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**Senior High School and the Labor Market:
Perspectives of Grade 12 Students
and Human Resource Officers**

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List of Acronyms

ABM	Accountancy, Business, and Management
ARTS	Arts and Design
BLE	Bureau of Local Employment
BPO	business process outsourcing
CAD	Computer-Aided Design
CALABARZON	Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon provinces
CHED	Commission on Higher Education
COC	Certificate of Competency
CS	civil service
CSC	Civil Service Commission
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DOLE	Department of Labor and Employment
FGD	focus group discussion
GAS	General Academic strand
HE	Home Economics
HEI	higher education institution
HS	high school
HUMSS	Humanities and Social Sciences
IBPAP	IT and Business Process Association of the Philippines
ICT	information and communications technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
IT	information technology
JFCCP	Joint Foreign Chamber of the Philippines
JHS	junior high school
KII	key informant interview
LGU	local government unit
LUC	local universities and colleges
MAP	Management Association of the Philippines
MARITIME	Pre-Baccalaureate Maritime
MIMAROPA	Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, and Palawan provinces
NC	National Certificate
NCAE	National Career Assessment Examination

NCR	National Capital Region
NEET	not in employment, education, or training
OECD	Organisation for Co-operation and Development
OJT	on-the-job training
PBEd	Philippine Business for Education
PCCI	Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry
PE	Physical Education
PHP	Philippine Peso
PMAP	People Management Association of the Philippines
PRC	Professional Regulation Commission
PSOC	Philippine Standard Occupational Classification
QS	qualification standards
RA	Republic Act
SCEP	Skills Certificate Equivalency Program
SHS	senior high school
SPES	Special Program for the Employment of Students
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
SUC	state universities and colleges
SY	school year
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
TLE	Technology and Livelihood Education
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TVL	Technical-Vocational-Livelihood

Abstract

The enactment of Republic Act 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 added two years to basic education. One of the rationales offered by proponents of the law is that Senior High School (SHS) graduates will be equipped with skills and capacity to work or engage in entrepreneurial activities if they choose to do so. This study assesses the likelihood of achieving the employment and entrepreneurship objectives of the program by examining the experience of Grade 12 graduating students and the views of firms about the labor market prospects of the SHS graduates. It does this by (i) looking into the SHS curriculum and the competencies developed among the graduates, (ii) identifying the types of jobs that fit the Grade 12 graduates, (iii) gathering the private sector perspective on the jobs available and appropriate for the Grade 12 graduates, and (iv) providing policy recommendations for improving the implementation of the SHS program. The study revealed that despite identifying employment and entrepreneurship as a rationale for the program, three quarters of the Grade 12 students plan to proceed to higher education. This proportion is true even for those in the Technical-Vocational-Livelihood track. Among the highlights of the focus group discussion with students is the revelation that they are not very confident that they will get a job after graduating from SHS. Even those who passed the National Certification assessments still believe that the firms will prefer hiring college graduates over them. Meanwhile, most of the firms lack in-depth knowledge of the SHS program. They expressed the need to be exposed to the SHS graduates before they can be confident in hiring them. While it may be too early to gauge the performance of the SHS program, particularly the performance of its graduates in the labor market, the study has uncovered areas for improving the implementation of the program to boost the chances of achieving its objectives, particularly the employment and entrepreneurship capabilities of SHS graduates.

Introduction

When Republic Act (RA) 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 was enacted into law, it faced considerable opposition from different sectors including a legal challenge to its constitutionality at the Supreme Court.¹ One of the rationales offered by proponents of the reform is that senior high school (SHS) graduates will be equipped to work or engage in entrepreneurial activities if they choose to do so. This study assesses the likelihood of achieving the employment and entrepreneurship objectives of the program by examining the experience of Grade 12 graduating students and the views of firms about the labor market prospects of the SHS graduates.

Reforming the basic education system has always been in the agenda of policymakers. Several fundamental issues are motivating the drive for reform. One, the 10-year basic education program is considered congested, forcing students to absorb too many subject areas in a relatively short period of time, leaving the students underprepared for higher education and employment. Two, the quality of basic education is also under question with national achievement test scores not improving fast enough and a proportion of students demonstrating mastery of key learning areas remaining low. The RA 10533 was designed to address the many issues in basic education. The law extends basic education by making kindergarten compulsory and adding two years to the secondary level. Thus, there are now a total of 13 years in basic education—kindergarten, six years of elementary education, four years of junior high school (JHS), and two years of SHS. This is designed to provide enough time for mastery of concepts and skills, develop lifelong learners, and prepare graduates for tertiary education, middle-level skills development, employment, and entrepreneurship. Furthermore, with the added two years in high school (HS), students have already reached the employable age to qualify for employment in the formal sector by the time they finish SHS.

The additional two years for upper secondary education (i.e., SHS) allow the student to choose a specialization based on aptitude, interests, and school capacity. The student's choice of track will define the specialization subject he/she will take in Grades 11 and 12. The student may choose from Academic, Sports, Arts and Design (ARTS),

¹ The Supreme Court ruled the law as constitutional on October 1, 2018. <http://sc.judiciary.gov.ph/pdf/web/viewer.html?file=/jurisprudence/2018/october2018/216930.pdf>.

and Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) tracks. K to 12 is also geared toward strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) integration in SHS. A student can obtain a Certificate of Competency (COC) or a National Certificate (NC) Level I² after finishing Grade 10, and a NC Level II³ after finishing a TVL track in Grade 12 provided he/she passes the competency-based assessment of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). This will allow graduates to have middle-level skills thus giving them better opportunities to be gainfully employed. In fact, the SHS Manual of Operations mentions, as among the indicators of success, an 80-percent hiring or business-launching rate within three months of graduation for learners under the TVL track.

To achieve its basic objective, this study (i) looks into the SHS curriculum and the competencies developed, (ii) identifies the types of jobs that fit the Grade 12 graduates, (iii) gathers private sector perspective on the jobs available and appropriate for the Grade 12 graduates, and (iv) provides policy recommendations for the improvement of the implementation of the SHS program.

Because of the limitations of time and resources, the paper puts emphasis only on the perspectives of Grade 12 students and human resource officers, particularly about the SHS program's employment and entrepreneurship objectives. For the same limitations, the study team is only able to do focus group discussions (FGDs) with Grade 12 students in 18 schools in the National Capital Region (NCR), Region III (Central Luzon), and Region IV-A (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Quezon [CALABARZON]). The key informant interviews (KIIs) with Human Resource Managers/Officers in 26 firms in NCR, CALABARZON, and Cebu provided the firm perspectives. It should be noted that the FGDs and KIIs only capture the experience of the Grade 12 students and the outlook of firms toward the SHS graduates. The FGDs and KIIs with the Department of Education (DepEd) about the SHS program were done in a more comprehensive study (SHS process evaluation). These are the main limitations of the study. It remains to be seen in the next few years how the SHS graduates perform in the labor market.

² TESDA issues a Certificate of Competency (COC) to those who satisfactorily demonstrate competence on a particular or a cluster of units of competency. The COC leads to certification beginning with NC Level I that indicates the performance of a routine and predictable task, requiring little judgement and supervision.

³ indicates performance of a prescribed range of functions

Profile of Senior High School Students and Schools

To provide a comprehensive picture of the SHS market, a profile of the first batch of SHS students and schools offering SHS education in the country for the SY 2017–2018 is presented in this section. The distribution of SHS students in different tracks, strands, and type of schools provides a broad background to the results of the FGDs with students and the KIIs with firms.

Looking at the data for SY 2017–2018 (Table 1), the Philippines has a total of 11,087 schools offering SHS, of which 58 percent are public, 40 percent are private, and 2 percent are state universities and colleges/local universities and colleges (SUC/LUCs). A total of 2.7 million students are enrolled in SHS, of which 1.5 million are Grade 11 students, and 1.2 million are Grade 12 students. Particularly for the Grade 12 population, 52 percent are enrolled in public schools, 45 percent in private schools, and 3 percent are in SUC/LUCs.

These distributions of enrollment per school classification highlight the important roles played by both the DepEd and the private schools in attaining the objectives of the SHS program.

In terms of offerings, the SHS program has four tracks: Academic, TVL, ARTS, and Sports. Among these four tracks, large concentrations of students are in the Academic and the TVL tracks (Figure 1).

The Academic track consists of five strands: (i) Accountancy, Business, and Management (ABM); (ii) Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS); (iii) Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM); (iv) General Academic (GAS); and (v) Pre-Baccalaureate Maritime (MARITIME). The TVL track also consists of five strands:

Table 1. Number of schools and enrollment in Grade 11 and Grade 12: Philippines, SY 2017–2018

Type	Schools		Enrollment				Total	
	Number	%	Grade 11		Grade 12		Number	%
			Number	%	Number	%		
Public	6,404	58	748,524	51	646,618	52	1,395,142	51
Private	4,451	40	684,653	46	564,351	45	1,249,004	46
SUC/LUC	232	2	47,926	3	41,388	3	89,314	3
Total	11,087	100	1,481,103	100	1,252,357	100	2,733,460	100

SY = school year; SUC/LUC = state universities and colleges/local universities and colleges
Source of basic data: Department of Education (2018)

(i) Home Economics (HE); (ii) Information and Communications Technology (ICT); (iii) Industrial Arts; (iv) Agri-Fishery; and (v) TVL Maritime.

Table 2 shows that only a total of 34 schools, which is equivalent to 0.3 percent of all SHS, offer 7 out of 8 strands⁴, while no school offers all 8 strands as of SY 2017-2018. For both public and private schools, a high percentage of each offer only one strand at 43.9 percent and 31.5 percent, respectively. These are somehow indicative of the level of readiness of the schools across the country in terms of implementing the SHS program, further implying that only a small percentage of schools are “ready” to provide the students with real options in terms of the sets of skills that should prepare them for employment or entrepreneurship after graduation. This is validated by the results of FGDs presented in the highlights of FGDs with Grade 12 students.

Table 2. Strand offerings under the SHS program: Philippines, SY 2017–2018

Number of Offered Strands	Public		Type of school Private		SUC/LUC		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1	2,813	43.9	1,400	31.5	48	20.7	4,261	38.4
2	2,198	34.3	948	21.3	60	25.9	3,206	28.9
3	639	10.0	932	20.9	53	22.8	1,624	14.6
4	468	7.3	710	16.0	42	18.1	1,220	11.0
5	227	3.5	395	8.9	23	9.9	645	5.8
6	43	0.7	48	1.1	6	2.6	97	0.9
7	16	0.2	18	0.4	0	0.0	34	0.3
Total	6,404	100.0	4,451	100.0	232	100.0	11,087	100.0

SY = school year; SUC/LUC = state universities and colleges/local universities and colleges
 Source of basic data: Department of Education (2018)

Among all these eight strands, GAS (28.5%) and TVL⁵ (28.2%) are the most commonly offered, followed by ABM (16.3%), HUMSS (13.5%), and STEM (12%), and only less than one percent each for ARTS, Sports, and MARITIME strands is offered by schools (Table 3). The most offered

⁴ Include each of the five academic strands plus TVL, ARTS, and Sports tracks. All five strands under the TVL track were grouped as one—i.e., TVL. Refer to Table 3 and footnote 5.

⁵ All five TVL strands were taken as one because of the problem with recording TVL strands in the data. Unlike in the academic strands where only one strand per student was recorded, students in the TVL track were recorded as taking more than one strand that created aggregation issues.

Table 3. Strands offered by SHS: Philippines, SY 2017–2018

Strands	Public		Private		SUC/LUC		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
GAS	4,305	34.4	2,600	23.0	66	10.2	6,971	28.5
TVL*	4,503	36.0	2,246	19.8	162	25.1	6,911	28.2
ABM	1,241	9.9	2,627	23.2	121	18.7	3,989	16.3
HUMSS	1,317	10.5	1,857	16.4	132	20.4	3,306	13.5
STEM	974	7.8	1,812	16.0	150	23.2	2,936	12.0
ARTS	93	0.7	106	0.9	5	0.8	204	0.8
Sports	67	0.5	38	0.3	8	1.2	113	0.5
MARITIME	3	0.0	35	0.3	2	0.3	40	0.2

Note: * See footnote 5.

SUC/LUC = state universities and colleges/local universities and colleges; GAS = General Academic strand, TVL = Technical-Vocational-Livelihood; ABM = Accountancy, Business, and Management; HUMSS = Humanities and Social Sciences; STEM = Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics; ARTS = Arts and Design; MARITIME = Pre-Baccalaureate Maritime

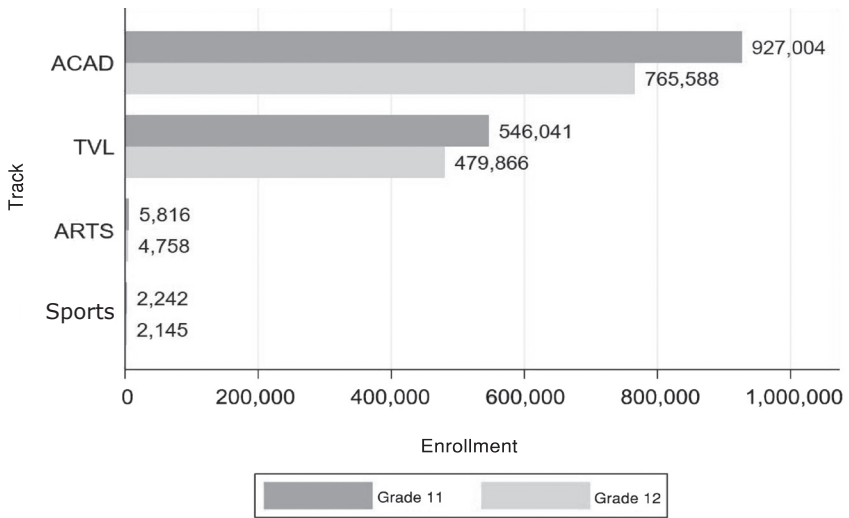
Source of basic data: Department of Education (2018)

strands by public SHS are TVL and GAS; ABM and GAS by private SHS; and TVL, STEM, HUMSS, and ABM by SUC/LUC. The distributions of SHS enrollment per track and strand are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2. Among the four tracks, the Academic track has the highest number of enrollees, followed by the TVL track for both Grades 11 and 12. Among the five strands under the Academic track, GAS is mostly offered, followed by STEM, ABM, and HUMSS for Grade 12. These data help define which competencies may be expected from SHS graduates.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of Grade 12 enrollment by region and by sex. Understandably, the distribution reflects the population size. Region IV-A, NCR, and Region III have the highest Grade 12 enrollments; while Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) and Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) have the least. It also shows that there is higher enrollment of female students across all regions in the country. This reflects the known trend in the country where boys, on average, quit school earlier than girls.

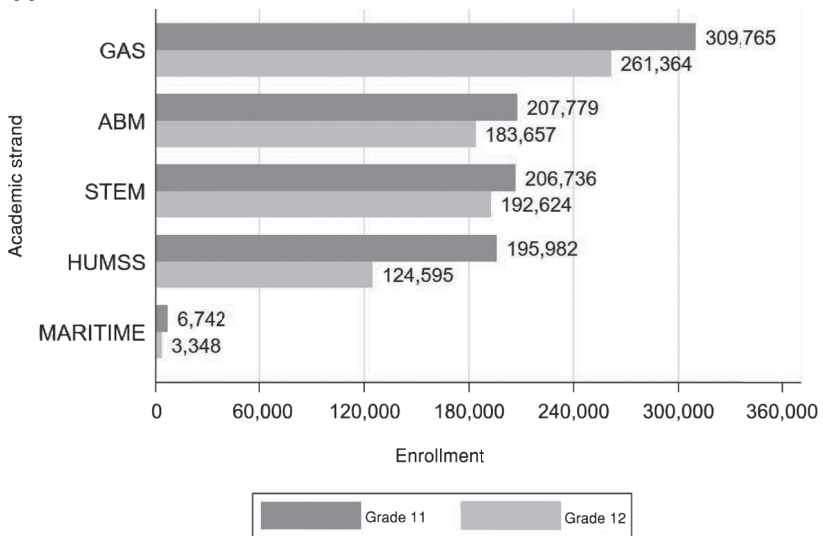
Figure 4 shows that more female students are enrolled in Academic and ARTS tracks, while there are more male students enrolled in TVL and Sports. Figure 5 shows that under the Academic track, GAS, ABM, and HUMSS strands are dominated by female students, while STEM and MARITIME strands are dominated by male students.

Figure 1. Distribution of enrollment, by track and by level: Philippines, SY 2017–2018



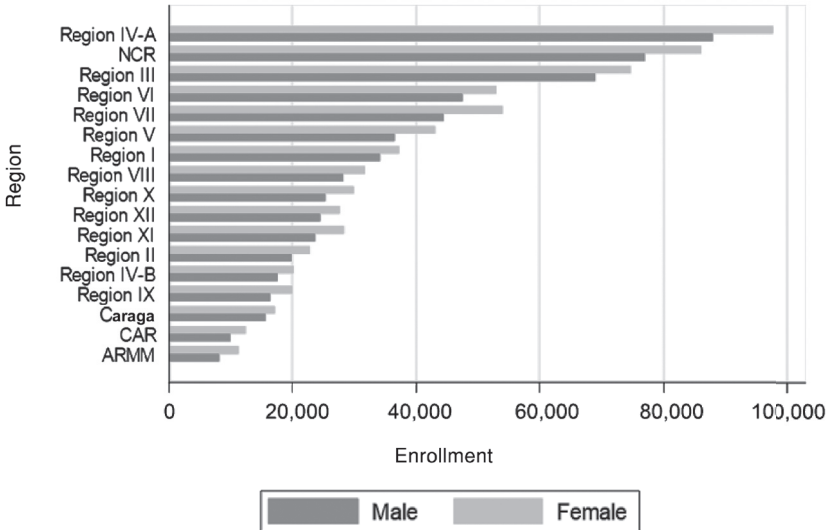
SY = school year; SUC/LUC = state universities and colleges/local universities and colleges; ACAD = Academic track; TVL = Technology-Vocational-Livelihood; ARTS = Arts and Design
 Source of basic data: Department of Education (2018)

Figure 2. Distribution of enrollment, by strand under the Academic Track: Philippines, SY 2017–2018



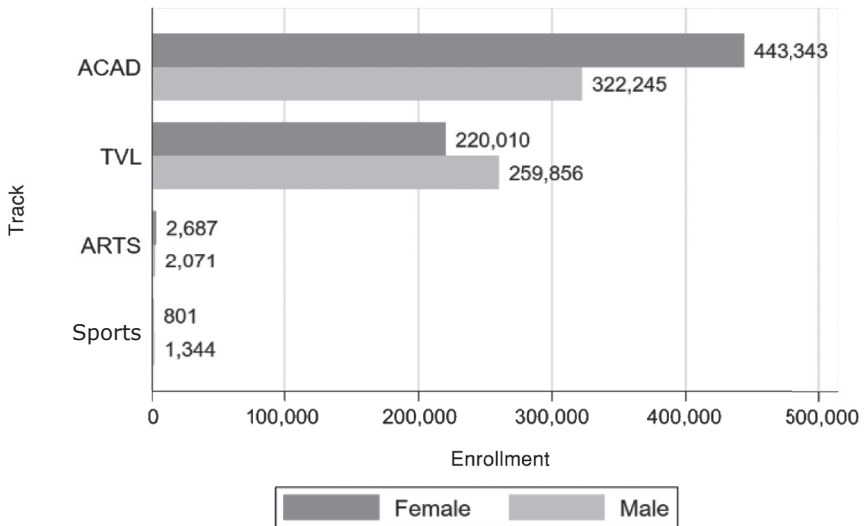
SY = school year; GAS = General Academic strand; ABM = Accountancy, Business, and Management; STEM = Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics; HUMSS = Humanities and Social Sciences; MARITIME = Pre-Baccalaureate Maritime
 Source of basic data: Department of Education (2018)

Figure 3. Grade 12 enrollment, by region and by sex: Philippines, SY 2017-2018



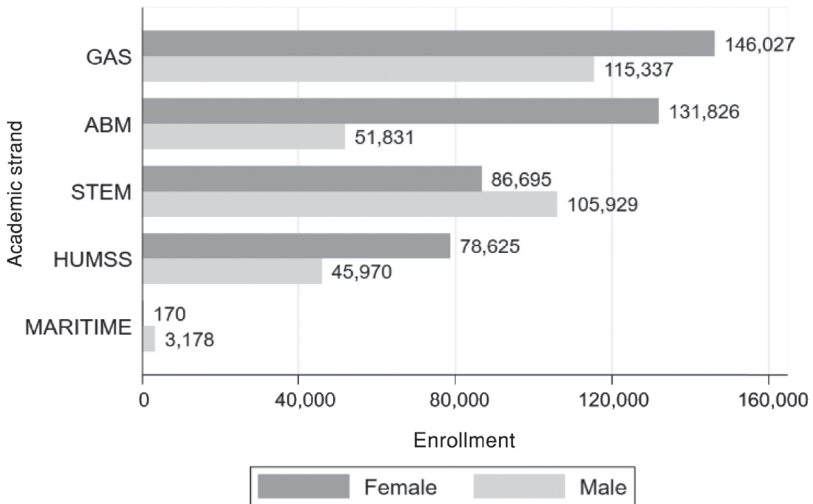
SY = school year; NCR = National Capital Region; CAR = Cordillera Administrative Region; ARMM = Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
 Source of basic data: Department of Education (2018)

Figure 4. Distribution of enrollment in Grade 12, by track and by sex: Philippines, SY 2017-2018



SY = school year; ACAD = Academic ; TVL = Technical-Vocational-Livelihood; ARTS = Arts and Design
 Source of basic data: Department of Education (2018)

Figure 5. Distribution of enrollment in Grade 12, by academic strand and by sex: Philippines, SY 2017–2018



SY= school year; GAS =General Academic strand; ABM = Accountancy, Business, and Management; STEM = Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics; HUMSS = Humanities and Social Sciences; MARITIME = Pre-Baccalaureate Maritime
 Source of basic data: Department of Education (2018)

As reflected in Table 1, the enrollment for Grade 12 reached about 1.25 million in SY 2017-2018.⁶ As of June 15, 2018, the national graduation rate is at 96 percent or 1.20 million (Table 4). DepEd schools have the highest graduation rate at 89.5 percent while private schools only have 52.7 percent graduation rate.

Table 4. Graduation rates by track: Philippines, SY 2017–2018

Track	Total
Sports	97.4
TVL	96.3
Academic	96.0
Arts and Design	94.6
National	96.1

SY = school year; TVL = Technical-Vocational-Livelihood
 Note: Data on SHS graduates as of June 15, 2018; Data on SHS enrollment as of November 30, 2017
 Source: Department of Education (2018)

⁶ Note that enrollment data do not capture enrollment beyond November 30, 2017.

Referring back to Tables 1 to 3, particularly on the gaps and limitations in the tracks offered between public and private schools, it is worth noting that there are minimal offerings of the ARTS, and TVL tracks in public schools. These limitations in the offerings of the public schools may be somehow addressed by the voucher program that enables completers from public JHS or SUCs/LUCs to enroll in their preferred strands that may only be available in private schools. A total of 1.2 million are allotted to private SHS with a total of 626,000 voucher recipients as of January 2018. This voucher program can affect the decision-making process of students in choosing the school and the strand.

It is also interesting to see if the specific sets of competencies demanded in the labor market are met by the supply of Grade 12 graduates that the current SHS program has produced across the country (Table 4), and how capable the schools are in providing the students with the needed competencies. It is therefore also important to note the challenges and limitations that explain the gaps in the supply of SHS graduates and its demand in the labor market. Indicative reasons for these trends are further discussed in the highlights of the FGDs with the Grade 12 students and the KIIs with the firms on page 23 and 34, respectively.

Review of Related Literature

Where students have an option to continue schooling, one motivation for staying is the expectation of better job and career opportunities with better education. This longer-term prospect is compared with the more immediate returns from working rather than continuing on with their education. Few of the challenges in transitioning from secondary school to work, however, involve the actual choosing of jobs and careers, and adjusting to workplace requirements that are seemingly different from those of the school. It also follows that the actual opportunities for full-time work in the labor market are important consideration. One way to address these challenges is through provision of varying work experience programs where the primary intention is for students to gain an orientation of an actual work setting. In most member-countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), short programs of six to eight days offered from the early or middle years of secondary school have reported favorable responses and outcomes, particularly in opening

employment opportunities for students. Some of these programs, which are technically intended for orientation rather than skills development, have evolved over the decades to focus more on vocational orientation, where there is increased interest in the knowledge about the job and related skills to develop the necessary competencies and skills for the workforce. One key element of these programs is the range of industries involved, underscoring the utmost importance of developing vocational skills specific to particular industries, not just a range of skills (Ainley 1996).

In highlighting the important role of secondary schools in facilitating job placement for students, an example cited by Ainley (1996) illustrated that about 75 percent of Japanese high schools provide institutional assistance to students who are work-bound after graduation. This, however, entails a long-standing relationship of school-employer linkages among the factors considered. In the Philippines, the active labor market programs that target provision of assistance to the youth generally focus on those who are (i) out-of-school, (ii) not in employment, education, or training (NEETs), or (iii) college graduates, but there is none yet for SHS graduates that specifically aims to facilitate in or promote transition to work after SHS graduation (ADB 2016; see also relevant policies and programs on pages 15–18).

It therefore follows that in any K to 12 reform, one important policy consideration is the alignment of its vocational component with the labor market. One-third of the OECD countries already hold upper-secondary TVET qualification as their highest educational attainment, and at least 50 percent in European countries, particularly Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, Slovak Republic, and Slovenia. An average of 79 percent of these TVET qualified young adults are employed, indicating the success of the upper secondary TVET in increasing the chances of SHS graduates in the labor market. It further follows from the trends in OECD countries that there exists better employment opportunities in countries where half or less (not higher) of the younger adults have an upper secondary TVET qualification as their highest educational attainment. Unemployment and inactivity rates are also lower in this group compared to those having general upper secondary education as their highest attainment. More importantly, TVET tends to be more expensive, underscoring the importance of ensuring good employment opportunities for graduates of upper secondary TVET programs (OECD 2013, 2016).

In the East Asia and the Pacific subregion, enrollment levels in upper-secondary TVET have been increasing, reflecting its growing demand. China (42.6%) and Thailand (39.9%) had the highest share of students in 2008, while Lao PDR (1.1%) and India (1.8%) had the lowest. Particularly embedded in the curriculum of most ASEAN+6 countries⁷ is the explicit requirement of curricular relevance for students entering the labor market. Challenges in the demand-supply match of skills, however, have always surrounded the upper secondary education even for countries where SHS has been in place for decades. Interestingly, many graduates from secondary-level TVET programs continue their education—an increasing trend especially across industrialized countries. Some developing countries, on the other hand, offer TVET programs through various channels at the general secondary level instead of through dedicated vocational schools due to the high cost of setting up the needed specialized technology and facilities, material base, and technical/vocational teachers. In terms of strategies in expanding the secondary level TVET, Malaysia’s multistream delivery system⁸ allows more diversity by focusing on student interests in providing the needed skills for the labor market. In Indonesia, also a developing economy, vocational education and training in the senior secondary (SMK) level⁹ is predominantly privately provided and has been rapidly expanding by 158 percent from 2001 to 2010. Of the total SMK graduates for the year 2011–2012, 94 percent sought to enter the job market immediately instead of proceeding to post-secondary education or training. This, however, has not necessarily translated to better outcomes. Specific to its response within the labor market, the skill profile of its workforce has not evolved with the labor market demands (UNESCO 2014; OECD and ADB 2015).

With the K to 12 reform in the Philippine education system, it is expected from the SHS program that Grade 12 graduates who took the TVL track and have obtained NC II and III may be hired as middle-level skilled workers in (i) HE (i.e., caregiving, cooking, baking, tailoring/

⁷ ASEAN is composed of member-states, namely, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam. ASEAN+6 includes the 10 member-states plus Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea.

⁸ offered at both general education schools and separate Technical and Vocational Education and Training schools

⁹ Senior secondary vocational schools in Indonesia are known as Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan (SMK).

dressmaking, events management, housekeeping, tour guiding, wellness), (ii) industrial arts (i.e., automotive, carpentry, construction painting, electrical installation, welding, machining, plumbing, refrigeration and air conditioning), (iii) agri-fishery arts (i.e., crop and animal production, animal health care, food processing, horticulture), and (iv) ICT (i.e., broadband installation, call center services, medical transcription, technical drafting). SHS graduates outside the TVL track may also be hired in entry-level positions, such as bookkeeping and clerical work, among others.

The succeeding subsections discuss the available literature on current employability of SHS graduates in the country in comparison and/or in contrast with the aforementioned expectations.

Willingness of companies to hire SHS graduates

In a survey on hiring preferences conducted by JobStreet.com in February 2018, employers using the JobStreet website were asked if they will hire SHS graduates. The survey report¹⁰ revealed that 41 percent were indefinite about hiring SHS graduates, 35 percent were not willing to hire, and only 24 percent were willing to hire (JobStreet 2018).

A portion of the employers who were indefinite about hiring SHS graduates are still evaluating the company's readiness and the availability of positions, while others have yet to set a definite timeline for hiring Grade 12 graduates.

Firms that are not willing to hire reported the following reasons and concerns for not hiring Grade 12 graduates: available jobs were for college graduates only (36%), SHS graduates were not qualified (25%), employers have no openings for any position (20%), and SHS graduates lack work experience (16%). Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) were among those most reluctant to hire K to 12 graduates. Having only 10–20 workers, an SME would rather not take the risk in recruiting SHS graduates. The reluctance to hire SHS graduates may also be related to another finding reflected in the same report that some human resources (HR) personnel may not be knowledgeable about information related to the K to 12 program. These refer to knowledge about the Work Immersion Program, the tracks and strands, as well

¹⁰ The JobStreet.com's 2018 Fresh Graduate Report is based on Employers' Survey on hiring preferences in February 2018 where 503 company representatives representing various locations, company sizes, and industries participated.

as the employment-related certificates that SHS students can obtain. Employers also lack information about the kind of job candidates that the SHS program produces. The survey's identified reasons for nonwillingness to hire SHS graduates are consistent with the concern of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) that the first batch of K to 12 graduates might still not be ready to work in a professional workplace. The hesitance of employers "to hire fresh graduates may be due to the absence of the necessary skills and training that industries need but not yet provided by the current SHS program", and the minimum requirement of 80 hours or two weeks for the "on-the-job training" was not enough to equip students with the skills they need to be employed. In response to these concerns, DepEd underscores that the longer hours of student training preferred by the industries is not the ideal scenario: "We can't be heavy on work immersion and lack content. [...] We are talking about high school graduates, the minimum competencies or subjects that they need to learn, and the work immersion component where they have to apply learnings in the classroom to make them ready for work" (Yee 2018).

Those willing to hire, on the other hand, were mostly from business process outsourcing (BPO), manufacturing, professional services, and retail industries. The identified available jobs were entry-level positions in administrative work, customer service, and sales and marketing. Attitude/work ethics would be the primary condition for hiring, followed by interpersonal and problem-solving skills. Most of these respondents are willing to pay minimum wages while the rest would offer an above minimum to PHP 15,000 monthly salary. Although there were employers receptive to hiring SHS graduates, the latter will still have to compete with fresh college graduates whom employers may prefer.

The Philippine Business for Education (PBE), an industry-led advocacy group for education, also conducted a survey of companies within its network. The results presented a more positive view on the willingness of companies to hire SHS graduates. While only 1 in 5 companies is ready to hire SHS graduates, 3 out of 5 are open to hiring them. As specified by PBE, it should be noted that readiness is the capacity to hire given the availability of facilities and entry-level positions, while openness pertains to willingness (PBE 2018). The following competencies are expected from the SHS graduates as identified by PBE and the business groups: comprehension in both Filipino and English, communication skills,

critical-thinking skills, and confidence and maturity in handling the job (Aguinaldo 2018).

Hiring of SHS graduates

Job entries of two online job portals, PhilJobNet and JobStreet, were reviewed to find out whether companies are offering jobs for SHS graduates.

PhilJobNet

PhilJobNet is the Philippine government’s official online job site administered by the Department of Labor and Employment-Bureau of Local Employment (DOLE-BLE). Job entries of firms in the PhilJobNet requiring “high school graduates” for the period June 5 to July 6, 2018 were reviewed to look into jobs currently offered to SHS graduates. HS graduate, as referred in the job entries, covers both graduates of the old four-year HS curriculum and the SHS.¹¹ For the one-month period mentioned, a total of 106 companies posted 235 jobs for “high school graduates”. Data show that most of the jobs (79%) require work experience (Table 5), majority (151 out of 185) of which demands 1–6 years of work experience. This indicates that these jobs are mostly intended for graduates of the old HS curriculum, who have been employed and gained years of work experience.

Jobs for HS requiring no work experience, which may refer to both the SHS graduates and the recent graduates of the old HS

Table 5. Qualifications required for jobs available for high school (HS) graduates

Qualifications	Number of job entries	Percent
HS graduate with work experience required	185	78.7
No entries for qualifications	37	15.7
HS graduate with no work experience required	12	5.1
SHS graduate	1	0.4
Total	235	100.0

SHS = senior high school

Source: PhilJobNet (n.d.) and Department of Labor and Employment-Bureau of Labor and Employment (2018)

¹¹ Based on inquiry made with DOLE-BLE, they are still in the process of updating the PhilJobNet system to differentiate SHS graduates from the graduates of the old four-year HS curriculum.

curriculum, constitute only 5.1 percent of the job entries. Positions here include call center agent, janitor/housekeeping provider, electronics maintenance technician, production equipment worker, warehouse helper, food/beverage service crew, and construction carpenter. Salaries range from PHP 8,000 to PHP 30,000 monthly. The companies that offered the job positions were from sectors such as job placement/manpower recruitment, BPO, audiovisual company, wholesale and retail distribution, restaurant/coffee shop, engineering technology, and janitorial/maintenance service (Appendix A).

Only one employer, a job placement/manpower recruitment company, mentioned explicitly that “fresh graduates of K to 12 are welcome to apply” for a production machine operator position with a salary of PHP 10,000–12,000 per month.

JobStreet.com

Job entries in JobStreet.com for one day were reviewed to check on employers offering jobs to SHS graduates. Out of the 75,078 job entries in the Philippines on October 13, 2018, around 60 job entries mentioned “open to SHS graduates”. However, of the 60 entries, some were observed to be requiring work experience. Weeding out entries that require work experience, only 20 entries were left with qualifications described as “open to SHS graduates, fresh SHS graduates can apply, and with no work experience required”. Positions offered were customer service representative/call center agent (18), transaction processing analyst (1), and computer-aided design (CAD) operator (1). Almost all companies offering jobs were from the BPO sector (Appendix B).

Based on the data gathered from the two online jobsites, there is an indication that companies are hiring SHS graduates but their numbers are very few. The jobs offered are customer service representative/call center agent positions coming from the BPO sector. In general, employers do not differentiate between the SHS graduates and the graduates of the old HS curriculum.

Relevant policies and programs

DepEd and DOLE policies related to work immersion

The DepEd’s Guidelines on Work Immersion, as mentioned earlier in this report, offers several delivery models ranging from the minimum of 80

hours work immersion to 340 hours distributed over several terms that schools may choose from, taking into consideration the required number of work immersion hours, learner's purposes and needs, school capabilities, and compliance to TESDA, DOLE, and DepEd work immersion guidelines (DepEd 2017; DOLE 2016 and 2017). Schools may also design their own delivery model as they deem fit for a specific situation or concern.

Although one of the objectives of the work immersion is to develop skills that are relevant to the needs of the job market in the area, DepEd stressed that it should not be reduced to a mere recruitment tool of a partner institution. Aside from the desired outcome of future employment of the graduates in the industry, work immersion should be designed in such a way that graduates will also acquire other skills and competencies and will qualify for other job options and not be limited to those offered by the partner institution.

Civil Service Commission (CSC) qualification standards

The current recruitment system in the Philippine civil service is based on qualification standards (QS), a minimum set of requirements comprised of education, eligibility, training, experience, and competence.

The 1987 Administrative Code of the Philippines (Book V, Chapter 2, Section 8) provides the classes of positions in the career service with corresponding required examinations and educational attainment. There are three major levels: (a) the first level includes clerical, trades, crafts, and custodial service positions that involve nonprofessional or subprofessional work in a nonsupervisory or supervisory capacity requiring less than four years of collegiate studies; (b) the second level includes professional, technical, and scientific positions that involve work in a nonsupervisory or supervisory capacity requiring at least four years of college work up to Division Chief level; and (c) the third level covers positions in the Career Executive Service. Most of the jobs that fit the SHS graduates, including those in career service, are in the first level, requiring less than four years of collegiate studies (CSC 2014).

The job portal of the CSC provides information about available government jobs posted based on submission of various national and regional government agencies and local government units (LGUs). A random review of first-level/entry-level positions of the job portal entries (72,000 entries on October 19, 2018) showed the following description of education and work experience required: (a) "high school graduates

with no work experience”; (b) “completion of two years in college or HS graduate with relevant vocational or trade course with no work experience”; and (c) “completion of two years in college and with no work experience” (Table 6). There were also first-level positions requiring only elementary graduates. As confirmed by the CSC, the HS refers to both SHS graduates and graduates of the four-year HS prior to K to 12, while JHS completer is considered HS level. Completion of two years in college is not equivalent to SHS graduate as SHS is not considered part of collegiate studies. Requirements for education of first-level positions in the civil service have not been adjusted to consider the SHS graduates. Such adjustment would require CSC to amend the QS.

On eligibility, any individual who has obtained COC or NC from TESDA and seeking to join the civil service may be given equivalent eligibility by the CSC under the Skills Certificate Equivalency Program of TESDA (TESDA n.d.). Examples of these are the eligibilities for data encoder, refrigeration and air-conditioning servicing, automotive servicing, machining, and plumbing, among others.

Table 6. Examples of first-level positions in the civil service and corresponding salary grade (SG) level according to qualifications

Qualifications (education and work experience)	Positions	SG Level
HS graduate with no experience	Social Welfare Aide, Water Meter Reader I, Market Ticket Checker	SG 3–6
Completed two years in college or HS graduate with relevant vocational or trade course with no experience; Civil Service subprofessional	Data Controller I, Computer Operator I, Communications Equipment Operator, Draftsman I, Electrician I	SG 4–7
Completed two years in college and with no work experience	Secretary I; Accounting Clerk I; Revenue Collection Clerk I; Buyer I; Tourism Operations Assistant; Agriculture Technician	SG 4–7
Elementary graduates	Bookbinder; Driver; Farm Worker; Utility Worker; Plumber	SG 2–5

SG = salary grade; HS = high school
Source: Civil Service Commission (2018)

Senate resolution

To support SHS graduates in finding jobs, Senate Resolution 700, introduced by Senator Grace Poe, was filed in the 17th Congress last April 3, 2018. The Resolution “expresses the sense of the Senate to call upon the private sector to hire graduates of the reformed K to 12 basic education system to enable fresh graduates to find decent and fulfilling employment and to ensure the successful implementation of RA 10533, otherwise known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013”. The resolution is still pending in the Senate Committee on Education.

Business groups’ initiatives on affirmative hiring

The PBEd convened business associations and chambers in April 2018 to reaffirm their support in ensuring employment of the graduates in preparation for the first batch of SHS graduates joining the workforce. The statement of support reads as follows, “we reaffirm our strong support for the K to 12 reform by taking affirmative action and opening employment positions for SHS graduates and rethinking our hiring guidelines to put a premium on competencies instead of credentials.” This statement of support was reaffirmed by leaders of the country’s biggest business associations such as the PCCI, Makati Business Club, Information Technology and Business Process Association of the Philippines, Management Association of the Philippines, People Management Association of the Philippines (PMAP), and the Joint Foreign Chambers of the Philippines.

Also, PBEd continues its own effort for affirmative hiring through a coalition where companies join and commit to provide trainings and hiring slots to help the SHS graduates in transitioning from school to work. Through this initiative, DepEd collaborates with PBEd to build and maintain a strong partnership between the private sector and the academe. This partnership “will pave the way for a change in hiring policies by getting industry to accommodate SHS graduates for entry-level work, such as accounting, logistics, and customer service, among others, in companies from sectors such as finance, IT-BPO, hospitality, construction-manufacturing, services, and media, among others. On the side of the academe, DepEd will provide continuous information dissemination to build the perception that employment is possible for SHS graduates” (Hernando-Malipot 2018). Since April 2018, the initiative has secured the commitment of 17 companies. PBEd is calling on more companies to take part and join their affirmative hiring coalition.

Research Design and Methodology

Research design and data collection method

The study was designed to provide information on the labor market prospects of SHS graduates. It intends to capture the experience of the first batch of SHS students and the perspectives of firms about SHS graduates. The objective is to provide a good description of both the demand and supply aspects of the emerging SHS graduates' labor market. The primary data collection methods are FGDs with Grade 12 students and key informant interviews (KIIs) with firms. The FGD and KII respondents were requested to sign an Informed Consent Form signifying that they agree to participate in the study, including the permission for the audio-recording of the interview and the assurance that the data to be collected will be kept confidential. The results of the FGDs and the KIIs are supported by background information on the Grade 12 enrollment, desk review of past studies, DepEd and DOLE guidelines on the implementation of SHS and work immersion, CSC hiring policies, and online jobsites dealing with SHS graduates.

The main objective of the FGD with Grade 12 students was to know their experiences during SHS and their own assessment of their employment prospects after graduating from SHS. The discussions focused on four main topics: (i) enrollment in SHS; (ii) experience in SHS; (iii) employment prospects; and (iv) plans for higher education.

The KIIs with firms, on the other hand, were intended to gather data from the firms/employers to determine their willingness to hire SHS graduates and find out the type of jobs available and fit for the latter. Desk review of past studies, DepEd and DOLE guidelines on the implementation of K to 12 and work immersion, CSC hiring policies, and online jobsites was carried out prior to the fieldwork. The preferred respondents for the KIIs were the HR managers or designated representatives of selected private companies and LGUs often referred to in this study as “firms”. The KIIs with firms revolved around the following topics: (i) profile of the firms, (ii) understanding of the K to 12 program, (iii) firms' perspective on the qualifications of the graduates and their willingness to hire, (iv) adjustments to be done in hiring policies, and (v) actual hiring of graduates.

The fieldwork for the FGDs and KIIs was conducted from March to July 2018.

Study sites

To generate the students' perspective of their labor market prospects, the study was designed to interview the first batch of Grade 12 students before they graduate. Due to time limitation, only specific regions were targeted as study sites. These regions include the NCR, Region IV-A, and Region III. For public schools offering Grade 12, these were divided into three groups (small, medium, large) according to enrollment size. The stratification by enrollment size was used as a proxy to capture the different experiences of students during their HS years. Two schools were randomly selected from each group. The permissions to do FGDs in public schools were negotiated by the DepEd Central Office through its Planning Service. Selected private schools in NCR and Region III were individually approached, and their selection was entirely dependent on their agreement to participate in the study. In each of the schools, a separate FGD was done for Academic track and TVL track students whenever possible. Because there was no list of students provided before the FGDs, the schools were requested to select 10 students for each session, with the proviso that each academic and TVL strand offered is represented, before the arrival of the research team. A total of 18 schools—12 public and 6 private—were visited for the FGDs with Grade 12 students. Table 7 provides the background of the school visited in terms of their enrollment size and tracks offered. As expected, only the larger schools offer more tracks/strands. Similar to the national tabulation, none of the schools in the sample offered all the eight strands. Most schools offered only five strands at most.

For the KII with firms, the NCR, Region IV-A, and the province of Cebu were selected as study sites because these areas are the hubs of Philippine business and industry. NCR and Region IV-A had the greatest number of business and industry establishments in the Philippines with 187,650 or 20.5 percent and 138,301 or 15 percent of the total establishments, respectively (PSA 2016). NCR covered the LGUs and private firms located in the cities of Pasig, Makati, Mandaluyong, and Quezon. Region IV-A included firms in various economic zones such as the Agricultural Special Economic Zone in Quezon, the Medical Tourism Park in Batangas, and the Tourism Economic Zone in Laguna. Cebu province continues to top the list of provinces outside NCR with the greatest number of establishments. Likewise, locator firms in the various economic zones (Mactan Economic Zone, Cebu Light Industrial Park,

and West Cebu Industrial Park) as well as within Cebu City representing various industries were selected.

The conduct of KIIs in the three sites had to be extended beyond the planned schedule to accommodate firms that requested for postponement as well as to find replacements for those who declined to participate in the study. In NCR, an HR officer of one big firm refused to participate in a

Table 7. Characteristics of schools selected for FGDs with Grade 12 students by region

Region	Size	Total Grade 12 enrollment	Strands Offered
NCR	Small, Public	57	GAS, TVL
NCR	Small, Public	63	STEM, TVL
NCR	Medium, Public	72	ABM, TVL
NCR	Medium, Public	161	ABM, HUMSS, STEM, TVL
NCR	Large, Public	402	ABM, HUMSS, TVL
NCR	Large, Public	433	ABM, HUMSS, STEM, TVL
NCR	Private	76	ABM
NCR	Private	0	No data with DepEd
Region III	Private	19	ABM, GAS
Region III	Private	32	ABM, HUMSS, GAS
Region III	Private	171	ABM, HUMSS, STEM, GAS, TVL
Region III	Private	570	ABM, HUMSS, STEM, GAS, TVL
Region IV-A	Small, Public	42	HUMSS, GAS, TVL
Region IV-A	Small, Public	52	ABM, TVL
Region IV-A	Medium, Public	121	HUMSS, GAS, TVL
Region IV-A	Medium, Public	130	GAS, TVL
Region IV-A	Large, Public	521	GAS, TVL
Region IV-A	Large, Public	696	ABM, HUMSS, GAS, TVL

FGD = focus group discussion; NCR = National Capital Region; GAS = General Academic strand; TVL = Technology-Vocational-Livelihood ; ABM = Accountancy, Business, and Management; HUMSS = Humanities and Social Sciences; STEM = Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

Source of basic data: Department of Education (2018)

face-to-face interview and requested to accomplish the KII guide online instead. In Cebu, KII schedule has to be adjusted to consider the long distance of some firms from the city. The preparatory activities and the conduct of KII in Region IV-A were rescheduled on the first week of July to accommodate the preparation of the highlights of KII data in NCR and Cebu. Among the three sites, CALABARZON had the greatest number of firms that refused to be interviewed. These include supermarkets, organic farms, automotive companies, bakeshops, and water district offices. Despite the request letters sent and repeated follow-ups, most of them apparently wanted to avoid discussion on topics related to hiring manpower.

Data processing, consolidation, and analysis

After data collection, audio recordings of the FGDs and KIIs were listened to, transcribed, encoded, and checked against the notes of the interviewer and documenter. Qualitative data were reviewed and consolidated manually. The profiles of the participants were processed and descriptive tables, where relevant, were prepared. Cross-checking and triangulation with the desk review/literature review were done. Finally, enrollment data for SY 2017–2018 from DepEd were also processed to provide a comprehensive profile of the SHS students and schools.

Description of the SHS Curriculum

The K to 12 curriculum is depicted in Table 8. The 13 years of basic education is broken down into three levels, namely, kindergarten and elementary (7 years), JHS (4 years), and SHS (2 years). The SHS curriculum is divided into eight core learning areas and four contextualized track subjects, namely, Academic, TVL, Sports, and ARTS. These are designed to cover the three possible exits identified by the program, namely, higher education, middle-level skills development, and employment or entrepreneurship.

On entrepreneurship, Grades 11 and 12 students are required to take up 80 hours of the applied track subject per semester focusing on the (i) development of a business plan and (ii) implementation of a simple business.

Table 8. Basic education curriculum in the Philippines

Elementary	Kinder to Grade 6					
Junior High School (Grade 7 to 10)	Grades 7 to 8 (Exploratory TLE)			Grades 9 to 10 (Specialized TLE)		
Senior High School (Grade 11 to 12)	8 Core Learning Areas Language Humanities Communications Mathematics Philosophy Science Social science P.E. and health	Tracks Contextualized Track Subjects				
		Academic		Technical-Vocational Livelihood (TVL)	Sports	Arts & Design
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. GAS 2. STEM 3. ABM 4. HUMSS 5. Pre-baccalaureate maritime 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Home economics 2.Agri-fishery 3.Industrial arts 4.ICT 5.TVL maritime 		
		Work immersion / culminating activity / research				

TLE = Technology and Livelihood Education; GAS = General Academic strand; STEM= Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics; ABM = Accountancy, Business, and Management; HUMSS = Humanities and Social Sciences; ICT = information and communications technology; PE = Physical Education
 Source: Department of Education (n.d.)

Highlights of FGDs with Grade 12 Students

The conduct of FGDs among the first batch of graduating students from the SHS program aimed to substantiate the study’s intention to potentially match student competencies with the available opportunities in the labor market. In each of the 18 schools (i.e., 12 public schools and 6 private schools) that were identified, two separate FGDs were conducted among students from the Academic track and those from the TVL track except for those that have only Academic or TVL track. There are two other tracks in SHS, namely, Sports and ARTS, although most schools only offer Academic and TVL tracks. For these FGDs, school selected a mix of 10 to 15 students coming from different tracks.

Profile of Grade 12 student respondents

The distribution of respondents by age group and sex is presented in Table 9. Data show that nearly two-thirds (61%) are female and a similar proportion (64%) are 18-year-olds. This reflects the well-known dominance of females as one goes up the education ladder in

Table 9. Distribution of respondents by age and sex (%)

Age group	Sex		Total
	Female	Male	
17 years old and under			
<i>Percent distribution by sex</i>	69.1	30.9	100.0
<i>Percent distribution by age group</i>	23.5	16.3	20.7
18 years old			
<i>Percent distribution by sex</i>	62.1	37.9	100.0
<i>Percent distribution by age group</i>	65.5	62.0	64.1
19 years old and above			
<i>Percent distribution by sex</i>	44.0	56.0	100.0
<i>Percent distribution by age group</i>	11.0	21.7	15.2
TOTAL			
<i>Percent distribution by sex</i>	60.8	39.2	100.0
<i>Percent distribution by age group</i>	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Authors' calculations

the Philippines. Males are known to drop out early from school. The expectation is that SHS graduates are of legal employment age of 18.

The plan of students after graduation was very informative. Table 10 shows that three-quarters of Grade 12 students were planning to go to college, another 14 percent intended to work and study, 10 percent were planning to work, and less than 1 percent were undecided. Results also revealed that even for those in TVL track, the proportion planning to go to college was similarly high as those in the Academic track. Understandably, there was a higher proportion in the TVL track who intended to work after graduation than those in the Academic track (19% vs. 4%).

Enrollment in SHS

The K to 12 program added two years in the upper secondary education, allowing students to choose a specialization based on, but not limited to, aptitude, interests, and school capacity. Incoming SHS students were required to take the National Career Assessment Examination (NCAE) prior to the start of school year to guide them in choosing their specialization in SHS and, ultimately, in making future career choices. This test was conducted among Grade 9 students enrolled both in public and private high schools. Schools also conducted orientation sessions to provide students, as well as parents, with an understanding of the two-

Table 10. Plan after graduation by track (%)

Plan after graduation	Track		Total
	Academic	TVL	
Go to college			
<i>Percent distribution by sex</i>	58.9	41.1	100.0
<i>Percent distribution by age group</i>	74.9	76.1	75.4
Work and study			
<i>Percent distribution by sex</i>	88.9	11.1	100.0
<i>Percent distribution by age group</i>	20.5	3.7	13.7
Get a job			
<i>Percent distribution by sex</i>	24.2	75.8	100.0
<i>Percent distribution by age group</i>	4.1	18.7	10.0
Undecided			
<i>Percent distribution by sex</i>	33.3	66.7	100.0
<i>Percent distribution by age group</i>	0.5	1.5	0.9
TOTAL			
<i>Percent distribution by sex</i>	59.3	40.7	100.0
<i>Percent distribution by age group</i>	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Authors' calculations

year curriculum. This study explored the reasons of students for selecting the tracks, strands, and schools.

In choosing a school, the top three reasons provided by the students, regardless of track, were the following: (1) convenience, particularly, the school’s proximity to their place of residence; (2) affordability; and (3) continuity of secondary education in the same school. Most students noted that despite having specific preference on track/strand, they still opted to enroll in the nearest school, primarily out of their own judgment, and also in consideration of their parents’ advice. They particularly considered (i) safety and (ii) ease and minimal cost of transportation. This is why affordability was also a major consideration in selecting schools. Students were inclined to choose public schools over private ones because of free tuition. Despite the voucher program, which is intended for those enrolling in private schools, many of the student-respondents believed that vouchers would not guarantee them of free schooling. For those who enrolled in private schools, some noted that they chose these schools because of the good facilities and smaller class sizes.

In most of the schools visited for this study, an orientation on the K to 12 program was conducted, and NCAE was also facilitated among

incoming SHS students. NCAE results, however, was not the primary consideration in choosing the SHS track and strand. Many students explained that they did not take the NCAE exams seriously so they could not fully rely on its results. Moreover, the NCAE recommendations did not match their interests and plans for college.

Deciding on which strand to pursue was primarily based on personal motivations, specifically, their interest in the area of specialization and the strand's relevance to their future plans after SHS. For TVL students, main consideration for choosing their respective track and strands was employability, that is, if they could easily get a job (e.g., in-demand) should they opt to work after SHS. For Academic students, majority selected their strand depending on the course that they intend to take up in college. The decision point of students in the selection of strand also appeared to be guided by their understanding of strands. Many of the students had a common perception on selected strands: (i) STEM is for those who are interested in pursuing sciences and engineering subjects; (ii) HUMSS for those who will take up Bachelor of Science in Education; (iii) ABM for business management and accountancy; (iv) while GAS is perceived to be a general strand. Because of such perception on GAS, students who were still undecided about the course that they would take up in college, had decided to enroll in the said strand.

In various cases, a significant number of students also explained that they were compelled to choose the next best track/strand in the schools that they have selected. For instance, some students initially enrolled in specific schools because these offered their preferred tracks/strands. However, those tracks/strands were dissolved right after the start of school year, either due to lack of teachers or student enrollees, leaving them with the option to either transfer to another school or just shift to another track/strand. Some students had to settle for another strand because their first choice was not offered in their preferred school. Students, as earlier mentioned, gave more priority to their school of choice than to their preferred track and strand. Other considerations that emerged from the discussions include personal reasons such as conforming to the family's advice and attending the same school with their peers. Despite different sets of reason, the chosen track and strand, in most cases, helped students firm up their college plans and career choices.

Experience in SHS

The K to 12 program promises an enhanced curriculum developed to offer students further education that serves their interests, equips them with specialized skills and knowledge, and makes them at par with their global counterparts. According to the DepEd, graduates of SHS may have greater employment options, including opportunities for entrepreneurial activities. Students are also expected to be better prepared for higher education, with middle-level skills that can be further enhanced to improve job opportunities.

The SHS curriculum was developed to include some subjects from the College General Education curriculum, thus allowing students to have a head start to tertiary education. It offers standardized subjects to ensure that students receive comparable education and training. Specialization in the two tracks is facilitated through subjects with special focus on every track and strand. The curriculum offers three types of subjects. First, “Core” subjects are given to all students regardless of chosen track and strand. Such subjects include Language, Humanities, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, Philosophy, and Physical Education and Health subjects. Students diverge as they take the second type of subjects or the “Applied Track”, given to develop standard competencies among students, albeit implemented in the context of chosen track and strand. Third, the “Specialized Track” subjects, which also set students apart, cover different contents, developing different sets of competencies among students.

In the FGDs, students expressed varied opinions about their SHS experience, including their thoughts about the subjects they had taken, the implementation of SHS curriculum, and effectiveness of the two-year program vis-à-vis its objectives. Most of the time, students would assess importance of subjects depending on their relevance to the track and strand they were enrolled in. Aside from the specialized subjects, both the Academic and TVL students found Entrepreneurship, Oral Communication, and Work Immersion subjects to be very useful.

Students also tend to enjoy and excel in subjects that were related to their area of specialization, especially in the case of most TVL students, who preferred subjects that enhance their practical skills. This is the reason why they believed that Math and Science subjects may be less relevant compared to the specialized subjects.¹² Interest of students,

¹² Specialized subjects are subjects that are specifically available under the track and strand that the students have chosen.

which may not be limited only to their area of specialization, somehow influenced the extent of their appreciation of the subject. On the other hand, there were also subjects that appeared to be challenging for most of the students. Research, in particular, was the most difficult for many of the students. The challenge came from the required rigor and time in finishing research outputs and working in groups. Others also highlighted burden from research costs (e.g., computer and internet rental, printing).

Generally, satisfaction with how subjects were handled was largely dependent on the effectiveness of teachers. Nonetheless, students also had an impression that schools were not completely prepared in this adjustment. Some of the external challenges that were mentioned regardless of track are as follows:

- 1) lack of required facilities (especially for TVL students), textbooks, and materials for demonstration purposes
- 2) dissatisfaction with the teaching methods and class and curriculum management, e.g., combining class sections (TVL and Academic tracks), offering subjects in Grade 12 instead of Grade 11, offering both Research 1 and 2 during the same semester when these are supposed to be conducted in two separate semesters
- 3) teachers handle subjects that are not related to their specialization and sometimes, they handle too many subjects and other tasks, which compromise the quality of teaching as well as students' learning
- 4) having a standardized exam even if teachers cover different contents or topics

Despite challenges in the implementation of the new curriculum, students, in general, thought that SHS allowed them to be trained further in their chosen area of specialization. Most of the students, apart from specialized knowledge and skills, have likewise developed soft skills, such as communication, people skills, critical thinking, positive attitude, teamwork, and work ethic. Although there were a few who felt that the additional two years of schooling could have been spent for working, most still realized the value of SHS in their preparation for tertiary education and in developing their competencies, which could help them should they decide to join the workforce.

Employment prospects

A significant feature of the K to 12 program is the integration of technical-vocational education curriculum in SHS. Section 5 of the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 mandates the DepEd to work mainly with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and TESDA in crafting harmonized basic and tertiary curricula, in consultation with relevant agencies, such as the DOLE and Professional Regulation Commission, student organizations, and school associations. With the expanded curriculum, K to 12 is expected to increase options for HS graduates, not only in pursuing tertiary education, but also in exploring employment and entrepreneurial opportunities.

The FGDs explored the students' perception in terms of their employability upon graduation from SHS. Students were asked to look at the training they had during SHS, evaluate their readiness in joining the workforce and identify the target jobs should they opt to work after SHS. This subsection also investigates the different factors that may persuade students to change their plans after SHS (i.e., factors that would make them go to college or skip college and work).

Most of the students, both under the Academic and TVL tracks, were not entirely confident that they would easily get a job after SHS. Students under the Academic track believed that they would still need to go to college because the training that they received in SHS was not meant to make them more employable, unlike in the case of the TVL students. For those under the TVL track, the answers were mixed. Some believe that they were employable because they were able to develop, at the very least, the basic skills needed to get the jobs that they intend to apply to, with the NC Level II as their proof of competence. In the K to 12 program, graduates can strengthen their employment eligibility by obtaining an NC or a COC. These certifications granted by TESDA imply that aspiring workers have met defined competency standards. Under SHS, TVL students can take the assessment exam for NC, depending on the competencies they have developed. Graduates of the ABM strand, under the Academic track, can likewise apply for NC in Bookkeeping.

However, many of the respondents did not experience the supposed benefits of NC on employability. Although schools intended to facilitate NC application of students, they had failed to set NC assessment or examination schedule for the students prior to their graduation. In addition, students would also need to shoulder the costs of the application and examination fees.

Senior High School and the Labor Market

To some students, acquiring NCs would not guarantee higher employability because prospective employers, especially large firms, would still prefer applicants with college degree and with a few years of work experience. These students were not completely confident about their employability despite the training and education they had in SHS. Overall, while the students felt that SHS has prepared and trained them for both work and further studies, completing tertiary education will give them the competence and confidence they would need to land a job.

As for the actual jobs that they might get after SHS, students felt that employment opportunities for SHS graduates might be limited to entry-level positions, support staff or service-oriented jobs. Hence, they do not expect to earn high salaries should they get hired, although they noted that they should be able to at least get minimum-waged jobs. Some of them knew that jobs may be paid with much higher wages in certain industries, such as BPOs (e.g., call centers), and abroad (e.g., around PHP 100,000 per month). Table 11 lists the prospective jobs that most students mentioned during the FGDs.

Table 11. Lists of prospective jobs, by track

Academic	TVL
Bakery worker/patisserie	Bakery worker/patisserie
Barista	Business owner (e.g., fruit stalls)
Business owner	Call center
Call center/BPOs	Computer technician/assistant
Carpentry (basic)	Encoder
Cashier/saleslady	Factory worker
Encoder	IT-related
Factory worker	Maintenance (e.g., electricians)
Front-desk officer (i.e., receptionist)	Manager
National government/Local government unit worker (e.g., human resources department, DOLE's Special Program for the Employment of Students)	Office worker/clerk/assistant
Office worker/clerk/secretary/assistant (e.g., bookkeeper, photocopier)	Quality control
Online jobs	Saleslady
Part-time coach	Service crew (e.g., fast food chains, hotels, restaurants)
Service crew (e.g., fast food chains, hotels, restaurants)	Website analyst
	Welder/fabricator

TVL = Technical-Vocational-Livelihood; BPO = business process outsourcing; DOLE = Department of Labor and Employment; IT = information technology

Source: Authors' compilation

Meanwhile, Table 12 presents the prospective salaries of the students should they opt to work after SHS. While most would apply to jobs that are related to their respective track and strands, some are willing to take other jobs not aligned with their training as long as they deem that the offered salary is sufficient for their needs. Seemingly, TVL students have higher salary-range expectations than the Academic students. Indeed, during the discussions, the latter tend to be less selective in terms of the salary preference since their intention was to work temporarily (e.g., summer jobs) to save up for their college education. The TVL students, who may have more awareness of the labor market rates for workers who have specialized skills like them, tend to have relatively high expectations.

Aside from certifications earlier mentioned, students were also asked to identify acquired skills and competencies that could possibly match qualification requirements of potential employers. Students recognized the importance of computer literacy and formal writing skills, both in getting a job and in meeting the academic requirements in college. Many of the students had again noted the value of soft skills and how they had developed these from their experiences in SHS classes (e.g., classes in Oral Communication, Personal Development, Immersion program, and Research). Specialized track subjects helped them focus more on the development of specific skills and knowledge that could build up employability. Likewise, the immersion program was particularly useful in preparing the students, especially TVL graduates, by exposing them to actual work environment. In addition to employability, SHS graduates, had a chance to explore entrepreneurial ideas during SHS, some of which the students had planned to use when they start a small business while in college.

Even with skills and qualifications that could increase their employability, most of the students were firm about their plans to pursue higher education because of the perception that college degree raises better employment opportunities and salaries. Nonetheless, there were few, especially among TVL students, who planned to skip college and work right after SHS due to different reasons, including the need to help their parents provide for family needs. Some of them would consider going to college only if the cost of studying, including allowances, would be supported through an external funding (e.g., scholarships).

Table 12. Ranges of prospective salaries of SHS graduates, by specialization/ type of work

Academic	TVL
<i>Service crew:</i>	
Fast food chains: PHP 450 per day	Fast food chains: around PHP 200 per half-day; PHP 60 per hour Restaurants: PHP 500 per day
<i>BPO worker:</i>	
Call centers: PHP 12,000–15,000 per month; PHP 10,000 and below for trainees and parttime	Call centers: PHP 5,000–20,000
Basic carpentry work: PHP 400–500 per day	Shielded Metal Arc Welding (SMAW): Abroad: PHP 120,000–150,000 per month Local: PHP 400–500 per day
<i>Full-time jobs (no specific job):</i>	
NCR rate: PHP 8,000–20,000 per month	NCR rate: PHP 13,000–15,000 per month or PHP 600–700 per day
Provincial rate: PHP 6,600 per month or PHP 300 per day	
Others: PHP 3,000–6,000 per month	Others: At least PHP 8,000–12,000 per month
<i>Minimum-waged jobs:</i>	
NCR rate: PHP 512 or PHP 7,000 per month	NCR rate: PHP 512 per day
Laguna rate: PHP 356 per day	Laguna rate: PHP 356 per day
	Subic rate: PHP 350–380 per day
<i>Summer jobs/Part-time:</i>	
NCR rate: PHP 300 per day; PHP 5,000 per month	NCR rate: PHP 300 per day
Under DOLE’s SPES: PHP 170.45 per day	
<i>TVL Maritime:</i>	
n/a	No definite amount given but can earn in dollars as ordinary seaman, which could go higher depending on the position, e.g., messman
n/a	A student mentioned they could earn about PHP 20,000–30,000 locally, and significantly higher when abroad in a cruise ship
<i>ICT strand (Animation program):</i>	
n/a	Animator abroad: PHP 100,000–150,000 (good opportunities)

SHS = senior high school; BPO = business process outsourcing; TVL = Technical-Vocational-Livelihood; NCR = National Capital Region; PHP = Philippine Peso; ICT = information and communications technology; DOLE SPES = Department of Labor and Employment–Special Program for the Employment of Students; n/a = not applicable

Source: Authors’ compilation

Plans for higher education

As previously discussed, almost all respondents of this study, both from TVL and Academic tracks, planned to enroll in college. Most of them had decided to pursue courses related to their tracks and strands. To some extent, this finding affirms one of the objectives of K to 12, which is to give graduates the same opportunity to prepare for and pursue college education regardless of their chosen tracks. Thus, SHS track only firms up selection of specialization, but it does not prescribe on student's decision whether to go to college or apply for a job after graduation. However, many students, both from Academic and TVL tracks, raised their concern about certain colleges and universities that require a bridging program for off-track SHS students. It was unclear to students how these institutions plan to implement the said program. Other potential issues that were mentioned were as follows: (1) inability to pass the entrance exams of the desired college; (2) financial needs; (3) scholarships that require maintaining grades; (4) difficulty in coping with a course that is unrelated with their strands; and (5) delayed releases of needed requirements from their respective SHS.

An important deciding factor in selecting between private and public higher education institution (HEI) was the cost of college education. Almost all the students were planning to enroll in SUCs or LUCs, while others were planning to apply for scholarship to be able to enroll in a private university. Aside from tuition fees, students applying to SUCs and LUCs also considered the following factors: (1) location, (2) reputation of the school relative to the course they plan to take up (usually based on performance on licensure exams), and (3) availability of their preferred course in the school. It must be noted, however, that the recent free tuition policy was not a primary influence on the students' desire to pursue tertiary education. Moreover, applying for a part-time job or summer job was also an option for others who would need further financial support for their college plans.

Results of the FGDs generally tell that SHS graduates, particularly the first batch, still have high premium for tertiary education. There was a common perception that a college degree can create better employment potentials. Nevertheless, SHS education was believed to be useful and effective in terms of enhancing the skills and expanding knowledge of students. Relative to the implementation of the SHS program, what remains to be addressed is the students' seemingly limited perspective

and understanding of the SHS curriculum and the tracks and strands. Based on some FGD sessions, Academic track students felt that the SHS program tends to benefit TVL students more because these students were provided with more vocational training, whereas Academic students are expected to proceed to college. On the other hand, there is an impression that TVL students will need to catch up should they decide to pursue college education compared to their counterparts in the Academic track. It must be emphasized that, while SHS develops certain level of specialization, the two-year curriculum likewise offers standardized subjects and approaches, which make it comprehensive rather than restrictive. As previously explained, SHS students are expected to have equal footing with college graduates in terms of core knowledge and skills developed during SHS. Thus, regardless of track and strand, graduates should be equipped, at certain level of standards, with the capacity needed for higher education and for employment.

Aside from the SHS curriculum itself, it is also important to note that the students' overall learning experience is highly dependent on the effectiveness of the teachers, availability of facilities, learning materials, and equipment/tools needed especially for the specialized subjects. The alignment of the teachers' background (e.g., specialization, trainings) vis-à-vis their respective teaching assignments is seen as a crucial factor in ensuring that the learning outcomes among students are achieved.

Highlights of the KIIs with the Firms

The discussion of results covers the description of the participating firms and the highlights of the KII with the firms. The KII highlights are divided into the following major parts: (a) firms' understanding of the SHS program; (b) willingness or unwillingness of firms to hire SHS graduates, the type of jobs available for SHS graduates, and qualifications and competencies required; (c) adjustments in hiring policies; (d) trainings needed to improve employability of SHS graduates; (e) whether firms are actually hiring SHS graduates and the types of jobs given to hired SHS graduates; and (f) whether SHS graduates are work-ready.

Profile of participating firms

Thirty-three HR managers/officers from 26 firms were interviewed using the KII guide. The KII covered nine firms in NCR, nine in Cebu,

and eight in CALABARZON. An official from a national chamber of industries was also interviewed (Table 13).

Table 13. Type of firms that participated in the key informant interview

Area/Type of Firms	Number of Firms	Number of Employees	Size Category*
<i>National Capital Region</i>	9		
Wholesale and retail distributor	1	500–600	Large
Real estate developer	1	304	Large
Hotel (four-star)	1	139	Medium
Multi-industry	1	7,600	Large
BPO	1	60,000	Large
Fast food chain	1	5,000	Large
LGUs (city government)	2	8,000–9,000	Large
LGU university	1	750	Large
<i>Cebu Province</i>	9		
Agribusiness	1	1,500	Large
Manufacturing (furniture, ship, marine transport, electronic parts)	2	253–739	Large
Hospitality/hotel	2	106–124	Medium
Hospitality/hotel	2	80–200	Medium to large
Shopping center management	1	180	Medium
Shipping line	1	400	Large
<i>CALABARZON</i>	8		
Private hospital	1	414	Large
Manufacturing (coffee products, coconut products)	2	23–2,000	Small to large
Agribusiness	1	108	Medium
Restaurant	1	9	Micro
Resort (swimming)	2	5–40	Micro to small
Theme park	1	500–1,000	Large
<i>Subtotal</i>	26		
National chamber of industries	1		
<i>Total</i>	27		

BPO = business process outsourcing; LGU = local government unit; CALABARZON = Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon provinces

Note: *Enterprise size according to number of employees based on National Statistics Office (now Philippine Statistics Authority) grouping where large has more than 250 employees, medium has 50–249 employees, small has 10–49 employees, and micro has less than 10 employees.

Source: Authors' calculations

In NCR, respondents included six private companies and three LGUs, which are mostly large firms based on number of employees. The largest firms are a BPO company, two city government offices, a multi-industry company (dealing with financial services, real estate, rural banks, and hotels), and a popular fast food chain. Other participating large firms included a distributor of sports wear and accessories, a real estate developer of midrise condominiums, and an LGU-financed university. One medium-sized hotel also took part in the KII.

In Cebu, five large and four medium-sized companies were involved in the KII. The large companies come from sectors such as agribusiness, manufacturing of high-end furniture, ship building, shipping line, and hospitality/hotel. The medium-sized companies included a builder of yachts and other marine transport, a manufacturer of electronic parts, a hotel, and a management company for a major shopping center.

In CALABARZON region, respondents were a mix of micro-, small-, medium-, and large-sized companies. Large firms that were interviewed included a theme park, a private hospital, and a manufacturer of coconut products for export. Other companies that participated were a medium-sized agribusiness company engaged in layer chicken farming and veterinary supplies distribution, a small manufacturer cum cooperative of coffee products, a small swimming resort, and two micro enterprises (a restaurant and a resort).

Understanding of the SHS program

All respondents have some understanding of the SHS program, the most common of which was the additional two years in HS. They know bits and pieces of information about the program as summarized below.

Most of the respondents understand that the SHS program provides options or choices to students when they graduate. SHS may prepare students for academic work in college or equip them with technical and vocational skills to prepare them for employment or entrepreneurship.

Some are aware of the specific subjects being taught like advance subjects in math, accounting, and research in preparation for college. Others said that the subjects taught are already connected to the kind of job that the students will apply for after graduation and mentioned specializations such as beauty care, massage, electronics, CAD, welding, carpentry, and sewing.

Other firms said that SHS students, regardless of their track and specialization, need to undergo work immersion along their chosen field

of specialization to be able to find a job after graduation. It was noted that some respondents used the term on-the-job training (OJT) and work immersion interchangeably indicating that they have limited knowledge of the nature and purpose of DepEd's work immersion program.

There were employers who view SHS education as equivalent to the educational attainment of second year of college. Others mentioned that the additional two years in HS will allow graduates to reach the legal age of work, which is 18 years old.

A few said that K to 12 is a tool for the country to reach the same level of education and skills that the other countries have. Students will be at par with the educational system of other countries should they continue their studies abroad.

Several firms said that while they have come across SHS education/program through radio and television news, they neither have in-depth knowledge of the curriculum/specialization the SHS graduates have studied nor the skills they have developed throughout their two years in SHS that will fit the industry. They do not know what kind of training the SHS students need from the businesses and what the SHS graduates could possibly offer to the industry in return.

In general, employers know bits and pieces of information about the SHS program. However, the knowledge employers have about the SHS curriculum/specialization as well as the quality of its first batch of graduates are not adequate enough. Some said they need to study and research about SHS to be familiar with the curriculum and program requirements.

Willingness to hire SHS graduates

Since the SHS program has just produced its first batch of graduates, most employers said they need to be exposed to the graduates to know them better, i.e., the knowledge the graduates have acquired, the skills they have developed, and whether the developed skills are enough and appropriate for the current needs of the industry.

When asked if they are willing to hire SHS graduates, almost all of the 26 firms answered yes. Only two said that they will not hire SHS graduates at this time. However, from among those willing to hire, only two companies (from the hospitality/tourism and manufacturing sectors) believed that SHS graduates already have the skills to be employed and employers only need to hone these skills. The rest of those who said yes gave preconditions for hiring such as requiring competencies

and specialized skills, improved work immersion, and offering only low positions due to the nature of their business as well as existing government hiring policies. The preconditions, which somehow indicate uncertainty in hiring the SHS graduates, are congruent/consistent with the reasons (i.e., SHS graduates were not qualified, and SHS graduates lack work experience) given by the employers for unwillingness to hire based on the JobStreet survey in February 2018.

"Will hire SHS graduates."

Firms that said they will hire SHS graduates mentioned the following preconditions before they do so.

SHS graduates should have the specialized skills needed by the industry. Some firms shared that they can accommodate graduates of both Academic and TVL tracks if the graduates have skills on marketing and customer service. One firm can offer positions in the hotel front desk but applicants should have specialized skills in using and operating the OPERA¹³ system. Others mentioned skills on computer, carpentry, construction painting, and quality control. Other firms said there is a chance that SHS graduates will be selected if they show learning and innovation skills, such as analytical and communication skills. Respondents were also looking for personal qualifications such as confidence, maturity, and sense of accountability. Some firms would hire SHS graduates if they are trainable, passionate about learning, assertive, and internally motivated to grow. According to one respondent, success depends more on the behavior or attitude rather than skills.

SHS graduates should have obtained TESDA national certificates. Some employers expressed preference for applicants who have TESDA NC II, i.e., on housekeeping, welding, automotive, and other middle-level skills. For them, the TESDA certificate guarantees actual experience and not just textbook knowledge.

SHS graduates must have undergone longer work immersion program. Most respondents said that 80 to 120 hours of work immersion are not sufficient to learn anything substantial. The minimum hours of immersion may somehow give the students an idea about the industry, but it is not a strong foundation to prepare them for work. Respondents from the hotel and restaurant industry said that the DepEd's minimum

¹³ Oracle hospitality OPERA cloud services is a mobile platform for hotel management and booking system.

hours of work immersion will not pass their standards as they look for graduates who have undergone OJT in other hotels for 300 to 450 hours. A real estate/construction company suggested longer internship of 300 to 700 hours. A manufacturing firm suggested to have a one-month minimum work immersion that will provide students enough experience in all aspects of the job. Another manufacturing company suggested one semester or around 1,800 hours to allow enough time for exposure to the industry. A shipping line said that the DepEd's minimum hours of immersion is for mere familiarization/orientation but not enough for in-depth learnings and readiness for work. For others, internship standard should be a maximum of six months and minimum of three months. Respondents also pointed out that there should be quality experience in the immersion process, i.e., providing actual activities relevant to the students' specialization.

Only positions lower than technical positions will be offered because of the critical/sensitive nature of the jobs in the industry. Because of the critical nature of their business, there are firms that are not yet ready to hire SHS graduates for the technical positions, thus they offer only low-level positions. These are firms involved in construction, which have to ensure the structural safety of residential buildings and offices. A firm involved in providing medical and health services said their workers have to be attentive and careful of the individual needs and complaints of their clients.

Only low positions in the LGUs can be offered due to existing policies of the CSC. LGUs are bound by the CSC-QS, i.e., education and civil service eligibility required for each position/salary grade level in the government. According to the LGU respondents, because of these requirements, they can only give the lowest position levels to SHS graduates, considered within the same level as HS graduates of the old curriculum. Examples of these positions are maintenance technicians, laborer, utility worker, and driver. Even for clerks, the CSC-QS requires, at the minimum, graduates of two-year vocational courses or completers of second year college. As of the time of the KII, the LGUs do not consider the SHS graduates as equivalent to the level of collegiate studies.

Aside from the presented preconditions to hiring, other firms gave other reasons for willingness to hire SHS graduates. A multi-industry firm, an agribusiness firm, and a private hospital said they have no option but to hire SHS graduates as they have foreseen gaps in the number of

college graduates (as a result of the additional two years in HS) in the next few years. One hospital shared that they usually hire nurses for their heart and respiratory technician positions. Since there will be no nursing graduates in the next two years, it will affect their operations. At the time of the interview, the said hospitals were already having difficulty recruiting nurses. They are open to hire SHS graduates provided the graduates have specialization in nursing care, which is a more advanced course than caregiving under the HE strand.

Some employers are not particular whether they will hire SHS or not, as they give premium to work experience related to the position being applied for regardless of educational attainment. Few of them said they will hire SHS graduates as seasonal workers provided the latter pass the exam and interview and perform satisfactorily during the probationary period.

"Will not hire at this time."

One respondent disclosed that they will not hire SHS graduates at this time. They have a standing policy of hiring applicants with college degree because they have to maintain their stature as a university. Unless there is a shift in their strategic direction, i.e., if they become training providers in the future, then they can hire the best of the SHS graduates as technical-vocational trainers. A fast food chain company said they have to revise/update first their internal policies and structure for hiring and discuss these with their Corporate Labor Relations and Legal team. Another company said that while they may hire SHS graduates for their land-based jobs, they could not do the same for their sea-based positions since the qualifications/requirements for the latter are regulated by the Philippine Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA).

Type of jobs available to SHS graduates, qualifications, and salary

Type of jobs available to SHS graduates by sector

The firms' responses on the type of jobs available to SHS graduates were grouped according to the 2012 Philippine Standard Occupational Classification (PSOC), a statistical classification of the different occupational groups of the working population published by the Philippine Statistics Authority.¹⁴ The classification is based on jobs

¹⁴ <https://psa.gov.ph/content/philippine-standard-occupational-classification-psoc>

and skills levels¹⁵ patterned after the 2008 International Standard Classification of Occupation of the International Labour Organization.

Generally, the jobs available to SHS graduates fall under the PSOC's lowest major occupational groups. Most jobs offered by the employers require second-level or middle-level skills such as entry-level positions in the clerical support, crafts and trades, and sales and services (Table 14; see also Appendixes C–E). Many employers, however, also offer elementary occupations that require only first-level skills that are below the skills expected to be acquired by the SHS graduates. Also, it was noted that some companies offer entry-level positions (although very few) that require third-level skill, i.e., ICT and clinical technicians under the associate professionals group.

Clerical support positions such as clerk, bookkeeper, office assistant, receptionist, and call center agent, among others, are offered by firms in sectors such as manufacturing, agribusiness, real estate, hotels and restaurants/resort, shopping mall management, multi-industry, hospital, BPO, and LGUs. Positions for call center agent and customer service representative are numerous in BPO companies.

Crafts and related trades works are mostly available in the manufacturing sector. But these can also be found in other sectors such as agribusiness, wholesale and retail distribution, transport, hospital, and in the LGUs. Jobs such as small machine operator, automotive technician, electrician, welder, plumber, carpenter, and construction painter, among others, fall under this occupational group.

Jobs in sales and services are offered by firms in the hotels and restaurants/resort, wholesale and retail distribution, shopping mall management, BPOs, and agribusiness. Under sales, respondent firms offer jobs such as sales clerk, call center salesperson, cashier, and sales

¹⁵ International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) skill level 3: involves the performance of complex technical and practical tasks that require an extensive body of knowledge in a specialized field; generally require high level of literacy and numeracy and well-developed interpersonal communication skills; studied at a higher education institution for 1-3 years.

ISCO skill level 2: involves performance of tasks such as operating machinery and electronic equipment, driving vehicles, maintenance and repair of electrical and mechanical equipment, and manipulation and storage of information; completion of first to second stage of secondary education with component of specialized vocational education.

ISCO skill level 1: involves performance of simple and routine physical or manual tasks; may require use of hand-held tools or simple electrical equipment; most occupations may require physical strength; completion of primary education may be required.

Table 14. Type of jobs (based on occupational groups) available to SHS graduates by sector

Sectors	Occupational Groups					Elementary Occupation (Skill Level 1)
	Technician and Associate Professional (Skill Level 3)	Clerical Support (Skill Level 2)	Service and Sales (Skill Level 2)	Crafts and Related Trades (Skill Level 2)	Plant and Machine Operators (Skill Level 2)	
Manufacturing (6 firms)	IT technician	Bookkeeper, Assistant bookkeeper, Assistant accountant, Payroll clerk, Office clerk, Stocks encoder, Purchaser/ buyer	<p><i>Sales</i> Sales assistant</p> <p><i>Services</i> Assistant barista</p>	Equipment maintenance technician, Automotive technician, Electrician, Mechanical technician, Welder, Carpenter, Spray painter, Wood sanding, Wood stoning, Wood laminator, Ship-bender, Coffee grinding and blending operator, Coconut dryer operator, Laboratory sampler, Production quality control, Production checker	Driver Logistics driver	Utility/maintenance, Messenger, Hand packer/ sealer, Warehouse helper, Delivery helper, Jute sack sewer, Coco sheller, Coco parer, Sorter, Picker, Coco classifier

Table 14. (continued)

Sectors	Occupational Groups					Elementary Occupation (Skill Level 1)
	Technician and Associate Professional (Skill Level 3)	Clerical Support (Skill Level 2)	Service and Sales (Skill Level 2)	Crafts and Related Trades (Skill Level 2)	Plant and Machine Operators (Skill Level 2)	
Agribusiness (2 firms)		Accounting clerk, Office clerk, Field clerk, Warehouse clerk, Filing and encoding clerk	Sales clerk, Order preparer, Dispatching clerk	Automotive technician, Electrical technician, Welder	Driver, Utility driver, Forklift operator	Utility man, Office cleaner, Messenger, Poultry helper, Packer, Warehouse man, Delivery helper
Wholesale and retail distribution (1 firm)			Inventory assistant, Cashier, Racket stringer, Exercise equipment specialist, Running consultant, Sales clerk	Maintenance/repair technician, Automotive technician	Driver	Messenger, Picker, Warehouse stacker
Real estate (1 firm)		HR support clerk, Documentation clerk, Accounting clerk	Marketing and sales clerk			

Table 14. (continued)

Sectors	Occupational Groups					Elementary Occupation (Skill Level 1)
	Technician and Associate Professional (Skill Level 3)	Clerical Support (Skill Level 2)	Service and Sales (Skill Level 2)	Crafts and Related Trades (Skill Level 2)	Plant and Machine Operators (Skill Level 2)	
Hotel and restaurant/resort (6 firms)	IT technician	Liaison office assistant, Receiving clerk, Front desk officer/ receptionist, Telephone operator, Business center attendant, Purchasing and receiving clerk, Accounting clerk	Sales Cashier, Sales and banquet coordinator, Sales clerk			Messenger, Swimming pool attendant, Public area attendant, Room attendant, Cleaner, Kitchen steward, Packer
Fast food chain (1 firm)		Has to be discussed with Legal Team				
Theme park (1 firm)			Services Hotel housekeeping, Building and grounds caretaker, Bartender, Waiter, Cook			Admission attendant, Guest service attendant, Games and rides attendant, Souvenir shop attendant

Table 14. (continued)

Sectors	Occupational Groups					
	Technician and Associate Professional (Skill Level 3)	Clerical Support (Skill Level 2)	Service and Sales (Skill Level 2)	Crafts and Related Trades (Skill Level 2)	Plant and Machine Operators (Skill Level 2)	Elementary Occupation (Skill Level 1)
Shopping mall management (1 firm)		Recruitment office assistant, Leasing and tenant relations office assistant, Accounting office assistant	Sales Leisure and entertainment center cashier, Sales clerk, Marketing and sales office assistant			
			Services Leisure and entertainment center attendant, Leisure and entertainment center porter			
Multi-industry (1 firm)	IT	Front desk officer, Receptionist, Business center attendant, Telephone operator	Transactions processing, Loan clerk, Sales report and monitoring clerk		Driver	Messenger, Room attendants

Table 14. (continued)

Sectors	Occupational Groups					Elementary Occupation (Skill Level 1)
	Technician and Associate Professional (Skill Level 3)	Clerical Support (Skill Level 2)	Service and Sales (Skill Level 2)	Crafts and Related Trades (Skill Level 2)	Plant and Machine Operators (Skill Level 2)	
Shipping line (transport) (1 firm)	IT		Cashier	Welder, Carpenter, Plumber, Aircon technician	Truck driver, Forklift operator	
Hospital (1 firm)	Nursing assistant, Operating room technician	Receptionist, Admitting/registration clerk, Medical records clerk, Benefits clerk, Clinical and laboratory sections clerk		Electrician, Plumber		
BPO (1 firm)		Call center agents, Customer service representatives	Call center agent (sales)			
LGU (3 firms)		Copying clerk, Data encoding clerk, Administrative assistant	Storekeeper	Maintenance and repair technician (electrician, automotive, refrigeration, air-condition), Mason	Driver, Elevator operator	Messenger, Laborer, Utility worker, Construction laborer, Street sweeper

SHS = senior high school; BPO = business process outsourcing; LGU = local government unit; IT = information technology
 Note: Occupational groups are based on the 2012 Philippine Standard Occupational Classification published by the Philippine Statistics Authority.
 Source: Philippine Statistics Authority (2012)

inventory assistant, among others. Under services, available job positions are hotel housekeeping provider, waiter, bartender, cook, and building and grounds caretaker.

Elementary occupations, which only require first-level skills and completion of primary education, are also offered to SHS graduates by most private companies and the LGUs. The private companies are led by the sectors in manufacturing, hotel and restaurant, agribusiness, and theme park. Positions offered include 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, among others.

Jobs like utility drivers, heavy truck drivers, fork lift operators and elevator operators under the machine operators' occupational group are also offered by companies in the manufacturing, agribusiness, wholesale and retail distribution, multi-industry, and transport sectors as well as in the LGUs.

Even if they are few, there are entry-level positions under the skill level three or associate-level professionals group offered to SHS graduates. The IT technician positions are available in a manufacturing firm, a hotel, a multi-industry firm, and a shipping line. Positions for nursing assistants/technicians and operating room (OR) technicians are now available in a hospital. This is due to the current lack of nursing graduates applying for the positions.

Qualifications and competencies and salaries

This section provides the qualifications and competencies that firms are looking for in a SHS graduate for identified available jobs. In a way, it gives stakeholders an idea on what work and behavioral skills should be developed in the SHS graduates to be employed mostly in middle-level skilled jobs. On the other hand, the information gathered also reflect the hiring policies of the firms/companies interviewed, whether they give premium to competencies or still give more importance to educational attainment.

In general, respondent firms are reluctant to hire fresh Grade 10/JHS completers for any of the available job positions because of the DOLE's policy that penalize the act of employing persons below 18 years old. Most manufacturing companies and one hospital expressed

apprehension of being charged with child labor and child abuse if they hire minors.

As previously mentioned in the hiring of the SHS graduates section, jobs available for SHS graduates are mostly second skills level or middle-level skilled jobs requiring secondary education such as clerical support staff, sales and services workers, machine operators (drivers and related jobs), and crafts and related trades workers. There are also elementary occupations available that require the first (lowest) skills level and primary education. Few jobs are available for associate/technician professionals requiring third skills level and education in HEIs.

For clerical support occupations. One large firm requires college graduates but it can adjust if applicants have work and behavioral skills relevant to the clerical positions. Other large firms are open to hiring SHS graduates but they have to compete with college graduates or graduates of a two-year college course usually preferred by employers. This manner of hiring somehow denies the SHS graduates the chance to be employed despite the fact that the positions require middle level skills only.

Meanwhile, one small firm does not differentiate graduates of SHS, previous fourth year HS, and JHS/Grade 10 completers because it gives importance to personal traits and skills (i.e., industrious, dependable, trainable, and interested in work). In this case, SHS graduates are still perceived to be on equal footing and have no comparative advantage over the other two (JHS completers and graduate of four-year HS) in terms of learning and behavioral skills developed. Likewise, one large BPO company does not distinguish among graduates of college, SHS, and JHS because they provide specialized training to new hires anyway.

A large agribusiness firm requires TESDA NC for its entry-level clerk position. Other respondents require OJT and internship that are far beyond the requirements of the work immersion for SHS students. Hotels prefer those with work experience and with skill in OPERA system and require 300–450 hours of OJT for their clerical jobs. A real estate firm would hire an applicant who had 300–700 hours of internship in relevant field. Respondents also look for skills and personal traits such as trainability, maturity, and good communication skills.

Still, one small manufacturer said it will hire SHS graduates on a part-time basis only to perform manual encoding on their ledgers.

For job positions in the sales sector. One wholesale and retail distributor said that the SHS graduates should have core competence in marketing

and customer service, product knowledge, good communication skills, and ability to learn fast. Hotels are looking for applicants who are confident, computer literate, good in guests-handling, and with good communication skills.

In the services sector. SHS graduates, according to respondents from hotels and restaurants, should have TESDA certificate and skills on table setup, proper buzzing, operating kitchen equipment, and others. One microenterprise said that it does not distinguish among graduates of SHS, the old four-year HS, and JHS/Grade 10 completers as long as they know their job functions and have multitasking ability. Employers are also looking for individuals who are trainable, persevering, and have good communications and listening skills.

For crafts and related trades. Several companies (shipping line, wholesale and retail distributor, hospital, LGUs) require TESDA certificates, i.e., NC II. However, one medium-sized electronics company requires 800–900 hours of practicum to qualify for the job while a large agribusiness firm looks for individuals who have gained equivalent to two-year college course with TESDA certificate/NC. While they are open to hiring SHS graduates, they demand qualifications above what the jobs require and what the SHS graduates have. In other companies (i.e., manufacturing sector), SHS graduates have to also compete with graduates of the old four-year HS course who have gained work experience and have worked their way up inside the firms.

Meanwhile, a large shipbuilding company does not differentiate among SHS graduates, JHS/Grade 10 completers, graduates of two-year/vocational courses, and those with college-level education because all new recruits will have to pass thorough training in the company's training center and earn a special certificate/license. The TESDA license is not adequate according to the company's high and internationally acknowledged standards. Thus, applicants must be highly trainable, physically and emotionally fit, and with good communication skills.

A medium-sized agribusiness company said that for simple works like spot welding, it may hire a SHS graduate but HS undergraduate or even an elementary graduate may qualify as long as the individual is trainable.

Other skills and traits mentioned for these types of jobs include being open to learning, mature, responsible, able to deal with people, and can easily understand instructions.

For drivers and related jobs. Respondents look for applicants with license and prefer those with experience and ability to deal with people.

Elementary occupation. As mentioned above, this refers to simple and routine manual tasks, most often requiring only physical strength as well as completion of primary education. Some large firms would consider SHS graduates, despite being overqualified, for these positions. A large manufacturing company said it has no choice but to offer these jobs to SHS graduates because there are no other job positions available in the firm. A large hospitality company does not distinguish between Grade 10/JHS completers and SHS graduates and is open to hiring both for park-based attendant jobs. On the other hand, a micro-enterprise with less than 10 workers said that because jobs under this category are simple and do not require special skills, these do not fit the SHS graduates and it may just accept HS undergraduate or elementary graduate as long as they are computer literate and can deal with customers.

Likewise, LGUs, while hesitant to offer low-level and menial jobs to SHS graduates, have to follow qualifications based on what the CSC-QS requires. A concern brought up by the LGU respondents was the confusion in the interpretation of “HS graduate” as written on the CSC-QS, whether there is a differentiation between graduates of SHS and the old four-year HS curriculum and how the educational level of JHS completers will be interpreted. This has policy implications on qualifications/requirements imposed by the CSC on hiring government employees.

A shipping line has the same predicament as the LGUs. It could not offer sea-based job positions because the functions of these positions and corresponding requirements are regulated by the MARINA. This may also entail a review in the issuance of the Seaman’s Book as a MARINA requirement for sea-based positions.

For associate level professionals/technicians. While degree holders are required, a few companies said they can adjust to accommodate SHS graduates. For IT technicians, SHS graduates must be willing to undergo in-depth and longer internship program that fit the needs of the concerned industry. For nursing assistant/technician and OR technician positions in a hospital, the latter is willing to hire SHS graduates, instead of nursing graduate-board passers. As suggested by the respondent firms, DepEd and other concerned authorities may explore developing a course (with TESDA certificate) that is more

advanced than the caregiving course under the TVL track/HE strand and comparable to the nursing care course. But this has to pass the requirements set by the Department of Health (DOH).

With regard to salary, firms, in general, give the regional daily minimum wage for entry-level positions, which also vary by region and sector. Meanwhile, call agents in NCR are offered PHP 15,000–18,000 monthly salary. A large ship building company in Cebu offers PHP 9,000–10,900 monthly salary for crafts and related trades workers.

Appendix C–E shows the type of jobs available and the corresponding qualifications and salaries for each firm/company in NCR, Cebu, and CALABARZON that participated in the KII.

Adjustments made/to be made in hiring policies

Some hiring policies of the companies/firms emerged during the discussion on qualifications and competencies. Some prefer college graduates or college level for middle-level skilled jobs. Others do not differentiate SHS graduates from JHS completers and the previous four-year HS graduates. LGUs are restricted by the QS set by the CSC while shipping lines have to follow MARINA regulations for recruiting sea-based personnel. These hiring policies/practices tend to impede employment of SHS graduates so that adjustments have to be made to help SHS graduates get employed.

Following is a summary of the responses made by the respondents when asked if they are willing to adjust their hiring policies for SHS graduates. Most of the firms interviewed disclosed that they have to discuss yet within their organization the hiring policies for SHS graduates. Some private firms have to consult their mother organizations. Meanwhile, the LGUs will have to follow the QS set by the CSC. Few firms said they are willing to adjust or make some changes in their hiring policies.

Willingness to adjust hiring policies and guidelines

Retail businesses can adjust their hiring policies for SHS graduates since they have already been giving more weights to skills and attitude that will fit the job rather than educational attainment. For example, they prefer applicants with ability to communicate and deal with people and with ability to thrive in sales.

Other firms will have adjustments in the qualifications of their support staff but they are not yet ready to do the same for the technical positions. One hospital was willing to hire SHS graduates for nursing assistant positions whose track/specialization is related to nursing care but more advanced than caregiving. But this has to be accepted and approved by the DOH. Some firms indicated that they will now be specific in posting for vacant positions, i.e., “at least SHS graduate” specifying the track/strand choice.

Has to follow government QS and regulations (CSC and MARINA). The LGU does not have its own hiring policies but follows the QS set by CSC. According to the respondents, positions available for SHS graduates would mostly be first-level positions (entry level) that fall under Salary Grade (SG) 4 or 5, which require “HS graduates”. There is a need, however, to clarify whether the educational requirement refers to the previous four-year HS graduate, the SHS graduate, or JHS completer. Likewise, there is a need to clarify if the additional two years of SHS is considered equivalent to a second year level in college. The CSC, together with other concerned agencies, may have to clarify these matters to prevent confusion among the HR departments in government.

As described in CSC-QS, HS refers to both SHS graduates and graduates of the four-year HS prior to K to 12 (or JHS completer in the current curriculum). Moreover, SHS is not considered part of collegiate studies. CSC, together with DepEd, TESDA, and CHED may review and adjust the educational requirements for first-level positions in the civil service to consider the SHS graduates. CSC may also have to conduct information dissemination not only across national government agencies but also across all LGUs nationwide.

On the hiring of sea-based workers, the respondent firm said that it depends on the approval of MARINA. DepEd and MARINA may have to review the requirements on giving licenses to sea-based personnel in consideration of SHS graduates.

Has to wait for the results of the pilot hiring. Policy adjustments will be made after the ongoing pilot hiring of SHS graduates in one large BPO firm. Data will be gathered to assess the SHS graduates’ work performance and retention in the company.

Has to be discussed yet within the organization. Some firms have not yet discussed this within the organization. Others said they need to consult their top management and/or their legal team. Others said it will

depend on the hiring guidelines of their mother company. If the mother company will not implement it yet, they may propose it. For now, if SHS graduates apply, they will be placed equally with the graduates of the old four-year HS curriculum. The DepEd and other stakeholders may see these responses of the employers as an opportunity to improve strategies in getting their support for the SHS program.

Trainings and related assistance to make SHS graduates employable

Respondents perceive that the following trainings/assistance will contribute to make SHS graduates employable: providing work immersion experience to SHS students, in-house training for SHS graduates who have been recruited, and making training assistance to the SHS program as part of the firm's corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Entering into an agreement with schools for students' work immersion.

Some firms provide and continue to support work immersion experience to SHS students by entering into an agreement with particular schools. Nine out of the 26 firms interviewed had the experience of handling work immersion for SHS students who are in the Academic track (STEM, HUMSS, and ABM) and TVL track (ICT and SMAW). Below is a summary of the initial experiences including insights and suggestions shared by some firms.

1) Firm 1 (Real estate): TVL, Drafting and design

Three students from a public school in NCR, who chose the TVL track specializing in drafting and design, applied for work immersion in the company. The students had the actual experience of using auto CAD and other computer software in making technical designs and illustrations. The respondent perceives that the school requirement of 120 hours is not enough for in-depth exposure of students to skills application and to build traits like patience, maturity, and confidence in doing work. The respondent suggested that the duration of immersion be extended to 300-700 hours or two to six months. Also, the company benefited from the immersion experience as it became a training opportunity for some of its personnel on how to do mentoring.

2) Firm 2 (Manufacturing): Academic track, ABM strand

This firm in CALABARZON accepted 30 SHS students aged 17-22 years old with ABM strand choice from one school. They

arranged five students per batch where the work immersion for each batch ran for about one week. It was emphasized that having few students per batch aimed to prevent disruption in the production line and also to give space and time for the SHS students to learn. They were rotated in the different sections, i.e., production line in coffee processing, simple bookkeeping like manual encoding in ledgers, and preparing and serving coffee drinks (as assistant to the barista) in the firm's small coffee shop. The respondent said that the immersion provided learnings that will help them prepare in doing business and will make them realize and appreciate the value of work—that they have to work hard to be able to run a business. They also learned the do's and don'ts of applying for work. Selected workers in the firm observed the performance of SHS students and corrected them on the spot. Toward the end of the immersion, SHS students were interviewed. Students were then assigned in other firms like the Water District office and the LGU office, to complete the minimum immersion duration of two weeks.

3) **Firm 3 (Furniture-making company): Academic track, ABM strand**

The firm had an agreement with a private school to provide 80 hours of immersion in bookkeeping to one SHS student in the Academic track. They required the student to make calendar notes of what she did and what she learned. After the work immersion, the firm gave a certificate of completion. The school sent a three-paged form for the firm to assess work and behavioral skills related to the student's specialization. The conduct of the immersion was through a special request only and the firm is still uncertain about accepting applicants in the future. A national HS in the area attempted to engage the firm in providing exposure to Grade 12 students in carpentry works but the firm did not accept the students due to safety concerns. The presence of carpentry machines in the production area may cause accidents and jeopardize the safety of the students. If the company has prepared a training program for SHS students, then it is willing to accept students in the furniture design department. Its action will be in cooperation with a specific economic zone, which also involves other locators.

The firm plans to train new young labor entrants as most of its workers are getting old and will soon be retirees. Its staff noted, however, that the current generation does not prefer this kind of industry.

4) **Firm 4 (Shipping line): TVL track, specialization in MARITIME**

The firm provided immersion to 100 SHS students specializing in maritime from one school. Students joined two interisland voyages where each complete voyage (to and from) ran for about 18 to 20 hours. In that length, the exposure was too limited and it will most likely be just familiarization, without any hands-on training. At the same time, the respondent noted how the limited work immersion hours became a consideration for company policies on confidentiality. It was not clear why the students only joined two voyages as the respondent did not see the memorandum of agreement between the school and the company. According to the respondent, they have not received feedback from the university after that.

5) **Firm 5 (Hospital): Academic track, ABM strand**

Thirty-seven (37) SHS students under the ABM strand from four schools in CALABARZON had work immersion last April 2018. The immersion ran for two weeks (80 hours) in various sections of the hospital such as accounting, HR, nursing service, and registration. Due to the short period of the immersion, deployment of each student was limited in one section and there was no rotation of work assignments. There was less time to supervise and monitor the students because the employees were busy with their own work. The respondent suggested longer immersion, i.e., 1–2 months, for students to absorb more learnings. Signed agreement with schools indicated that the firm is willing to continue providing opportunity for work immersion to SHS students. The firm is also open to expand to other tracks.

6) **Firm 6 (Theme park): TVL track, Home Economics strand specializing in Tourism and Academic tracks, HUMSS and ABM strands**

Around 130 students with academic (HUMSS and ABM) and predominantly TVL (HE-tourism) track choices had work

immersion from November 2017 to March 2018 in three batches. The firm viewed this endeavor as part of their CSR. Fresh from attending the SHS Work Immersion Forum organized by the DepEd in partnership with the industries in 2017, the firm prepared a training plan to systematize the conduct of its work immersion. Track choices and specialization were aligned with assigned units: (a) students in the tourism strand were park-based; (b) those in the ABM strand were assigned in corporate planning and office work; and (c) those in the HUMSS strand were tasked to interact with children guests. Students were oriented before they were deployed to their respective assignments to avoid culture shock, i.e., on how to greet the guests, what to deliver. Due to the limited time of 80 hours, they were only confined in one section and did not have the chance to go around the different sections of the company. Duration of immersion was only one and a half months and students reported two to three times a week. Schedule was only from 9 am to 4 pm. They also asked the parents' consent if there were events that would require them to stay beyond 4 pm. The firm shouldered the cost of T-shirts for the immersion graduation.

During the immersion, the firm noted that some students lack written and verbal communication skills while others have behavioral problems, i.e., "*hindi maayos makipag-usap*". But there were also some positive traits observed. Some were enthusiastic in dealing with people while some were good in sales as they were able to sell annual passes. They realized there are interesting work opportunities inside the theme park and some expressed interest to work in the firm after graduation while waiting for their college classes in August.

7) **Other firms**

In the LGU offices in NCR, there were situations where students were assigned to various departments without consideration of the students' chosen track/strand and specialization. This happened because there were too many students, especially from public high schools, to accommodate at one time.

One hotel in Cebu enforces a 450-hour minimum requirement for "OJTs" and SHS students usually back out. The respondent believes that this requirement is essential for

the employers especially if the students will be considered in the short listing of job applicants in the future. With the current work immersion of only 80–120 hours, the respondent hoped for its extension to allow more time for the students to apply and test their skills and lengthen their exposure in the industry. From the respondent's understanding, the students may already have an idea about the industry but it is still not a strong foundation for them to be prepared for employment.

Firms suggested that the immersion must show the complete cycle of work to enable the students to learn all the aspects of work from top to bottom. For students whose track choice is related to food and beverage (F&B), the curriculum must enable students to learn more about food etiquette, courtesy, and how to interact with people as well as finetune their skills on proper table setting, and serving of food and drinks to the guests. The immersion must also emphasize the value of time management in carrying out the different activities of work.

In-house training for recruits. Some firms provide experiential (not classroom) type of training programs to recruits, i.e., personality development, core values, and confidence-building. In other firms, newly hired employees are trained on specific tasks before placed in specific assignments, i.e., front office and guest assistance, telephone operation, housekeeping (how to use cleaning chemicals, doing the laundry). Large firms have designated units that give formal or informal training while micro and small establishments provide mostly informal training (showing how to do things and pointing out errors on the spot).

Long-term training programs as part of the firms' CSR. Several firms were willing to partner with the government in providing in-depth apprenticeship program for SHS, i.e., on customer care, sales, and marketing. In this case, there is an opportunity for the company to gauge the capacity of the students and later on, find jobs/positions for them. It is important for the SHS program planners/developers to consult and involve the industries.

Few firms said they have no training programs for SHS graduates but expressed interest in including trainings for SHS students as part of their CSR, focusing on long-term programs to help develop the potentials of SHS students.

SHS graduates who applied and were hired

Majority of the firms (18 out of 26) interviewed have not yet received job applications from SHS graduates. Graduates were not applying because of the following reasons: firms have no vacant positions in the first place; SHS graduates, regardless of tracks, wanted to go to college first; SHS graduates were hesitant to apply because they felt they are not yet prepared to work; and graduates have no confidence to compete with college graduate applicants.

Firms that received job applications revealed that SHS graduates apply for jobs for financial reason, i.e., they need to help augment family income. Other graduates are no longer interested to continue schooling because they think they are already old to go to college (for 21 to 22 year-old graduates).

Of the few companies (8 out of 26) that received applications, two did not hire SHS graduates. One company preferred college and vocational graduates over SHS-TVL graduates for CAD operator positions while the other establishment had no vacancies. The remaining six firms that hired SHS graduates were from the BPO, manufacturing, shopping center management, and hospitality (theme park, resort, and restaurant) sectors (Table 15).

SHS graduates were hired mostly as elementary occupation workers (warehouse helper, leisure and entertainment center attendant, ground cleaner/maintenance man, park-based and guest service attendant, and picker). Others were placed as clerical support workers (call agent, encoding clerk, receptionist), crafts and related trades workers (production operator), and sales and services workers (call center sales person).

Matching of jobs with chosen track/strand were observed, i.e., those in home economics track as waiters, or those in tourism track as guest service attendants. There were graduates in the TVL-electronics track hired as ground cleaners/maintenance. There were also JHS completers who competed with SHS graduate applicants and were hired as park-based attendants in a theme park.

An electronics manufacturing company in Cebu absorbed SHS graduates who have undergone a special (five-month) apprenticeship in their firm. They were hired as encoding clerks, direct operators (crafts and trades), and warehouse helpers.

Table 15 . Number of SHS graduates who applied and were hired by firms

Positions Applied For	Number of Applicants	Number of Hired applicants	Salary Given (in PHP)
<i>NCR (9 firms)</i>			
<i>BPO (1)</i>			
Clerical support, and sales and services (Voice and chat agents)	< 100	10	15,000–18,000/month
	Competed with college graduates and Grade 10 completers; those with call center experience fared better regardless of educational attainment		
8 firms	none	n/a	n/a
<i>Cebu (9 firms)</i>			
<i>Manufacturing, electronics (1)</i>			
Clerical support (encoding clerks)	Did not apply; absorbed and hired after a special five-month apprenticeship with firm	20	Regional minimum wage
Crafts and related trades (direct operators)			
Elementary occupation (warehouse helpers)			
<i>Shopping center management corporation (1)</i>			
Elementary occupation (leisure and entertainment center attendants)	10	1 2 were offered jobs but only 1 got accepted	Regional minimum wage
<i>Manufacturing (furniture) (1)</i>			
Technician/associate professional (CAD operators)	TVL: 10	None; college and vocational graduates were hired	
6 firms	None	n/a	n/a

Senior High School and the Labor Market

Table 15 . (continued)

Positions Applied For	Number of Applicants	Number of Hired applicants	Salary Given (in PHP)
<i>CALABARZON (8 firms)</i>			
<i>Resort (1)</i>			
Clerical support (receptionist)	IT: 1	1 already left the firm to look for IT-related work elsewhere	Regional minimum wage of PHP 300 plus free lunch
	ABM:1	1 was accepted but did not proceed; preferred to work in Manila	
Services (waiters)	Food and beverage: 4	4 worked only for 1½ months to gain experience then left to apply to other companies	Regional minimum wage of PHP 300 plus free lunch
Elementary occupation (ground cleaners/maintenance)	Electronics: 10	10 worked for 1½ to 2 months only and then left the firm to continue college	Regional minimum wage of PHP 300 plus free lunch
<i>Restaurant (1)</i>			
Elementary occupation (Maintenance)	1	Not hired because there was no vacancy	
<i>Theme Park (1)</i>			
Elementary occupation (guest service attendants)	Tourism: 5	5 worked from April to July 2018 while waiting for the start of college classes in August; intend to pursue college)	Minimum wage

Table 15 . (continued)

Positions Applied For	Number of Applicants	Number of Hired applicants	Salary Given (in PHP)
Elementary occupation (park-based attendants)	JHS completers < 10	<10 Will not continue schooling because families lack money	
<i>Manufacturing (1)</i>			
Elementary occupation (picker)	30	10 Vacant positions were limited; firm did not accept those who just wanted to save money for college; firm needs people who will stay	Minimum wage
4 firms	None	n/a	n/a

SHS = senior high school; PHP = Philippine Pesos; NCR = National Capital Region; BPO = business process outsourcing; CALABARZON = Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon provinces; IT = information technology; ABM = Accountancy, Business, and Management; TVL = Technical-Vocational-Livelihood
 Source: Authors' compilation

Most of the firms give the regional minimum wage. A BPO company offers PHP 15,000–18,000 for call agents at entry level. Few small establishments provided free meals.

One company in NCR is currently piloting the hiring of SHS graduates. Out of the less than a hundred SHS graduates who have applied and competed with college graduates, ten percent were hired. Accepted applicants have not started working yet (as of the time of the interview),

as they will have to undergo training, with pay, first. They will be on standard probationary period for six months and their performance will be evaluated on their fifth month. One concern of the firm though, is that some of the trainees may opt to resign to study in college. This is the reason why the firm will gather data and observe the trend in performance and work retention of SHS graduates. Results of the pilot study, expected by the first quarter of 2019, will be used as basis for hiring policies for SHS graduates.

The issue on work retention was also brought up by other firms that have experienced hiring SHS graduates. They observed that most of the hired SHS graduates worked only for a short period of time, from one and a half months up to four months. Most of them proceeded to college while a few just gained experience and hopped to other companies for higher compensation. One large company from the hospitality sector shared that SHS graduates are quick to decide to leave the job without formal resignation and most likely to go on absence without leave (AWOL). They have a tendency for company hopping as they wanted to have high salary instantly. For the firm, this is a waste of time and resources spent in recruitment (e.g., screening, medical expenses, processing of documents), orientation, and training. The firm suggested that work ethics, values, and related concerns be emphasized in the SHS curriculum.

General comments on work-readiness of SHS graduates

When asked if SHS graduates are work-ready, there were more firms that said SHS graduates are not yet ready. A few said graduates are work-ready while others still need to gather data to gauge work readiness of the graduates.

Not work-ready

More firms perceive SHS graduates as not work-ready. They raised concerns on the inadequate technical and behavioral skills of SHS graduates as well as lack of length and quality of work immersion. These comments were consistent with the preconditions for hiring SHS graduates discussed on pages 38–40.

In spite of the work immersion completion, students still lack work skills. With regard to behavior, students were playful at work and were often caught using their cellphones. There is still a need to

work on the values of the students. Because of their young age (mostly 17–18 years old), they lack maturity and perseverance in performing work, and they might not be able to withstand the working conditions, i.e., in manufacturing companies. Further, most of them are not yet assertive.

The work immersion hours (80 hours) they completed is not enough to prepare SHS graduates for employment. It is just an observation phase especially in the LGU offices where there was not much work assigned to students aside from filing and encoding.

Yes, work-ready

Only few firms gave favorable responses. They said that millennials are technology-savvy and can easily pace with the latest trends and innovations. One firm in wholesale and retail distribution articulated that there are markets for SHS graduates not only locally but outside the country. Said firm added that SHS graduates are not less competent and they are not “second class citizens”. In general, this is a trial-and-error period and there are still areas for improvement.

In CALABARZON, micro business establishments interviewed articulated that SHS graduates are work-ready for jobs that require simple routine skills such as cleaning and waiting. Manufacturing companies thought that SHS graduates are work-ready but only for positions in the production line and selected clerical positions. Two firms expressed that they have workers who are elementary graduates only, so hiring SHS graduates is much better. But it is a waste of resources to hire SHS graduates only to become cleaners or laborer.

Others said that SHS graduates are work-ready if the track/specialization they followed matches the type of jobs available. Those who had TVL or Academic-ABM track are work-ready if they obtained NC II from TESDA.

Do not know yet

Some firms said that it is too early to assess if the graduates are work-ready since the program just produced the first batch. The firms have yet to participate in the work immersion program and be exposed to the K to 12 program and students. They have no benchmark data yet as to the level of ability and performance of K to 12 graduates particularly during work immersion.

Summary and Recommendations

Summary

The enactment of RA 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 added two years to basic education. One of the rationales offered by proponents of the law is that SHS graduates can either work or engage in entrepreneurial activities if they choose to do so. This study assesses the likelihood of achieving these employment and entrepreneurship objectives of the program by examining the experience of Grade 12 graduating students and the views of firms about the labor market prospects of the SHS graduates. It does this by (i) looking into the SHS curriculum and the competencies developed, (ii) identifying the types of jobs that fit the Grade 12 graduates, (iii) gathering the private sector perspective on the jobs available and appropriate for the Grade 12 graduates, and (iv) providing policy recommendations for the improvement of the SHS curriculum.

Based on the enrollment data for SY 2017–18, there are 11,087 schools offering SHS, 58 percent of which are public. There are 2.7 million SHS students, 1.2 million of which are Grade 12 students. This level of enrollment was more than what was expected. None of the schools offered all the eight strands and majority offered only one strand. The shortage would likely be more on the number of strand offerings rather than the number of schools. The most popular among the eight strands was GAS, closely followed by TVL. There were more female than male SHS students depicting the well-known phenomenon in the Philippines that, on average, male students drop out of school earlier than female students.

The FGDs with Grade 12 students were conducted in 18 schools in NCR, Region III, and Region IV-A, 12 of which were public. The profile of the Grade 12 respondents revealed that most of the students were 18 years old (64%) and majority (61%) of them were female. Results also confirmed that most of the students were planning to go to college even for those in the TVL track. The FGDs revealed that majority of the students intended to proceed to college including those in the TVL track. In fact, most students revealed they will apply or have already applied for college. The results revealed that school and track selection was based on any of the following factors: (a) convenience, (b) personal preferences, (c) affordability, or (d) decision by parents. The students

expressed appreciation of the additional two years for providing them with the opportunity to assess what courses to take up in college, helping to improve their character/attitude, and equipping them with additional knowledge and skills for fields they want to specialize in. Their appreciation was found to be largely dependent on the quality of teaching, the relevance of the subjects taught, and the learning resources and facilities available. The students revealed that they are not very confident that they will get a job after SHS. Even those who gained NC for the TVL strand feel that companies would still prefer to hire college graduates. Most of the respondents expected minimum wage salary if they get hired.

The KIIs were conducted with 33 human resource managers/officers from 26 firms in NCR, CALABARZON, and Cebu. The types of firms that participated span the services, manufacturing, agribusiness sectors, and local government units. It also covered large, medium, small, and micro enterprises.

The highlights of the KIIs revealed that the firms interviewed lack in-depth knowledge of the SHS program. They knew bits and pieces of information about the program; however, the knowledge they have about the SHS curriculum and the profile/quality of its first batch of graduates were not adequate enough. Firms articulated that they must be exposed to the graduates to know them better, i.e., the knowledge the graduates have acquired, the skills they have developed, and whether the skills they have developed are adequate and appropriate for the current needs of the industry.

There was reluctance among most of the respondent firms to hire SHS graduates. While most of firms are willing to hire SHS graduates, they gave preconditions for hiring, such as required competencies and specialized skills, longer and more in-depth work immersion, and giving only low positions in their company. These preconditions were congruent with the reasons (SHS graduates are not qualified, SHS lack work experience) cited by the JobStreet survey report on unwillingness of firms to hire SHS graduates. The reluctance to hire may also be linked to the firms' lack of in-depth knowledge of the SHS program. Further, more firms perceived SHS graduates as not work-ready validating the PCCI's concern that the first batch of SHS graduates might not still be ready to work in a professional workplace. Firms' perception on work readiness of SHS graduates may contribute to their reluctance to hire the graduates.

The type of jobs available for SHS graduates was mostly entry-level positions requiring middle level skills such as clerical support staff, crafts and trade workers, machine operators, and sales and services workers. But many employers offered elementary occupations that only require completion of primary education and skills below the middle-level skills. Hiring policies of the companies/firms surfaced from the discussion on qualifications and competencies. Some firms preferred college graduates or college level for middle-level skilled jobs. Others did not differentiate SHS graduates from JHS completers and the previous fourth year HS graduates and placed SHS graduates on equal footing with them and having no comparative advantage over the other two (JHS completers and graduate of four-year HS) in terms of learning and behavioral skills developed. LGUs, restricted by the CSC-QS, gave some low-level and menial jobs to SHS graduates. LGUs also brought up concerns about the interpretation of “high school graduate” as written on the CSC-QS and how the educational level of JHS completers be will be interpreted. This has policy implications on qualifications/requirements imposed by the CSC on hiring government employees. Likewise, shipping lines had to follow MARINA regulations for recruiting sea-based personnel. Other firms required OJT and internship that are far beyond the requirements of the work immersion for SHS students. These hiring policies/practices tended to impede employment of SHS graduates and adjustments have to be made to help SHS graduates get employed.

Few companies offered SHS graduates the associate-level professional/technician positions such as IT technicians, nursing assistants, and operating room technicians. While degree holders are required, these few companies were willing to adjust hiring policies to accommodate SHS graduates, i.e., requiring in-depth and longer internship program for IT technicians and exploring the development of a course (with TESDA certificate) for nursing care, which is more advanced than the caregiving course under the TVL track/HE strand.

Firms shared their experiences and insights on the conduct of work immersion. Most of them perceived that the minimum school requirement of 80 hours is not enough for in-depth exposure of TVL students to skills application and in honing behavioral skills/traits, i.e., patience, maturity, and confidence in doing work. The exposure was too limited, and it will most likely be just familiarization. There was less time for firms to supervise and monitor the students because the

employees were busy with their own work. Most respondents likened immersion to OJTs and internships of college students. Some private firms emphasized having few students per batch to prevent disruption in operations/production and allow space and time for the SHS students to learn. LGUs, however, have contrary situations wherein there were too many students, especially from public schools, to accommodate all at one time, resulting in deployment to various LGU departments without consideration of the students' chosen track/strand and specialization. The issue on exposure and hands-on training in the maritime industry vis-à-vis safety of minors and disclosure of confidential information surfaced in providing immersion experience for TVL-maritime students. One firm raised the challenge for the young generation to take interest in furniture making because current workers are getting old. Firms hope for the extension of the current work immersion hours to allow more time for the students to apply and test their skills and lengthen their exposure in the industry.

KIIs with firms confirmed the information gathered from the literature review, that there are only very few companies hiring SHS graduates. They reasoned out that SHS graduates were not applying for jobs because of the following reasons: firms have no vacant positions in the first place; SHS graduates (regardless of tracks) wanted to go to college first; SHS graduates were hesitant to apply because they felt they are not yet prepared to work; and graduates have no confidence to compete with college graduate applicants. The KII results added that SHS graduates were hired mostly as elementary occupation workers (warehouse helpers, leisure and entertainment center attendants, ground cleaner/maintenance man, park-based and guest service attendants, and picker). Some firms said this is because they have no vacancies and the only positions available are those under the elementary occupations. It could also be possible that because there is reluctance in hiring SHS graduates, only the lower positions are offered. It was also validated that SHS graduates were hired as call agents by BPO companies.

The issue on work retention surfaced from the firms' experience in hiring SHS graduates. Most firms that hired SHS graduates noticed the latter's tendency to work only for a short period either because they will proceed to college or they just wanted to gain experience and hope to transfer to higher paying companies. According to the respondents, this is a waste of time and resources spent in recruitment, orientation, and training. This is the reason why one large company is piloting the hiring

of SHS graduates to gather data on the graduates' work performance and retention, the results of which will serve as basis for adjustments in hiring policies.

Recommendations

While it may be too early to be gauging the performance of the SHS program, particularly the performance of its graduates in the labor market, the study has uncovered areas for improving the implementation of the program focusing on this objective. Based on the results of the FGDs with grade 12 students and the KIIs with human resources managers/officers of firms as well as the review of the literature and secondary data, the following recommendations are put forward.

Improve quality and standardization of teaching SHS subjects

It has been observed that due to lack of needed resources, the quality of teaching SHS subjects is dependent on the ability and initiative of teachers to find needed learning materials. It is noted in the interviews that the students' extent of appreciation of the program is dependent on the quality of teaching, the relevance of subject taught, and the learning resources and facilities available. This highlights the importance of continuously improving the quality and standardization of teaching in SHS. The aim is to raise quality of teaching regardless of the ability and initiative of teachers. This may have been part of the program's birth pains, but this should not be allowed to extend beyond the initial years of implementation. Even highly-able teachers will eventually be hampered by the lack of needed teaching materials.

Highlight the longer-term importance and better teaching of the core courses

Perhaps because of the novelty of the opportunity of tracking students to specializations, which is at the heart of the SHS implementation, and because core courses have been taught in JHS, students tended to dismiss the core courses as unnecessary and a mere repetition of JHS topics. This may have been the result of having JHS teachers teach in SHS or the lack of information of what has already been taught in JHS for new SHS teachers. Given this, there is a need to demonstrate progression in knowledge taught in SHS from that of JHS. It must be realized that, by design, much of the general education subjects in

higher education are supposed to be taught in SHS. The core courses in SHS must be used to deepen knowledge in these areas to the level taught in higher education. Deepening knowledge in the core courses is essential for higher education, flexibility, and trainability given the rapid changes in the workplace with the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Dadios et al. 2018).

Improve arrangements for taking NC assessments

NC assessments are important for certifying the skills SHS graduates possess. Despite the current problems with acceptability of NCs to firms (Orbeta and Esguerra 2017), the employment and entrepreneurship objectives of the program dictate that taking NC assessments should be given a priority. The current practice of encouraging only TVL students to take NC assessments should be reexamined as those in the academic tracks may also be eligible for appropriate NC assessments, e.g., bookkeeping for those in the ABM track. This also includes the taking of Civil Service subprofessional examinations. At the very least, the school should make part of their mandate to arrange for the taking of the NC exams for their students. Given that the assessment fees may be prohibitive to poor students, a subsidy for them may be budgeted by the program.

Step up and sustain information campaign and other awareness-raising activities among employers to convince firms to support the SHS program, i.e., participate in work immersion program and support hiring of SHS graduates

Firms, particularly their HR officers in charge of hiring, need to be oriented on the basics of the SHS program, its objectives, the curriculum exits, various tracks and specializations, the 21st century skills that will be developed, the work immersion program, and the certificates that will be obtained. Based on the results of the KII, HR officers wanted to know the knowledge and skills that the SHS graduates will develop to match these with the needs of their industries.

The SHS Work Immersion Forum held in Ortigas last September 2017 attended by the government and various industries (as shared by one of the respondents) may be continued/sustained to help government convince the employers to provide work immersion experience to SHS learners. Companies must be enlightened on the purpose of the

immersion, their roles as partner-institution, and the various delivery models that may be used depending on the learners' needs. A big challenge is how to convince the employers on the adequacy of the duration of the work immersion and how (with the perceived limited hours) students' skills may be applied and tested.

Continuing activities after the forum and orientation are important like sharing of experiences and learnings during the initial implementation of the program, i.e., improving the design and content of work immersion delivery models that would address the needs of their industry, handling of work immersion program, and adjustments in hiring policies for K to 12 graduates. Venues for regular discussion and sharing could be the Annual Locators' Forum and the regular meetings of the Regional PMAP meetings.

Ensure that deployment of students in work immersion venues is according to their track/specialization choice

This is vital especially in LGU offices where too many SHS students are deployed and just to comply with the immersion requirements, students were accommodated in departments not relevant to their track/specialization. Government and schools must continuously monitor, supervise, and work with participating firms in the preparation of their training and deployment plan for work immersion. Employers must designate their training coordinator/supervisor who will oversee the execution of immersion within the company. The bigger challenge is for the government and concerned stakeholders to come up with innovative strategies to motivate more employers to participate in work immersion in order to have more immersion venues.

Have longer and competency-oriented work immersion

To be work-ready, firms suggested that the duration of work immersion be longer than 80 hours. The recommended length varies depending on the industry, i.e., 300 to 700 hours for hotels. Regardless of this, firms suggested that the immersion must show the complete cycle of work to enable the students to learn all the aspects of work from top to bottom. The length is arbitrary and must be complemented by quality activities. The problem seen is how to convince companies to allow 200 or more hours for student work immersion. In a pilot testing done by the PCCI of the dual training system in home economics and hospitality strands, what was done was to

integrate applied subjects into work immersion. Also, the work immersion program was prepared in coordination with the industries, i.e., association of employers in the locality.

Review and update curriculum content including immersion delivery models

Following are some suggested areas for curriculum development that emanated from the main discussion of the report:

- 1) One hospital said it is open to hire SHS graduates as nursing assistants whose specialization is nursing care, a more advanced course than caregiving under the Home Economics strand. But this must be approved by the DOH.
- 2) Hotels suggested the inclusion of the food and beverage services course, i.e., food etiquette, courtesy in serving food and drinks to guests, how to deal with guests, and proper table setting.
- 3) The curriculum must give importance to the development of behavioral skills and personal traits such as appreciation of the value of time management in performing work, do's and don'ts in applying for work, and developing multitasking ability.
- 4) Firms that had experienced hiring SHS graduates shared that the graduates were quick to decide to leave the job without formal resignation and were most likely to go on AWOL. They tend to hop from one company to another in the hope of finding high-paying jobs. Development of work ethics and work values must be emphasized in the SHS curriculum as this is linked to work retention, a vital factor aside from work performance now being considered by the employers in hiring SHS graduates.
- 5) The development of the immersion delivery model for TVL-maritime students must take into consideration the aim of providing hands-on training/completing immersion hours vis-à-vis safety of minors (i.e., boarding ships and joining voyages that entail long straight hours) and disclosure of confidential information in the maritime industry.
- 6) One firm raised the challenge of developing courses that will get the interest of SHS students to specialize in furniture design/making because current workers are getting old.

Review and adjust hiring policies of government

The CSC may consider reviewing government job positions that require HS graduates, i.e., SG level 6 and below. The meaning of “high school graduate”, as contained in the QS must be clarified. The CSC-QS may need to differentiate among SHS graduates, JHS completers, and the old four-year HS graduates and study how to put premium on SHS graduates, whose QS was raised because of the additional two years of learning and work exposure. Likewise, the MARINA regulations governing the recruitment and licensing of sea-based workers must be reviewed to allow the hiring of SHS graduates. All national government agencies and LGU offices must be informed nationwide about the adjustments in policies.

Encourage online jobsites to be SHS graduates-friendly

The PhilJobnet, the Philippine government’s official online jobsite operated by the DOLE, must update its online system to differentiate SHS graduates from the JHS completers and graduates of the four-year HS course. JobStreet and other similar online jobsites may also be encouraged to do the same.

Review objectives and strategies of the SHS program in relation to employment and work retention

Work performance and work retention are factors that influence the decision of employers to hire SHS graduates. As mentioned in the findings, one company conducted a pilot study on hiring of SHS graduates to gather data on work performance and retention that will be their basis for adjusting hiring policies. Meanwhile, other firms observed that most of the SHS graduates they hired did not stay long. This is because most of them, regardless of track, proceeded to go to college. If work retention will be an issue because SHS graduates would go to college anyway, then employers may be discouraged to hire them. There is an obvious inconsistency in encouraging employers to hire SHS graduates when most of them will proceed to go to college. There is a need to review the options for curriculum exits for students in the TVL track, whether to allow them to have both options of preparing for college or employment or to let them focus on preparing for employment. Employers may opt not to hire SHS graduates in the long run if there will be issues on work retention.

Related to this, one respondent recommended to focus on the disadvantaged students. To quote the respondent, “the TVL track must be separated from the rest of the tracks. And since most of the disadvantaged students are on the TVL track, tuition and other fees should be free. The objective is to make TVL-track takers job-ready rather than go to college/university. Later, they can go to college as part-time students while working. The process of separating the TVL may be done fast through the signing of an executive order.”

Some firms said that it is too early to assess if the graduates are work-ready since the program has just produced the first batch of graduates. Many firms have yet to participate in the work immersion program and be exposed to the SHS program and students. They have no benchmark data yet as to the level of ability and performance of K to 12 graduates particularly during work immersion.

Appendixes

Appendix A. Sample entry-level position items from the job portal of the Civil Service Commission as of October 20, 2018 (72,000 job entries)

Position title	Salary Grade*	Eligibility	Education	Work Experience	Training	Competency
Data controller I	SG 6 PHP 10,388	CS subprofessional; data encoder	Finished 2nd year college or HS graduate with relevant vocational course	none	none	none
Computer operator I	SG 7 PHP 15,254	CS subprofessional	Finished 2nd year college or HS graduate with relevant vocational course	none	no entry	no entry
Communications equipment operator	SG 6 PHP 14,340	CSC MC 10	Finished 2nd year college or HS graduate with relevant vocational course	none	no entry	no entry
Secretary I	SG 7 PHP 15,254	CS subprofessional	Finished 2nd year college	none	no entry	no entry
Accounting Clerk I	SG 4 PHP 12,040	CS subprofessional	Finished 2nd year college	none	none	none
Cash clerk I	SG 4 PHP 10,773 to 11,403	CS professional; 2nd level eligibility	Finished 2nd year college	none	none	no entry
Clerk I	SG 3 PHP 11,914	CS subprofessional; 1st level eligibility	Finished 2nd year college	none	none	n/a
Revenue collection clerk I	SG 5 PHP 12,133	CS subprofessional	Finished 2nd year college	none	no entry	no entry
Social welfare aide	SG 4 PHP 10,773	None CSC MC 11	HS graduate	none	none	no entry
Water meter reader I	SG 4 PHP 11,407	None CSC MC 11	HS graduate	none	no entry	no entry

Senior High School and the Labor Market

Appendix A. (continued)

Position title	Salary Grade*	Eligibility	Education	Work Experience	Training	Competency
Market ticket checker	SG 3 PHP 10,723	None CSC MC 11	HS graduate	none	no entry	no entry
Buyer I	SG 4 PHP 12,674	CS subprofessional	Finished 2nd year college	none	no entry	n/a
Tourism operations assistant	SG 7 PHP 13,729	CS subprofessional	Finished 2nd year college	none	no entry	n/a
Tribal affairs assistant	SG 5 PHP 13,481	CSC MC 11, CSC Category II	HS graduate	none	no entry	no entry
Draftsman I	SG 6 PHP 12,906	Draftsman; CSC MC 10	Finished 2nd year college or HS graduate with relevant vocational course	none	no entry	n/a
Agriculture technician	SG 6 PHP 12,906	CS subprofessional	Finished 2nd year college	none	no entry	n/a
Bookbinder I	SG 2 PHP 9,520	none	Elementary graduate	none	no entry	Office technology
Bookbinder II	SG 4 PHP 9,116	none	Elementary graduate	none	no entry	n/a
Farm foreman	SG 6 PHP 12,189	none	HS graduate	none	no entry	no entry
Farm worker I	SG 2 PHP 10,640	none	Elementary graduate	none	no entry	n/a
Driver II	SG 4 PHP 12,674	CSC MC 10; driver's license	Elementary graduate	none	none	n/a
Driver I	SG 3 PHP 11,318	driver's license	Elementary graduate	none	no entry	n/a

Appendix A. (continued)

Position title	Salary Grade*	Eligibility	Education	Work Experience	Training	Competency
Machinist II	SG 6 PHP 14,340	CSC MC 11	HS graduate or completion of vocational/trade course	none	no entry	n/a
Engineering aide B	SG 4 PHP 12,674	none; CSC MC 11	HS graduate or completion of vocational/trade course	none	none	n/a
Heavy equipment operator	SG 6 PHP 12,189	None	HS graduate or vocational trade course graduate	none	no entry	no entry
Watchman	SG 2 PHP 9,520	None	Elementary graduate	none	no entry	no entry
Utility worker	SG 1–SG 2 PHP 7,000–8,000	None	Able to read and write	none	no entry	no entry
Plumber	SG 5 PHP 12,000–12,500	Plumber- MC 10	Elementary graduate	none	none	n/a

Note: *as submitted by various national and local agencies, where concerned job vacancies exist
 CS = civil service; CSC = Civil Service Commission; MC = memorandum circular; SG = salary grade; PHP = Philippine Pesos; HS = high school;
 n/a = not applicable
 Source: Civil Service Commission (2018)

Appendix B. Available jobs in JobStreet for SHS graduates

Firm	Position	Qualification	Salary
Call center/BPO CALABARZON, MIMAROPA, NCR >5,000 employees	Customer service representative	SHS graduate/completed at least 2 years in college; fresh graduates may apply; HS graduate; excellent English communication skills; 18 years old and above	
Call center/BPO Novaliches >5,000 employees	Customer service associate	At least 2 years of college or graduated SHS; excellent English Communication skills	
Call center/BPO Megamall 2,000–5,000 employees	Customer service representative	18 years old and above; HS graduate with 6 months call center experience; SHS graduate or 2 years in college without call center experience; excellent conversational skills; good problem solving and analytical skills	
Call center/BPO Taguig >5,000 employees	Customer service representative	18 years old and above; open to SHS graduate; HS graduate, college undergraduate/graduate; conversant in English	
Computer/ IT (software) < 50 employees	CAD operator	SHS graduate, vocational course graduate; basic knowledge on technical drawings; proficient in Microsoft office applications	

Appendix B. (continued)

Firm	Position	Qualification	Salary
Call center/BPO >5,000 employees	Senior customer relationship officers ; Senior customer service representatives Senior customer service specialist	HS graduates; college undergraduates; college graduates; with or without call center experience; fresh graduates may apply; web navigation and computer literate	PHP 13,000–23,000 basic salary; plus allowance (PHP 1,000–5,000), performance incentives and night shift differentials
Human resource management/consulting <50 employees	Transaction processing analyst	HS graduate; fluent in English and Mandarin	
Call center/BPO >5,000 employees	Customer service representatives 100 slots	HS/vocational diploma; short course certificate; college graduate; no work experience required	
HR management /consulting/ recruitment firm 500–1000 employees	Customer service representatives for a BPO company	At least SHS graduate or completed 2 years in college; no work experience required; social media savvy	
Recruitment agency	Customer service representatives 250 slots	HS (previous curriculum) and SHS graduates; 2nd year college level and graduates; English communication skills; computer navigation skills	

CAD = computer-aided design; PHP = Philippine Peso; CALABARZON = Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon provinces; MIMAROPA = Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, and Palawan provinces; HS = high school; SHS = senior high school; IT = information technology; BPO = business process outsourcing
 Note: Job entries as of October 13, 2018
 Source: JobStreet.com (2018)

Appendix C. Type of jobs available and the corresponding qualifications and salaries for K to 12 graduates:
National Capital Region

Firms/Areas of Operation	Positions Open to K to 12 Graduates	Qualifications/Competencies	Starting Salary
Retail and wholesale distributor (sports-oriented)	Rank-and-file positions	Should have competencies and skills specific for the positions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum wage • Plus incentives
Manila (with branches in Laguna, Bulacan, Pampanga, Bagoio, Cagayan, Iloilo, Cebu, and Davao)	<p>In the stores:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory assistant • Cashier • Racket stringers • Exercise equipment specialist • Sales clerk • Running consultants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core competence on marketing and customer service/care; even the Cashier should know how to sell; experience in sales preferred • Product knowledge • Healthy and fit • With sports inclination • Not necessarily good in English but talks sensibly • Good attitude toward work • Open to learn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merit increase based on performance • Collective Bargaining Agreement
<p>In the warehouse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driver • Picker • Inventory • <i>Tagasalansan</i>/stacker • Driving skill (driver) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physically fit (warehouse) • Driving skill (driver) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum wage • Plus incentives • Merit increase based on performance • Collective Bargaining Agreement 	
<p>After sales:</p> <p>Maintenance and repair of equipment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technicians • Mechanic (auto) <p>In the office:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Messenger 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanical skills; with National Computer Center certificate • Physically fit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum wage • Plus incentives • Merit increase based on performance • Collective Bargaining Agreement 	

Appendix C. (continued)

Firms/Areas of Operation	Positions Open to K to 12 Graduates	Qualifications/Competencies	Starting Salary
<p>Real estate: builder of mid-rise condominiums and socialized housing units</p> <p>Metro Manila (with branches in Bulacan, Laguna, Cebu, and Davao)</p>	<p>Support staff, mostly clerical, in the following departments (note: still exploratory; depends on the need of the hiring department):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation • HR • Marketing and Sales • Accounting/Finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good communication skills • With work experience or had 300–700 hours of internship • Confident and patient • With strong personality 	<p>Minimum daily wage (PHP 554) plus cost-of-living allowance</p>
<p>Hospitality: small hotel</p> <p>Pasig City</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front office/reception • Telephone operator • Room attendant • Housekeeping • Administrative work, i.e., sales assistant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication skills • Presentable/professional-looking • Good attitude toward work • Trainable • Skill in OPERA system (for receptionist) • Had 300–350 hours of on-the-job training 	<p>Minimum wage</p>
<p>Multi-industry company (financial services, IT, rural bank, hotels, and real estate management)</p> <p>Nationwide</p>	<p>Routine positions that do not require facing/dealing with the clients:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clerical positions in branch operations (transactions processing, sales reporting and monitoring) • IT (graphic artist) • Hotels: routine administrative positions (i.e., business center attendant, front desk officer, and telephone operator) and room attendants • Driver/messenger 	<p>Required for all positions are college graduates except for driver and messenger but firm can adjust as long as K to 12 graduates are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mature in work; • patient; • imaginative and creative; and • willing to undergo in-depth and longer internship program that fits the needs of the industry, i.e., on customer care, sales, and marketing 	<p>Minimum wage</p>

Appendix C. (continued)

Firms/Areas of Operation	Positions Open to K to 12 Graduates	Qualifications/Competencies	Starting Salary
City Government Pasig City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laborer • Utility worker • Driver • Maintenance (aircon, refrigeration, automotive, and electrical works) 	For maintenance technicians, in-house trainings for eight days where certifications are issued	Minimum daily wage of PHP 376.68
City Government Makati City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative assistant • Clerks • Encoding clerk • Copying clerk • Messengers • Drivers • Menial Jobs (mason, construction workers, street sweepers, laborers) 	Below salary grade 5 or 6 based on CSC qualifications standards	Minimum wage
LGU University Makati City	<p>They hire college graduates only because they have to maintain stature as a university. They do not have skills-based positions. Clerks should be college graduates. Housekeeping, maintenance, and security personnel are outsourced. Messengers/ couriers are student assistants.</p> <p>The only available positions they can offer are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevator operators • Storekeepers • Drivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good communication skills • Good in English 	Job order renewable every 6 months

Appendix C. (continued)

Firms/Areas of Operation	Positions Open to K to 12 Graduates	Qualifications/Competencies	Starting Salary
<p>Business Process Outsourcing (BPO): provision of voice and chat support Metro Manila (with branches in Clark, Baguio, Bacolod, Cebu, and Davao)</p>	<p>Call agent positions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voice • Chat 	<p>For college graduates, SHS graduates and 4-year HS graduates (old HS curriculum)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require 6 months of call center experience for 4-year HS graduates; not required for K to 12 graduates • Good communication skills for all applicants 	<p>PHP 15,000 to 18,000 monthly</p>
<p>Fastfood chain Metro Manila</p>	<p>Hiring program has to be discussed with their Corporate Labor Relations and Legal team</p>		

NCR = National Capital Region; PHP = Philippine Peso; IT = information technology; CSC = Civil Service Commission; LGU = local government unit; SHS = senior high school; TESDA = Technical Education and Skills Development Authority; NC = national certificate; DOLE = Department of Labor and Employment; SSS = Social Security System; JHS = junior high school; ABM = Accounting, Business, and Management; HR = human resource
Source: Authors' compilation

Appendix D: Summary of the type of jobs available to SHS graduates and JHS completers including qualifications/competencies: Cebu

Firms/areas of operation	Positions Available	College	SHS	JHS	Qualifications and Competencies	Starting Salary
Agribusiness: wholesale and retail of agrivet product nationwide	Operations				Sales clerk only for SHS; TESDA NC	Regional minimum wage; probationary period and regular wage adjustment plus benefits
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clerical (branch and sales) • Labor/mental (utility men) 	✓	✓	✓	Utility man may be promoted as clerk if there is potential; working student is preferred	
	Office				Graduates of 2-year course preferred for clerks; with TESDA NC	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clerks • Messengers and drivers 	✓	✓	✓	Driver's license for drivers	
	Warehouse					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General clerks • Order preparers • Packers and checkers • Forklift operators • Warehouse and delivery men • Utility drivers and dispatchers 	✓	✓	✓	SHS for clerks should have NC, be trainable, respectful, and have a good attitude toward work	
					trainable, respectful, and have good attitude toward work	

Appendix D. (continued)

Firms/areas of operation	Positions Available	College	SHS	JHS	Qualifications and Competencies	Starting Salary
Agribusiness: wholesale and retail of agrivet product nationwide	Others		✓		Equivalent to two-year course: NC	Regional daily minimum wage
	• Welding technicians		✓			
	• Automotive technicians		✓			
	• Electrical technicians		✓			
Hospitality industry: three-star hotel with over 400 rooms Cebu City	• Housekeeping		✓			
	Operations				Skills on proper buzzing, table set-up, wine-pouring, trainable; open to learning; NC II; working students are preferred (more persevering). Good oral and written communication skills; can handle guests complaints	
	• Bar, pool, and business center attendants	✓	✓			
	• Housekeeping		✓	✓		
	• Public and room attendants	✓	✓	✓		
	• Front office		✓		For SHS, working students are preferred	
	• Back office					
	• HR assistant	✓				
	• HR support (training, recruitment)		✓			
	• Purchasing, receiving		✓			
• Stewarding, packing				✓		
• Cookery			✓		TESDA certificate for cookery	
• Accounting and finance (clerical)	✓				Equivalent to 2-year course for accounting and finance; analytical	Regional minimum wage

Appendix D. (continued)

Firms/areas of operation	Positions Available	College	SHS	JHS	Qualifications and Competencies	Starting Salary
Shopping center management Cebu City	Assistants for various departments, i.e., leasing, tenant relations, marketing, accounting, recruitment, and security	✓	✓		With experience; working students are preferred, if no experience. Should be outstanding student, mature about learning; driven. Working students are preferred	Regional minimum wage plus company benefits
	Rank-and-file employees for leisure and entertainment center (cashier, attendant, sales, clerk, porter)	✓	✓			
Manufacturing: Japanese-owned furniture-making company (for export and local market)	Clerical (encoder of stocks) Production (carpentry, sanding, wood stoning, painting, packing, quality control)		✓	✓	Trainable; In good health condition; With skills specific to position; With people skills; If Grade 10, must be of legal age (18 years old) per DOLE policy	Regional minimum wage plus company benefits
Mactan Economic Zone 1, Lapu-Lapu City	Shipping, utility, and Maintenance			✓		

Appendix D. (continued)

Firms/areas of operation	Positions Available	College	SHS	JHS	Qualifications and Competencies	Starting Salary
Manufacturing: passenger ferries, yachts and other marine transport (below 100 gross tonnage)	Admin operations support: Utility staff Production: Welder, painter, laminator, electrician		✓		15 percent skills and 85 percent good attitude; open to learning. Experience is important.	PHP 400 per day; Helper: PHP 366 per day
Mactan Economic Zone 1, Lapu-Lapu City	Others: IT, carpenter/helper, technicians (electrical, mechanical, automotive), and office (clerks, bookkeeper)		✓			
Manufacturing: electronic parts (used in radio frequency, automotive, car parking system, medical machine, and windmills)	Level 2 (QC inspector II, trainer, clerk, team leader, encoder, warehouse helper)		✓		Will not accept Grade 10 completers due to DOLE policy	Regional minimum wage
Cebu Light Industrial Park, Lapu-Lapu City	Level 1 (Logistics driver, buyer, purchasing, direct operator, encoder, clerk, QC inspector I, messenger)		✓			

Appendix D. (continued)

Firms/areas of operation	Positions Available	College	SHS	JHS	Qualifications and Competencies	Starting Salary
Manufacturing: ship-building and repair West Cebu Industrial Park, Cebu	Skilled workers (operators, technicians, electrician, welders, wirebrushers, checkers, maintenance of equipment)		✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same treatment for SHS graduate and Grade 10 completers; college level and two-year courses also considered • Must have NK (Nippon Kaiji Kyokai) license; TESDA NC is considered but new entrants should be trained in the firm's training center to get NK license; • Hiring through subcontractors is easier than directly hiring K to 12 graduates; subcontractor has pool of trained and experienced skilled workers • Not aggressive personality • Trainable/willing to learn 	Job grade 3 (PHP 9,000) or Job grade 4 (PHP 10,900)
Hospitality industry: hotel Cebu City	Front Office Concierge, guest service, associate		✓		<p>Good English communication skills, confident, computer literate</p>	Regional minimum wage plus SSS, PhilHealth, Pag-IBIG

Appendix D. (continued)

Firms/areas of operation	Positions Available	College	SHS	JHS	Qualifications and Competencies	Starting Salary
Hospitality industry: hotel Cebu City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food and Beverage • Bartender • Food and beverage associate 		✓		Knowledge and skills in operating kitchen equipment, in knife-handling. Good communication skills; listening skills	Regional minimum wage plus SSS, PhilHealth, Pag-IBIG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptionist/Cashier • Kitchen • Line cook • Steward 			✓		
Hospitality industry: hotel Cebu City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housekeeping • Coordinator • Room and public attendants 				Skills and experience in electronics and equipment; computer skills	Regional minimum wage plus SSS, PhilHealth, Pag-IBIG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engineering • Staff • IT • Telephone operator 					
Hospitality industry: hotel Cebu City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finance • Liaison officer • General accounting staff 		✓		For sales: confident, good guest-handling, communication skills, computer literate	Regional minimum wage plus SSS, PhilHealth, Pag-IBIG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchasing assistance • Receiving clerk • Messenger 					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sales Sales and banquet coordinator 		✓			

Appendix D. (continued)

Firms/areas of operation	Positions Available	College	SHS	JHS	Qualifications and Competencies	Starting Salary
Shipping Line: provider of cargo and passenger transportation	Land-based Marketing and sales: Cashier, freight operator, and graphic artist	✓	✓		College level with experience College level but not K to 12	Regional minimum wage plus benefits
Cebu City-based	Terminal operations: container yard staff, e.g., forklift operators, truck drivers, welders, carpenters, plumbers, and other skilled workers. <i>Sea-based positions are regulated and governed by Codes. Require college graduates with license.</i>		✓		Could understand simple instructions; with TESDA NC II; mature; responsible	

Note: Based on key informant interview with firms
 PHP = Philippine Peso; IT = information technology; CSC = Civil Service Commission; LGU = local government unit; SHS = senior high school; QC = quality control; TESDA = Technical Education and Skills Development Authority; NC = national certificate; DOLE = Department of Labor and Employment; SSS = Social Security System; JHS = junior high school
 Source: Authors' compilation

Appendix E. Type of jobs available to SHS graduates and JHS completers including qualification/competencies: CALABARZON

Firms/areas of operation	Positions Available	College	SHS	JHS	Qualifications and Competencies	Starting Salary
Private Hospital Medical Tourism Park, Batangas	Clinical: • Nursing assistant	✓	✓		K to 12 with caregiving track; well-trained; with TESDA NC II; prefers nursing care which is more advanced than caregiving	Minimum wage for entry level; salary increase based on work performance
Note: will not hire JHS because they are not yet of working age; might be charged of child abuse and labor	• Operating room technician Administrative office • Receptionist	✓	✓		Prefers staff with background on medical field; trainable; does not easily give up, persevering, can work under pressure	
	• Registration/admitting clerk • Medical records clerk • Benefits clerk (PhilHealth) • Support staff/clerk in every clinical and laboratory section	✓	✓	✓		
	Maintenance • Electrician • Plumber	✓	✓	✓	With NC II; should be well-trained prior to recruitment	

Appendix E. (continued)

Firms/areas of operation	Positions Available	College	SHS	JHS	Qualifications and Competencies	Starting Salary
Coffee trading and manufacturing of coffee products Cavite	Production				No differentiation between SHS and previous four-year HS for production positions; not JHS because under-aged	Minimum wage, which is PHP 317 in the area
	• Grinding and blending		✓	✓	Preferred those with work experience but fresh SHS graduates may be accepted (to be trained on the first week once hired); quick to understand and learn	
	• Packaging and sealing		✓	✓		
	• Sewing of jute sack		✓	✓		
	• <i>Pahinante</i>		✓	✓		
Coffee trading and manufacturing of coffee products Cavite	• Driver		✓	✓		
	Warehouse					
	• Warehouse assistant		✓	✓		
	Office				Will hire K to 12 but only to do manual encoding in ledgers and on part-time basis only	
	• Assistant bookkeeper		✓	✓		
Coffee trading and manufacturing of coffee products Cavite	• Assistant accountant		✓	✓		
	Sales crew					
	• Sales assistant		✓	✓	Quick to learn	
	Coffee shop					
	• Assistant barista		✓	✓	Quick to learn	

Appendix E. (continued)

Firms/areas of operation	Positions Available	College	SHS	JHS	Qualifications and Competencies	Starting Salary
Restaurant Lucena City, Quezon	Office: • Bookkeeper	✓	✓		Willing to be trained; With multitasking ability	
	Waiters		✓	✓	Willing to be trained; With multitasking ability	Higher than minimum wage
	Cooks		✓	✓	For these positions, there is no differentiation of graduates of SHS with previous four-year HS and even with JHS as long as they know the job; with or without experience	Minimum wage
	Caretaker		✓	✓		
Resort Sariaya, Quezon	Ground maintenance				Industrious; trainable; interested in work; dependable	Regional minimum wage plus free lunch
	Room attendant					
	Waiter				No differentiation among JHS completer, previous 4th year HS graduate, and K to 12 graduates.	
	Receptionist				For the receptionist position, those who had on-the-job training in hotels in Lucena are preferred.	

Appendix E. (continued)

Firms/areas of operation	Positions Available	College	SHS	JHS	Qualifications and Competencies	Starting Salary
Theme park Laguna	Park-based: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admission attendant • Ride attendant • Guest service attendant • Game attendant Souvenir shops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • souvenir shops attendants 		✓	✓	No differentiation if JHS completer or SHS graduate as long as they pass the training and meet the qualifications; should be at least 18 years old With consistently fun personality; willing to work on weekends and holidays; must love the job For park-based: can adjust to physical working condition (no aircon, exposed to sun and rain) TESDA or vocational graduate; with NC II, III, or IV; hardworking; good work attitude	Minimum wage of PHP 373 per day; overtime pay beyond 8 hours; double pay for holidays
Agribusiness Batangas	Accounting clerk Secretarial jobs (filing and encoding) Poultry helpers Spot welders (small machine only)		✓	✓	Computer literate; patient and persevering; good attitude and maturity; not a working student because not focused on work May hire elementary level or even those who are not HS graduates but trainable because works are simple	Regional minimum wage; PhilHealth; SSS; sick leave

Appendix E. (continued)

Firms/areas of operation	Positions Available	College	SHS	JHS	Qualifications and Competencies	Starting Salary
Manufacturing: coconut products Candelaria, Quezon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production: • Sheller • Parer • Sorter • Picker • Dryer operator • Classifier • Weigher • Packer • Sealer Laboratory: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sampler • Hygiene checker Office: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting clerk • Payroll clerk 	✓	✓	✓	For production jobs, same treatment for SHS graduate and Grade 10 completers. For parer, elementary graduates are accepted; for dryer operator, HS graduate but with experience and has worked his way up inside the firm.	Regional minimum wage except for dryer operator and sampler who have higher than minimum wage
Resort Batangas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptionist/clerk • Maintenance/cleaner 	✓	✓	✓	Open to K to 12 ABM track but prefers college graduates Since the firm is a micro enterprise, employees perform multiple tasks; work is simple and do not require special skills; accepts even elementary graduate as long as computer literate and can deal with customers.	Around PHP 4,500 per month plus free meals and accommodation

CALABARZON = Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon provinces; PHP = Philippine Peso; IT = information technology; CSC = Civil Service Commission; LGU = local government unit; SHS = senior high school; TESDA = Technical Education and Skills Development Authority; NC = national certificate; DOLE = Department of Labor and Employment; SSS = Social Security System; JHS = junior high school; ABM = Accounting, Business, and Management; HR = human resource
Source: Authors' compilation

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The enactment of Republic Act 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 added two years to basic education. One of the rationales offered by proponents of the law is that Senior High School (SHS) graduates will be equipped with skills and capacity to work or engage in entrepreneurial activities if they choose to do so. This study assesses the likelihood of achieving the employment and entrepreneurship objectives of the program by examining the experience of Grade 12 graduating students and the views of firms about the labor market prospects of the SHS graduates. It does this by (i) looking into the SHS curriculum and the competencies developed among the graduates, (ii) identifying the types of jobs that fit the Grade 12 graduates, (iii) gathering the private sector perspective on the jobs available and appropriate for the Grade 12 graduates, and (iv) providing policy recommendations for improving the implementation of the SHS program. The study revealed that despite identifying employment and entrepreneurship as a rationale for the program, three quarters of the Grade 12 students plan to proceed to higher education. This proportion is true even for those in the Technical-Vocational-Livelihood track. Among the highlights of the focus group discussion with students is the revelation that they are not very confident that they will get a job after graduating from SHS. Even those who passed the National Certification assessments still believe that the firms will prefer hiring college graduates over them. Meanwhile, most of the firms lack in-depth knowledge of the SHS program. They expressed the need to be exposed to the SHS graduates before they can be confident in hiring them. While it may be too early to gauge the performance of the SHS program, particularly the performance of its graduates in the labor market, the study has uncovered areas for improving the implementation of the program to boost the chances of achieving its objectives, particularly the employment and entrepreneurship capabilities of SHS graduates.



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