

FROM CLASSROOM TO CAREER: HOW PREPARED ARE SHS TECH-VOC STUDENTS FOR WORKPLACE REALITIES?

by:

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The transition from the Senior High School (SHS) Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) track classroom to the Philippine workforce remains a complex and challenging journey for many graduates. While the K to 12 program was designed, in part, to equip these students for immediate employment, industry reception has been lukewarm. A persistent issue, as highlighted by a study from the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) and echoed by the Philippine Business for Education (PBE), is the perception among many companies that SHS graduates are not yet work-ready, often preferring job applicants with at least two years of college education. This hesitancy stems partly from the perceived insufficiency of the initial 80 hours of Work Immersion mandated under DepEd Order No. 30, s. 2017, which employers often argue is too brief to allow students to truly apply their skills and develop the necessary competencies for industrial rigor.

Addressing this gap requires concrete curricular and structural adjustments, which the Department of Education (DepEd) is actively pursuing. A major current issue is the misalignment between the SHS-TVL curriculum and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority's (TESDA) Training Regulations (TRs), resulting in a low assessment rate for National Certifications (NCs) among graduates. In response, DepEd is piloting an Enhanced SHS Work Immersion Program in select schools, as outlined in a recent DepEd Memorandum, which significantly increases the total hours – up to four months or approximately 640 hours – of a competency-oriented work immersion. Furthermore, the introduction of the new Technical Professional (TechPro) track, which

replaces the TVL track and focuses on aligning clusters of electives more tightly with industry-certifiable skills, is a strategic move to ensure graduates are genuinely equipped with industry-relevant skills and NCs upon graduation, thereby boosting their employability.

Ultimately, the preparedness of SHS Tech-Voc graduates hinges on a synergistic ecosystem of education, certification, and industry engagement. Beyond increasing immersion hours and curriculum alignment, the quality of instruction remains paramount, with DepEd recognizing the need to capacitate TVL teachers to have the appropriate TESDA assessment and certification themselves. For the graduates, a positive employment outlook necessitates overcoming not just skill mismatches but also the lingering employer preference for college degrees and the general challenges in the labor market, such as youth underemployment. By enforcing the new TechPro track and its embedded NCs, and strengthening partnerships with the private sector, the government is trying to clear the path for these technical-vocational learners to transition from trainees to productive, certified professionals capable of meeting the demands of the modern workplace.

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