



Republic of the Philippines
Department of Education
 REGION III-CENTRAL LUZON

DepEd-SDO of Bulacan Office of the SDS

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
 REGION III-CENTRAL LUZON
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REGIONAL MEMORANDUM
 No. 482 s. 2021

**DISSEMINATION OF AIDE MEMOIRE DATED MAY 24, 2021, RE: TOWARDS
 GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN SHS GRADUATES
 AND THE GOVERNMENT, INDUSTRY, AND BUSINESS SECTORS**

To: Schools Division Superintendents

1. For the information and guidance of all concerned, enclosed is Aide Memoire dated May 24, 2021, re: Towards Gainful Employment: Bridging the Gap Between SHS Graduates and the Government, Industry, and Business Sectors.
2. Wide dissemination of this Aide Memoire is hereby enjoined.

M
MAY B. ECLAR, PhD, CESO III
 Regional Director

Encl.: as stated

Clmd1
 May 25, 2021

Reproduction No. 139, s. 2021
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Republika ng Pilipinas

Kagawaran ng Edukasyon

Tanggapan ng Pangalawang Kalihim

AIDE MEMOIRE

24 May 2021

TOWARDS GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN SHS GRADUATES AND THE GOVERNMENT, INDUSTRY, AND BUSINESS SECTORS

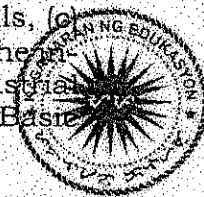
I. Introduction

The Philippines adopted the K to 12 Basic Education Program in School Year 2012-2013 which includes Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education. This was made possible through the Republic Act No. 10533 Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 added two years of Senior High School (SHS) with the goal of expanding high school education for higher education, employment, middle level skills development, and entrepreneurship.

The Senior High School (SHS) Program enhances the 21st century skills of the learners along their careers choices from the tracks and strands, namely:

- 1. Academic track** with strands that include the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), Humanities and Socials Sciences (HUMSS), Accountancy, Business and Management (ABM), Maritime, and General Academic
- 2. Technical-Vocational-Livelihood track** with strands that include Industrial Arts, Home Economics, Information and Communications Technology and Agri-Fishery Arts
- 3. Sports track**
- 4. Arts and Design track**

Considered as the most significant educational reforms in the country, the K to 12 program seeks to provide Filipino learners with the necessary skills and competences to prepare them to face the challenges of the 21st Century. At the end of the program, SHS graduates are expected to have fully acquired the following 21st century skills: (a) learning and innovation skills, (b) effective communication skills, (c) information, media and technology skills and (d) life and career skills which are the demand skills as part of the international standards amid the Fourth Industrial Revolution (DepEd Order No. 21, s.2019 Policy Guidelines on the K to 12 Basic Education Program.)



Office of the Undersecretary for Administration (OUA)

*Administrative Service (AS), Information and Communications Technology Service (ICTS),
Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Service (DRRMS), Bureau of Learner Support*



II. Current Situation

In SY 2017-2018, the first batch of approximately 1.2 million SHS students graduated in April 2018. This is the combined total of SHS graduates from the DepEd public schools, private schools and non-DepEd public schools. After 7 years of implementation, there is still a gap between graduates of the K to 12 program and employment. The digital economy is driving the Philippines' emerging jobs and by 2025, the country's digital economy is expected to be worth more than Php 1 Trillion, according to the e-Conomy SEA 2019 (http://think.storage.googleapis.com/docs/e-Conomy_SEA_2019_report.pdf).

A. Research Conducted

The three (3) released discussion papers of the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) in December of 2018, 2019 and 2020 showed that there was a **growing interest in helping raise the employability of SHS graduates.**

The PIDS Discussion Paper Series No. 2018-49 entitled *Senior High School and the Labor Market: Perspectives of Grade 12 Students and Human Resource Officers* released in December 2018 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 TVL track.

In addition, the PIDS Discussion Paper Series No. 2019-13 entitled *Status of Senior High School Implementation: A Process Evaluation* released in December 2019, assessed the extent of implementation of the SHS program two years into implementation in order to identify issues and challenges it is facing and find areas for improvement. As in any process evaluation of programs, it looks at three domains, namely: program theory, service delivery and utilization, and program organization.

The assessment revealed that the program had notable gains:

1. Enrollment exceeded expectations. The Department of Education expected only one (1) million enrollees but got 200 thousand more with transition from G10 to G11 – a higher transition rate than from fourth year to college before the program.

Other explanations besides high continuation rate among G10 graduates were given, namely, many of the out-of-school youth went back to school, and graduates of ALS also may have continued their studies. It has also been noted that preliminary data has shown high graduation rate among the first batch of SHS students.

2. Stakeholders also mentioned anecdotal evidence that graduates, particularly of the TVL track, found employment after graduation. Employment is one the desired exits for SHS graduates.



3. Stakeholder support and school leadership at work in SHS implementation. One of the observations of this study is that amidst implementation challenges, there are senior high schools that thrive due mainly to a combination of good school leadership and a strong support from stakeholders.
4. The program has also become a venue for public and private partnership in the implementation. The SHS voucher program and the JDVP-TVL are two such programs that foster public-private partnerships. The SHS voucher enables students who cannot be accommodated in the public school to study in private schools using the voucher as subsidy for their tuition. The JDVPTVL allows students of DepEd SHS offering TVL strands that have inadequate facilities to take their TVL specializations in selected TVIs.

The PIDS Discussion Paper Series No. 2020-40 entitled *On the Employability of the Senior High School Graduates: Evidence from the Labor Force* released in December 2020 confirmed the results in the earlier study that only a small proportion (a little over 20%) enter the labor force and most of them (more than 70 percent) continue with their education. Furthermore, **there is a need to continue working with employers informing and demonstrating to them what SHS graduates can do and eventually clearly defining the right niche for them in the labor market.**

The Philippine Business for Education (PBED) group also conducted a study and found that the first batch of SHS graduates possess "theoretically" 93% of the competencies suitable to the needs of the country's industries. But in a separate study, the PBED found that only 20% of the 70 leading companies in the Philippines were inclined to hire senior high graduates, preferring college graduates or those with at least two years of college education.

In 2019 and 2020, the Bureau of Curriculum Development (BCD) conducted a National SHS Tracer Study – a mixed methods research, which aimed at determining the curriculum exits taken by learners after having graduated from the Senior High School in SY 2017-2018. A majority of 82.67% of the graduates pursued higher education while 10.22% got employed. Only a small percentage engaged in entrepreneurship (1.30%) and middle-level skills development (0.42%). 5.39 % of the graduates did not pursue any of the exits after SHS graduation.

The BCD also studied the cohorts of SHS graduates in SY 2017-2018 by requesting Regional Offices to submit reports on the following: number of SHS graduates according to tracks and strands; number of SHS graduates who got employed, pursued higher education, engaged in entrepreneurial activities, and/or underwent middle level skills development.

Among those who proceeded to higher education, majority were from the Academic track accounting for 42.3% of the graduates, followed by TVL track graduates at 24.8%, Arts & Design track graduates at 0.3%, and Sports track graduates at 0.2%.



The SHS TVL track graduates registered the highest from those who got employed at 9.7% followed by the Academic track graduates at 6.2%, then Arts & Design graduates at 0.03%, and Sports tracks graduates at 0.02%.

B. Current Support Mechanisms

There are also efforts to integrate the K to 12 qualifications in the Civil Service Commission (CSC) qualification standards to better improve the employability of K to 12 graduate in the government sector. Basically, the qualification standards include (a) education, either JHS completer or SHS graduate, (b) experience, (c) training, which can be in the form of National Certificates (NCs) and (d) Eligibility.

When SHS students and/or graduates have reached the age of 18, they are eligible to take the CSC Written Examination. If they pass, they will have greater chances of obtaining the minimum qualification standards for government employment.

Aside from government support, PBED expressed its commitment to convince private business and industry companies to open their doors to K to 12 students and graduates through work immersion and employment opportunities. This was made possible through the **"First Future" Program of PBED** where it studied the employability of the Senior HS graduates. Data showed that "3 of 5 companies are open to hiring K to 12 graduates while 1 of 5 companies are ready to hire given available facilities and current hiring policies." PBED announced that over 19,000 entry-level jobs and 400 work immersion positions for senior high school graduates and students have been opened and made available for K to 12 graduates.

A total of 116 companies offered 19,385 job openings and 773 training positions for SHS students and graduates. Currently, PBED data show at least 2,900 positions had already been filled; 544 graduates have been employed; 211 have been trained; while 105 are scheduled for training.

C. Gaps and Misalignment

However, there are still gaps in the employability of the SHS graduates. As DepEd continues to enhance the employability of the SHS graduates, there has to be strategies to help them build their employment portfolio and resume.

The current misalignment is partly due to longstanding traditional mindsets both from the supply side (students) and the demand side (employers) that high school graduates are not work-ready. Students are not confident enough to find gainful employment after graduation, limiting themselves to jobs that are not matched with the technical education and training they have received in SHS, and employers still prefer to hire college graduates or at least those with some years of college education.

Currently, industry leaders have indicated that software engineers and developers are emerging jobs that are critical for businesses wanting to take the



next digital step. Employers are more inclined to hire graduates that have already acquired digital skills since this would reduce training time and cost.

III. Bridging the Gap

Recognizing this gap between SHS graduates and employment opportunities, the Office of the Undersecretary for Administration (OUA), in collaboration with the Curriculum and Instruction (CI) Strand, is spearheading a **project in support of the K to 12 program, to better prepare learners to be more work-ready.**

In partnership with **Microsoft Philippines**, the OUA aims to equip graduating Grade 12 learners with the knowledge and skills to **build impactful resumes and online professional profiles through LinkedIn.** LinkedIn is a social platform that focuses on professional networking and career development for individuals.

As far back as 2 to 3 years ago, the undersigned has been asking Microsoft to create a LinkedIn Student Version to allow SHS students to register, since the age requirement to use the platform at that time was 18 years old. Recently, LinkedIn lowered the age requirement to 16 years old, thus allowing the Department of Education to take the opportunity to make use of the platform for its SHS students.

By providing our SHS learners access to LinkedIn and skilling platforms such as Microsoft Learn, Microsoft Imagine Academy, and LinkedIn Learning, **students will be given the opportunity to not just connect professionally with industry practitioners but also to acquire competencies and digital certifications by completing learning paths in digital productivity, computer science, cloud, artificial intelligence (AI), and data science which are all aligned to in-demand technical and product skills, and the most in-demand jobs, globally.** Aside from this, online training modules will also be made available for the students that support 21st century skills needed in the workplace - communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, empathy (effective communication and presentation skills, interview tips, workplace ethics, and others) This nationwide training will be done online and aims to support learners with workforce advantage and readiness.

Moreover, learners will be given capability building in accomplishing the Personal Data Sheet (PDS) being the standard resume format for those applying for government positions. OUA is making representation with Microsoft for the possible conversion of LinkedIn resumes to the government-required PDS.

Equipping learners, at the supply side, with more skills aimed at increasing their employability is only one part of the equation in bridging the gap. The other part is the demand side, and this is where industry partners come in.

Reaching out to the **Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP)** and getting their support for the program gives graduating SHS students **opportunities to find possible employment or if not, gain significant real-world experience in job hunting.** Students who have earned a certificate of completion jointly issued by DepEd, ECOP, and Microsoft will be given a higher chance of being employed by ECOP member-companies. Input from ECOP will also be incorporated in the training program to **give insight into what the industries are looking for from potential**



employees. LinkedIn has reported that the 10 most currently in demand jobs in the Philippines are: Robotics Engineer, Cyber Security Specialist, Customer Success Specialist, Data Scientist, Sales Development Representative, Full Stack Engineer, DevOps Engineer, Data Engineer, JavaScript Developer, and Cloud Engineer.

The involvement of more industries, firms, and labor sectors will surely aid the growth process of SHS students. Active participation of the said stakeholders can be foreseen as a sign of better employment opportunities and realistic upskill. Skills education, with regards to competency development, shall then be introduced to the practical and "real-world" requisites of the labor force through direct experience-based insights provided by the sectors to be involved.

With this activity, the supply and demand sides are brought together and are made aware of how each can adjust and improve with the common goal of economically empowering the Filipino youth. Students are upskilled and what they have learned through their basic education is reinforced with more skills training, while the industry sector is made aware of the capacities and potential of the SHS graduates.

It is hoped that through this activity and experience, SHS students gain greater appreciation for the education and trainings they have received and become motivated to further equip themselves with skills that will lead them towards career and professional development.

IV. Way Forward

Training SHS students and their teachers in developing their online professional profiles and PDS is just the beginning. The ultimate objective is to have a continuous program for incoming SHS students, this time targeting Grade 10 and 11 learners. By capacitating them early, students will learn to put more value to their education and training because they know these will be included in their résumés, whether digital or not. It will force them to take a look at the direction they are taking as they approach graduation, and to work towards the goals they set for themselves, be it towards tertiary/college education, entrepreneurship, entry level-employment, or further technical skills training.

For the K to 12 program to succeed, **there is a need for a paradigm shift in how learners, teachers, parents, and employers see this new breed of graduating Filipino SHS students.** Learners, teachers, and parents need to see SHS students as young adults, gearing to enter the real world and as such, must be provided with all possible tools, skills, and support they need to succeed. Employers, on the other hand, need to view SHS students as skilled workers who are work-ready and—with the proper mentorship, training, and experience—can reach their full potential in the career paths they choose.

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) employ around 65% of the total workforce. To address this, there is a need to educate the chambers of commerce and employers' associations about the benefits of absorbing K to 12 graduates opting to join the workforce.

There is also a need to "re-brand" these new generation of graduates of basic



education to remove them from the stigma of “diploma mill” mentality. More meaningful names for these graduates may help change the mindset, to match the skills and work-readiness of these youth. For starters, we recommend that we do not call them “High School graduate” and instead use strong and more youthful and work-ready names to mark and establish their completion of a specific SHS track. Offhand, these come to mind: “Academic Apprentice”, “Academic Practitioner”, “TVL Builder” or “Tech-Voc-Live Specialist”, “Agri-Technician” or “Novice in Agri-Fishery” and “Novice in Industrial Arts”, “Sports Master”, “Sports Scholar”, “Digital Artisan”, “Digital Technologist”.

Next to be carried out—in collaboration with the CI Strand, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and the Business Sector—is the full development and expansion of the SHS Internship and Immersion Program where Grade 11 students are absorbed by DepEd (schools, divisions, regions and central office) and other government agencies; while Grade 12 students will gain work experiences in the private sector. Their internship must have substantial number of hours of actual hands-on exposure in the workplace, according to the strand they have decided to pursue or in accordance with what the business sector in their areas require. For two years, learners will have work experiences both in government and in the private sector. Such exposure in the real world will substantiate, if not strengthen further, their employability right after their graduation. It is recommended that this activity for Grades 11-12 learners will be tied to their grading performance linked to the appropriate subject in DepEd’s curriculum (e.g., Work Immersion, Empowerment Technologies, Media Information Literacy, English Communication). **The alignment of DepEd’s future-ready skills curriculum with industry requirements and standards aims to address the real problems being faced today.**

Other recommendations are directed towards strengthening the immersion curriculum, where competencies in the curriculum guide need to be aligned with the current situation and regional direction. Revisiting the guidelines on the implementation of the immersion program, particularly partnerships with industry and immersion venues, is also recommended alongside the improvement of monitoring and assessment tools during immersion. Regional advocacy for SHS offerings must be promoted to involve local business sectors in developing a more responsive program for immersion.

Our first step for June 2021 is the introduction and use of LinkedIn for the graduating Grade 12 learners of SY 2020-2021. This will be followed by capacity-building and upskilling sessions to include Grades 10 and 11 learners in the following months.

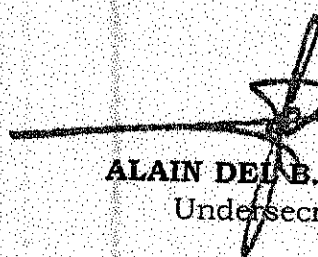
A paradigm shift and an open and optimistic mind can change the future of our Filipino youth and move towards the success of the Philippine K to 12 basic education program.

For the information of all concerned.



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ALAIN DEL B. PASCUA
Undersecretary

