

REVIEW ARTICLE

From Placement to Partnership: Industry-Academe Linkages for Localized Senior High School Work Immersion in the Philippines

Noemi Grace Cosare^{1,*}

¹ University of the Immaculate Conception, Philippines

*Corresponding author: ncosare@uic.edu.ph

Keywords: employability, localization, school-to-work, skills, vocational education

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.66074/C9D2E6F3G7>

Received: 11 June 2026

Accepted: 30 Aug 2026

Revised: 13 Aug 2026

Published: 13 Sep 2026

ABSTRACT

Background: The Philippine Senior High School (SHS) work immersion system is entering a major transition. The Strengthened SHS Curriculum extends workplace exposure beyond the earlier 80-hour minimum and permits 320 to 640 hours for Technical-Professional pathways, while an enhanced public-private pilot has used 420-hour and 640-hour models. Longer exposure can improve skill formation only when schools can secure relevant, safe, and adequately supervised placements. **Objective:** This review examined the challenges that constrain industry-academe linkages and identified best practices for localized work immersion, with particular attention to provincial and developing regions where employer density and transport access vary. **Methods:** A structured narrative review synthesized 23 substantive sources, including Philippine laws and DepEd issuances, national labor-market studies, Philippine work immersion research, and international evidence on work-based learning, apprenticeships, employer engagement, and school-to-work transitions. Two methodological sources guided review transparency and narrative quality. **Results:** The evidence converged on seven implementation domains: partner availability, placement alignment, authentic task design, coordination capacity, learner welfare and access, employer incentives, and competency assessment. Effective models used multi-partner networks, explicit training plans, shared supervision, transport or meal support, competency-based assessment, and recurrent feedback between schools and employers. **Conclusion:** Expanded immersion hours should be treated as a partnership capacity reform rather than a scheduling reform. A localized ecosystem model that maps local industries, pools placements across sectors, protects learner access, and links workplace tasks to assessable competencies offers a more credible route to equitable and industry-validated SHS credentials.

I. INTRODUCTION

The promise of Senior High School (SHS) in the Philippines has always extended beyond completion of basic education. Republic Act No. 10533 framed the additional years of schooling as preparation for higher education, middle-level skills development, employment, and entrepreneurship, and it required the basic education curriculum to remain responsive to the needs of learners, communities, and the labor market (Republic Act No. 10533, 2013). Work immersion became one of the most visible mechanisms for translating that policy ambition into practice. Under DepEd Order No. 30, s. 2017, learners were expected to enter or simulate authentic work environments, apply competencies acquired in school, strengthen communication and human relations, develop work habits, and become familiar with workplace expectations (Department of Education, 2017). The original policy established a minimum of 80 hours while permitting longer delivery models when school capacity and program requirements justified them.

The policy environment has since shifted from short exposure toward deeper, competency-oriented workplace learning. Evidence from employers had already indicated that an 80-hour minimum was often too short to observe sustained performance, permit meaningful task rotation, or develop behavioral competencies. Orbeta et al. (2019) found that many firms had limited knowledge of the SHS program and tended to view SHS graduates as insufficiently work-ready, with employers explicitly pointing to the short immersion period and weak alignment between placements and specialization.

More recent labor-market evidence has reinforced the need to examine the work preparation function of SHS. Orbeta and Potestad (2025) reported that only a minority of SHS graduates entered the labor force soon after graduation, while most continued their education, and they emphasized the continuing importance of employer engagement and credible demonstrations of graduate competence.

The Strengthened SHS Curriculum responds to these concerns with a substantial expansion of workplace exposure. DepEd Memorandum No. 48, s. 2025 permits the extension of work immersion from the earlier 80 to 320-hour range to 320 to 640 hours depending on track and specialization, with authentic workplace experience and strong industry partnership identified as central design principles (Department of Education, 2025a). The separate DepEd-PCORP enhanced work immersion pilot provided 420-hour and 640-hour delivery options and formalized expectations for industry alignment, learner welfare support, accident or health protection, and structured pre-immersion and post-immersion phases (Department of Education, 2025b). Full implementation of the Strengthened SHS Curriculum for incoming Grade 11 learners began in School Year 2026-2027, which made institutional readiness and partner coordination immediate rather than prospective concerns (Department of Education, 2026).

The expansion of hours changes the economics and logistics of work immersion. A school that can place 100 learners for 80 hours needs to secure roughly 8,000 learner-hours of workplace opportunity. If the same cohort requires 320 hours, the placement demand rises to 32,000 learner-hours; at 640

hours, it reaches 64,000 learner-hours. The numerical increase does not merely lengthen a subject. It multiplies the need for partner capacity, supervision, transportation, workplace insurance, task sequencing, documentation, and mechanisms for resolving attendance or safety concerns. It also raises the consequences of poor placement quality. A mismatched placement that lasts several days may be an inconvenience; the same mismatch over several months can displace substantial curriculum time without producing the intended occupational competence.

This issue is especially important outside dense metropolitan labor markets. Provincial schools often operate within narrower clusters of employers, public offices, microenterprises, farms, cooperatives, hospitals, hospitality establishments, service firms, and local government units. Learners may travel farther to reach placements, while individual enterprises may lack the capacity to host large cohorts. Philippine studies from Mindanao illustrate the practical dimensions of this problem. In Davao del Norte, work immersion coordinators described difficulty in securing partner institutions and relied on school heads, academic networks, local government units, and community stakeholders to maintain implementation (Muyco & Leopardas, 2024). In Misamis Oriental, Tabaosares and Castillo (2024) documented work immersion performance among SHS learners assigned to partner institutions and highlighted the continued role of strand-aligned workplace exposure in learner development. Such studies do not establish a uniform Mindanao pattern, but they show why national policy must be translated through local partnership ecosystems rather than through a single placement template.

International work-based learning research points in the same direction. The workplace can provide equipment, expert practice, social norms, feedback, and authentic production conditions that are difficult to reproduce in classrooms, but quality depends on design rather than exposure alone. Musset (2019) emphasized that length, sequencing, employer engagement, and equity safeguards shape the value of work-based learning in secondary education. James Relly and Laczik (2022) similarly showed that employer engagement in apprenticeship depends on reciprocal collaboration rather than simple employer participation. Hiim (2023) found that relevant vocational education requires sustained collaboration between schools and workplaces around curriculum content, learner tasks, and professional practice. These findings are particularly relevant when work immersion shifts from brief observation toward hundreds of hours of workplace participation.

The Philippine policy environment also increasingly favors enterprise participation in skills development. Republic Act No. 12063 institutionalized the Enterprise-Based Education and Training framework, recognized the private sector as an indispensable partner in competency development, and allowed students who must complete immersion or internship requirements to participate in registered enterprise-based programs subject to interagency rules (Republic Act No. 12063, 2024). Although SHS work immersion remains governed by DepEd policy, the law signals a broader national move toward industry-driven training plans, competency standards, workplace protection, and stronger incentives for enterprise participation. The overlap creates an opportunity to design SHS immersion as part of a wider local skills ecosystem rather than as an isolated school requirement.

A central problem, therefore, is not whether longer work immersion is desirable in principle. The more consequential question is how expanded work immersion can remain relevant, safe, accessible, and manageable when the supply of placements differs sharply across localities. A policy that assumes equal industry density can unintentionally widen geographic inequality. Schools with strong employer networks may provide occupationally aligned placements with modern equipment and trained supervisors, while schools in less industrialized areas may rely on convenient but weakly aligned sites. Learners with greater financial resources may absorb transportation and meal costs, while economically vulnerable learners may face attendance pressure when placements are distant. Coordinators may also carry heavy administrative loads when one teacher must negotiate memoranda, orient employers, monitor learners, validate hours, manage incidents, and reconcile school assessment with workplace evaluation.

This review addresses that implementation gap through a localized industry-academe lens. It examines the policy transition toward expanded immersion hours, synthesizes reported challenges in Philippine work immersion and international work-based learning, and identifies design practices that can preserve quality when partner availability is uneven. The review gives particular attention to five linked questions: what expanded hours require from local partnership capacity; which barriers most often weaken

placement quality; what partnership arrangements improve task authenticity and supervision; how equity and learner welfare can be protected; and which governance mechanisms can convert employer participation into durable school-industry collaboration. The aim is to move the conversation from the number of immersion hours to the architecture required for those hours to produce credible, industry-recognized learning.

II. METHODS

This study used a structured narrative review because the topic spans policy documents, labor-market research, qualitative implementation studies, quantitative work immersion studies, vocational education research, and international guidance on work-based learning. A conventional effect-size meta-analysis would not have been appropriate because the evidence base uses heterogeneous outcomes, units of analysis, intervention designs, and policy constructs. The review followed the logic of a semi-systematic narrative synthesis described by Snyder (2019), with explicit search boundaries, transparent eligibility criteria, source appraisal, and thematic integration. The presentation also drew on the SANRA criteria for high-quality narrative reviews, particularly justification of the review, description of the search, appropriate referencing, scientific reasoning, and presentation of endpoint data where available (Baethge et al., 2019).

The substantive scope covered SHS work immersion in the Philippines and closely related international evidence on work-based learning, vocational education, apprenticeships, employer engagement, and school-to-work transition. The review centered on implementation conditions rather than on a single student outcome. Five review questions guided synthesis: (1) How has Philippine policy changed the expected scale and structure of SHS work immersion? (2) What challenges affect the availability, alignment, supervision, and accessibility of placements? (3) Which partnership features are associated with more authentic and competency-oriented workplace learning? (4) Which practices reduce geographic and socioeconomic inequities in participation? and (5) What local governance arrangements can sustain industry-academe partnerships as work immersion hours expand?

Evidence identification took place in September 2026 through targeted scholarly and policy searches across publicly accessible publisher platforms, journal repositories, national government repositories, and international organization databases. Philippine policy and statutory sources were obtained from the Department of Education, Lawphil, and related government repositories. National labor-market and education studies were identified through the Philippine Institute for Development Studies and peer-reviewed Philippine journals. International evidence was drawn from OECD publications, the International Labour Organization, and peer-reviewed journals in vocational education, education and work, higher education, labor-market transition, and economics of education. Search strings combined terms such as senior high school, work immersion, Philippines, industry partner, industry-academe, work-based learning, vocational education, employer engagement, apprenticeship, school-to-work transition, rural, provincial, placement alignment, supervision, employability, and competency assessment. Citation chaining was used when a verified source identified a directly relevant foundational or policy document.

Sources were prioritized when they met four conditions: direct relevance to workplace-based learning or SHS employability; verifiable bibliographic or official publication details; sufficient methodological or policy information to support interpretation; and publication from 2019 through September 12, 2026. Older sources were retained only when they were foundational to the Philippine legal or regulatory framework, particularly Republic Act No. 10533 and DepEd Order No. 30, s. 2017. Peer-reviewed studies from the Philippines were included when they addressed work immersion performance, student challenges, coordinator experience, placement alignment, labor-market transition, or cross-sector collaboration. International sources were included when they provided transferable evidence on employer engagement, workplace pedagogy, apprenticeship quality, vocational school-work collaboration, or work-based learning outcomes. Sources were excluded when citation details could not be verified, the content was primarily promotional, the setting had no meaningful connection to workplace learning, or the conclusions could not be distinguished from opinion.

Appraisal was fit-for-purpose rather than based on a single risk-of-bias scale because the review included laws, administrative issuances, policy reports, qualitative studies, quantitative studies, reviews, and international

standards. Legal and administrative documents were appraised by issuing authority, policy status, implementation relevance, and specificity of requirements. Empirical studies were appraised for clarity of design, sample description, data source, alignment between research question and analysis, and transparency of reported findings. International reviews and policy reports were appraised for evidence breadth, methodological description, and relevance to secondary or vocational work-based learning. Lower-tier local studies were not used to establish broad causal claims; they served as contextual evidence when their findings converged with stronger national or international sources.

For each substantive source, information was charted on jurisdiction, source type, population or policy coverage, work-based learning model, partnership arrangement, reported implementation challenge, quality safeguard, learner support mechanism, and outcome or policy implication. The final substantive evidence base contained 23 sources, supplemented by two review-method sources. The 23 sources consisted of six Philippine statutory or DepEd policy documents, eight Philippine empirical or policy research sources, and nine international work-based learning or school-to-work sources. The synthesis proceeded in three stages. First, policy provisions were arranged chronologically to identify changes in immersion duration, partnership expectations, and learner protection. Second, implementation findings were coded into recurring challenge domains. Third, reported solutions and design features were compared across Philippine and international sources to identify practices that were locally actionable and supported by more than one evidence stream.

Initial codes included partner scarcity, employer awareness, specialization mismatch, task authenticity, supervisor capacity, teacher workload, learner transport, meal costs, insurance, safety, assessment, certification, employer incentives, local government support, interagency coordination, and feedback systems. Related codes were grouped into seven analytic domains: partner availability and geographic capacity; alignment and task authenticity; partnership governance and coordinator workload; learner welfare and access; employer value and incentives; supervision and workplace pedagogy; and competency assessment with outcome feedback. A final cross-cutting category captured localization practices that redistribute placement demand across employers and sectors. The analysis preserved distinctions between evidence about program operation and interpretation about system design; descriptive findings are reported in the Results section, while policy and theoretical implications are reserved for the Discussion.

Several steps were used to improve review rigor. Policy claims about hours, participation, industry alignment, learner support, and full implementation were anchored to official issuances rather than secondary commentary. Philippine empirical claims were cross-checked against national labor-market evidence and international work-based learning research before they were treated as recurring patterns. The review avoided treating the 640-hour figure as a universal requirement for all SHS learners; instead, it distinguished the strengthened curriculum's 320 to 640-hour range from the 420-hour and 640-hour options used in the enhanced DepEd-PCORP pilot. References were limited to sources with traceable publication records, and DOI information was verified for scholarly sources when available. Because this was a narrative review rather than a systematic review with exhaustive database coverage, the emphasis was on transparent reasoning, source quality, policy relevance, and convergence across evidence streams rather than claims of complete literature capture.

III. RESULTS

The substantive synthesis included 23 sources relevant to Philippine SHS work immersion, labor-market transition, work-based learning, employer engagement, vocational education, or apprenticeship quality. Six were Philippine laws or DepEd issuances, eight were Philippine empirical or policy research sources, and nine were international scholarly or intergovernmental sources. Two additional sources addressed narrative review method and were used only to guide review conduct. Table 1 summarizes the evidence base used for substantive synthesis.

Policy Expansion and the Shift from Exposure to Competency

The policy record showed a clear increase in the expected intensity of workplace learning. Republic Act No. 10533 established employability and

productive work as explicit outcomes of basic education and required consultation with labor, training, education, and industry stakeholders (Republic Act No. 10533, 2013). DepEd Order No. 30, s. 2017 operationalized work immersion and established the 80-hour minimum, with longer models available subject to program design and school capacity (Department of Education, 2017).

DepEd Memorandum No. 48, s. 2025 introduced a strengthened curriculum structure that allows work immersion to extend from the earlier 80 to 320-hour range to 320 to 640 hours depending on track and specialization. The issuance required authentic learning in real work settings and stronger partnerships with industry and relevant institutions (Department of Education, 2025a). DepEd Memorandum No. 52, s. 2025 established enhanced pilot options of 420 or 640 hours, including school-based pre-immersion and post-immersion components and a workplace phase aligned with approved industry training plans. The same issuance specified partner criteria related to child protection, labor compliance, meaningful work experience, meal or transport assistance, accident or health protection, industry alignment, and possible incentives for participating firms (Department of Education, 2025b).

Republic Act No. 12063 added a complementary national policy environment for enterprise-based skills formation. It positioned enterprises as partners in competency development, recognized formal training plans and competency standards, required occupational safety and health protections, and allowed students with academic immersion requirements to participate in registered enterprise-based programs subject to interagency rules (Republic Act No. 12063, 2024). DepEd Memorandum No. 12, s. 2026 then directed full implementation of the Strengthened SHS Curriculum for incoming Grade 11 learners in School Year 2026-2027 and identified coordination with relevant partners as part of implementation preparation (Department of Education, 2026).

Table 1
Composition of the Substantive Evidence Base

Evidence group	Number	Primary contribution to synthesis
Philippine statutory and DepEd policy documents	6	Legal basis, work immersion duration, implementation rules, employer participation, learner protection, and national rollout.
Philippine empirical and policy research	8	Employer perceptions, labor-market outcomes, work immersion performance, coordinator experience, partnership barriers, and placement alignment.
International work-based learning and school-to-work evidence	9	Employer engagement, workplace pedagogy, vocational school-work collaboration, equity, apprenticeship quality, and outcome evidence.

Table 2
Policy Trajectory of Philippine SHS Work Immersion

Policy milestone	Workplace exposure	Partnership feature	Implementation significance
RA 10533 (2013)	Employability established as a basic education outcome.	Consultation with DepEd, TESDA, CHED, DOLE, and industry stakeholders.	Created the legal basis for labor-market responsive SHS.
DO 30, s. 2017	Minimum 80 hours, with longer delivery models possible.	School-partner arrangements for authentic workplace exposure.	Established operational work immersion requirements.
RA 12063 (2024)	Enterprise-based training framework with competency standards.	Industry as an indispensable training partner; training plans and protections.	Expanded the national infrastructure for enterprise-led skills formation.
DM 48, s. 2025	320 to 640 hours depending on track and specialization.	Authentic work environments and stronger institutional partnerships.	Moved work immersion toward sustained competency development.
DM 52, s. 2025	Enhanced pilot options of 420 or 640 hours.	Industry alignment, learner welfare support, insurance, and partner incentives.	Tested deeper industry participation and structured training plans.
DM 12, s. 2026	Full strengthened SHS rollout for incoming Grade 11.	Implementation preparation includes coordination with relevant partners.	Made partnership capacity a system-wide implementation requirement.

Partner Availability and Geographic Capacity

Philippine evidence repeatedly identified the supply of suitable partner institutions as a constraint. Muyco and Leopardas (2024) reported that coordinators in Davao del Norte encountered obstacles in establishing industry partnerships and relied on school leadership, academic networks, community stakeholders, and local government units to secure support. Tengco (2025) identified limited industry participation and fragmented coordination as policy

gaps that affected the capacity of SHS work immersion to improve employability. Anabo et al. (2025) also documented practical difficulties among out-of-campus learners that were linked to distance, family support, school supervision, field supervision, work ethics, and skills competence.

The national labor-market literature showed a related demand-side problem. Orbeta et al. (2019) found that many firms lacked detailed knowledge of the SHS program and that employer willingness to hire SHS graduates was conditioned by perceived competence and improved work preparation. Mokher and Mella-Alcazar (2024) reported that collaboration across Philippine education sectors occurred less extensively in practice than policy intended, although boundary practices around hands-on training, student access, and teacher development supported implementation where coordination was active. These studies documented a recurring dependence on local institutional relationships rather than on a uniform national pool of placements.

International evidence reported similar constraints when employer engagement was treated as a one-time request for placement slots. Musset (2019) identified employer recruitment and retention as a persistent challenge in school-based work-based learning. James Relly and Laczik (2022) described successful vocational formation as a collaborative process that depends on sustained relationships and shared responsibility. Ramli et al. (2024) synthesized stakeholder evidence and found that work-based learning models varied substantially in how education providers and employers shared roles, with stronger training transfer reported when stakeholder engagement was reciprocal.

Placement Alignment and Authenticity of Workplace Tasks

Placement relevance emerged as a separate quality issue from placement availability. Tengco (2025) reported recurring mismatches between SHS strands and immersion sites and linked these mismatches to weaker employability outcomes. DepEd Memorandum No. 52, s. 2025 directly addressed this problem by requiring partner focus areas to align with the TVL specializations offered by participating schools and by requiring authentic workplace experiences that develop technical and 21st-century competencies (Department of Education, 2025b).

Regional Philippine evidence showed that strand-linked workplace exposure remained a central feature of work immersion implementation. Tabaosares and Castillo (2024) examined Grade 12 learners in Misamis Oriental who completed workplace immersion with partner institutions aligned to their academic strands. The study reported generally favorable performance evaluations across the participating strands. The evidence did not establish that all assigned tasks were equally authentic, but it documented the role of aligned partner sites in the existing model.

International vocational education research provided more detail on task authenticity. Hiim (2023) found that collaboration between schools and workplaces contributed to relevant vocational education when curriculum, workplace tasks, and occupational practice were connected rather than treated as separate domains. James Relly and Laczik (2022) likewise described vocational formation as a process in which employers, educators, and learners contribute distinct resources. The ILO (2022) identified structured work-based learning, local industry participation, and clear institutional roles as central features of stronger school-based vocational systems.

Coordination Capacity, Supervision, and Administrative Load

Coordinator capacity was a recurrent operational finding in Philippine studies. Muyco and Leopardas (2024) described work immersion coordinators as responsible for partnership formation, documentation, orientation, learner support, and coordination with internal and external stakeholders. Their participants reported that school-head support, professional networks, community assistance, and local government cooperation helped them sustain the program. Tengco (2025) similarly identified leadership and coordination gaps as structural weaknesses in work immersion implementation.

The international evidence distinguished supervision from simple attendance monitoring. Workplace learning was stronger when an experienced worker or supervisor provided feedback, modeled occupational practice, and connected tasks to explicit competencies. The ILO (2022) emphasized the role of workplace trainers, coordination mechanisms, and local social partners in school-based vocational learning. Hiim (2023) reported that school-workplace

collaboration was most relevant when both settings contributed to the learner's vocational development. Ramli et al. (2024) found that shared responsibility among education providers, students, and industry partners supported the transfer of learning.

Longer immersion hours increased the duration over which these coordination functions must operate. DepEd Memorandum No. 52, s. 2025 divided the enhanced pilot into pre-immersion, workplace, and post-immersion phases, required industry-based content in the workplace phase, and tied implementation to partner training plans (Department of Education, 2025b). The policy structure therefore assigned coordination tasks before, during, and after the placement rather than limiting the coordinator's role to deployment.

Learner Welfare, Cost, and Access

Learner access was affected by the location and cost of off-campus placement. Anabo et al. (2025) reported that many respondents traveled six kilometers or more to immersion venues and assessed challenges related to family support, school supervision, field supervision, work ethics, and skills competence. The study situated these concerns within out-of-campus immersion, where daily attendance requires learners to absorb transport time and related costs.

The enhanced pilot policy incorporated direct safeguards for these costs. DepEd Memorandum No. 52, s. 2025 required participating partner institutions to demonstrate capacity to provide meal or transportation support and accident or health protection for participating learners. It also required parental consent, learner assent, and compliance with child protection and labor rules (Department of Education, 2025b). These provisions were more explicit than the original assumption that schools and partners could arrange workplace exposure without a standardized welfare package.

International guidance reported comparable equity concerns. Musset (2019) noted that work-based learning can reproduce inequality when high-quality placements are more accessible to learners with stronger networks, better transport, or greater financial resources. The ILO's Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation emphasized safe conditions, rights, social dialogue, structured programs, and measures that broaden participation rather than restrict workplace learning to learners who can absorb hidden costs (International Labour Organization, 2023).

Employer Value, Incentives, and Relationship Durability

Employer participation was reported as more stable when firms received a clear value proposition. Orbeta et al. (2019) found that employers wanted greater clarity about SHS competencies and more confidence in graduate skills before treating SHS as a meaningful recruitment source. DepEd's later enhanced pilot responded with potential tax benefits, public recognition, or co-branding opportunities for private-sector partners, while schools and division offices could formally recognize exemplary partner institutions (Department of Education, 2025b).

Republic Act No. 12063 also created a wider incentive environment for enterprise-based education and training. The law rationalized training modalities, recognized enterprise-designed programs under competency standards, and provided a framework in which enterprises could participate in skills development with defined training plans and trainee protections (Republic Act No. 12063, 2024). The law did not replace DepEd work immersion rules, but it documented a national policy direction toward structured and incentivized enterprise participation.

International sources reported that employers engage for multiple reasons, including recruitment, workforce development, corporate responsibility, and relationships with education providers. James Relly and Laczik (2022) found that collaboration was more durable when employer engagement was embedded in vocational formation rather than treated as a transactional placement arrangement. Ramli et al. (2024) likewise found that stakeholder expectations, mutual benefit, and clarity of roles affected the quality of engagement.

Competency Assessment, Credentials, and Feedback

The evidence distinguished time spent at a workplace from demonstrated competence. Orbeta et al. (2019) reported employer concern about the practical and behavioral readiness of SHS graduates even when learners had

completed the required immersion. Orbeta and Potestad (2025) later found mixed labor-market outcomes for SHS graduates and called for continued validation of the work preparation component of SHS, together with sustained employer engagement and clearer evidence of graduate skills.

The strengthened policy framework gave greater prominence to competency alignment. DepEd Memorandum No. 52, s. 2025 required training plans and industry-based content, while Republic Act No. 12063 defined competency standards, competency assessment, and qualifications as key components of enterprise-based education and training. The combined policy direction favored evidence of performance against defined standards rather than the use of accumulated hours as the sole indicator of completion.

International evidence supported this distinction. Tobback et al. (2025) found that the effects of workplace versus school-based learning varied by vocational track, outcome, and amount of workplace learning, which indicated that placement quantity alone did not produce uniform benefits. Jackson and Bridgstock (2021) found that work-integrated and internship experiences were valued for skills and experience, but their contribution to employment outcomes varied. Blokker et al. (2023), in a broad review of school-to-work research, organized transition outcomes as products of both individual and contextual factors over time, reinforcing the importance of tracking outcomes beyond immediate placement completion.

Reported Best Practices for Localized Linkage Models

Across the evidence base, reported practices clustered around eight design elements: local labor-market mapping, portfolio-based partner networks, specialization-aligned placement, written competency and task plans, shared supervision, learner welfare support, employer recognition or incentives, and post-immersion feedback. Table 3 presents the descriptive synthesis of challenges and corresponding practices reported across the reviewed sources.

Table 3
Recurring Implementation Challenges and Reported Best-Practice Responses

Challenge domain	Reported manifestation	Reported response or safeguard
Partner availability	Few suitable host institutions; large learner cohorts; repeated dependence on the same employers.	Map local sectors, pool public and private partners, use multi-employer networks, and involve LGUs and industry associations.
Placement alignment	Learners assigned to convenient sites or tasks with weak connection to specialization.	Match placements to specialization and define approved workplace tasks before deployment.
Task authenticity	Observation, clerical errands, or repetitive low-skill tasks dominate the placement.	Use competency-linked training plans, task rotation, and progressive responsibility.
Coordinator workload	One coordinator manages agreements, orientation, monitoring, documentation, and incident response.	Distribute coordination roles, use common templates and schedules, and formalize partner focal persons.
Supervision quality	Attendance is monitored but workplace feedback is inconsistent.	Assign trained workplace supervisors and schedule school-industry feedback checkpoints.
Learner access	Transport distance, meals, safety, and insurance create participation barriers.	Provide transport or meal support, insurance, consent procedures, and placement proximity criteria.
Employer retention	Partners participate once but do not renew placements.	Offer recognition, clear communication, predictable calendars, and a defined employer value proposition.
Assessment and feedback	Hours completed become the dominant completion measure.	Assess observable competencies, gather employer ratings, archive learner evidence, and feed results into curriculum review.

A final pattern concerned localization. Philippine studies reported the use of local government units, academic networks, community stakeholders, and nearby partner institutions to sustain placements (Muyco & Leopardas, 2024). National policy permitted schools to coordinate with relevant partners and required alignment between offered specializations and workplace focus areas (Department of Education, 2025b, 2026). International evidence described comparable local network functions, including school-employer collaboration, intermediary support, and workplace trainer participation (Hiim, 2023; International Labour Organization, 2022; James Relly & Laczik, 2022). The descriptive evidence therefore showed that localization was implemented through network formation, role clarification, and adaptation to the available regional economy rather than through a single standard host model.

IV. DISCUSSION

The central implication of the review is that the expansion of work immersion hours should be understood as a partnership capacity reform. Increasing the allowable or expected duration of workplace learning creates the opportunity for deeper occupational socialization, task progression, and competency development, but it also amplifies every weakness already present in placement systems. Musset (2019) argued that the quality of school-based work learning depends on design, sequencing, employer engagement, and equity safeguards. The Philippine policy shift now makes these conditions more consequential because a weak placement can occupy hundreds of hours of a learner's curriculum. The relevant unit of policy is therefore no longer the individual placement slot. It is the local system that supplies, governs, supervises, and evaluates a portfolio of placements.

This perspective clarifies why industry density matters. A metropolitan school may be able to distribute learners across hospitals, manufacturing firms, hotels, information technology companies, logistics providers, laboratories, construction firms, retail establishments, financial institutions, and professional offices. A provincial school may operate within a smaller employer base and may need to combine local government offices, cooperatives, farms, tourism establishments, clinics, microenterprises, state institutions, and a limited number of larger firms. The goal should not be to force both settings into identical industry configurations. Hiim (2023) showed that vocational relevance emerges from collaboration between education and working life, while the ILO (2022) emphasized the importance of local industry and social partners in school-based vocational systems. The practical standard should therefore be competency equivalence: different local sites may be acceptable when they can provide the required learning outcomes, task authenticity, supervision, and evidence of performance.

A localized approach also changes how schools should define industry-academe linkage. The conventional model assumes a bilateral relationship between one school and one firm. That arrangement can work for small cohorts, but it becomes fragile when immersion hours and learner numbers rise. Muyco and Leopardas (2024) documented how coordinators already depend on school heads, community stakeholders, professional networks, and local government. James Relly and Laczik (2022) similarly described employer engagement as collaborative vocational formation rather than a simple placement transaction. These findings support a network model in which schools organize a portfolio of employers, LGUs, industry associations, technical-vocational institutions, and intermediary organizations. The portfolio reduces dependence on any single firm and permits schools to distribute learners according to specialization, location, capacity, and timing.

The review suggests six core functions for such a localized linkage architecture. First, labor-market mapping should identify the actual employer base within reasonable travel distance, including small and medium enterprises and public institutions rather than only large firms. Second, partner segmentation should classify hosts according to specialization fit, number of learners they can absorb, equipment available, supervisor capacity, risk profile, and calendar constraints. Third, competency contracting should translate curriculum competencies into a short workplace training plan that specifies tasks, evidence, supervision, and assessment responsibilities. Fourth, learner support should define transport, meals, safety, insurance, consent, and accommodations before placement. Fifth, joint supervision should establish predictable contact between the school coordinator and workplace supervisor. Sixth, outcome feedback should use employer ratings, learner evidence, and completion data to revise future placements and, where appropriate, curriculum delivery.

The value of labor-market mapping is particularly strong in provincial settings. Without a local map, placement assignment tends to follow convenience, personal contacts, or historical relationships. That can produce repeated use of sites that are accessible but weakly aligned with the learner's specialization. Tengco (2025) identified placement mismatch as a persistent policy gap, while DepEd Memorandum No. 52, s. 2025 explicitly requires partner focus areas to align with school specializations. A local map makes that requirement operational. It also allows a school division to see where demand exceeds capacity. If several nearby schools all require hospitality placements in the same quarter, the problem is not solvable by asking each coordinator to negotiate harder. The division needs a shared placement calendar or a wider set of approved hosts.

The distinction between hours and competencies should also guide program evaluation. The strengthened policy appropriately expands time because authentic competence usually requires repeated practice. However, Tobback et al. (2025) found that the effects of workplace learning vary by track, outcome, and amount of exposure, while Jackson and Bridgstock (2021) showed that work-integrated experiences are not equally effective across all employment outcomes. Time is therefore a necessary resource, not a sufficient quality indicator. A 640-hour placement should demonstrate more than a 640-hour attendance record. It should provide a sequence of tasks through which the learner moves from orientation and observation to guided practice and, where safe and appropriate, increasingly independent performance.

Competency contracting can prevent long placements from becoming repetitive labor. Before deployment, the school and employer can specify a limited set of observable competencies and the tasks that will provide evidence for them. This does not require an employer to reproduce a classroom syllabus. It requires agreement on what the learner should be able to demonstrate by the end of the placement. The ILO (2023) places structured training and recognized competencies at the center of quality apprenticeships, and Republic Act No. 12063 similarly formalizes competency standards and training plans in enterprise-based education. DepEd's enhanced pilot already requires training plans and industry-based content. A concise competency contract would therefore operationalize existing policy rather than add an unrelated layer of paperwork.

Employer engagement should likewise be designed as a reciprocal relationship. Early Philippine evidence found that many firms had limited awareness of SHS competencies and were hesitant to treat SHS graduates as work-ready (Orbeta et al., 2019). That problem cannot be solved only by increasing immersion hours. Employers need to know what students have learned before deployment, what tasks are appropriate, what supervision is expected, and how their evaluation will be used. Schools, in turn, need honest employer feedback about technical gaps, communication, reliability, safety behavior, and emerging skill requirements. Mokher and Mella-Alcazar (2024) showed that cross-sector collaboration in Philippine technical-vocational pathways was less extensive than intended but became more useful through concrete boundary practices. Regular pre-placement and post-placement meetings are examples of such practices because they convert general partnership language into operational exchange.

The employer value proposition deserves equal attention. Firms incur real costs when they host learners: supervisor time, workflow disruption, safety responsibility, administrative coordination, and sometimes meals, transport support, insurance, or equipment. DepEd Memorandum No. 52, s. 2025 recognizes these realities through incentives, recognition, and co-branding possibilities. Republic Act No. 12063 takes a broader approach by creating an enterprise-based training framework with incentives and formal training arrangements. For SHS, the most sustainable incentives may not always be financial. Predictable scheduling, a single school focal person, prepared learners, streamlined documents, public recognition, access to a future recruitment pool, and opportunities to influence curriculum can reduce transaction costs and increase perceived benefit.

A localized model also requires an explicit equity standard. Expanded hours can impose substantial transport and meal costs, and those costs accumulate over months rather than days. Anabo et al. (2025) documented the importance of travel distance and family support in out-of-campus immersion. Musset (2019) warned that work-based learning can reproduce inequality if access to high-quality placements depends on social or financial resources. DepEd's enhanced pilot is notable because it makes meal or transport support and accident or health protection part of partner capacity. For system-wide expansion, these safeguards should be treated as quality requirements rather than optional benefits. A technically excellent placement that a low-income learner cannot reach reliably is not an equitable placement.

Geographic equity also argues for cluster-based organization. Schools located within the same city, municipality, or economic corridor can maintain a shared registry of approved partners, specialization fit, learner capacity, safety status, and past performance. Such a registry would reduce duplicated negotiation and allow placement demand to be balanced across schools. In locations with few employers, a division-level arrangement can also support staggered immersion calendars, shared transport, or short rotations across complementary sites. The ILO (2022) described the value of intermediaries and local coordination in work-based learning systems, while Ramli et al. (2024) found that stakeholder engagement improves when roles are shared and

explicit. A division or local consortium can perform this intermediary function where an individual school lacks bargaining power or administrative capacity.

Rotation should nevertheless be used selectively. If a single employer can provide a coherent training plan, adequate supervision, and progressive responsibility, unnecessary movement across sites may fragment learning. Rotation is most useful when no single local employer can provide the full competency set or when a specialization naturally spans different contexts. For example, an agriculture pathway may combine farm production, post-harvest operations, cooperative marketing, and local agribusiness; hospitality may combine front office, housekeeping, food service, and tourism operations. The governing principle is not exposure to many sites. It is completion of a coherent competency pathway.

Supervision must also evolve as immersion length expands. The Philippine coordinator role already includes partnership formation, orientation, documentation, monitoring, and learner support (Muyco & Leopardas, 2024). A model that simply increases the number of hours without redistributing these functions risks administrative overload. Shared supervision can reduce that burden. Each host should have a designated workplace mentor, each school should have a coordinator with a manageable caseload, and monitoring schedules should be risk-based rather than identical for every site. New or high-risk partners may require more frequent contact, while experienced low-risk partners can use scheduled digital check-ins supplemented by site visits. The purpose of supervision should remain developmental and protective rather than purely documentary.

Assessment is the final element that can convert work immersion from attendance into credential evidence. Employer ratings should be anchored to observable behavior and technical performance rather than global impressions. Learners can maintain a portfolio that includes task logs, supervisor-verified outputs, reflection linked to competencies, safety records, and selected work products that do not violate company confidentiality. Where TESDA or sector certifications are available, schools can align immersion tasks with relevant competency standards without assuming that immersion alone is equivalent to certification. Orbeta and Potestad (2025) emphasize that employers need clearer evidence of SHS graduate capabilities; a standardized workplace evidence package can make those capabilities more visible.

The school-to-work perspective broadens the outcome horizon further. Yamauchi and Tiongco (2021) showed that Filipino youth often move through imperfect early jobs and that education, ability, and experience shape later occupational upgrading. Blokker et al. (2023) likewise conceptualized school-to-work transition as a process influenced by person, context, and time. Work immersion should therefore be assessed not only by immediate employer satisfaction but also by learner confidence, skill demonstration, certification attainment, subsequent education or training, job search behavior, placement-to-employment conversion where appropriate, and employer willingness to host future cohorts. These indicators create a feedback loop between program design and actual transition outcomes.

For Mindanao and other geographically diverse regions, localization should not be mistaken for lower standards. The purpose of localization is to achieve national competencies through context-sensitive delivery. Davao del Norte evidence shows the importance of local government and stakeholder networks in sustaining immersion (Muyco & Leopardas, 2024), while Misamis Oriental evidence confirms that regional schools already use partner institutions for workplace performance assessment (Tabaosares & Castillo, 2024). The next policy step is to formalize these local strengths through shared registries, partner development, competency plans, welfare safeguards, and common assessment tools. Such mechanisms would allow smaller local economies to provide credible workplace learning without copying the industrial profile of Metro Manila, Cebu, or other dense labor markets.

The broader implication is that industry-academe linkage should be measured by relationship quality rather than by the number of memoranda of agreement signed. A school can have many formal partners but still provide mismatched tasks, weak supervision, and limited feedback. Conversely, a smaller but well-governed network can provide deeper training if partners understand competencies, supervisors are prepared, learner costs are covered, and evidence returns to the school. James Relly and Laczik (2022) describe this logic as collaboration in vocational formation, while Hiim (2023) emphasizes the integration of school and workplace learning. The Philippine strengthened SHS reforms create a policy window to institutionalize that deeper model.

Taken together, the evidence supports a move from placement administration to partnership management. The first asks whether every learner has somewhere to go. The second asks whether the local ecosystem has enough relevant capacity, whether tasks build competence, whether learners can access the sites safely and affordably, whether employers see value in participation, and whether evidence from the workplace changes what schools teach. Expanded immersion hours can produce stronger credentials only when these system conditions are addressed at the same time.

V. LIMITATIONS

This review has several limitations. First, it is a structured narrative review rather than an exhaustive systematic review, so the evidence base should not be interpreted as a complete census of all Philippine work immersion studies. The literature on SHS work immersion is dispersed across national reports, local journals, institutional repositories, and administrative issuances, and some studies provide limited methodological detail. The review therefore prioritized traceable sources and convergence across evidence streams rather than numerical completeness.

Second, the Philippine evidence base remains geographically uneven. Studies from Davao del Norte and Misamis Oriental provide useful Mindanao examples, but they do not represent the full variation across Regions IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, and BARMM or across urban, rural, island, and conflict-affected settings. Third, the Strengthened SHS Curriculum and the enhanced immersion pilots are recent, which means peer-reviewed outcome studies on 320 to 640-hour implementation are still limited. Many conclusions in this review therefore concern implementation readiness and design logic rather than measured long-term effects of the new duration.

Fourth, work-based learning research from other countries was used to inform partnership design, but institutional arrangements for apprenticeships, vocational education, employer incentives, and school governance differ across jurisdictions. Transferable principles were emphasized only when they aligned with Philippine policy or local evidence. Finally, the review did not estimate causal effects of specific linkage practices. Future research should compare placement models, track learner outcomes longitudinally, and examine whether partner density, distance, supervision intensity, employer incentives, and competency alignment predict certification, employment, and further training outcomes.

VI. CONCLUSION

The expansion of SHS work immersion marks a significant change in the Philippine school-to-work agenda. Moving from a minimum 80-hour model toward 320 to 640-hour arrangements creates more time for learners to practice technical skills, understand workplace norms, receive feedback, and demonstrate competence. Yet longer duration also multiplies the demand for partner capacity, supervision, learner support, and quality assurance. The evidence reviewed here indicates that the main implementation challenge is not the number of hours itself but the strength of the local partnership system that gives those hours educational value.

A credible localized model requires more than additional memoranda with employers. Schools and divisions need a mapped portfolio of partners, specialization-aligned placements, competency-based training plans, trained workplace supervisors, predictable school monitoring, transport and welfare safeguards, employer incentives or recognition, and outcome data that return to curriculum planning. In provincial and developing regions, local government units, industry associations, cooperatives, technical-vocational institutions, public agencies, and small and medium enterprises can form part of the immersion ecosystem when they can provide authentic tasks and adequate supervision.

The policy objective should therefore shift from securing placements to governing partnerships. Expanded immersion will be most defensible when every learner can access a relevant and safe workplace, every partner understands the competencies to be developed, every supervisor has a clear role, and completion produces evidence of performance rather than only evidence of attendance. Under those conditions, localized work immersion can become a practical bridge between SHS, industry-validated credentials, further training, and productive school-to-work transitions.

Author Contributions

The author conceptualized the review, developed the search strategy, synthesized the evidence, interpreted the findings, prepared the language support framework, and approved the final manuscript.

Funding

No external funding was received for this work.

Ethics Approval and Informed Consent

Ethics approval and informed consent were not required because this study reviewed and synthesized previously published literature and publicly available curriculum materials and did not involve direct participation of human subjects.

Competing Interests

The author declares no competing interests.

Data Availability

All evidence discussed in this review is available in the cited publications and official sources. The structured evidence matrix used for synthesis can be made available by the author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of AI Use

A generative artificial intelligence tool was used to assist with language refinement, structural organization, and consistency checking during manuscript preparation. Scholarly claims and bibliographic details were checked against source records, and responsibility for the final content rests with the author.

Acknowledgments

None.

References

- Anabo, R. O., Nebrija, R. N., Sison, M. N., Lopido, J. L. C., Picardal, B. M., & Rapada, V. P., Jr. (2025). Challenges and problems encountered by senior high school out-of-campus students in work immersion program. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*, 6(2), 805-822. <https://doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.06.02.27>
- Baethge, C., Goldbeck-Wood, S., & Mertens, S. (2019). SANRA - a scale for the quality assessment of narrative review articles. *Research Integrity and Peer Review*, 4, 5. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41073-019-0064-8>
- Blokker, R., Akkermans, J., Marciniak, J., Jansen, P. G. W., & Khapova, S. N. (2023). Organizing school-to-work transition research from a sustainable career perspective: A review and research agenda. *Work, Aging and Retirement*, 9(3), 239-261. <https://doi.org/10.1093/workar/waad012>
- Department of Education. (2017). DepEd Order No. 30, s. 2017: Guidelines for work immersion. <https://www.deped.gov.ph/2017/06/05/do-30-s-2017-guidelines-for-work-immersion/>
- Department of Education. (2025a). DepEd Memorandum No. 48, s. 2025: Pilot implementation of the Strengthened Senior High School Curriculum for Grade 11 in School Year 2025-2026. https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/DM-48-s.-2025_-Pilot-Implementation-of-the-Strengthened-Senior-High-School-Curriculum-for-Grade-11-in-School-Year-2025-2026.pdf
- Department of Education. (2025b). DepEd Memorandum No. 52, s. 2025: Guidelines for the DepEd-PCORP pilot implementation of the Enhanced Senior High School Work Immersion Program in selected schools. https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/DM_s2025_052r.pdf
- Department of Education. (2026). DepEd Memorandum No. 12, s. 2026: Full implementation of the Strengthened Senior High School Curriculum in School Year 2026-2027. https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/DM_s2026_012r.pdf
- Hiim, H. (2023). How can collaboration between schools and workplaces contribute to relevant vocational education? *Vocations and Learning*, 16, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12186-022-09300-z>
- International Labour Organization. (2022). Strengthening work-based learning in VET institutions. International Labour Office. <https://www.ilo.org/publications/strengthening-work-based-learning-vet-institutions>

- International Labour Organization. (2023). Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208). International Labour Office. <https://www.ilo.org/resource/other/r208-quality-apprenticeships-recommendation-2023>
- Jackson, D., & Bridgstock, R. (2021). What actually works to enhance graduate employability? The relative value of curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular learning and paid work. *Higher Education*, 81, 723-739. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-020-00570-x>
- James Relly, S., & Laczik, A. (2022). Apprenticeship, employer engagement and vocational formation: A process of collaboration. *Journal of Education and Work*, 35(1), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2021.1983524>
- Mokher, C. G., & Mella-Alcazar, A. A. C. (2024). Improving education pathways: Collaboration supporting transitions from K-12 to postsecondary education in the Philippines. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 106, 103003. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2024.103003>
- Musset, P. (2019). Improving work-based learning in schools (OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers No. 233). OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/918caba5-en>
- Muyco, M. A. B., & Leopardas, M. M. (2024). Lived experiences of coordinators in the implementation of Senior High School (SHS) work immersion: A qualitative study. *EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 10(8), 66-76. <https://doi.org/10.36713/epri17913>
- Orbeta, A. C., Jr., Lagarto, M. B., Ortiz, M. K. P., Ortiz, D. A. P., & Potestad, M. V. (2019). Senior High School and the labor market: Perspectives of Grade 12 students and human resource officers (Research Paper Series No. 2019-04). Philippine Institute for Development Studies. <https://doi.org/10.62986/rps2019.04>
- Orbeta, A. C., Jr., & Potestad, M. V. (2025). On the employability of Senior High School graduates in the Philippines: Evidence from the Labor Force Survey. *Philippine Journal of Development*, 49(1). <https://doi.org/10.62986/pjd2025.49.1d>
- Ramli, M. A., Zakariah, S. H., & Ab Halim, F. (2024). Work based learning in vocational education training (VET): A review of engagement among stakeholders. *Online Journal for TVET Practitioners*, 9(2), 81-97. <https://doi.org/10.30880/ojtp.2024.09.02.007>
- Republic Act No. 10533. (2013). Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013. https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2013/ra_10533_2013.html
- Republic Act No. 12063. (2024). Enterprise-Based Education and Training (EBET) Framework Act. https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2024/ra_12063_2024.html
- Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, 104, 333-339. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>
- Tabaosares, M. C., & Castillo, A. A. (2024). Assessing the demographic profile and work immersion performance of Senior High School students. *International Journal of Science and Management Studies*, 7(3), 265-273. <https://doi.org/10.51386/25815946/ijsms-v7i3p116>
- Tengco, V. Y. (2025). Policy gaps in SHS work immersion and employability. *International Journal of Research Studies in Education*, 14(14), 197-208. <https://doi.org/10.5861/ijrse.2025.25245>
- Tobback, I., Verhaest, D., & De Witte, K. (2025). The impact of work-based versus school-based learning on cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes in vocational secondary education. *Economics of Education Review*, 107, 102673. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2025.102673>
- Yamauchi, F., & Tiongo, M. (2021). Tracking school-to-work transition among the youth in the Philippines. *DLSU Business & Economics Review*, 30(2), 61-79. <https://doi.org/10.59588/2243-786X.1109>