

Voices from the Field: Exploring Learners' and Teachers' Experiences in Work Immersion Programs

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative-narrative inquiry study explored the experiences of work immersion learners and teachers among the Mother High Schools of the Third Congressional District of the Schools Division of Iloilo to understand the challenges that affect the implementation of the Senior High School Work Immersion Program. Using thematic analysis, the study examined the learners' and teachers' accounts on work immersion program. The findings showed that learners needed strong guidance and support especially in areas such as punctuality, responsibility, communication, and adapting to workplace expectations. Teachers noted that some students struggled with confidence, work habits, and handling real-world tasks, which required continuous monitoring and coaching. Learners' experiences were also shaped by the quality of school-industry partnerships. When expectations were clear and workplace tasks were meaningful, students showed better engagement and learning. However, communication gaps and unclear instructions sometimes confuse learners, which may affect their performance. Behavioral issues such as tardiness, absenteeism, and inconsistent effort were common challenges that teachers had to address. Hence, the insights reveal that improving learner readiness before deployment and strengthening teacher and school support during immersion were essential to help develop workplace skills, positive attitudes, and real-world preparedness. These improvements can lead to stronger learning outcomes and more successful immersion experiences for both teachers and learners.

Keywords: Qualitative narrative inquiry, Senior high school, Work, Immersion

INTRODUCTION

The Work Immersion Program is a vital component of the Senior High School (SHS) Curriculum under the K to 12 Basic Education Program. It was designed to bridge the gap between classroom instruction and industry demands by providing learners with opportunities to engage in real workplace settings where they can apply theoretical knowledge and develop practical competencies (Department of Education [DepEd], 2016).

However, despite its intended benefits, the implementation of work immersion programs presents several challenges to learners such as long travel distances to assigned workplaces, limited resources in some host institutions, inadequate supervision and mentoring, and mismatches between assigned tasks and their competencies. Pequit and Sanson (2024) noted that these issues made learners struggle to progress beyond basic skills limiting the quality of their immersion experiences.

Understanding the challenges and experiences encountered in work immersion was important because the program played a critical role in preparing learners for the workforce and lifelong learning through the development of practical and soft skills. Flores and Dela Cruz (2025) emphasized that learners who actively engage in reflective practices and maintain open communication with supervisors tend to perform better and gain more meaningful experiences from the program.

Although previous studies have examined the implementation of work immersion programs, limited research has explored the combined experiences of both learners and teachers in the context of workplace readiness and support systems. Furthermore, there remained insufficient understanding of how experiential learning and social support contribute to the overall effectiveness of work immersion programs. By exploring the experiences of both learners and teachers, this research aims to provide insights that can improve the implementation of work immersion programs and enhance their contribution to developing a skilled and work-ready generation.

Theoretical Perspectives

This study was anchored on David Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) which emphasizes that learning occurs through concrete experience and reflective observation (Kolb, 1984). As cited by Pacites et al. (2026), ELT explained that learners learn best when they actively participate in workplace experiences, reflect on these experiences, draw meaningful insights and apply their learning to new situations. Thus, the TVL Work Immersion Program enables learners to acquire knowledge technical competence, practical skills, confidence and problem-solving skills through actual activities in work environments. Furthermore, the integration of Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) and Social Learning Theory (SLT) provided a comprehensive insight of TVL work immersion by highlighting how direct experience, social interactions, mentorship, workplace culture, and teachers' supervision and direction contribute to the development of both hard and soft skills among learners.

Statement of the Problem

The study aimed to explore the lived experiences of learners and teachers in the work immersion program in the Third Congressional District of Iloilo. In particular, it addressed the following key questions:

1. What are the experiences of learners related to the Work Immersion Program?
2. What are the experiences of teachers in supervising and coordinating immersion activities of learners?
3. How do learners and teachers cope with or overcome challenges in the work immersion program?
4. How can these insights guide improvements in program implementation to enhance learners learning outcomes, support systems, and workplace preparedness?

METHODS

This study used narrative inquiry, a qualitative research design that focuses on understanding how individuals' make meaning of their lived experiences through storytelling guided (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). In the context of a work immersion program, this approach allowed researchers to explore how learners and teachers interpret and give meaning to their real workplace experiences. By collecting personal narratives through interviews or reflections, narrative inquiry captures not only the challenges and successes encountered during work immersion activities but also how these experiences influence learners' skills, professional identity, and readiness for future careers. Likewise, teachers' stories reveal their perspectives on supervising, mentoring and facilitating learning in authentic work environments.

Participants of the Study

The participants of this study included twelve (12) individuals drawn from public secondary mother high schools in the Third Congressional District of Iloilo specifically Mina National High School, Pototan National Comprehensive High School, Janiway National Comprehensive High School, Cabatuan Comprehensive National High School, Maasin National Comprehensive High School and Lambunao National High School. They were the primary sources of information on the unique experiences, and challenges of students and teachers in the TVL work immersion program, there were **six (6)** Grade 12 learners enrolled in the Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) track and **six (6)** teachers directly involved in supervising work immersion activities for the School Year 2025–2026. The inclusion of both learners and teachers was intentional, as the study sought to capture a balanced and in-depth understanding of work immersion experiences both perspectives.

The study employed purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique commonly used in qualitative research. Specific inclusion criteria were established to ensure the relevance and credibility of the data gathered. For the learners, participants had to be (1) currently enrolled as Grade 12 learner in the TVL track, (2) actively participating in or having recently completed their work immersion, and (3) willing to share their experiences and insights. For the teacher participants, the criteria included (1) being officially designated as a work immersion teacher or coordinator, (2) having direct supervisory or monitoring responsibilities over immersion learners during the specified school year, and (3) having at least one cycle of immersion supervision experience. These criteria ensured that all participants had sufficient exposure and involvement in the program to provide relevant and informed perspectives.

Data Gathering Tool

The primary data-gathering tool used in this study was a semi-structured interview guide developed by the researcher composed of questions designed to explore the in-depth experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of both learners and teachers involved in the work immersion program. To ensure the validity and appropriateness of the instrument, the interview guide was subjected to expert validation. Three research experts in the field reviewed the interview guide as to its content, relevance, clarity, and alignment with the objectives of the study. Their feedback was incorporated to refine the wording and sequencing of questions enhancing the reliability and effectiveness of the tool in eliciting meaningful data.

Data Gathering Procedure

As an initial step, the researcher formally secured permission to conduct the study from the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent and the Public Schools District Supervisor. Approval was also obtained from the respective school principals to ensure institutional support and to facilitate access to the selected participants. Data were collected through interviews conducted with the participants of the study. This approach enabled the researcher to gather in-depth insights and understand the participants' perspectives on their experiences in the work immersion program.

Data Analysis Procedure

This study employed thematic analysis to systematically examine and interpret the qualitative data gathered. To analyze the data using thematic analysis, six phases of thematic analysis will be used (Braun and Clarke, 2020 as cited in Naelgas, 2022). This should not be viewed as a linear model, where one cannot proceed to the next phase without completing the prior phase; rather analysis is a recursive process (Naelgas, 2022). Researcher used thematic research which includes 6 phases: (1) Familiarizing the Data, researcher were immerse themselves into the data to obtain a deeper understanding to the context. (2) Coding, researcher then break the data into chunks and were categorized into pieces that were given a specific code. (3) Searching for Themes, researcher then combine the related codes into a theme. (4) Reviewing Themes, researcher then refine all the themes, ensuring that the data is aligned to the theme. (5) Defining and Naming Themes, researcher then clearly define each theme and give it a concise name. (6) Writing up, researcher were then synthesize the data and were prepare to present the compelling narrative perspective of the participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Learners' Experiences in Work Immersion

Through thematic analysis, three major themes emerged: (1) emotional journey in work immersion, (2) roles and workplace interaction, and (3) memorable experiences and personal growth.

Emotional Journeys in Work Immersion

The narratives of the work immersion learners' revealed one important theme: their emotional journey during work immersion begins with uncertainty and gradually develops into confidence. Learner 1 expressed, *"at first I felt nervous because it was my first time working in real workplace, but as days passed, I became more comfortable."* But they confirmed that work immersion had given them the opportunity to put their learning at

school into real-world situations. Learner 1 added, *“My experiences have lived up to my expectations as I could exchange what I have learned at school and acquired new skills and learning different work ethics.”* They were able to identify how work immersion taught them discipline and responsibility, two major affective values of developing emotional facet. Learner 6 noted, *“This experience of the overall conduct of work immersion was both challenging and rewarding. I learnt the value of self-discipline, of time management.”* The focus on challenge and reward depicts transformative learning in which learners use emotional discomfort to develop competence and character. This is in line with Kolb’s Experiential Learning that organized work experience helps increased the emotional maturity of the learners through exposure to real deadlines, routines and expectations.

Roles and Workplace Interaction

The second theme, roles and workplace interaction, emerged in the stories of the learners. It showed that the tasks given were very instrumental in helping them to understand what was expected of them in the workplace. Learner 1 shared, *“Some of the tasks I did during my work immersion included helping to prepare food, clean the kitchen, tie the utensils and helping staff with the simple service work.”* Learner 5 added, *“The functions and duties allotted to me in the work immersion were washing the dishes, assisting in preparing the food and serving the food to the students.”* Rivera (2025) emphasized that rotational placement of learners in immersion offers more experiential learning and builds up of flexibility to diverse work requirements. The experiences demonstrate that the roles assigned to the learners, together with the nature of communication at the workplace, influenced their perception of the actual workplace environments.

Memorable Experiences and Personal Growth

The third theme which is the real-life experiences that built confidence and self-development in the learners were brought out because of memorable moments in the work immersion. Learner 1 remembered, *“One of my experiences that I have most enjoyed was when I helped to prepare food to guest. I take pride that I was given an opportunity to help and share my skills with my team.”* This showed how the involvement in actual tasks helped in a feeling of accomplishment. Lopez (2025) explained that concrete successful achievements involving hands-on assignments in immersion programs boost student self-efficacy as they start initiating an ability to play a significant role in the functioning of the work environment. They build confidence through engagement with the customers; acquire communication competence, social awareness, and service-oriented behaviour, skills that are significant in the service industry of hospitality and customer relations.

Teachers’ Experiences in Work Immersion Program

This highlights the multifaceted roles of teachers in facilitating program implementation, supervising learners, and coordinating with industry partners. Five major themes emerged: (1) facilitating Work Immersion Implementation, (2) Supervision of learners during work immersion (3) coordination with industry partners (4) preparation and readiness activities and, (5) guidance and support through immersion.

Facilitating Work Immersion Implementation

The narratives of the immersion teachers revealed one important theme: facilitating work immersion program. It was one of the professional responsibilities that teachers mostly portrayed. Teacher A communicated professional identity and role by saying: *“My schedule is that I serve as a facilitator of immersion of my learners in food processing, hold orientations, and arrange schedules since we have only one partner institution and accordingly, I have four-year experiences serving as an Work Immersion facilitator.”* This reaction indicates her specialty and experience and the organization position she holds in introducing the immersion program of nearly 4 years as facilitators. Teacher B also stressed similar duties and indicated her profile and practice: *“37 years old and my teaching specialization is TVL Home Economics strand in Cookery NC II As an immersion teacher, I have been tutoring my learners at the workplace, after 8 years of service, I coordinate the planning and execution of the learning experience with the industry partners, to ensure they have the necessary work ethics, professionalism and career readiness skills.”* This reinforces the notion that readiness and placement verification are important part of teachers' facilitation roles before and during the actual work immersion deployment. Teacher F also integrated his profile and role, stating that: *“My role in the work immersion program are guiding and supports learners throughout a work immersion program bridging classroom knowledge and real world occupational*

practice. Acts as a liaison between learners, their families and workplace supervisors to ensure clear communications and resolve any issues that arises during the program.” This reflects facilitation that extends beyond logistics to include communication on learners and their families, relationships, and learner support systems that strengthens the work immersion program.

Supervision of Learners during Work Immersion

Another theme came out as teachers emphasized that supervision and guidance were part of roles of the immersion teacher. According to Teacher A, this broad supervisory role sounded like, “I am a work immersion teacher and Advisor and have experience in overseeing the learners in terms of their attendance, performance and behaviour during their work immersion with the partner institution. I maintain a close contact with the learners and guide them on their work assignments prior to them going to the partner institution.” This insight reflects supervision as preparation and on-going support were necessary in deploying immersion learners. Teacher B pointed out that supervision was not merely monitoring and active involvement in the readiness of learners. She said, “I regularly communicate with partner institutions to track learners’ progress. Address concerns and ensure that learning goals are met. I also conduct site visits, evaluate and provide guidance to help them improve their skills, work attitudes, and professionalism. Before deploying learners to partner institutions, I conduct through orientation and preparation. This includes discussing workplace, rules, expectations and proper behavior. I also guide them in preparing required documents like resume, application letters, and portfolios. I emphasize work ethics, safety protocols and proper grooming to ensure they are fully prepared and confident to enter the workplace.” This highlights the role of supervision as a continuous liaison role of work immersion teachers.

Collaboration with Industry Partners

Co-ordination with collaborating institutions was outlined as critical to immersive experiences. Teacher D said, “We, the teachers go there to identify the industry, which is ready to have their work immersion venue in connection with the very specialization we are working in. we get the MOA or the Memorandum of Agreement signed by the School Principal, Industry Partner and an Attorney.” This means coordination encompass building relationships and legal formations. Teacher F said, “I make regular site visits or check -ins to evaluate performance, to discuss concerns and give feedback that relates to the tasks, the academic concepts, and keep comprehensive records to track performance and to comply with the regulatory requirements.” This was an indicator of coordination that guaranties quality work immersion.

Preparation and Readiness Activities

Teachers highlighted the importance of pre-immersion preparation as a key to successful work immersion. Teacher A talked about, “The aims of working in an immersion, the rules and regulations at work, and how to behave and act safely.” Meeting with learners’ prior to immersion familiarized them to the expectations. Teacher B engaged more on this preparation, such as assistance with resumes, applications letters, and portfolios, which assist learners to make good presentations, “I focus on work-ethics, safety measures and dressing up so that they become fully equipped and have no hesitation to go to work.” This emphasizes the significance of preparedness beyond technical capacities.

Guidance and Support throughout Immersion

Teachers perceived their role as not just an organizer but also serving the learners through supporting them in the process of immersion. Teacher A gave support during the times of difficulties so that learners could be assured “Enjoy a safe, positive and fruitful experience.” This puts the teacher to be a custodian of good learning. Teacher B was very clear about the role of supervision and guidance in assisting the learners, “Be better at their jobs, work attitudes, and professionalism.” Additionally, Teacher F integrated support with problem resolution and communicative roles, stating, “Acts as a liaison between learners, their families, and workplace supervisors to ensure clear communications and resolve any issues that arises during the program.” The statements highlight the supportive, relational dimension of teachers’ immersion roles. The teachers’ narratives showed that their role was not bounded inside the classroom; it showed the timeless effort extended beyond supervision and encouragement.

Challenges Encountered by the Learners

The challenges encountered by learners during their participation in the Work Immersion Program, highlights the various difficulties experienced by students, particularly in adjusting to the work environment, such as initial nervousness, shyness, and adapting to fast-paced workplace settings. Through thematic analysis, four major themes emerged: (1) adjustment to work environment, (2) managing workload and scheduling challenges (3) feeling unprepared for tasks and, (4) personal skills development.

Adjustment to Work Environment

As learners shared their challenges they initially faced challenges in adjusting to the work environment. Learner 1 expressed that, *“Some challenges I encountered, dealing with pressures and learning tasks quickly. These challenges helped me grow as a student/ trainee because I became more responsible, [a] good listener, and motivated to deal with different tasks.”* In the same manner, Learner 2 also shared that, *“During my work immersion as a Grade 12 – HE student at K-ribs restaurant, I experienced some challenges like adjusting to a busy environment and learning tasks quickly. I also felt shy when taking the customers and staff at first. Sometimes I was nervous because I was afraid of making mistakes. These challenges affected me because I felt less confident in the beginning, but as time went by. I became more comfortable, learned how to communicate better, and improved my skills”* These experiences illustrate that initial nervousness and shyness are common responses to new environments as immersion learners navigate their journey. This highlight the study of Delgado (2025) asserting that first-time workplace exposure triggers anxiety that gradually diminishes with routine and adaptation.

Managing Workload and Scheduling Challenges

Learners noted problems with workload and schedule management, which happens especially when it comes to doing early starts or high-demand events. Learner 5 described, *“It has also presented some challenges where I would have to get up early to go to work immersion because my body clock is also already programmed to wake up late as we have class in the afternoon hours. My lesson learned is to be more motivated and adaptable to complete my work each day.”* Likewise, Learner 6 noted, *“Ultimately, the Binanag Festival also played a challenge on my part as I had to deal with hungry customers and there was too many orders to take but I remain calm and do the job with utmost care.”* All these statements underscore the fact that time management abilities and the capability to prioritize activities by students are critical towards dealing with work demands. Thus, exposure to high workload in real-life contexts enhances students’ planning, flexibility, and perseverance.

Feeling Unprepared for Tasks

During the deployment of the learners it is very evident that a common challenge for learners was feeling unprepared for certain tasks. This happens especially when encountering new responsibilities. Learner 1 admitted, *“Yes, there were times when I feel unprepared especially when I was given a task, I can’t finish immediately. To overcome this I stayed calm and observe carefully and asked for guidance to my supervisors.”* In the same manner Learner 2 also said, *“Yes, there was a time when I felt unprepared, especially when I felt nervous and pressured to handle, I stayed calm and asked for help from my supervisor or co-workers... Because of that, I learned quickly and became more confident.”* Learner 3 emphasized the importance of proactive learning which reflects Kolb’s Experiential learning that when an immersion learner experience something and reflects on it they become more confident over time, *“I felt nervous because I was afraid of making mistakes... I asked for guidance from my supervisor and observed how others did their tasks... Because of that, I became more confident and independent.”* Learners 4 and 5 reported staying calm and balancing school responsibilities, showing varied coping mechanisms. That feeling unprepared is a typical part of work immersion, but seeking guidance and observing others accelerates skill acquisition and builds confidence.

Personal Skills Development

The next theme learners recognized that facing challenges during immersion contributed to personal skill development. These personal skills enable to handle different circumstances. Learner 1 shared, *“The personal*

skills that helped me complete my Work Immersion were teamwork, patience, responsibility and willingness to learn. These competences enabled me deal with challenges as I could collaborate with others. Do what I say and keep my head straight on what I need to do despite the difficulties.” Similarly, Learners 3, 4, 5 and 6 repeated the same sentiments on the importance of discipline, responsibility, listening, and being a positive person. This relates to Bautista and Ramos (2025) describing that immersion programs form the important opportunities of developing life skills like patience, responsibility and working as a team that directly reflects in the ability of students to manage working challenges.

Challenges Encountered by Teachers in Implementing Work Immersion Program

The challenges encountered by teachers in implementing the Work Immersion Program, highlights the complexities teachers’ face, particularly in securing and coordinating with partner institutions, including limited placement opportunities and scheduling conflicts that affect student deployment. Through thematic analysis, five major themes emerged: (1) partner institution and placement challenges, (2) learner readiness and support constraint (3) time management and teacher workload and, (4) managing specific difficult situation.

Partner Institution and Placement Challenges

As the immersion teacher shared their challenges, it is very evident that teachers consistently identified **difficulty finding and managing partner institutions**. It is one of the central challenges in implementing the work immersion program. Teacher A explained the complexity of placing learners, saying, *“Implementing the work immersion program, I encounter several challenges such as limited partner institutions, scheduling conflicts and ensuring that all learners are given equal opportunities to perform relevant tasks. Since we only have limited partner institution, it becomes challenging to accommodate all students at the same time, which requires careful grouping and scheduling. Another challenge is monitoring the learners consistently, especially when they are already deployed, as well as ensuring their safety and proper guidance in workplace. The most difficult challenge to manage is the limited availability of partner institutions.”* Similarly, Teacher F shared her sentiments in the difficulty of matching learners to meaningful industry partners, stating that, *“The challenges I face to implement the work immersion program is finding enough institution partners that align with learners tracks and can accommodate groups while providing meaningful task is often difficult.”* Both these reactions demonstrate that finding sufficient and proper industry partners is a systemic issue that has to be addressed in the long run. Because it influences the extent, quality and equity of the immersion experience of the learners. Conversely, a single teacher reported that there was relatively little challenge in her place, emphasizing that favorable local relationship can help alleviate the problem. Teacher B said, *“The work immersion program is not difficult to implement and we are lucky that there are many partner institutions that can support the program, in particular, the restaurants and restaurants here in Pototan.”* Although this experience was not as negative, it supports the fact that the difficulty of finding partners is relative. It can differ depending on the local networks and industry consent.

Learner Readiness and Support Constraints

The other theme emerged are teachers struggle revolved around variability in the way learners are ready. This involves essential skills, soft skills and actual exposure. This difficulty was explained by Teacher C saying, *“A learner dealing with differing degrees of preparedness among people some will not possess the basic technical skills, professional etiquette or limited soft skills like communications and problem solving amongst students. Next finding long term funding or resources to keep the program going, as Immersion teacher I used my own funds to facilitate, overseeing students to work place area daily to get me to transportation.”* The answer to this question raises two issues to which work immersion teacher has to deal: the varying readiness of learners as they join the workplaces, and the *resource limitations* that affect teacher capacity to fully support immersion activities. Teacher E noted a learner-related behavior challenge, *“In implementing work immersion, I encountered the tardiness of students and their usage of cell phones during work immersion period.”* This pointed to internal learner habits or attitudes that can disrupt workflow. It affects professionalism, and made supervision more difficult. Both of these responses suggest that learner preparation both in terms of skills and work attitudes. It remains a core challenge, requiring additional support, reinforcement of expectations and pre-immersion training.

Time Management and Teacher Workload

Another theme came out as teachers described their challenges linked to **balancing supervision duties with other professional responsibilities**. This happens especially when immersion activities requiring off-campus traveling to and far from the industry partners. That requires dual demands of tasks as Teacher D explained, *“The challenges that we face during the work immersion is time management as our time is divided when we need to monitor the students outside and there are also work immersion students that we handle inside the campus. Additional to that we teachers also have classes in the lower years. The most challenging for me is to travel to the different industry in a day especially if the venue is far from the school in monitoring the learners in the actual work immersion venue. It’s hard to commute especially if you do not have your own vehicle, though the travel expenses are compensated, still it requires time, effort, patience and dedication to fulfil the role as a work immersion teacher.”* This revealed that teacher workload, travel time, and physical distance to partner sites can create logistical stress. Santelli and Grissom (2024) stated that long queuing time is associated with increased stress and reduces teacher well-being. This suggests that teacher workload in work immersion is not limited to the classroom but also significantly influenced by travel time, physical distance, and accessibility of immersion sites

Managing Specific Difficult Situations

Teachers also faced **specific difficult situations during supervision that required problem-solving and mediation**. These included learner attendance issues, interpersonal conflicts, disciplinary cases, and health or well-being incidents. Teacher A detailed an attendance challenge, *“One difficult situation I experienced while supervising learners during work immersion is dealing with students who are frequently later or absent. This affects not only their performance but also the workflow in the partner institution and their overall learning experience. To resolve this, I first talk to the learners individually to understand the reasons behind their tardiness or absences. I remind them of the importance of punctuality, responsibility, and professionalism in the workplace. I also liaise with their parents or guardians when necessary and report to the industry supervisor of the situation. I also have explicit surveillance in the form of attendance reports and mandatory number of immersion hours. Most of the learners can become better at their attendance and responsible in a better way through constant guidance, communication, and reinforcement of expectations.”* This strategy used by the immersion teacher reflects restorative and reflective supervision practices when interpersonal conflict arises. Teacher D outlined an emergency response situation, noting: *“The difficult situation I encountered is when one of the students got sick during their work immersion. Sometimes the industry is far and we need to travel immediately to go check on them. To resolve the problem, I coordinate with my subject group head, and together we fetch the student who is sick in the industry, get him/her checked in the clinic and take the student home to rest. In some serious case, we resolve the problem by letting the student do an In-school immersion where they finish their remaining days of duty in school, to avoid the repetition of this event.”* This story was a response to the struggle that teachers may have that is not necessarily on the acceptable line of professional responsibilities but on the student well-being and health reactions. Teacher E provided a less significant, yet pertinent, supervisory scenario, which justified, *“Once, an instance that I have is when my students came late to duty yet in this case they are in need of a solution which is why we decided to award the student with over time to compensate the late or day off hour.”* In this case, the teacher was able to control the challenge using negotiated punitive actions. Teacher F shared an inspirational and performance issues in the immersion program, *“The situation I encountered when it comes to supervising learners is that they lack motivation, an inability to learn the techniques to complete the tasks instantly, or poor time management, resulting in unfinished assignments or an inability to perform to the expectations of the workplace.”* This demonstrated that the involvement of learners and development of skills was still an evolving issue in supervision, and that extra guidance and assistance was needed.

Coping Strategies and Practices by Work Immersion Learners

The coping strategies and practices employed by work immersion learners as they navigated various challenges during their placement emphasizes the role of emotional regulation, such as staying calm and maintaining a positive mindsets, in overcoming difficulties. One major theme emerged: adaptive coping strategies.

Adaptive Coping Strategies

In work immersion learners enter an actual workplace where they can observe how things are done, reflect on their experiences and apply what they have learned in school. This process helps them understand work better and develop new skills as they go through real tasks and situations. In order to overcome the challenges learners rely heavily on coping strategies and external support. Learner 1 shared her experiences in overcoming challenges, *“I overcome my challenges by staying observant and being open to learn the right techniques and managing my time properly. The staff and my supervisors at Damires Hills helped me a lot; they guided me, corrected my mistakes and encouraged me to make it better.”* Learner 2 shared that, *“I was able to cope with the challenges by staying calm and doing my best to learn every day... The people who supported me were my supervisor and co-workers at K-ribs restaurant; they guided me, gave me instructions, and helped me improve my skills.”* This was affirmed by learner 6, *“I coped and overcame the challenges I experienced by staying calm and maintaining a positive mindsets.”* Learner 5 further emphasized time management as he navigated his immersion journey, *“To cope those challenges, I managed my time wisely, I did what needed to do so that I will not be short in time. Since I usually wake up early, I set my alarm clock so that I can get up early. And I am happy that my teachers are always there for me to guide and give the best for us.”* In addition, Learners 3 and 6 highlighted teacher support and positive mindsets as critical to overcoming difficulties. This connects to Rivera (2025) findings that supportive supervisors and guidance systems in workplace immersion significantly improve students’ adaptability, emotional regulation, and task performance. In the same manner, Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory explains how learners learn through real experiences these coping strategies allow learners to go through Kolb’s cycle in a logical way of learning from experiences, understanding it and improving through practice.

Coping Strategies and Practices by Work Immersion Teachers

The coping strategies and practices employed by teachers in managing the challenges encountered during the implementation of the Work Immersion Program emphasizes strategies such as continuous mentoring, structured task guidance, and the use of positive reinforcement to improve learners’ responsibility, motivation, and performance. Four major themes emerged: (1) learner guidance support, (2) orientation and preparedness, (3) motivation and learner engagement and, (4) safety and compliance measure.

Learner Guidance and Support

One theme emerged as teachers shared their coping strategies, emphasizing the importance of **continuous guidance, monitoring, and support**. This will help learners overcome challenges during work immersion. Teacher A shared a detailed approach to improving learner responsibility and attendance, *“To resolve this, I first talk to the learners individually to understand the reasons behind their tardiness or absences. The level of monitoring I use is clear based on attendance and the number of immersion hours required. Most learners can better their attendance and gain a greater level of responsibility through unceasing guidance, communication, and reinforcement of expectations.”* Likewise, Teacher B emphasized the use of mentoring combined with close supervision when immersion learners were being deployed, *“The trend I adopt to assist learners in addressing challenges when they are immersed in work involves employing a mix of guidance, monitoring, and continuous support.”* Such measures suggest that active teacher participation and organization. They play a critical role in enabling the learners to adapt to the workplace expectations and become responsible. Teacher F further provided a dimension of frame worked task management in terms of dealing with learners, and observed, *“The strategies I employ to assist my learners in overcoming their challenges in the process of immersion I give the learners small stepwise task goals with milestones to keep them on point and not to get overwhelmed by it, I apply positive reinforcement to acknowledge small wins, increasing their confidence and motivation.”* This demonstrated the ability to divide tasks into step that can be handled. But at the same time offer continuous support to keep the learners motivated and engaged. This is required particularly where there are complicated or unfamiliar work settings.

Orientation and Preparedness

The pre-immersion orientation and preparation are also mentioned as another important strategy used by the teachers in order to introduce learners to the workplace expectations. Teacher C insisted on giving information

in detail prior to placement, *“To assist learners cope with challenges in the immersion process give them thorough training on workplace, culture, dress code, and communication. Norms and day-to-day behaviours prior to the placement commence. That is the reason why learners undergo orientation.”* Teacher A and Teacher B also emphasized good preparation as a factor of safety and performance with Teacher A observing, *“To maintain the safety and learning of learners in the workplace during work immersion, I apply adequate preparation, close supervision and good coordination with the partner institution and ensure that the tasks they handle reinforces their competence and are in tandem with the expected competency. I also make sure that they know of the personal standard of hygiene, management as well as standard emergency procedure in case any problems crop up, I will provide guidelines and assistance.”* These reactions showed that orientation prepare the learners with not only technical knowledge by preparing them with job etiquette. This will enhance confidence and minimizing chances of errors, misunderstanding or accidents within the industry context. Teacher C and Teacher F played up the argument that effective pre-immersion preparation is directly proportional to levels of performance and the ability of learners to comfortably enter the professional settings.

Motivation and Learner Engagement

Another theme emerged as teachers emphasized as well that motivation and engagement was an important coping strategy to maintain learners’ engagement and participation. Teacher D said, *“I keep them informed on a daily basis via message of their activities and being hands on by going to them in the field is one of the best tricks that keep the learners going with their immersion notwithstanding their gruelling and wearisome daily duties in the industry. Here T5 explained application of peer support and autonomy by saying, I give them liberty to choose their schedule at their own choice that comes with their fellow students by providing, and they are more willing to go to their area of work immersion. When they are with classmates they are more at ease working.”* These measures demonstrate that on-going motivation, feedback and cooperation of peers can assist students to beat their exhaustion, tension, or incompetence in their natural environments. The other factor in the engagement of learners is positive reinforcement. Teacher E stated, *“I employ positive reinforcement to reward the tiny victories giving me confidence and inspiration.”* Not only does this teacher approach reward achievement. However, these also enhance persistence and commitment of learners during the period of immersion.

Safety and Compliance Measures

The teachers always pushed the essentiality of coping as a concern, which was safety of learners and their compliance with the occupational standards. Teacher C reported safety precautions with the following, *“Ensure the safety and the meaningful learning of learners during work immersion The practices the most effective include the following conduct mandatory safety orientation such as workplace hazard., emergency procedures, use of PPE, safe written agreements with the partners encompassing safety responsibilities, insurance of the learners and securing the visit of the conduct site.”* Teacher D offered practical application on the job during immersion, *“The students have been thought on how to observe the OSHS or the occupational safety and health standards during the Pre-immersion, and by wearing the PPE or their personal protective equipment the students are observed by their industry supervisor giving instructions to the students on what to do and what not to do in the venue.”* Compliance in health rules, and in health handling in particular, were also emphasized by other teachers. Teacher E said, *“Since they are working in the immersion of working with food I requested them to carry a health card and out of their safety I remember to remind them to carry on with their PPE daily.”* Teacher F mentioned of the necessity to follow local rules, saying, *“I make sure that both the safety and learning of the learners are mandatory during the work immersion through security briefing that includes industry-specific protocol, emergency procedures, and local laws such as the Philippine Occupational Health safety standards.”* Such reactions depict that thorough safety orientation, frequent surveillance and maintenance of standards in the industry. The key practices employed by the teachers in mitigating risks, eliminating accidents and ensuring a safe and productive environment.

Learners’ Reflections and Insights

The learners’ reflections and insights gained from their participation in the Work Immersion Program, highlights how learners developed essential professional skills and work ethics, including time management, communication, responsibility, and discipline, which are critical in real workplace settings. Four major themes

emerged: (1) skills gained and work ethics, (2) preparedness for future profession, (3) personal growth and self-reflection and, (4) development of professional discipline.

Skills Gained and Work Ethics

Skills and work ethics were one of the themes that emerged as learners shared their insights and reflections. Learners always reported that they had acquired a good range of skills and a better understanding of the work ethics during their immersion experiences. Learner 1 noted, *“Lessons and skills that I learned during the work immersion program included proper work ethics, time management, communications and basic working skills.”* Similarly, Learner 2 stated, *“In the work immersion, I got to be accountable, have better time management and communication with others, know how to work within a team and be careful with instructions.”* Learners stressed that such lessons were not exclusive to technical elements, but also included discipline, patience, and responsibility. Learner 5 added, *“Some of the lessons I learned during the work immersion are to be disciplined without anyone watching you; to be clean when handling the food, since it might go to the wrong person in case there was not a clean way of handling the food.”* Learner 6 reflected similarly, *“Among the most valuable lessons I had to have the value of discipline and time management in order to make the works smooth.”* These remarks show that the program not only developed professional abilities but also professional ethics, and that immersion programs are more likely to instil a sense of accountability, diligence, and professionalism on students.

Preparedness for Future Profession

Another theme is the preparedness for the future. Learners were also ready to work in the future through the work immersion which helped them to have a real experience of what to expect at the workplace. Learner 1 shared, *“The work immersion program prepared me for my future profession by giving me real-life experiences in a workplace setting. These experiences changed my view/vision of work by making me realize that working is not easy and requires patience, effort and dedication.”* Learner 2 added, *“I realized that every job task requires effort, patience and teamwork, and that even small tasks are important for the success of the workplace.”* Learner 3 reinforced this view, *“The program prepared me by giving me real experience in a workplace. I learned how to act professionally and I realized that working is not easy. It needs patience, effort and responsibility.”* These reflections suggested that immersion experiences help students develop professional awareness and readiness. And that hands-on exposure equips students with realistic expectations and prepares them for future career responsibilities. Learners’ reflection was an important part of the learning process as it helps learners connect their actual experiences and build meaningful connections between what they do and what they think (Coleman et al., 2025).

Personal Growth and Self-Reflection

In addition personal growth and self-reflection were among the theme emerged as learners reported that the program encouraged them to have self-reflection and personal growth. Learner 4 explained, *“I do observe, study and analyze myself if I possess those certain skills or not, I do assess myself. Work immersion program helps me to become more skillful and become more knowledgeable and to be ready in real work job.”* Learners also recognized character development as a major outcome. Learner 4 noted, *“My experience here prepared me to become more skillful and helped me to develop my character to handle professionalism in different work ethics. And this, [for me, I’m] always trying my best to make this better.”* Reflection allowed the students to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses and obtain some information that helps them become more confident and prepared to face challenges in the working environment. This is in line with Mendoza (2025), who pointed out that immersion programs help in instilling self-awareness and maturity as it makes learners assess their competencies in real-life situations.

Development of Professional Discipline

Development of professional discipline and compliance with standards were strengthened by work immersion as learners immersed themselves with rich experiences. Learner 3 highlighted, *“I also got used to taking orders and became more responsible.”* Learner 5 emphasized, *“To be good when no one looks. I also learnt how to be patient, and there is a lot of work assigned to me.”* Learner 2 acknowledged the need to collaborate and communicate efficiently in preserving discipline in the workplace. These thoughts reflect the idea that immersion

made the learners internalize professional norms and ethical behavior, and Calingasan (2025) proved to be right, claiming that structured workplace programs made students more responsible, punctual, and ethically involved in their work.

Workplace Readiness Skills Application

Workplace readiness skills application was recognized by the learners saying that immersion program served as the gap between learning in the classroom and the field, making them more job-ready. Learner 3 stated, *“These will be of use later on as they can be applied in my occupation, particularly in the food sector. It will also make me a more confident and ready person.”* Learner 5 observed, *“The work immersion allowed me to expand my knowledge in the profession I will be pursuing in future. It assisted me to improve my confidence and effective communication.”* Learner 6 added, *“It made me be ready to work in the future, providing me with real experience and understanding of how things work at work.”* These considerations underscore the fact that immersion helps learners to apply knowledge and skills to real-world settings, which is consistent with Bautista and Ramos (2025), who discovered a substantial role of the practical exposure in enhancing the competence, confidence, and professional adaptability of students.

Teachers Reflections and Insights

The teachers’ reflections and insights on the Work Immersion Program highlights teachers’ perspectives on the effectiveness of the program in developing learners’ practical skills, work values, and confidence, as well as preparing them for real-world employment. Four major themes emerged: (1) effectiveness of work immersion program, (2) areas for program improvement, (3) teacher and learner support needs and, (4) mental health and well-being consideration.

Effectiveness of the Work Immersion Program

Teachers recognized the **effectiveness of the work immersion program**. These prepare learners for real-world work and enhance both technical and soft skills. Teacher A emphasized practical skills, work values, and confidence, *“Based on my experience, the work immersion program is very effective in helping learners develop practical skills, work values, and real- world experience, especially in the field of cookery. It allows students to apply what they have learned in the classroom to actual situations, improving their confidence, competence, and sense of responsibility. It also helps them become more prepared for future employment or entrepreneurship.”* In addition, Teacher B noted, *“Based on my experience, the work immersion program is highly effective in preparing learners for real- world work.”* Moreover, Teacher D highlighted the application of classroom learning to real-life situations and the development of soft skills, *“My personal take is that, work immersion is really important and effective as this is where the students apply their learning from school to the real life situation and gain deep appreciation for work. This is where they develop their soft skills and acquire ideas on how to become a successful person in line of any work or business as an employer or an employee.”* Teachers emphasized **foundational skills and preparedness** as crucial for program success. Teacher F said, *“Based on my experience the most effective in the work immersion program is to master the basic safety protocols and foundational skills relevant to their strand. Be ready to make professional documentation such as a resume, application letters or portfolio to make a good impression about themselves and always take time to see how the tasks relate to the classroom learning and what aspects they can improve.”* Teacher E mentioned that the program enables the learners to be prepared in the real life situations. She pointed out, *“Work immersion for me is very effective it harnesses the students and making them ready for real life situations.”* These responses reveal that work immersion plays a critical role as an intermediary in the integration of classroom knowledge and learning in the workplace, providing students with the technical competence, professionalism, and career readiness.

Areas for Program Improvement

The narratives revealed that the teachers indicated areas that were supposed to be improved to the program especially in reference to partner institutions, scheduling and resources. Teacher A noted, *“Nonetheless, the number of partner institutions is one aspect of the program that should be improved, as there are only several partners, which have a negative impact on the quality of exposure, the range of different and relevant work experiences that learners can gain, depending on their specialization.”* In addition, Teacher C proposed a

flexibility of timelines, *“Based on my experience work immersion Is very effective involve with choosing career direction, one of the program needs to be better is with duration and scheduling Which may help to better involve and be flexible with length or offer flexible timelines.”* Teacher D stressed on the growth of teacher support/partnerships, *“To enhance the program, we can continue to do the same by introducing more work immersion teachers and industry partners to ease all the TVL learners who come through the work immersion.”* Teachers restated this issue and emphasized the necessity of access and equity. Teacher A underscored, *“One concern I would like to share is the limited number of partner institutions. While the program is effective, having only one or a few partner sites and real- world experiences. Expanding partnerships with more industries or food processing establishments could enhance the program and provide more meaningful learning opportunities. Additionally, it would be helpful to provide more resources and support for both teachers and learners, such as training workshops, monitoring tools, and materials for practice, to ensure that the program runs smoothly and achieves its objectives.”* Teacher F added, *“The issues/concerns that have not been discussed the work immersion are not the only ones, all learners are not equally provided with quality placements, learners from low-income backgrounds might have a problem with transportation.”* These narratives highlight requirements of strategic partnerships, resources and logistics to enhance program quality and learner experience.

Teacher and Learner Support Needs

Teachers emphasized that support was a necessary factor that should be provided to the learners as well as to the facilitators in order to make the program a success. Teacher A emphasized the preparation, supervising, as well as coordination with partner institutions, *“By using the experience of a work immersion teacher, one can enhance the program implementation process by pointing out the necessity of an adequate preparation process, close supervision and effective coordination with partner institutions. By giving a comprehensive orientation of learners prior to deployment, giving work according to their capabilities, and regular transparency with supervisors in the industry, among others, make the immersion not only safe, but also fruitful. Introducing more partner institutions offering variety and applicable experiences, sufficient resources/materials to practice the skills, and constant training on teachers on monitoring and assessment strategies is the support that the teachers and learners need most. With these effectively ensuring that learners gain the full benefits of work immersion while teachers are better equipped to guide and supervise them.”* While other teachers highlighted financial, logistical, and mentorship support, Teacher C communicated, *“Both teacher and learners require tailored support to make work immersion program successful. For students and teachers logistical and financial assistance like transportation expenses. Guidance and mentorship and environmental well-being support. For teacher, support for training and capacity building, recognition and incentives, acknowledgment of my extra effort in managing the program. Professional development credits or reward to motivate continued engagement.* In other way, Teacher E noted the financial struggles of learners, *“For me the support that learner needs is financial some of the students struggles going to their work immersion venue because of having a lack of budget.”* Teacher D emphasized additional school and LGU support, *“The support of the school and the parents is already there, maybe an additional support coming from the LGU by providing a vehicle during the deployment of students and providing the school more industry that they can augment in the different barangays in Cabatuan would be really great.”* These lessons indicate how important sufficient resources, logistics support, mentoring and recognition are. To maintain program quality, minimize inequities and optimize student and teacher learning outcomes.

Mental Health and Well-Being Considerations

Another theme came out was the issue of learner stress, mental health, and well-being was mentioned by some teachers. Teacher C stressed, *“Yes, regarding mental health and well-being support a work immersion program since most of our learners enter immersion w/ high expectations and may feel the intense pressure to perform well thus leading to stress, burnout or imposter, host organization and supervisors in some cases do not consider the emotional aspect of adjusting to a new setting, striking a balance between being critical of performance and other setbacks is necessary to incorporate mental health support.”* This illustrates that as much as technical abilities and work-related readiness are important, educators are aware of the psychological stress students are attracting to the real world and how a plan of emotional and physical health services need to be provided to enable a comprehensive form of growth.

Leveraging Findings to Enhance Student Learning Support Systems and Workplace Readiness

The insights drawn from both learners and teachers provide a strong basis for improving the implementation of the Work Immersion Program to enhance student learning outcomes, strengthen support systems, and ensure better workplace preparedness. These findings suggest that while the program is effective, its impact can be maximized through more structured planning, targeted support, and stronger collaboration with stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study revealed that learners' experiences in the Work Immersion Program were both challenging and transformative. Initially, many learners reported feelings of nervousness, anxiety, and difficulty adjusting to real workplace environments. However, as immersion progressed, they developed confidence, improved technical and interpersonal skills, and gained a deeper understanding of work ethics such as discipline, responsibility, and time management. Learners also valued meaningful task engagement and real-world exposure, which enhanced their preparedness for future employment.

Teachers' experiences highlighted their critical role in facilitating and managing the program. They were actively involved in organizing placements, coordinating with industry partners, monitoring student performance, and ensuring compliance with program requirements. However, teachers also encountered challenges such as limited partner institutions, scheduling conflicts, heavy workload, and the need to balance classroom teaching with off-campus supervision. Additionally, they addressed issues related to learner readiness, attendance, and workplace behavior.

Both learners and teachers demonstrated effective coping strategies in overcoming challenges. Learners relied on observation, patience, time management, and support from supervisors, peers, and teachers to adapt to workplace demands. Teachers, on the other hand, employed strategies such as continuous guidance, structured task delegation, regular monitoring, and positive reinforcement to support learners. Strong communication and collaboration with industry partners also played a key role in addressing issues. The insights from the study suggest several improvements for program implementation. Strengthening partnerships with industry, enhancing pre-immersion preparation, providing financial and logistical support and integrating mental health support systems are essential. Additionally, improving alignment between tasks and learners' competencies, as well as supporting teachers through reduced workload and professional development, can further enhance student learning outcomes, support systems, and workplace preparedness.

IMPLICATIONS

Based on the results of the study, the following implications were drawn:

1. The Work Immersion Program functions as a meaningful and transformative component of senior high school education, effectively developing learners' practical skills, work values, and readiness for real-world environments. It facilitates the application of classroom knowledge in authentic settings, thereby strengthening learners' confidence, discipline, and professional competence;
2. The successful implementation of the program largely depends on the active and multifaceted role of teachers, who serve as coordinators, supervisors, and facilitators of learning. However, the effectiveness of their role is constrained by structural and operational challenges, indicating the need for stronger institutional support and resource allocation.
3. Learners' and teachers' ability to adapt and respond to challenges demonstrates that coping mechanisms—such as guidance, collaboration, time management, and positive reinforcement—are essential in sustaining engagement and achieving desired outcomes in work immersion; and
4. Improving the program requires a more systematic and collaborative approach, including stronger industry partnerships, better alignment of tasks with learners' competencies, enhanced pre-immersion preparation, and the provision of adequate financial, logistical, and psychosocial support. Strengthening teacher support systems and capacity-building initiatives is equally important to ensure effective supervision and program delivery.

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