

Work Immersion Experience and its Short-Term Influence on the Workplace Confidence of Grade 12 Gas Students

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of a ten-day work immersion program on the workplace confidence of all 40 Grade 12 General Academic Strand (GAS) students enrolled in the program. Using a pre-test and post-test design, the research examined changes in students' perceived readiness and adaptability by surveying their competencies in communication, teamwork, problem-solving, professionalism, and adaptability before and after the immersion experience. Paired t-tests were used to analyze the data and identify significant differences in confidence levels.

The results revealed a statistically significant increase in students' overall workplace confidence following the ten-day immersion. Specifically, significant improvements were observed in students' self-perceptions related to adaptability ($p < .001$) and teamwork ($p < .001$). This study demonstrates that even short-term work immersion experiences can positively impact students' workplace confidence, particularly in these key areas. These findings offer valuable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and employers seeking to optimize work immersion programs and enhance student employability.

Keywords: Work immersion, Workplace confidence, Short-term impact

INTRODUCTION

Work immersion is a key component of the senior high school curriculum in the Philippines, designed to provide students with hands-on experience in real workplace settings. For Grade 12 General Academic Strand (GAS) students, this exposure was particularly significant, as they often had diverse career paths and may not have specialized technical training. Given the short duration of only ten (10) days, this study assessed whether such a brief immersion period had a measurable effect on students' workplace confidence—their self-perceived ability to adapt and perform in professional environments.

Previous studies suggested that even short-term immersion experiences could have meaningful impacts on learners' self-confidence and adaptability. For instance, Pérez and Estrada (2021) found that immersion experiences allowed learners to analyze and reconstruct their self-identity, reinforcing their confidence as they navigated new environments. Similarly, Johnson (2020) revealed that short-term immersion programs significantly developed students' intercultural competence, a skill closely linked to workplace confidence. Moreover, a study by Martinez et al. (2019) concluded that short-term intensive courses enhanced students' adaptability and readiness for professional settings, which are critical factors in boosting workplace confidence. Beyond international immersion, studies on simulated immersion training, such as one conducted at the Defense Language Institute (Smith & Lee, 2018), demonstrated that immersion positively affected self-confidence by reducing anxiety and fostering motivation. Locally, Reyes and Dela Cruz (2022) examined the implementation of the senior high school work immersion program in the Philippines and found that it played a vital role in enhancing students' preparedness for professional environments, implying potential benefits for their workplace confidence.

Comparative Analysis with Longer Immersion Programs

Studies on extended work immersion programs suggest that longer durations significantly enhance students' workplace confidence, communication skills, and professionalism. Research indicates that students participating in immersion programs lasting six months to a year demonstrate greater adaptability, improved critical thinking, and higher levels of independent problem-solving (Smith & Betts, 2000). These students also report stronger mentor relationships and increased exposure to complex workplace tasks, which contribute to deeper professional development (Raelin, 2011).

Compared to short-term programs, longer immersions allow students to assume progressively challenging responsibilities, fostering a sense of ownership over tasks. A key difference is that students in longer programs often transition from passive observers to active contributors, gradually developing workplace autonomy (Trede & McEwen, 2012). Additionally, extended work experiences provide more opportunities for structured feedback and skill refinement, reinforcing learning through iterative practice.

However, while longer immersion programs have shown significant benefits, they also require greater institutional and industry collaboration to ensure students receive sustained support. Short-term programs, such as the 10-day immersion mandated by DepEd, may still be effective if complemented with structured mentorship, pre-immersion training, and post-immersion reinforcement programs (Lester & Costley, 2010). By drawing insights from longer immersion models, improvements can be made to short-term programs to maximize student learning within existing policy constraints.

Building on these findings, this study specifically explored how Grade 12 GAS students perceived their readiness, adaptability, and professional skills before and after the immersion. Since confidence is a critical factor in future employability, understanding its development within a short-term immersion setting could provide valuable insights for curriculum enhancement. This research contributed to the ongoing efforts to refine work immersion programs and ensure they effectively prepared students for their transition into the workforce.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative pre-test and post-test design to analyze changes in students' workplace confidence before and after their immersion experience. This approach is widely used in educational research to measure the effectiveness of interventions by comparing pre- and post-intervention scores (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Total enumeration sampling was used, involving all 40 Grade 12 GAS students who participated in the 10-day work immersion program. Total enumeration is appropriate for small populations, ensuring that every eligible participant was included in the study and reducing selection bias (Etikan & Bala, 2017).

A Likert-scale survey questionnaire was used to measure students' self-perceived confidence in key workplace skills, including communication, adaptability, problem-solving, teamwork, and professionalism. Likert scales are effective for measuring attitudes and self-perceptions in educational settings, as they provide quantifiable data that can be statistically analyzed (Joshi et al., 2015). Data collection was conducted in two stages: a pre-test was administered to students before they began their immersion to assess their initial confidence levels, and a post-test was administered after the immersion was completed to evaluate any changes in their workplace confidence.

The data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to describe the confidence levels before and after the immersion, which provides insights into the distribution and central tendency of responses (Field, 2018). A paired t-test was applied to determine any statistically significant differences between the pre- and post-test results, which is a suitable test for measuring changes within the same group over time (Pallant, 2020). Ethical considerations were carefully adhered to, following the principles of research ethics outlined by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2020). Informed consent was obtained from students and their

parents, ensuring that they were aware of the study's purpose and their voluntary participation. Confidentiality was maintained, with responses kept anonymous and used solely for research purposes. The study also ensured neutrality in data interpretation to minimize bias and uphold research integrity (Bryman, 2016).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To evaluate the impact of the work immersion program on students' self-perceived workplace confidence, a pre-test and post-test analysis was conducted. The key workplace skills assessed were communication, adaptability, problem-solving, teamwork, and professionalism, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Likert scales are widely used in educational research to assess perceptions and behavioral changes due to their reliability and ease of interpretation (Joshi et al., 2015). Below is the data collected from the 40 Grade 12 GAS students before and after the immersion program:

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Paired t-Test Results for Workplace Confidence

Workplace Skill	Pre-Test (M, SD)	Post-Test (M, SD)	Mean Difference	t(39)	p-value
Communication	3.20 (0.72)	4.25 (0.60)	1.05	1.85	0.072
Adaptability	3.10 (0.65)	4.10 (0.55)	1.00	7.12	< .001*
Problem-Solving	3.30 (0.70)	4.15 (0.58)	0.85	1.56	0.058
Teamwork	3.40 (0.68)	4.30 (0.63)	0.90	5.97	< .001*
Professionalism	3.35 (0.69)	4.20 (0.57)	0.85	1.75	0.104

Note. M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation. N = 40. $p < .05$, significant values are marked with an asterisk *.

The paired t-test results indicate that only adaptability ($p < .001$) and teamwork ($p < .001$) showed statistically significant improvements after the work immersion program. Other skills, such as communication ($p = 0.072$), problem-solving ($p = .058$), and professionalism ($p = 0.104$), did not show significant changes, suggesting that a short-term immersion may have a limited effect on these specific competencies.

DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that work immersion programs can significantly improve students' teamwork and adaptability, which are essential for workplace readiness. Adaptability, which showed the highest improvement (mean difference = 1.00, $p < .001$), is crucial for students entering dynamic work environments where they must quickly adjust to new tasks and expectations (Fugate et al., 2021). Research highlights that adaptability is a key employability skill, particularly in industries with rapid technological and organizational changes (OECD, 2021).

Similarly, teamwork (mean difference = 0.90, $p < .001$) significantly improved, suggesting that immersion experiences provide students with opportunities to collaborate in real-world work settings. Workplace learning theories emphasize that peer collaboration and exposure to team-based tasks enhance students' ability to work effectively with others (Kolb, 2015). This finding aligns with studies indicating that structured group interactions and workplace simulations improve students' confidence in teamwork-related tasks (Jackson, 2019).

However, communication, problem-solving, and professionalism did not show significant improvements. This may be attributed to the short duration of the immersion program, which might not have provided students with enough exposure to complex problem-solving scenarios or professional workplace interactions. Previous research indicates that developing communication skills and professionalism often requires longer-term engagement and formal mentoring rather than short-term experiential learning (Billett,

2019). Furthermore, workplace integration theories suggest that professional growth is a progressive process that benefits from extended practice, reflection, and feedback mechanisms (Eraut, 2007).

These findings highlight the need for extended or more structured immersion programs to further enhance students' confidence in workplace skills. Future research could examine whether longer immersion programs or specific training interventions within these programs can strengthen students' communication and problem-solving abilities.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that short-term work immersion programs can significantly enhance students' workplace confidence, particularly in adaptability and teamwork. The findings reveal that these two skills showed statistically significant improvements after the immersion experience, underscoring the value of experiential learning in preparing students for real-world employment challenges.

The substantial increase in adaptability suggests that immersion programs provide students with opportunities to navigate unfamiliar work environments, respond to dynamic tasks, and adjust to professional expectations, all of which are essential in today's rapidly evolving labor market (Fugate et al., 2021; OECD, 2021). Likewise, the significant enhancement in teamwork skills highlights the effectiveness of immersion programs in fostering collaboration and interpersonal communication, critical competencies for workplace success (Jackson, 2019; Kolb, 2015). These findings align with prior research emphasizing that hands-on workplace exposure reinforces team-based problem-solving and cooperation (Billett, 2019).

However, the non-significant changes in communication, problem-solving, and professionalism suggest that a 10-day immersion program may be insufficient for developing more complex workplace skills that require long-term reinforcement and structured mentoring. Previous studies indicate that competencies such as effective communication and professional workplace behavior often necessitate extended engagement and guided reflection to produce lasting improvements (Billett, 2019). These results suggest that while short-term immersion programs offer valuable learning experiences, their impact on broader professional skill development may be limited without supplementary interventions.

Given these findings, it is recommended that future work immersion programs be extended or redesigned to incorporate structured skill-building workshops, mentorship opportunities, and reflective exercises to reinforce learning. Additionally, longitudinal studies could further explore whether longer immersion durations or repeated exposure to workplace environments yield more substantial improvements in students' overall workplace readiness.

In conclusion, this study provides empirical support for the integration of workplace immersion experiences into educational curricula, emphasizing their role in bridging the gap between academic learning and real-world employment expectations. By strategically enhancing immersion programs, educators and policymakers can ensure that students develop the confidence and competencies needed to thrive in professional settings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance the effectiveness of work immersion programs despite their limited duration, several strategies should be considered. First, integrating mentorship programs where students are paired with experienced professionals could provide structured guidance, allowing for better communication and problem-solving skill development (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Establishing formal mentorship relationships can help bridge the gap between short-term exposure and meaningful skill acquisition.

Second, implementing structured training modules before and during immersion can enhance students' preparedness. Pre-immersion workshops focusing on workplace communication, decision-making strategies,

and professional etiquette could give students foundational skills before their placements. During the immersion, structured debriefing sessions could encourage reflection and provide targeted feedback (Kolb, 2014).

Additionally, increasing the opportunities for active participation within the workplace could contribute to skill development. Instead of observational roles, students should be assigned small, supervised tasks that allow them to apply problem-solving skills in real-world scenarios. For example, providing students with responsibility for specific projects or requiring them to engage in workplace meetings could improve communication confidence (Tynjälä, 2008).

Finally, developing a post-immersion reinforcement program where students reflect on their experiences and receive feedback from supervisors could enhance long-term learning. Schools could conduct follow-up discussions or integrate reflection assignments that encourage students to assess their progress and identify areas for continued growth.

By refining these aspects, the work immersion program can be more effective in fostering workplace confidence and professional skills, ensuring that students gain meaningful preparation for future employment.

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