

## INSIGHT

# Lessons from Education Choices and Career Expectations of the Youth



With the introduction of senior high school as part of the move to the K to 12 Basic Education Program in the Philippines, students are taking various tracks to prepare them for tertiary education, skills development, employment, and entrepreneurship. *Students need not just career guidance but also practical information on the enrollment process and available financial assistance programs.*

## Introduction

### Background of the Youth Education Investment and Labor Market Outcomes Survey

The implementation of the K to 12 Basic Education Program in the Philippines includes the introduction of senior high school (SHS), or grades 11 and 12, the final 2 years in a new 6-year secondary education system. While previous curricula focused mainly on readiness for postsecondary education, the SHS curriculum aims to prepare students for either further education or employment.

SHS students undertake a standard core curriculum and can choose from four tracks of specialization: academic, technical-vocational and livelihood (TVL), sports, or arts and design. The academic track is further divided into strands: accountancy, business, and management (ABM); science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); humanities and social sciences (HUMSS); and general academic. The TVL track also has several strands and various specializations under each one: home economics; information and communications technology (ICT); agri-fishery arts; and industrial arts. There are two specific specializations for the maritime industry: the prebaccalaureate maritime specialization—a modified STEM curriculum—and the TVL maritime specialization.

To understand the factors that influence education investment and career planning choices of incoming and current SHS students, the Asian Development Bank and the Philippines' Department of Education (DepEd) conducted the Youth Education Investment and Labor Market Outcomes Survey (YEILMOS) in 2017. The survey covered students and their families as well as school heads of select public and private high schools in four pilot areas: the National Capital Region (NCR), Ilocos Sur for Luzon, Eastern Samar for Visayas, and Davao del Sur for Mindanao. While the YEILMOS results are not representative of the overall SHS population, insights and lessons can still be derived from the study's findings.

## Implications

### **Allowing for Differences between Perception and Reality**

Several questions asked in the YEILMOS were designed to capture the perceptions of students regarding career-related information and financial assistance, and the responses may not necessarily reflect reality. For example, when students (or their parents) were asked whether they received certain types of career-related information from a specific source, it is possible that some respondents answered that they did not receive such information, even if they did, and vice versa. One reason for this may be that the respondents were not able to absorb the information they received. Furthermore, when students were asked whether they received financial assistance, it is possible that some answered "yes", even if they did not receive any financial assistance, or "no", even if they did receive it. Hence, the responses provided by these students (or their parents) can be interpreted only as the perception of whether or not they received information or financial assistance. Similarly, when asked to rank major sources of information, low ranks do not necessarily imply that a certain source is not important. Rather, a low rank might simply suggest that respondents used other sources of information. On the other hand, when students (or their parents) were asked to assess their (their children's) likelihood of continuing in the education system, it is possible that some respondents indicated they were likely to proceed to further education, but eventually dropped out, and the opposite may also be true. In other words, what the survey tried to capture was the level of optimism of each student because both perception and level of optimism are considered influential factors when making decisions.

### **What Tracks Do Students Prefer and What Leads Them to these Preferences?**

For students and parents alike, the academic track was the most preferred SHS track. This may be due to the prospect of higher wage returns after completing college since the academic track caters to those wishing to proceed to postsecondary education. Preference rates for the academic track among students were higher by 20 percentage points in private schools (82.5%) compared to those in public schools (62.2%). Disaggregated data on track preferences by survey area and by sex suggests that a quarter to a third of boys surveyed in Luzon, and about two-fifths surveyed outside Luzon, preferred TVL. Meanwhile, a fifth to a quarter of girls preferred TVL.

About 80% of SHS students, whether from public or private schools and from across the four survey areas, chose their tracks primarily based on their personal interests. Half of all students also chose tracks based on their perceived strengths or skills. Most parents also cited the child's interests as the

primary reason for the choice of SHS track, but half of them also reported that potential wages and employment opportunities were an important factor for track preference. Less than 10% of students consider costs and financial matters during SHS track selection.

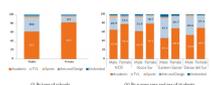
### What Types of College Majors Do Students Plan to Take?

Of the SHS students surveyed, about 90% were optimistic that they will continue on to postsecondary education, with most preferring courses in personal services, engineering, and engineering trades, teacher training and education, science, and health. Preference for the high-value college majors (health, engineering, business administration, law, and computing) was more common among private school students than public school students, who envisaged moving on to degree courses such as teacher training and security services. When asked about their preferred occupation by age 30, around half (51%) of students across grade levels reported an inclination to become professionals. Similarly, almost three quarters (72.6%) of parents expected their children to become professionals. As with choosing an SHS track, students mostly considered their personal interests and perceived strengths or skills when selecting a college major, though they also began to look at employment prospects and wage considerations. Even when choosing a college major, family members and social circles were still the main sources of information for students. About 44% of parents said they expected their children to be employed in the city.

### What Sources of Information Do Students Rely on When Choosing Tracks?

When making career-related decisions, two-thirds of students cited their parents or siblings as their major source of information. Peers, other relatives, and teachers were also frequently cited, while guidance counsellors were least mentioned, probably due to the limited exposure of guidance counsellors to students compared to the contact these youths have with their families and social circles. Administered to Grade 9 students in all public and private schools in the Philippines, the National Career Assessment Examination (NCAE) is one of the analytical tools used by schools to assist students in identifying their interests and skills. The exam profiles a student’s aptitude in the four SHS tracks and their corresponding strands. In particular, the NCAE is designed to gauge a student’s interests and career inclination, whether it is technical-vocational, entrepreneurial, or toward further education in college. The results of the NCAE are, however, not used optimally. The benefits of the exam should be given more prominence and schools should endeavor to adequately explain its results to students, thereby providing a broader perspective on positive personal attributes and career prospects.

### Preferences of Students for Senior High School Tracks



NCR = National Capital Region, TVL = technical-vocational and livelihood.  
 Source: Asian Development Bank staff estimates using Youth Education Investment and Labor Market Outcomes Survey data.

## **How Do Guidance Programs Help Students Make Decisions about Education and Careers?**

To help students and their families make informed education and career decisions, DepEd developed a career guidance program (CGP) for SHS. When asked what types of information they received through their schools' CGP, 55% of students from private schools and 56% from public schools pointed out that the program focused primarily on the types of occupations and training that best matched their interests. Roughly 49% of private school students and 43% of public school students said that they received information on the types of occupations that might fit their skills, and more than 33% reported receiving information on schools that could provide quality education. Interestingly, according to students, lower priority was given to providing information on financial aid options. On average, each student reportedly received 5 hours per year of personalized help from career guidance counselors at their schools.

To examine whether the types of career guidance information students reported receiving from schools align with what the schools actually offer, the YEILMOS also asked school heads to identify the most common guidance counselling activities they offered. In public schools, the heads reported that they generally focused on immediate skills requirements, through the CGP (69%), group counseling (68%), and vocationally oriented seminars with experts talking to classes (62%). In private schools, the heads cited group counseling sessions (89%), one-on-one career counseling sessions (85%), and the CGP (81%) as the most frequently used activities. Guidance activities that require access to employers or industry groups, or use significant resources, were given higher priority and delivered more often in private and urban schools compared to public and rural schools. Schools reported that universities, colleges, and other tertiary institutions were the most common source of career information used by guidance counsellors to advise students. This was closely followed by the internet and the colleagues of guidance counselors and career advocates.

## **What Constraints are Faced by Students and their Families When Making Decisions about Education and Careers?**

When surveyed, a majority of students and their parents were optimistic that they would proceed to SHS and on to postsecondary education. However, transferring between schools due to finance issues was also quite common among SHS students. Nearly half of all survey respondents, notably parents, reported that unexpected occurrences such as extreme weather events, business failure, rapid inflation, and other socioeconomic shocks had affected their education-related decisions in the past and may continue to do so in the future. Among those who were not optimistic about graduating from SHS and moving to postsecondary education, financial hardship was the most frequently cited reason. Other reasons included household responsibilities, lack of job offers, indecisiveness, and/ or unpreparedness to proceed to further education. When asked about information on potential funding options to support their children through SHS, only 14% of parents reported having knowledge of financial aid programs. Furthermore, although high school students can benefit from financial aid from the government, such as educational service contracting and the voucher program, these programs are sometimes not accessed because of expected top-up costs and perceived difficulty in the application procedures.

## **Policy Implications**

The results from the YEILMOS bring to light a number of challenges around the implementation of the K to 12 Basic Education Program, particularly the introduction of SHS. These challenges could be further complicated by uncertainty in the labor market caused by emerging technologies such as automation, artificial intelligence, big data, cloud computing, and 3D-printing (Schwab 2016). Nevertheless, insights gained from the YEILMOS can help guide key actions in public policy and foster required partnerships between stakeholders in basic and higher education.

## **Enhancing Career Guidance**

The YEILMOS results indicate that many SHS students and their families prefer the academic track over the nonacademic tracks. This is in large part due to the expectation of continuing on to college education, and consequently into better-paying jobs (compared to the expectations around jobs gained through the TVL, sports, or arts and design tracks). While current career guidance activities, including CGPs, concentrate on the attributes and interests of students to guide them in choosing their SHS track, more can be done to help students understand that their personal interests and ambitions may change over time. They need to be given a clear picture of the viability of all SHS tracks (academic and nonacademic alike) and provided with information on financial aid, accessibility and affordability of education institutions for preferred tracks or courses, and postsecondary outcomes, including labor market trends and future employment demand.

Parents should be more integrated into career counseling activities, especially as they are typically involved in the career decisions and futures of their children. Career planning and guidance activities that promote parental participation should ideally be conducted as early as possible prior to SHS, to ensure that parents are able to provide reliable information to their children. There are currently limited formal channels where parents are taught to search for career-related information that they can share with their children. The government, therefore, needs to implement initiatives to help parents acquire up-to-date information on the economic viability of all SHS tracks, on actual college costs, and on financial aid programs.

Those providing career guidance information should use simple language that can be easily understood by students and their families. Youths should also be given role models for careers, even early on, perhaps by strengthening ties with alumni who can give career talks at schools. Technology can enhance the impact of career guidance, and schools in urban areas use technology in such guidance more than do their rural counterparts. Currently, there are limited local knowledge materials accessible on the internet, especially on social media, that can help Filipino students or parents make informed choices on career paths. Given the potential of digital technology to reach so many people so cost-effectively (compared to group or one-on-one counselling), it is important for DepEd to develop and deliver—perhaps in conjunction with other government agencies such as the Department of Information and Communications Technology—initiatives that will harness technology, especially the internet, to provide more accessible and informative career guidance. Such initiatives might particularly help schools with limited resources and families in rural and remote areas.

### **Strengthening Partnerships with Firms, Other Government Agencies, and the Higher Education Community**

To ensure SHS graduates are equipped with skills that will find them good jobs, the government should develop a strategy to work with firms to translate industry roadmaps and business plans into specific skill sets in demand. This would allow DepEd to continually improve the SHS curriculum toward labor market outcomes, and thereby reassure SHS graduates that they will gain sufficient competencies for employment, should they prefer to work right after SHS. Similarly, current civil service eligibility requirements need to be re-examined with the Civil Service Commission, so there are no bottlenecks for the public sector from hiring SHS graduates.

Since public and rural schools generally lack resources and access to employers and industry groups, DepEd and basic education stakeholders should work on initiatives to address these gaps so that all students can make informed choices. Given emerging and vastly changing labor market demands, the government has to make adequate preparations to ensure that no SHS graduate is left behind in building suitable prospects for learning and employment. While higher education institutions are reliable sources of career guidance information in other countries, their role has not been leveraged to full effect in the Philippines. Given their closer proximity to employers (compared to the basic education community), universities and colleges can regularly provide more information on admission standards and course offerings, along with insights into the labor market outcomes achieved by their graduates.

## **Resources**

Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Department of Education of the Government of the Philippines (DepEd). 2019. *Youth Education Investment and Labor Market Outcomes in the Philippines: Survey Report*. Manila.

ADB. Regional: Key Indicators for Asia and the Pacific 2018-2020 – Key Indicators for Asia and the Pacific 2018 (Subproject 1).

ADB. 2015. *A Smarter Future: Skills, Education, and Growth in Asia*. Special Chapter of Key Indicators for Asia and the Pacific 2015. Manila.

ADB. 2014. Framework for Inclusive Growth Indicators. Manila.

C.C. David and J. R. G. Albert. 2015. Recent Trends in Out-of-School Children in the Philippines. Discussion Paper 2015-51. Philippine Institute for Development Studies. Manila.

K. Schwab. 2016. The Fourth Industrial Revolution. Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum.

Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), Department of Education (DepEd), and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). 2012. Global Initiative on Out of School Children: Philippine Country Report. Manila.

V. Paqueo and R. Abrigo. 2018. Quantifying the Value of the Public and Private Benefits of Education. Discussion Paper in Preparation. Unpublished.



Jose Ramon Albert

Senior Research Fellow, Philippine Institute for Development Studies

Jose Ramon Albert was Chief Statistician of the Philippines. He has worked in 25 countries providing capacity development assistance on data analytics, including the analysis of poverty and income distribution. He has written widely on development issues, including big data, emerging technologies, education, and social protection.



Arturo Martinez, Jr.

Statistician, Economic Research and Regional Cooperation Department, Asian Development Bank

Art Martinez works on Sustainable Development Goals indicator compilation, particularly poverty statistics and big data analytics. Prior to joining ADB, he was a research fellow at the University of Queensland where he also got his doctorate in Social Statistics.



Asian Development Bank (ADB)

The Asian Development Bank is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members—49 from the region. Its main instruments for helping its developing member countries are policy dialogue, loans, equity investments, guarantees, grants, and technical assistance.



Follow Asian Development Bank (ADB) on

---

Last updated: August 2019