Youth at Work

A Needs Assessment of Integrating Basic Labor Education in Selected Laboratory High Schools in Metro Manila*

Walter M. ROBLES**

Introduction

At a time when governments the world over are struggling to stimulate their economies in response to widespread recession, it is noteworthy that one sector of society is continually ignored when it comes to an integrated economic development agenda.

Young people are among the most neglected sectors of society. Their sheer number, however, underline the importance of including them in every country's economic and social development programs. Not surprisingly, the International Labor Organization estimated that halving youth unemployment in the world (from 14.4% to 7.2%) will result in an additional 4.4% to 7.0% in global domestic product. Harnessing the full potential of the youth would stimulate economies and promote growth the world over.

It is only in recent years that developing countries started noticing the huge contribution the youth could make to their economic development. Before that, developmental policies fell into the conceptual fault of generalization—that is, failing to account for the various differences within the economically active population in terms of gender, age, socio-cultural background and regional industries. This generalization has translated into efforts that some view as inefficient.

Social and labor policies have tended to produce merely cosmetic improvements rather than the structural overhaul essential for the all-inclusive development of the working population. Youth unemployment is not the result of short-term ups and downs in the economy. Rather, it is a systematic and structural effect of short-term stop-gap measures that

fail to integrate micro and macro policies designed to make structural changes to the developmental model adopted.

Labor Market Trends for Youth

Approximately 85% of the youth live in developing economies and the ILO projects an increase of 7.5% in youth in the labor force between 2003 and 2015. From 1993 to 2003, a -4.0% change in labor force participation rate has been observed in the youth sector. A couple of factors have been cited for this. On one hand, more youth the world over are postponing their entrance to the workforce and opt to go back to school or, if already there, study longer. On the other hand, some drop out of the labor force after succumbing to the struggle of making a living and eventually lose hope.

The world youth population growth projection from 2003 to 2015 is 10.5%, while youth employment growth is much lower at 0.2%. In Southeast Asia, the figures are even more startling, with a projected youth population growth of 13.1% and an abysmal youth employment growth of 0.3% over the same period (ILO 2004). While decreasing youth employment to population ratio may be due to postponement to study first or longer, it is universally held that promoting youth employment will be beneficial to all economies in the long term.

The unemployment rate remains the most accessible and obvious indicator of the youth employment challenge all over the world. However, this aggregate employment rate fails to reflect the composition of young jobless populations, making it more difficult to customize policies and programs that directly target employment issues using approaches sensitive to these differences. Aggregate unemployment figures also exclude analysis of youth from developing countries who cannot afford to stay unemployed as long as their counterparts in developed countries can. The other critical issue in developing countries is not so much unemployment per se, but the lamentably poor conditions of work of those already employed.

To address the issues surrounding youth employment properly, it is crucial to look into discrimination trends within the unemployed youth population. Within this sector, it is important to note that there are twice the number of unemployed youth between 15 and 19 years old than there are of those between 20 and 24 years old. The level of education and

skills is also inversely proportional to the level of youth unemployment in developing countries.

It is also important to have data on unemployment duration, especially in developed countries, to determine if the labor market is stagnant or dynamic. Underemployment is a big problem for youth workers. Incidence of increasing temporary work leads us to conclude that this is due to strict labor policies. Young workers are less likely to be organized; in developing countries this means very little job security, if any.

Wage employment is still the most desirable employment status, perceived as having more established social safety nets for those lucky enough to be part of it (ILO 2003). The rest, which make up the critical mass, belong to the own account and unpaid family workers categories which have yet to see an institutionalized social protection scheme to safeguard their income and ensure their productivity.

Globally, 85% of all employment opportunities are created in the informal sector. In developing regions, the service and agriculture sectors dominate informal employment, with the latter primarily characterized by unpaid family work. In Latin America the informal sector, which offer short-term and temporary work, provides the best opportunity for new entrants in the labor market (ILO 1999).

Basic Labor Education for High School Students

Integrating basic labor education into the public high school curriculum may promote the creation of more decent productive work and at the same time may minimize exploitation, discrimination and abuse to which young workers are prone.

It is particularly appropriate to assess the need to integrate basic labor education in the laboratory high school curriculum where students are taught specialized skills in technology and vocational courses such as electronics, stenography and bookkeeping. These skills not only enable them to qualify for entry-level jobs immediately after graduation but give them advantage over regular high school graduates and improve their chances of earning an income while pursuing college education.

These laboratory high schools also serve as pilot schools for innovations in teaching methodologies, new books and curriculum revisions. This

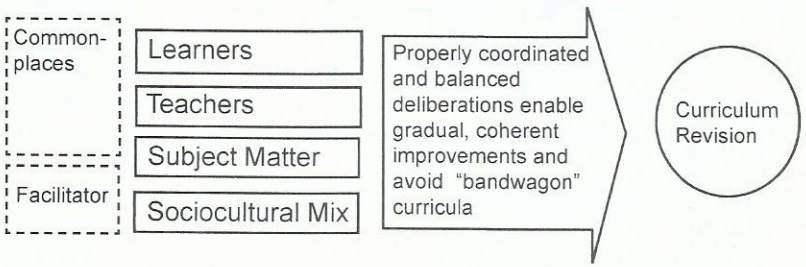
makes them a perfect start off point to gauge the efficacy of new projects planned for implementation covering the entire secondary school system.

Theoretical Framework

Joseph J. Schwab (1909-1988) was professor of education and natural sciences at the University of Chicago and author of The Practical, an educational improvement manual based on curriculum deliberations.

His Deliberative Curriculum Theory (1973) requires five participants representing different perspectives and experiences to form a collaborative group which handles the complicated task of curriculum revision. The first four, which he called "commonplaces," represent the learners, teachers, socio-cultural milieu, and subject matter experts. The fifth member is the curriculum specialist who has the task of properly coordinating and moderating the "commonplaces" and ensuring balanced deliberations to avoid a "bandwagon" curriculum.

Figure 1. Research Theoretical Framework



During deliberations, members of the group discover and develop their actual capacities to assert and communicate their perspectives, hence, improving the chances of a holistic approach to curriculum revision. The process results in a gradual, coherent realization of which solutions go with what problems, which problems can be grouped together to go with the same solution, and how the effects of solutions can bring about additional problems and opportunities in the future.

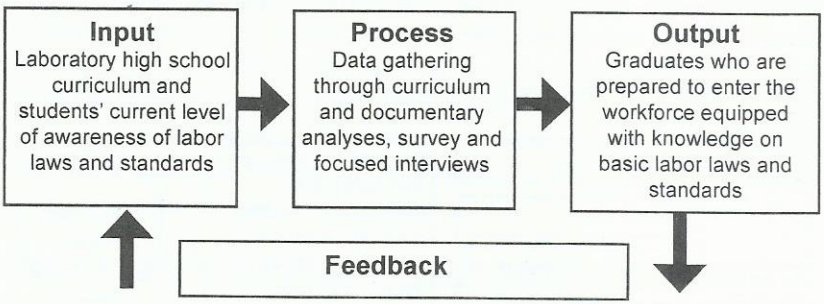
Conceptual Framework

In issues concerning education and employment, a multisectoral approach to consultation and problem-solving yields curriculum revisions that are

timely, responsive and sensitive to the demands of the labor market. Collaboration underlines the importance of achieving a balance in the roles these sectors play and the active partnerships they forge to promote youth employment and create decent work in the Philippines.

The primary concern of this research is to establish whether or not there is need to integrate basic labor education into the public high school curriculum. This was accomplished by means of analyzing the curricula of the participating laboratory high schools and measuring the level of awareness of basic labor laws and standards among students.

The findings were then combined with data gathered from focused interviews of school administrators and teachers and tripartite representatives. Recommendations were subsequently made based on these results.



Statement of the Problem and Research Objectives

The study aims to establish and analyze the need to integrate basic labor education within the public high school curriculum in order to prepare high school graduates to enter the workforce by educating them on their rights and responsibilities as future workers.

In addition, the study aims to determine how best to approach the integration of basic labor education into the public high school curriculum from school administrators' and educators' points of view and offer alternative recommendations, where applicable, in addressing issues related to youth employment in the Philippines through tripartite consultations.

Specifically, the following questions were likewise addressed:

1. What is the background of the student respondent and how does this affect his or her level of awareness of labor laws and standards?

2. Is there a significant relationship between the level of awareness of students and

   2.1 the educational attainment of parents?

   2.2 the type of employment of parents?

   2.3 their confidence in getting a job immediately after high school?

   2.4 their experience with actual work and/or on-the-job training?

3. What would be the best approach to integrate labor education in the senior high school curriculum?

4. What other aspects of public high school curriculum should be looked into to ensure the most effective instruction for preparing high school students secure jobs immediately after graduation?

5. How do the state, labor and employer sectors view the integration of basic labor education in the high school curriculum and what are their recommendations to maximize the benefits to all parties involved?

To answer the abovementioned problems, the study adopted the following objectives:

1. Review the curricula of laboratory high schools from selected state universities and colleges in Metro Manila.

2. Determine the level of awareness of senior high school students on the subject of labor laws and standards and identify possible factors which influence it.

3. Consult with school administrators and teachers on the best approach to integrate labor education in the high school curriculum.

4. Consolidate recommendations of state, labor and employer sectoral representatives in preparing high school graduates enter the workforce.

5. Recommend policies designed to promote youth employment and the establishment of decent, productive work for the Filipinos in general and young workers in particular.

Research Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between the students' level of awareness of basic labor laws and standards and their parents' educational attainment and employment category, their perceived confidence to get a job immediately after high school, experience with on-the-job training, and engagement in paid work.

Significance of the Study

The Philippines is one of the signatories to the ILO's Minimum Age Convention in 1973 which was enshrined in the Philippine Labor Code in the provision which mandates that no persons below 15 years of age shall be allowed to work except in unusual circumstances as allowed by the law.

In November 2008, the Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics published the profile of the new entrants to the labor force as part of its Labstat Updates. The report highlights the age and highest grade completed by new entrants, showing that 81% of the population in the study belonged to the 15-24 years old age bracket, while 70.9% are high school graduates or of higher educational attainment.

This study has particular significance for students because it aims to assess the necessity of integrating basic labor education in the high school curriculum. Should this need be established, then appropriate policy recommendations can be made to equip graduating high school students with knowledge on workers' rights and responsibilities. Senior level high school is the best time to implement this because, as figures from the Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics show, most senior high school students are 15 years old and above.

This study also has particular significance for schools because it allows them to integrate a relevant, useful and practical subject into their curriculum and contribute to the holistic formation of students into productive individuals.

Indicator	Total		First Time Employed		First Time Unemployed	
	Number (000)	Percent (%)	Number (000)	Percent (%)	Number (000)	Percent (%)
Gender	**888**	**100.0**	**657**	**100.0**	**231**	**100.0**
Male	463	52.1	347	52.8	116	50.2
Female	425	47.9	310	47.2	115	49.8
All Age Group						
15 – 24 years	719	**81.0**	513	78.1	206	89.2
25 – 34 years	163	18.4	438	21.0	25	10.8
35 – 44 years	4	0.5	4	0.6	*	**
45 – 54 years	1	0.1	1	0.2	-	-
55 – 64 years	1	0.1	1	0.2	-	-
65 years and over	-	-	-	-	-	-
Highest Grade Completed						
No Grade	4	0.5	3	0.5	1	0.4
Elem Undergrad	60	6.8	55	8.4	5	2.2
Elem Graduate	54	6.1	48	7.3	6	2.6
HS Undergrad	142	**16.0**	121	18.4	21	9.1
HS Graduate	261	**29.4**	188	28.6	73	31.6
College Undergrad	164	**18.5**	112	17.0	52	22.5
College Graduate	204	**23.0**	130	19.8	74	32.0

** Less than 500*
*** Less than 0.05%*
Source: Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics, Labstat Updates (November 2008).

Table 1. New Entrants to the Labor Force by Gender, Age Group and Highest Grade Completed, Philippines

The study is also valuable to prospective employers because a universal understanding of basic labor laws and standards may help minimize worker unrest caused when labor laws and standards are misunderstood or misinterpreted. This in turn may help foster harmonious relationship between workers and employers and promote industrial peace.

For the labor sector, this study has particular significance in that new entrants into the workforce would be made aware of basic labor laws and standards and be better equipped to avoid exploitation, assert their rights, and carry out their responsibilities. A solid knowledge of basic labor laws and standards would also serve as an excellent foundation for a healthy and active labor movement in the country.

The government will find this study valuable because in promoting awareness of labor laws and standards among young people it safeguards their participation in the labor force, thereby ensuring their positive contribution to national development.

Finally, it is hoped that the findings will shall serve as basis for future research in integrating labor education into the design and development of public school curricula in the Philippines, and perhaps, in the entire ASEAN region.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study was conceptualized with the ultimate goal of preparing high school graduates enter the workforce. Providing them with basic labor education, particularly on workers' rights and responsibilities, may promote youth employment and the establishment of more decent, productive work for the Philippine labor force.

With this in mind, the study focused on graduating students of laboratory high schools of four selected state colleges and universities in Metro Manila for the following reasons:

- The four (4) laboratory high schools were chosen with time and the researcher's own physical limitations in mind. The Polytechnic University of the Philippines Laboratory High School (PUPLHS) in Sta. Mesa, Manila; Rizal Technological University Laboratory High School (RTU LHS) in Boni Avenue, Mandaluyong; Eulogio "Amang" Rodriguez Institute for Science and Technology Laboratory High School (EARIST LHS) in Nagtahan, Manila; and Philippine Normal University Center for Teaching and Learning (PNU CTL) in Taft Avenue, Manila, are ideal in terms of proximity, accessibility and perceived homogeneity of student population.

- While these laboratory high schools are under their universities' own charter they follow the Department of Education's prescribed curriculum for secondary schools with minor differences from regular public high schools. These differences usually follow the thrust of the universities. For example, Rizal Technological University specializes in technology subjects, as reflected in the technology subjects in all four levels of its curriculum. The Polytechnic University of the Philippines Laboratory High School, on the other hand, adopts a

commercial curriculum with subjects focusing on entrepreneurship, office technology and bookkeeping. It also serves as a venue for teacher-training for College of Office Administration and Business Teacher Education (COABTE) students.

- Laboratory high schools of state universities and colleges also serve as pilot schools for innovations in curriculum development and teaching methodologies. These innovations are first tested in these schools for effectiveness and applicability before they are adopted nationally. This makes them perfect for this study since our goal is eventually to cover all public high schools in the country.

One hundred ninety-one (191) senior high school students were surveyed. Four (4) school administrators and faculty members were interviewed. The interviewees were selected based on their willingness to participate in the study and their roles in the schools. High school principals (primarily involved in curriculum design and development) and social studies teachers (the most relevant subject to basic labor education) were preferred in the interview.

Tripartite representatives were also chosen for focused interviews. The interviewees included an official of the Department of Labor and Employment (representing the state), the youth representative of the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (representing labor), a Korean call center owner (representing formal employers) and a married couple who own and run a beach resort (representing informal employers).

Definition of Terms

For purposes of this study, the following definitions have been adopted:

Basic Labor Education – refers to a subject covering instruction on labor topics such as wages, hours of work, laws related to hiring and promotion, and social security.

Basic Labor Laws and Standards – comprises laws and provisions in the Philippine Labor Code which deals with wages, hours of work, laws related to hiring, termination and retirement, and social security.

Young Workers – are those who are engaged in paid employment either full-time or part-time, and are between the ages 15 and 24.

Youth – a segment of the population between the ages 15 and 24.

The following four components shall comprise the proposed basic labor education in public high schools:

1. Wages – Minimum Wage (Philippine Labor Code [PLC] Articles 99 to 119), Night Shift Pay (PLC Art. 86), Overtime Pay (PLC Art. 87), Premium Pay (PLC Arts. 93 and 94), and 13th Month Pay (Presidential Decree 851).

2. Hours of Work – Eight hours per day (PLC Art. 83), Meal Periods (PLC Art. 85), Weekly Rest Period (PLC Arts. 91 and 92), Maternity Leave (PLC Art. 133), and Paternity Leave (Republic Act 8187).

3. Laws Related to Hiring, Termination and Retirement – Security of Tenure (PLC Art. 279), Regular and Casual Employment (PLC Art. 280), Probationary Employment (PLC Art. 281), Termination of Employment by Employer (PLC Arts. 282 to 284), Termination of Employment by Employee (PLC Art. 285), and Retirement (PLC Art. 287).

4. Social Security – SSS Law (RA 8282), GSIS Law (RA 8291), Home Development Mutual Fund Law (Pag-Ibig Law), and Philhealth Law (RA 7875).

Related Studies

While there are several books and other publications written on the subject of youth employment, unemployment and the creation of decent, productive work, there are very few on the subject of teaching basic labor education in the high school curriculum. The following looks into global, ASEAN and Philippine youth employment.

Youth Employment: An Overview

The International Labor Organization's Global Employment Trends for Youth (2004) confirmed the staggering statistics on the problems surrounding youth employment in the world. The youth, according to the report, are three times more likely to be unemployed compared to their adult counterparts. In developing economies such as the Philippines the gap even widens, with the likelihood of youth unemployment five times more than that of their adult counterparts. These figures only highlight the importance of harnessing the largely untapped youth sector

and the urgency of addressing the economic and social problems posed by youth unemployment.

Youth Unemployment

The link between youth unemployment and social exclusion has been established (Ryan 1999). Employment lowers the risk of youth engaging in illegal activities as a matter of survival, providing them with alternatives to a life of dependence and the dangers associated with underground engagements.

It has been observed that the youth are more exposed to intermittent, temporary, and informal work than their adult counterparts. Promoting youth employment helps them avoid the vicious cycle of unemployment, poverty, frustration and poor working conditions. Also established is the correlation between difficult entry into the workforce and higher probability of unemployment in later life in depressed economies (Raaum and Røem 2004).

For most youth, entering the workforce and securing productive decent work marks their transition from childhood to adulthood. On the other hand, youth with no decent income stay with their families longer, thereby limiting the prospects of other siblings to access to formal education. This results in a vicious cycle where parents' lack of access to formal education results in low employability leading to limited household income and eventually to lack of access to formal education of children.

Globally, one out of four in the working age population is between 15 and 24 years old. About half of them or 47% are unemployed. Those who are able to work usually find themselves paid lower, with little or no social protection, working longer hours, and generally engaging in short-term, informal contracts (ILO 2004b).

While demographic changes in industrialized economies show evidence of aging populations, youth unemployment may decrease although not as an automatic phenomenon. The global financial crisis which began affecting developed economies in 2008 is one of the more pressing reasons to promote youth employment and include largely ignored sectors such as the urban poor and women in economic and social policy formation if we are to weather the burgeoning effects of the global economic slump. The ILO noted that halving youth unemployment from 14.4% to 7.2%

will yield an additional 4.4% to 7.0% growth in global GDP (based on the value in 2003), a figure all countries and several struggling industries would find most necessary and crucial.

Labor Market Trends in South-East Asia

More young women feel that there are no suitable jobs available for them which results in discouragement, a concept used to "describe individuals who would like to work, but who are not seeking work because they feel or perceive that no suitable work is available" (ILO 2006, 18). Discouragement is therefore a subjective measure, as opposed to the objective measure of unemployment. In general, young well-educated people see fewer opportunities in the job market and a wide gap between their expectations and reality. They queue for relatively stable formal sector jobs, while the uneducated unskilled youth fall into the informal economy (ILO 2008).

The period from 1997 to 2007 yielded a 6.3% increase in regional youth unemployment. Vulnerable employment decreased by 4% over the same period, but six out of ten are still considered in vulnerable employment situations. Labor productivity growth in ASEAN economies is stagnant and slower than the rest of Asia with a measly 2.0% average per annum. In 1997, 24.1% of families lived on a dollar day. This was halved at 13.4% in 2007. Sadly, however, one in two families still live on less than US$2 a day (ILO 2008).

The biggest challenge in Southeast Asia is not only to promote youth employment but also create decent jobs in all sectors while coping with the resultant increase in costs considering that labor rates are already higher compared to other regions in Asia, particularly China. Education and skills development remain the precursor to increasing productivity levels which, in turn, ensure the growth of decent work. Poverty in the ASEAN region is steadily becoming a rural phenomenon, prompting migration to urban centers, and creating many of the problems associated with an overpopulated metropolis. The agricultural sector is essentially not driving growth but merely supporting it. Unfortunately, in many countries agriculture falls short of national demand.

According to the ILO it is critical to set up social safety nets for young workers to ensure and maximize their productivity. Facing high incidence of unemployment policy makers must address the issue of mismatched

skills vis-à-vis available jobs. This often leads to unfulfilled expectations with regard to quality of jobs which result in discouragement and lost hope.

During the ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment in Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok in 2002, participants in the session on national workshops and synthesis reports for country studies from Indonesia, Hong Kong and Papua New Guinea (ILO Bangkok 2002) concluded that:

- Basic education is necessary to make the transition from school to work;
- Unemployment and underemployment among the youth are equally critical;
- Youths end up working in the informal economy;
- Youth employment policies must be integrated in the general employment policies of economies for them to work; and
- The youth have the wrong attitude towards employment.

The last item on the list generated the longest discussion, with the session concluding that this wrong work attitude is primarily a critique of the quality of education, training and information on job opportunities available to them, and the youth finding that what they are given is not necessarily what they need to secure decent, productive work. Improving the youth's access to quality and relevant education and training is key—a realization that has prompted governments to draw up policies geared towards targeting this structural mismatch.

Youth Employment in the Philippines

A study conducted by Gust, et al. published in 2001 attempted to profile Filipino youths in terms of labor participation and employment. Filipinos aged 15 to 24 years old were characterized as follows: 56% are employed as wage earners, 20% as own account workers and the remaining 24% as unpaid family workers. The service and agriculture sectors each employ approximately 40% and industry sectors the remaining 20% (Gust, Marin, Salas, and Sinajon 2001).

Of the 4.3 million unemployed Filipinos in 2001, 58% are between the age 15 and 24. In 2007, the situation slightly improved with only 50%

Table 2. Philippine Labor Force Participation Rate and Employment Status, 2001 to 2006

Year / Area	Labor Force Participation Rate (Percent)	Employed (Percent)	Unemployed (Percent)
Philippines			
2001	67.5	90.2	9.8
2002	66.2	89.8	10.2
2003	67.1	89.8	10.2
2004	66.5	89.1	10.9
2005	64.8	92.6	7.4
2006	64.0	92.7	7.3
Urban			
2001	65.3	87.2	12.8
2002	64.1	86.8	13.2
2003	...	...	...
2004	...	...	...
2005	...	...	...
2006	...	...	...
Rural			
2001	69.8	93.1	6.9
2002	68.4	92.7	7.3
2003	...	...	...
2004	...	...	...
2005	...	...	...
2006	...	...	...

Note: Urban and rural classification was no longer applied starting the July 2003 round of the LFS.
Source: 2007 Philippine Statistical Yearbook, National Statistical Coordination Board.

of the unemployed belonging to this age group. A disturbing category—educated unemployment—which counts all unemployed people with at least a college level education is rising, registering at 30.5% in 1990, 31.5% in 2000 and 38.2% in 2007. Six in ten underemployed youths are found in rural areas, underlining the gap in wealth between urban and rural populations.

The study also notes that Philippine LFPR for the 15-24 age bracket (50.1%) is much lower than those of its ASEAN neighbors: 53.3% in Indonesia, 54.4% in Malaysia and 75.5% in Thailand (Gust, et al. 2001). This figure is possibly due to the Filipinos' preference for longer formal education and a tight labor market, access to which is highly dependent on educational attainment.

Workers' Education in the Philippines

The history of workers' education in the Philippines may be traced to the development of the UP Labor Education Center, which initially offered basic education in trade unionism. Now the School of Labor and Industrial Relations, it remains the leader in labor education and the study and practice of industrial relations.

Benito Gonzales remarked that the need for workers' education should be in the context of the nature and composition of the labor force. But the educational system that Gonzales criticized in 1983 remains more or less the same at present—it fails to impart knowledge of labor rights and responsibilities and produces graduates with very little understanding of trade unionism other than the oft-misunderstood strike (Gonzales 1983).

His study of workers in 1983 revealed a disappointingly low level of awareness of workers' rights and responsibilities, something that may have had a direct effect on the level of productivity. He also demonstrated its clear impact on the growth and development of the trade union movement whose membership has continued to dwindle in the last few years. The curious trend, in fact, is that more labor organizations are registered every year, but their memberships continue to decline.

Gonzales identified problems that deter the successful implementation of an effective workers' education program. The first, and perhaps hardest to overcome, is the issue of program planning where concerns such as budget, time, politics and the ever critical needs assessment come into play. Workers' education curricula are not necessarily custom fit for participants so it is necessary to recommend baseline labor education course

Table 3. Number and Membership of Existing Labor Organizations for 2000 and 2004

	2000	2004
Number of Labor Organizations	10,269	16,853
Membership in Labor Organizations	3,788,304	1,858,555
% of wage and salary workers	27.2	9.9
% change	n/a	40.04

Source of Data: 2004 Yearbook of Labor Statistics, Bureau of Labor Relations

content and then add to any additional special topics the participants may require. The question of whether academics or practitioners should develop the course content was also critical, although this is no longer such a problem given the vibrant and varied composition of UPSOLAIR professors. Finally, traditional evaluation tools may not be applicable for labor education. Hence, a practical and more useful tool may be developed to ensure appropriate evaluation and feedback.

In the end, Gonzales recommended that workers' education must reflect cultural and social values for its participants to be able to relate to and appreciate the context and applications of its contents. Labor education must also strive to include the dynamics of development and the relationship between the goals of the labor movement and broader societal goals to achieve the holistic and universal aim of creating productive, decent work for everyone.

Youth Employment

In the Asia-Pacific region, the Philippines is one of the few countries suffering from a high unemployment rate over a long period of time. The Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics announced that unemployment was down to 8.0% in April 2008 from 10.6% in 2006, with the youth aged 15 to 24 accounting for almost half (49.7%) of the total unemployed. The youth unemployment rate in 2003 was 21.5%, three times as high as that of the 25-54 age bracket.

A study published by the International Labor Organization's International Training Center indicates that the global unemployment rate for female youth workers has always been higher than that of male youth workers in contrast to the marginal difference in adult unemployment rate between male and female workers. The study also cites an increasing trend in unemployment in the youth sector.

The Philippine government has been taking action to improve the unemployment situation of the youth. A good example of this is the promotion of IT and communication skills through the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), a branch of the Congressional Commission on Education whose mandate is to promote middle level skills development primarily among the youth and to make technical and vocational courses viable options to university education. Their programs have slightly shifted to IT and communication-related

Table 4. Employment Statistics in the Philippines, 2003-2004

	Total Unemployed (000)		Per cent Share		Unemployment Rate	
	2003	2004	2003	2004	2003	2004
Sex (all)	3,567	3,888	100.0	100.0	10.2	10.9
Men	2,173	2,385	61.3	61.2	10.6	10.9
Women	1,375	1,513	38.6	38.8	10.5	11.2
Age Group	3,559	3,899	100.0	100.0	10.6	11.0
15 – 24	**1,616**	**1,793**	**45.4**	**46.0**	**21.5**	**22.1**
25 – 54	1,628	1,749	45.8	44.9	7.7	7.7
55 – 65	315	357	8.8	9.2	6.2	7.8

Source of data: 2004 Philippine Statistical Yearbook, Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics.

skills development courses in response to the booming demand for qualified business process outsourcing employees, particularly in call centers which have been growing steadily in the last eight years. In addition, TESDA launched its "Operation One Million," a project aimed at training at least one million young Filipinos in short and long-term technical-vocational courses within the agency or through TESDA-accredited public and private training centers.

Quite obviously, despite the efforts of government and its related agencies, particularly in the area of short-term employment generation and job-placement services for young workers, youth unemployment still persists and shows no sign of improvement in the near future. This has given rise to the question of how to address mismatches in the Philippine labor market. In a labor surplus economy like the Philippines, high rates of unemployment and underemployment reflect the prevalence of labor market mismatches.

For young people the concept of work and employment can mean a lot of things. It may define social identity, serve as a source of income, give access to social safety nets, or enhance socio-economic and political power. To account for all these, it is important to look into the proper integration of young people into the world of work. Loss of work may mean not only exclusion and segregation; it may also lead to civil, economic and social insecurity. Unemployment causes frustration because it limits the ability of a young worker to develop an independent life and be part of a cultural and economic entity.

The dearth of work for young men and women means that society is deprived of the integral contribution of the youth sector in the economy and society in general. It also denies them access to basic social protection which results in a myriad of socio-political problems the government must now address. It is universally accepted that the development of nations not only depends on the amount of national resources they have at their disposal but more importantly on the number of human resources they can harness and maximize to generate wealth and create the ideal conditions for well-being (Calderon 2005).

Research Methodology

Although there are several local and international studies on youth employment, few have been written on labor education. Thus far, there are no studies which attempt to establish the need for integrating labor education in the high school curriculum.

This research design was a combination of descriptive, quantitative and qualitative techniques designed to provide a holistic view on high school students' level of preparedness to enter the workforce, the academic and tripartite opinion on youth employment, as well as the integration of basic labor education into the high school curriculum.

A. Curriculum Review

The first stage analyzes the curricula of the laboratory high schools to establish the following:

- Similarities and differences in the nature of subjects offered;
- Weight distribution of individual subjects in terms of number of units and hours allotted;
- Special programs specifically designed to equip students with transferable skills; and
- Existence of the four identified components of basic labor education in any of the subjects in the high school curriculum.

B. Survey

The second stage of the study involves a survey conducted on senior students from these four laboratory high schools in Metro Manila:

- Polytechnic University of the Philippines Laboratory High School (PUPLHS) in Sta. Mesa, Manila;
- Philippine Normal University Center for Teaching and Learning (PNUCTL) in Taft Ave., Manila;
- Eulogio "Amang" Rodriguez Institute of Science and Technology Laboratory High School (EARIST LHS) in Nagtahan, Manila; and
- Rizal Technological University Laboratory High School in Boni Ave., Mandaluyong.

Sloven's formula was used to determine the total sample size.

$$
\begin{aligned}
n &= N / (1 + Ne^2) \\
&= 363 / (1 + <363 \times 0.05^2>) \\
&= 363 / (1 + 0.9075) \\
&= 363 / 1.9075) \\
n &= 191
\end{aligned}
$$

The sample size from each school is determined using the formula (Table LHS 1)

$$
\begin{aligned}
n(\text{school}) &= (n \text{ total} / N \text{ total}) \times N \text{ school} \\
&= (191 / 363) \times 123 \text{ (PUPLHS)} \\
&= 0.53 \times 123 \\
n(\text{PUPLHS}) &= 65
\end{aligned}
$$

As soon as the sampling size for each school was determined, the researcher requested school officials to provide the exact number of students to participate in the survey. The only discrimination used on the students was their voluntary participation since all classes were perceived homogeneous.

The questionnaire given to students was in three parts. The fist part asked for personal information, which included the student's name (optional), age, gender, name of high school, experience with paid work and on-the-job training (OJT) and confidence in getting a job with only their high school education. The second part asked for their family background, particularly the marital status, educational attainment and employment category of one or both their parents, and the number of children in the family. The third part had 15 statements which they had to determine as whether true or false. English and Tagalog translations were provided to avoid confusion.

Completed questionnaires were then tabulated and processed using SPSS v.15 which provides ease in data processing and analysis. Operations included frequency counts, means and descriptive statistics which analyzed relationships among different variables plotted in the program. Analyses were also done on individual schools for comparison purposes.

C. Focused Interview

The third and fourth stages of the study involved focused (semi-structured) interviews with school officials and tripartite representatives. In the schools, preference was given to school officials who have handled administrative functions (school principals, administrative officers and the like) and faculty members who teach Social Studies, Technology and Livelihood Education and Values Education.

Among the tripartite representatives, four were identified to provide a balanced perspective on issues surrounding the study: one representative from the state (DOLE Usec. Luzviminda G. Padilla), one from labor (Ms. Anna Lee Fos of TUCP), one formal sector employer (Mr. Jack Kim of Neungyule Eduphone, Inc.) and one informal sector employer (Mr. and Mrs. Hoffrichter of P&M Final Option Beach Resort and German Bistro).

A list of guide questions was prepared and used for this purpose (see Annex E). The answers were then tabulated to find the similarities and differences between the responses. Afterwards, appropriate recommendations were made.

Summary of Findings

Based on the curricula of the four schools and the recommendations of the school administrators and teachers interviewed, this researcher concludes that there is need to include basic labor education in the high school curriculum. Moreover, it is best to integrate it in the subject Economics since labor education covers such related concepts such as income, industry, and public policy.

Reviewing the curricula of the selected laboratory high schools reveals that they differ very little from that used by all public high schools. There are, however, notable differences in subject areas offered under the Technology and Livelihood Education program which primarily follows the thrust of their universities. For example, technology-based subjects

such as electronics and technical drafting are offered to RTULHS students, while commercial subjects such as bookkeeping, stenography and entrepreneurship are offered to PUPLHS students.

The national curriculum for secondary schools consists of five key areas, namely English, Filipino, Mathematics, Science and Makabayan (Social Studies, MAPEH, Technology and Livelihood Education and Values Education). Curriculum analysis confirms that basic labor education and its identified four components do not exist in any of the subjects in high school but would be best integrated into the Ekonomiks subject. It is also possible to integrate lessons in basic labor laws and standards into other subjects. For example, in Mathematics, computations of wages might be used in place of the more common word problems, thereby introducing concepts such as premium pay, pro-rated salary, and the like.

The survey was able to establish the relationship between having experienced on-the-job training and students' confidence in getting jobs with only a high school diploma.

On the other hand, the relationship between this confidence and the following was disproved:

- having ever engaged in paid work,
- parents' educational attainment,
- parents' category of employment, and
- test scores.

The entire sample population's average test score of 8.14 out of 15 points or 54.27% shows there is indeed a gap in knowledge of labor laws and standards among senior high school students. It is possible that students answered some of the questions correctly because of knowledge gained through informal means such as family members, the mass media, or on-the-job training.

The table summarizes responses from each laboratory high school and reflects the homogeneity of the student-respondents. Note that except for on-the-job training, which is a requirement under the Office Procedures subject in PUP Laboratory High School, there is very little difference between the variables.

School officials and faculty members all agree that the integration of basic labor education in the high school curriculum will benefit the

Table 5. Summary of responses from all schools

Variables	Laboratory High Schools				
	PUP	PNU	EARIST	RTU	All
Average Age	15.75	15.83	15.45	15.65	**15.70**
Engaged in Paid Work	16.90%	16.70%	9.10%	10.60%	**13.61%**
Experienced OJT	98.50%	0.00%	0.00%	1.20%	**34.03%**
Confident in finding work	86.20%	76.60%	72.60%	62.40%	**73.3%**
Average Score	7.86	8.3	8.45	8.25	**8.14**

students in terms of equipping them with knowledge on workers' rights and responsibilities before entering the workforce. However, they are not so keen about creating an altogether separate subject and suggested it be integrated into the Economics subject which is offered either as Social Studies III or IV in their schools. Other subjects such as History, Literature and Values Education are also excellent platforms to provide relevant examples on issues regarding employment, workers' rights and responsibilities, and work values and attitudes.

The interviewees also stress that improving the delivery of instruction in schools particularly under the Technology and Livelihood Education program would enhance the employability of students by equipping them with transferable skills and technical know-how. Appropriate investments in infrastructure, equipment, teacher training and training module development are crucial to the sustainable promotion of skills-based learning and employment.

They are quick to add, however, that the acquisition of these skills as a means to securing decent, productive jobs is only secondary to the true mission of their high schools: to prepare their students for college and earn a bachelor's degree.

The tripartite respondents have mixed views regarding the proposal to integrate basic labor education in the high school curriculum. They recognize that the problems surrounding youth employment, promotion and skills development are structural. There is a striking mismatch between the skill level of new entrants in the workforce and the jobs available in the market. While integrating basic labor education in the high school curriculum may prove beneficial, it will barely improve the chances of young workers in the workplace unless their skills are first developed.

Usec. Luzviminda Padilla of DOLE stresses the importance of career guidance counseling in high school to ensure that students are properly guided on the appropriate higher education, technical or vocational training after graduation based on their natural talents, interests, and projected labor demands of key industries.

Ms. Anna Lee Fos of TUCP is also convinced that proper career guidance counseling on top of a strengthened TLE program would address the youth's very low regard for manual labor, a sector they see as difficult, dirty and prone to unrest. The promotion of skills-based jobs shall give the youth an alternative to a college diploma, which actually does not say anything about their employability. She stresses the importance of making employment information available to everyone, believing that not all unemployed persons are unskilled and, hence, no excuse for the unfilled jobs. Access is as crucial as the quality of jobs available to everyone.

Mr. Jack Kim says that while he personally thinks values are something one cannot force upon people, students must be made aware of concepts such as professionalism and positive work attitudes through success stories. Drawing from his wealth of experience working here and in his native country, he is able to fuse the best of both groups of workers, identifying positive work values as the backbone of a long successful career in any industry.

The Hoffrichters recommend the school curriculum to be more reflective of the kind of jobs available in each community and highlight critical skills and knowledge related to these jobs. For example, in places where tourism is the largest income generator, knowledge of local interests and customs, their promotion, customer service, as well as basic food preparation are essential in the sustainable engagement of locals and growth of the local industries. Entrepreneurship must also be promoted to lessen dependence on wage employment, encourage self-sufficiency, and create employment for family members.

Conclusion

Students are not equipped with enough knowledge of labor laws and standards to prepare them for the workforce. There is a significant relationship between their level of awareness and their experience from on-

the-job training. Basic labor education and its four identified components do not exist in the high school curriculum but would be best integrated in the Ekonomiks subject of third or fourth year students. According to school officials, teachers and tripartite representatives, it is crucial to strengthen other subjects in the curriculum, particularly Technology and Livelihood Education, to enhance the students' employability.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following are recommended for urgent action to promote youth employment and create decent and productive work in the Philippines:

The Philippine Government

- Mobilize the Department of Education to initiate appropriate curriculum revisions in order to integrate basic labor education in the high school curriculum.
- Align youth employment policies with the national development agenda and recognize the importance of the youth sector by providing scholarships to students who opt to pursue technical and vocational careers.
- Enforce and champion compliance with labor laws and standards and the improvement of conditions of work through regular, random and thorough inspections of all business units, including government agencies.
- Expand TESDA's mandate to cover Technology and Livelihood Education programs in high schools in order to promote skills-based careers among students at an early age and ensure a steady supply of skilled workers to the labor market.
- Gather expanded data on youth labor market indicators, including underemployment, unemployment duration, and technical and vocational education, and facilitate its sharing between national and local governments, the academe, employers, and the labor sector.
- Provide additional financial incentives such as tax breaks and exemptions to companies who actively hire young workers.
- Document industry best practices on hiring and maintaining young workers and disseminate them as benchmark for other companies.

The Academe

- Integrate basic labor education in the high school curriculum by including it in the Economiks subject in junior or senior high school.
- Develop a module for the instruction of basic labor education with particular emphasis on such concepts as wages, hours of work, laws related to hiring, termination and retirement, and social security.
- Improve the delivery of Technology and Livelihood Education classes through module design and development and continuous teacher training programs administered by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority.
- Strengthen career guidance counseling programs with personality and trade exams and interviews to gauge the capability of students and enable them to make informed career decisions based on their interests, aptitudes, and projected labor market demands.
- Implement, where applicable, on-the-job training (OJT) programs for graduating high school students in industries where they see themselves actually pursuing careers to give them an appreciation of what it is like to work in that particular field.
- Establish active partnerships with the private sector by including their members in curriculum deliberations and position schools as steady suppliers of qualified trainable workers.
- Promote entrepreneurial, technical and vocational courses as alternatives to a college diploma by giving students scholarships and apprenticeship opportunities.

The Private Sector

- Comply with labor laws and standards and adhere to the provisions on wages, hours of work, social security, and types of employment.
- Open doors to apprenticeships and on-the-job training and play an active role in skills development among the youth by taking advantage of the provisions of the Dual Training Systems Act of 1994.
- Share good practices within industries to facilitate the integration of new entrants into the workforce through industry-based conferences and symposia.

- Communicate critical skills information to concerned government agencies like TESDA and DOLE as well as to educational institutions to ensure quality graduates with relevant and timely capabilities and technical know-how.
- Adopt a pay scale reflecting a premium given to workers possessing transferable skills and give additional incentives to those who show interest in continuous skills training.

The Labor Sector

- Change the way workers' organizations project themselves to the youth by taking stands on issues affecting young people such as reproductive health, technology and education to attract membership and involvement.
- Acknowledge changes in the workplace, particularly the emergence of the service sector, knowledge workers and rise in part-time work and temporary employment, and allow membership for these workers.
- Develop a strategy to attract young workers in emerging industries such as hospitality, business process outsourcing and information technology.
- Address and advocate against such issues as job discrimination and sexual harassment among young workers.
- Participate in regular tripartite dialogues and develop policy recommendations which reflect the interests of young people in particular and the labor movement in general.

The Youth

- Campaign for the election of youth representatives in Congress who will represent young people on such issues as education, employment, and discrimination.
- Recognize the viability of pursuing technical and vocational courses as a means to secure employment and achieve financial independence.
- Learn and develop transferable skills that enhance employability and expertise in chosen industries by training in technical and vocational courses.

With enough laws and legislation to promote and protect youth employment in the country, the Philippines needs only ensure that proper implementation and sustained compliance are observed to create an environment conducive to the promotion of youth employment and the creation of decent and productive work in the country.

If the full potential of youth workers is tapped through multisectoral partnerships, coordination and integration, social problems associated with youth unemployment and an unresponsive educational system will be addressed. Economic development may be achieved. The Philippines will be closer to attaining its Millennium Development Goals of eradicating poverty and hunger through the creation of decent and productive jobs for skilled and well-informed young workers in the country.

Notes

* Assistant Professor, UP College of Home Economics

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