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A Proposed Technical Immersion Program in Philippine State College of Aeronautics: Towards Standardization

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Abstract

Aim: This research introduced a novel approach to aircraft maintenance training through the development of a technical immersion program, rooted in the solicitation of views and perceptions from instructors across various Philippine State College of Aeronautics (PHILSCA) campuses.

Methodology: This study utilized quantitative research through a descriptive-normative survey. This method of research described and interpreted systematically a situation or area of interest factually and accurately. It was used to collect data about people's behavior, practices, attitudes, perceptions and the like. It is concerned with the result of a census study, public opinion survey, fact finding survey, status studies and questionnaire and interview studies among others. Online interviews were also utilized as source of additional information related to the variables of the study. The online interviews were used by the researcher in supporting the result of the survey conducted.

Results: The results revealed that all participants agreed (mean = 3.23) that the technical immersion program contributes to the development of future work skills in graduates. This agreement extended to indicators such as the ability to operate machines/equipment (mean = 3.23), demonstrating thoroughness and attention to detail (mean = 3.23), meeting work output quotas (mean = 3.23), and understanding task relationships (mean = 3.23)

Conclusion: The technical immersion program positively contributes to the development of various skills in graduates. However, the findings also highlight areas for improvement. Participants, who were primarily new faculty (instructors 1-3) with Master's degrees and limited training experience, indicated that the program could enhance the integration of ethical practices ("applies virtues of integrity and honesty") and exploration of new ideas in their field. These findings underscore the importance of designing immersion programs that cultivate not only technical skills but also professional ethics and critical thinking.

Keywords: technical immersion, aviation, aircraft maintenance, on the job training

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education implemented the Work Immersion Program in accordance with R. A. 10533, or "The Enhanced Basic Education Act," which aims to strengthen the existing curriculum by adding two years of senior high school (Republic Act No. 10533, 2013). One of the K-12 program's goals is to provide senior high school students with practical knowledge, skills, work ethic, and values that prepare them for their future careers (Department of Education, 2017). The Work Immersion Program is a requirement for graduation and relates directly to students' goals, providing industry-specific training in their chosen field (Cabulay, 2009). Senior high school students are given the opportunity to train in business, industry, or academe simulations through partnerships with public or private entities (Department of Education, 2017). This alignment of education with real-world experience aims to support national development goals through the K-12 curriculum and achieve congruence with the basic education system by mandating at least 80 hours of work immersion (Chua et al., 2019). DepEd Order No. 30, s. 2017 mandates institutions offering Senior High School to implement these programs, emphasizing the development of competencies, work ethics, and values that align with further education and the workforce (Department of Education, 2017). Partnerships with various industries during the Work Immersion Program enable graduates to balance theoretical knowledge with practical application (Espino-Diaz et al., 2020).

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Moreover, the Philippine State College of Aeronautics (PHILSCA) and the Philippine Air Force (PAF) under the Air Education Training and Doctrine Command (AEDTC) have collaborated to provide On-the-Job Training (OJT) opportunities for aviation students, allowing them to learn from real-world situations (Amin et al., 2013). PHILSCA students can use aircraft maintenance-related facilities during OJT, ensuring they complete the required training hours (De Simon & Harris, 1998). OJT teaches essential skills, processes, and knowledge in the actual working environment, transitioning students from observation and guided learning to independent task performance (Gupta, 2008). Unlike traditional classroom-based learning, OJT emphasizes hands-on training in the workplace, although it lacks the formal preparation found in other types of learning transfers (Daly et al., 2009).

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) legal services must conduct investigations throughout the student's immersion program to ensure compliance with training center provisions (Republic Act No. 10647, 2014). Aircraft maintenance training programs are critical for developing the future workforce of the aviation industry, particularly in the maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) sectors (De, 2011). These programs provide students with a comprehensive understanding of tasks such as inspecting, troubleshooting, overhauling, and maintaining aircraft, which is crucial for ensuring airworthiness (Shehada & Alkhaldi, 2015). The competency-based training system focuses on learning objectives rather than time spent, shifting from a teacher-centered model to a student-centered approach where progress is measured by achievement (Chang et al., 2013). Trainers in these programs have evolved into media and information managers, facilitating learning through data access and advanced technologies (De Simon & Harris, 1998).

Technical Immersion Programs are structured with both on-the-job and off-the-job training methods designed to enhance employees' skills for specific job roles (Avolio & Hannah, 2020). These programs are essential for updating the skills and knowledge of employees to meet the demands of a constantly changing environment (Imran & Tanveer, 2015). Training is a detailed process that imparts knowledge and builds awareness of rules and procedures, leading to positive changes in employees' knowledge, skills, and attitudes (DeRue & Ashford, 2020). It helps bridge the gap between employees' current abilities and the demands of their jobs, thus preparing them for higher responsibilities (Evans, 2013).

Objectives

This study aimed to propose a technical immersion program through soliciting views and perceptions among instructors of PHILSCA campuses.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the participants in terms of:
   a. age;
   b. gender;
   c. rank;
   d. Educational Attainment;
   e. Years in Service; and
   f. Trainings Attended?
2. What is the significance of a technical immersion program as perceived by the participants in terms of:
   2.1 Work skills;
   2.2 Social skills;
   2.3 Personal skills; and
   2.4 Technical skills?
3. What are the challenges of a technical immersion program as perceived by the participants in terms of:
   3.1 Students' participation in the immersion program;
   3.2 Students' skills development;
   3.3 Students' attitude towards learning;
   3.4 Students' relationship with other people; and
   3.5 Management of the immersion program?
4. Is there a significant difference in the perception of participants on the technical immersion program when grouped according to their profile variables?
5. What technical immersion program can be proposed, based on the results of the study?

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Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis were tested in this study:

Ho_1 There is no significant difference in the perception of participants on the technical immersion program when they group according to their profile.

METHODS

Research Design

This study utilized the quantitative attributes of research design, data collection and analysis. The quantitative data came from a descriptive-normative survey. This method of research described and interpreted systematically a situation or area of interest factually and accurately. It was used to collect data about people's behavior, practices, attitudes, perceptions and the like. It is concerned with the result of a census study, public opinion survey, fact finding survey, status studies and questionnaire and interview studies among others.

Participants of the Study

The subjects of this study were the AMT faculty members of four (4) campuses of the Philippine State College of Aeronautics: Villamor Air Base (VAB), Fernando Air Base (FAB), Mactan, and Basa. Purposive sampling of primary studies for inclusion in the synthesis is one way of achieving a manageable amount of data. Thirty (30) instructors participated in the research. The researcher purposively selected participants with the specified characteristics to achieve the main goal of the study (Etikan et al., 2016).

Instrument

Survey questionnaires were utilized in the study. The validation of the instrument and further refinement of the survey questionnaires were done by the researcher by presenting them to a group of experts in the field of aviation education.

Data Collection

Data collection procedures were done following all the protocols set in the study.

Treatment of Data

The study utilized the frequency distribution and percentage and mean and standard deviation. It also utilized t-test to compare the means between two groups and Analysis of Variance to compare the means among three or more groups. The researcher made use of the SPSS version 22. Data was treated as input for the SPSS to generate results, tables and computed values.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher ensured that all research protocols involving ethics in research were complied with for the protection of all people and institutions involved in the conduct of the study.

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RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Profile of the participants:

Table 1
Frequency And Percentage Distribution Of The Student-Participant Relative To Demographic Profile

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE		
Age	**Frequency**	**Percent**
30 and below	13	43.3
31 - 40	8	26.7
41 - 50	5	16.7
51 - 60	2	6.7
Above 60	2	6.7
Gender		
Male	17	56.7
Female	13	43.3
Rank		
Instructor 1-3	24	80
Assistant Professor	6	20
Educational Attainment		
Bachelor's degree with M.A. units	14	46.7
M.A. degree holder	10	33.3
M. A. with doctoral units	5	16.7
Doctorate Holder	1	3.3
Years in Service		
3 - 5 years	14	46.7
6 - 10 years	11	36.7
11 - 15 years	5	16.7
Trainings Attended		
5 and below	18	60
6 to 9	12	40

Table 1 revealed that majority of the participants aged 30 and below while same frequency and percentage for participants with age 51-60 and above 60 year old. This implied that most of the instructors spent few years in the service and just graduated from their baccalaureate degrees.

Moreover, in terms of participants' rank, it can be seen that twenty-four (24) participants were Instructor 1-3 with 80 percent and six (6) were assistant professor. Most of the instructors just started their careers in the academe and still needs to pursue professional growth for promotion in the future.

For the educational attainment it showed that fourteen (14) of the participants had units in masters while ten (10) were M.A. degree holder, only five(5) with doctoral units and one (1) was a doctorate holder. The table presented implied that some instructors had finished master's degree and the others continue to pursue it as part of their professional growth.

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For the years in service, it showed that most of the participants were 3-5 years and service with 14 in frequency or 46.7 percent while 5 participants were 11-15 years in service. It can be gleaned that majority of the instructors had few years of experience teaching in the aviation school. Lastly, it was revealed that 18 participants attended 5 and below seminars and trainings while 12 were able to attend from 6-9 seminars and trainings. It can be inferred that few trainings were joined by the teachers for the last five (5) years in service.

Significance of a technical immersion program as perceived by the participants in terms of:

2.1 Work skills

Table 2
Mean Results on the Significance of Technical Immersion Program as Perceived by the Participants in Terms of Work Skills

Work skills **Students will…**	**Mean**	**Interpretation**
1. seek to improve their skills by taking initiative to learn new paradigms and methodologies	3.07	Agree
2. demonstrate the ability to operate machines/equipment/materials needed for the job	3.23	Agree
3 Make productive use of the resources e.g., terminals and or workstations assigned to them	3.20	Agree
4.manifest thoroughness and precise attention to details of work assigned	3.23	Agree
5.deliver the required amount/volume of work output within the allotted time	3.23	Agree
6.fully understand the linkage or connection between his/her tasks to previous intervening and subsequent tasks	3.23	Agree
Composite Mean	3.20	Agree

Scale: 4(3.26-4.00)= Strongly Agree; 3(2.51-3.25)= Agree; 2(1.76-2.50)= Strongly Disagree; 1(1.00-1.75)= Disagree

It can be revealed in the table that all participants agree that technical immersion program contributes to the future work skills of future graduates. The indicators demonstrate the ability to operate machines/equipment/materials needed for the job, manifest thoroughness, and precise attention to details of work assigned, deliver the required amount/volume of work output within the allotted time and fully understand the linkage or connection between his/her tasks to previous intervening and subsequent tasks got the same mean of 3.23 with verbal interpretation of Agree. Overall, the respondents rated that in terms of work skills and it was revealed that their attitude towards the job in terms of work skills was AGREE with overall weighted mean 3.20. Becoming more knowledgeable and updated and well-equipped with the newest techniques are the authenticities of a true and competent professional life.

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2.2 Social skills

Table 3
Mean Results on the Significance of Technical Immersion Program as Perceived by the Participants in Terms of Social Skills

Social skills **Students will…**	Mean	Interpretation
1. show tack in dealing with different peoples that he/she comes in contact with	3.63	Strongly Agree
2. show respect and courtesy in dealing with peers and superiors	3.63	Strongly Agree
3. report to the office with regular punctuality and finishes the duty as scheduled	3.73	Strongly Agree
4. apply the virtues of integrity and honesty in all aspects of your work	3.57	Strongly Agree
5. reliable and imbues a sense of Responsibility in handling the tasks assigned.	3.67	Strongly Agree
Composite Mean	3.65	Strongly Agree

Scale: 4(3.26-4.00)= Strongly Agree; 3(2.51-3.25)= Agree; 2(1.76-2.50)= Strongly Disagree; 1(1.00-1.75)= Disagree

For the social skills, the table showed that participants strongly agree in this aspect of a work immersion program with the indicator finishes the duty as scheduled which got the highest mean of 3.73 while the indicator apply the virtues of integrity and honesty in all aspects of your Work got 3.57 mean. This also showed how social skills and competencies as predictors of on-the-job training success and satisfaction were classified as hard skills. Hard skills are considered to be inherent to the person and stay the same regardless of company usually related to the application of acquired knowledge to technical aspects of performing a task.

2.3 Personal skills

Table 4
Mean Results on the Significance of Technical Immersion Program as Perceived by the Participants in Terms of Personal Skills

Personal skills **Students will…**	Mean	Interpretation
1. give an opportunity to explore new ideas in relation to the existing theories in the field of discipline	3.40	Strongly Agree
2. motivate the person to pursue high level of learning	3.53	Strongly Agree
3.support work experiences with fundamentals and theories coming from formal education set-up	3.57	Strongly Agree

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4. comprehend the big and clearer picture of what is being expected.	3.57	Strongly Agree
5. realize the strength of the skills are aligned in specialization to be pursued in college	3.80	Strongly Agree
Composite Mean	3.57	Strongly Agree

Scale: 4(3.26-4.00)= Strongly Agree; 3(2.51-3.25)= Agree; 2(1.76-2.50)= Strongly Disagree; 1(1.00-1.75)= Disagree

The table for personal skills also revealed that participants strongly agreed with the 5 indicators having realize the strength of the skills are aligned in specialization to be pursued in college which got the highest mean of 3.80. When student-trainees are committed and dedicated to report for work all the time, they can be recognized as dependable and credible. Other trainees can depend and rely on them and eventually, considered as role models.

2.4 Technical skills

Table 5

Mean Results on the Significance of Technical Immersion Program as Perceived by the Participants in Terms of Technical Skills

Technical skills **Students will…**	**Mean**	**Interpretation**
1. give advantage to further enhance the technical skills	3.57	Strongly Agree
2. create avenue to discover new techniques in processing and executing technical skills	3.30	Strongly Agree
3. guarantee that skills develop are able to operate facilities and equipment such Microsoft Office , Manipulative aviation tools, and interact with various group of people having discourse competence skill in aviation and other technical skills	3.40	Strongly Agree
4. strengthens interest in maximizing skills-related toward specific responsibilities	3.43	Strongly Agree
5. sharpens students acquire knowledge which is suitable to the tasks to be performed	3.33	Strongly Agree
Composite Mean	3.41	Strongly Agree

Scale: 4(3.26-4.00)= Strongly Agree; 3(2.51-3.25)= Agree; 2(1.76-2.50)= Strongly Disagree; 1(1.00-1.75)= Disagree

It can be seen in Table 5 that all of the participants strongly agree in the importance of an immersion program towards improvement of technical skills with the indicator give advantage to further enhance the technical skills with

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3.57 mean with verbal interpretation of strongly agree. These personal characteristics are highly considered as strong points and/or assets. These combined the trainees' attitude, behavior and expressions.

Challenges of a technical immersion program as perceived by the participants

According to the interviews conducted when asked about the challenges of a technical immersion program as perceived by the teacher-participants mentioned the following:

Table 6
Challenges of a Technical Immersion Program as Perceived by the Participants

SOP	Answer SOP	Evidence	Impression
challenges of a technical immersion program as perceived by the participants	***Students' participation in the immersion program***	1. Always come to office on time and observe proper break time period	Students' participation in an immersion program is a crucial component of their educational and experiential learning journey. Immersion programs typically provide students with an opportunity to gain real-world experience and hands-on exposure to a specific field, industry, or profession.
		2. Perform assigned task within the assigned time.	
		3. Always see to it that the works and reports are neat, presentable	
	Students' skills development	1. Inadequate knowledge regarding the task assigned to me	Students' skills development refers to the process of acquiring and enhancing a wide range of abilities and competencies that are essential for success in education, future careers, and life in general. Skill development is a fundamental aspect of education and personal growth, and it encompasses various domains.
		2. The trainee should be aware of the different aspects to be evaluated by the supervisor	
		3. The training method is efficient	
		4. The firm environment is exclusive for learning	
		5. The practicum is free to ask questions to the trainer whenever it is necessary.	
	Students' attitude towards learning	1. Patience and diligence in performing assigned task	
		2. Open to constructive criticisms	

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	Students' relationship with other people	1. Enthusiasm and interest in performing the task assigned	Students' relationships with other people are an integral part of their personal, social, and emotional development. These relationships play a significant role in shaping students' experiences, well-being, and overall growth.
		2. Office personnel relations - work harmoniously with the officemates	
	Management of the immersion program	1. Have the knowledge and interest in the work assigned	The management of an immersion program involves planning, organizing, implementing, and overseeing the various aspects of the program to ensure its success. Immersion programs are typically designed to provide students with hands-on, real-world experiences in a specific field, industry, or discipline.
		2. Readily understands instructions	
		3. Performs the tasks with minimum supervision.	
		4. Showing strength and stability	
		5. Has a good working relationship with the trainee.	

Conclusion

The study revealed that males outnumbered females among the 50 respondents, with most being relatively new to the academe, holding ranks from Instructor 1 to 3 and having 3-5 years of service. These respondents typically possess a Master's degree and have attended five or fewer training sessions. Regarding the participants' perception of the significance of technical work immersion, it was noted that the indicator focusing on applying virtues of integrity and honesty in all aspects of work could be improved. In the realm of personal skills, the indicator that provides opportunities to explore new ideas related to existing theories in the field received the lowest mean score. Additionally, the indicator aimed at creating avenues for discovering new techniques in processing and executing technical skills also scored the lowest.

Several challenges and shortcomings were identified that students might encounter during immersion or OJT programs, which can significantly impact their personal, work, social, and technical skills. These factors should be carefully considered when developing a proposed immersion program. The study found no statistically significant difference in the respondents' mean perception of the technical immersion program when grouped according to their profile. This indicates that their perceptions of the technical immersion program were consistent across different ages, genders, ranks, educational attainments, years of service, and the number of training sessions attended.

Recommendations

To enhance the technical immersion deployment process, it is essential to reinforce the current system for a more efficient and timely completion of the required hours. Establishing and strengthening linkages with cooperating industries in both government and private sectors is crucial. PHILSCA campuses should sustain partnerships with these agencies through ongoing Memorandums of Agreement (MOA) to provide comprehensive and relevant training for Accountancy trainees. Proper orientation is vital and should be delivered through workshops, training sessions, and seminars to equip students with the necessary skills and understanding of the aviation industry's demands before they leave PHILSCA campuses and commence their immersion.

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The OJT Coordinator plays a critical role and should conduct frequent on-the-spot visits and closely monitor the performance of student trainees and cooperating agencies. Considering the economic challenges faced by students, it is important to study the deployment locations and the distance between the cooperating firm and the school or residence of the OJT students. Exploring alternative industries that offer similar skills could address monetary issues.

Additionally, the OJT/Immersion Manual should be reviewed regularly to incorporate necessary updates, improvements, and changes to align with the current needs and demands of the cooperating partner agencies. For future researchers, further studies on this topic are encouraged to enhance the immersion experience for BS Aircraft Maintenance Technology students and improve the overall immersion program.

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