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Social Acceptability of the Senior High School Program in Selected Public Schools in Laguna

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Abstract This descriptive study examined the acceptability of the Senior High Shool (SHS) program during its first year of implementation, considering urban and rural differentiation. Cluster and purposive sampling selected 1,420 students and 96 parents, respectively, from five urban and five rural schools offering two or more academic with technical-vocational-livelihood strands in Laguna. Factor analysis on indicators revealed higher program acceptability among urban respondents, who recognized its role in making students college- or work-ready and cited advocacy efforts as crucial to acceptability. Finance-related factors elicited poor acceptability, especially among low-income families due to additional expenses and lost opportunity for children. Mann-Whitney U test results indicated more openness and willingness among urban respondents towards SHS implementation. Content analysis of interviews with four purposively chosen local government officials showed that advocacy programs significantly raised acceptability and that

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government provision of needed resources is paramount, especially in rural areas. Policy and practice implications are discussed.

Keywords: *basic education; K-12; senior high school; social acceptability*

Introduction

Globalization has shaped contemporary education and made it adapt to the demands of the modern world. Global processes were already seen to influence many education systems in the early 21st century, with convergence around policies, practices, and values (Jackson, 2016). Standardization of structure, curriculum, assessment, and related aspects among educational institutions worldwide have since become the rule rather than the exception. In the context of basic education structure and curriculum, the Philippines has operated under a 10-year cycle before adopting the K-12 Basic Education Program, lagging behind other Southeast Asian countries that had long offered 12-15 years of pre-university education.

The 13-Year Basic Education: Philippine Context

The first decade of this century witnessed the detrimental outcomes of an ailing basic education system. A 2000-2010 assessment report showed declining net enrollment rates for both elementary and secondary schools, from over 90% and 70% in the 1990s to 84% and 60% in 2008, respectively. Repetition rate (~5%) and dropout rate (~15%) remained persistently high. Moreover, students learned only two-thirds of what they were supposed to learn in elementary school and less than half in high school (World Bank & Australian Aid, 2012). From a peak of 96.58% in 1990, youth literacy rate dropped to 95.09% in 2000. It decreased to 95.06% in 2003, making the Philippines the only country in Southeast Asia with a declining rate that year (UNESCO Institute for

Statistics [UIS], n.d.). The data that were taken from the UIS Data Center shows that Filipino Grade 8 students performed abysmally in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2003 assessment. Similarly, Filipino Grade 4 pupils ranked last in a list of 58 participating countries in math and science performance in 2019 (TIMSS & Progress in International Reading Literacy Study [PIRLS] International Study Center, 2020). The country's lackluster performance, which primarily stems from insufficient investment in basic education and inefficient program delivery, foiled government efforts to attain its targets under the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All by 2015.

The 10-year education cycle, instituted through the Educational Act of 1940, implemented changes in the country's basic education system, including the temporary removal of Grade 7 which was never reinstated. The Department of Education (DepEd) deemed the 10-year cycle as short of global standards, producing graduates inadequately prepared for college and too young to engage in business or to be legally employed. The internationally accepted 12-year cycle made the bachelor's degree obtained in the country equivalent to only two years of undergraduate study, producing graduates lacking in academic qualifications and preparedness as professionals and putting them at a disadvantage abroad (Cabansag, 2014; Tayag, 2013). Graduates ended up doing jobs that do not match their educational credentials (Durban & Catalan, 2012). Moreover, the mobility rate of students holding degrees from the Philippines was low relative to Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore (UIS, n.d.).

Recognizing the setbacks of the 10-year education cycle, the Philippine government finally adopted the K-12 Basic Education Program, the country's most comprehensive initiative for basic education since the establishment of the public education system in 1901. This landmark reform aimed to decongest and enhance the curriculum to enable

learners to gain mastery of concepts and skills, develop life-long learning, and be prepared for work, business, or higher education. The program also intended to align the basic education cycle with global practice and increase students' and graduates' competitiveness in international examinations and labor market. Every additional year spent in school is said to translate to higher wage, employability, and gross domestic product, apart from a high rate of return, thus generating benefits from increased socioeconomic development (Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization-Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology [SEAMEO-INNOTECH], 2012). Created through Republic Act 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, the K-12 Basic Education Program institutionalized one year of Kindergarten and two years of Senior High School (SHS) (DepEd, 2010). The lengthening of secondary education sparked much debate among key stakeholders regarding numerous issues and concerns. Critics claimed that longer education cycles do not guarantee quality education, as these do not necessarily result in better student performance in TIMSS (Felipe & Porio, 2010).

Issues in SHS Program Implementation

The SHS component of the K-12 Basic Education Program was beset by challenges, particularly economic issues. Two more years of high school entailed additional expenses and put further stress on the family budget (Cabansag, 2014). Poor families expect children to earn as soon as possible and not spend more years in school (Okabe, 2013). Moreover, many children chose not to attend school due to the high cost of education (Okabe, 2013; Senate Economic Planning Office [SEPO], 2011). The drop in primary and secondary school enrollment levels in 2008 was found to coincide with increased poverty from 2003 to 2006 (World Bank & Australian Aid, 2012).

Extreme poverty is widespread in many rural regions, while economic growth is largely concentrated in urban centers. Such disparities between regions and socioeconomic classes result in unequal access to education, especially in the secondary level. A 2010 survey by the National Statistics Office (now the Philippine Statistics Authority) (as cited in Okabe, 2013) reflected the divide between those in the high-income social stratum and living in the highly urbanized National Capital Region (NCR); and those in the low-income stratum and residing in regions outside NCR (mostly rural areas). Results showed that more high school graduates and students accessing higher education were from high-income families or residing in urban areas. Students from low-income families or living in peripheral areas were less likely to finish high school. The gap between socioeconomic classes is also evident in the participation rate. In 2007, participation rate was 91.8% for non-poor and only 85.9% for poor pupils in elementary level, while in secondary level the rate was 76.5% for non-poor and 51.4% for poor students. School-leavers were also mostly from poor families (SEPO*,* 2011). Rampant child labor kept children from classrooms to help with family income (Durban & Catalan, 2012).

The economics of education highlighted the K-12 Basic Education Program's crucial role in the socioeconomic upliftment of the country and its people. Studies underlined the impact of socioeconomic status in accessing the right to education, particularly among economically and geographically-disadvantaged societal groups. Literature on the impact of two additional years in high school on students and parents from urban and rural communities is scant.

Studies also rarely highlight the participation of local government unit (LGU) officials in SHS assessment. As community leaders and Local School Board (LSB) members who are mandated to support local public schools in delivering quality education (DepEd, 2009), they could provide insights

on the status and barriers to the implementation of SHS. Engaging them in the process creates opportunities for self-evaluation of their commitment and efforts and recognizes their invaluable role in the program's overall success.

SHS program implementation could be undermined by its lack of social acceptability (SA) among stakeholders. Following the definition by Brunson (1996, as cited in Shindler, Brunson, & Stankey, 2002), stakeholders will judge the program's potential to address the problems assailing the country's basic education. Factors internal and external to them could influence their judgment (Shindler et al., 2002). Social acceptance depends on stakeholders' perception of project costs, benefits, and impacts (ENEA Consulting, 2012). Studies also show that attitude (Janhunen, Hujala, & Patari, 2018), knowledge, perception, and beliefs (Moula, Maula, Hamdy, Tingting, Jung, & Lahdelma, 2013) affect social acceptability. Moreover, Moula and colleagues (2013) revealed that socioeconomic background, age group, behavior, usefulness, and costs influence acceptability.

Social acceptability of the SHS program entails the stakeholders' thorough understanding of its impacts, especially among rural households that mostly have insufficient income to shoulder additional cost of schooling. The lack of social acceptability and public support to the program could lead to rejection or discontinued implementation.

Framework of the Study

Education is crucial to human capital build-up, which is necessary for national development. The K-12 Basic Education Program aimed to respond to this need. It was criticized, however, as a highly ambitious project that effects fundamental changes at different levels of education that were otherwise deemed urgent by program supporters.

From the perspective of parents and students, weighing the pros and cons of the program is reflected in their social acceptability. Integral to stakeholders' response towards the SHS program are the consultative and collaborative efforts that involve them and the shared processes that promote transparency and trust (ENEA Consulting, 2012; Shindler et al., 2002). These processes and advocacy initiatives could provide stakeholders correct and sufficient knowledge of the program's costs, benefits, and other implications. Credibility and legitimacy of proponents and level of knowledge could influence stakeholder acceptance of a project (ENEA Consulting, 2012).

Stakeholder participation and support are crucial to the success of education reforms. Alonzo (2015) recommended greater stakeholder support to the government while Omirin (2015), and Caballero and Cabahug (2015) identified adequate preparation, stakeholder participation and support, and improved awareness among stakeholders as vital factors in implementing education reform. Since stakeholder participation is the most impactful component of authentic education transformations in contemporary research (Reyes, 2016, as cited in Oracion, Naidu, Ng, & Reyes, 2020), school leaders on the ground having pivotal role in implementation were chosen to lead "bottom-up" initiatives to K–12 (Oracion et al., 2020).

Acceptability is also a product of "complex forces that come from within individuals themselves and from the social context within which they participate" (Shindler et al., 2002, p. 43). Thus, it is also contingent on the project's relevance to a person/group and its effects on values and strongly-held beliefs. Filipinos highly regard good education, which is seen as a means to a better quality of life and a way up the social ladder. Thus, most stakeholders support SHS despite the added cost.

Despite recognizing the benefits of SHS, low-income parents may still opt to spend money on food rather than on additional schooling (Okabe, 2013). The two additional years strain the family's resources even more (Cabansag, 2014), leading students to stop schooling to avoid added expenses and to help with the family's needs (SEPO, 2011; Okabe, 2013).

The foregoing discussion underlines social acceptability as a shared process, based on information filtered through networks of communication and influenced by multiple factors. Acceptability is temporary (Shindler et al., 2002) and could be reshaped by the presence/absence of enabling and reinforcing processes. What is most important is to align the national government's and DepEd's vision of societal development through the SHS program with stakeholder interests.

Purposes of the Research

This study described the acceptability of the SHS program among selected students, parents, LGU officials, and other stakeholders in Laguna while highlighting urban and rural differentiation in their responses. Study results could fill gaps in literature and serve as bases for policies and actions.

Methodology

Research Design

This descriptive study used quantitative and qualitative data gathering methods, including survey questionnaires, key informant (KI) interviews, and secondary data.

Participants

A total of 10 (urban = 5, rural = 5) senior high schools offering three or more programs from at least two tracks in four DepEd divisions in Laguna were randomly selected. Sampled schools offered two or more academic strands combined with technical-vocational-livelihood (TVL) strands. Using cluster sampling, 1,420 student-respondents were identified (42/70 clusters, urban = 21, rural = 21). Each cluster represented one class taking a particular strand based on a proportion with $\alpha = 5\%$, .5 population proportion, and 10% margin of error. Ninety-six (96) purposively selected Parent-Teacher Association officers (urban = 50, rural = 46) also served as respondents. Key informants (KIs) from LGUs, who must be education committee heads and Local School Board members or their representatives, were purposively selected. Participants included one municipal mayor, two councilors, and one special assistant to the vice-mayor.

Instruments

The survey questionnaire comprised questions on personal and school data, and 15 social acceptability questions that were translated and revised for simplicity and clarity before a pretest in a senior high school in Bay, Laguna. Social acceptability questions for students and parents were formulated based on published articles regarding SHS program characteristics, benefits, and issues and challenges. Social acceptability questions were rated using a five-point Likert scale, with increasing acceptability from 1 (highly unacceptable) to 5 (highly acceptable). At least one-fourth of the answered questionnaires in the pre-test were checked and questions were found to be valid.

Interviews with LGU representatives focused on activities done to enhance SHS acceptability, particularly

on increasing awareness on and support for the program, matching school offerings with community needs, and fostering partnership/linkages between schools and other institutions; general assessment of SHS social acceptability by parents, students, and government/non-government institutions; and difference in SHS social acceptability among schools in their respective local government compared to those in cities (municipalities).

Data Gathering

Permission was obtained from school officials and parents and informed consent was secured from students prior to the survey. Interview schedules were arranged with KIs and guide questions were emailed to them prior to the interview. Actual survey and gathering of accomplished questionnaires were conducted from mid-February until the end of March 2017. Enumerators were hired to administer the survey among students in the selected clusters in each school. Teachers-in-charge administered and collected questionnaires for absent students. SHS coordinators distributed and collected self-administered questionnaires from parents. Data were then encoded and analyzed.

KIs were interviewed in their offices and the proceedings were documented. Each interview lasted 75 to 90 minutes. Most KIs showed pertinent documents, such as Memoradum of Agreement with DepEd and/or the private sector and Maintenance and other Operating Expenses of public schools in their locality. Interviews were transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics analyzed the quantitative data from the survey. Factor analysis determined the association of trends or patterns with a latent variable

and to group together variables with similar characteristics into a few interpretable underlying factors. Test on mean difference or mean rank differences between rural and urban schools was done using Independent Sample t-test if assumption of normality was satisfied; otherwise, Mann-Whitney U test was used.

Content analysis examined the qualitative data from KII transcripts. Data entries were classified into categories or themes based on questions underpinning the study objectives. Themes were broken down into sub-themes when needed. Entries in each theme were organized and synthesized to provide necessary information.

Results and Discussion

Social Acceptability (SA) among Students

Factor Analysis on SA indicators

Table 1 summarizes the results of the factor analysis on 15 SA statements as variables and two resulting latent factors. Variables SA1 to SA11 have higher loadings on Factor 1, with SA6 having the highest factor loadings. This implies a strong association of these variables with the SHS program's ability to equip graduates with necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to better prepare for college, employment, or business. Variables SA2, SA10, SA9, and SA1, having higher loadings on Factor 1, relate to competitive advantage and benefits that SHS graduates can derive from the program and are important considerations in making SHS socially-acceptable to students.

Variables SA12 to SA15 have higher loadings on Factor 2, with SA12 having the highest loadings. This finding indicates strong influence on variable SA12. Variables SA13, SA14, and SA15, having higher loadings

on Factor 2, constitute calls to enforce policy actions and strategies to successfully implement SHS and make it more socially-acceptable to stakeholders.

Table 1.

Rotated Component Matrix of SA of SHS among Students and Parents.

VARIABLES		STUDENT		PARENT	
		COMPONENT		COMPONENT	
		Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 1	Factor 2
SA 1.	Additional two years of senior high school (SHS) is necessary to improve Philippine basic education.	.717		.764	.191
SA 2.	Enhanced SHS curriculum in different tracks and strands is necessary to prepare students for future plans/endeavours.	.757	.125	.873	.149
SA 3.	SHS will make graduates at par with international standards.	.652	.289	.755	.270
SA 4.	SHS is the answer to problem on mismatch of competencies between graduates and job requirements of industries/business sector.	.604	.273	.766	
SA 5.	SHS is the effective answer to country's deteriorating basic education system.	.420	.405	.640	.136
SA 6.	SHS equips graduates with necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be better prepared for college, employment, or business.	.775	.229	.781	.310
SA 7.	TVL Track of SHS makes graduates work-ready thereby helping students and parents save money by cutting two years in college.	.495		.674	.266
SA 8.	SHS, with its new curriculum and additional two years, would help Filipino college graduates be globally competitive to work/study abroad.	.704	.199	.672	.368

SA 9.	Additional two years of SHS decongest overloaded four-year high school curriculum, allowing for greater/deeper student learning.	.721	.200	.705	.158
SA 10.	SHS helps students develop basic competencies and maturity for world outside school.	.737	.256	.705	.356
SA 11.	SHS helps students achieve better performance/scores in national achievement tests and internationally-sponsored tests.	.596	.347	.633	.343
SA 12.	SHS results in additional expenses with the additional two years of basic education.	−.155	.859		.558
SA 13.	Merits of SHS program and how it should be implemented should be sufficiently and properly discussed to all stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, school administrators, LGU, etc.).	.520	.539	.420	.779
SA 14.	Success of SHS program rests on collaboration and partnership among different stakeholders, government agencies (e.g., DepEd, CHED, TESDA, LGUs) and private or nongovernment institutions/organizations.	.568	.523	.461	.776
SA 15.	Success of SHS program rests on preparedness of all stakeholders.	.585	.503	.310	.840

Assessment of Social Acceptability

Most student-respondents from both rural and urban schools provided an "acceptable" assessment to all statements regarding SA of SHS implementation, except for SA12 (Table 2). Respondents had almost equally divided percentage between "fairly acceptable" and "acceptable" assessments for SA12, recognizing that extended schooling through SHS implementation results in additional expenses (Cabansag, 2014).

Under Factor 1, SA6, SA2, and SA10 were the top statements acceptable to students from rural and urban areas. Students were convinced that additional years of high school will help them in their future plans. This might be due to advocacies launched by DepEd and schools, supported by LGUs, and to personal

Table 2.

Student and Parent Assessment on the SA of Implementing SHS

STATEMENTS	STUDENTS								PARENTS							
	RURAL				URBAN				RURAL				URBAN			
	U (%)	FA (%)	A (%)	Total (%)	U (%)	FA (%)	A (%)	Total (%)	U (%)	FA (%)	A (%)	Total (%)	U (%)	FA (%)	A (%)	Total (%)
SA1	2.49	10.2	40.19	52.88	1.9	7.59	37.58	47.07	2.08	10.42	33.33	45.83	1.04	4.17	43.75	48.96
SA2	2.7	5.9	44.23	52.83	1.9	3.8	41.37	47.07	2.08	10.42	34.38	46.88	0	6.25	42.71	48.96
SA3	3.17	11.22	38.37	52.76	1.89	10.3	34.7	46.92	4.17	8.33	32.29	44.79	1.04	11.5	36.46	48.96
SA4	3.46	15.56	33.49	52.51	2.95	14.5	29.31	46.77	4.17	17.71	25	46.88	2.08	16.7	30.21	48.96
SA5	7.34	13.79	31.29	52.42	6.28	12.9	27.74	46.88	3.13	17.71	25	45.83	9.38	8.33	31.25	48.96
SA6	2.49	4.26	45.67	52.42	1.69	3.84	41.41	46.94	5.21	6.25	34.38	45.83	1.04	4.17	43.75	48.96
SA7	3.33	10.33	39.18	52.84	1.69	10	35.21	46.94	4.17	8.33	33.33	45.83	2.08	11.5	35.42	48.96
SA8	2.61	8.86	41.33	52.8	1.68	8.05	37.19	46.92	5.21	10.42	31.25	46.88	2.08	8.33	38.54	48.96
SA9	2.66	10.12	39.93	52.71	1.98	7.89	37.11	46.98	4.17	11.46	31.25	46.88	2.08	10.4	36.46	48.96
SA10	2.49	6.79	43.27	52.55	1.65	5.61	39.59	46.85	7.29	7.29	31.25	45.83	1.04	10.4	37.5	48.96
SA11	2.11	12.4	37.95	52.46	1.48	12	33.35	46.81	3.13	19.79	23.96	46.88	1.04	13.5	34.38	48.96
Factor 1	**4.01**				**4.07**				**3.75**				**4.00**			
SA12	13.1	19.74	19.44	52.29	9.15	18.1	19.52	46.8	9.38	18.75	18.75	46.88	5.21	15.6	27.08	47.92
SA13	2.2	10.29	40.23	52.72	1.73	9.15	35.93	46.81	6.25	4.17	36.46	46.88	0	8.33	40.63	48.96
SA14	2.44	6.69	43.22	52.35	1.56	7.89	37.49	46.94	5.21	9.38	32.29	46.88	1.04	11.5	36.46	48.96
SA15	2.36	7.46	42.85	52.67	1.9	7.42	37.53	46.85	7.29	4.17	35.42	46.88	1.04	10.4	37.5	48.96
Factor 2	**3.9**				**3.93**				**3.66**				**4.05**			
Overall Social Acceptability	**3.98**				**4.03**				**3.73**				**4.01**			

Note: U - Unacceptable; FA – Fairly Acceptable; A – Acceptable

experiences while studying two semesters under the SHS program. Effectiveness of advocacy and information campaigns for stakeholder participation and support of education programs is recognized by Alonzo (2015), Omirin (2015), Caballero and Cabahug (2015), and Oracion et al. (2020).

Meanwhile, SA5, SA4, and SA11 were acceptable to the least number of students from both areas. Students may yet to see clear indications of the program's benefits at the macro level. The program's beneficial impact on the state of the country's education, labor mismatch, and local/ international assessment performance would take time to materialize.

Under Factor 2, SA14 and SA15 were most acceptable to students from rural and urban areas. They believed that SHS success lies in the collaborative effort of all stakeholders, a process deemed imperative in social acceptability (ENEA Consulting, 2012; Shindler et al., 2002). In both areas, the least number of students rated SA12 as acceptable, perhaps due to the appreciation of the program's long-term benefits in preparing them for future opportunities despite additional costs. This may be particularly true since majority of student-respondents come from households with sufficient income for family needs. Students from poor families may perceive SHS as additional expense, making it unacceptable to them.

In sum, students from urban schools obtained higher mean scores in Factor 1 (4.07), Factor 2 (3.93), and overall SA (4.03) compared to those from rural schools (4.01, 3.90, and 3.98, respectively). This result suggests that students from urban schools are more willing to embrace SHS as a curricular reform, knowing they will gain competitive advantage upon program completion despite added costs. Given that education reforms must benefit all students, policies should target strategies to improve SHS program social acceptability especially in rural areas.

Social Acceptability among Parents

Factor Analysis of SA indicators

Similar results were observed in various acceptability indicators for parents, except SA2's highest loadings on Factor 1, indicating that parents consider these variables strongly influencing SA2 (Table 1). Together with SA6, SA1, SA9, and SA10, SA3 exhibited high loadings on Factor 1. Parents, like in the case of students, gave high premium to competitive advantage and benefits acquired after program completion.

Variables SA12 to SA15 also had higher loadings on Factor 2, but with SA15 having highest loadings, implying that these variables strongly influence the latter variable. In the same vein, variables SA13 and SA14 exhibited high loadings on Factor 2, although SA12 had the lowest loading among four variables, suggesting that parents viewed the program's success as resting on adequate preparation, strong partnership and collaboration, and wider information dissemination, as mentioned by Omirin (2015) and Caballero and Cabahug (2015), which necessitate policy actions and specific strategies.

Assessment of Social Acceptability

As in the case with students, most parents from rural and urban schools assessed almost all statements as acceptable. Interestingly, an equal percentage of parents from rural schools (18.75%) rated SA12 as fairly acceptable and acceptable, perhaps due to the perception that SHS may result in additional expenses, particularly for rural families that may deem the original four-year secondary education already sufficient to prepare their children for work to bring food to the table.

Under Factor 1, SA2, SA6, and SA1 were the top variables acceptable to parents from both areas, which is attributable to advocacy programs and experiences of Grade 11 students, as well as to parents realizing the program's potential benefits in enhancing their children's future. Results also show that parents exhibit greater broadmindedness on the program's potential benefits in improving the country's basic education. Parents from rural schools also concurred with SA7, although more students were enrolled in the TVL track in urban than in rural schools. This could be due to greater difficulties and higher costs incurred by parents from rural than from urban areas, where most tertiary education institutions are located, pointing to locational constraint as an important consideration for those residing in far-flung areas. This result underscores the great influence of socioeconomic background (Moula et al., 2013), aside from attitude, culture, and shared values of the community (ENEA, 2012; Moula et al., 2013; Janhunen et al., 2018), on acceptability.

The least number of parents from both areas consider SA4, SA5, and SA11 acceptable among statements under Factor 1. The potential impact of SHS on labour supply-demand mismatch and educational assessment performance cannot be achieved overnight. Although majority of parents agreed that SHS is necessary, they do not see it as the only solution to the deteriorating education system.

Under Factor 2, SA13 and SA15 were most acceptable to parents from both areas. Parents believe that major changes in the school system should be well understood by all parties involved through early consultations (ENEA Consulting, 2012). SA 12 was acceptable to the least number of parents from both areas, perhaps due to the program's benefits in providing future opportunities for their children despite additional costs, considering that majority of parents are from families with sufficient income. In contrast, poor families may find the statement unacceptable due to additional expenses.

In sum, parents from urban schools have higher mean scores in Factor 1 (4.00), Factor 2 (4.05), and overall SA (4.01) compared to those from rural schools (3.75, 3.66, and 3.73, respectively). This means that parents from urban schools are more willing to embrace SHS as a curricular reform, realizing their children's competitive advantage upon program completion despite additional costs. Policies must be implemented to help rural families meet the challenges caused by the SHS program. While parents dream of good education for their children, addressing their most essential needs first is the reality for poor families.

Social Acceptability among LGU officials

Themes surfaced from a content analysis of KIIs with LGU representatives revealed a generally positive acceptance of the SHS program implementation, as evidenced by their support to the program through awareness campaigns, program and community needs matching, and partnership building.

Efforts done to Enhance Social Acceptability

Efforts done by LGUs as reported by KIs fall under three categories, as follows:

Enhancing awareness and support for SHS. LGU officials supported information drives initiated by DepEd and schools regarding SHS track offerings, benefits, and preparations done before implementation. They also helped raise awareness on SHS among students and parents during school activities. One conducted massive information drive in his city to further enhance key stakeholders' awareness.

Matching programs with community needs. Program offerings were matched with the interest of students and the needs of the community. One LGU conducted a survey while another consulted with the academe. One city government passed a resolution to create a stand-alone city senior high

school that will offer specialized programs needed by industries, such as Mechatronics and Computer Programming. A city government conducted consultations with DepEd and the private sector to ensure that courses offered in schools matched industry needs.

Fostering partnerships and linkages. LGUs forged partnerships with DepEd and the business sector. One city government actively assisted in bridging active public-private partnerships between DepEd/schools and the industry.

The social acceptability of the SHS program can be enhanced through collaborative and consultative activities, such that stakeholders understand its benefits (ENEA Consulting, 2012; Shindler et al., 2002) and students are sufficiently prepared for personal holistic development, contribute to socioeconomic development (Cabansag, 2014; Okabe, 2013; SEAMEO-INNOTECH, 2012) and are encouraged by both private and public entities in the surrounding community. Active participation of LGUs and other stakeholders in school improvement is embodied in the School-Based Management approach (DepEd, 2009).

Observations on Stakeholders' SA of the SHS Program

KIs unanimously stated that stakeholders reacted negatively to the K-12 curriculum, especially poorer families that could not afford the cost of additional two years of schooling. They stated, however, that information campaigns generally improved the acceptability of SHS among students and parents, as these highlighted the program's benefits. This emphasizes the importance of stakeholder awareness on acceptability (Shindler et al., 2002; ENEA Consulting, 2012). Survey results also showed that parents and students believed SHS would enhance the students' future, equip them for global competition, and provide them with better opportunities despite additional costs.

In addition, all KIs observed that government institutions have generally positive acceptance of the SHS program. In urban areas, LGUs and the private sector actively participated in DepEd programs. One city LGU created ordinances to make the SHS program a top priority.

Some KIs in rural areas, however, stated getting negative responses due to lack of support. This is consistent with survey results that in Factor 2, SA14 was the most acceptable, stressing the need for cooperation and partnership with public and private institutions in successfully implementing SHS.

Urban and Rural Differentiation in SA

Differences in SA between Rural and Urban Schools

Mean scores of the dependent variables in students' and parents' surveys were tested for normality using Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and Shapiro-Wilk tests, respectively (Table 3). In both surveys, the assumption of normality was not met; thus, the Mann-Whitney U test was used to test mean rank difference between rural and urban schools.

Based on survey results, SA Factor 1 and overall SA were statistically different between rural and urban schools at $\alpha = 5\%$, while SA Factor 2 was significantly different at $\alpha = 10\%$. Students from urban schools gave higher SA ratings considering the competitive advantage and benefits after program completion, while also believing that program success rests on adequate preparation, strong partnership and collaboration, and wider information dissemination among stakeholders (Omirin, 2015; Caballero & Cabahug, 2015). This indicates that they were more open and willing to take on the challenges brought by SHS.

Among parents, SA Factor 2 and overall SA mean ranks were statistically significant between rural and urban

schools at α = 10%. Difference in SA Factor 1 between schools was insignificant; hence, parents of students from urban schools were more amenable to SHS implementation, believing that program success depends on adequate preparation, strong partnership and collaboration, and wider information dissemination among stakeholders. Such openness and willingness among students and parents could be due to greater support provided by LGUs in urban areas. Having great influence on their children and on their education and future, parents must first be convinced about the benefits of SHS. This necessitates active and wider advocacy and information efforts by key implementers and stakeholders.

Table 3.

Test of Normality and Mean Difference/Mean Rank Difference of SA of SHS among Students and Parents

	STUDENTS		PARENTS	
	TEST OF NORMALITY	TEST OF DIFFERENCE	TEST OF NORMALITY	TEST OF DIFFERENCE
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Mann-Whitney U	Shapiro-Wilk	Mann-Whitney U
	(p-value)	(p-value)	(p-value)	(p-value)
SA Factor 1	.000	.049**	.000	.156[ns]
SA Factor 2	.000	.093*	.000	.074*
Overall SA	.000	.045**	.000	.065*

[ns] Not significant

*Significant at 10% level

** Significant at 5% level

Differences in Social Acceptability based on KII

Three LGU KIs identified urban stakeholders as having advantage over their rural counterparts due to higher budgetary allocation that enabled urban LGUs to provide greater support to their constituents' educational needs. In general, SHS implementation was more acceptable to both students and parents from urban schools. One city respondent

identified the parents' lack of awareness regarding the SHS program as contributory to SA differences between parents from urban and rural areas. Financial constraints also emerged as an issue, especially when parents are forced to send children to private schools because of the inaccessibility of SHS in far-flung areas. Although tuition is free, students still have to shoulder other expenses (e.g., transportation, projects, and books).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the acceptability of the SHS program among selected students, parents, and other stakeholders in urban and rural areas in Laguna after its first year of implementation. Results helped shed light on factors affecting the program's acceptability based on economic status and urban-rural dichotomies, exposing the uneven burden of two additional years of schooling on socioeconomically-disadvantaged groups.

By the end of its first year, the SHS program enjoyed improved social acceptability through the advocacy efforts implemented by DepEd and schools, although issues still hound program implementation. Many students and parents believed that the program will provide children with knowledge and skills to pursue their future plans. The program's presumed benefits, such as addressing the labour supply-demand mismatch and improving performance in assessment tests, are yet to materialize.

Respondents asserted that proposed major changes in the school system should be well communicated and understood by all stakeholders. This highlights the vital role of enabling processes (consultation, collaboration, advocacy, and information dissemination) in encouraging stakeholder support. For low-income households, additional financial

burden and employment delay remained their primary issues with the SHS program. Negative acceptability was still noted, especially among poorer families with limited means to send their children to school for another two years.

Government institutions generally have positive acceptance of SHS, which is evident in their support through fostering partnerships with the private sector and other institutions. However, cases of lack of support from government and non-government institutions in certain areas were noted. Meanwhile, the SHS program was generally more acceptable to students and parents from urban than from rural schools, owing to better support provided by their LGUs for its implementation.

Stakeholder acceptability is paramount to the success of the SHS program. Advocacy and other facilitating initiatives to promote greater participation of all stakeholders and to align national aspirations and interests with those of the family, community, and society must be undertaken regularly. The national government and other institutions must provide sustained support in terms of the needed resources, especially in rural areas. Mechanisms must be in place to ensure regular, realistic, effective, and efficient nationwide monitoring and evaluation of the program. Policies addressing the identified problem areas must be soundly crafted and rigorously implemented at all levels. These measures would help ensure that the SHS program benefits students from both urban and rural communities. The envisioned goal of social and economic development may then be forthcoming.

Social acceptability studies are recommended on the first cohort of SHS graduates who have earned bachelor's degree or have opted to earn money after high school. As the first batch to finish SHS under the K-12 Basic Education Program, their views are valuable in helping make this

curricular reform effective and relevant in meeting global standards and needs.

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