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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### CURRICULUM EXIT AND ITS ALIGNMENT TO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL OFFERINGS IN SCHOOLS DIVISION OF ISABELA: A BASIS FOR POLICY PROGRAM

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#### Abstract

*This study analyzed and compared the curriculum exit paths of four batches of Senior High School (SHS) graduates in Isabela's Schools Division Office (SDO). The research sought to inform localized policy guidelines and monitoring tools for the SHS program by assessing the educational trajectories and alignment of graduates' subsequent pursuits. Using data exclusively from the SDO Isabela's SHS Tracking System, the study investigated the exit paths of SHS graduates, revealing that a predominant majority (ranging from 88.33% to 92.23%) pursued higher education in colleges. In contrast, others explored avenues such as employment, acquiring middle-level skills, or engaging in entrepreneurship. Data analysis unveiled that a significant proportion (73% to 84%) of graduates pursued college degrees aligned with their SHS strands. However, a noteworthy percentage (27% to 30%) opted for paths not aligned with their SHS specialization. Conversely, most graduates employed after SHS did not find jobs aligned with their SHS strands, indicating a misalignment in specific career trajectories. Furthermore, General Academic Strand and Arts and Design Track graduates frequently pursued college programs without alignment, especially in Legislative District 2. The Technical-Vocational-Livelihood Track displayed a balanced proportion between aligned and non-aligned paths. The study also highlighted reasons preventing some graduates from pursuing higher education, such as financial constraints, early pregnancies, and unfortunate deaths. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions and support mechanisms for SHS graduates, emphasizing the significance of aligning SHS programs with subsequent career paths. Ultimately, this research contributes vital insights to refine and improve the SHS curriculum's effectiveness, fostering better alignment between education and students' future endeavors.*

## INTRODUCTION

The transformation of the educational landscape in the Philippines, notably propelled by Republic Act 10533, known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, represents a pivotal move towards holistic student readiness with the introduction of the Senior High School (SHS) Program. This two-year augmentation is a deliberate effort to give students the essential tools for pursuing higher education, securing employment, fostering middle-level skills development, and cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset. This strategic initiative harmonizes seamlessly with the overarching vision of the Department of Education, which is committed to delivering education of the highest quality and elevating the global competitiveness of learners.

However, concerns have surfaced regarding the readiness of SHS graduates to transition into the workforce seamlessly (Pamittan et al., 2018). Articles such as "Employers Worried About SHS

Readiness to Work,” featured in *Business World* (June 25, 2021), highlighted employers’ hesitancy in hiring SHS graduates, who, in turn, often prefer pursuing further studies. Supporting these apprehensions, a PIDS Discussion Paper Series (No. 2020-40) titled “On the Employability of the Senior High School” (December 2020) revealed that a mere 20% of SHS graduates join the labor force, while over 70% opt for continued education, suggesting varied outcomes regarding labor market success and prompting a reevaluation of SHS program objectives.

In response to these concerns, the Department of Education initiated a tracking system for SHS graduates, particularly in the Schools Division Office of Isabela, to scrutinize the curriculum exit paths of graduates across the first to fourth batches. This endeavor aimed to glean insights for formulating localized policy guidelines tailored to enhance the efficacy of the senior high school program. This assessment underscores the Department of Education’s unwavering commitment to refine the SHS program, aligning it with the evolving demands of students and the job market. Continual evaluation, research, and tracking endeavors intend to provide a comprehensive understanding of the roles SHS graduates play in the labor market, ensuring the SHS program’s coherence with its intended objectives. The pursuit of this research stems from the imperative need to optimize the SHS curriculum to serve better the dynamic needs of students and the contemporary workforce.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design and Participants

This study adopted a quantitative-descriptive research design focused on numerical data from the SHS Tracking System documents from Legislative Districts I-VI within Isabela’s Schools Division Office (SDO). The participants in this study comprised the first to fourth batches of SHS graduates, accessible through the SHS Tracking System of SDO Isabela, which was gathered and stored in a Google Drive repository—sampling involved collecting data available within the system without additional direct participant involvement.

To ensure ethical compliance, the researchers obtained permission from the Schools Division Superintendent of Isabela to access and utilize the data contained in the SHS Tracking System. Ethical considerations also involved adhering to data privacy protocols, encrypting sensitive information within the SHS Tracking System, and limiting access to authorized personnel such as Education Program Supervisors and SHS Focal Persons.

### Data Gathering Tools, Procedures, and Analysis

The primary data source for this study was the document titled “SHS Tracking System of SDO Isabela,” presented during the SHS Consultative Meeting on November 24, 2021. Permission was sought and access this document, consolidating data over three years of SHS implementation. Considering IATF protocols, data collection occurred via internet-mediated research methods. The intervention involved accessing and analyzing the SHS Tracking System document, focusing on its content for a specified duration corresponding to the three-year implementation period of the SHS program in Isabela. Given the document analysis nature of the research, the data was quantitatively analyzed using frequency and percentage techniques (Pentang, 2021). This analysis aimed to identify and compare the curriculum exit paths chosen by the four batches of SHS graduates in SDO Isabela. The focus lay on assessing alignment and implications concerning program offerings based on the gathered information from the SHS Tracking System. Researchers exercised caution and rigor in interpreting the data, recognizing the internal and external reviewers’ recommendations for potential nationwide dissemination of the findings.

## RESULTS

### Curriculum Exit of First Batch ABM Strand of Senior High School in SDO Isabela

The first batch from the ABM strand in SDO Isabela prioritized pursuing their dreams by enrolling in higher education with 468 graduates, followed by employment with 12 graduates while entrepreneurship and middle-skill with one graduate (Table 1). As per higher education, LD 1 has the highest number in pursuing it with 154 graduates, LD 3 with 137, LD 2 with 59, LD 5 with 43 and LD 4 with 32 graduates. On the other hand, LD 6 did not offer ABM during SY 2017-2018. Regarding employment, LD 1 has the highest number of joining a job with six graduates followed by LD with four and LD 3 and 5 with both one graduate. For middle-skill, only graduates from LD 4 pursued it, while LD 1 pursued entrepreneurship.

Table 1. Curriculum Exit of First Batch ABM Strand of Senior High School in SDO Isabela

LD	ABM			
	Higher Education	Middle Skill	Employment	Entrepreneurship
LD 1	154	-	6	1
LD 2	59	-	-	-
LD 3	137	-	1	-
LD 4	32	1	3	-
LD 5	43	-	1	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>

### Curriculum Exit of First Batch GAS Strand of Senior High School in SDO Isabela

The GAS strand graduates prioritized enrolling in college with 2947, followed by employment with 288 graduates, middle-skill with 106, and entrepreneurship with the most minors (Table 2). Regarding LD, LD 5 has the highest number of graduates who pursued higher education (600) and employment (86), LD 3, with 33 graduates, has the highest number in middle-skill. In contrast, LD 2, with nine graduates, has the highest number who went for entrepreneurship.

Table 2. Curriculum Exit of First Batch GAS Strand of Senior High School in SDO Isabela

LD	GAS			
	Higher Education	Middle Skill	Employment	Entrepreneurship
LD 1	487	9	69	5
LD 2	412	25	44	9
LD 3	522	33	47	5
LD 4	519	19	8	5
LD 5	600	16	86	5
LD6	407	4	34	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2947</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>31</b>

### Curriculum Exit of First Batch HUMSS Strand of Senior High School in SDO Isabela

Like other strands, higher education was the priority curriculum exit of the First Batch under the HUMSS strand in SDO Isabela (Table 3). It can be seen in the numerical data that LD 1 has the highest number of graduates, with 355. Next to priority was employment, with 51 graduates, and 20 of them came from LD 1. The third priority of HUMSS graduates was the middle-skill; the highest number came from LD 5, with 11 graduates. On the other hand, entrepreneurship has the lowest number, with three graduates from LD 5.

Table 3. Curriculum Exit of First Batch HUMSS Strand of Senior High School in SDO Isabela

LD	HUMSS			
	Higher Education	Middle Skill	Employment	Entrepreneurship
LD 1	355	2	20	-
LD 2	94	-	-	-
LD 3	95	-	3	-
LD 4	99	3	9	-
LD 5	275	11	19	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>918</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>3</b>

### Curriculum Exit of First Batch STEM Strand of Senior High School in SDO Isabela

Based on Table 4, STEM graduates from SY 2017-2018 prioritized pursuing higher education with 883, followed by employment with 17 and middle-skill with two graduates. However, no one pursued business in all LDs in SDO Isabela. Regarding curriculum exit per LD, LD 1 has the highest number for higher education; out of 17 who chose employment, the highest number of 13.

Table 4. Curriculum Exit of First Batch STEM Strand of Senior High School in SDO Isabela

LD	STEM			
	Higher Education	Middle Skill	Employment	Entrepreneurship
LD 1	244	-	-	-
LD 2	111	-	-	-
LD 3	168	1	13	-
LD 4	39	-	3	-
LD 5	224	1	-	-
LD6	97	-	1	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>883</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>-</b>

### Curriculum Exit of First Batch Home Economics Strand of Senior High School in SDO Isabela

Still, higher education is the number one priority of SDO Isabela, especially from the home economics strand with 807 respondents (Table 5), followed by employment with 119, middle-skill with 13, and entrepreneurship with six respondents. Of these numbers, the highest number of graduates who chose the highest education, middle-skill, employment, and entrepreneurship came from LD 1 of SDO Isabela.

Table 5. Curriculum Exit of First Batch Home Economics Strand of Senior High School in SDO Isabela

LD	HOME ECONOMICS			
	Higher Education	Middle Skill	Employment	Entrepreneurship
LD 1	362	7	57	4
LD 2	189	-	30	-
LD 3	89	6	-	-
LD 4	28	-	5	-
LD 5	104	-	23	2
LD6	35	-	4	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>807</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>6</b>

### Curriculum Exit of First Batch Industrial Arts Strand of Senior High School in SDO Isabela

The numerical data showed that higher education was the highest priority, with 689 graduates, followed by employment with 122, middle-skill with 25, and no one chose business (Table 6). Regarding the highest number of graduates pursued in different curriculum exits in SHS, LD 1 of SDO Isabela got it. Also, remember that LD 4 did not offer IA during SY 2017-2018. Based on the data, still higher education was the priority exit with 318 respondents, followed by employment with 53 respondents, middle skill with ten respondents, and entrepreneurship with four respondents.

Table 6. Curriculum Exit of First Batch Industrial Arts Strand of Senior High School in SDO Isabela

LD	INDUSTRIAL ARTS			
	Higher Education	Middle Skill	Employment	Entrepreneurship
LD 1	324	11	68	-
LD 2	138	-	21	-
LD 3	81	7	14	-
LD 5	81	7	14	-
LD 6	65	-	5	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>689</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>0</b>

### Curriculum Exit of First Batch Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Strand of Senior High School in SDO Isabela

LD 5 has the highest number of graduates (Table 7) who pursued higher education (124), middle-skill (5), and employment (30). On the other hand, out of 4 graduates who pursued business, LD 2 has the highest number with three respondents.

Table 7. Curriculum Exit of First Batch Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Strand of Senior High School in SDO Isabela

LD	INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY			
	Higher Education	Middle Skill	Employment	Entrepreneurship
LD 1	48	-	13	-
LD 2	33	2	-	3
LD 3	42	3	4	-
LD 4	-	-	-	-
LD 5	124	5	30	1
LD6	71	-	6	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>4</b>

### Implications of Curriculum Exit of First Batch (2017-2018) of Senior High School in SDO Isabela to the Existing Program Offerings (ABM STRAND)

Table 8 shows the implications of curriculum exit of the first batch of Senior High Schools in SDO Isabela to the existing program offerings, ABM strand. LD6 did not offer the ABM strand during the first batch. While the LD 1 to LD 5 offered it in their respective districts. With a percentage range from 61% to 95%, it can be concluded that the LD 1 to LD 6 alignment rate of higher education to ABM strand graduates was higher compared to those not, with a percentage range of 5% to 39%. Moreover, among the five LDs offering the ABM strand in SDO Isabela, LD 5 has the highest alignment with 95%, followed by LD 3 at 75%, LD 1 at 72%, LD 4 at 69%, and the least with LD1 at 61%.

On the other hand, LD 3 and LD 4 ABM graduates who landed a job have a 100% alignment rate. This only means that their strand during their SHS days was 100% aligned with their job. This was in contrast with LD1 and LD 5 wherein 100% of their ABM graduates went for a job without alignment. With a total of 291 ABM graduates in SDO Isabela and respondents of this study, it can be concluded that their college course was aligned to their strand in SHS, which is ABM, as proven by 72% compared to 111 or 28% whose course in college were not aligned in ABM strand. Meanwhile, 7 or 64% of respondents said that their strand in SHS, ABM, had no alignment to their current job, as proven by 4 or 36% of respondents.

Table 8. Implications of Curriculum Exit of First Batch (2017-2018) of Senior High School in SDO Isabela to the Existing Program Offerings (ABM STRAND)

	Higher Education				Employment			
	Aligned		Not Aligned		Aligned		Not Aligned	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
LD 1	111	72	43	28	0	0	6	100
LD 2	36	61	23	39	0	0	0	0
LD 3	104	75	34	25	1	100	0	0
LD 4	22	69	10	31	3	100	0	0
LD 5	18	95	1	5	0	0	1	100
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>64</b>

### Implications of Curriculum Exit of First Batch (2017-2018) of Senior High School in SDO Isabela to the Existing Program Offerings (GAS STRAND)

Table 9 shows that the percentages of LD1, LD3, LD4, LD5, and LD6 range from 53% to 97%, confirming that the strand of GAS graduates had a greater alignment rate to the course they took in college. However, the 43% alignment rate in LD2 connotes that it was lower compared to 57% of GAS graduates who claimed that their strand had no alignment in their course in college. Moreover, among the LDs, LD1 has the highest alignment rate with 97%, followed by LD5 with 91%, LD4 with 90%, LD6 with 83%, and LD3 with 53%.

On the other hand, only LD4 with 74% of respondents, said that their strand in SHS, which was GAS, aligns with their job. On the contrary, most respondents from LD1, LD2, LD3, LD5, and LD6 GAS graduates who proceeded to the job immediately affirmed that their works had no alignment to their strand in SHS. The job of 96% of the respondents of LD 3 had no alignment to their GAS strand, 86% from LD1, 76% from LD2, 75% from LD5, and 67% from LD6.

With a total of 2246 or 77% of GAS graduates respondents, this number connotes that the course of most respondents aligned with the course they took in college. Unlike employment, 69% of respondents said their job had no alignment with their strand in SHS, which was GAS.

Table 9. Implications of Curriculum Exit of First Batch (2017-2018) of Senior High School in SDO Isabela to the Existing Program Offerings (GAS STRAND)

	Higher Education				Employment			
	Aligned		Not Aligned		Aligned		Not Aligned	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
<b>LD 1</b>	472	97	15	3	5	14	32	86
<b>LD 2</b>	177	43	235	57	11	24	35	76
<b>LD 3</b>	276	53	246	47	2	4	53	96
<b>LD 4</b>	459	90	53	10	47	76	15	24
<b>LD 5</b>	538	91	51	9	16	25	47	75
<b>LD 6</b>	324	83	65	17	9	33	18	67
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2246</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>665</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>69</b>

### Implications of Curriculum Exit of First Batch (2017-2018) of Senior High School in SDO Isabela to the Existing Program Offerings (HUMSS STRAND)

Table 10 presents the implication of strands to higher education and employment as the curriculum exit of HUMSS's first batch of Senior High School graduates in SDO Isabela. The majority of the respondents said that their strain in Senior High School had an alignment with the course they enrolled in college. As proof, the LD with the highest alignment rate of 95% were from LD3 and LD5, followed by LD with 92%, LD4 at 90%, LD1 at 87%, and the least LD6 at 76%.

On the other hand, 100% of LD1 and LD3 and 88% of LD5 had no alignment of employment to the HUMSS strand offered in SDO Isabela. Meanwhile, among the six districts in Isabela, only graduates from LD 4, with 67% employed, were aligned to their HUMSS strand. The overall rating of 89% under higher education implies that the majority of the respondents who enrolled in college had an alignment to the strand where they graduated, unlike to employment, wherein the majority of the respondents who landed the job had no alignment to the strand they graduated at as proven by 84%.

Table 10. Implications of Curriculum Exit of First Batch (2017-2018) of Senior High School in SDO Isabela to the Existing Program Offerings (HUMSS STRAND)

	Higher Education				Employment			
	Aligned		Not Aligned		Aligned		Not Aligned	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
<b>LD 1</b>	310	87	45	13	-	-	20	100
<b>LD 2</b>	70	92	6	8	-	-	-	-
<b>LD 3</b>	90	95	5	5	-	-	3	100
<b>LD 4</b>	89	90	10	10	6	67	3	33
<b>LD 5</b>	226	95	12	5	2	11	17	89
<b>LD 6</b>	71	76	23	24	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>856</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>84</b>

### Implications of Curriculum Exit of First Batch (2017-2018) of Senior High School in SDO Isabela to the Existing Program Offerings (STEM STRAND)

The numerical data presented above shows the implications of curriculum exit to programs offering STEM strands in SDO Isabela. From the percentage ranges from 100% to 74%, it can be stated that the STEM strand taken by the first batch in SDO Isabela aligns with the courses they enrolled in college. The corresponding percentage, higher than 50%, showed that most aligned with the course they enrolled in. Moreover, among the six LDs, 100% of respondents from LD6 went to college, taking a course related to the STEM strand. 97% from LD3, 93% from LD1, 88% from LD5,

77% from LD2 and 74% from LD4 had a course in college related to STEM strand. On the other hand, 100% of LD 3, LD 4, and LD 6 who landed employment had no alignment to the STEM strand.

Table 11. Implications of Curriculum Exit of First Batch (2017-2018) of Senior High School in SDO Isabela to the Existing Program Offerings (STEM STRAND)

	Higher Education				Employment			
	Aligned		Not Aligned		Aligned		Not Aligned	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
LD 1	228	93	16	7	-	-	-	-
LD 2	85	77	26	23	-	-	-	-
LD 3	163	97	5	3	-	-	13	100
LD 4	29	74	10	26	-	-	3	100
LD 5	197	88	27	12	-	-	-	0
LD 6	97	100	0	0	-	-	1	100
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>799</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

### Reasons for Batch 2018 Graduates Who Did Not Choose Any of the Curriculum Exit

The top reasons of first graduates for not proceeding in any of the curriculum exits were Financial Problems, with 377 or 65%, followed by early marriage and pregnancy with 167 or 29% (Table 12). A combination of it was 25 or 4% while there were 4 or 1% death records and went to church missionary. Regarding leading legislative districts per area, LD 6 contributed the highest percentage in early pregnancy/marriage with 40% as their reasons for not choosing any curriculum exit. Next was LD 1 with 37 % and LD4 with 34%. On the other hand, LD2, with 79%, has the highest percentage of reasons for financial problems. LD1 came to the 3% death reasons.

Table 12. Reasons for Batch 2018 Graduates Who Did Not Choose Any of the Curriculum Exit

2017-2018	EARLY PREGNANCY/EARLY MARRIAGE		FINANCIAL PROBLEM		REASONS COMBINATION OF EARLY PREGNANCY AND FINANCIAL PROBLEMS		DEATH		CHURCH MISSIONARY		ARMY TRAINING	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
LD 1	44	37	70	59			3	3	1	1		
LD 2	2	3	46	79	10	17						
LD 3	14	30	16	35	15	33			1	2		
LD 4	12	34	22	63							1	3
LD 5	73	27	191	72					2	1	1	0.4
LD 6	22	40	32	58			1	2				
<b>Total</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>

### Reasons for Batch 2019 Graduates Who Did Not Choose Any of the Curriculum Exit

The top reasons for Batch 2 graduates not proceeding in the four curriculum exits were financial problems with 84%, followed by early marriage with 13 and a combination with 17%. Under early marriage/pregnancy, 22% of the highest came from LD4, while LD2 and LD5, with 89%, were the top contributors and did not choose any curriculum exits for financial problems. However, one respondent from LD 6 went for Army training.

Table 13. Reasons for Batch 2019 Graduates Who Did Not Choose Any of the Curriculum Exit

2018-2019	EARLY PREGNANCY/EARLY MARRIAGE		FINANCIAL PROBLEM		REASONS COMBINATION OF EARLY PREGNANCY AND FINANCIAL PROBLEMS		DEATH		CHURCH MISSIONARY		ARMY TRAINING	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
LD 1	15	16	60	65	17	18						
LD 2	8	11	67	89								
LD 3	12	14	73	86								
LD 4	7	22	25	78								
LD 5	47	11	363	89								
LD 6	9	20	31	70			3	7			1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0.4</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>0.1</b>

### Reasons for Batch 2020 Graduates Who Did Not Choose Any of the Curriculum Exit

Forty-nine or 15% of the respondents from LD5 had the reason for early pregnancy/marriage as they did not choose any of the curriculum exits (Table 14). On the other hand, LD 3, with 100%, had financial problems. Followed to it was LD 6 with 97% and LD2 with 96%. However, 1 SHS graduate from LD 4 went to church missionary.

Table 14. Reasons for Batch 2020 Graduates Who Did Not Choose Any of the Curriculum Exit

2019-2020	EARLY PREGNANCY/EARLY MARRIAGE		FINANCIAL PROBLEMS		REASONS COMBINATION OF EARLY PREGNANCY AND FINANCIAL PROBLEMS		DEATH		CHURCH MISSIONARY		ARMY TRAINING	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
	LD 1	9	9	74	77	13	14					
LD 2	4	4	108	96								
LD 3	3	5	54	82	9	14						
LD 4	0	0	34	100								
LD 5	49	15	280	85					1	0		
LD 6	2	3	74	97								
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>624</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>3</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>		

### Reasons for Batch 2021 Graduates Who Did Not Choose Any of the Curriculum Exit

With a total of 542 or 84%, financial problem was the main reason for the fourth batch of senior high school in not proceeding to any curriculum exit. Next to it was early pregnancy/marriage with 13%, followed by a combination of financial problems and early pregnancy with 3%, and 1 went to church missionary. Meanwhile, 49% of LD 3 had the highest number of respondents in early pregnancy, while LD5, with 95% of respondents, had a reason for financial problems.

Table 15. Reasons for Batch 2021 Graduates Who Did Not Choose Any of the Curriculum Exit

2020-2021	EARLY PREGNANCY/EARLY MARRIAGE		FINANCIAL PROBLEMS		REASONS COMBINATION OF EARLY PREGNANCY AND FINANCIAL PROBLEMS		DEATH		CHURCH MISSIONARY		ARMY TRAINING	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
	LD 1			49	82	11	18					
LD 2	19	18	89	82								
LD 3	25	49	19	37	6	12			1	2		
LD 4		0	33	100								
LD 5	19	6	<b>280</b>	94								
LD 6	23	24	72	76								
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>3</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>		

### Reasons for Senior High School Graduates from First to Fourth Batches in SDO Isabela Who Did Not Choose Any of the Curriculum Exit

The table above presents reasons for the first to fourth batches of Senior High School in SDO Isabela for not choosing any of the four curriculum exits. As indicated in the table, the main reason for the senior high school graduates was financial problems, as proven by 2162 or 81%, and most of them came from the third batch with 87%, followed by the second and fourth batches with 84%.

On the other hand, 418, or 16%, did not proceed in any of the curriculum exits because of early pregnancy/marriage. The highest number came from the first batch with 167 or 29%, followed by the second and fourth batch with 13%, and 3% had a reason for combining the two. However, seven graduates came from first and fourth with reason of death. Six graduates became church missionaries, and three went to army training.



Table 16. Reasons for Senior High School Graduates from First to Fourth Batches in SDO Isabela Who Did Not Choose Any of the Curriculum Exit

BATCH	REASONS EARLY PREGNANCY/EARLY MARRIAGE		FINANCIAL PROBLEMS		COMBINATION OF EARLY PREGNANCY AND FINANCIAL PROBLEMS		DEATH		CHURCH MISSIONARY		ARMY TRAINING	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
<b>First</b>	167	29	377	65	25	4	4	1	4	1	2	0
<b>Second</b>	98	13	619	84	17	2	3	0.4			1	0.1
<b>Third</b>	67	9	624	87	22	3			1	0		
<b>Fourth</b>	86	13	542	84	17	3			1	0		
<b>Total</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2162</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>

## DISCUSSION

The curriculum exit patterns of the first batch of Senior High School students in various strands in SDO Isabela reveal distinct priorities and preferences. In the ABM strand, most graduates, totaling 468, chose higher education as their primary exit, with LD 1 having the highest enrollment at 154 students. Employment was the second choice, with LD 1 leading in job placements. In the GAS strand, the focus was predominantly on higher education, with 2947 graduates pursuing college, while LD 5 had the highest number opting for higher education and employment. For HUMSS graduates, higher education took precedence, with LD 1 having the highest number at 355, followed by employment and middle-skill options. Similarly, STEM graduates prioritized higher education, with LD 1 having the highest enrollment.

In Home Economics, Industrial Arts, and Information and Communication Technology strands, the overarching trend remains a preference for higher education, with LD 1 consistently leading across different strands. In Industrial Arts, middle-skill emerged as a notable choice. LD 4 did not offer Industrial Arts during the specified academic year. These findings underscore SHS graduates' varied aspirations and preferences in SDO Isabela, emphasizing the significance of understanding and catering to individualized career and educational paths within the diverse landscape of senior high school strands.

The analysis of the first batch (2017-2018) of Senior High School curriculum exits in SDO Isabela highlights varying alignment rates between SHS strands and higher education and employment outcomes. In the ABM strand, LD 5 demonstrated the highest alignment with 95%, while LD 6, which did not offer ABM, showed lower alignment rates. Interestingly, LD 3 and LD 4 ABM graduates achieved 100% alignment with their jobs, indicating the direct relevance of their SHS strand to employment. Similar patterns were observed in the GAS and HUMSS strands, with disparities between alignment in higher education and employment outcomes.

For STEM, there was strong alignment with higher education across districts, but LD 3, LD 4, and LD 6 had 100% of their STEM graduates in jobs without alignment. Financial problems emerged as the predominant reason for graduates across batches not choosing any curriculum exit, affecting 81% to 87% of respondents, highlighting the need for addressing financial barriers in educational pathways. Early pregnancy/marriage was the second most common reason, impacting 16% of graduates, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive support for students in navigating educational and career decisions.

The curriculum exit patterns of the first batch of Senior High School students in SDO Isabela underscore the importance of recognizing and accommodating graduates' diverse career and educational aspirations. The prevalence of higher education as the primary choice across various strands, alongside disparities in alignment rates, highlights the need for tailored guidance and support systems. The success of certain strands in achieving alignment with higher education and employment, particularly ABM and STEM, suggests the effectiveness of these pathways. Conversely, variations in alignment rates, especially in GAS and HUMSS, indicate areas for

improvement in ensuring students are well-prepared for their chosen trajectories (Capulso et al., 2021). Addressing financial challenges is critical, emphasizing the importance of enhancing access and equity in educational opportunities for SHS graduates in SDO Isabela.

## CONCLUSION

The study on Senior High School graduates in Isabela's Schools Division Office presents several critical implications. Primarily, it underscores the dominance of higher education as the favored pathway post-SHS, signaling the need for a comprehensive review of alternative pathways like employment, skills development, and entrepreneurship. Alignment discrepancies between SHS strands and subsequent college courses indicate the necessity for better integration between these levels of education. This misalignment impacts graduates' employment prospects, emphasizing the importance of aligning education with industry demands.

Specific SHS strands exhibit nuanced patterns in college enrollment and subsequent employment, highlighting the complexity of factors influencing graduates' choices. Financial constraints emerged as a significant barrier, demanding focused interventions to support students facing economic limitations. The study's implications stress the urgency of strategic interventions in the education system. Solutions encompass career counseling, curriculum adjustments, and fostering collaborations between educational institutions and industries to bridge the gap between education and employment.

Efforts to enhance post-SHS monitoring systems and interventions for non-proceeding students, especially regarding financial aid and reproductive health education, are crucial. Refining the SHS curriculum to include industry-aligned components is essential to prepare graduates for their chosen pathways better. The study advocates for continuous research, policy adjustments, and broader data collection approaches to understand and enhance SHS curriculum exits comprehensively. Longitudinal studies and monitoring policy effectiveness are suggested for future directions, aiming for a holistic approach to improving educational outcomes and student transitions beyond SHS.

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