



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

RESOLUTION
CHR (VI) No. POL2023-002

The Commission **RESOLVES** to **ADOPT** the attached Human Rights Situation Report – School to Work Transition 2022, submitted by the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Center, HR Centers Management Office.

SO RESOLVED.

Done this 13th day of February 2023 in Quezon City, Philippines.



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HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION REPORT

SCHOOL-TO-WORK TRANSITION

2022

Executive Summary

The unemployment rate of the youth has been consistently high in the Philippines based on recent data and research findings. One major strategy introduced by the government to address this problem is the implementation of the K to 12 Program in 2012, which revamped the basic education curriculum and imposed an additional two years, or the Senior High School (SHS), as prescribed in the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013. This major educational reform has designed Senior High School for three possible exits: toward (a) higher education, (b) middle-level skills development, and (c) employment or entrepreneurship. Such structure assumes that the SHS graduates will have the competencies and skills not only for further studies but also for employment. However, the Department of Education (DepEd) lacks data and empirical evidence on the employability of the first batches of K to 12 graduates as the agency has yet to conduct a tracer study of the graduates of the program.

Moreover, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has disrupted the youth's education and training as schools have shifted to different learning modalities. At the same time, many companies have shut down or downsized and turned their recruitment processes online. Young workers, including SHS graduates, find themselves competing against more people – some of whom have more relevant work experience than they do – for less available jobs. With the changes brought by the K to 12 Program in the country's education system and a current worldwide pandemic, the school-to-work transition has indeed become more difficult for the youth.

The Commission on Human Rights (CHR), the country's independent national human rights institution (NHRI) entrusted with the role of monitoring the human rights situation in the country as well as the government's compliance with international treaty obligations to human rights, looked into the situation of the youth in school-to-work transition. Pursuant to this mandate, the CHR's Economic, Social, and Cultural (ESCR) Center under the Human Rights Management Office produced this human rights situation report on the right to education of the youth, specifically their transition from school to work, as well as their experiences in the context of the implementation of the K to 12 Program and the COVID-19 pandemic. In developing this report, the ESCR Center conducted virtual focus group discussions (FGDs) with representatives of five different sectors: (i) national organizations and local government units; (ii) civil society organizations and advocacy groups; (iii) employers; (iv) teachers, school administrators, and principals; and (v) youth.

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List of Abbreviations

4IR Framework	Fourth Industrial Revolution
A&E	Accreditation and Equivalency
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADMU	Ateneo de Manila University
ALS	Alternative Learning System
ANCPAG	Adaptation, Navigation, Choices, Paths, Assessment, and Goals
APC	Asia Pacific College
APIS	Annual Poverty Indicators Survey
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Nations
ATI	Agricultural Training Institute
AYAN PH	ASEAN Youth Advocates Network - Philippines
BALS	Bureau of Alternative Learning System
BatStateU	Batangas State University
BIOTA/UP	Biology Teachers Association of the University of the Philippines
BP-OSA	Balik-Paaralan Para sa Out-Of-School Adults
BPO	Business Process Outsourcing
OSA	Out-of-School-Adult
CABEH-IKSP	Culturally-Adaptive Basic Education and Health – Integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices
CBSUA	Central Bicol State University of Agriculture
CESC	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CHED	Commission on Higher Education
CHR	Commission on Human Rights
CLSU	Central Luzon State University
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease
CREATE Act	Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises Act
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CvSU	Cavite State University
DA	Department of Agriculture
DALSC	District ALS Coordinators
DBAM	Don Bosco Academy Mabalacat
DBM	Department of Budget and Management
DepEd	Department of Education
DepEd NASEAS	Department of Education National Association of Employees and Administrative Services
DLSU	De La Salle University
DOH	Department of Health
DOLE	Department of Labor and Employment
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
EAP	Educational Assistance Program
ESCR	Economic, Social, and Cultural
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FIRe	Fourth Industrial Revolution
FYSWP	Facilitating Youth School-to-Work Transition Program
GE	General education
GIDAs	Geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HR	Human Resources
HRCMO	Human Rights Centers Management Office
HVAC	Heating, Ventilation & Air conditioning
IATF	Inter-Agency Task Force

ICCs/IPs	Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILS	Institute for Labor Studies
INSET	In-Service Training
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IP	Indigenous people
IPA	Innovations for Poverty Action
JHS	Junior high school
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JRU	Jose Rizal University
KPL	Kabataan Party-List
LFS	Labor Force Survey
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and/or Questioning, and Asexual and/or Ally
LGUs	Local Government Units
LUCs	Local Universities and Colleges
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
NBI	National Bureau of Investigation
NCDA	National Council on Disability Affairs
NCIP	National Commission on Indigenous Peoples
NEDA	National Economic and Development Agency
NEE	Neither in Education nor Employment
NEET	Not in Employment, not in Education, and not in Training
NEU	New Era University
NHE	Non-Handicapping Environment
NHRI	Independent National Human Rights Institution
NYC	National Youth Commission
MC	Miriam College
OFW	Overseas Filipino Worker
OJT	On-the-Job Training
Oplan TAWID	Oplan technology-assisted work immersion delivery
OSY	Out-of-School Youth
PASS	Philippine Association of School Superintendents
PBED	Philippine Business for Education
PCW	Philippine Commission on Women
PDL	Persons Deprived of Liberty
PDP	Philippine Development Plan
PESFA	Private Education Student Financial Assistance
PESO	Public Employment Service Office
PIDS	Philippine Institute for Development Studies
Pisa	International Student Assessment
PMAP	People Management Association of the Philippines
PMU	Program Management Unit
PQF	Philippine Qualifications Framework
PRC	Professional Regulation Commission
PSA	Philippine Statistics Authority
RSU	Romblon State University
SBU	San Beda University
SEA-PLM	Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics
SEF	Special Education Fund
SHS	Senior High School
SLM	Self-Learning Module
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SOGIE	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity or Expression
SPARK	Samahan ng Progresibong Kabataan

SPES	Special Program for Employment of Students
SSC	Saint Scholastica's College
STEP	Skills Training for Employment Program
StuFAP	Students Financial Assistance Program
STVI	State-run Technical Vocational Institution
SU	Siliman University
SUCs	State Universities and Colleges
SWTS	School-to-Work Transition Survey
TCTAR Foundation	The Tiu Cho Teg-Ana Ros Foundation
Tech-Voc	Technical-Vocational
TEEP	Third Elementary Education Project
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
TIIC	Technical Institute of Iloilo City
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TIN	Tax Identification Number
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
TVL	Technical-Vocational-Livelihood
TWSP	Training for Work Scholarship Program
UAQTEA	Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education
UC	University of Cordilleras
UDF-YSO	United Diwata Familia Youth Serving Organization
UE	University of the East
UMID ID	Unified Multi-Purpose Identification
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNP	University of Northern Philippines
UP	University of the Philippines
UPIS	University of the Philippines Integrated School
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USB	Universal Serial Bus
USC	University of San Carlos
USeP	University of Southeastern Philippines
UST	University of Santo Tomas
UX	User Experience
YE-YE Project	Youth Education - Youth Employability Project

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Background

1. The youth's school-to-work transition is a convergence of numerous rights. The term itself features the rights to education¹ and work,² as stipulated in the conventions of the United Nations (UN). Moreover, these rights also intersect and are interdependent of other human rights, such as the right to adequate food, right to the highest attainable standard of health, right to social security, right to water, and right to adequate housing.³ Further, specificities and protection for employment security, wages, vocational guidance and training, equal opportunities and treatment, and health and welfare of different kinds of workers, among others, are covered by international legal instruments drawn by the International Labour Organization (ILO) through the International Labour Standards.⁴
2. It is important to note that the definition of *youth* varies from country to country, proponent to proponent, organization to organization, and document to document, among others. For example, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) limits the youth population to persons who are fifteen (15) to twenty-four (24) years old,⁵ while Republic Act No. 8044 (An Act Creating the National Youth Commission (NYC), Establishing a National Comprehensive and Coordinated Program on Youth Development, Appropriating Funds Therefor, and for Other Purposes) or otherwise known as the Youth in Nation-Building Act defines *youth* as persons whose ages range from fifteen (15) to thirty (30) years old.⁶
3. In the Asia-Pacific region, the ILO has observed some concerning findings in its school-to-work transition survey (SWTS) report published in 2014, covering Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal, Samoa, and Viet Nam.⁷ Among its key findings are: (a) that too many young people are not benefiting fully from the educational system as an average 37% of young people aged 15 to 29 in the five countries were enrolled in school yet there remains between 0.1 and 13.9% young people in the same countries who have never attended school; (b) the lack of education/training is seen as an obstacle to finding work by young people, yet results show lower unemployment rates among the lesser educated and university graduates face longer job queues; (c) the countries' average youth unemployment rate (relaxed definition)⁸ is 14.2%, with Cambodia having the lowest rate at 3.8%, and Nepal, the highest, at 28.9%; (d) the youth labor market in the region is profoundly influenced by gender issues with the average female

¹ Convention on the Rights of a Child, *adopted* Nov. 20, 1989.

² International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *adopted* Dec. 16, 1966.

³ Diokno, M. S. I. (2004). Human Rights Centered Development: Theory and Practice. University of the Philippines Press.

⁴ International Labour Organization. *Subjects covered by International Labour Standards*, ILO.ORG available at <https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/lang--en/index.htm> (last accessed May 17, 2022).

⁵ Philippine Statistics Authority, *November 2021 Labor Force Survey*, available at <https://psa.gov.ph/content/unemployment-rate-november-2021-estimated-65-percent> (last accessed May 26, 2022).

⁶ An Act Creating the National Youth Commission, Establishing a National Comprehensive and Coordinated Program on Youth Development, Appropriating Funds Therefore, and for Other Purposes [YOUTH IN NATION-BUILDING ACT], Republic Act No. 8044, (1994).

⁷ International Labour Office, *Labour market transitions of young women and men in Asia and the Pacific*, Work4Youth Publication Series 19, (2014).

⁸ This refers to the "relaxed unemployment" used in the ILO report, which describes a person without work and available to work (relaxing the job-seeking criteria of persons of 15 years of age who did not work, who were actively searching for a job or took concrete action to start their own business, or who were available to work within the two weeks following the period of the study). *Id.* at 67-68.

youth unemployment rate at 19.9% compared to the male rate of 11.9%, with the exception of Samoa, at least one in four working youth expressed a desire to change their job; (e) informal employment⁹ is the standard condition among youth in the Asia-Pacific region; and (f) the qualifications mismatch is high among young workers in the five countries with over one-half of young workers in Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Nepal are undereducated for the work they do.¹⁰

4. In the Philippines, the World Bank reported that “there is a crisis in education—which started pre-COVID-19, but will have been made worse by COVID-19,” and “more than 80 percent of children do not know what they should know” in school.¹¹ The report was based on the *Program for International Student Assessment* (PISA), in which the Philippines took part for the first time in 2018, the *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study* (TIMSS), as well as the first cycle of the *Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics* (SEA-PLM) in 2019.¹² Pisa assessed achievement and application of key knowledge and skills of 15-year-old students in reading, mathematics, and science, while TIMSS gauged proficiency in mathematics and science at the fourth and eighth grades, and SEA-PLM evaluated reading, writing, and mathematical literacy, with an initial focus on Grade 5.¹³ Across the three assessments, poor learning results were observed among students in the Philippines, with more than 80% of them falling below minimum levels of proficiency expected for the respective grades.¹⁴ The Philippines ranked last in reading and second to the last in science and mathematics among 79 countries in Pisa, and ranked last in both mathematics and science among 58 countries in the fourth-grade assessment in TIMSS and was among the bottom half of the six countries in reading, mathematics, and writing literacy in SEA-PLM.¹⁵ In another study by the World Bank, titled “Assessing Basic Education Service Delivery in the Philippines: Public Education Expenditure Tracking and Quantitative Service Delivery Study,” issues such as limited discretionary funding, difficulties in using public funds by the schools, week transparency and accountability for fund use, low, declining and unequal local government funding to basic education, and poor record-keeping and reporting on the distribution and effectiveness of local government funding for education were observed.¹⁶
5. Ironically, key agencies, such as the Department of Education (DepEd), state universities and colleges (SUCs), local universities and colleges (LUCs), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), have been given

⁹ Informal employment in the report is measured according to the guidelines recommended by the 17th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, which includes: (a) paid employees in “informal jobs,” i.e., jobs without a social security entitlement, paid annual leave, or paid sick leave; (b) paid employees in an unregistered enterprise with size classification below five employees; (c) own-account workers in an unregistered enterprise with size classification below five employees; (d) employers in an unregistered enterprise with size classification below five employees; and (e) contributing family workers. *Id.* at 38.

¹⁰ *Id.* at 2-5.

¹¹ Ben O. de Vera, *80% of PH kids don't know what they should know – World Bank*, INQUIRER.NET, July 01, 2021, available at <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1453814/wb-80-of-ph-kids-dont-know-what-they-should-know#ixzz7WXXlYr1v> (last accessed June 21, 2022).

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ The World Bank, *Assessing Basic Education Service Delivery in the Philippines: Public Education Expenditure Tracking and Quantitative Service Delivery Study*, (2016).

the biggest budget allocation by the national government for the past five years.

Table 1: Budget allocation to DepEd, CHED and TESDA from 2018-2022, in billions of Philippine pesos

	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
DepEd	-	-	-	531.6	553.3
SUCs	-	-	-	68.3	62.1
CHED	-	-	-	52.4	49.4
TESDA	-	-	-	12.6	7.6
Total Education Budget	773.6	751.7	692.6	664.9	672.4

Source: Department of Budget and Management (DBM)¹⁷

- Meanwhile, there has been a slight decline in the total number of junior high school (JHS) enrollees in public and private schools from 2018 to 2021, while a slight increase is evident in senior high school (SHS) enrollees in the same period.

Table 2: Junior High School Enrollees

School Year (SY)	Public	Private	SUCs/LUCs	Total
2018-2019	6,840,249	1,421,817	54,229	8,320,627
2019-2020	7,004,355	1,439,507	53,107	8,503,650
2020-2021	7,043,981	1,238,473	50,779	8,339,391

Source: Department of Education¹⁸

Table 3: Senior High School Enrollees

School Year (SY)	Public	Private	SUCs/LUCs	Total
2018-2019	1,599,637	1,339,951	82,268	3,022,841
2019-2020	1,766,818	1,357,882	67,702	3,194,035
2020-2021	1,987,180	1,189,707	58,219	3,236,827

Source: Department of Education¹⁹

- However, for the school year 2020 to 2021, DepEd only recorded a total of 288,687 public school teachers for junior high school and 74,056 for senior high school.²⁰ In 2020, the Philippine Business for Education (PBE) published an overview of the state of education in the country, noting that the classroom-learner ratio in junior high school was 1:39 and 1:31 in

¹⁷ Department of Budget and Management, 2019 National Budget: Building a Bright Future for the Philippines and Its People, available at https://www.dbm.gov.ph/images/pdf/files/2019-People's-Budget-Quick-Glance_English-Version.pdf (last accessed Jun 21, 2022).
¹⁸ Department of Education, Datasets: Historical Enrollment data, available at <https://www.deped.gov.ph/alternative-learning-system/resources/facts-and-figures/datasets/> (last accessed June 21, 2022).
¹⁹ *Id.*
²⁰ Ma. Teresa Montemayor, 2018 Senior High School implementation exceeds DepEd outlook, PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY, Dec. 28, 2018, available at <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1057609> (last accessed June 21, 2022).

senior high school²¹ and that junior high school students move up despite having low proficiency in Mathematics (1% proficient), English (3% proficient), Science (1% proficient), Filipino (13% proficient), and Araling Panlipunan (10% proficient).²²

8. For learners with disabilities in the country, DepEd reported a total of 648 centers for learners with disabilities and schools with programs for them, of which 471 are for elementary and 177 for high school learners.²³
9. The following tables show a breakdown of the number of learners with different disabilities enrolled in the school year 2016-2017²⁴:

Table 4: Visual Impairment with Diagnosis

	Secondary		Total
	Male	Female	
Graded	5,554	7,985	13,539
Non-Graded	109	180	289

Table 5: Hearing Impairment with Diagnosis

	Secondary		Total
	Male	Female	
Graded	2,046	1,849	3,895
Non-Graded	88	77	165

Table 6: Learning Disability with Diagnosis

	Secondary		Total
	Male	Female	
Graded	2,536	1,348	3,884
Non-Graded	43	33	76

Table 7: Mental Disability with Diagnosis

	Secondary		Total
	Male	Female	
Graded	934	558	1,492
Non-Graded	184	147	331

²¹ Philippine Business for Education, State of Education Press Conference infographics, FACEBOOK, July 5, 2021, available at <https://web.facebook.com/OnePBE/photos/pcb.4129042517143752/4129041147143889/?type=3&theater> (last accessed June 18, 2022).

²² *Id.*

²³ National Council on Disability Affairs, Disability Data: DEPED – Relevant numbers in relation to learners with disabilities, available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iTCWS6WNchS1mLSwf9na7hSJ199ebxU/view> (last accessed June 19, 2022).

²⁴ *Id.*

Table 8: Autism Spectrum Disorder with Diagnosis

	Secondary		Total
	Male	Female	
Graded	480	136	616
Non-Graded	81	18	99

Table 9: Emotional-Behavioral with Diagnosis

	Secondary		Total
	Male	Female	
Graded	1,412	600	2,012
Non-Graded	35	20	55

Table 10: Orthopedic/Physical Disability with Diagnosis

	Secondary		Total
	Male	Female	
Graded	1,141	719	1,860
Non-Graded	20	18	38

Table 11: Speech/Language Disorder with Diagnosis

	Secondary		Total
	Male	Female	
Graded	1,527	1,118	2,645
Non-Graded	40	22	62

Table 12: Cerebral Palsy with Diagnosis

	Secondary		Total
	Male	Female	
Graded	175	155	330
Non-Graded	19	17	36

Table 13: Special Health Problem/Chronic Illness with Diagnosis

	Secondary		Total
	Male	Female	
Graded	2,542	4,117	6,659
Non-Graded	90	167	257

Table 14: Multiple Disabilities with Diagnosis

	Secondary		Total
	Male	Female	
Graded	201	185	386
Non-Graded	13	14	27

Table 15: Difficulty seeing based on manifestation

	Secondary		Total
	Male	Female	
Graded	12,370	18,281	30,651
Non-Graded	258	478	736

Table 16: Difficulty hearing based on manifestation

	Secondary		Total
	Male	Female	
Graded	3,050	2,715	5,765
Non-Graded	106	64	170

Table 17: Difficulty walking, climbing, grasping based on manifestation

	Secondary		Total
	Male	Female	
Graded	1,450	1,187	2,637
Non-Graded	46	33	79

Table 18: Difficulty remembering, concentrating, paying attention and understanding based on manifestation

	Secondary		Total
	Male	Female	
Graded	23,788	16,560	40,348
Non-Graded	816	612	1,428

Table 19: Difficulty communicating based on manifestation

	Secondary		Total
	Male	Female	
Graded	4,428	3,114	7,542
Non-Graded	123	71	194

10. In terms of the number of teachers for students with disabilities in high school, DepEd data from SY 2012-2013 to SY 2017-2018 show an increase in the first three school years, then a significant decline from 2015 to 2017, and a slight improvement in SY 2017-2018.²⁵

Table 20: Number of Teachers for Students with Disabilities in High School, SY 2012-2013 to SY 2017-2018

School Year					
2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
264	289	562	305	284	355

11. Meanwhile, in 2021, TESDA reported that, together with their partner private technical-vocational (tech-voc) institutions, more than 11.6 million Filipinos enrolled in tech-voc education, and more than 10.8 million graduated. The employment rate of technical vocational education and training (TVET) graduates also rose from 70.51% in 2020 to 78.57% in 2021.²⁶ Moreover, in President Duterte’s administration, almost 35,000 repatriated Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), including their dependents, had also enrolled in their free tech-voc programs, and more than 30,000 graduated, and around 19,000 were also certified as skilled workers.²⁷
12. However, based on the 2017 Annual Poverty Indicators Survey (APIS), the PSA reported that about 9% of the estimated 39.2 million Filipinos aged 6 to 24 years old were out-of-school children and youth (OSCY), who are family members, 6 to 14 years old, not attending formal school, and those 15 to 24 years old who are currently out of school, not gainfully employed, and have not finished college or post-secondary course.²⁸
13. A research report by Arcelo and Sanyal through the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) was published as early as 1987 on the transition from college to work in the Philippines. While the researchers assumed that unemployment of college students in the country at the time of the study in 1981 was voluntary and attributed the gravity of the problem to the type of institution and curricular program of the graduates, they also acknowledged the limited educational opportunities at the higher level and educational mismatch among graduates, recommending that “the educational system should concentrate on producing graduates who can adapt themselves to rapidly changing needs of jobs. In other words, the education system should concentrate on imparting basic skills, while specialization would take place on the job.”²⁹
14. Such a conclusion is not far from what Yamauchi and Tiongco (2020) have observed in a student tracking survey conducted to assess the impact of a

²⁵ *Id.*
²⁶ Leslie Ann Aquino, *TESDA reports increase in employability of tech-voc graduates*, MANILA BULLETIN, May 31, 2022, available at <https://mb.com.ph/2022/05/31/tesda-reports-increase-in-employability-of-tech-voc-graduates/> (last accessed June 18, 2022).
²⁷ *Id.*
²⁸ Philippine Statistics Authority, *Nine Percent of Filipinos Aged 6 to 24 years are Out of School (Results from the 2017 Annual Poverty Indicators Survey)*, available at <https://psa.gov.ph/content/nine-percent-filipinos-aged-6-24-years-are-out-school-results-2017-annual-poverty-indicators> (last accessed June 18, 2022).
²⁹ Adriano A. Arcelo & Bikas C. Sanyal, *Employment and career opportunities after graduation: A study on the transition from college to work in the Philippines*, No. 61, IIEP Research Report, 229 (1987).

large school-based intervention called the *Third Elementary Education Project* (TEEP), which was implemented in 23 relatively poor divisions from 2001 to 2006.³⁰ By examining the wage dynamics of the data gathered in eight provinces (Ifugao, Nueva Vizcaya, Antique, Iloilo, Leyte, Samar, Cebu, and Negros Oriental), their study shows that a student's education and ability or natural capacity or ability (endowment) together augment the gains from accumulating labor market experience, implying that education helps adolescents upgrade their occupations over time.³¹ Furthermore, they stress that "it is important to prepare the youth for the school-to-work transition, equip them with knowledge and competencies and the right attitude, and strengthen skill development to situate themselves in productive and decent work."³²

15. The same study also notes that the high unemployment rate among the youth is a typical phenomenon in the Philippines. Similarly, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESC) has made the same observation in its combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of the Philippines, citing that based on available information, the unemployment rate remains high, especially among the youth.³³ The Committee also presents several recommendations for the government to reduce unemployment among the youth, one of which is to intensify its efforts in developing "effective school-to-work transition programs for young graduates and adopt other youth employment policies to respond to the fast-growing youth population."³⁴
16. More recently, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) estimated the youth labor force participation rate in April 2022 at 34.8%, which was lower compared to the reported estimate of 38.2% in the same period last year but higher than the 32% estimate in January 2022.³⁵ The same data showed that the youth employment rate was at 87.7%, or 6.14 million of the 7.01 million youth labor force, which was higher than the reported estimate of 86.2% in January 2022 and the 84.2% reported in the same period last year.³⁶ However, unemployed youth was at 12.3% or 861,000 out of the 7.01 million youth in the labor force, and underemployed youth was reported at 11.4% or 703,000 of the total 6.14 million youth reportedly employed in April 2022, while youth not in employment, not in education, and not in training (NEET) accounted for 11.9% of the 20.12 million youth population, aged 15-24 years old, which was lower than the youth NEET in April 2021 (15.8%) and in January 2022 (14.5%).³⁷ Moreover, the Institute for Labor Studies (ILS) reported that despite a slight increase of young people that were neither in education nor employment (NEE) from 18.8% or 3.7 million in January 2018 to 19.7%

³⁰ Futoshi Yamauchi & Marites Tiongco, *Tracking School-to-Work Transition Among the Youth in the Philippines*, 30(1), DLSU Business & Economics Review, 61–79 (2020). <https://www.dlsu.edu.ph/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/5Yamauchi-033021.pdf>

³¹ *Id.*

³² *Id.* at 76.

³³ UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *Concluding Observations on the Combined Fifth and Sixth Periodic Reports of the Philippines*, (Oct. 7, 2016), available at https://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/CESCR_Concluding_Observations_Philippines_2016_En.pdf (last accessed May 26, 2022).

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ Philippine Statistics Authority, *Employment Rate in April 2022 is Estimated at 94.3*, available at <https://psa.gov.ph/content/employment-rate-april-2022-estimated-943-percent> (last accessed June 18, 2022).

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ *Id.*

or 3.9 million in January 2019, the youth NEE in January 2019 was the second-lowest NEE recorded for all January rounds of the labor force surveys by the ILS since 2010.³⁸ However, the underemployment rate remained high for the youth (aged 15 to 24 years old) at 14.1% in January 2019, an increase from 12.5% in January 2018, which the ILS attributed to the 11.7% decline in the youth labor force (–938,000).³⁹ In terms of educational attainment, the ILS also recorded an increase in the underemployment rate of SHS graduates from 4% in 2018 to 19.5% in 2019, but a decline and a much lower underemployment rate of those with other educational levels (except for elementary).⁴⁰

17. Regarding the salary offered to entry-level jobs, the telecommunications industry offers the highest median entry-level salary of Php20,000,⁴¹ according to JobStreet Salary Report 2022. This is followed by the computer or IT industry (Php19,550), the communication service industry (Php19,500), and consulting companies (Php19,000). Meanwhile, industries offering lower average entry-level salaries are by insurance and electronics companies (Php17,000), hospitality and manufacturing (Php15,500), consumer goods (Php15,000), and banking and finance (Php14,600).⁴² Moreover, while the number of freelancing jobs on an hourly basis is on the rise in Australia, the U.S., and Europe, the same employer participant observes that most companies in the Philippines still offer full-time employment.
18. Several factors contribute, if not highlight, the disadvantages of the youth in entering the country's labor force. According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB), only 20% of high school completers and less than 80% of college graduates find a job within a year of leaving school.⁴³ Education level, age, job search behavior, family income, and social networks are the main factors influencing a young Filipino's ability to integrate into the labor market.⁴⁴ Those who have not completed secondary education, or the so-called "high school leavers," proved to have the most difficulty transitioning into the workforce.⁴⁵ A gender gap is also reflected in labor market performance in lower employment rates during the transition period as young women are more likely to be engaged in precarious forms of employment (e.g., private households) compared to men.⁴⁶ Further, the "lack of [labor] market and job-search information and experience" put young people at a disadvantage compared to their older counterparts.⁴⁷

³⁸ Institute for Labor Studies, January 2019 Labor Force Survey (LFS) Results, available at <https://ils.dole.gov.ph/labor-force-survey-report/2019-lfsr> (last accessed May 26, 2022).

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ Cathrine Gonzales, *Telcos, IT industry offer highest entry-level pay – Jobstreet*, INQUIRER.NET, Jan. 27, 2022, available at <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1545950/telcos-it-industry-offer-highest-entry-level-pay-jobstreet> (last accessed June 21, 2022).

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ Asian Development Bank, Program Impact Assessment Facilitating Youth School-to-Work Transition Program-Subprogram 1, RRP PHI 49117-002 (April 2017).

⁴⁴ *Id.* at 1.

⁴⁵ *Id.*

⁴⁶ *Id.*

⁴⁷ United Nations Children's Fund, *Transitions from School to Work UNICEF Technical Report*, 12, (2019), available at <https://www.unicef.org/media/60366/file/Transitions-from-school-to-work-2019.pdf> (last accessed May 26, 2022).

In the Context of the K to 12 Basic Education Program

19. The DepEd began its implementation of the K to 12 Basic Education Program in 2012. One of the most significant changes that came with the K to 12 is the introduction of the additional two (2) years in the country's basic education system or SHS, as prescribed in Republic Act No. 10533 *or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013*.⁴⁸ DepEd welcomed its first batch of Grade 11 students in 2016 and made history with its first senior high school graduation in 2018.⁴⁹
20. The K to 12 Program is one of the country's most significant educational reforms. Part of its goals is to "develop in learners the competencies, work ethic, and values relevant to pursuing further education and/or joining the world of work."⁵⁰ The SHS was designed for three (3) possible exits: toward (i) higher education, (ii) middle-level skills development, and (iii) employment or entrepreneurship.⁵¹
21. The program's core curriculum covers seven learning areas: Languages, Literature, Communication, Mathematics, Philosophy, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences. Some General Education (GE) subjects as well are embedded in the SHS curriculum.⁵² Based on these learning areas, the SHS core subjects include Oral Communication; Reading and Writing; *Komunikasyon at Pananaliksik sa Wika at Kulturang Pilipino*; *Pagbabasa at Pagsusuri ng Iba't Ibang Teksto Tungo sa Pananaliksik*; 21st Century Literature from the Philippines and the World; Contemporary Philippine Arts from the Regions; Media and Information Literacy; General Math; Statistics and Probability; Earth and Life Science; Physical Science; Introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Person; Physical Education and Health; Personal Development; Understanding Culture, Society and Politics; Earth Science; and Disaster Readiness and Risk Reduction.⁵³
22. With this goal comes a paradigm shift in education wherein SHS graduates are assumed to have the competencies and skills not just for further studies but also for employment. In other words, those who have completed senior high school are expected to be employment-ready upon their graduation.
23. However, in a policy note published in the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) assessing the K to 12 Transition Program and the functions of CHED's Program Management Unit (PMU), Brillantes (2018) identifies several administrative issues in the program's implementation.⁵⁴ These include inadequate preparation for K to 12, lack of absorptive capacities of CHED and its PMU, underdeveloped internal

⁴⁸ An Act Enhancing the Philippine Basic Education System by Strengthening Its Curriculum and Increasing the Number of Years for Basic Education, Appropriating Funds Therefor and for Other Purposes [ENHANCED BASIC EDUCATION ACT OF 2013], Republic Act No. 10533 (2013).

⁴⁹ Ma. Teresa Montemayor, *2018 Senior High School implementation exceeds DepEd outlook*, PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY, Dec. 28, 2018, available at <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1057609> (last accessed June 21, 2022).

⁵⁰ Department of Education, *Guidelines for Work Immersion*, DepEd Order No. 30, s. 2017, (June 5, 2017).

⁵¹ Aniceto C. Orbeta Jr. & Maropsil V. Potestad, *On the Employability of the Senior High School Graduates: Evidence from the Labor Force Survey*, PIDS Discussion Paper Series No. 2020-40, (2020).

⁵² What is the K to 12 Program?, Curriculum Guide – Senior High (Grades 11-12), available at [https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/k-12/#:~:text=11%20and%2012,-.Each%20student%20in%20Senior%20High%20School%20can%20choose%20among%20three,Engineering%2C%20Ma%20thematics%20\(STEM\)](https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/k-12/#:~:text=11%20and%2012,-.Each%20student%20in%20Senior%20High%20School%20can%20choose%20among%20three,Engineering%2C%20Ma%20thematics%20(STEM)) (last accessed July 9, 2022).

⁵³ Department of Education, *Senior High School Core Curriculum Subjects*, available at depd.gov.ph/k-to-12/about/k-to-12-basic-education-curriculum/senior-high-school-core-curriculum-subjects/ (last accessed July 9, 2022).

systems, slow internal administrative processes, inadequate monitoring mechanisms, unclear interoffice administrative procedures, and poor coordination and absence of feedback mechanisms.⁵⁵ Given such issues, he recommends institutionalizing review policies, strengthening deconcentration processes, improving the capacities of PMU, preparing a sustainability and follow-through plan, and focusing on the broader goal of improving the country's competitiveness in higher education among the community of nations.⁵⁶

24. Since the K to 12 Program was signed into law, at least five petitions have been filed by students, teachers, and parents, claiming that the program will, among other issues, aggravate the financial situation of Filipino families and force millions to drop out of school.⁵⁷ This has been stressed by the National Union of People's Lawyers (NUPL) in their petition, arguing that the "K to 12 Program is no ordinary government program."⁵⁴⁵⁸ It is set to redefine access to education, especially for the poor who must spend for additional years of education. It unduly burdens the exercise of the human right to education."⁵⁵ To illustrate, the financial demands of completing the K to 12 Program, a study by the Kabataan Party-List (KPL) shows that students entering senior high school will need as much as PHP200,000 for the two additional years in school, and families will need to produce around Php20,000 to Php30,000 annually for the food and transportation allowance of students of Php100 to Php150 for 200 school days.⁵⁶ Further, KPL estimates an additional P10,000 for the cost of school supplies and other miscellaneous expenses such as uniforms and workbooks based on the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) data and case studies from Araullo High School.⁵⁷ Besides the financial burden on students and their families, the K to 12 Program also places added pressure on teachers and educators who must undergo extensive training to offer the courses needed to be taught to senior high school students and, at the same time, manage large classes as often seen in the public school system.⁵⁸
25. Moreover, in a study conducted by Orbeta and Potestad (2020) based on the Labor Force Survey (LFS) from July 2018 to April 2020, only approximately 20% of the total estimated SHS graduates enter the labor force, and around 70% pursue further studies.⁵⁹ In an interview, former DepEd Secretary Leonor Briones admits that the agency is unsure where "K to 12 graduates go" as the organization has yet to "conduct a tracer study on the graduates of the program."⁶⁰ Given these, there have been calls for continued close monitoring of the employability of SHS graduates with the current dearth of data and empirical evidence.⁶¹

⁵⁴ *Id.*

⁵⁵ *Id.*

⁵⁶ *Id.*

⁵⁷ *Id.*

⁵⁸ *Id.*

⁵⁹ Orbeta & Potestad, *supra* note 51.

⁶⁰ Patricia Ann V. Roxas, *Where do K-12 graduates go? Briones unsure, says research still pending*, INQUIRER.NET, Sept. 3, 2019, available at <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1160384/where-do-k-12-graduates-go-briones-unsure-says> (last accessed June 21, 2022).

⁶¹ *Id.*

In the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic

26. The COVID-19 pandemic has also provided additional challenges for the youth. Preliminary evidence shows that “young people’s jobs, education and [labor] market transitions in Asia and the Pacific are expected to be severely disrupted by the COVID-19 crisis.”⁶² In 2019 or before the pandemic, DepEd registered a total of 27.7 million students.⁶³ In 2020, this number was down to 26,227,022, but there was a notably slight increase in November 2021, with 27,232,095 total enrollees.⁶⁴ The abrupt transition from face-to-face classes to distance or modular learning made it difficult for many learners to cope with their studies. At the height of the COVID-19 outbreak, the DepEd also adjusted the 2020-2021 school calendar to push back the formal opening of classes from June to August 2020, which extended the end of the school year to April 2021,⁶⁵ as well as to give to learning interventions such as remediation and In-Service Training (INSET) activities.⁶⁶
27. Moreover, with the Philippines ranking 79th among 85 countries with the least affordable internet and 84th among those with the slowest and least stable internet, the education gap is exacerbated by the digital divide revealed by distance learning via modular and flexible learning.⁶⁷ The Free Wi-Fi for All Program by the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), which provides free internet in public places around the country, aims to address the need for internet connectivity, especially in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDAs).⁶⁸ However, DepEd data for SY 2020-2021 show BARMM has obtained the lowest percentage of public schools with internet access at 50.8% in junior high school and 54.2% in senior high school, while NCR has 95.4% and 73.5%, respectively, for the same school year.⁶⁹ Further, as observed by Santos (2020), school closures to minimize the spread of COVID-19 have impacted roughly 28 million Filipino students. K-12 students and teachers, as well as college students, scramble for digital devices such as desktops, laptops, and cellphones that can be connected to the internet to keep up with their lessons.⁷⁰

⁶² Asian Development Bank and the International Labour Organization, *Tackling the COVID-19 youth employment crisis in Asia and the Pacific*, (2020), available at <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/626046/covid-19-youth-employment-crisis-asia-pacific.pdf> (last accessed May 26, 2022).

⁶³ CNN Philippines Staff, *DepEd hits target number of enrollees, but millions of student[s] seen to be left out*, CNN PHILIPPINES, July 29, 2020, available at <https://www.cnn.ph/news/2020/7/29/DepEd-enrollees-2020-2021-.html> (last accessed May 26, 2022).

⁶⁴ Department of Education, *DepEd posts 4% increase in enrollment for basic education in SY 2021-2022* (Nov. 18, 2021), available at

<https://www.google.com/search?q=DepEd+posts+4%25+increase+in+enrollment+for+basic+education+in+SY+2021-2022&oeq=DepEd+posts+4%25+increase+in+enrollment+for+basic+education+in+SY+2021-2022&ags=chrome..69i57.615j0i4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8> (last accessed June 21, 2022).

⁶⁵ Department of Education, *School Calendar and Activities for School Year 2020-2021*, DepEd Order No. 007 s. 2020, (May 11, 2020).

⁶⁶ Department of Education, *Amendment to DepEd Order No. 030, S. 2020*, DepEd Order No. 012, s. 2021, (Mar. 2, 2021).

⁶⁷ Digital Quality of Life Index 2020, *Findings Report*, at 13 & 17, available at <https://surfshark.com/dql2020-slides.pdf> (last accessed July 9, 2022).

⁶⁸ DICT VSAT 20 times faster; 5 times cheaper than previous foreign contractors, Department of Information and Communications Technology, June 1, 2021, available at <https://dict.gov.ph/dict-vs-20-times-faster-5-times-cheaper-than-previous-foreign-contractors/> (last accessed July 9, 2022).

⁶⁹ Number of Functional Computers for SY 2020-2021, Department of Education, available at https://dict.gov.ph/ictstatistics/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/DepEd_22615_Number-of-Functional-Computers-for-SY-2020-2021.pdf (last accessed July 9, 2022).

⁷⁰ Ana P. Santos, *In the Philippines, distance learning reveals the digital divide*, HEINRICH-BÖLL-STIFTUNG, Oct. 6, 2020, available at <https://eu.boell.org/en/2020/10/06/philippines-distance-learning-reveals-digital-divide> (last accessed May 26, 2022).

28. Many have witnessed how the COVID-19 crisis has disrupted the youth's employment, education, and training. A study by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in 2021, titled "The Impact of COVID-19 on Opportunities for Out-of-School Youth in the Philippines," shows that the percentage of out-of-school youth (OSY) has increased significantly during the pandemic, from 16.9% in January 2020 to 25.2% in April 2020.⁷¹ Moreover, the report states that "as many as three million Filipinos, ages 16-24, are not in school, not gainfully employed and have not finished college or post-secondary education, with the females comprising the majority of the figure at 63%."⁷² The report observes that the trend toward OSY correlates with poverty as more than half of the three million OSY belong to the bottom 30% economically, based on per capita income.⁷³ It then highlights that "not only is the lack of opportunity for OSY a problem that impacts the entire Filipino population, but it worsens the challenges faced by two already disadvantaged groups: women and those living at or below poverty level."⁷⁴
29. By conducting two analyses of online media sources — one for October 2019 to mid-March 2020 and another from mid-March 2020 to July 2020 —to assess the potential differences in the OSY employment topic during COVID-19, the report also observes that positive sentiment from online OSY-related news stories fell from 90% to 68% during the given period.⁷⁵ These results are attributed to rising uncertainties from the pandemic, fear of unemployment, and the threat of youth recruitment by extremist groups.⁷⁶ The same result has also been observed in the positive sentiments from social media after COVID-19 struck, which significantly dropped from 63% to 11% due to the increase in youth unemployment, higher risk of school dropouts, child labor, and sexual exploitation, as well as a key youth employability program being put on hold.⁷⁷
30. Further, a 2021 study on the mental health of children in the country during the COVID-19 pandemic found factors that add burden to the mental well-being of children including fear and anxiety of contracting the virus, the suspension of physical classes, the disruption of regular daily routine, a decrease of social support from school peers collectively, and the shift to online classes.⁷⁸ Moreover, it notes that "excessive use of these technologies has been associated with developmental delays and has resulted in sleep schedule disruptions," which is aggravated by the strict implementation of the confinement of children at home.⁷⁹ Children living with preexisting mental health concerns and those living in cramped households and communities face worse circumstances.⁸⁰ Additionally, research by Phinma Education network noted that college students,

⁷¹ USAID, EDC & Accenture, *The Impact of COVID-19 on Opportunities for Out-of-School Youth in the Philippines*, An Opportunity 2.0 Research Report, (2021), available at https://opportunity.org.ph/wp-content/uploads/USAID-EDC-Accenture-COVID-19-Impact-OSY-Philippines_v2021-11-08-Final-1.pdf (last accessed June 21, 2022).

⁷² *Id.* at 4

⁷³ *Id.*

⁷⁴ *Id.*

⁷⁵ *Id.* at 5

⁷⁶ *Id.*

⁷⁷ *Id.*

⁷⁸ Grace Zurielle C. Malolos, et al. *Mental health and well-being of children in the Philippine setting during the COVID-19 pandemic*, 11, *Health Promotion Perspectives*, 267–270 (2021), available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8501475/> (last accessed June 21, 2022).

⁷⁹ *Id.* at 268.

⁸⁰ *Id.*

particularly those from poor households, worried more about tuition, gadgets, internet reliability, as well as future job prospects compared to their more affluent peers.⁸¹ In 2020, a group called Samahan ng Progresibong Kabataan (SPARK) monitored 20 cases of deaths among students in that school year that are linked to distance learning.⁸² The group claimed that of the total, 19 were students from Grade 6 to third-year college, and of the 19, 17 were suicides, while one death was due to electrocution and another was due to a vehicular accident.⁸³

31. With fewer employment opportunities and more people competing for available jobs, young workers will find themselves competing with adults who have gained more relevant experience.⁸⁴ The school-to-work transition has indeed become more difficult for the youth, especially with the current worldwide pandemic. Disruptions to education and training have profound effects on the youth’s employability and employment, such as in the form of increased household work burdens due to school closures, particularly for women, who, in the context of limited family resources, also have a greater possibility of withdrawing from school as their education is deemed less important than men’s.⁸⁵ Disruption is also evident in the form of exploitative work of young children in the household, even child labor, due to reduced household income caused by the pandemic.⁸⁶

Legal Framework

32. The ILO provides two (2) frameworks to define school-to-work transition. On the one hand, Framework I defines *school-to-work transition* as “the passage of a young person from the end of schooling to the first regular or satisfactory job.” On the other hand, Framework II defines it as “the passage of a young person from the end of schooling to the first decent or satisfactory employment.”⁸⁷ Framework I only requires a *regular or satisfactory job*, while the stricter Framework II calls for *decent or satisfactory employment*. Regular employment merely provides for the duration of contract or expected length of tenure, whereas decent employment outlines a set of criteria for work to be considered *decent* (e.g., job security, entitlements, a monthly wage, etc.).⁸⁸ Meanwhile, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) offers several indicators to measure school-to-work transition results, which include increased probability of employment, a better quality of employment, increased business performance, reduced time to find a job, increased ability to retain a job, and increased earnings or consumption.⁸⁹

⁸¹ Doris Dumlao-Abadilla, *Study weighs pandemic toll on students’ mental health*, INQUIRER.NET, Jan. 2, 2022, available at <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1537244/study-weighs-pandemic-toll-on-students-mental-health#ixzz7WYVXF0Rf> (last accessed June 21, 2022).

⁸² Ding Cervantes, *Group assails DepEd, cites 17 student suicide cases*, THE PHILIPPINE STAR, Oct. 28, 2020, available at <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/10/28/2052834/group-assails-deped-cites-17-student-suicide-cases> (last accessed June 21, 2022).

⁸³ *Id.*

⁸⁴ Asian Development Bank and the International Labour Organization, *supra* note 65.

⁸⁵ *Id.*

⁸⁶ *Id.*

⁸⁷ International Labour Office, *ILO School-to-Work Transition Survey: A Methodological Guide: Module 1: Basic Concepts, Roles, and Implementation Process*, at 12, (2009), available at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms_140857.pdf (last accessed May 26, 2022).

⁸⁸ *Id.* at 8.

⁸⁹ United Nations Children’s Fund, *supra* note 47.

33. According to the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the right to work implies “the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely chooses or accepts” and that the state “will take appropriate steps to safeguard this right,” which include technical and vocational guidance and training programs, policies, and techniques to achieve steady economic, social and cultural development and full and productive employment under conditions safeguarding fundamental political and economic freedoms to the individual.”⁹⁰ In recognizing the right of everyone to the enjoyment of just and favorable conditions of work, the state must ensure fair wages and equal remuneration for work of equal value without distinction of any kind, particularly for women, being guaranteed conditions of work not inferior to those enjoyed by men, with equal pay for equal work; safe and healthy working conditions; equal opportunity for everyone to be promoted in his employment to an appropriate higher level; and rest, leisure and reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay, as well as remuneration for public holidays.⁹¹
34. In terms of protection for children, both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Labour Standards recognize child labor as a violation of fundamental human rights and have established clear safeguards, one of which is by imposing a minimum age or ages for admission to employment.⁹² The International Labour Standards has set the general minimum age for admission to employment or work at 15 years (13 for light work) and the minimum age for hazardous work at 18 (16 under certain strict conditions).⁹³
35. In the Philippines, the 1987 Philippine Constitution ensures protection of the right to work, which encompasses full protection to labor, local and overseas, organized and unorganized, full employment, equality of employment opportunities, rights to self-organization, collective bargaining and negotiations, and peaceful concerted activities, shared responsibility between workers and employers and just share in the fruits of production and the right of enterprises to reasonable returns on investments, and expansion and growth.⁹⁴ The Labor Code, in particular, elaborates the provisions for employment practices and labor relations in the country, including establishing a “national apprenticeship program through the participation of employers, workers, government and non-government agencies to help meet the demand of the economy for trained manpower.”⁹⁵ It defines apprenticeship as a “practical training on the job supplemented by related theoretical instruction,” and an apprentice as “a worker who is covered by a written apprenticeship agreement with an individual employer,” at least 14 years of age, and possesses vocational aptitude and capacity for appropriate tests and the ability to comprehend

⁹⁰ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *adopted* Dec. 16, 1966.

⁹¹ *Id.*

⁹² Conventions on the Rights of a Child, *supra* note 1 and International Labour Organization, *Rules of the Game: An Introduction to the standards-related work of the International Labour Organization*, (2019).

⁹³ International Labour Organization, *Rules of the Game: An Introduction to the standards-related work of the International Labour Organization*, at 42, (2019).

⁹⁴ 1987 CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES, *available at* <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/constitutions/1987-constitution/> (last accessed June 18, 2022).

⁹⁵ A Decree Instituting a Labor Code Thereby Revising and Consolidating Labor and Social Laws to Afford Protection to Labor, Promote Employment and Human Resources Development and Insure Industrial Peace Based on Social Justice [LABOR CODE], bk. 2, art. 57.

and follow oral and written instructions.⁹⁶ It also notes that the *Apprenticeship Agreement* should include the period of apprenticeship that will not exceed six months and wage rates below the legal minimum wage, which starts below 75% of the minimum wage.⁹⁷ Such provision has been preceded by the National Apprenticeship Act of 1957, which was amended in 1973 in terms of the duties and function of the Bureau of Apprenticeship under the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), unlawful employment of a worker at subminimum wages unless approved by the Bureau of Apprenticeship, apprenticeship schemes (apprenticeship conducted entirely by and within the sponsoring firm, establishment or entity; apprenticeship entirely within DOLE training center or other public training institution duly approved by the Bureau; and initial broad training in trade fundamentals in a training center or other institution with subsequent actual work participation within the sponsoring firm or entity during the final stage of training); contents and signatories of the apprenticeship agreement; wage rate of apprentices; filing a complaint; conclusive decision of the Secretary of Labor; provision of aptitude tests of employers or entities with apprenticeship programs; voluntary nature and compulsory undertaking of apprenticeship programs under certain circumstances (such as when national security or economic development demand such programs); nationwide promotion of apprenticeship and close supervision of on-going apprenticeship programs by the Bureau of Apprenticeship under DOLE.⁹⁸

36. Lastly, to ensure access to basic learning opportunities and promote the right to quality education in the country, the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 aims to provide every student quality education that is globally competitive and based on a pedagogically sound curriculum that is at par with international standards; broaden the goals of high school education for college preparation, vocational and technical career opportunities as well as creative arts, sports and entrepreneurial employment in a rapidly changing and increasingly globalized environment; and to make education learner-oriented and responsive to the needs, cognitive and cultural capacity, the circumstances and diversity of learners, schools and communities through the appropriate languages of teaching and learning, including mother tongue as a learning resource.⁹⁹ It has transformed basic education into 13 years of compulsory schooling: seven for Kindergarten to Grade 6, four for Junior High School (Grades 7 to 10), and two for Senior High School (Grades 11 and 12), and encompasses the Alternative Learning System (ALS).¹⁰⁰ It also serves as one of the legal frameworks of DepEd's Basic Education Development Plan 2030, which is designed as the department's blueprint for the next decade in formulating, implementing, coordinating, monitoring, evaluating, and supervising policies, plans, programs, and projects in the areas of formal and nonformal education.¹⁰¹ It provides a strategic roadmap for the department

⁹⁶ *Id.* at bk 2, art. 58 and art. 59.

⁹⁷ *Id.* at art. 61.

⁹⁸ A Decree Amending Further Republic Act Number One Thousand Eight Hundred Twenty-Six, As Amended, Otherwise Known as the "National Apprenticeship Act of 1957," Presidential Decree No. 173 (1973) (as amended).

⁹⁹ ENHANCED BASIC EDUCATION ACT OF 2013.

¹⁰⁰ *Id.*

¹⁰¹ Department of Education, Adoption of the Basic Education Development Plan 2030, DepEd Order No. 024, s. 2022 (May 30, 2022).

to follow to improve the delivery and quality of basic education and the experience of learners in the basic education learning environment; to address the immediate impacts of the pandemic on learning and participation and learning loss while deepening learning gains; to close the remaining gaps, confronts the issue on education quality, and anticipate the future of education and introduce innovations in fostering resiliency and embedding the rights of children and the youth in education.¹⁰²

Methodology

37. The Human Rights Centers Management Office (HRCMO), through the ESCR Center, conducted a series of consultations for the monitoring of the human right to education, specifically school-to-work transition, to aid the ESCR Center achieve the following:
- a. Capture real-life experiences of learners during their school-to-work transition;
 - b. Document government programs, policies, and activities for youth employment;
 - c. Identify the gaps in the programs and policies of the government on youth employment; and
 - d. Provide recommendations for policy reform and program development on how to support the youth’s transition from school to further education, training, or employment.
38. The monitoring activity employs the following methodology:
- a. The ESCR Center developed a monitoring tool to capture the experiences and recommendations of the representatives from the identified sectors. The monitoring tool includes questions on the general school-to-work transition of learners, issues encountered in the implementation of the K to 12 Program, and experiences in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - b. The sectoral monitoring consists of virtual consultations through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with representatives of five different sectors, namely: (i) national organizations and local government units; (ii) civil society organizations and advocacy groups; (iii) employers; (iv) teachers, school administrators, and principals; (v) youth.
 - c. The virtual consultations were conducted through Zoom and recorded with the participants’ consent.
 - d. For each scheduled virtual consultation, the ESCR Center invited as many representatives of the different sectors to participate in the FGDs.

¹⁰² *Id.*

- e. Groups with more than 15 participants were divided into smaller breakout groups to ensure the active participation of each attendee. Representatives from the national government organizations and local government units presented existing school-to-work-transition programs and initiatives. The consultations with breakup groups chose a presenter who shared the summary of the session during the plenary.
 - f. The monitoring tool served as a guide for the discussions. After the FGDs, representatives of the breakout groups were tasked to present a summary of their discussions.
 - g. Desk research was also conducted to supplement and validate the data and information gathered in the consultations.
39. The participants of the FGDs are representatives of various government agencies, organizations, companies, and institutions. For the national organizations and local government units, representatives are those from the offices of the DepEd – Central Office and Iloilo Regional Office, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW). For civil society organizations and advocacy groups, participants consist of members of NORFIL Foundation, Inc., United Diwata Familia Youth Serving Organization (UDF-YSO), Resources for the Blind, I AM HL, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Youth Organization, ASEAN Youth Advocates Network - Philippines (AYAN PH), Seed4Com, and faculty members from Saint Louis University and the De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde. Employer participants are representatives of the construction company, DATEM Inc., the online job portal, JobsStreet, and the association of human resource and people managers in the country, People Management Association of the Philippines (PMAP). For the sector of teachers, school administrators, and principals, participants are comprised of officers, deans, and administration heads mostly of private academic institutions, which include Siliman University (SU), Saint Scholastica's College (SSC) Manila, Miriam College (MC), Jose Rizal University (JRU), Asia Pacific College (APC), University of Cordilleras (UC), De La Salle University (DLSU), University of the East (UE), University of Santo Tomas (UST), and New Era University (NEU). State university participants are from the University of the Philippines (UP), University of the Philippines Integrated School (UPIS), Cavite State University (CvSU), Bulacan State University, Batangas State University (BatStateU), and University of Southeastern Philippines (USEP). Other school administrator participants include officers from DepEd NCR and representatives of the Department of Education National Association of Employees and Administrative Services (DepEd NASEAS, Inc.) and the Philippine Association of School Superintendents (PASS). One participant is also from the local government of Quezon City, and another is from the Biology Teachers Association of the University of the Philippines (BIOTA/UP). For the youth sector, the majority of the participants are

college students and student council leaders of universities, such as the University of Northern Philippines (UNP), University of San Carlos (USC), Central Bicol State University of Agriculture (CBSUA) - Pili Campus, Central Luzon State University (CLSU), Romblon State University (RSU), and San Beda University (SBU). Other youth participants are senior high school students from Don Bosco Academy Mabalacat (DBAM) and De La Salle University (DLSU).

Scope and Limitations

40. Virtual consultations via Zoom were conducted in place of face-to-face focus group discussions due to the imposition of varying COVID-19 restrictions in the country. Lagging video stream due to weak or intermittent internet connection and background noise that obscured and drowned out the audio of some participants, which made what they were saying inaudible, were also experienced. There were data gaps, particularly among teachers, school administrators, principals, LGUs, and employers, as a limited number of representatives of these sectors were able to respond to CHR's requests for their participation in the scheduled online consultations.

Mapping of Existing Programs, Services, Coordination Mechanisms, and Other Initiatives of State and Non-State Actors

This section presents the existing programs, services, coordination mechanisms, and initiatives of different government agencies, local government units, and the private sector.

National Government

41. ADB's Facilitating Youth School-to-Work Transition Program (FYSWP) - Subprogram 1 is focused on providing training to "at-risk" youth from poor households, most of whom are either high school graduates or people who did not finish college.¹⁰³ This program complements other ADB interventions that aim to help accelerate the transition from school to work for young people in the Philippines, including the Senior High School Support Program approved in December 2014.¹⁰⁴ The program's impact is to increase employment rates for young women and men resulting from shortening the school-to-work transition period for youth.¹⁰⁵ While the primary target group is youth, many of the program reforms will also assist prime-aged unemployed workers in their job-to-job transition.¹⁰⁶ The FYSWP will comprise three subprograms that will include a series of policy reforms and interventions aimed at achieving three outputs: (i) labor market made to work better for youth, (ii) training systems made to work better for

¹⁰³ Asian Development Bank, Philippines: Facilitating Youth School-to-Work Transition Program (Subprogram 1), ADB project 49117-002 (April 2017).

¹⁰⁴ *Id.*

¹⁰⁵ Asian Development Bank, Proposed Programmatic Approach and Policy-based Loan for Subprogram 1 Republic of the Philippines: Facilitating Youth School-to-Work Transition Program Concept Paper, ADB project 49117-002 (February 2016).

¹⁰⁶ *Id.*

youth, and (iii) labor market regulations and policies improved to the benefit of young people.¹⁰⁷

Department of Education (DepEd)

42. The Department of Education (DepEd) formulates, implements, and coordinates policies, plans, programs, and projects for formal and non-formal basic education.¹⁰⁸ It oversees and supervises all elementary and secondary education institutions, including alternative learning systems, both public and private; and provides for the establishment and maintenance of a complete, adequate, and integrated system of basic education relevant to the goals of national development.¹⁰⁹
43. One of DepEd's programs in line with the K to 12 Program is the Senior High School Career Guidance Program and Early Registration. It aims to guide Grade 10 students/SHS entrants in making informed decisions regarding their choices of SHS track in view of the SHS Early Registration.¹¹⁰ The program promotes awareness of the importance of choosing a career that suits the learners' skills and interests that match the available resources and needs of society.¹¹¹ Included in the set of guidelines established by the DepEd for conducting the SHS Career Guidance Program (CGP) is the Grade 10 Career Manual, which the class adviser will deliver during the weekly Homeroom Guidance. This manual contains three modules: (i) Embarking on a Journey of Self Awareness, (ii) Examining the Destinations, and (iii) Charting Your Own Course.¹¹²
44. DepEd has also established the Alternative Learning System (ALS), a parallel learning system in the Philippines that provides a practical option to the existing formal instruction and includes both the non-formal and informal sources of knowledge and skills.¹¹³ The department implements two major programs on ALS through the Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS): the Basic Literacy Program and the Continuing Education Program – Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E).¹¹⁴ Both programs are modular and flexible. Unlike formal education, ALS non-formal education happens outside the classroom, is community-based, and is usually conducted at community learning centers, barangay multi-purpose halls, libraries, or at home, managed by ALS learning facilitators, such as mobile teachers, district ALS Coordinators, instructional managers at an agreed schedule and venue between the learners and facilitators.¹¹⁵
45. In 2016, the ALS Program began undergoing reforms to strengthen, intensify, and expand its implementation.¹¹⁶ After three years of

¹⁰⁷ *Id.*

¹⁰⁸ Department of Education, Our Mandate, available at <https://www.deped.gov.ph/about-deped/vision-mission-core-values-and-mandate/> (last accessed June 21, 2022).

¹⁰⁹ *Id.*

¹¹⁰ Department of Education, Senior High School Career Guidance Program and Early Registration, DepEd Order No. 41, s. 2015 (Aug. 28, 2015).

¹¹¹ *Id.*

¹¹² *Id.*

¹¹³ Department of Education, About Alternative Learning System, available at <https://www.deped.gov.ph/k-to-12/inclusive-education/about-alternative-learning-system/> (last accessed May 26, 2022)

¹¹⁴ *Id.*

¹¹⁵ *Id.*

¹¹⁶ Department of Education, About the Program: ALS 2.0, available at <https://www.deped.gov.ph/about-als/#:~:text=ALS%202.0,pathways%20to%20complete%20basic%20education> (last accessed May 26, 2022).

consultation, review, and development of policies, training and evaluation with partners in the government, local and international non-government agencies, and civil society organizations, the enhanced ALS K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum was finalized, and the ALS Program 2.0 was developed, and the five-year ALS 2.0 Strategic Roadmap was rolled out.¹¹⁷

District ALS Coordinators (DALSCs) and Mobile Teachers

- a. The ALS program implementation is lodged primarily with Mobile Teachers and DALSCs, who are assigned to conduct intensive community-based learning sessions for out-of-school children, youth, and adults in far-flung and isolated communities as well as in other marginalized communities in all divisions nationwide.¹¹⁸
 - b. Due to a lack of human resources in the implementation of ALS programs in the field, the BALS requested for the services of some formal school teachers to be designated as full-time DALSC.¹¹⁹
 - c. Both Mobile Teachers and DALCs conduct intensive community-based learning sessions for illiterate out-of-school children, youth and adults, and those who have not finished ten years of basic education.¹²⁰
46. Balik-Paaralan Para sa Out-Of-School Adults (BP-OSA) was launched in response to the need to provide an opportunity for out-of-school adults aged 20 to 45 to return to school to finish secondary education and start small-scale businesses through the assistance of participating lending institutions. It was initially implemented in 33 participating secondary schools nationwide beginning SY 1997–1998, specifically from July 9, 1997, to April 10, 1998.¹²¹
47. A joint project by DepEd, Microsoft, and CloudSwyft, Oplan TAWID (technology-assisted work immersion delivery) is a focused skilling program with five key industry partners to provide critical skills development and increase the employability of graduating Senior High School (SHS) students across the Philippines. It provides training courses on in-demand 21st-century skills, soft skills, and digital literacy, among others, with industry partners, CloudSwyft and Audentes Technologies.
48. The program focuses on three main areas: (i) enhancing digital literacy through training and certification on Microsoft Office or Microsoft Azure Cloud fundamentals, each integrating extensive practical experience and assessment via virtual labs technology; (ii) strengthening soft skills such as communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking; and

¹¹⁷ *Id.*

¹¹⁸ Department of Education, Provision of Teaching Aid and Transportation Allowances to ALS Mobile Teachers and District ALS Coordinators, DepEd Memorandum No. 313 s. 2008 (July 2, 2008).

¹¹⁹ *Id.*

¹²⁰ *Id.*

¹²¹ Department of Education, “Balik-Paaralan Para sa Out-of-School Adults (OSA) Program Amended by DO, S. 1998 – Corrigendum To DECS Order No. 47, s. 1997 (Balik-Paaralan Para sa Out-of-School Adult (BP-OSA) Program), DepEd Order 47, s. 1997 (May 29, 1997).

(iii) increasing employability by linking students to employers for relevant industry immersions.

49. After its official launching via a virtual event last December 2, 2021, a pilot test was conducted in the National Capital Region with an initial target of 120 SHS students between November 2021 to March 2022. The program will later expand to different regions of the country.¹²²
50. MaSHSigabong Tagumpay sa Trabaho at Negosyo Pinanday: The SHS Graduates Success Stories is a series of 16 success stories of SHS graduates through individual videos and narratives that were streamed on the DepEd's Office website – DepEd Philippines YouTube Channel, DepEd Philippines Facebook Page and other official social media platforms from March 17, 2022, to April 8, 2022.¹²³ The success stories were divided into four categories: SHS TVL graduates who are gainfully employed, SHS TVL graduates who are entrepreneurs, SHS Academic, Arts and Design, or Sports graduates who are gainfully employed, and SHS Academic, Arts and Design, or Sports graduates who are entrepreneurs.¹²⁴

Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA)

51. The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) is the government agency tasked with managing and supervising technical education and skills development in the Philippines.¹²⁵ It sets direction, promulgates relevant standards, and implements programs geared toward quality-assured and inclusive technical education, skills development, and certification systems.¹²⁶
52. TESDA developed the National Technical Education and Skills Development Plan 2018-2022 to calibrate its national strategy for technical-vocational education and training (TVET) to address the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic and the needs of priority groups, including the youth. This plan guides TESDA in developing the strategies for the country's TVET aimed at global competitiveness, workforce readiness, and social equity.
53. TVET Towards the New Normal - TESDA's Operational Plan in response to the COVID-19 crisis is a recovery plan to transition the agency's systems, processes, and programs into the new normal and allow the agency to cater to the skills needs of the people, particularly digital skills which have seen an increase in demand during the pandemic. This plan specifies priority sectors, namely, agriculture, health, ICT, and construction. It is divided into three phases: phase I – survival (March-June 2020) aims at reducing possible transmission of the disease and ensuring

¹²² Microsoft Philippines Communications Team, *Department of Education Drives Employability and Work Opportunities for Senior High School Graduates through Oplan TAWID Program*, MICROSOFT NEWS CENTER PHILIPPINES, Jan. 12, 2022, available at <https://news.microsoft.com/en-ph/2022/01/12/department-of-education-drives-employability-and-work-opportunities-for-senior-high-school-graduates-through-oplan-tawid-program/> (last accessed May 26, 2022).

¹²³ Department of Education, *Launching of the MaSHSigabong Tagumpay sa Trabaho at Negosyo Pinanday: The Senior High School Graduate Success Stories*, Regional Memorandum No. 0194, s. 2022 (March 15, 2022).

¹²⁴ *Id.*

¹²⁵ TESDA, *Vision, Mission, Value and Quality Statement*, available at <https://www.tesda.gov.ph/About/TESDA/11> (last accessed June 21, 2022).

¹²⁶ *Id.*

safety and security; phase II – transitional (July – December 2020) encompasses programs and activities that would slowly aid in the transition towards the “new normal”; and phase III – structural (January 2021 onwards) is the regular implementation of policies, projects, and programs under the “new normal.”

54. TVET PH Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) Framework contains specific measures to ensure the right competencies are imparted to TVET learners, particularly the youth, in six areas or aspects. First is in terms of governance, which includes modernization and upgrading of TVET schools and institutions; strengthening of the information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and info system; and TVET financing. The second is developing competency standards and a curriculum responsive to emerging technologies, benchmarking, and referencing international standards. The third is in terms of TVET delivery through a flexible and agile learning delivery system and assessment certification system. Fourth is the quality of TVET HR by capacity-building and upskilling of TVET human resources and learning and facilitators. Fifth encompasses partnerships and networking by intensifying partnerships and networking with industries. And sixth includes TVET policies that are responsive and agile and include skills anticipation and forecasting, intensification of research in TVET, and installation of KM System.

TVET Programs Supporting the Youth

- a. Philippine Credit Transfer System provides the framework for learner progression through the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) levels which then sets the standard for qualification outcomes in both the education sectors. It supports the implementation of the Ladderized Education Act, which aims to strengthen the interface between TVET and higher education and presents articulated pathways such as ladderized and embedded TVET and Higher Education programs. It also provides credit transfer arrangements that will maximize credit through recognition of equivalencies and assesses learning outcomes through recognition of prior learning. Currently, this system is in a pilot testing phase.
- b. Micro-Credentialing programs provide guidelines on recognizing micro-credentials for lifelong learning and upskilling/reskilling of learners in TVET and cover all delivery modes of learning: formal, non-formal, and informal that are also flexible enough to accommodate different modalities. It offers a new way of certifying a portfolio of skills, recognizing small and discrete learning, as well as credentialing existing knowledge and skills that are transferable across jobs in order to navigate the future of work. It is essentially small credentials, also called nano-degrees, badges, or stackable micro-degrees, which recognize the achievement of skill sets or knowledge required by industry, professional associations, or the community.

- c. Recognition of Prior Learning already has guidelines that have been issued and are now in place to make TVET inclusive of all clients with academic achievement, work exposures, and life experiences aligned with the competencies contained in various TVET programs. So through this program, a person who may not have undergone formal education but possesses skills in specific qualifications earned through work experience or non-formal may apply for a National Certificate, Certificate of Competency, Certificate of Training or Achievement, or earn credits through training portfolio.
- d. TESDA Online Program (www.e-tesda.gov.ph) is a free/open educational resource that aims to make technical education accessible to more Filipino citizens through the use of ICT. It offers 128 free online courses ranging from ICT, Tourism, Human Healthcare, Maritime, Trainers Methodology Automotive, Entrepreneurship, Agriculture, Electronics, to Heating, Ventilation & Air conditioning (HVAC).
- e. TESDA App, which is yet to be launched, will provide access to youth to programs being offered by TESDA, including scholarships, training centers, and e-learning videos.
- f. TESDA also offers a variety of scholarship programs, such as: TWSP (Training for Work Scholarship Program) to support rapid, inclusive, and sustained through course offering in priority industries and key employment generators in the country; STEP (Skills Training for Employment Program), which addresses the specific skills needs of the communities and promote employment, through entrepreneurial, self-employment, and service-oriented activities; PESFA (Private Education Student Financial Assistance) that extends financial assistance to marginalized but deserving students in private technical vocational schools; UAQTEA (Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education), which provides tuition and other school fees in state and local universities and colleges, and state-run technical-vocational institutions (STVIs); and Tulong Trabaho that aims to equip/enhance the skills of its target beneficiaries(including employed workers) giving them better opportunities for employment after their training.
- g. TESDA also conducts an annual employment study of TVET graduates as part of its monitoring system.

National Economic Development Authority (NEDA)

- 55. As the country's socio-economic planning body, the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) is regarded as the authority in macroeconomic forecasting, policy analysis, and research by providing high-level advice to policymakers in Congress and the Executive Branch.¹²⁷ It is responsible for performing coordinating activities such as

¹²⁷ National Economic and Development Authority, About NEDA, available at <https://neda.gov.ph/about-neda/> (last accessed June 21, 2022).

the formulation of policies, plans, and programs to efficiently set the broad parameters for national and sub-national (area-wide, regional, and local development); reviewing, evaluating, and monitoring infrastructure projects identified under the Comprehensive and Integrated Infrastructure Program consistent with the government's thrust of increasing investment spending for the growing demand on quality infrastructure facilities; and undertaking of short-term policy reviews to provide critical analyses of development issues and policy alternatives to decision-makers.¹²⁸

56. In 2021, NEDA updated the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022 Strategies for School-to-Work Transition to include the following strategies to aid school to work transition: (i) setting up joint industry and government bodies for technical and vocational education and training quality assurance; (ii) enhancing the implementation of students financial assistance program (StuFAPs) and the timely awarding of StuFAPs including the benefits under the Universal Access to Quality and Tertiary Education Act; (iii) developing a roadmap for academic and technical programs responsive to the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (FIRe), including updating the K-12 curriculum and developing a new program that will allow students to cater to emerging disciplines and address the country's post-pandemic needs; (iv) intensifying distance learning methods to promote learning continuity and retooling; (v) modernizing learning and teaching material and methods in cross-cutting strategy, the entire education sector needs to revisit the ecological approaches, assessment strategies, and learning materials; (vi) maximizing government-industry collaboration and international partnership; (vii) developing an action plan to operationalize the PQF; (viii) boosting and expanding employment facilitation services; and (ix) strengthening and expanding internship and dual training programs.
57. NEDA also recommends certain amendments to the Apprenticeship Law to encourage enterprises to participate in the implementation of apprenticeship programs. Their proposed Apprenticeship Bill seeks to expand and make the existing apprenticeship law adapt to the emerging demands of the labor market. The agency's key recommendations include: (a) defining apprenticeship or apprenticeable occupation as "training" rather than "employment"; (b) providing a training allowance equivalent to 75% of the minimum wage and consistent with the Dual Training Systems Act and Labor Code; (c) exempting from probationary employment certified apprentices who are employed by the same enterprise with which they entered into an apprenticeship agreement with; (d) extending the current six months limit to four years maximum duration to ensure the scheme remains relevant for skilled occupations that require a much longer learning period; (e) allowing greater industry involvement in identifying apprenticeship occupation; (f) developing qualifications, standards and curricula, and monitoring; and (g) extending tax incentives aligned with the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises or the CREATE Act.

¹²⁸ *Id.*

Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE)

58. The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) is the national government agency mandated to formulate policies, implement programs and serve as the policy-coordinating arm of the Executive Branch on labor and employment.¹²⁹ To carry out this mandate, the DOLE has 16 regional offices, 83 Field Offices with 4 Satellite Offices, 38 overseas posts, 6 bureaus, 7 staff services, and 11 agencies attached to it for policy and program supervision and/or coordination.¹³⁰ It provides services to more than 40 million workers comprising the country's labor force, including those in the formal and informal economies, private and public organizations, employers, employers' groups, non-government organizations (NGOs), and other government agencies, the academe, other stakeholders, international organizations (e.g., ILO, UNICEF, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)), and the international community including the host countries of our OFWs.¹³¹
59. On its website, the Bureau of Workers with Special Concerns of the Department of Labor and Employment has identified the Youth Education - Youth Employability (YE-YE) Project as one of its programs for the youth. YE-YE aims to address the education-to-employment needs of the youth.¹³²
60. In 2014, the DOLE, in partnership with Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA)-affiliated researchers, conducted a randomized evaluation to investigate the impact of the Special Program for Employment of Students (SPES) on youth education, employability, and employment in Manila, Central Luzon, Western Visayas, Central Visayas, and Davao Region.¹³³ They found that although SPES did not impact academic outcomes or work readiness in the medium term, it helped the beneficiaries find work, increasing their likelihood of being currently employed by 3.9% points, a 70% increase from the comparison group rate of 5.6%.¹³⁴
61. The DOLE, in coordination with all Local Government Units (LGUs), has also established the Public Employment Service Office (PESO), a non-fee charging multi-dimensional employment service facility or entity.¹³⁵ It aims to ensure prompt and efficient delivery of employment facilitation services through labor market information, referral and placement, and employment coaching and career counseling to provide timely information on the labor market and DOLE Programs.¹³⁶ PESOs, together with DepEd, work to

¹²⁹ Department of Labor and Employment, About Us, available at <https://www.dole.gov.ph/about-us/> (last accessed June 21, 2022).

¹³⁰ *Id.*

¹³¹ *Id.*

¹³² Department of Labor and Employment: Bureau of Workers with Special Concerns, Programs for the Youth: Youth Education – Youth Employability (YE-YE) Project, available at <https://bwsc.dole.gov.ph/35-programs-projects/programs-for-the-youth.html> (last accessed May 26, 2022).

¹³³ Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), Details of Intervention, available at <https://www.poverty-action.org/study/impact-youth-employment-bridging-program-philippines#:~:text=While%20it%20improved%20students'%20confidence,group%20rate%20of%205.6%20percent> (last accessed May 26, 2022).

¹³⁴ *Id.* at Results and Policy Lessons.

¹³⁵ Department of Labor and Employment, About Public Employment Services (PES), available at <https://www.dole.gov.ph/public-employment-services-pes-contents/> (last accessed June 21, 2022).

¹³⁶ *Id.*

establish indirect immersions and ensure students have completed Grade 12 and are equipped to enter the industry. They also conduct career awareness programs.

62. However, in a case study by San Pedro and Angon (2013) on the implementation of the MDG Fund Joint Programme on Alternatives to Migration: Decent Jobs for Filipino Youth in four pilot provinces (Masbate, Antique, Maguindanao, and Agusan del Sur), they observe that many PESOs are still non-institutionalized, the LGUs' dependency on internal revenue allotment (IRA) constraints budget including that for PESO.¹³⁷ Budget and human resources constraints limit local employment services provided by the PESO to clients, and a lack of private-sector employers poses a challenge to the job matching function of the PESO.¹³⁸

National Youth Commission (NYC)

63. The National Youth Commission (NYC) is the policy-making coordinating body of all youth-related institutions, programs, projects, and activities of the government.¹³⁹
64. Economic empowerment forms part of NYC's Philippine Youth Development Plan 2017-2022. In this document, the NYC outlines its programs and activities to enable the youth to participate in the country's economy as "empowered employees and/or entrepreneurs who are productively engaged in decent and gainful work and/or businesses and protected from work-related vulnerabilities such as child labor, discrimination, underemployment, and occupational hazards."¹⁴⁰

National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP)

65. The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) is mandated to serve as the primary government agency through which indigenous cultural communities/indigenous peoples (ICCs/IPs) can seek government assistance and as the medium, through which such assistance may be extended; review and assess the condition of ICCs/IPs including existing laws and policies pertinent thereto and to propose relevant laws and policies to address role in national development; formulate and implement policies, plans, programs and projects for the economic, social and cultural development of the ICCs/IPs and monitor their implementation; request and engage the services and support of experts from other agencies of government employ private experts and consultants as may be required in the pursuit of its objectives; issue certificate of ancestral land/domain title; enter into contracts, agreements, or arrangement, with government or private agencies or entities as may be necessary as subject to existing laws, and obtain loans from government lending institutions and other

¹³⁷ Wilbert San Pedro & Roche Angon, *Strengthening Local Employment Services To Promote Youth Employment: A Case Study*, available at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-manila/documents/publication/wcms_203581.pdf (last accessed May 26, 2022).

¹³⁸ *Id.* at 6-8.

¹³⁹ National Youth Commission, NYC Vision, Mission, and Core Values, available at <https://nyc.gov.ph/vision-mission-corevalues/> (last accessed June 21, 2022).

¹⁴⁰ National Youth Commission, *Updated Philippine Youth Development Plan (PYDP) 2017–2022*, at 11 (2018).

lending institutions to finance its programs, as subject to the approval of the President.¹⁴¹

- 66. For 2022, NCIP has a total fund allocation of Php168,878,000 to 13 regional offices for 10,397 beneficiaries. The agency conducts indigenous people (IP) Youth Training to encourage peace advocates, researchers, community organizers, community planners, and program developers to become partners of the agency and ALS stakeholders and establish the roles of the IP youth.

National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA)

- 67. The National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA) is the lead government agency mandated to steer the course of program development for persons with disabilities and the delivery of services to the sector by formulating policies and coordinating the activities of all agencies, whether public or private, concerning disability issues and concerns.¹⁴² It is tasked with monitoring the implementation of several laws to ensure the protection of PWDs' civil and political rights, such as the Republic Act No 7277 (Magna Carta for Disabled Persons), Batas Pambansa Blg. 344 (Accessibility Law), Republic Act 6759 (White Cane Act), and ILO Convention No. 159 (Vocational Rehabilitation of Persons With Disability).¹⁴³
- 68. One of NCDA's major projects is the Non-Handicapping Environment (NHE), aimed at enhancing the physical and social accessibility of persons with disabilities. Launched in cooperation with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), it was pioneered in the municipalities of New Lucena, Iloilo(Region VI), and Opol, Misamis Oriental (Region X) from 2008 to 2012, with two JICA experts dispatched to help in the implementation of the project.¹⁴⁴ It implemented activities based on a series of five components/outputs as follows: (1) implementing Mechanism to define the implementing and monitoring mechanisms; (2) Profiling to grasp/assess the situation on PWDs and physical accessibility; (3) Capacity Development to enhance the capacity of counterparts/stakeholders, empower PWDs and their groups/organizations and promote their participation; (4) Advocacy to promote the removal of barriers in society; and (5) Networking to disseminate/share project experiences and NHE with International/National stakeholders.¹⁴⁵

Legislative Department

- 69. Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) was established in 2012 through Executive Order No. 83 and passed into law through the Republic

¹⁴¹ National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, Mandate, Vision, Power and Functions, available at <https://ncip.gov.ph/mandate-vision-and-mission/> (last accessed June 21, 2022).

¹⁴² National Council on Disability Affairs, About Us, available at <https://www.ncda.gov.ph/about/> (last accessed June 21, 2022).

¹⁴³ *Id.*

¹⁴⁴ National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, Non-Handicapping Environment (NHE) Project, available at <https://www.ncda.gov.ph/non-handicapping-environment/non-handicapping-environment-nhe-project/> (last accessed June 21, 2022).

¹⁴⁵ *Id.*, Non-Handicapping Environment: Background, available at <https://www.ncda.gov.ph/non-handicapping-environment/> (last accessed June 21, 2022).

Act No. 10968 or An Act Institutionalizing the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF).¹⁴⁶ Developed through the collaboration of the DepEd, TESDA, CHED, DOLE, and the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), the PQF is a quality assured national system for the development, recognition, and award of qualifications based on standards of knowledge, skills, and values acquired in different ways and methods by learners and workers educated/trained in the Philippines.¹⁴⁷ It describes the levels of educational qualifications and sets the standards for qualification outcomes.¹⁴⁸ As defined in Republic Act (RA)10968, qualification refers to a formal certification that a person has successfully achieved specific learning outcomes relevant to the identified academic, industry, or community requirements. A qualification confers official recognition of value in the world of education and training, work, and job creation.¹⁴⁹

70. Republic Act 11261 or known as the First Time Jobseekers Assistance Act, was also signed into law in 2019.¹⁵⁰ This Act mandates government agencies and instrumentalities to waive fees for first-time job seekers in relation to their application for licenses, identification, clearances, certificates, or other requirements required for employment locally or abroad.¹⁵¹
71. Indigenous People (IP) Education and Advocacy Services as codified in RA 8371.¹⁵² The development objective of IP Education and Advocacy Services is to invest in human development through the educational grant or scholarship to serve indigenous cultural communities/indigenous people who seek the opportunity and qualify for educational advancement and/or skills development, thereby empowering them to become self-reliant, capacitated and socially responsible to meaningfully contribute to the recognition, promotion, and protection of their rights and well-being, and to nation-building.
72. The program has four components: (i) Educational Assistance Program (EAP), which provides financial assistance to learners who must maintain a general weighted average of 80%; (ii) Merit-based Scholarship Program (MBSP), which aims to provide a full package benefit to qualify the serving art students; (iii) PAMANA-EAP, whose beneficiaries come from IP conflict-affected areas and conflict-vulnerable areas; and support to Advocacy Program through assistance to community schools, help in the review of LET and other professional exams, bridging project/tutorial activities, school-based supplemental feeding, Culturally-Adaptive Basic Education and Health – Integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (CABEH-IKSP); assistance in the development of IP dictionaries/glossary

¹⁴⁶ Philippine Qualifications Framework, Legal Bases, available at <https://pqf.gov.ph/Home/Details/5#:~:text=10968%20entitled%20%E2%80%9CAn%20Act%20Institutionalizing,%20and%20Appropriating%20Funds%20Therefor.%E2%80%9D> (last accessed May 19, 2022).

¹⁴⁷ Philippine Qualifications Framework, The Philippine Qualifications Framework and the Philippine Education and Training System, available at <https://pqf.gov.ph/Home/Details/16> (last accessed May 19, 2022).

¹⁴⁸ *Id.*

¹⁴⁹ *Id.*

¹⁵⁰ An Act Waiving Government Fees and Charges in the Issuance of Documents Required in the Application for Employment of First Time Jobseekers [FIRST TIME JOBSEEKERS ASSISTANCE ACT], Republic Act No. 11261, (2019).

¹⁵¹ *Id.* at § 3.

¹⁵² An Act to Recognize, Protect and Promote the Rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples, Creating a National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, Establishing Appropriating Funds Therefor, and for Other Purposes [THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS ACT OF 1997], Republic Act No. 8371, (1997).

of terms and expressions, assistance to IP language training, and integrated development project for more vulnerable IP groups.

73. The Act Prohibiting Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity or Expression (SOGIE) and Providing Penalties Therefor (House Bill No. 4982), or the Anti-Discrimination Act and also more popularly known as the SOGIE Bill, aims to address all forms of discrimination and violence on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity and to promote human dignity as enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, particularly General Recommendation No. 28 on Nondiscrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and all other relevant and universally accepted human rights instruments and other international conventions to which the Philippines is a signatory.¹⁵³ This proposed law seeks to protect individuals and communities that experience human rights violations on the basis of SOGIE, including, but not limited to, individuals and communities of diverse sexual orientation or gender identity or expression who are children, young, poor, differently abled, of different ethnic background or cultural background, and of various religious belief.¹⁵⁴ In December 2020, it was reintroduced in the 18th Congress after it was turned down in the previous sessions.¹⁵⁵

Local Government Units (LGUs)

74. In Quezon City, a locally managed technical vocational center in Quezon City provides skills training for teachers, especially in K to 12. There are also continuous skills and competency development programs for teachers. In 2019, the Senior High School Graduate Skills Registration Program was launched by the Quezon City Council, which involves creating a database using information from a Skills Registration Form made available online for Grade 12 students to answer. Once the program commences, PESO will take over the database, so registered students will be referred to companies and receive invitations to job fairs and skills programs.¹⁵⁶ During the pandemic, in 2020, Quarantalks QC was launched, a series of online webinars to help parents transition their children to distance learning.
75. In Iloilo City, the Tiu Cho Teg-Ana Ros (TCTAR) Foundation Integrated School in Barangay Lanit in Jaro district was converted into a farm school that catered initially to 39 learners. Having met the standards of the DepEd to offer the curriculum for agriculture, the school has a space that can be utilized for small organic farming or gardening. Offline-online blended

¹⁵³ An Act Prohibiting Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity or Expression (SOGIE) and Providing Penalties Therefor (House Bill No. 4982), S.B. No. 689, 18TH CONG., 1ST Reg. Sess. (2019).

¹⁵⁴ *Id.* at § 4.

¹⁵⁵ Jove Moya, *SOGIE Equality Bill: Everything You Need to Know—Supporters, Beginnings, And More*, TATLER ASIA, Jan. 13, 2022, available at <https://www.tatlerasia.com/culture/arts/pride-month-2021-sogie-equality-bill-timeline> (last accessed June 21, 2022).

¹⁵⁶ Christel Castillo, *QC Council pursues Senior High School Graduate Skills Registration Program*, METRO NEWS CENTRAL, 2019, available at <http://metronewscentral.net/quezon-city/metro-gen/qc-council-pursues-senior-high-school-graduate-skills-registration-program> (last accessed May 26, 2022).

learning modality will be used, and practical activities will be done online as face-to-face classes are still not allowed. Learners are also provided with computer tablets containing organic farming and agriculture curriculum along with their other subjects.¹⁵⁷ DepEd will be partnering with the City Agriculturist Office and the Department of Agriculture (DA) to utilize the Uswag Plant Nursery in Barangay Tacas, Jaro, as the school's laboratory, although a memorandum of agreement (MOA) is yet to be signed by the agencies involved.¹⁵⁸

- 76. The WHEELS Program for Inclusive Development is a six-point agenda platform by Mayor Jerry Trenas that envisions Iloilo City to be one of the three urbanized cities in the country by 2028 in terms of liability, competitiveness, viability, and governance practice. Since education is a key element in the platform, as represented by the first “E” in the WHEELS program, several initiatives have been made by the local government of Iloilo. These include offering full scholarships to college students and daycare teachers, as well as to primary and secondary public school teachers, effective and efficient dispensing of special education fund (SEF) as checked by the local school board, constructing of school buildings, producing and upgrading the facilities, security, and internet connectivity of public schools and their libraries.
- 77. Programs for out-of-school youth and individuals are comprised of ALS Kahon ng Karunungan, Katuwang at Kapatiran; ALS special classes for persons deprived of liberty (PDL), children in conflict with the law, persons with disabilities, and IPs; Painting Ko Buhay Ko for ALS Learners Project, which aims to provide opportunities to learn new skills which can be a potential source of livelihood for sustainability and self-sufficiency; and Balik Paaralan Para sa Out-of-School-Adult (BPOSA). Meanwhile, USWAG Skills Program of the Technical Institute of Iloilo City (TIIC) is a free-upskilling and reskilling training program for the marginalized population, particularly the youth, women, and persons with disabilities. Taking inspiration from the word USWAG, which means progress and ensuring that nobody will be left behind, the program commits to empowering the recipients by providing the education skills and competencies that will make them the employers’ choice in the skill-based economy. Furthermore, USWAG has also provided livelihood training, which encourages the recipients to be micro-entrepreneurs backed up with a reasonable capital provided by the city government.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Advocacy Groups

- 78. Income-generating activities for individuals with visual impairment are organized to augment existing livelihoods, such as making rags out of excess clothes from donation drives and producing homemade dishwashing liquid, performing music online or in the malls, and forming groups such as a rondalla group of people with visual impairment. In order to equip them with soft skills and technical skills, such as basic computer

¹⁵⁷ Perla Lena, Urban farm school to help promote food sufficiency, PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY, Sept. 17. 2021, available at <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1153832> (last accessed May 26, 2022).

¹⁵⁸ *Id.*

learning, face-to-face training sessions are conducted. They are also referred to TESDA-accredited schools upon graduation from high school. On the other hand, an employers' forum and orientation are organized to capacitate different stakeholders such as organizations and private companies.

79. Different youth organizations push forward different advocacies by conducting seminars and values formation integrated with education advocacies, cultural sensitivity, current pressing issues for the youth, or working with a national organization to document and study different cases of discrimination and violence against members of the LGBTQIA+ community.
80. Financial assistance is also given, either in the form of cash to be given to the parents of youth members of an organization or as a scholarship and school allowance.
81. Several initiatives to address the learning gaps in modular and online learning are also launched by different organizations, such as through a mobile classroom that will go to far-flung areas in Central Visayas, partnering with Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) learning sites, public school training on online learning, building a computer room or learning hub in a Dumagat community, and transcribing of modules into accessible formats.
82. An organization started a small business in a community where local people are employed. The same model can also be used to create employment and promote advocacy, for instance, by building a business enterprise that employs members of the vulnerable sector, such as persons with disabilities and IPs.
83. Continuous monitoring of career progression and status of student beneficiaries or youth members of the organizations is conducted to provide them with their needed intervention.
84. International youth organizations have programs that focus on gathering and giving young people training to encourage becoming changemakers or to be trained to expand their business and their entrepreneurship skills. They also conduct career fairs and internship programs to link students to local companies and stakeholders and offer one-year internships in their organization as well to teach students the skills needed in the workplace.
85. CSOs and advocacy groups forge partnerships with academic institutions like Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU), UST, or DLSU to conduct a much better online learning environment for the youth.

Employers

86. Employers hold internship programs for students, either virtual or face-to-face, in which students must go through all the work processes and help them develop soft skills and technical skills. An employer also prioritizes

absorbing or hiring the students who finished their internship program. In terms of evaluation, one employer not only evaluates their interns but also allows them to evaluate the company.

87. Besides internship programs, one employer also launched a series of webinars and a career lab to empower placement or career advisors in state universities.
88. Employers also work with the private sector to lend and share their know-how in the industry. A partnership between one employer's company and the university has led to upgrading the university's curricula in Civil Engineering and Architecture based on industry trends so that graduates of the said courses can make a better transition into the construction industry. Another employer works with a non-profit organization that helps improve access to opportunities for persons with disabilities.
89. Employers generally do not discriminate against applicants in terms of age, religion, or disability. In fact, one employer that connects candidate job seekers to employers and hiring companies encourages their partners to accept people with disabilities.

Teachers, School Administrators, and Principals

90. Programs for school-to-work transition are already embedded in the course program of the universities, wherein the internship program happens after the course work. In the internship program, a strong interface can be seen with the labor market.
91. Universities offer placement support groups through the alumni network industry linkages and companies. From the discussion with the participants, it is highly evident that universities have a strong partnership not only with their alumni but also with the industry and different companies.
92. Universities generally have career placement offices to support graduates and alumni so that the graduates can be employed immediately after graduation, and the universities can determine the demand and conduct graduate tracer studies.
93. Parent orientations held by schools consistently draw their attention to what they can do to help transition their children to distance learning.
94. Capstone projects are done virtually instead of immersion programs so senior high school students can still convene with their classmates.
95. In order to assist in remote learning during the pandemic, self-learning modules (SLMs) and transistor radio units with Universal Serial Bus (USB) slots were provided. Plug-play-and-learn scheme (saving the lessons in a USB flash drive, which is then plugged into a transistor radio) was also used to help learners, especially IP learners, who had many questions or had no one to guide them in following the modules.

96. Informal integrations of competencies and career guidance to prepare students for employment are offered and start as early as Grade 7 in some schools.
97. Schools also provide work immersion opportunities to students undergoing or taking up not only tech-voc tracks but also those in the academic track and arts and design track. Teaching internship is conducted in a laboratory school and immersion in different public schools.
98. Workshops, training, and seminars are organized and conducted, usually online, by schools, universities, or academic associations to facilitate networking and share a variety of topics to undergraduates about expectations in the workplace or graduate school, module development for those who are into teaching, advancement in research, to the ways of filing and securing government documents needed for employment.

Youth

99. ANCPAG (Adaptation, Navigation, Choices, Paths, Assessment, and Goals) is a developmental career orientation program by GuidanceNGO designed for junior and senior high school learners and their parents to orient them on key aspects of higher education and careers and help them make more decisions.¹⁵⁹
100. KadaKareer is a low-bandwidth, community-based career development platform that provides free coaches and resources for underprivileged Filipino students.¹⁶⁰
101. Boot camps and skills training are offered to students, such as by Coding Dojo Philippines, Eskwelabs, and Avion School.
102. Career Contact is an education technology company that equips high school and tertiary students with digital skills in User Experience (UX) & Analytics and connects students with small enterprises to work on business and/or community challenges from a variety of industries.¹⁶¹
103. Career-assistance programs through online webinars are conducted by the office in-charge in the universities.
104. While lines of communication through help desks and hotlines were opened between the institutions and students to air their grievances and problems encountered during the pandemic, most programs were initiated by student councils in the different institutions to assist the students.

¹⁵⁹ GuidanceNGO, ANCPAG Webinars, available at <http://guidancengoph.org/ancpag.html> (last accessed June 21, 2022).

¹⁶⁰ KadaKareer, available at <https://www.kadakareer.com/> (last accessed June 21, 2022).

¹⁶¹ LinkedIn, CareerContact, available at <https://sg.linkedin.com/company/careercontact> (last accessed June 21, 2022).

Key Findings

This section discusses the major insights gathered based on the FGDs with the representatives of the five different sectors, supplemented by desk research on the related data and information.

National Government and LGUs

105. **The length of school-to-work transition of senior high school and college graduates is yet to be measured.** Based on the PIDS data shared by the TESDA representative, the school-to-work transition of TESDA graduates takes 3.35 months, which is higher than the 2015 baseline of 3 months but lower than the 2020 target of 3 to 5 months. However, no data is available for the length of school-to-work transition of senior high school and college graduates. However, the end plan targets are between .75 to 9 to 12 months.

Employers

Lack of guidelines on internship/OJT programs

106. **Guidelines on internship or OJT programs are unclear.** One of the amendments in the National Apprenticeship Act concerns the wage rate of apprentices, which “at the initial stage shall be seventy-five percent of the statutory minimum wage and their graduated wage scales or progressive wage increases shall take off therefrom.”¹⁶² Additionally, it states that “if there are serious considerations why an employer cannot meet the above requirements and upon presentation of adequate proof to this effect, the Secretary of Labor, upon recommendation of the Bureau [of Apprenticeship under DOLE], may authorize a lower initial rate for the particular program, but such rate should not be less than fifty percent of the legal minimum wage, provided, that periodic wage increases for apprentices should be uniform but scaled in a manner which at its later stages would not surpass or otherwise disturb wage structure fixed by collective bargaining agreements or otherwise in effect in the firm for journeypersons or regular workers in the same occupational classification as the apprentice.”¹⁶³ Moreover, “any person who pays his apprentices wages at less than the sub-minimum rates fixed for them in their apprenticeship agreements shall be penalized with a fine of not less than five hundred pesos nor more than three thousand pesos, with subsidiary imprisonment in case of insolvency.”¹⁶⁴ However, despite such provisions, employer participants are confused because such practice varies among companies, and the standards or guidelines are unclear and not well monitored or closely supervised by the DOLE, which is the primary implementing agency of the National Apprenticeship Law.

¹⁶² Presidential Decree No. 173 s. 1993, at § 11 (§ 6-A).

¹⁶³ *Id.*

¹⁶⁴ *Id.* at § 11 (§ 6-B).

107. **New graduates tend to lack soft skills.** New graduates experience culture shock upon entering the workplace because their expectations differ from what they were taught at school, and some fail to adjust to their work and decide to resign but have a hard time being hired again. This is reflected by the high attrition rate among newly graduates, as noted by an employer participant. Moreover, as one employer participant shares, based on the data gathered by an online job platform, the top issues observed among the first two years of K to 12 graduates are related to communication skills, working as a team, and critical thinking. Another employer participant comments that their company is particular on the soft skills of fresh graduates during their recruitment process, making them undergo a behavioral exam conducted by registered psychometricians from which they also based their interview questions because they have observed that technical skills are easier taught than soft skills or those related to empathy, creativity, resilience, and communication skills. These issues are heightened and even augmented by the circumstances brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as working from home or losing one's job and finding another one only when the market re-opens. However, as another employee participant explains, the majority of those from the generation today, Gen Y or those born roughly from 1980 to the mid-1990s,¹⁶⁵ and Gen Z or those born in the late 1990s and early 2000s,¹⁶⁶ who will constitute around 55 to 60% of the country's workforce in the next three to five years, which is close to NEDA's population projection of 64% from 2019 to 2025,¹⁶⁷ will have an increased or better resiliency as enhanced by their experiences during the pandemic than those from older generations like Gen X, who will be the ones to hire the younger generation in the future.
108. **New graduates are highly vulnerable to scams and fake job postings.** As noted by one employer participant, since most companies or hiring agencies have turned almost every part of their recruitment process digital and will most likely remain digital, more online job posting platforms and websites have emerged. However, no one, including the government and its agencies, monitors and checks these online job platforms, making job seekers, especially first-time applicants and new graduates, vulnerable to being scammed and led by fake job postings.

Job readiness

109. **New graduates lack job readiness.** While readiness for work varies from employers, it generally entails "preparedness to learn and perform on the job, the ability to continue to learn, and the personal characteristics that contribute to the successful accomplishment of work."¹⁶⁸ One concern of

¹⁶⁵ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Definition of Generation Y, available at <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Generation%20Y> (last accessed July 9, 2022).

¹⁶⁶ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Definition of Generation Z, available at <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Generation%20Z> (last accessed July 9, 2022).

¹⁶⁷ NEDA, PDP 2017-2022, Chapter 13: Reaching for the Demographic Dividend, at 1, available at <https://pdp.neda.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Draft-Write-Up-PDP-Chapter-13.pdf> (last accessed June 21, 2022).

¹⁶⁸ *Employment: Employer's Perceptions of Employment Readiness*, available at <https://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1953/Employment-EMPLOYERS-PERCEPTIONS-EMPLOYMENT-READINESS.html> (last accessed July 9, 2022).

those who graduated during the pandemic was that all their on-the-job training was done online, and many of the skills they had learned online could not be translated into actual practice. Moreover, youth participants, who are still in school, feel the need to be better equipped to take on more responsibilities and know more about “adulting,” as in the term of youth participants, so they can be ready to be an adult once they have graduated from college.

- 110. **New graduates tend to miss their scheduled interviews.** An employer participant relates that one of the top issues of employers and human resource (HR) practitioners in recruiting fresh graduates is not showing up for their scheduled interviews without prior notice, which they have observed both in the pre-pandemic period and during the pandemic. On the other hand, fresh graduates who are looking for jobs complain about not receiving any update regarding the status of their application from the hiring managers or employers.

Teachers, School Administrators, and Principals

Matching of teachers to SHS programs

- 111. **Teachers’ competencies do not align with the SHS programs.** Because there is also a lack of teachers in senior high school, the competencies of the available teachers are not aligned with the SHS programs. For instance, one participant from a university relates that while revising the curriculum to address the K to 12 Program in their institution, the Biology subjects were dropped because Biology in their senior high school was being taught by an English teacher who was a Filipino major. Such a situation is highly possible since, as one participant from DepEd explains, the deployment of teachers is dependent on the number of enrollees. DepEd cannot provide as many teachers to complete all the subject areas because of the number of enrollments in one area of the school. Moreover, tool subjects like English, Math, and Science and the specialization in technical-vocational-livelihood (TVL) courses are prioritized.

Monitoring of students’ career pathways after graduation

- 112. **Monitoring of graduates from universities shows a strong alumni network.** Most representatives from universities share that they conduct graduate tracer surveys, but the rationale for conducting them varies. Some are for monitoring purposes and career progress of the alumni, while others are for tracking the successful alumni. Still, others conduct tracer surveys to ensure the employment of students, including those with disabilities, and to point out employability issues. One aspect that is highlighted is the strong alumni network and the support and recognition of outstanding alumni in their universities. One participant from a state university mentions that they have Balik Scientist Program and that they also organize industry visits.

Lack of career guidance programs and guidance counselors

113. **Public schools and state universities lack career guidance programs.** Youth participants who are students of private schools are fortunate to have career guidance programs even as early as Grade 7, but those from the public schools and state universities have none. One youth participant, who is about to enter senior high school, relates that because a career orientation that the participant had attended was done too quickly, the participant was not well informed before making a decision or choice of a career track. Furthermore, in their school, students are already in junior high school when they are oriented about the different programs and career tracks of senior high school when career guidance should have been given to students at Grade 10. The lack of guidance counselors can explain such circumstances because schools also have a hard time getting guidance counselors due to the low salary offered in public schools and the volume of students they must attend to.

Youth

Program/course and job matching

114. **The program/course of graduates does not necessarily match available jobs.** One youth participant, who is a Political Science graduate, expresses dismay after learning from a school event attended by various companies that employment opportunities for Political Science students in the private industry are few. Job matching is an issue since the available industry jobs are not related to the programs or courses the students have completed, making it harder for them to be employed.

Limited internship/OJT options

115. **Internship or On-the-Job Training (OJT) opportunities are limited.** Student participants relate that oftentimes their preferred internship roles are not offered or unavailable by the employers who offer internship opportunities, so they end up not having a slot.

Information on job opportunities

116. **There is a lack of information on the various job opportunities and how to apply for them.** Youth participants note a knowledge gap among young people on the kinds of jobs and roles available in the different industries and sectors, especially now that remote work is becoming a trend. Moreover, they also observe a lack of awareness on how to apply for jobs, particularly on permanent work, because they do not have sufficient information or they have difficulty finding information. So, they look for job and internship opportunities on their own. One youth student participant is interested in working in the government but does not know how or where to start because no representative from any government agency gave them or their school any information or guidance on the process of applying for a job in the government.

117. **There are more early leavers than available jobs.** Students who do not proceed or finish college, called early leavers, do not find work because there are only a few options and opportunities for them to be employed.

Costs of job application

118. **Job applications can be costly for graduates.** Despite the First Time Jobseekers Assistance Act, waiving the transaction fees for documentary requirements from government offices such as clearances from police, barangay, and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), birth certificate, transcript of records, Tax Identification Number (TIN), and Unified Multi-Purpose (UMID) ID, youth participants relate that other expenses such as transportation costs, and even at times, fees for medical or health requirements required for the job that are not covered or reimbursed by the employer pose an additional burden to them. Such additional employment expenses also pose another challenge to out-of-school youth and those living below the poverty level, who are already disadvantaged, as observed in the USAID report correlating the trend of OSY with poverty.

Availability of jobs upon graduation/leaving school

119. **Companies employ early leavers or K to 12 graduates, but most graduates still have difficulty finding a job.** Most of those who employ K to 12 graduates are business process outsourcing (BPO), call center companies, and some small and medium enterprises (SMEs), as observed by an employer participant. Moreover, as another employer participant shares, their company is open to accepting K to 12 graduates since, based on their experience, they tend to stay longer in terms of tenure and because the company has also employed college undergraduates who have become regular employees. They have positions for the K to 12 graduates starting on documentation, labor, and utilities. However, most still have difficulty getting hired because employers still prefer applicants with bachelor's degrees. In the study by Orbeta and Potestad, from July 2018 to April 2020, while more SHS graduates are in the labor force, have lower visible underemployment rate, work more hours, more are wage and salary workers, and have a higher proportion working in the industry compared to second-year college completers, they have lower employment rate and lower proportion than those who are self-employed.¹⁶⁹

Issues Specific to K to 12 Program

Teachers, School Administrators, and Principals

Lower turnout for SHS compared to previous years

120. **Although there is a lower turnout of SHS and youth enrollees this year, unlike in previous years, public school enrolment has increased.** Data from DepEd shows that the total number of enrollees in Grade 11 and 12 (senior high school) in the country for the school year

¹⁶⁹ Orbeta & Potestad, *supra* note 51 at 20.

2019–2020 has reached 3,194,035, and 3,236,827 for the school year 2020-2021.¹⁷⁰ Figures from TESDA showed a stark decrease in youth enrollment, from 1,081,340 in 2018, 1,155,751 in 2019 to 309,223 in 2020, and 345,181 in 2021.¹⁷¹ However, a participant from DepEd National Capital Region shares that public school enrollment has improved from 2.01 million in 2021 to 2.1 million in 2022. Similarly, a participant from the School Division in Iloilo notes an influx of enrollees to public schools due to COVID-19, adding that they saw an almost 5% increase of enrollees last school year. This school year, 2021–2022, they observe another increase in SHS enrollees, totaling 15,465 in public schools and 10,456 in private schools. These numbers add up to the 10,254,650 enrollees in the formal basic education for the same school year based on the August 2021 data of DepEd, which is lower than the 26.2 million recorded number of enrollees for SY 2020-2021.¹⁷² Moreover, a total of 3,666 learners are enrolled in Iloilo’s ALS, while a total of 52,245 are enrolled nationwide, which is lower than the 599,365 total enrollees in the ALS in the previous school year.¹⁷³

121. **Absence of midterm report.** Republic Act No. 10533 mandates the government to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the K to 12 program, as well as release a midterm report by the end of School Year 2014-2015. However, no such report has been published officially on the DepEd website and shared to the Commission on Human Rights during the conduct of its consultations. The monitoring report is relevant to compare the progress at every evaluation interval, determine whether the outcomes are met, and whether the beneficiaries really have benefited from the law.

Youth

Availability of SHS Programs

122. **Students’ choices of academic track are limited by the availability of SHS programs in schools.** Youth participants mention that because choices of academic tracks in some schools are limited, students are forced to take whatever academic track or program is available in their school, even if it is not their preferred choice. Access is critical because, as one participant from DepEd explains, if a school nearby a student’s residence only offers TVL and general academics and the student cannot make any other choice because of limited access to transportation, the student will most likely choose to enroll in either academics or TVL. Moreover, while schools can train students in livelihood because they want to engage in business, they cannot do so because their families or parents do not have the capital for entrepreneurship.

Overlapping courses of SHS and college programs

¹⁷⁰ Department of Education, Datasets, *supra* note 18.
¹⁷¹ TESDA ICTO data Nov 2021: full and partial school closures in 2020 and 2021 due to IATF community quarantine guidelines impacted skills training.
¹⁷² Merlina Hernando-Malipot, DepEd records 10.2M enrollees in formal, 52K learners in ALS for SY 2021-2022, MANILA BULLETIN, Aug. 27, 2021, available at <https://mb.com.ph/2021/08/27/deped-records-10-2m-enrollees-in-formal-52k-learners-in-als-for-sy-2021-2022/> (last accessed June 21, 2022).
¹⁷³ *Id.*

123. **Some courses in senior high school overlap with those in college.** Youth participants mention that some general college courses have already been taught in senior high school, missing their chance to take other subjects and wasting their time and resources.

Evaluation of the first few years of implementation

124. **There is a lack of monitoring of K to 12 graduates, particularly in public schools.** Youth participants and public school administrators alike would want to monitor the graduates in different pathways because such data are crucial to know in which phase or what aspects in the process students need help or intervention for their school-to-work transition. However, as much as the public schools want to do the monitoring, they lack the resources to do so.

Issues Specific to COVID-19 Pandemic

National government and LGUs

Vaccination requirement for face-to-face classes

125. **The vaccination policy for face-to-face classes is deemed discriminatory.** CHED and the Department of Health (DOH) published a joint memorandum on the *Guidelines on the Implementation of Limited Face-to-Face Classes for All Programs of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Areas under the Alert Levels System for COVID-19 Response*, which specified only fully vaccinated students as well as teaching and non-teaching personnel of HEIs, private HEIs, and LUCs located in areas under Alert Levels 1,2 and 3 are allowed to join limited face-to-face classes.¹⁷⁴ The Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) approved the recommendations of CHED in conducting limited face-to-face classes but noted that only fully vaccinated teaching, non-teaching personnel, and students shall be allowed on the school premises, while unvaccinated or partially vaccinated students will continue under flexible learning modalities.¹⁷⁵ On the other hand, there is no clear vaccination requirement included in DepEd's Operational Guidelines on the Implementation of Limited Face-to-Face Learning Modality, stating that "All teachers and employees who are 65 years old and below and with no diagnosed co-morbidities shall be eligible to provide service during the conduct of the face-to-face classes. Likewise, teachers and employees who are considered persons with disabilities, are pregnant and lactating, whose services are indispensable under the present circumstance may be considered eligible."¹⁷⁶ Moreover, it specified that "Regardless of the vaccination status, teachers and other employees are eligible to participate, while those with stable co-morbidities may join

¹⁷⁴ Commission on High Education and Department of Health, *Guidelines on the Implementation of Limited Face-to-Face Classes for All Programs of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Areas Under Alert Levels System for COVID-19 Response*, Joint Memorandum Circular No. 2021 – 004.

¹⁷⁵ Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases, Resolution No. 164, Series of 2022 (Mar. 10, 2022).

¹⁷⁶ Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases, Resolution No. 164, Series of 2022 (Mar. 10, 2022).

voluntarily. School administrators may decide on teachers and other employees then schedule based on careful analysis of risks and benefits.”¹⁷⁷ Nevertheless, both student participants and teachers find the vaccination policy in face-to-face classes discriminatory because some remain unvaccinated due to health reasons, and some parents choose not to vaccinate their children but insist on making them attend face-to-face classes. Not fully vaccinated teachers must present a negative RT-PCR or antigen test once every two weeks. Moreover, one participant from DepEd further notes that teachers feel such policy also violates equal protection and has led to serious confusion to the extent that one school principal filed charges against a teacher for violation of reasonable office rules and regulations, while the teacher filed a countersuit against the principal for grave coercion.

Teachers, school administrators, and principals

Out-of-pocket expenses of teachers

126. Teachers **had to cover additional expenses**. Teacher participants from public schools and state universities and colleges relate that they had to buy additional supplies for the classrooms using their own money for plastic barriers and alcohol, which the school administration and management did not provide nor reimburse.

Youth

Availability of devices and programs

127. **Students lacked available devices and programs**. Participants from state universities and colleges and public SHS related that schools could not provide the devices for remote learning to every one of their students because of limited resources, and some prioritize giving them to the teachers, which the students understand. However, the students could not participate in the online classes because they had no means as well, nor did they have their own devices and gadgets to join in their classes online.

Shifting to online modalities

128. **Students and teachers alike had a hard time adapting to online learning**. Both students and teachers had to learn and re-learn online modalities in the quickest time possible because of the sudden transition and urgent need.

Mental health and general health of students and families

129. **The students’ mental health and general health of their families were affected**. As students were forced to stay at home, it affected their own mental health, but they were also concerned and directly affected by the well-being and general health of those in their households.

¹⁷⁷ *Id.*

Multiple burdens

130. **Students and graduates experienced multiple burdens.** Students had to juggle their school work with household chores and other errands. Youth participants shared that the workload felt heavier during the pandemic because not only did they have to multitask and attend synchronous online classes, but their teachers also required them to attend asynchronous learning. Even graduates such as TVET graduates from TESDA were concerned about getting sick, travel restrictions, increase in food prices, lack of work, shortage of food and medicine, paying utility bills and rent, and disruption of educational institutes, livelihood sources, and medical services.¹⁷⁸

Hands-on activities/practicum were done virtually

131. **Because hands-on activities, such as a practicum and work immersion, were done virtually, the learning experience for students became less immersive.** Youth participants shared that hand-on activities and practicum, usually done face-to-face, had become virtual. For instance, a youth participant, who is an Agriculture student, related that for a class, they were to assist in pig farrowing, but since everything had become online, they simply watched their professor guide the hog to give birth when they should have manually assisted in the hog's delivery. Moreover, the participant added that veterinary medicine students should have also been allowed to attend limited face-to-face classes like students in medical schools since they have laboratory work.

Less internship/OJT opportunities

132. **There were fewer opportunities for internships or OJT.** Students had fewer opportunities for internship/OJT since face-to-face or physical reporting to the office was no longer required, and not all employers transitioned to online internship/OJT programs.

Delays in taking the board exam

133. **Employment of some graduates was delayed due to delays in taking the licensure exam.** Due to the extended community quarantines in the country, the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), on September 16, 2020, posted an advisory postponing licensure examinations for several professions, such as architects, midwives, civil engineers, aeronautical engineers, geologists, criminologists, nurses, pharmacists, and dental hygienists, and rescheduled them in 2021.¹⁷⁹ So for job positions that require licensure exams, some graduates were further delayed and had to wait longer to get employed because of the delay in taking the licensure exam.

¹⁷⁸ TESDA, *Study on the Employment of TVET Graduates (SETG)*, (2019).

¹⁷⁹ Professional Regulation Commission, Postponement of the Licensure Examinations for Various Boards and Resetting Them to 2021, available at <https://www.prc.gov.ph/article/postponement-licensure-examinations-various-boards-and-resetting-them-2021/4609> (last accessed June 24, 2022).

Challenging labor market

134. **The labor market became even more challenging and competitive.** Since many companies during the pandemic have shut down, downsized, or implemented freeze hiring, more fresh graduates found it more difficult to be employed due to the limited opportunities available.

Underemployment and unemployment

135. **It took longer for fresh graduates to get hired during the pandemic.** Based on the data gathered from hirers, which are mostly BPO companies, an employer participant compares that unlike in the pre-pandemic period, when it takes 30 to 90 days for fresh graduates to find a job, nowadays, it takes three to six months, on average for them to get hired. This is due to the limited openings and infrastructure of the hirer and job seeker for a work-from-home setup. New graduates are employed mostly in entry-level jobs, with a monthly salary ranging from Php14,600 to Php20,000 based on the JobStreet report,¹⁸⁰ which is slightly above the current highest daily minimum wage (Php508.02 in the National Capital Region) based on DOLE as of June 2022.¹⁸¹
136. **Many graduates were unemployed and underemployed.** TESDA cites several reasons for unemployment among TVET graduates (aged 15 to 24 years old) during the COVID-19 pandemic, which include travel/movement being restricted, the employer having to close shop/business, household members working were sick or in quarantine, the employer deciding to downsize or reduce the number of employees, and daily labor was reduced.¹⁸² Because the labor market has become challenging, some graduates have accepted offers from companies even though they were overqualified for the job since it was the only work available in their area or to them. A stark drop in the employment rate was also recorded in Iloilo City Community College, from 90% in 2018 to 68.55% in 2019 and 58.06% in 2020.

Issues Specific to Vulnerable Sectors

National government and LGUs

Equal opportunities

137. **Slots in educational assistance programs for IPs are limited.** Despite the vast amount of IP education advocacy and services funds, it is still not enough, as an NCIP representative relates. Many IPs want to go to school but cannot be accommodated by NCIP, so they refer them to other government agencies with programs for indigenous people like CHED, DOH, and TESDA.

¹⁸⁰ *supra* note 41.

¹⁸¹ Department of Labor and Employment – National Wages and Productivity Commission, Current Minimum Wage Rates, available at <https://nwpc.dole.gov.ph/stats/current-real-minimum-wage-rates/> (accessed July 11, 2022).

¹⁸² Commission on Higher Education and Department of Health, *supra* note 177.

138. **IP graduates lack regular monitoring.** Without regular monitoring, the NCIP is unaware of the status and situation of IP graduates. However, the NCIP participant hopes they can keep track of their graduates by improving the agency's mechanism, particularly with the operationalization of the educational system program information system.
139. **There is a lack of comprehensive studies on the employment of persons with disabilities.** To date, there is no comprehensive and in-depth study that shows the current data of persons with disabilities employed and unemployed. As one CSO participant shares, even government agencies try to look for people with the least impact of disabling conditions to fulfill the one percent (1%) of their regular and non-regular positions reserved for persons with disabilities.
140. **There are several issues with capacitating persons with disabilities in using available technologies.** As a CSO participant notes, while many useful software programs have been developed for persons with visual impairment for online jobs, only a handful of agencies and advocacy groups offer the skills training to them, and those who do, have limited or lack of facilities to train them to use the technologies available. Moreover, no one evaluates if the skills training programs being offered are still relevant and responsive to the needs of the persons with disabilities, and not many persons with developmental impairments avail of the skills training programs.
141. **IP graduates also face underemployment.** Some college graduates do not practice their profession. As the NCIP participant reports, they know of someone who has finished a college degree and works as a salesperson.

CSOs and Advocacy Groups

Cost of transportation

142. **Persons with disabilities are more willing to work part-time than work full-time for a minimum wage.** As one CSO participant relates, many persons with visual impairment are content doing online teaching part-time. They do not look for other jobs anymore because they only need a computer with an internet connection and they do not need to leave their house, which is costlier for them to do because they will have to commute twice and pay a guide, leaving them with not much from their salary.
143. **Although some persons with disabilities, such as those with intellectual impairment, may be competent skill-wise, a CSO participant notes that they may lack social and daily living.** Another CSO participant stresses the importance of soft skills for persons with disabilities because they had cases of persons with disabilities resigning after two weeks or one month of employment, and the longest time persons with visual impairment have stayed in BPO companies is from two to three years.

Employers

144. **Employers, and society in general, are not ready to work with persons with disabilities.** According to RA 10524 or the Magna Carta For Persons With Disability, “no person with disability shall be denied access to opportunities for suitable employment. A qualified employee with disability shall be subject to the same terms and conditions of employment and the same compensation, privileges, benefits, fringe benefits, incentives or allowances as a qualified able bodied person.”¹⁸³ As of August 2017, the Civil Service Commission shared that a total of 7,250 persons with disabilities were employed in government service, 3,973 were men, and 3,277 were women.¹⁸⁴ However a CSO participant asserts, “*Generally kasi ang ating lipunan ay hindi pa talaga handa na tanggapin na ang mga tao na may kapansanan ay bahagi ng ating lipunan. So may implication noh. May implication ito sa kanilang livelihood employment*” [Generally, our society is really not ready to accept persons with disabilities as part of it. So this has an implication. An implication to their livelihood employment]. In other words, the burden of finding a job tends to fall solely on persons with disabilities when the readiness of employers to work with them should also be sought.

Discrimination

145. **While some persons with disabilities find employment, most still have difficulty getting employed, and diversity, equity, and inclusion issues remain.** An employer participant shares that BPO companies they have been working with have started accepting persons with disabilities who could answer the phones and talk to people since their disability does not hamper them from performing such tasks. Persons with visual impairment are competitive as sighted people and are often employed because of their abilities, as explained by a CSO participant, who also shared that they were able to employ a person with visual impairment to a call center that has already employed three persons with disabilities. Then, later on, another BPO company employed five persons with visual impairment. Furthermore, based on the data from their group’s one-week training to capacitate students or graduates with visual impairment, 47% have been employed, mostly by DepEd, followed by BPO, then massage clinics.
146. While it takes as fast as two weeks, on a rare occasion, for a qualified person with visual impairment to get hired, it can also take years for someone with visual impairment who lacks skills to find employment. Moreover, the same CSO participant acknowledges that the employment of persons with disabilities is still limited since the decision to hire an applicant still rests on the employers who may have prejudices, as implied by what one employer participant relates about some companies being

¹⁸³ An Act Expanding the Positions Reserved for Persons with Disability, Amending the Purpose Republic Act No. 7277, As Amended, Otherwise Known as the Magna Carta for Persons with Disability, Republic Act No. 10524, § 1, (2012) (as amended).

¹⁸⁴ Letter from Alicia dela Rosa-Bala, Chairperson of the Civil Service Commission, to Undersecretary Severo S. Catura, Executive Director of the Presidential Human Rights Committee Secretariat (May 28, 2018), available at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bmJTv7La_od1syTu-D2BbMKB-B2Tdqls/view (last accessed June 21, 2022).

insistent on seeing and interviewing applicants face-to-face, which is burdensome and prejudicial against persons with disabilities and the members of the LGBTQIA+ community. As another CSO participant attests, an employer still discriminates against employing a trans woman because she looks and dresses as a woman despite being assigned as male at birth. Furthermore, as another CSO participant observes, when persons with intellectual impairment are employed, it is usually out of pity and not because of their qualification or competence. At times, they are trained by their parents or family members who also start a business to allow them to work. Even individuals with autism who have graduated from high school or even college have a hard time looking for a job because employers assess if their degree matches the needs of the employment or if they match with open employment.

Teachers, school administrators, and principals

Lack of teachers for learners with disabilities

147. **There are not enough teachers to attend to learners with disabilities.** Based on the DepEd data for SY 2016-2017, there were only 284 teachers who had to attend to as many as 40,348 learners with disabilities, specifically those with difficulty remembering, concentrating, paying attention, and understanding based on manifestation.¹⁸⁵ Due to the lack of teachers to attend to students with different disabilities and needs, some combine them all in one class despite each having different learning objectives and goals, or they are mainstreamed with other learners.

Youth

Unavailability of modules in accessible formats

148. **Learners with disabilities had limited access to learning materials, technology, and other devices.** Most of the materials in the modules were picture copies or screenshots, which were not accessible to students with visual impairment. Added to this, some lacked the know-how to use technology, and others could not be assisted by their parents or by the teachers who failed to respond to the students' messages, leaving their needs and concerns unattended. Others had gadgets that were incompatible with educational applications or computer software and learning platforms, such as *Google Classrooms* and *Henry*, and other students had no gadgets or the necessary devices. While the braille keyboard was accessible, only a few knew how to use it. These issues were compounded by the general concerns of the rest of the students on the lack of stable internet connection and costly load credits for mobile phones.

¹⁸⁵ National Council on Disability Affairs, Disability Data, *supra* note 24.

149. **Parents' and other stakeholders' support is critical for students and workers with disabilities.** The lack of support of some parents for their children with disabilities can be due to a lack of awareness of the kind of support their children need, which is why support and assistance from other stakeholders are also crucial. Moreover, pre-existing issues on the right to education of learners with disabilities were highlighted even more during the pandemic. For instance, some modules were inaccessible to students with visual impairment who needed a screen reader, or the printed modules could not be translated to audio, so they found it more difficult to understand the lessons.
150. **Preference for remote learning and face-to-face learning varies depending on a student's impairment.** Some students with impairments prefer attending face-to-face classes because they miss interacting with their classmates and teachers. On the other hand, other students, like those on the autism spectrum, favor online classes because their opportunities to socialize are minimized, and they are less likely to be bullied. In addition to this, going to school is more expensive because of the added transportation costs.
151. **School-to-work transition is different for youth with disabilities.** A CSO participant notes that transition from school for children and youth with disabilities is unique because it can mean many things: transition from work to sheltered employment, from school to supportive employment, or from school to open employment. Moreover, public school teachers have no clear understanding of what transition means for children and youth with developmental impairment, and there is no proper curriculum for their transition from school to employment

Analysis of the Existing Structures, Programs, and Processes of the Stakeholders

This section provides an examination of the existing programs and processes in relation to the key findings.

Program/course and job matching

152. While there are career placement offices and placement support groups through the alumni network industry linkages and companies, these are mostly offered and found in private universities. State universities and local colleges do not necessarily have the same mechanisms in place.
153. Ironically, employers in the private sector and CSOs want to work with more key government agencies with school-to-work transition programs, so the policies and guidelines to be developed or reforms to be made are aligned with industry trends and standards. This has been taken into account by NEDA by updating the PDP 2017-2022 to include strategies for School-to-Work Transition and recommending further amendments in

some of the provisions of the National Apprenticeship Act of 1957, such as in terms of making employment more accessible for interns, allowing greater involvement of industry in identifying apprenticeship occupations and in developing standards and curricula, and standardizing an allowance for interns, which is not closely monitored by the DOLE that supposedly promoted apprenticeship programs nationwide.

Matching of teachers to SHS programs

- 154. With a shortage of teachers attending to different learners, teachers and learners suffer. Although there is a lower turnout of enrollees in the current school year compared to the previous school year according to DepEd data,¹⁸⁶ there are still not enough teachers for junior and senior high school. On the one hand, the teachers have to make extra preparations and teach beyond their competencies. Some are possibly unqualified to teach certain subject matters, thus, reducing their effectiveness in teaching and threatening the students' ability to learn.

Lack of career guidance programs and guidance counselors

- 155. Although DepEd has a Senior High School Career Guidance Program and has allowed even unregistered and unlicensed career and employment guidance counselors to conduct career advocacy activities for secondary-level students, there are still not enough guidance counselors in public schools and state universities due to unappealing compensation and workload. The developmental career orientation programs, such as those by GuidanceNGO, and career-assistance programs through online webinars in the universities are timely and helpful, but these have limitations as they are not widely publicized and not regularly conducted. So, students, particularly in public schools, are ill-informed as they are left to decide which SHS track to pursue based on little guidance they receive.

Limited internship/OJT options

- 156. While employers offer internship programs, as do international youth organizations, which also link students to local companies and stakeholders, the issue is the number of slots available or offered and the kind of internship being offered to the students. State universities and local colleges are at a disadvantage because they do not provide work immersion opportunities to different SHS tracks, unlike private universities, which offer academic track and arts and design tracks other than the tech-voc track.

Lack of guidelines on internship/OJT programs

- 157. Because of the absence of a Bureau of Apprenticeship under DOLE, the standards and guidelines set in the National Apprenticeship Law are not properly implemented and supervised. Irregularities in wages, working conditions, and duration, as well as abuse of apprentices or learners

¹⁸⁶ *supra* note 175.

undergoing internship programs are highly possible as these are often left to the employer's discretion.

Information on job opportunities

158. The students' lack of information on various job opportunities and how to apply for them stems from a lack of guidance or direction in finding the information they need. While job fairs and career boot camps organized by local government units, schools, universities, and youth organizations are beneficial, they can be overwhelming and confusing to students because of information overload.

Life and soft skills training

159. While the K to 12 Program assumes to equip SHS graduates with competencies and skills not just for further studies but also for employment, not much attention is given to developing their life and soft skills, which, as the employer participants attest, are equally important in the workplace. Supplementary programs by DepEd, such as the Alternative Learning System and Oplan TAWID, as well as youth programs and plans and initiatives by TESDA, are focused on providing basic education and skills training and not on developing effective communication, teamwork, and critical thinking.

Vulnerability to scams and fake job postings

160. First-time job seekers, including new graduates, are vulnerable to illegitimate or fake job recruitment platforms and online job scams, which are rising as most employers have shifted their recruitment processes online. Such actions can be considered among the prohibited practices enumerated in the Labor Code, specifically "furnishing or publishing false notice or information or documents in relation to recruitment or employment."¹⁸⁷ However, since there is no monitoring mechanism in place to verify the legitimacy of career websites and online job postings, anomalous sites will most probably continue to proliferate and prey on unsuspecting job seekers.

Costs of job application

161. While the First Time Jobseekers Assistance Act provides an incentive to new graduates by waiving processing fees for pre-employment documents, additional expenses such as transportation costs and pre-employment medical fees that job applicants have to pay themselves since some employers do not reimburse or cover them overburden the youth particularly out-of-school youth, who belong to households with limited or insufficient income to spend for their daily needs and survival.

¹⁸⁷ LABOR CODE, bk. 1, ch. 2, art. 34.

In the Context of the K to 12 Program

Availability of SHS Programs

162. Because not all schools offer all academic tracks, learners are limited to the SHS programs available in schools that are only accessible to them and those they can afford. While TESDA has laid out concrete measures in its TVET PH Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) Framework, they are designed only for the Technical-Vocational-Livelihood track. Schools with programs for the Academic track and the Sports and Arts tracks are limited and are usually offered by private academic institutions that not all learners can afford to attend.

Overlapping courses of SHS and college programs

Since some GE subjects are still embedded in the SHS curriculum, overlaps are possible despite CHED's overhaul in 2013 of core GE subjects offered for first-year college.¹⁸⁸ For instance, Contemporary Philippine Arts from the Regions in the SHS curriculum seems similar to the GE subject Art Appreciation for first-year college students as well as the SHS subjects, Oral Communication, and Reading and Writing, with Purposive Communication subject in first-year college. The subject titles may be different, but their scope may be similar.

Monitoring of students' career pathways after graduation

163. While private schools and universities conduct graduate tracer studies, public schools, state universities, and local colleges do not conduct them, or if they do, not regularly. DepEd has not conducted a tracer study of K to 12 graduates to date despite welcoming the first batch of Grade 11 students in 2016 and the first senior high school graduates in 2018. Such data and empirical evidence are crucial in monitoring the employability of SHS graduates.

In the Context of COVID-19 Pandemic

Shifting to online modalities

164. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing issues in the state of the country's education with the shift to modular and distance or online learning. Two key issues are highlighted in the adoption of online learning modalities. One is accessibility, as it has become challenging for students and their families to acquire gadgets and devices that can connect to the internet and run different learning applications or software. Moreover, while some schools provide self-learning modules and transistor radio units with USB slots and use plug-play-and-learn schemes to reach as many learners as possible, especially those in remote areas, such initiatives are not enough. So, advocacy groups and CSOs fill in the gaps by deploying a mobile classroom, conducting public school training sessions on online

¹⁸⁸ Commission on Higher Education, General Education Curriculum: Holistic Understandings, Intellectual and Civic Competencies, Memorandum Order No. 20, Series 2013, § 3 (June 28, 2013).

learning, building a learning hub for remote communities, and transcribing or converting learning modules into accessible formats for learners with disabilities, such as for those with visual impairment. Another key issue is the cost of online learning not only to students but also to the teachers as well. Additional costs further burdened learners with disabilities and their carers, as well as learners from households below the poverty line, due to expenses for procuring prepaid cards and paying bills for electricity and internet connection.

Mental health and multiple burdens of students

165. Prolonged lockdowns have taken a toll not only on physical health but also on the mental health and well-being of learners. Such restrictions have been found to worsen the condition of learners with pre-existing mental health issues and those living in cramped households and communities.¹⁸⁹ Some learners also need to multitask as they attend online classes, complete modules, and even do household chores and other errands. These circumstances add up to the mental stress and anxiety that learners have to endure, to the extent that there are reports of student deaths related to distance learning.¹⁹⁰ Because the students themselves have experienced the impact of COVID-19 on their mental health, the student councils of different schools have initiated help desks and hotlines for students to air their grievances and problems encountered during the pandemic. Such initiatives are helpful, but attention to the deaths of students through a formal investigation or inquiry by the government through DepEd and CHED could have generated interventions and reforms that can be implemented widely in different schools and academic institutions to avoid the rise of student deaths.

Vaccination requirement for face-to-face classes

166. Based on the Human Rights Advisory by the CHR on COVID-19 vaccination, “COVID-19 vaccines should be made affordable and accessible without discrimination,” especially to the most vulnerable or marginalized sectors of the population, and “made physically accessible for marginalized groups and people living in remote areas.”¹⁹¹ The CHR further notes, “COVID-19 vaccination should not be compulsory and should only be administered under the conditions of informed consent”¹⁹² and stresses that “At all times, the State should seek to ensure that vaccination is voluntary.” Acceptability of vaccines, their safety and efficacy, transparency of the vaccine provider, and the people’s trust in the government agencies in charge of ensuring the vaccine’s safety are considerations to be made for issuing a vaccination policy.¹⁹³ The vaccination policies issued by CHED and DepEd along with the DOH contradict these key points as students, teachers, and non-teaching staff are compelled to get vaccinated to be allowed to enter the school premises and participate in the limited face-to-face classes. Such policies also

¹⁸⁹ *supra* note 81.

¹⁹⁰ *supra* note 85.

¹⁹¹ Commission on Human Rights, Human Rights Advisory on COVID-19 Vaccination, CHR (V) 2020-2021, at 5–6 (Jan 26, 2021).

¹⁹² CHR, Human Rights Advisory on COVID-19 Vaccination, at 8.

¹⁹³ *Id.*

discriminate against those who are unvaccinated and partially vaccinated due to health reasons or contextual factors such as geographic distance to vaccination sites and financial affordability that may contribute to their untimely vaccination. Moreover, requiring negative RT-PCR or antigen tests from not fully vaccinated teachers and non-teaching personnel who wish to report to the schools presents an undue burden since these tests are costly, particularly for daily wage earners and those who live below the poverty line.

Virtual hands-on activities/practicum

167. With the internship and work immersions mostly done virtually following the shift to remote learning due to the pandemic, the roles of the school partnership focal person, work immersion partner institution supervisor, and work immersion teacher as specified in the DepEd Guidelines for Work Immersion have become irrelevant as they are not included in the discussions with the schools and employers, though DepEd has specified their roles for work immersion of senior high schools.¹⁹⁴

Concerning the Vulnerable Sectors

Lack of teachers for learners with disabilities

168. The CESC expresses concern over the high percentage of children with disabilities who are not fully included in the educational system and the limited access to the internet among disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups in rural areas.¹⁹⁵ Addressing the needs of learners with a spectrum of disabilities requires an understanding of their different needs and conditions, which DepEd has appropriately surveyed by maintaining data sets,¹⁹⁶ but these should be regularly updated. However, because of the insufficiency of the number of teachers who can attend and cater to learners with disabilities, their needs remain unmet, which the different advocacy groups try to address and augment through their own initiatives.
169. Similarly, the needs of youth with disabilities should be founded on a clear understanding or definition of what school-to-work transition means for them as well as for the teachers, as one CSO participant has raised. So that the recommendations, curricula, and policies are tailor-fit according to the different conditions and requirements of the learners and not blanket or generic plans.

Equal opportunities

170. The challenges faced by persons with disabilities finding employment are rooted in the readiness of employers and society, in general, to employ them, as one CSO participant asserts. The Non-Handicapping Environment (NHE) project of NCDA in partnership with JICA should have

¹⁹⁴ DepEd, Order No. 30, s. 2017, at 2.

¹⁹⁵ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *Concluding observation on the combined fifth and sixth periodic report of the Philippines*, E/C.12/PHL/CO/5-6 (Oct. 7, 2016).

¹⁹⁶ *supra* note 24.

been a good start in promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities into society. However, there has been no follow-through with the project, nor the NCDA or other government agencies have replicated it or launched a similar initiative since the project's conclusion in 2012. Moreover, RA No. 10524 supposedly protects and promotes equal opportunity for employment of persons with disabilities through the implementation of the one percent (1%) provision of reserved positions for them in all government agencies, offices, or corporal positions and private corporations with more than 100 employees.¹⁹⁷ However, compliance with such provision does not necessarily suggest employing qualified persons with disabilities since offices and companies usually employ persons with disabilities based on the severity of their disability and not based on their competencies. Thus, persons with disabilities who, despite being competent skill-wise, are deemed unqualified because of the severity of their conditions.

Discrimination

171. With the online recruitment becoming a trend, job recruitment based on appearance as evident, for instance, on an employer's insistence for a face-to-face interview, can be considered a violation of one's right to work and to equal opportunity based on the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Presidential Decree No. 966¹⁹⁸), Magna Carta of Disabled Persons (Republic Act No. 7277), or the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (Republic Act of 8371), or even the proposed Anti-Discrimination Act, which specifies among discriminatory practices, "to include SOGIE, as well as the disclosure of sexual orientation, in the criteria for hiring, promotion, transfer, designation, work assignment, reassignment, dismissal of workers, and other human resource movement and action, performance review and in the determination of employee compensation, career development opportunities, training, and other learning and development interventions, incentives, privileges, benefits or allowances, and other terms and conditions of employment."¹⁹⁹

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations proposed based on the key findings and gaps identified in the FGDs conducted with the representatives of the different sectors.

For the National Government

172. Encourage more IPs to pursue schooling such as by offering more scholarship programs for them.
173. The national government, through CHED, TESDA, DepEd, and state universities, can form partnerships with industries and human resource

¹⁹⁷ Republic Act No. 10524, at § 1.

¹⁹⁸ International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, *adopted* Dec. 21, 1965.

¹⁹⁹ S.B. No. 689, at § 5.

executives from the private sector so students and graduates can be easily linked to job opportunities.

174. Additional financial or logistical support, either from the government or schools and universities, can be given to students who are looking for work.
175. In the absence of legislation, a memorandum of agreement between the government and employers in the private sector can be drafted and signed to set the guidelines and standardize salary or allowance for interns or on-the-job trainees.
176. Government should work together with institutions to provide proper training for youth before they go into the labor force, particularly those who were sandwiched by the pandemic.
177. Amend First Time Jobseekers Assistance to include waiving or reimbursing by employers of fees for pre-employment medical examinations of first-time job seekers.
178. Strengthen the partnerships of duty-bearers and rights holders as well as other stakeholders like advocacy groups for persons with disabilities.
179. Discuss the results of the study at conferences or general membership meetings of employers in the private sector and industry leaders to promote awareness of issues regarding the school-to-work transition of students and graduates.

For the Department of Education, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, Commission on Higher Education, State Universities and Colleges, and Local Universities and Colleges

180. Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the K to 12 Program and its first few years of implementation and consider the competency of faculty and resources.
181. Revisit the curriculum along with concerned stakeholders and the industry to align it with industry demands and resolve issues at the basic education level and any overlap in tech-voc tracks and TESDA programs.
182. Ensure continuity of education across levels, quality of basic education, and the right to a high quality of education.
183. Ensure that the curriculum under the Indigenous Peoples Education strictly adheres to the communities' practices and systems.
184. Extend virtual opportunities to public schools and state universities, such as educational technologies being explored in private schools.
185. To retain the quality of teachers, let them focus on their function to teach and minimize their lateral functions and administrative roles.

186. Make vaccination voluntary for students, teachers, and non-teaching personnel reporting to schools and provide free RT-PCR tests and antigen tests should they be required from those not fully vaccinated.
187. Strengthen psychological and mental health programs for students and faculty.
188. Highlight the importance of the role of the parents and guardians of children with disabilities because sometimes they themselves become barriers to the rights of their child.
189. Creating a bureau for alternative learning systems can reinforce and expand their gains and implementation.
190. Empower the youth with the ability to build competencies in life and work, particularly their soft skills such as communication, working with a team, and resilience, and provide them with more opportunities to be connected with the stakeholders in their current field of work.
191. Boost information dissemination to different schools and colleges, such as through info drives and campaigns about the jobs related to the degree programs offered in the said learning institutions; for instance, the Department of Agriculture can provide information about agricultural jobs in universities.
192. Develop bridging programs for those whose on-the-job training has been done online to allow them to practice hands-on the skills they had learned before going to their places of work.
193. Support the immersion of K to 12 graduates by subsidizing paid internships not necessarily by the national government but by organizations that cannot afford paid internships.
194. Establish a feedback system in the DepEd for the private sector to raise issues and challenges they have observed that students and new graduates are encountering.
195. Local government units should work with the DepEd and City Development Programming to keep track of learners after senior high school.
196. Efforts to follow through with the graduates should be standardized, so schools have the data and information to support their graduates.
197. For persons with disabilities, soft skills training is not enough. There should be assessment tools to gauge their skill level to see aspects that need to be enhanced so they can be job-ready or livelihood-ready.
198. Enhance skills training such as on technology that will equalize opportunities for persons with disabilities with people without disabilities.

199. Inter-agency coordination between TESDA and PRC can be done so PRC can recognize the programs by TESDA and confer certification for their graduates.

For the Department of Labor and Employment

200. Protect job applicants from online application scams and fake recruitment sites by setting up a monitoring mechanism that verifies the legitimacy of the online job platforms.
201. Monitor and empower PESO and the implementation of the First Time Jobseekers Assistance Act to help graduates and job seekers from incurring additional employment expenses.
202. Reinforce job coaches and life coaches for persons with disabilities because only a few are in the country.

For the Civil Service Commission

203. Review qualification standards for guidance counselors set by the CSC as well as their entry-level salary rate to make it more competitive with industry standards.
204. Enhance information through info drives and campaigns about the available jobs in the government.

For the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples

205. Establish a regular monitoring mechanism for IP graduates.

For the National Council on Disability Affairs

206. Conduct a comprehensive study on the number of persons with disabilities employed, their needs, and areas of intervention for their employability to make further recommendations evidence-based and boost the studies and research on the conditions and situations of persons with disabilities from which programs and policies will be crafted.
207. Expand the framework of community-based rehabilitation with regard to disabling conditions to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities into the community.
208. Bolster support services such as effective and efficient orientation and mobility for people with visual impairment and children with autism and mental disabilities and for therapy services for those who cannot afford them.
209. Strengthen the participation of people without disabilities in advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities.

210. Reinforce disability sensitivity, including the human rights of persons with disabilities.

Conclusion

211. School-to-work transition implies rights to education and to work. However, it must be stressed that it is not enough to aspire to the minimum standard of education and any kind of work but to quality education as well as quality work.
212. The high unemployment rate among young people (15 to 24 years old), including senior high school, cannot be traced to one or two root causes. Although a school-to-work transition is included in the course program of the universities, which have linkages to industry via their alumni network, and employers offer annual internship programs and prioritize hiring interns into their company, formal and concrete steps through the implementation of strategies and legislation by the national government agencies can further advance and expand the assistance given to learners who are transitioning from school to work. Moreover, inter-agency coordination and collaboration between the government, the private sector, and other stakeholders should be enhanced to align their expectations and policies, such as, for instance, in terms of life and soft skills that employers have observed new graduates lack. Such skills should go hand-in-hand with technical skills, so students and new graduates are not ill-equipped and readily overwhelmed by the demands and pressure of work, as the youth participants have also attested.
213. Preparation starts at the schools. The K to 12 Program can benefit from a comprehensive evaluation and review of its curriculum and implementation to resolve the lapses and gaps identified. However, as one participant points out, the purpose of employability should only be secondary to the pursuit of education. Additionally, the pursuit of education should be learning, making the country better, and improving oneself rather than earning a degree or salary.
214. The COVID-19 pandemic has added another dimension to learning and earning a living. The shift to remote learning and online recruitment has not only compounded existing issues such as access to the Internet, technology, and devices, but they made the digital divide even more pronounced to the marginalized group such as learners with disabilities and IPs in rural areas. This experience of the marginalized group also suggests that school-to-work transition is not the same for all learners; some are more disadvantaged than the rest. Digitalization has also given rise to new challenges that the government, schools, employers, and other stakeholders must soon address. Similar to how most health organizations and nations around the world initially responded to the pandemic, it is crucial to map out and get a clear picture of the situation by collecting and constantly updating the data so appropriate interventions can be done in problem areas and expand or strengthen the good practices made. This situational report has provided a glimpse of the real-life situation of learners in their school-to-work transition, which hopefully is the first step to

protecting every learner's right to education and ensuring that they achieve their full potential in life.

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