

Phenomenologizing the Experiences of K-12 Program Graduates: Its Opportunities and Challenges

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Abstract

Education is widely regarded as a crucial factor in facilitating individuals' acquisition of knowledge and skills that enhance their quality of life. The study described the obstacles and prospects encountered by alumni of K-12 programs upon matriculation to higher education institutions. The present investigation employed a qualitative methodology, specifically a phenomenological study focusing on the participants' experiences. The study sample comprises 11 individuals who are enrolled in various universities. The research employed open-ended inquiries to elicit particularized data from the participants. The study's results indicate that K-12 education positively impacts students, particularly in relation to their college pursuits, as evidenced by their personal experiences. The K-12 program facilitated the acquisition of competencies and expertise, significantly enhancing its beneficiaries' academic pursuits. Acquiring skills and knowledge from the K-12 program is advantageous in accessing new opportunities in college.

Keywords: K-12 Program, Senior High School, Phenomenology

1. Introduction

Education encompasses both the pedagogical process of imparting knowledge and the receptive process of acquiring knowledge from external sources. The assertion pertains to acquiring knowledge and information that can pave the way for a contented future (Al-Shuaibi, 2014). The K-12 education system, commonly called kindergarten through grade 12, is designed to enhance fundamental skills, cultivate proficient members of society, and equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills to complete higher education successfully. This system is administered by the Department of Education, as per K12 Philippines (2015). The K-12 Basic Education Program was implemented to enhance students' mastery of subject matter and equip them with the necessary skills for the workforce, in contrast to the traditional notion that education should solely focus on preparing students for higher education. This was achieved by extending the previous ten-year basic education program by two years (Cabansag, 2014). According to Abarangan et al. (2022), the K-12 program demonstrates a high standard of education, particularly in comparison to global education systems, focusing on preparing students for employment opportunities abroad and fostering the development of job-related competencies.

According to Ian (2015), before implementing the K-12 system, the Philippines had a 10-year college preparatory education program, making it the final nation in Asia and one of only three countries to do so. Implementing the K-12 program in the Philippines in 2012 is a pertinent condition related to this study, as it is a relatively recent development compared to other nations (Masayoshi, 2013). As per the research conducted by Abarangan et al. (2022), it has been observed that certain parents hold a pessimistic perception towards the program, considering it an additional physical and financial strain on both them and their children. However, a few parents hold an optimistic outlook towards the program, perceiving it as a beneficial tool for learners to make informed decisions regarding their career choices.

The study conducted by Mamba et al. (2020) indicates that there is still a need for improvement in the preparedness of DepEd's K-12 graduates for college, particularly in science and mathematics education. The scholars utilized the College Readiness Test (CRT) as a criterion-referenced tool to evaluate the preparedness of K-12 graduates for college. The assessment was based on their overall performance on the

test and their proficiency in the seven learning domains (English, Filipino, Literature, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Humanities), which are anticipated to be acquired during the K–12 program. Regrettably, the findings indicate that the fundamental educational framework in the Philippines does not offer a promising prospect for preparing its alumni for tertiary education. The primary objective of this research is to delineate the encounters of twelfth-grade alumni from diverse universities to determine the extent to which the program facilitated their readiness for higher education. This study aims to determine the extent to which the knowledge and skills obtained by students during their senior high school education have contributed to their academic pursuits at the college level.

1.1. Objectives

The focus of this study is to describe the experiences of Grade 12 graduates from different universities to determine if the program helped them prepare for college. Specifically, it will try to answer the following sub-questions:

1. What are the experiences of college students who went through the K–12 program in terms of:
 - 1.1. using the knowledge; and
 - 1.2. What skills did they acquire while in senior high school while pursuing their college degree?
2. What are the challenges experienced by the students of the K–12 program when they went to college?

1.2. Literature Review

Purpose of K-12 Program

The primary objective of the K–12 Basic Education Program is to furnish each Filipino citizen with a high-quality 12-year fundamental education. The statement made by the user is in line with the provisions of Article IV, Section 2 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, which mandates the state to establish, maintain, and support a comprehensive, sufficient, and unified education system that is responsive to the demands of the populace and society (Gazette, 2015). The primary objective of the K–12 Basic Education Program is to establish a functional foundational framework that can generate responsible and productive citizens equipped with the essential knowledge and skills required for employment. The Department of Education's K-12 Education vision (DepEd, 2010) posits that each Enhanced K-12 Basic Education Program graduate is a capable individual who has acquired knowledge through a curriculum founded on robust principles and aimed at achieving superiority. According to K12 Philippines (2015), there are three benefits that K-12 education can offer to students. The three key areas of focus for evaluating an individual's preparedness for future endeavours are (1) their aptitude for pursuing higher education; (2) their aptitude for entering the workforce; and (3) their proficiency in the skills required to compete in the international job market. (1) Implementing the K-12 system has resulted in a higher average graduation age among students compared to previous graduates. As per the Department of Education (DepEd), this approach holds benefits as it positions graduates as young adults. Consequently, upon commencing their tertiary education, individuals will possess enhanced readiness to cope with a significantly high standard of academic instruction. The K-12 system differs from its predecessor in that it does not mandate all students' post-senior high school (SHS) college enrollment. In reality, this proposal gives students autonomy to make their own decisions. Individuals who have opted for a non-academic trajectory may opt out of pursuing higher education at the collegiate level. One potential benefit is that graduates of Senior High School (SHS) will possess the requisite competencies acquired through their elective courses to thrive in specific domains. The primary objective of the K-12 education system is to enhance linguistic, mathematical, and scientific proficiency. The Department of Education (DepEd) has pledged to enhance the quality of education utilizing tracks utilizing the new curriculum. Sufficient time will be allocated for students to specialize in a particular subject and hone their skills on each track. According to Ian (2015), individuals who have completed their K-12 education will possess the necessary skills and knowledge to compete globally and secure employment in a highly competitive job market.

Preparation for college

Mitchell et al. (2021) have noted that transitioning from high school to college can be a significant change for students who relocate away from their families and friends for the first time. There exist preparatory measures that individuals can undertake to alleviate concerns regarding the commencement of their academic journey and the current state of ambiguity. The subsequent guidance can facilitate first-year college students in establishing a structured approach and the foundation for their triumph in academia, encompassing researching academic resources and cultivating vital interpersonal aptitudes. Students' preparedness for college is a critical factor in determining their academic achievement in that setting. In certain instances, secondary school educators, guardians, and pupils have equipped the latter with the necessary resources to succeed. Throughout a student's tenure in high school, there are frequent endeavors aimed at equipping them with the necessary tools to succeed in college. College admission usually requires a certain threshold of academic performance during high school and satisfactory results on standardized entrance examinations. Kokemuller (2021) notes that high schools commonly provide technical courses that enable students to investigate their career prospects. Providing K–12 education adequately prepares students for college and subsequent career opportunities (Wicks, 2022). All students should receive K–12 education to ensure a positive college experience and a fulfilling professional trajectory. The DepEd K–12 curriculum has introduced four distinct strands, namely the Accountancy, Business, and Management (ABM), Humanities and Social Sciences Strand (HUMSS), Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), and General Academic strands. These strands have been designed to equip high school students with the necessary skills and knowledge to pursue higher education. Upon examining these strands, it becomes evident that students are required to decide on their preparation for either college or the workforce and commit to a particular field or discipline (Weissman, 2014).

Seen Opportunities of K-12

The curriculum for K-12 education in the Philippines has been formulated to equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills to pursue higher education, secure employment, and foster their overall skill development upon completing senior high School (SHS) (Dizon et al., 2019). Certain high school students opt to commence their professional pursuits after graduation, affording them the prospect of progressing in their careers and amassing practical knowledge immediately. While certain occupations provide on-site training and career progression opportunities, others require enrollment in a vocational school or obtaining certifications to acquire specialized expertise. As per the findings of the Philippine Business for Education (PBED) group, as cited in deped.gov.ph (n.d.), the inaugural cohort of senior high school (SHS) graduates is deemed to possess 93% of the 11 competencies mandated by the country's industries. In contrast, a separate study conducted by PBED revealed that a mere 20% of the 70 leading companies in the Philippines tended to employ senior high school graduates, exhibiting a preference for individuals with a college degree or a minimum of two years of college education. The Bureau of Curriculum Development (BCD) conducted a mixed-methods study in 2019 and 2020 called the National SHS Tracer Study. The study's primary objective was to identify the curriculum pathways senior high school graduates pursued after completing their studies in 2017–2018. Most of the graduates, 82.67%, pursued further education, whereas a smaller proportion, 10.22%, secured employment. The practice of entrepreneurship, accounting for 1.30% of the population, and the development of middle-level skills, which accounts for 0.42% of individuals, were only observed among a limited population segment. After graduation from SHS, 5.39% of the graduates opted not to pursue any available exits. The data reveals that a significant proportion of individuals who completed the academic track pursued advanced education, with a percentage of 42.3%.

In contrast, graduates from the TVL, Arts & Design, and Sports tracks exhibited lower rates of pursuing higher education, with percentages of 24.8%, 0.3%, and 0.2%, respectively. According to Llego's study, SHS TVL track graduates exhibited the highest employment rate at 9.7%, while academic track graduates followed closely at 6.2%. On the other hand, arts & design and sports track graduates had notably lower employment rates at 0.03% and 0.02%, respectively.

2. Methods

The study employed a qualitative methodology to collect data and arrive at a conclusion regarding the research issues. The Phenomenology method is utilized to comprehend and depict the fundamental characteristics of a phenomenon universally (Neubauer et al., 2019).

3. Participants

The study employed purposive sampling to select a sample of eleven (11) students from various universities. The selection of participants was based on a purposive sampling method, necessitated by constraints on both time and resources.

4. Instrument

Guided interview questions are utilized in research studies to collect targeted data that aligns with the research inquiries. The study involved conducting interviews with participants for approximately thirty minutes. The interviews aimed to gather information on the participant's experiences in the K-12 program and assess the program's effectiveness in aiding them to make informed decisions on their preferred college courses or degrees.

5. Data Analysis

The data was collected via comprehensive interviews to obtain perspectives on program outcomes from the participants. The researcher encoded the interview data and subsequently sought to identify any potential connections or patterns among the resulting codes. Furthermore, the researcher categorized the encoded information into themes. In the analysis phase, the feedback the participants provided was compared to identify the specific areas that require improvement. The interview was captured using mobile devices and subsequently transcribed, coded, thematically organized, and analyzed.

6. Results and Discussion

The fundamental significance of an individual's statement was revealed by employing the phenomenological reduction method. The data collected from the participants' experiences, opportunities, and challenges were organized into themes.

Table 1. Skills Development through K-12 Program

Subthemes	Excerpts from K-12 program graduates' interview
Communication Skills	P3: Communication skills kasi yung strand ko is humanities and social sciences, we focus on communication that is why iyon yung skill nana-acquire ko nana-enhance at patuloy na nagagamit sa course namin which is education. <i>(Communication skills, because my strand is Humanities and Social Sciences, we focus on communication that's why the skill that I acquired is enhanced and continues to be used in our course which is the Education.)</i>
Collaboration Skills	P4: Another skill na na-acquire ko is collaboration skills, were in I learned to socialize with other people during my senior high school base kasi it requires us to interact with other people especially, yung nature ng strand namin which is HUMMS. <i>(The other skill I acquired was collaboration skills, where I learned to socialize with other people during my senior high school because it requires us to interact with other people especially in our strand which is HUMSS.)</i> P6: Yung teamwork skill ko or yung pakikipag- collaborate sa mga kapwa kong estudyante and also yung leadership. <i>(My team working skills or collaborating skills with my fellow students and also the leadership skills.)</i>
Accounting Skills	P5: Number one is accounting skills and entrepreneurial skills. P7: Ang strand ko kasi nung senior high school is ABM, so siguro yung skills na nakuha ko is

marketing and accounting skills. Nagagamit ko siya ngayon sa college, sa taxation and sa mga entrepreneurial subjects naming. (My strand when I was in Senior High School is ABM, so I think the skills that I acquired is marketing and accounting skills. I can use it now in our taxation and in our entrepreneurial subjects.)

Computer Skills

P8: Yung strand ko po kasi dati is ICT so parang nagamit ko po yung skills sa paggawa ng mga excel tsaka yung mga documents po sa mga subjects. (When I was in senior high, my strand is ICT so, so I have used the skills to create Excel documents for our subjects.)

Table 1 displays the thematized statements of participants obtained through a qualitative interview focused on the skills attained by college students from K–12. The competencies college students have acquired from the K–12 program exhibit variations primarily due to the specific track and strand they pursued during their senior high school education. The curriculum was comprised of four distinct strands: namely Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS), Accountancy and Business Management (ABM), Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). During the interview, the candidate demonstrated proficiency in various skills, including *communication, collaboration, accounting, computers, and organization*.

The acquisition of communication skills is predominantly attributed to graduates from the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand, as posited from the study De Vera et al. (2018). Specifically, the source above notes that the development of clear articulation, confident delivery, and spontaneous expression are key components of communication skills most commonly cultivated among HUMSS students. Collaborating has improved a team's overall functioning and ability to effectively address and resolve complex issues. This leads to enhanced innovation, efficient protocols, heightened achievement, and enhanced communication. Collaborative efforts towards achieving goals can be facilitated by fostering attentiveness and mutual learning among team members, as Rebeiro (2020) suggested. The interview findings indicate that graduates of the K–12 programs, specifically those from the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) strands, have developed collaborative skills during their Senior High School education. The interview findings indicate that ABM graduates predominantly possess the necessary accounting skills. According to the OEd Senior High School (2021), students enrolled in the ABM program are anticipated to develop proficiencies in fundamental accounting, financial management, and commerce skills.

Moreover, as reported by participants, proficiency in computer skills is typically attained through the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) strand. The capacity to effectively handle expectations, maintain task management, and deliver outcomes within a specified timeframe is commonly referred to as a soft skill, specifically organizational proficiency (Miles, 2023). According to graduates of the Information Communication and Technology (ICT) and Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) strands, the competencies they developed during their senior high school education primarily pertained to organizational skills.

Table 2. Knowledge Acquired from K-12 Program

Subthemes	Excerpts from K-12 program graduates' interview
Philosophies and Theories	P2: About naman sa knowledge, yung sa mga minor subjects ko karamihan sa mga na nata-tackle nila na topic is na-tackle ko na nung HUMSS ako, halimbawa is yung mga philosophers, yung mga philosophies nila, yung mga theories nila. (When it comes to knowledge, most of my minor subjects tackled the topics that I tackled when I was in HUMSS, for example the philosophers, we tackled their philosophies and their theories.)
Oral Communication	P3: Since HUMSS yung strand ko, doon tinuruan kami kung paano makipag usap sa mga tao, kung paano mag-build ng social interaction sa mga tao. (Since my strand was HUMSS, they teach us how to communicate with other people, and how to build a social interaction with them.) P4: Oral Communication, na-enhance niya yung speaking skills ko. Sa knowledge naman sa thinking kapag nagi-speak, mabilis mag-process yung mga naiisip naming yung sinasabi namin. So I think sa knowledge naman ang pinaka-edge namin is English. (Oral Communication, this subject enhanced my speaking skills. When it comes to the knowledge of thinking when speaking, I quickly process the thoughts for what I'm going to say. So I think our edge in knowledge is English.)

Accounting

P7: Siguro ako when it comes sa marketing, yung mga marketing strategies na mga dapat gawin na nagagamit ko rin siya ngayon yung skills na 'yon sa BSBA students and siguro yung knowledge din sa paggawa ng feasibility studies. (When it comes to marketing, the marketing strategies that should be done, I can use now as a BSBA student. Also, the knowledge in doing feasibility studies.)

Research

P11: There is a lot of knowledge that I acquired during my shs. One is the research, bugbog ang shs sa research and thesis kasi nagamit ko siya nowadays kasi sa college madaming thesis paper nanangyayari almost most of the subjects are research, merong every subjects magkakaroon ka ng research paper. (There is a lot of knowledge that I acquired during my Senior High School. One is the research, SHS has beaten us in research and thesis. I use it nowadays, because in college a lot of thesis papers happen. Most of the subjects are research and there is every subject that you will have a research paper.)

The skills and knowledge obtained from the K-12 program vary depending on the strand the individual pursues during their Senior High School education. Table 2 displays the knowledge acquired by graduates of the K-12 program, which has been categorized into five themes. Based on the feedback provided by K-12 program alumni, the acquired knowledge areas include philosophical and theoretical concepts, oral communication skills, accounting principles, mathematical and scientific concepts, and research methodologies.

The Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand encompasses Philosophy as one of its subjects. Senior High students are exposed to diverse schools of thought and their impact on human psychology and decision-making. The discipline of philosophy encompasses theoretical concepts and their impact on the collective understanding of society (OEd et al. School, 2022). According to the participant, familiarity with philosophies and theories facilitated their pursuit of a college degree, as certain subjects, such as Philosophy in college, had already been covered during their Senior High School education. Oral communication refers to conveying concepts or thoughts through spoken language to an individual or a collective audience. According to Akpsi (2022), the ability to articulate an idea lucidly, with each thought expressed coherently, indicates professional verbal aptitude. Table 2 displays that, as per the respondents, K-12 education facilitated their acquisition of knowledge about oral communication. The act of communication facilitated their ability to establish social interactions with individuals. Typically, individuals acquire expertise in accounting through enrollment in the Accountancy Business and Management (ABM) curriculum. According to the ABM strand participants, the knowledge they acquired from the K-12 program has benefited their pursuit of a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA) degree.

Moreover, the insights from the interviews conducted with STEM graduates indicate that the K-12 curriculum primarily focuses on mathematics and science education. This corroborates Dalton's (2020) research, which posits that students pursuing STEM education must comprehensively understand mathematics and science. This is because the fields of technology and engineering heavily rely on these subjects, making them indispensable in the STEM curriculum. Finally, K-12 education provides a wealth of knowledge, including the ability to conduct research. The participant benefited from the intervention as college curricula necessitate the completion of numerous research papers, and most courses mandate research as a component of their requirements.

Table 3. Opportunities provided by K-12 Program

Subthemes	Excerpts from K-12 program graduates' interview
Academics	<p>P2: Yes, kasebabalik tayo doon sanaging review ko siya, so naging opportunity ko siya for me to have a good grade. (It gives an opportunity on me to have good grades.)</p> <p>P8: Yung sa akin dahil nga po about siyasa parang ICT is about computer so far nakatulong din po yung senior high sa course ko ngayon dahil nagkaroon na parang advantage sa paggamit ng computer kasi kadalasan naman po computer din po ang gamit sa mga office namin. (In my case, ICT is about computers. So far, senior high has also helped me in my course today because it seems like there is an advantage in using computers because computers are usually used in our offices.)</p>
Being on Organizations	<p>P2: So diba ang focus ko kase is yungsa communication skills ko, so as a college student, may organizations ako and officer ako for those organizations, nakatulong yung communication skills ko para mas mapa-ayos ko yung orgs ko as a officer samga orgs na yon. (So my focus is on my</p>

communication skills, as a college student, I have organizations and I am an officer for those organizations, my communication skills helped me to better organize my orgs as an officer with those orgs.)

P6: Ngayong college kase marami yung mga organizations, sa high school din naman pero mas marami kase sa college yung mga department, yung mga organization so yung opportunity ko na makasali sa ganon, maka-participate sa organization, mga leadership event, mas nadadalian na ako na makihalubilo sa mga kapwa kong estudyante. (In college, there are many organizations as there are in high school, but there are more departments than in college, so I have the opportunity to participate in organizations, leadership events, and socialize with fellow students.)

P4: Yung mga opportunities nana-open sa'kin is kagaya ng mga invitation as a speaker, MC nagiging master of ceremony ako minsan. Tapos, when it comes din sa socializing, nagma-manifest din yung speaking skills kagaya ng mga leadership boot camp na inaattendan ko this college. Kasi meron akong scholarship, yung mga scholarship nabinigay sa'kin ginagawa akong guest speaker whenever na nagkakaroon ng mga leadership boot camp sa Bulacan. (The opportunities open to me are like invitations as a speaker, sometimes I become the master of ceremony. Then, when it comes to socializing, speaking skills also manifest like in the leadership boot camps I attend this college. Because I have a scholarship, the scholarships given to me made me a guest speaker whenever there are leadership boot camps in Bulacan.)

P6: Ngayong college, quizzer ako, so yung opportunity namai-represent yung school ko sa ibang lugar para maipakita ko yung natutuhan ko or mai-showcase ko saibangtaohindi lang sa school ko kun'disamarami pang lugar. (This college, I am a quizzer, so the opportunity is to represent my school in other places so that I can show what I have learned or I can showcase it to other people, not only in my school but in many other places.)

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P4: Help sa amin ng K-12 program is nagkaroon na kami ng overview about the topics na madi-discuss during this college life kasi may mga subject ng senior high school na itinuro na kaya ngayong college days naming more on recalling kami ng mga topics na na-lessson na naming nung SHS. I think yung binigay na benefit ng K-12 program is preparation, literally preparation siya for your college life. (K-12 program helped us because we had an overview about the topics discussed during this college life because there are subjects of senior high school that were taught, so in our college days we are more on recalling the topics we learned in SHS. I think the benefit provided by the K-12 program is preparation, literally preparation for your college life.)

Joining Competitions and Other Events

Presenting

College Preparation

Table 3 illustrates the opportunities college students have acquired from implementing the K-12 program. The participants reported that graduating from the K-12 program resulted in numerous opportunities. The K-12 program graduates have classified the opportunities they acquired into five distinct themes. As per the accounts of K-12 program alumni, the benefits they acquired encompassed academic prospects, participation in various organizations, engagement in competitions and other activities, presentation skills, and readiness for college.

The K-12 program enhanced the participants' academic performance in their fields of study. Per the respondents, the K-12 program facilitated their access to academic opportunities, enabling them to excel in their studies. The competencies and expertise the individuals attained during their Senior High School education have proven advantageous in their college pursuits. As per the accounts of certain participants, the K-12 program has proven instrumental in facilitating their acquisition of opportunities, such as assuming leadership roles within school organizations. According to the testimony of Participant 2, the communication skills obtained from the K-12 program facilitated the organization of the participant's group, given that the participant holds a position as one of the officers within the organization. As a result of the K-12 program, participants have acquired valuable communication skills, often leading to invitations to participate in events such as the Master of Ceremonies (MC). Per the respondents, the benefits they have accrued from K-12 include assuming the role of a departmental representative in competitions and participating as a quizzer. In addition, it is virtually unavoidable for college students to engage in public speaking, regardless of their field of study, as it is a crucial skill that necessitates practice. According to Katewa (2023), students must deliver

an oral presentation before an audience, be it a seminar, a report on their research, or an assessment component. The K-12 program has been reported by participants in the table to have facilitated college students in developing skills such as public speaking and presentation, thereby providing them with enhanced opportunities in their academic pursuits. Despite variations in academic backgrounds among participants during their K-12 education, a consensus was reached that the K-12 program effectively facilitated their college preparedness. The individual obtained a comprehensive understanding of the anticipated academic trajectory upon starting their college career, as the curriculum largely drew upon prior Senior High School coursework.

Table 4. Challenges Experienced by K-12 Graduates

Subthemes	Excerpts from K-12 program graduates' interview
Academic	P3: Mga challenges ko ngayon is more on academics, ngayong college wala na siyang gaanong free time unlike nung senior high school meron kang time, ngayon talaga yung tulog na lang yung pinaka pahinga mo. (The challenges that I experienced right now are more on academics. In college, there is no free time. Unlike when you were in senior high school you had time, but now the only thing you really relax is sleeping.)
Culture Shock	P6: Nakaka-culture shock ang college dahil andami mong kailangang ayusin at kabisaduhin, malaking bagay lang sa akin yung senior high school. (It is a culture shock because you have to adjust and memorize, senior high school is just a big deal for me.)
Communicating	P5: Siguro yung mga financial statement, mga balance sheet, tsaka kung paano mag-solve ng problem through excel. (I think about financial statements, balance sheets, and how to solve problems through using excel.) P1: Pinaka-challenging sa akin is yung pakikipag-communicate lalo na kapag kailangan ko maharap sa mga hindi ko kilalang tao kasi ano 'pag HM student ka. (The most challenging thing for me is communicating, especially when I have to deal with people I don't know because you're an HM student.)
Strand is Not Aligned with Their Course in College	P2: Ngayong college, HUMSS ako pero ang major ko is about sa science, nagkaroon ako ng hirap doon kase hindi kami nag-focus noon sa science and math during senior high school so hindi kami ganoon ka-gamay sa course naito. (This college, I am from HUMSS but my major is about science, I had a hard time there because we didn't focus on science and math during senior high school so we weren't that good at this course.) P8: Medyo nahirapan nga po kasi kumbaga po ICT for computer nga po talaga siya. Hindi po siya masyadong about sa computing or yung mga sa business kasi nga about talaga siya sa paggamit ng computer, paggawa ng mga url, or basta something na about sa computer. (It's a bit difficult because it's like ICT for computers. He's not too much about computing or business because he's really about using computers, creating URLs, or just something about computers.)

Table 4 displays the thematized statements of participants obtained from a qualitative interview focused on the challenges college students encounter during their academic pursuits. The K-12 program graduates encountered a limited number of challenges upon transitioning to college, as per the participant feedback. This can be attributed to the perceived efficacy of the K-12 program in preparing them for higher education. The interview revealed the emergence of sub-themes about academic challenges, culture shock, communication difficulties, and a lack of alignment between the strand pursued in college and the individual's course of study.

As per the accounts of fellow participants, the sole obstacle encountered pertained to physical challenges, particularly in the academic realm. Analogous to the predicaments faced by other college students, they reported experiencing fatigue due to the heavy demands of academic tasks such as assessments and evaluations. The study's participants reported that they experienced more free time during their Senior High School years compared to their current college experience. According to Michigan Technological University (2023), students may encounter culture shock upon being abruptly introduced to a culture that diverges significantly from their upbringing. Culture shock can elicit various emotional responses in students, such as surprise, confusion, and anxiety. As per the account of a singular participant, the experience of attending college can be characterized as a culture shock due to the multitude of tasks and adjustments that must be made in this academic setting.

Moreover, as per the account of a singular participant, a considerable difficulty encountered during the college experience pertains to interpersonal communication. Despite the majority of participants reporting that they gained communication skills through the K-12 program, one participant experienced difficulty communicating, particularly with individuals who were not familiar with them. Finally, the participants encountered difficulties upon entering college due to the incongruity between the strand they pursued in the K-12 program and the course they are currently undertaking. As indicated in Table 4, several participants encountered difficulties due to a misalignment between their academic background and their current college course. For example, students from the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand pursuing a science-related degree, as well as an Information and Communications Technology (ICT) strand student now enrolled in a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA) program, faced challenges in their academic pursuits. Occasionally, individuals encounter difficulty comprehending and keeping pace with instructional material due to their lack of familiarity with it.

7. Conclusions

The conclusions were derived from the findings presented.

1. The results indicate that the students possess varying abilities and expertise due to their selection of distinct academic pathways.
2. Most students were afforded equal opportunities in higher education due to the competencies and expertise they gained in their Senior High School education.
3. Implementing the K-12 program facilitated the students' readiness for the academic demands of higher education.
4. Considerable students encountered difficulties during their senior high school years due to the lack of coherence between their chosen college course and the strands they pursued in the K-12 program.

8. Recommendations

The research findings elucidated the difficulties and prospects of tertiary-level scholars during their tenure in secondary education. Therefore, the subsequent suggestions are a result of this proposal:

1. The respondents propose ensuring alignment between the academic track pursued in senior high school and the college program selected.
2. Given the potential overlap of academic tasks, the acquisition of time management skills is a crucial aspect of college life.
3. It is recommended that students conduct thorough research before selecting a college course.
4. To expand the body of knowledge regarding the experiences of K-12 graduates, it is recommended that future researchers undertake a comparative investigation from an alternative perspective.

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