

Implementation, Challenges and Opportunities of the Special Program For Employment of Students (SPES) in a First-Class Philippine Province: An Explanatory Sequential Inquiry

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Introduction: The role of employment facilitates countries in safeguarding the decent work, productive employment, and inclusive growth agenda in the Sustainable Development Goals. Education is intended to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and encourage lifelong learning opportunities. Nations are making education better and available to everyone as education is removing the barriers of poverty. This study aimed to understand the implementation, challenges and opportunities of the Special Program for Employment of Students (SPES) as carried out by the Public Employment Service Office (PESO) in a first-class province in Central Philippines.

Methodology: This study utilized the explanatory sequential mixed method research design. Descriptive design for the quantitative phase on the extent of implementation and opportunities of the SPES in LGUs, integrating data collection and analyses through merging, connecting, and embedding the data. The respondent-students were identified using stratified random sampling while for implementers', PESO Managers, support staff, and coordinators who has been in the service for five years was purposive sampling. These were incorporated into mixed method design that includes the timing of the data collection, sequential. The qualitative stage using semi-structured interview protocol. The results of the quantitative phase were presented and analyzed first, followed by the presentation of themes from the qualitative phase. The quantitative data was integrated with the results of the qualitative inquiry. A joint presentation of the integration followed.

Results: Results of the study revealed a very great implementation of the SPES by the PESOs in reducing unemployment thru free education. The experiences of the SPES recipient demonstrated how the PESOs in LGUs executed the program regardless of levels of government, income classification, and number of SPES beneficiaries results was generally very great. Challenges were overcome and great opportunities were recommended to enhance the implementation. The findings of the study serve as baseline information in the preparation of a strategic plan of the PESO.

Conclusion: Integrating the quantitative and qualitative phases reveals that the PESO is crucial to the successful implementation of the SPES. Beneficiaries expressed strong approval of the program, citing significant economic and social benefits. These consistent findings support the study's framework; although implementation challenges exist, the opportunities for future enhancement are promising.

Practical Value of the Paper: The results of the study may provide the DOLE and LGUs reliable information as basis for enhancement, efficient delivery of tasks/functions towards employment generation contributing to the SDGs 1 and 8, demonstrating the critical link between education and employment in reducing poverty.

Direction for Future Research: Future researchers can provide enhancement by integration of other livelihood programs at the local level.

Keywords: public administration, SPES, explanatory sequential, Philippines

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