



# **LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION OF CAREER GUIDANCE PROGRAM AND THE CURRICULAR EXIT READINESS AND DECISION OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN CALAUAG EAST AND WEST DISTRICTS, DIVISION OF QUEZON**

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20358777>

## **ABSTRACT**

This study examined the level of implementation of the Career Guidance Program (CGP), curricular exit readiness, and curricular exit decision of senior high school learners in public secondary schools in Calauag East and West Districts, Division of Quezon, for School Year 2025–2026. It also determined the significant relationship between CGP implementation and learners' curricular exit readiness and decision, identified implementation challenges and strategies, and proposed an enhancement program. The study employed a descriptive-correlational quantitative research design. A total of 267 senior high school learners were selected through simple random sampling. Data were gathered using a validated and pilot-tested researcher-made questionnaire and were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, and Spearman's rank correlation. Findings revealed that the CGP was very highly implemented in terms of career guidance advocacy, assessment, consultation, counseling, portfolio, curriculum exits tracking, and learning materials. Learners were also very highly ready in terms of college, work, business, and skill. For curricular exit decision, higher education was the most preferred exit, employment was less preferred, entrepreneurship remained uncertain for many learners, and middle-level skills development was viewed as possible but not yet definite. Results also showed significant relationships between CGP implementation and both curricular exit readiness and decision. Major challenges included limited parental involvement, inadequate funding, lack of guidance counselors, and time constraints. Based on the findings, the study proposed the Guidance Advancement and Bridging Industry for the Youth of Calauag (GABAY Calauag).

**Keywords:** *Career Guidance, Senior High School, Curricular Exit, Readiness, Enhancement Program*

## INTRODUCTION

Career guidance is a structured support system that helps students make informed academic and career decisions through counseling, assessment, portfolio development, mentorship, and decision-making assistance. It strengthens learners' self-efficacy, career readiness, and ability to align their skills and interests with future opportunities (Magsino, 2024; Mustafa et al., 2024; Savugathali et al., 2024). As labor markets continue to change, career guidance also helps bridge school learning and employment by providing learners with career information, skills preparation, and awareness of job market demands (Nayak, 2024; Usman, 2024).

Similarly, related studies show that Career Guidance Programs help learners make clearer and more informed curricular exit decisions when services are structured, accessible, and supported by trained personnel. Advocacy, assessment, consultation, counseling, portfolio development, curriculum exit tracking, and learning materials were found to improve learners' awareness, confidence, and career planning skills (Butal & Pevida, 2025; Darwin et al., 2020; Gallarin & Olua, 2023; Maestrado & Bucar, 2024; Mun & Yang, 2023; Puna III, 2024). These studies also suggest that career guidance becomes more meaningful when students receive practical tools, personal support, and opportunities to connect their interests with real academic and career pathways.

Other studies emphasize that curricular exit readiness and decision-making differ across college, work, business, and skills pathways. College readiness improves when learners receive academic, financial, and transition support, while work readiness becomes stronger through employability training and actual workplace exposure (Isip et al., 2024; Stokoe et al., 2024). Business readiness is strengthened through entrepreneurial knowledge, financial literacy, and digital business skills (Hasan et al., 2024; Jambo et al., 2025). Skills readiness also improves when learners are exposed to technical-vocational preparation, industry-based training, and clear certification pathways (Arban et al., 2024; Khamdamovna, 2025).

These studies affirm that Career Guidance Programs play an important role in preparing senior high school learners for their preferred curricular exits. However, they also point to continuing challenges such as limited guidance personnel, weak industry linkages, inadequate training, and uneven access to career resources. These gaps are relevant to the present study because rural schools may experience stronger limitations in program delivery. Thus, the current research builds on these studies by examining the level of CGP implementation, learners' curricular exit readiness and decision, and the challenges and strategies in Calauag East and West Districts.

Across global and regional contexts, the implementation of career guidance remains uneven. Some countries experience challenges linked to limited counselors,

unequal access, weak program integration, and strong external influences on students' choices (Franke, 2020; Harris, 2022; Maclean et al., 2021; Nguyen, 2023). In the Philippines, similar concerns are evident, particularly in public schools where teachers often assume guidance roles despite limited training. Many students also remain focused on traditional careers and may have limited awareness of emerging fields, which can affect their preparedness for higher education, employment, entrepreneurship, or middle-level skills development.

Similarly, the Department of Education has established policies to strengthen career guidance in basic education. Republic Act No. 10533 and Republic Act No. 11206 support the integration of career guidance and counseling in secondary schools, while DepEd Order No. 25, s. 2013 and DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2017 provide direction for career advocacy and transition support (DepEd, 2013, 2017; Saniel et al., 2022). DepEd OUOPS 2023-03-8149 further identifies key Career Guidance Program components, including advocacy, assessment, consultation, counseling, guidance portfolio, curriculum exits tracking, and learning materials (DepEd, 2023). These policies support the alignment of learners' competencies with national and regional qualification standards (Ocampo et al., 2022).

Within Calauag East and West Districts, career guidance concerns remain more visible because many schools have limited career counselors, insufficient resources, and fewer opportunities for career exposure. Psychometric tools, portfolios, fairs, and immersion activities may not be fully used, especially in remote schools. Although national policies already define the expected components of career guidance, there is still limited district-level evidence on how these are implemented and how they relate to learners' curricular exit readiness and decisions. This study addressed this gap by examining Career Guidance Program implementation, learners' readiness and decisions, challenges, strategies, and a proposed enhancement program for public senior high schools in Calauag East and West Districts.

## Research Questions

This study explored the level of implementation of Career Guidance Program and the curricular exit readiness and decision of senior high school students in public secondary schools in Calauag East and West Districts, Division of Quezon, for the school year 2025-2026. Specifically, this answered the following research questions:

1. What is the level of implementation of the Career Guidance Program in the public senior high schools in terms of:
  - 1.1. Career Guidance Advocacy;
  - 1.2. Career Assessment;
  - 1.3. Career Consultation;
  - 1.4. Career Counseling;
  - 1.5. Career Guidance Portfolio
  - 1.6. Curriculum Exits Tracking; and
  - 1.7. Career Guidance Learning Materials?
2. What is the curricular exit readiness of the senior high school learners in terms of:

- 2.1. College;
  - 2.2. Work;
  - 2.3. Business; and
  - 2.4. Skill?
3. What is the curricular exit decision of the senior high school learners in terms of the following exits:
    - 3.1. Higher Education;
    - 3.2. Employment;
    - 3.3. Entrepreneurship; and
    - 3.4. Middle-Level Skills Development?
  4. Is there a significant relationship between the level of implementation of Career Guidance Programs and the curricular exit readiness of the senior high school students in Calauag East and West Districts?
  5. Is there a significant relationship between the level of implementation of Career Guidance Programs and the curricular exit decision of the senior high school students in Calauag East and West Districts?
  6. What are the challenges encountered, and strategies used in the implementation of the Career Guidance Program in the public senior high schools in Calauag West and East Districts?
  7. What enhancement program can be proposed based on the findings of the study?

### **Research Hypothesis**

**Null Hypothesis (Ho1):** There is no significant relationship between the level of implementation of Career Guidance Programs and the curricular exit readiness of the senior high school students in Calauag East and West Districts.

**Null Hypothesis (Ho2):** There is no significant relationship between the level of implementation of Career Guidance Programs and the curricular exit decision of the senior high school students in East and West Districts.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study used a descriptive-correlational quantitative research design to determine the level of implementation of the Career Guidance Program, the curricular exit readiness, and the curricular exit decision of senior high school learners. It was conducted in public senior high schools in Calauag East and West Districts, Division of Quezon, during School Year 2025–2026. From a population of 804 senior high school learners, 267 respondents were selected using the Slovin formula at a 5% margin of error. Simple random sampling was used to give all learners an equal chance of being selected. The study was limited to public senior high schools in the two districts and focused on the learners' assessment of CGP implementation, readiness, decision, challenges, strategies, and the proposed enhancement program.

The main instrument was a researcher-made questionnaire based on the DepEd Career Guidance Program framework, RA 10533, and RA 11206. The questionnaire had four parts: level of CGP implementation in seven components, curricular exit readiness in college, work, business, and skill, curricular exit decision in higher education, employment, entrepreneurship, and middle-level skills development, and challenges and strategies in CGP implementation. The instrument used five-point scales appropriate to each section. It underwent content validation by five experts in education, career guidance, and research, followed by pilot testing with 30 senior high school learners from a school not included in the actual study. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine internal consistency before final administration.

Before data gathering, the researcher secured permission from the Schools Division Office, school heads, and concerned school personnel. The selected respondents were oriented about the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw. The questionnaire was administered through printed and online formats, depending on learner access and school arrangements. After retrieval, responses were checked, encoded, and prepared for statistical analysis. Frequency and percentage were used for respondent distribution, curricular exit decision, and strategies used. Mean was used to describe CGP implementation, curricular exit readiness, and challenges encountered. Spearman's rank correlation was used to test the significant relationship between CGP implementation and learners' curricular exit readiness and decision.

## RESULTS

**Table 1.**  
**Level of Implementation of Career Guidance Program in the Public Senior High Schools**

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>	<b>Highest Rated Indicator</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>
<b>Career Guidance Advocacy</b>	4.62	Very Highly Implemented	advocating career development policies.	4.79	Very Highly Implemented
<b>Career Assessment</b>	4.62	Very Highly Implemented	using digital platforms for career assessment; aligning assessment results with career choices.	4.75	Very Highly Implemented
<b>Career Consultation</b>	4.66	Very Highly Implemented	facilitating career workshops.	4.79	Very Highly Implemented

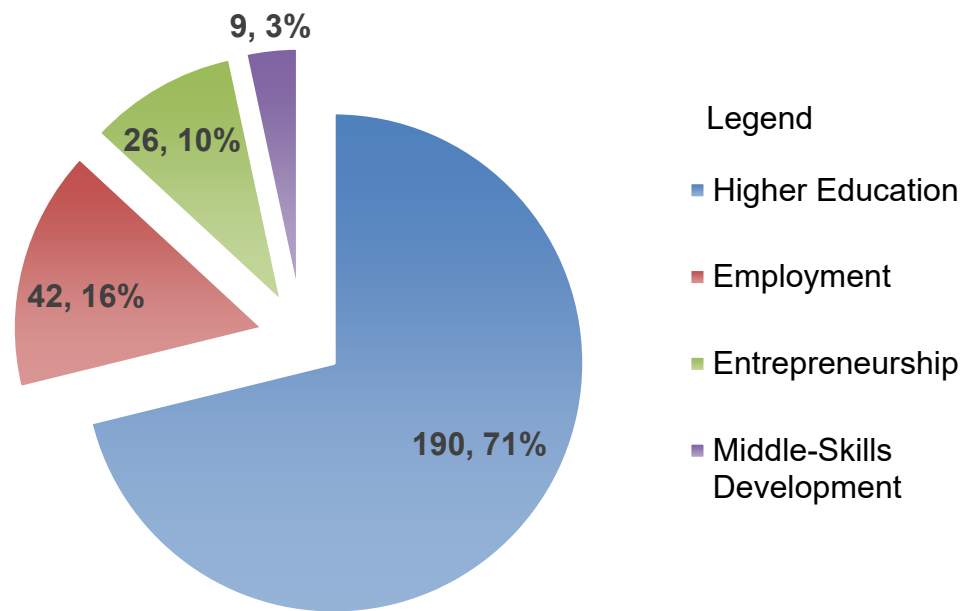
<b>Career Counseling</b>	4.65	Very Highly Implemented	using career counseling frameworks.	4.76	Very Highly Implemented
<b>Career Guidance Portfolio</b>	4.60	Very Highly Implemented	integrating digital career portfolio systems.	4.72	Very Highly Implemented
<b>Curriculum Exit Tracking</b>	4.62	Very Highly Implemented	maintaining a database of student career paths.	4.75	Very Highly Implemented
<b>Career Guidance Learning Materials</b>	4.70	Very Highly Implemented	evaluating effectiveness of career learning materials.	4.85	Very Highly Implemented

**Legend:** Very Highly Implemented (4.51 – 5.00,) Highly Implemented (3.51 – 4.50), Moderately Implemented (2.51 – 3.50), Slightly Implemented (1.51 – 2.50), Not Implemented (1.00 – 1.50)

**Table 2.**  
**Curricular Exit Readiness of the Senior High School Learners**

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>	<b>Highest Rated Indicator</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>
College	4.69	Very Highly Ready	awareness of scholarship opportunities and other financial support for college study.	4.81	Very Highly Ready
Work	4.65	Very Highly Ready	readiness to apply for a job after senior high school.	4.79	Very Highly Ready
Business	4.66	Very Highly Ready	confidence in starting a small business based on personal skills or interests; readiness to prepare a simple business plan.	4.80	Very Highly Ready
Skills	4.62	Very Highly Ready	understanding of non-degree career paths that require middle-level skills.	4.79	Very Highly Ready

**Legend:** Very Highly Ready (4.51 – 5.00), Ready (3.51 – 4.50), Moderately Ready (2.51 – 3.50), Slightly Ready(1.51 – 2.50), Not Ready (1.00 – 1.50)



**Figure 1.**  
Curricular Exit Decision of the Senior High School in terms of Middle Skills Development

**Table 3**  
Significant Relationship Between Career Guidance Program Implementation and Curricular Exit Readiness

CGP Component	Highest Related Readiness Domain	Correlation Coefficient	p-value	Decision	Remarks
Career Guidance Advocacy	Work	0.863	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Career Assessment	College	0.426	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Career Consultation	Work	0.895	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Career Counseling	Work	0.763	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant

Career Guidance Portfolio	Skills	0.548	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Curriculum Exits Tracking	Skills	0.600	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Career Guidance Learning Materials	Work	0.937	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant

*Note: If the p-value is less than or equal to the significance level (0.05), reject Ho; otherwise, fail to reject Ho.*

**Table 4**  
**Significant Relationship Between Career Guidance Program Implementation and Curricular Exit Decision**

Curricular Exit Decision	Highest Related CGP Component	Correlation Coefficient	p-value	Decision	Remarks
Higher Education	Career Guidance Advocacy	0.653	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Employment	Career Consultation	-0.211	0.001	Reject Ho	Significant
Entrepreneurship	Curriculum Exits Tracking	-0.119	0.005	Reject Ho	Significant
Middle-Level Skills Development	Career Guidance Advocacy; Career Guidance Learning Materials	0.463	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant

*Note: If the p-value is less than or equal to the significance level (0.05), reject Ho; otherwise, fail to reject Ho.*

**Table 5**  
**Challenges Encountered and Strategies Used in the Implementation of Career Guidance Programs**

<b>Challenges Encountered</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>	<b>Highest Rated Strategy Used</b>	<b>%</b>
Limited parental involvement in career decision-making.	4.71	Very Highly Challenging	organize parent seminars.	36.70
Inadequate funding for career programs.	4.68	Very Highly Challenging	request local funding.	35.58
Lack of career guidance counselors.	4.63	Very Highly Challenging	request additional registered guidance counselors.	39.70
Time constraints due to academic workload.	4.63	Very Highly Challenging	integrate into class schedules.	50.94
Lack of ICT-based career guidance platforms.	4.48	Highly Challenging	utilize free online apps.	37.08
Limited career assessment tools.	4.44	Highly Challenging	use free online tools.	43.45
insufficient career learning materials.	4.43	Highly Challenging	request materials online.	42.70
minimal industry linkages and partnerships.	4.41	Highly Challenging	ask for internship opportunities.	36.70
low student participation in guidance sessions.	4.39	Highly Challenging	add to priority activities.	47.94
poor tracking of curriculum exits.	4.30	Highly Challenging	create GCS and online groups.	41.57

**Legend:** *Very Highly Challenging (4.51 – 5.00), Highly Challenging (3.51 – 4.50), Moderately Challenging (2.51 – 3.50), Less Challenging (1.51 – 2.50), Not Challenging (1.00 – 1.50)*



Figure 2. Proposed Enhancement Program based on the Findings of the Study

## DISCUSSION

### ***Level of Implementation of Career Guidance Program in the Public Senior High Schools in terms of Career Guidance Learning Materials***

Table 1 presents the level of implementation of the Career Guidance Program in public senior high schools across seven domains. Results show that all domains were Very Highly Implemented, with overall means ranging from 4.60 to 4.70. The highest overall mean was recorded in career guidance learning materials ( $M = 4.70$ ), followed by career consultation ( $M = 4.66$ ), career counseling ( $M = 4.65$ ), career guidance advocacy, career assessment, and curriculum exit tracking ( $M = 4.62$ ), while career guidance portfolio obtained the lowest mean ( $M = 4.60$ ). These results indicate that the Career Guidance Program was consistently practiced across the schools, with strong attention given to learning resources, consultation activities, counseling support, assessment practices, advocacy efforts, portfolio systems, and curriculum exit monitoring in the conduct of CGP.

In terms of the highest-rated indicators, evaluating the effectiveness of career learning materials obtained the highest mean ( $M = 4.85$ ), followed by advocating career development policies and facilitating career workshops ( $M = 4.79$ ). Other highly rated indicators included using career counseling frameworks ( $M = 4.76$ ), using digital platforms for career assessment and aligning results with career choices ( $M = 4.75$ ), maintaining a database of student career paths ( $M = 4.75$ ), and integrating digital career portfolio systems ( $M = 4.72$ ). These findings suggest that schools do not only implement career guidance activities, but also use structured systems, digital tools, and monitoring practices to support students' career planning and curricular exit decisions.

Results indicate that the Career Guidance Program in the participating schools has a strong operational foundation. Since all domains were rated very highly implemented, students may have broad access to career information, assessment, consultation, counseling, learning materials, and tracking mechanisms. This can help them become more aware of their choices after senior high school. At the same time, the slightly lower mean in career guidance portfolio suggests that portfolio use may still need deeper attention, especially in helping learners connect their records, reflections, and assessment results to actual career decisions.

These results are consistent with the view that career guidance supports students through counseling, assessment, portfolio development, mentorship, and decision-making assistance (Magsino, 2024; Mustafa et al., 2024; Savugathali et al., 2024). The findings also agree with studies stating that structured and accessible Career Guidance Programs improve learners' awareness, confidence, and career planning skills (Butal & Pevida, 2025; Darwin et al., 2020; Gallarin & Olua, 2023). Moreover, the strong implementation of advocacy, assessment, consultation, counseling, portfolio, tracking, and learning materials reflects the key components identified in DepEd's Career Guidance Program framework (DepEd, 2023).

### ***Level of Implementation of Career Guidance Program in the Public Senior High Schools in terms of Career Guidance Learning Materials***

Table 2 depicts the curricular exit readiness of senior high school learners in terms of college, work, business, and skills. Results show that all domains were Very Highly Ready, with overall means ranging from 4.62 to 4.69. College obtained the highest overall mean ( $M = 4.69$ ), followed by business ( $M = 4.66$ ), work ( $M = 4.65$ ), and skills ( $M = 4.62$ ). These results indicate that learners showed strong readiness across all curricular exit pathways.

Similarly, for the highest-rated indicators, awareness of scholarship opportunities and other financial support for college study obtained the highest mean ( $M = 4.81$ ). This was followed by confidence in starting a small business and readiness to prepare a simple business plan ( $M = 4.80$ ), readiness to apply for a job after senior high school ( $M = 4.79$ ), and understanding of non-degree career paths that require middle-level skills ( $M = 4.79$ ). These findings suggest that learners are aware of practical opportunities and requirements connected to their future choices.

The research results imply that learners are generally prepared to pursue different post-senior high school pathways. However, the slightly lower mean in skills suggests the need to strengthen exposure to technical-vocational options, certification pathways, and middle-level skills development. The results also show that learners need continued guidance so their readiness can translate into clear and realistic decisions.

These findings support studies stating that curricular exit readiness differs across college, work, business, and skills pathways. College readiness improves through academic, financial, and transition support, while work readiness is strengthened through employability preparation and workplace exposure (Isip et al., 2024; Stokoe et al., 2024). Business readiness is supported by entrepreneurial knowledge and financial literacy, while skills readiness improves through technical-vocational preparation and clear certification pathways (Arban et al., 2024; Hasan et al., 2024; Jambo et al., 2025; Khamdamovna, 2025).

### ***Curricular Exit Decision of the Senior High School in terms of Middle Skills Development***

Figure 1 shows the curricular exit decision of senior high school learners. Results show that Higher Education was the most preferred curricular exit, with 190 learners (71%) choosing this pathway. This was followed by Employment with 42 learners (16%), Entrepreneurship with 26 learners (10%), and Middle-Level Skills Development with 9 learners (3%). These results indicate that most learners intend to continue their studies after senior high school, while fewer learners plan to enter work, start a business, or pursue skills-based training.

This finding suggests that higher education remains the dominant pathway among the respondents. Learners may view college as a more stable route toward better career opportunities and long-term personal growth. However, the lower percentages for employment, entrepreneurship, and middle-level skills development suggest that these

exits may need stronger promotion, clearer orientation, and more practical exposure. Schools may strengthen career guidance by giving equal attention to all curricular exits through college preparation, job-readiness activities, entrepreneurship support, and TESDA-related skills orientation.

The findings are consistent with studies showing that career guidance helps learners make clearer post-secondary decisions when they receive structured information and support. Bauyot and Abas (2024) and Maya (2024) noted that career education strengthens confidence in pursuing higher education. Meanwhile, Moses (2024), Capili and Bauyot (2024), and Pasawano and Sangsawang (2024) emphasized the need for practical exposure and stronger guidance in employment, entrepreneurship, and technical-vocational pathways.

### ***Significant Relationship Between Career Guidance Program Implementation and Curricular Exit Readiness***

Table 3 presents the significant relationship between Career Guidance Program implementation and the curricular exit readiness of senior high school learners. The results show that all CGP components had significant relationships with readiness, as all p-values were 0.000, which is lower than the 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected in all areas. The strongest relationship was found between career guidance learning materials and work readiness ( $r = 0.937$ ), interpreted as Very Strong Positive. This was followed by career consultation and work readiness ( $r = 0.895$ ), and career guidance advocacy and work readiness ( $r = 0.863$ ), both also interpreted as Very Strong Positive.

Results indicate that the implementation of CGP is strongly connected with learners' readiness, especially in the area of work. Clear learning materials, direct consultation, and active advocacy may help learners understand job opportunities, workplace expectations, and the skills needed after graduation. Career counseling also showed a Strong Positive relationship with work readiness ( $r = 0.763$ ), while curriculum exits tracking had a Strong Positive relationship with skills readiness ( $r = 0.600$ ). Meanwhile, career assessment had a Moderate Positive relationship with college readiness ( $r = 0.426$ ), and career guidance portfolio had a Moderate Positive relationship with skills readiness ( $r = 0.548$ ).

Overall, the results imply that stronger CGP implementation improves learners' preparedness for their chosen curricular exits. The findings support the need to strengthen learning materials, consultation services, advocacy activities, counseling, portfolio use, and exit tracking. These results are consistent with studies showing that structured career guidance improves learners' career readiness, confidence, and transition planning (Butal & Pevida, 2025; Otwine et al., 2022).

### ***Significant Relationship Between Career Guidance Program Implementation and Curricular Exit Decision***

Table 4 shows the relationship between the implementation of the Career Guidance Program and the curricular exit decision of senior high school learners. All results were significant because the p-values were below the 0.05 level of significance; therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. For higher education, career guidance advocacy had the strongest relationship ( $r = 0.653$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), which was interpreted as Strong Positive. For middle-level skills development, career guidance advocacy and career guidance learning materials both obtained the highest correlation ( $r = 0.463$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), interpreted as Moderate Positive.

Meanwhile, employment had a Weak Negative relationship with career consultation ( $r = -0.211$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), while entrepreneurship had a Very Weak Negative relationship with curriculum exits tracking ( $r = -0.119$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ). These results suggest that stronger CGP implementation is more clearly associated with learners' decisions to pursue higher education and middle-level skills development. However, the same level of influence was not observed in employment and entrepreneurship, which may require more direct workplace exposure, business preparation, and financial support.

Generally, the findings indicate that Career Guidance Program implementation affects curricular exit decisions in different ways. Advocacy and learning materials appear to guide learners more effectively toward college and skills-based pathways. In contrast, employment and entrepreneurship may need stronger support through work immersion, job-readiness activities, business planning, and financial literacy programs. These findings are consistent with studies stating that career guidance can support learner decision-making, although final choices are still shaped by family, economic conditions, and available opportunities (Butal & Pevida, 2025; Maestrado & Bucar, 2024).

### ***Challenges Encountered and Strategies Used in the Implementation of Career Guidance Programs***

Table 5 presents the challenges encountered and the highest rated strategies used in implementing the Career Guidance Program. The most serious challenge was limited parental involvement in career decision-making ( $M = 4.71$ ), interpreted as Very Highly Challenging, which was mainly addressed through organizing parent seminars (36.70%). This was followed by inadequate funding for career programs ( $M = 4.68$ ), addressed through requesting local funding (35.58%). Other very highly challenging concerns included the lack of career guidance counselors ( $M = 4.63$ ), addressed through requesting additional registered guidance counselors (39.70%), and time constraints due to academic workload ( $M = 4.63$ ), addressed through integrating activities into class schedules (50.94%). These findings indicate that the most pressing issues are related to stakeholder involvement, resource availability, and human capacity.

Meanwhile, the remaining challenges were interpreted as Highly Challenging, including lack of ICT-based platforms ( $M = 4.48$ ), limited career assessment tools ( $M =$

4.44), insufficient career learning materials ( $M = 4.43$ ), minimal industry linkages ( $M = 4.41$ ), low student participation ( $M = 4.39$ ), and poor tracking of curriculum exits ( $M = 4.30$ ). Schools addressed these concerns through practical and accessible strategies such as using free online tools, requesting materials online, organizing internship opportunities, prioritizing activities, and creating online tracking systems. These responses suggest that schools are resourceful and adaptive, using available means to continue program implementation despite existing constraints.

The findings imply several important considerations for program improvement. First, the high level of challenge in parental involvement indicates that career decision-making is not only a school responsibility but also a shared process with families. Without strong parent engagement, students may experience confusion or conflicting advice when choosing their pathways. Second, funding limitations and the lack of guidance counselors point to systemic concerns that require policy-level support, such as increased budget allocation, hiring of qualified personnel, and continuous professional development for teacher-designates. Third, time constraints suggest that career guidance must be treated as an integral part of the curriculum rather than an additional task. Integrating career activities within subject areas may help ensure consistent delivery without overloading students and teachers.

Moreover, the challenges related to ICT platforms, assessment tools, and learning materials indicate a need for modernization and standardization of career guidance resources. Schools may benefit from centralized and updated digital systems that provide reliable career information, assessment interpretation, and accessible learning materials. In the same way, limited industry linkages and weak tracking systems suggest gaps in connecting education with real-world outcomes. Strengthening partnerships with local industries, TESDA, and higher education institutions may provide learners with clearer career pathways and practical exposure. Likewise, improved tracking systems may help schools monitor graduate outcomes and refine programs based on actual data.

These findings align with existing studies which emphasize that effective career guidance requires adequate staffing, sufficient resources, strong stakeholder collaboration, and alignment with labor market needs (Lacson et al., 2024; Maguate et al., 2024; Piala et al., 2024). Overall, the results suggest that while schools demonstrate strong commitment and adaptability, long-term improvement in Career Guidance Program implementation depends on coordinated efforts among schools, families, policymakers, and community partners to ensure sustainability and relevance.

### ***Proposed Enhancement Program based on the Findings of the Study***

GABAY Calauag is a proposed enhancement program designed to strengthen the Career Guidance Program in public senior high schools of Calauag East and West Districts. It focuses on improving students' career readiness through stronger school-industry partnerships, better use of career assessment results, structured referral systems, employability training, entrepreneurship support, portfolio evaluation, and graduate tracking. The program also aims to address common challenges such as limited

parental involvement, weak industry linkages, funding concerns, and lack of guidance support.

The output presents GABAY Calauag as a one-year, system-based intervention that connects schools, students, parents, industry partners, TESDA, higher education institutions, and community stakeholders. Through its six major phases, the program supports students in making informed decisions for higher education, employment, entrepreneurship, and technical-vocational pathways. It also promotes sustainable monitoring and evaluation to ensure that career guidance activities lead to meaningful and measurable student outcomes.

## **Conclusions**

Based on the findings, the study concludes that the Career Guidance Program in public senior high schools of Calauag East and West Districts was very highly implemented across its key components, and learners were also very highly ready in terms of college, work, business, and skills. However, some areas still need improvement, particularly industry coordination, assessment interpretation, career referrals, motivation activities, portfolio evaluation, graduate tracking, multimedia use, college planning, technical skills application, digital entrepreneurship, and TESDA awareness. Higher education was the most preferred curricular exit, while employment, entrepreneurship, and middle-level skills development were less firmly chosen. The results also confirmed significant relationships between CGP implementation and both curricular exit readiness and curricular exit decision, which led to the rejection of the null hypotheses. Major challenges included limited parental involvement, inadequate funding, lack of guidance counselors, and time constraints, which schools addressed through parent seminars, funding requests, additional guidance personnel, and integration of activities into class schedules. Thus, the proposed GABAY Calauag program is necessary to address these gaps and strengthen career guidance implementation.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the conclusions, it is recommended that DepEd officials, school heads, guidance coordinators, and teachers sustain the very high implementation of the Career Guidance Program while strengthening areas that still need improvement, such as industry coordination, assessment interpretation, referral systems, motivation activities, portfolio evaluation, graduate tracking, and multimedia integration. Schools may provide more focused support for college planning, long-term goal setting, technical skills application, digital entrepreneurship, and TESDA awareness. A more balanced promotion of all curricular exits may also be strengthened through career talks, immersion activities, entrepreneurship programs, technical-vocational orientations, and industry engagement so learners can make informed choices based on their interests and capacities. Since the study confirmed significant relationships between CGP implementation and both curricular exit readiness and decision, sustained mentoring, counseling, classroom-based career integration, and practical exposure may be continued. To address challenges, partnerships with local government units, private organizations, alumni networks, parents,

and community stakeholders may be expanded to support funding, personnel needs, and career activities. Lastly, future researchers may pilot-test, evaluate, and refine the proposed GABAY Calauag program in other districts or divisions and examine its long-term effect on learners' post-secondary success and employability outcomes.

### **Compliance with Ethical Standards**

The researcher complied with ethical standards throughout the conduct of the study. Informed consent was obtained from the respondents, and their participation was voluntary. They were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty. The anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents were maintained, and all data were handled in accordance with data privacy principles. The respondents' well-being was safeguarded during the data-gathering process. The researcher declares that no conflict of interest existed in the conduct of the study. Plagiarism was strictly avoided, all sources were properly acknowledged, and the findings were interpreted objectively and without bias. The results were used purely for academic and research purposes. Artificial intelligence tools were used only to assist in organizing and refining the manuscript, while the researcher retained full responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of the final work.

### **Acknowledgments**

The researcher expresses sincere gratitude to Marinduque State University Extension of Graduate Programs to Quezonian Educational College, Inc., the Graduate School faculty and staff, his adviser, validators, editor, copy editor, statistician, and oral examination committee for their guidance, expertise, and valuable suggestions in improving this study. Appreciation is also extended to the Schools Division Superintendent, district supervisors of Calauag East and West Districts, school heads, teachers, and senior high school student-respondents for their permission, cooperation, and participation. The researcher also thanks Ananias Diamante Integrated National High School, Sir Raymar C. Francia, his family, relatives, and especially his wife, Lyca M. Arenque, for their support and encouragement. Above all, the researcher gives thanks to God Almighty for the wisdom, strength, and guidance that made this work possible.

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**APA Citation:**

Arenque, K. J. C., & Dasco, R. J. (2026). LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION OF CAREER GUIDANCE PROGRAM AND THE CURRICULAR EXIT READINESS AND DECISION OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN CALAUAG EAST AND WEST DISTRICTS, DIVISION OF QUEZON. *Ignatian International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 4(5), 2291–2310. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20358777>

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