

STUDENTS' PERSISTENCE IN THE K TO 12 SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS (STEM)

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ABSTRACT

Due to the unprecedented change in Science and technological advancement, strengthening of STEM Education in the Philippines becomes an important goal under the K to 12 Curriculum to produce 21st century and globally competitive learners. The educational reform was implemented even in rural areas to lessen inequalities and poverty in consonance with Education for All (EFA) and Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs). Senior high school (SHS) students can take STEM strand towards STEM-related careers without going into Science high schools or universities. However, very few students are opting for STEM because of grade requirements and negative perceptions towards STEM. This phenomenological study was conducted to explore factors that contributed to the persistence in STEM of selected SHS students. The participants (n=7) were purposively selected. They were among the first batch of successful graduates of the K to 12 Curriculum in 2018 in an SHS-STEM school. One-on-one in-depth interviews were conducted to arrive at the insightful narration of their lived experiences as STEM students. Transcription, coding, and thematic analysis of the students' lived experiences showed that their persistence in the STEM program is due to Self-efficacy and Social support. The study provides practical evidence for the importance of cognitive, affective, and psychosocial support from parents, family, peers, teachers, and the school. Students should have the freedom to choose the track/strand they wanted to pursue. School authorities must further activities that will strengthen STEM initiatives and implementation.

Keywords: STEM Education, Persistence, phenomenological study, K to 12 Curriculum, Philippines