



JOURNAL

OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH,
INNOVATION, AND
MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

An Academic Journal Publication



Website: | <https://jerimspublication.com>

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD SERIAL NUMBERS



PRINT ISSN

3116-5559



ONLINE ISSN

3116-5567

Volume 1, Issue 7, pp 17-22, September 2026

Research Article

Challenges and Opportunities in Strengthened Senior High School Program Implementation: A Case Study

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Article History:

Submission: August, 2026
Revised: September, 2026
Accepted: September, 2026
Published: September, 2026

Originality: 98%
Similarity Index: 5%
Grammarly Score: 96%

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Recommended Citation:

Baldesoto, I. V. B. & Udal, J., (2026). Challenges and Opportunities in Strengthened Senior High School Program Implementation: A Case Study. *Journal of Educational Research, Innovation, and Multidisciplinary Studies*, 1(7), 17-22.

<https://doi.org/10.67001/jeri.2026.07.B7R2WL>

ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study examined the perspectives of Grade 11 teachers at Misamis Occidental National High School regarding implementation of the Strengthened Senior High School (SHS) Program during School Year 2025–2026. Twelve purposively selected teachers representing the academic and technical-professional pathways participated in interviews and focus group discussions. Thematic analysis identified six major challenge areas: resource and infrastructure constraints; classroom management and learner-related challenges; time constraints and curriculum demands; curriculum integration challenges; curriculum transition and adaptation challenges; and instructional delivery and pedagogical challenges. Opportunities included enhanced student participation and active learning, higher-order thinking and independent learning, teacher development and instructional innovation, work-based learning and skills development, career readiness and competency development, and holistic student development. Teachers emphasized differentiated and learner-centered instruction, technology integration, collaboration, professional development, adequate resources, curriculum alignment, and continuous monitoring as essential supports. The findings indicate that effective implementation depends on both teacher adaptability and a coordinated institutional support system.

Keywords: strengthened senior high school, curriculum implementation, teacher challenges, instructional strategies, support systems, case study

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Introduction

The Strengthened Senior High School (SHS) Program forms part of continuing efforts to improve the Philippine K to 12 curriculum by strengthening academic, technical, and vocational preparation for higher education, employment, entrepreneurship, and middle-level skills development. The reform requires schools and teachers to translate national curriculum expectations into classroom practices while responding to learner diversity, resource availability, and changing instructional demands.

Existing literature cited in the thesis shows that SHS implementation continues to face concerns involving resource allocation, teacher preparation, instructional materials, infrastructure, workload, and curriculum adjustment (Alim & Alim, 2024; Bacus & Alda, 2022; Díaz, 2024; Guiamalon & Hariraya, 2021). These conditions are especially important in a pilot setting because teachers are among the first to operationalize revised curriculum structures, new learning expectations, technology-supported instruction, and strengthened career-oriented competencies.

At the same time, curriculum reform can create opportunities for instructional innovation, professional growth, learner-centered teaching, technology integration, work-based learning, and stronger career preparation. Teachers may develop new strategies as they respond to implementation challenges, while students may benefit from active learning, higher-order thinking, practical application, and exposure to industry-related competencies (Argate et al., 2024; Bacus & Alda, 2022; Barcelona et al., 2023).

Misamis Occidental National High School is identified in the thesis as a pilot school for the Strengthened SHS Program in Region X. Understanding teachers' experiences in this setting is therefore important for determining how curriculum policy is experienced in actual classroom practice. This study examined the challenges encountered by Grade 11 teachers, the opportunities arising from program implementation, and the strategies and support mechanisms they perceived as effective in addressing implementation difficulties.

Methods

The study employed a qualitative descriptive case study design at Misamis Occidental National High School, Oroquieta City, a pilot school for the Strengthened SHS Program. Twelve permanent Grade 11 teachers directly teaching under the strengthened curriculum were purposively selected, consisting of six teachers from the academic pathway and six from the technical-professional pathway. Data were gathered through researcher-developed, expert-validated semi-structured interview and focus group discussion guides. With appropriate permissions and informed consent, interviews and discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed. The data were analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework, supported by coding and organization of themes. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were strengthened through member checking, data-source triangulation, and transparent documentation. Ethical safeguards included voluntary participation, confidentiality, pseudonyms, secure data storage, and compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Results and Discussions

Challenges Encountered in Strengthened SHS Program Implementation

Table 1. Major Themes on Challenges Encountered by Grade 11 Teachers

Theme	Key Evidence / Meaning
Resource and Infrastructure Constraints	Limited laboratory facilities, instructional materials, equipment, modules, and learning resources constrained hands-on and competency-based instruction.
Classroom Management and Learner-Related Challenges	Large classes, diverse learner needs, multiple sections, and difficulty applying theory to practice complicated instruction.
Time Constraints and Curriculum Demands	Limited lesson time, extensive preparation, lesson exemplar requirements, and simultaneous classroom demands created workload pressure.
Curriculum Integration Challenges	Teachers experienced difficulty integrating technical and academic content, promoting higher-order thinking, and shifting toward student-

	centered instruction.
Curriculum Transition and Adaptation Challenges	Movement from the previous curriculum required new strategies, continuous upskilling, and adjustment to sudden curriculum changes.
Instructional Delivery and Pedagogical Challenges	Maintaining interactive lessons, using digital tools effectively, and sustaining student engagement remained recurring concerns.

The first group of findings shows that implementation difficulties were interconnected rather than isolated. Resource and infrastructure limitations directly affected teachers' capacity to conduct hands-on activities, particularly in technical-professional subjects where laboratory facilities and equipment are essential. When learning resources were insufficient, teachers had to modify activities or rely on alternatives, reducing opportunities for authentic practice. This finding is consistent with studies cited in the thesis that identify inadequate facilities, instructional materials, and ICT resources as continuing barriers in SHS implementation (Argate et al., 2024; Díaz, 2024).

Classroom conditions further intensified these constraints. Teachers managed large classes, varied learning abilities, multiple sections, and students who differed in their readiness to connect theory with practice. These differences increased the need for differentiated and learner-centered teaching but also required additional preparation and classroom management. The findings therefore show a tension between the curriculum's expectation for responsive instruction and the practical limits imposed by class size, time, and available resources.

Time constraints were closely linked with curriculum demands. Teachers reported difficulty fitting lesson exemplars within prescribed time allotments while preparing interactive activities and attending to individual learner needs. Curriculum integration added another layer of complexity because teachers were expected to connect academic content, technical skills, higher-order thinking, and student-centered approaches. Such demands required not only content knowledge but also pedagogical flexibility.

The transition to the strengthened curriculum also required continuous adaptation. Teachers had to learn new approaches, respond to changing requirements, and develop competence in digital and interactive instruction. These findings support the thesis literature emphasizing the importance of sustained, track-specific professional development rather than one-time training (Bacus & Alda, 2022; Bernardo et al., 2020). They also suggest that curriculum implementation depends on the interaction of teacher capability, motivation, and institutional opportunity: even committed teachers may struggle when time, materials, facilities, and technical support are insufficient.

Opportunities Arising from the Strengthened SHS Program

Table 2. Major Themes on Opportunities for Grade 11 Teachers and Learners

Theme	Key Evidence / Meaning
Enhanced Student Participation and Active Learning	Interactive, activity-based, and student-centered approaches increased participation and classroom engagement.
Higher-Order Thinking and Independent Learning	Students were encouraged to analyze, evaluate, make decisions, apply knowledge, and work more independently.
Teacher Development and Instructional Innovation	Teachers explored new strategies, strengthened professional competence, and increased use of digital tools.
Work-Based Learning and Skills Development	Hands-on training, real-world application, work immersion, and industry exposure connected classroom learning with practice.
Career Readiness and Competency Development	Industry alignment, technical skill development, certification opportunities, and employment preparation strengthened career readiness.

Holistic Student Development	Students developed confidence, communication, responsibility, decision-making, adaptability, and other life and career skills.
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Despite implementation difficulties, teachers identified important opportunities created by the strengthened program. The curriculum encouraged more active and learner-centered classroom practices. Interactive and activity-based approaches increased participation and gave students greater responsibility for their learning. Rather than functioning only as recipients of information, learners were expected to analyze, evaluate, apply knowledge, and participate in meaningful tasks. This supports the thesis literature on the value of multimodal and student-centered instruction in improving engagement and meaningful learning.

Teachers also viewed the reform as an opportunity for professional growth. The need to implement new content and approaches encouraged them to explore instructional strategies, use technology, and rethink traditional classroom practices. In this sense, the implementation challenge itself became a stimulus for instructional innovation. This is consistent with studies cited in the thesis indicating that curriculum change can promote teacher resilience, creativity, and professional development when adequate support is available (Bacus & Alda, 2022; Frianeza et al., 2024).

A major strength of the program was its emphasis on practical and career-oriented learning. Work-based experiences, hands-on activities, industry exposure, and certification opportunities were perceived as ways to connect school learning with employment and further education. Teachers further observed opportunities for holistic development, including confidence, communication, responsibility, decision-making, and adaptability. Thus, the program's perceived benefits extended beyond academic content to preparation for work and life.

Strategies and Support Mechanisms

Table 3. Key Strategies and Support Mechanisms Identified by Teachers

Theme	Key Evidence / Meaning
Learner-Centered and Differentiated Instruction	Teachers adapted content, methods, pacing, and activities to accommodate differences in readiness and learning needs.
Technology and Instructional Resources	Digital tools, multimedia, visual aids, and available learning materials were used to improve delivery and participation.
Collaboration and School Leadership Support	Co-teachers and school leaders provided shared strategies, resources, guidance, and instructional support.
Continuous Professional Development	Training, workshops, upskilling, and track-specific capacity building strengthened teacher competence and confidence.
Adequate Resource Provision and Curriculum Alignment	Facilities, equipment, materials, realistic time allocation, and alignment with classroom realities were considered essential.
Monitoring, Evaluation, and Feedback	Assessment, follow-up support, feedback, and collaborative review helped teachers refine instruction and implementation.

Teachers responded to implementation challenges through flexible instructional practices. Differentiated instruction, activity-based learning, learner-centered approaches, and adjustments in content and pacing were used to address varied levels of student understanding. Technology and multimedia resources were also employed to improve lesson delivery and engagement. These strategies demonstrate teacher adaptability, but their effectiveness remained dependent on access to suitable resources and sufficient preparation time.

Collaboration emerged as an important support mechanism. Teachers benefited from sharing strategies and resources with colleagues, while school leadership provided guidance and organizational support. Professional development was likewise considered necessary because the strengthened curriculum requires new competencies, particularly in specialized subjects, technology use, and learner-centered pedagogy. The findings

reinforce the thesis literature emphasizing the role of school leadership, mentoring, and targeted professional development in strengthening teacher self-efficacy and instructional effectiveness (Ajani, 2020; Pelingon et al., 2024).

Teachers also emphasized that sustainable implementation requires adequate resources, curriculum alignment, and continuous monitoring. Facilities and materials must correspond with the competencies expected in the curriculum, while content scope and time allocation should reflect classroom realities. Monitoring and feedback should function as developmental support rather than simple compliance. Taken together, the findings show that successful implementation cannot rely on teacher effort alone; it requires a coordinated system in which teachers, school leaders, curriculum developers, policymakers, and stakeholders share responsibility for instructional quality.

Conclusions

The study concludes that Grade 11 teachers implementing the Strengthened SHS Program experience a complex combination of instructional, curricular, and systemic challenges. Resource limitations, diverse learner needs, time constraints, curriculum integration, transition demands, and pedagogical difficulties affect teachers' capacity to deliver the curriculum as intended. Nevertheless, teachers demonstrate commitment and adaptability by modifying instruction, integrating technology, collaborating with colleagues, and continuously improving their practices. The strengthened program also creates meaningful opportunities for active learning, higher-order thinking, teacher innovation, work-based learning, career readiness, and holistic student development. These benefits are most likely to be sustained when implementation is supported by responsive leadership, continuous professional development, adequate facilities and instructional resources, realistic curriculum alignment, and consistent monitoring and feedback. Strengthening SHS implementation is therefore both an instructional and systemic responsibility.

Recommendations

Teachers should continue using differentiated, learner-centered, activity-based, and technology-supported strategies while participating in continuous professional development and collaborative planning. School administrators should integrate Strengthened SHS needs into School Improvement Plans, prioritize facilities and instructional resources, provide targeted in-service training, and establish supportive monitoring systems. Curriculum developers should review content scope, instructional materials, and time allocation in relation to classroom realities. Policymakers should sustain flexible, competency-based policies and provide adequate resources, specialized teacher training, and mechanisms for implementation feedback. Parents and learners should be encouraged to participate actively in the learning process, while future researchers may examine implementation across other pilot schools and contexts to determine similarities and differences in challenges, opportunities, and support needs.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares that they have no conflicts of interest

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