

Valuing General Academic Strand (GAS): exploring attitude of the Senior High School graduating class on their career choice

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ABSTRACT

The General Academic Strand (GAS) serves students who remain uncertain about their preferred college course or degree program, providing them with an avenue to pursue higher education despite indecision. Selecting a career path is often a complex and overwhelming process, given the vast array of options available and the extensive information students must process (Gati et al., 2019). Many students experience a mismatch between their senior high school strand and the college degree they eventually pursue, often resulting in the need to take bridging programs to satisfy prerequisite requirements. This situation can place a significant financial burden on families, compelling parents to struggle in providing quality education for their children. By emphasizing the value of the GAS strand, students are encouraged to reflect on their curriculum experiences and elective subjects undertaken during Grades 11 and 12. Such reflection aims to facilitate better alignment between chosen college degree programs and prior academic preparation, thereby reducing the necessity for bridging courses and easing parental financial strain. This study explores the attitudes of Grade 12 students graduating in the school year 2024-2025 toward the degree programs they intend to pursue in college following their engagement in the GAS curriculum. Employing a qualitative approach, the research involved randomly selected interviews with Grade 12 students who shared their preferences for potential college degree programs. Interviews were conducted with sensitivity to participants' availability and comfort, lasting no longer than fifteen minutes. Participants were assured confidentiality, and the questions focused on their valuation of the GAS strand and their attitudes toward enrolling in degree programs aligned with their senior high school experiences. Findings reveal that most participants rated the importance of the GAS strand as "very important," highlighting its role in promoting autonomy in managing tasks, encouraging the generation of new ideas, and intellectually challenging students. Many respondents indicated that their GAS experience influenced their consideration of degree programs such as Political Science, Education, and Psychology. However, a minority expressed uncertainty, primarily due to financial constraints that prevented them from enrolling in STEM courses aligned with their genuine interests, such as medical fields. This aligns with Borchert's (2002) assertion that students should begin contemplating career decisions during their senior high school years. The study further shows that by the second semester of Grade 12, students exhibited increased maturity and discipline, particularly in completing requirements for subjects like Work Immersion and Research, Inquiries, and Investigation. Their engagement with humanities-related subjects within the GAS

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strand fostered an awareness of careers focused on helping and transforming lives. This process contributed to the development of a professional identity grounded in their evolving preferences, skills, and abilities, which is crucial for making informed career choices (Tang, 2019).

Keywords: General Academic Strand, career attitude, senior high school students

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INTRODUCTION

General Academic Strand (GAS) caters students who are not yet sure of what course or degree they want to take up in college. In other words, this strand is being offered for indecisive learners to still proceed in college to any degree program or choice they may want to opt to. Nevertheless, selecting a career can be one of life's most challenging decisions. People often feel overwhelmed by the amount of information they need to absorb when considering the numerous career paths, they could potentially follow (Gati et al., 2019). Considering, most of the students when enrolling in the college degree program results to mismatch of strand and what to take up in align to prerequisite strand as requirement in college. With this, it results to graduates of Senior High School, taking up bridging programs offered by university schools to align strand taken during SHS to meet college degree programs requirement.

From that perspective, it made parents more prone to gauging financial problems and struggle to make ends meet just to provide the best of education for their children. As such, by valuing General Academic Strand (GAS), students will be reminded of their curriculum tasks to live in the principle of what they have learned and acquired out of the elective subjects they have been engaging from Grade 11 to Grade 12 of which as well will result to aligning degree programs to take up in college, making parents less prone to financial struggles of paying bridging subjects as part of the curriculum requirement.

Thus, this article measures the attitude of the Grade 12 students graduating class towards the degree program they will be taking in college after the rigorous training and curriculum they have been learning while enrolling in GAS strand during the school year 2024-2025.

Statement of the problem

This study aims to determine the attitudes of Grade 12 students enrolled in the General Academic Strand (GAS) toward the college degree programs they intend to pursue after graduation. Specifically, it seeks to explore how these students value the GAS strand in relation to their preparedness and decision-making for higher education. The study also investigates the alignment between the students' chosen senior high school strand and their preferred college degree programs, as well as the factors influencing their career choices amid academic and financial challenges.

METHODOLOGY

This study made use of qualitative type of study of which involved interviewing Grade 12 students on what possible college degree program they will be enrolling when given the chances

and opportunities to proceed to tertiary education. Moreover, the interview was randomly selected and with utmost consideration of the students' preferences of time and questions they were more comfortable at answering or responding. Significantly, while doing the interview questions, students as research participants were assured of the confidentiality of their answers and was only asked for not more than 15 minutes in the areas of valuing GAS as a strand and exploring attitude of them taking degrees aligned to what taken up during the Senior High School years.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on this study, it was found out that in terms of "Valuing General Academic Strand" most of the research participants answered "4 or Very Important" the strand to them in terms of promotion, control over how and when they work the tasks given to them, being able to contribute new ideas which will help build the future, and being given challenges which they were stretched intellectually. This was furthered when the students reiterated that taking up GAS Strand enabled them to consider degree programs in Political Science, Education, and Psychology; however three out of 20 research participants, answered "2 or slight importance" which made them still doubt of what to take up in college, because deep inside their hearts were the desire to take up medical courses but because of their parent's financial incapacity, they weren't able to enroll in STEM to some private institutions offering such. As such in the study of (Borchert, 2002) he stated that "students should be thinking about career decisions in their senior year of high school".

On the other side, as to exploring the attitude of the SHS Graduating Class, it showed that most of the respondents were maturing the moment they reached Grade 12 2nd semester of their Senior High School years due to the need to be disciplined enough in submitting requirements in particular "Work Immersion" and "Research, Inquiries, and Investigation" subjects. Their attitude revealed that taking care of humanities involved engagement by them through the number of subjects in GAS of which focused on the people and the study of ways and manners as to how people react. With this, it made the research participants realized that there is career in helping and aiding people to transform their lives based on the strategies, pedagogies, and learning habits acquired through the Senior years. As such, a genuinely conscious choice of profession and place of future employment directly depends on the individual's current preferences by forming a sense of professional identity. Students' clear understanding of their inclinations, skills, and abilities – which will continue to develop throughout their lives – is essential (Tang, 2019).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that the majority of Grade 12 students enrolled in the General Academic Strand recognize the importance of the strand in shaping their academic growth and career considerations. The GAS curriculum has positively influenced their ability to manage tasks independently, contribute innovative ideas, and face intellectual challenges, which in turn has guided many students toward degree programs such as Political Science, Education, and Psychology. However, financial limitations continue to hinder some students from pursuing their preferred courses, particularly in STEM fields, leading to uncertainty in their college plans.

Furthermore, the senior high school experience fosters increased maturity and discipline, especially through subjects that emphasize research and community engagement, helping students develop a clearer sense of professional identity. Ultimately, the study underscores the significance of valuing the GAS strand as a foundation for informed career decisions and the alignment of senior high school preparation with college degree choices, which may help alleviate the financial and academic struggles faced by students and their families.

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