

Success beyond the classroom achieved by Technical Vocational Education Graduates

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Imagine learning skills that don't just stay within the four corners of a classroom, but travel with you into the real world opening doors, creating jobs, and solving real world problems. That's the promise and hope offered by the Technical-Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in the Philippines. While some still downplay it as a second-tier path compared to a traditional college degree, the countless numbers and stories speak otherwise. TVET is not just about securing a job. Its about building a life, a livelihood, and a legacy unlike any others. And despite the setbacks it faces, Filipino TVET graduates continue to prove that success doesn't need to wear a toga. Its how you survive adversity.

Let's not sugarcoat it shall we: TVET students face real challenges due to multifaceted factors. Many training centers lack modern equipment, making it hard for trainees to match industry expectations once they step out into the workforce (Edralin & Pastrana, 2023). There's also a social stigma, the silent judgment that vocational training is only for those who can't make it in college assuming reasons. This bias is reinforced by employers who still lean toward academic degrees, even when the job clearly calls for technical skills (Reyes, 2024). On top of that, graduates who only completed secondary education often land in lower-paying jobs compared to their university counterparts (Del Rosario et al., 2024). These barriers don't just slow progress, they test the resolve of every trainee trying to carve a future from the skills they've worked hard to master. This could also be tied back to how globalization plays a role in asserting global standards and criteria when it comes to hiring. But, it does not necessarily adapt to the local needs of certain industries.

And yet, they rise. TVET graduates are out here winning quietly. TESDA's own studies show that eight out of ten of them land jobs shortly after graduation (TESDA, 2023). Many programs also include hands-on training through apprenticeships or dual-learning system experiences that leave graduates not just qualified on paper, but confident in practice. Some even go beyond employment. A Malaysian model of TVET entrepreneurship revealed that about 25% of their graduates became full-time business owners (n.a, 2020). In the Philippines, more TVET institutions are now offering modules on business development helping trainees think beyond employment and towards ownership, leadership, and independence.

The real win? Their impact stretches far beyond their own resumes and curriculum vitae. TVET graduates are driving the workforce in high-demand sectors like hospitality, agriculture, construction, welding, and automotive services. They're the people fixing our roads, wiring our buildings, preparing our food, and caring for our homes. And in many local communities, TVET-trained entrepreneurs are setting up small enterprises that don't just uplift their families, they provide jobs for others too (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2012). Its not just always about getting hired. Its about becoming

a contributor, a change maker, someone who turns skills into service, and knowledge into practice.

Furthermore, TVET graduates in the Philippines still face hurdles. But they're also rewriting the narrative slowly through every passing generation. From high employment rates to entrepreneurial success, their stories challenge the outdated idea enforced by society: that vocational training is a fallback. Its not. It's a valid, valuable path toward personal and economic empowerment and the country needs it now more than ever.

As someone who's debated the worth of systems and the power of choices, I see TVET not as a last resort, but as a strategic move. The critics focus too much on the prestige a university can bring and offer. But what's more prestigious than knowing you've got the skills to thrive in the real world? What's more honorable than using your hands, mind, and heart to serve your family and community? Sure, we need to invest more in facilities, build stronger industry ties, and break the stigma but the foundation is already there. In a world that keeps changing, we need workers who can adapt, act, and build. And that's exactly who our TVET graduates are. They are already facing the impossible. Its already there. Growing amidst hurdles and proving the triumphs of Filipino TVET Graduates.

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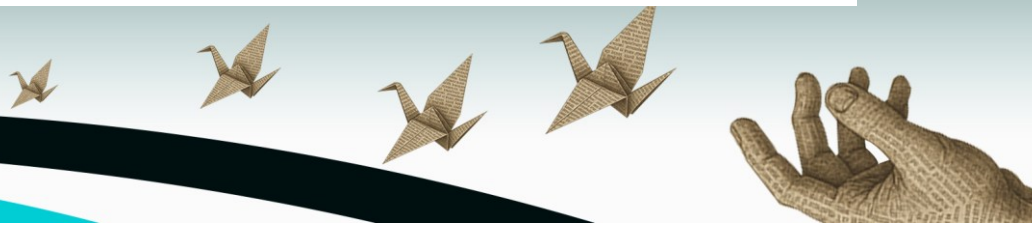
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