

PREPARING PHILIPPINE TVET FOR THE FUTURE IN ASEAN

TVET BRIEF: INDUSTRY TRENDS | ISSUE NUMBER 8 | SERIES OF 2020



How Ready is Philippine TVET for the Future in the ASEAN Region?

I. Introduction

The challenges presented by the 21st Century make it clear that the future generation of workers need to keep pace with change, perhaps now more than ever. Manual labor is slowly being augmented by automation and advanced machinery, and digital technology is being integrated in nearly all aspects of life, from communication to commerce. Disruptions brought about by these changes, such as skills gaps, also mean that global economies must follow suit: adapting to new challenges and opportunities as they arise in order to remain competitive.

Such are the points made by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), declaring that technical vocational education and training (TVET) are the means with which member-countries can prepare their workforce for the 21st Century. However, the ASEAN also acknowledged that TVET in Asia still has plenty of room for growth. For one thing, reception and implementation of TVET by ASEAN member states is a mixed bag: some countries train their workers better than others. In addition, TVET graduates in the region have varying levels of competency looked for by businesses and industries. This, among many things, are the reasons why the ASEAN outlined its TVET agenda, highlighting the need for continuous collaboration between governments, academes, and industries.

The agenda was formally created in the 7th Regional Policy Dialogue (“Business and industry cooperation in TVET – Towards a better practice for ASEAN”) held at Jakarta on June 2018. It sought to answer the question: what is the future of TVET in ASEAN?

II. Overview of the Future ASEAN Agenda for TVET

The ASEAN perceives TVET as something akin to a tripartite relationship between government leaders, business management organizations (BMOs), and educational institutions. To quote the ASEAN document produced after the 7th Regional Policy Dialogue:

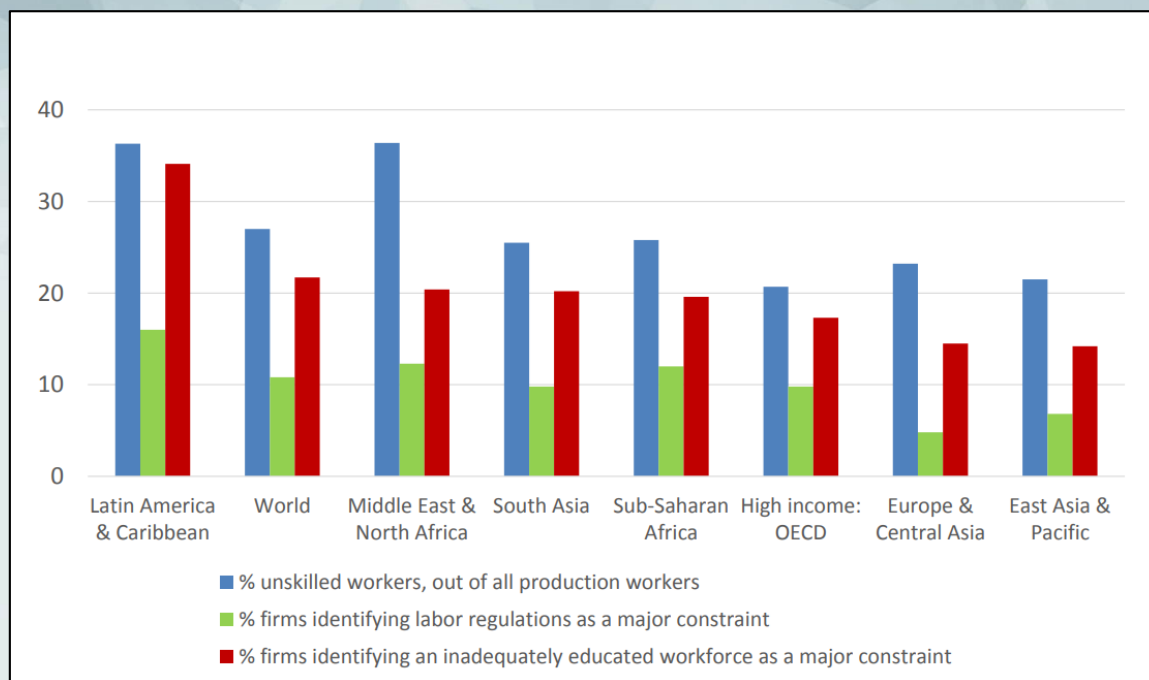
Governments provide direction, strategy, infrastructure, resources and funding. BMOs promote industry involvement in skills development and industry-driven apprenticeships, and they solicit and feedback the interest of business and industry to policy makers. TVET schools provide the curriculum and quality teachers to delivery training

Skills development, in particular is such an important aspect that ASEAN highlighted it as a major strategy for the TVET Future Agenda, i.e. creating models for skill standard development and skills assessments, and therefore establish a consistent quality in technical-vocational (tech-voc) skills within the region. The strategies recommended by the ASEAN are as follows (in verbatim):

- a) Enhancing the relevance and quality of TVET regulations and strategies
- b) Establishing public-private models for skill standard development and assessments
- c) Strengthening the leadership of business membership organisations in TVET
- d) Rebranding TVET
- e) Mobilizing companies to engage in TVET
- f) Ensuring sufficient funding for TVET
- g) Improving the quality of training delivery
- h) Deepening the collaboration of TVET schools with business and industry
- i) Intensifying research on TVET and future skills needs

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) shares a similar view for TVET, recognizing the need for upskilling in the future. As seen in Figure 1, other regions in the world have a significant portion of their workforces identified as “unskilled”, meaning their jobs do not require special talents or knowledge to perform. In addition, many countries also consider poor education/training of workers to be a significant challenge in achieving their economic goals. The need for upskilling also applies to TVET teachers, as UNESCO believes that teachers need to be familiar with the very skills and traits they wish to impart to their students.

Fig. 1 Industries' Perception on the Top Three Challenges in Economic Activity (World Bank 2016)



Source: UNESCO, Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems Education Sector (2019)

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Overcoming such problems on skills training will require a concerted effort from governments, businesses, and the academe. According to the ASEAN, these three parties must consistently work hand-in-hand when crafting skills and competencies, implementing their associated training programs, monitoring their success and effectiveness, and garnering feedback for future reference. Incorporating TVET into a country’s national economic agenda is also a very important step to take, but ASEAN relents how some countries fail in this regard due to insufficient dialogue among the three parties.

It is for this reason that the ASEAN proposed several core values within the TVET Future Agenda that member countries should espouse, moving forward. For TVET to survive in the future, it is important for all parties involved in the TVET-space to exhibit the following:

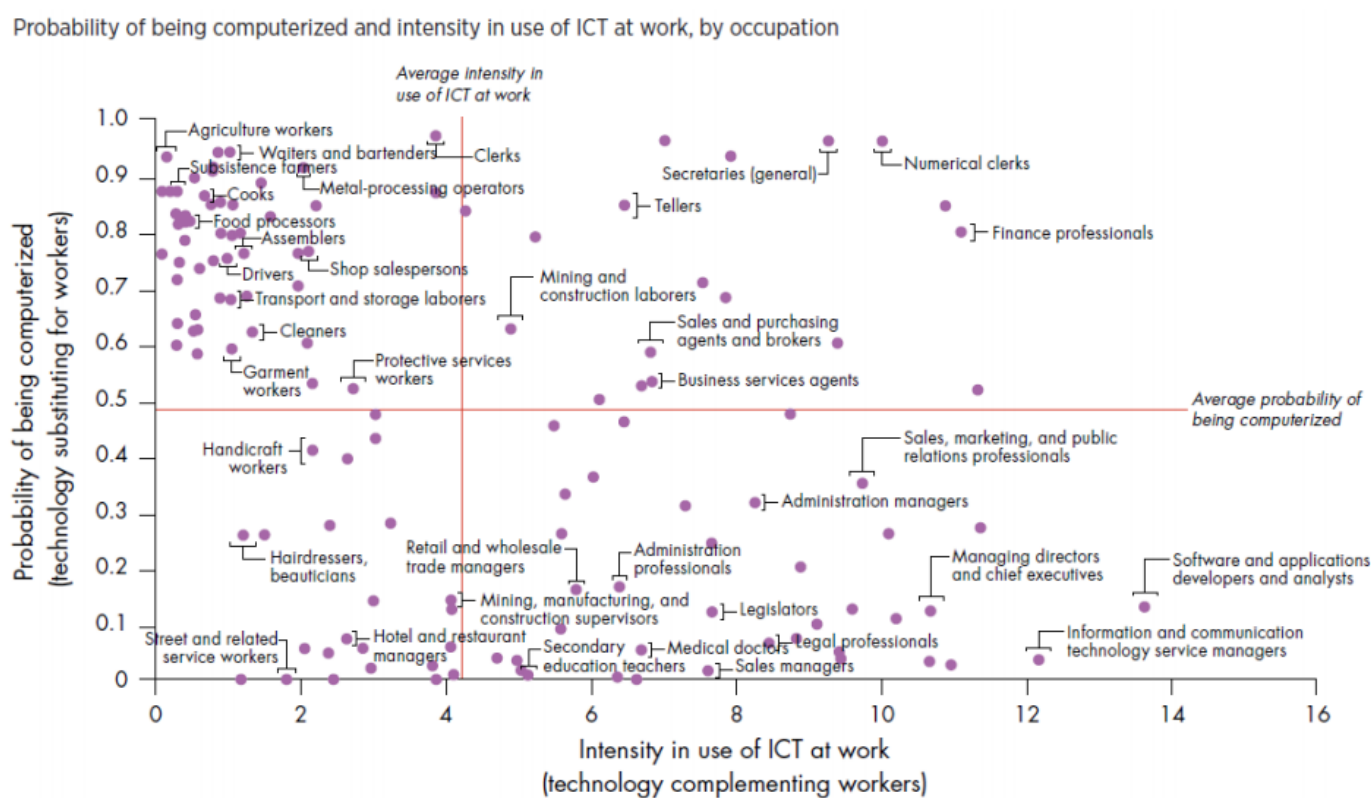
- a) **Partnership:** Successful business and industry cooperation in TVET is based on a partnership of all stakeholders that is defined by honesty, integrity and transparency. In a true partnership, stakeholders also feel like they belong, they accept and support each other.
- b) **Effectiveness:** Successful business and industry cooperation in TVET ensures effectiveness in TVET development. It is purpose-driven and utilizes opportunities to create a legacy.
- c) **Communication:** Successful business and industry cooperation in TVET is based on open communication which allows everyone to know and be known, creates understanding and ultimately ensures inclusion and participation of all stakeholders.
- d) **Learning:** Successful business and industry cooperation in TVET is based on continuous (life-long) learning. The cooperation provides inspiration and stimulation to all stakeholders. Using creativity, it leads to innovation and the continuous improvement of TVET.
- e) **Sustainability:** Successful business and industry cooperation in TVET is based on consistent and sustainable efforts of all stakeholders to enhance TVET development, in order to achieve stability, harmony and prosperity in ASEAN."

III. What has the Philippines Done so Far?

The Philippines has been an ASEAN member-country since 1967, being one of its founders. The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) is the premier authority on TVET in the country and has already recognized the need to prepare for the future in its 2018-2022 National Technical Education and Skills Development Plan (NTESDP).

Among the many issues cited in the NTESDP is the deepening impact of 21st Century technologies in various industries, which could affect the instruction of tech-voc skills throughout the country. TESDA cited a 2018 conference hosted by the Philippine Institute for Development (PID), explaining that fields of transportation, education, finance, manufacturing, and the like are now experiencing disruptions due to the growing prevalence of artificial intelligence, the Internet, data analytics, and other similar technologies. As such, tech-voc skills should be instructed with these considerations in mind. As seen in Figure 2, this phenomenon has resulted in several occupations being more likely to be automated in the near future, many of which involving TVET. Such occupations include machine operators, garment workers, and clerks. Interestingly, the same data claims that jobs that require cognitive skills like communication and empathy are likely to be unaffected by such advances in technology. Managers, nurses, and artists fall in this category.

Fig. 2 Occupations by Probability of Being Computerized and Intensity of Use of ICT



Source: TESDA NTESDP 2018-2022; World Development Report 2016: Digital Dividends

Many of the aforementioned strategies are already being carried out by TESDA:

- a) For “Enhancing the Relevance and Quality of TVET Regulations and Strategies”
 - TESDA has the NTESDP 2018-2022 and the new HR Plan to prepare for the future.
 - Industry leaders are part of the TESDA Board, in addition to the skills prioritization meetings being conducted regularly.
 - TESDA regularly consults with industry association/partners for the formation and implementation of training regulations.
 - TESDA is also implementing Enterprise-Based Training for this exact reason.
 - TESDA conducts Employers Satisfaction Survey to determine feedback of the industry

- b) For “Establishing public-private models for skill standard development and assessments”
 - Throughout the first three quarters of 2019, TESDA conducted an Action Programming and Resource Allocation Planning initiative with Bayan Academy to determine relevant reforms in the 2018-2022 NTESDP. The initiative saw both public and private sectors entities discuss future skills standards and assessments that are most relevant in their respective industries. The results of these talks are currently being considered by TESDA.
 - On May 2019, TESDA released guidelines for the implementation of a new TVET Governance Ecosystem, which sought (among other things) to address local skills needs through the continuous collaboration of government, private, and public actors.

- c) For “Strengthening the leadership of business membership organizations in TVET”
 - o TESDA is currently taking steps to reinstate Recognized Industry Boards (RIBs) and Industry Associations in TVET Governance. RIBs are envisioned to be responsible for developing TRs and their respective competency assessment tools, accrediting individuals and centers in the private sector as training assessors, and approving priority skills needs to the TESDA Board.

 - d) For “Rebranding TVET”
 - o TESDA’s current “Abot Lahat” campaign emphasizes the ability of TVET to provide meaningful livelihoods for Filipinos from all strata, instead of those from any particular group. TESDA intends TVET to be a viable path for returning overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), former rebels, college graduates, full-time professionals, and so on, a message which is constantly emphasized in its information dissemination activities.

 - e) For “Mobilizing companies to engage in TVET”
 - o TESDA continues to strengthen the implementation of its Enterprise-Based Training scheme, which provides an opportunity for companies to actively take part in TVET instruction. A few examples of such Trainings in 2020 include programs aimed at agriculture schools and returning OFWs.
 - o TESDA has also engaged with other companies for the implementation/promulgation of specific TVET programs. An example is Speed Limitation Device Servicing NC II, which was created largely with assistance from various automotive manufacturers and the Department of Transportation (DOTr).

 - f) For “Improving the quality of training delivery”
 - o Certain training regulations are now available online via the TESDA Online Program (TOP), thus allowing students to engage in remote learning.
 - o TESDA also implements Enterprise-based Training so that students will learn skills directly from the industry itself.
 - o TESDA ensures the quality of the delivery of its services by subjecting its processes to the criteria of the International Organization for Standards (ISO) and Philippine Quality Awards (PQA). Likewise, training institutions are subjected to quality-assurance programs such as the System for TVET Accreditation and Recognition (STAR) Awards and the Asia Pacific Accreditation and Certification Commission (APACC).
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- g) For “Intensifying research on TVET and future skills needs”
- TESDA, in partnership with the International Labor Organization (ILO), conducted the Workplace Skills Satisfaction Survey and the Study on the Employability of TVET Graduates, which intends to directly determine the labor outlook of learners in the current year, as well as to know areas in training that TESDA should improve.
 - The aforementioned Action Programming and Resource Allocation Planning initiative with Bayan Academy in 2019 also served a research function for TVET, for a number of new skills needs were identified at the end of its sessions. An example would be the new Foreman training regulation, which would meet the demand for middle-level technical skills in the Philippine Electronics and Semiconductors Industry.

IV. Moving Forward

- a) As stated in the ASEAN Future TVET Agenda, the Philippines should create a stronger government-industry-academe relationship in order to make TVET even more competitive and relevant in the future.
- b) The Agenda also recommends that the following entities be established in the country, in some way or form, to make Philippine TVET even more competitive and dynamic:
- **Skills Committees** that can monitor and *immediately* initiate the updating of TVET skills as changes in the industry happen.
 - **National Certification Committees** that streamline and standardize TVET certification; the Agenda recommends these be co-chaired by both private and public sector figures.
 - **TVET Departments**, or at least a **TVET Point Person**, in *all* companies that can coordinate with TESDA regarding the skills needs of their employees. This arrangement will also allow the conduct of training seminars, programs, and the like to be seamless and less time-consuming due to the ease of coordination between TESDA and the company.
 - **TVET Industry Advisory Councils** could provide a forum for regular exchanges and discussions of information among schools and companies. Such councils could be set up on the local level (in this case, school-specific) or at the regional/ provincial level.
 - **National Coordinating Council**, mainly for TVET research and also to encourage collaborations with other governments for research.
- c) The Philippines should ensure that TVET continues to have proper funding and support.
- d) The Philippines should continue to promote TVET by focusing on the following messages suggested by the Agenda:
- “TVET graduates contribute significantly to the social and economic development of our countries, to MSMEs and start-ups;
 - TVET graduates can start earning money more quickly and continue their higher education later on, or at the same time of pursuing a TVET degree;
 - TVET provides skills of the future and opportunities for self-employment;
 - TVET can contribute to securing the sustainability of family businesses by providing necessary core skills of running a business (such as bookkeeping);
 - TVET covers not only blue-collar jobs, but also prepares students for jobs in other sectors, such as hospitality, business, and administration.”

- e) The initial evaluation vis-à-vis the identified strategies indicates that there are other areas that PH TVET should look into to make it ready for the future. This can be considered in the next cycle of the NTESDP as this consider the international perspectives and mechanism that can be adopted by PH TVET.
- f) Further, the results of the discussion should be looked into as the ASEAN TVET Council is already in place. The identified areas that should be given focused for TVET to cope and address the future requirements. These can be included in the priority areas/agenda of the ASEAN TVET Council.

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Policy Research and Evaluation Division

Planning Office

Office of the Deputy Director General for Policies and Planning

Technical Education and Skills Development Authority

TESDA Complex, East Service Road, South Luzon Expressway (SLEX)

Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City 1630, Metro Manila



www.tesda.gov.ph



po.pred@tesda.gov.ph



(02) 8817- 2675 | 8893 -1966