

TRAVERSING THE “NEW NORMAL”: INNOVATION IN PHILIPPINE TVET

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How will TVET cope with the New Normal?

Pandemic: COVID-19

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. Most people infected with COVID-19 will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness.



The best way to prevent and slow down transmission is to be well informed about the COVID-19, the disease it causes and how it spreads. Protect yourself and others from infection by washing your hands or using an alcohol-based rub frequently and not touching your face.

The COVID-19 spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes, so it's important that you also practice respiratory etiquette (for example, by coughing into a flexed elbow).¹

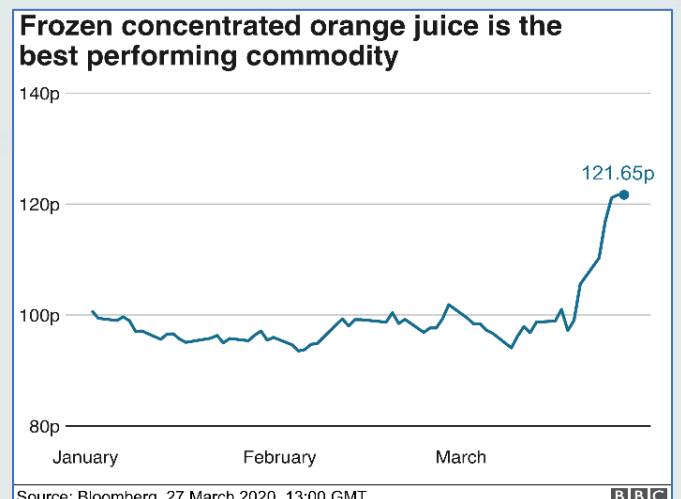
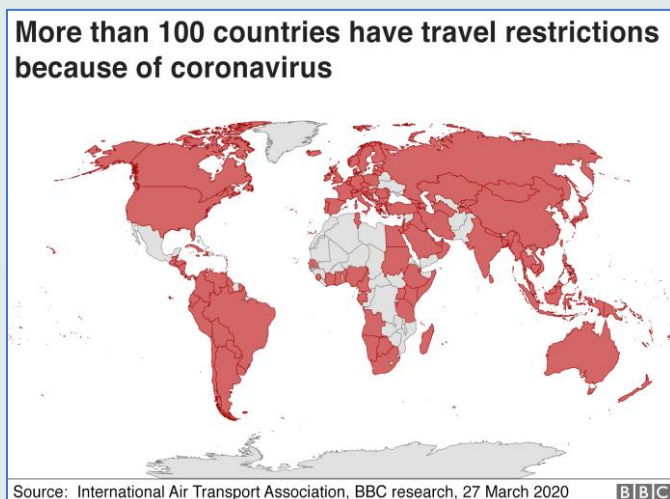
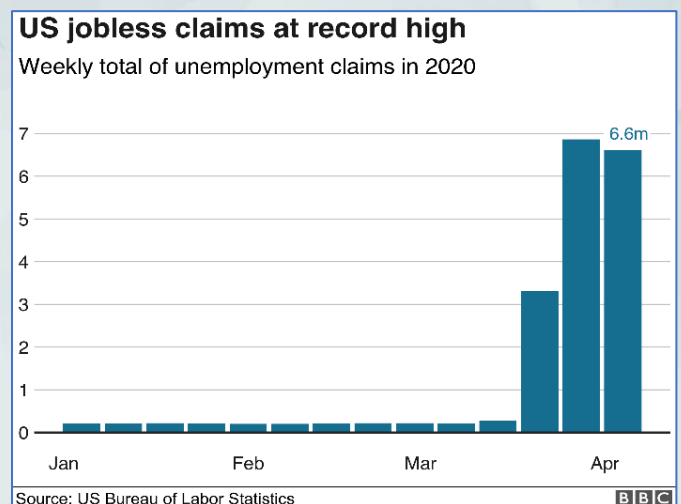
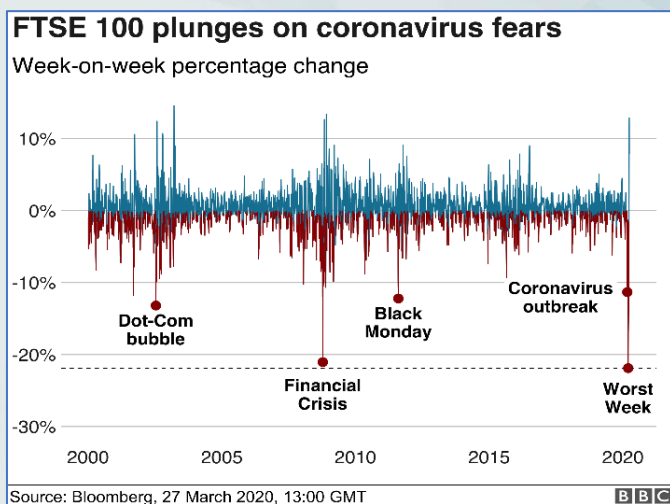
At this time, there are no specific vaccines or treatments for COVID-19. However, there are many ongoing clinical trials evaluating potential treatments. WHO will continue to provide updated information as soon as clinical findings become available.

¹ https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1

Impact of COVID-19

In one of the article of The World Economic Forum (WEF) it emphasizes the impact of the pandemic, that with more than 1 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 worldwide, businesses are coping with lost revenue and disrupted supply chains as factory shutdowns and quarantine measures spread across the globe, restricting movement and commerce. Unemployment is skyrocketing, while policymakers across countries race to implement fiscal and monetary measures to alleviate the financial burden on citizens and shore up economies under severe strain.²

The occurrence of the COVID-19 has intensely affected the economy, in the stock markets, employment/unemployment, and tourism industry, among others. The graphs below illustrate the effect of the pandemic.



While the COVID-19 pandemic is first and foremost a health issue, it is also undeniably a big factor in the transformation of various aspects of life. One of which is education. The interruptions brought by this issue is on an unprecedented scale. The online method of teaching has suddenly become the norm even though it has not really been tested as to its effectivity as a learning delivery platform. Also, the longevity of the issue remains questionable. The global lockdown of education institutions is not a short-term issue and its consequences may be felt for a long time even after the pandemic is solved. (Burgess & Sievertsen, 2020)

² <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/02/coronavirus-economic-effects-global-economy-trade-travel/>

With the new normal, there will likely be substantial disparities between families in the extent to which they can help their children and themselves learn. (Burgess & Sievertsen, 2020) Key differences include (Oreopoulos, T von Wachter, & A Heisz, 2012) the amount of time available to devote to teaching/studying, the non-cognitive skills of the parents, resources (for example, not everyone will have the kit to access the best online material), and also the amount of knowledge – it's hard to help your child learn something that you may not understand yourself.

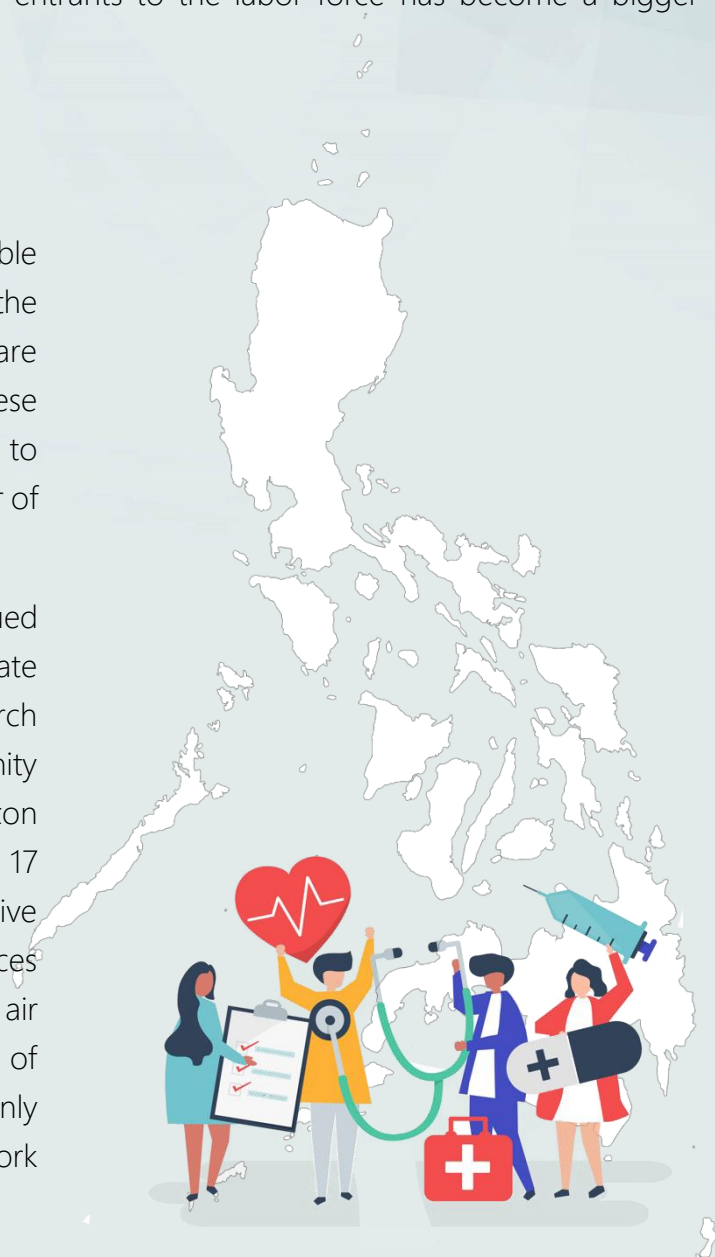
The careers of this year's university graduates may also be severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. They have experienced major teaching interruptions in the final part of their studies, they are experiencing major interruptions in their assessments, and finally they are likely to graduate at the beginning of a major global recession. Evidence suggests that poor market conditions at labor market entry cause workers to accept lower paid jobs, and that this has permanent effects for the careers of some.

Oreopoulos et al. (2012) show that graduates from programs with high predicted earnings can compensate for their poor starting point through both within- and across-firm earnings gains, but graduates from other programs have been found to experience permanent earnings losses from graduating in a recession. (Burgess & Sievertsen, 2020) This creates a domino effect on the problems that needs to be addressed. Now, even access to possible employment of new entrants to the labor force has become a bigger challenge.

Philippines in the time of COVID-19

In response to the growing concern over the irreversible effects of COVID-19 in the life of Filipinos, the government has imposed several guidelines which are to be strictly followed during the outbreak. These guidelines cover various sectors and are put in place to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infecting a great number of the population.

In the Philippines, Proclamation No. 929 was issued which: (a) declared the whole Philippines under a State of Calamity for a period of six (6) months from 16 March 2020; and (b) imposed an Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) throughout the island of Luzon (which includes Metro Manila) from 12:00 a.m. of 17 March 2020 to 12:00 a.m. of 13 April 2020, both effective unless earlier lifted or extended as the circumstances may warrant. Under this proclamation, land, sea, and air travel restrictions will continue. The movement of people will be regulated and remain limited to only procuring essential goods and reporting to work deemed necessary by the government.



On April 7, 2020, it was announced that the ECQ for Luzon will be extended until April 30 instead of the initial announcement of April 13. This extension was placed to further prevent the spread of COVID-19 or as they say, "to flatten the curve". Aside from these, various initiatives were also taken by the government such as doling out money or goods under the Social Amelioration Program (SAP) for the people affected by the ECQ especially those whose source of income are directly affected by the ECQ.

According to Department of Health (DOH), there are a total of 6, 459 cases of COVID-19 in the country. While the number of cases keep on growing, Filipinos find hope in the increasing number of recovered cases as opposed to the cases resulting to death which are 613 and 428 respectively. (DOH, 2020)

To combat the spread of COVID-19, the government is continuously setting up community quarantine and treatment centers. Health cluster coordination meetings are ongoing between government, WHO, UN, NGO, donor and private sector. All are aiming for an integrated approach among health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), Nutrition, Sexual and Reproductive Health, and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) sub-clusters, as well as specific health cluster coordination for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). (World Health Organization (WHO), 2020)

According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Philippines' economic growth will slow significantly this year before a strong rebound in 2021, with expansionary fiscal and monetary policies partly offsetting slower domestic demand and disruptions in tourism, trade, and manufacturing. (Asian Development Bank, 2020)

"This unprecedented and extraordinary public health emergency brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic will substantially slow down economic growth this year, with most of the contraction in the economy occurring in the second quarter. We are anticipating a bounce back starting in the second half of this year, supported by the government's stimulus spending and easier monetary policies," said ADB Country Director for the Philippines Kelly Bird.

According to a report from ADB, due to the ECQ, there is a need to shut down schools and most government offices and private establishments in Metro Manila and the entire Luzon island, which accounts for over half of the country's total population and generates more than two-thirds of the country's overall GDP. On the bright side, sustained public investment—especially in priority projects under the government's "Build, Build, Build" (BBB) infrastructure development program—and a rebound in private consumption will drive economic growth in 2021. The economy will also benefit from the government's large-scale fiscal spending to boost the delivery of relief measures to vulnerable sectors affected by the pandemic. (Asian Development Bank, 2020)

On the other hand, a report entitled, "Philippines In Covid-19 Lockdown: Impact on Consumer Sector" by Fitch Solutions, says that consumer and retail in the country is expected to be hit the hardest due to ECQ. However, while most sectors in consumer and retail will experience a decrease in demand in sales, two (2) sectors are predicted to become outliers.

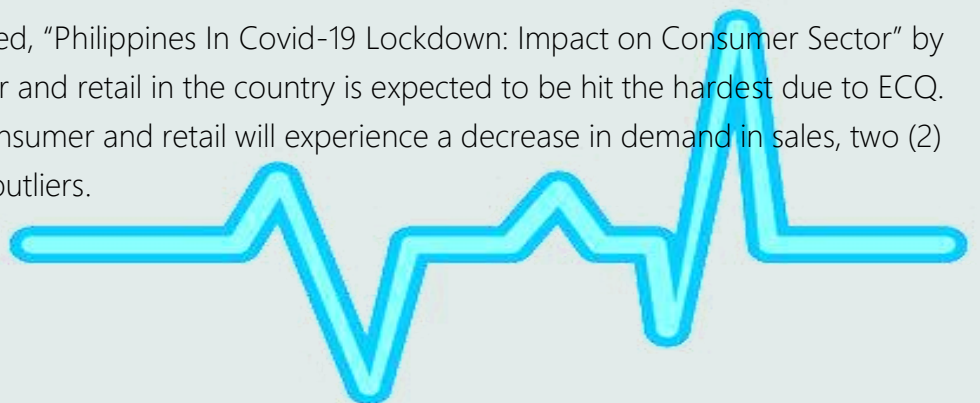


Table 1: Philippines - Potential Revisions to Forecasts (Consumer Spending)

Consumer Spending Category	Potential Revision to Forecast	Description of Forecast Revision
Food and alcoholic drinks	Upward	There has been evidence of panic buying, especially in dense urban areas such as Metro Manila where relatively richer urban consumers can afford to stockpile.
Clothing and footwear	Downward	Non-essential businesses are closed, including clothing and footwear stores. Less potential for e-commerce as deliveries are prioritized for food.
Furnishing	Downward	Non-essential businesses are closed, including furniture stores. Less potential for e-commerce as deliveries are prioritized for food.
Health	Upward	More over the counter medication sales is expected, with consumers seeking medicine and health related purchases during the pandemic.
Transport	Downward	Public transport has been suspended in major urban cities.
Recreation and culture	Downward	With lockdowns, quarantines and suspension of public transport, it is unlikely that Filipinos are able to travel. However, streaming services like Netflix will see increased demand--the streaming service has already had to place caps on video quality to avoid overburdening its platform.
Restaurant and hotels	Downward	Restaurants have been ordered to close, although there is anecdotal evidence that some restaurants continue to offer takeout or delivery options.

Source: (Fitch Solutions, 2020)

The prevalence of COVID-19 cases not only in the Philippines but also in other parts of the world gave birth to the concept of the "new normal" wherein the implementation of physical and social distancing measures and the wearing of face masks has become part of the status quo. Most Filipinos opted to stay indoors unless there's an extremely urgent reason to go outside. Schools have suspended their classes while companies who can still operate via telecommuting implemented a Work from Home (WFH) setup to ensure the safety of their workers. Because of this, people suddenly needed to effectively transition to telecommuting in order to continue working/studying.

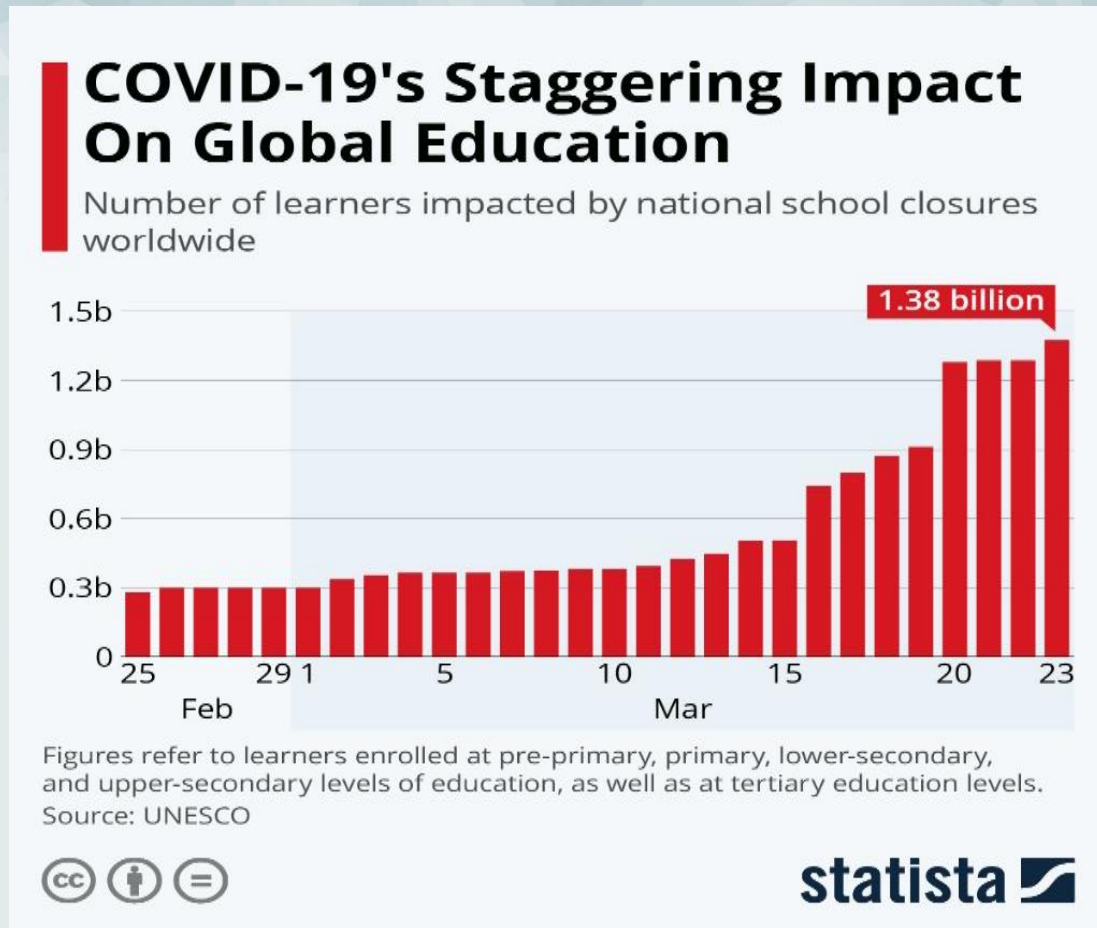
The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) suggested in their recent report that schools shall be closed for the time being to avoid the spread of COVID-19. (National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), 2020) However, with the closure of schools and training centers, the quality of learning outcomes will be diminished.

NEDA also mentioned that the Philippines is looking for ways to restore the public's confidence in the economy, once it restarts under a "new normal" due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In relation to this, there is also a need to define what the "new normal" is and how to best adapt the policies the Philippine economy needs to adjust. (ABS-CBN News, 2020)

Education in the Time of COVID-19

Globally, the education sector is one of the sectors most affected by COVID-19. According to UNESCO, the nationwide closures are impacting over 91% of the world's student population. Several other countries have implemented localized closures impacting millions of additional learners. (UNESCO, 2020)

Figure 1: COVID-19's Staggering Impact on Global Education



Source: World Economic Forum (McCarthy, 2020)

The closure of education institutions leads to the stop of on-going classes/session, examinations even supposed to be graduation of students. COVID-19 has changed the usual education system not only in one country but all over the world. It seems that new methodologies will be needed to fit it in with the current situation brought by the pandemic.

Rappler published an article titled "Old school to new school: Transitioning PH schools to remote learning", which indicates three major weaknesses of the pre-COVID-19 "old school" system:

1. The current school system is vulnerable to disruptions. The face-to-face delivery platform of the current school setup is rendered useless in times of disruptions.
2. The official curriculum limits flexible learning options for the learners. It assumes that every Filipino child in every grade level must possess a minimum set of competencies regarded as essential knowledge, values, and skills to be functional and productive citizens who are "MAKA-DIYOS, MAKA-KALIKASAN, MAKATAO, AT MAKABAYAN."

3. The current school system has relegated the teachers as curriculum implementers rather than as resource guides and learning task designers and innovators. (Yeban, 2020)

The challenge is how the old education system will be transformed to go along with the current requirements. The World Economic Forum suggested three (3) trends that could hint a future transformation:

1. Education - nudged and pushed to change - could lead to surprising innovations

The slow pace of change in academic institutions globally is lamentable, with centuries-old, lecture-based approaches to teaching, entrenched institutional biases, and outmoded classrooms. However, COVID-19 has become a catalyst for educational institutions worldwide to search for innovative solutions in a relatively short period of time.

2. Public-private educational partnerships could grow in importance

In just the past few weeks, we have seen learning consortiums and coalitions taking shape, with diverse stakeholders - including governments, publishers, education professionals, technology providers, and telecom network operators - coming together to utilize digital platforms as a temporary solution to the crisis. In emerging countries where education has predominantly been provided by the government, this could become a prevalent and consequential trend to future education.

3. The digital divide could widen

Most schools in affected areas are finding stop-gap solutions to continue teaching, but the quality of learning is heavily dependent on the level and quality of digital access. After all, only around 60% of the globe's population is online. While virtual classes on personal tablets may be the norm in Hong Kong, for example, many students in less developed economies rely on lessons and assignments sent via WhatsApp or email. (Tam & El-Azar, 2020)



The Philippine TVET

In addressing the issues brought by COVID-19, it is worth considering the current situation of Philippine TVET, analyzing its strengths and weaknesses that can be used by TESDA as the authority in developing/adopting new system. Here are some of the facts about Philippine TVET that should be considered:



1. PH TVET has diverse clientele, it caters different types of individuals with different situation in life. TVET learners could be someone who has the capability to afford connectivity at home but there are also learners who only rely on the available facilities that will be provided by the training providers.
2. There are different training modalities used for the delivery of training, namely Enterprise-Based, Institution-Based and Community-Based. These are being implemented depending on the requirements of the learners.
3. PH TVET is competency-based, wherein training programs developed are in sync with the qualifications needed by industries and employers.
4. The government has allocated scholarship programs such as Training for Work Scholarship Program (TWSP), Private Education Student Financial Assistance (PESFA), Special Training for Employment Program (STEP), Unified Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act (UAQTEA), and Tulong Trabaho Law.
5. TESDA programs are industry driven. From policy formulation to Training Regulation development to TVET delivery, industry partners (together with other relevant stakeholders) are very much involved in TESDA programs implemented throughout the country.
6. Based on data on the TESDA Online Program (TOP) on its users during the ECQ period, 50% have full-time employment, 18% are students, while only 15% are unemployed. This points to an existing economic discrepancy in education driven by Information and communications technology (ICT).



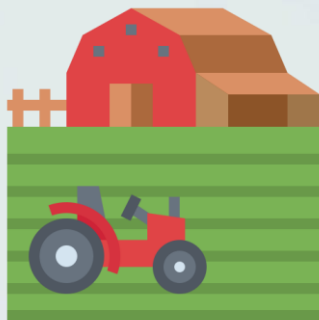
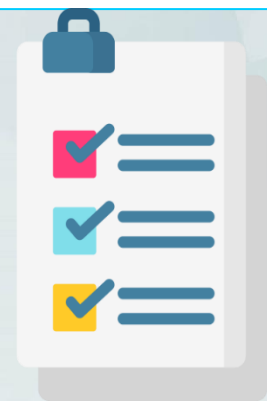
Confronting COVID-19: Ways Forward for PH TVET

Considering the aforementioned 3 WEF trends in transforming the education and the facts **about Philippine TVET**, TESDA may look into the following actions that could be undertaken to adequately situate Philippine TVET post COVID-19:



1. Formulate policies and develop programs to delicately balance education and economic objectives, taking into consideration the impact of COVID-19 and innovation to people of different socio-economic class. This involves carefully crafting an approach such as a new and/or improved mode of delivery of training which will help improve equitable access to TVET.

2. Adopt flexible and dynamic approaches in the registration of programs, conduct of assessment and certification implementation TESD programs, like utilizing ICT or online modes in the processing of applications, inspection, validation, authentication, verification and issuance of certifications and compliance audit.



3. Development of Multi-dimensional/cross sectoral program packages in agriculture which can be delivered in the communities using the family farms or barangay lots as laboratories.

4. Development of Competency Standards to address the emerging skills requirements of the current situation, especially on relevant sectors like, health and wellness, logistics, agriculture, etc.



5. Revisit Training Regulations to ensure the inclusion of preventive measures, Occupation Health and Safety related competencies that are relevant to the current situation.



6. Strengthen collaborations with concerned government agencies, LGUs, and other stakeholders in support Partnerships in support of the Bayanihan Act.

7. Enhancement of the ICT-based methodology and innovative programs in the conduct of training like the TESDA Online Program (TOP).



8. Upskills and reskill the learning facilitators including the effective delivery of online / blended training mode, "learning by experience" for them to effectively implement training programs using different

9. Refunnel budget allocated for TVET scholarship programs to more urgent concerns. Bigger sectoral scholarship allocation should also be considered for sectors identified to help address the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19. There is a need to review the existing guidelines to make it responsive to complement other government initiatives and provide



10. Conduct of policy researches that will support the formulation of relevant policies and technology researches that will lead to innovations.

11. TESDA should formulate policies and programs implemented to capacitate employees on the requirements of the "new normal".



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