

LINKING MIGRATION AND ECONOMIC POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

TVET BRIEF: INDUSTRY TRENDS | ISSUE NUMBER 2 | SERIES OF 2021



How does Technical Vocational Education and Training interplay with migration and economic development policies?

Background

Migration as defined by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) means the movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within a State. (Langthaler & Gündüz, 2020)

According to Waldinger (quoted in Langthaler & Gündüz, 2020) migration is a multidimensional phenomenon that the academic and policy literature usually works with classifications of migrants such as their destination, duration, reasons and choice. Macro-level theories discuss structural phenomena such as push and pull factors. These include economic (e.g. employment), political (e.g. war or persecution), environmental or social factors.

Micro-level theories analyse migration decisions from the perspective of an individual person. Drivers include education, gender, age, wealth, marital status and others. Meso-level theories aim at bridging the preceding

levels focusing on the relational dimensions of migration. (Langthaler & Gündüz, 2020)

Based on the study of the Research and Evidence Facility (2019) poverty and unemployment are major drivers of the out-migration while the ILO study identified a mismatch between available education/training opportunities and labour market demands.

High levels of unemployment and the lack of decent work in their place of origin are routinely cited among the top reasons why people decide to migrate. Moreover, in most settings young people of working age have the greatest propensity to migrate. If the local employment market does not provide opportunities that match young people's aspirations, their primary interest may be in using employment as a springboard to move away to more promising places – either through saving money to fund their migration, or gaining skills and experience to improve their employability abroad. (REF, 2019)

Migration in the Philippines

In the Philippines, the IOM and SMC study (quoted in OECD/Scalabrini Migration Center, 2017) observes that the insertion of overseas employment in the 1974 Labor Code provided the legal basis for launching an overseas employment program as a temporary intervention to deal with rising unemployment and eroding foreign reserves. Additionally, the study pointed out that under the administration of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (2001-10), the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (2004-10) specifically mentioned for the first time a target of sending overseas a million workers every year (NEDA, 2004).

The 1970s were an important decade in contemporary international migration from the Philippines. It was a period associated with immigration reforms in traditional countries of settlement and the demand for workers in the oil-rich countries in the Gulf Region. The former opened up opportunities for permanent settlement, while the latter initiated the Philippines into international labour migration. Since then, international migration from the Philippines has increased and has become part of the country's culture. (OECD/Scalabrini Migration Center, 2017)

The OECD/Scalabrini Migration Center study (2017) further confirms that the lack of employment opportunities in the Philippines is commonly mentioned by migrants and aspiring migrants as the reason for deciding to work abroad. Data on the employment situation and labour migration trends

suggest close links between migration and the labour market.

Although there are concerns and anxieties attached to migrating overseas, on the whole migration is valued, particularly as a vehicle to promote family well-being. (OECD/Scalabrini Migration Center, 2017)

Since labour migration is temporary, the return and reintegration of OFWs is an important aspect. Reintegration has already been considered in the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995 (RA 8042), which provided for the establishment of a Replacement and Monitoring Center. Return Filipino migrants are dealt with by the National Reintegration Center for OFWs (NRCO), tasked with the reintegration of OFWs and the promotion of their local employment and entrepreneurship. The Department of Foreign Affairs is responsible for the release of passports and for providing assistance to overseas Filipinos through the Foreign Service posts. Assistance in time of crisis and for repatriation is provided by the Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Assistance (OUMWWA). Other departments assume specific responsibilities in the governance of migration: The Department of Health for health insurance, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) for the verification of educational training of migrants, the Technical Education Skills Development Authority (TESDA) for training programmes and skills certification, and the BSP for remittances. (OECD/ Scalabrini Migration Center, 2017)

Migration and Education

According to Langthaler and Gündüz (2020), there is relatively little systematic research has been done so far in terms of the relation between migration, education and TVET. The Research and Evidence Facility study (2019) also confirms that viewed from the perspective where people do have work and maintain their aspirations to emigrate, their earnings can serve to build up savings to fund future movement, whether for themselves or other family members, there is no obvious link between increasing young people's access to jobs and any reduction in outward migration.

The Research and Evidence Facility study (2019) cited ILO report found that 53 per cent of employed tertiary-educated youth aspire to migrate abroad, compared with 37 per cent of young people with a secondary education or less. Education and training may improve people's skills but may also make them more aware of how they can be better used in other places. At the same time, training that does not deliver employment for graduates may serve to convince them that they have no future staying where they are and reinforce their desire to migrate by any means. Hence the process of training itself, regardless of the employment outcome, may change participants' attitudes and propensity to migrate. (REF, 2019)

In recent years, systematic thinking about the relationship between education and migration has gained more prominence. The UNESCO dedicated the Global Education

Monitoring Report 2019 to the topic of migration, displacement and education, drawing attention to the educational needs of migrants and refugees with a view to leaving no one behind. (Langthaler & Gündüz, 2020)

Migration and the TVET Sector

Policy discourse in donor countries commonly points to TVET's key role in enabling income-generating employment, economic productivity and growth as the basis for improved livelihoods and decreased motivation to emigrate. Many of these policies and programmes include education and TVET components. (Langthaler & Gündüz, 2020)

Langthaler and Gündüz (2020) further explained that the underlying assumption of these commitments, which are reflected in many development programs, is that investments in education and TVET will lead to employment, income generation and improved livelihoods, which in turn will reduce pressure on people to leave their home countries. The assumption of a linear causal relationship between education and development, mainly in terms of income generation and productivity, but also with reference to improved health, democratic attitudes, female empowerment and others, has informed education policies in bi- and multilateral development cooperation since decades.

The Research and Evidence Facility study (2019) however argues that while there is a significant body of research that addresses such questions in

relation to education in general – especially with respect to the migration of graduates – there is much less known about the impact of TVET programs on young people's mobility. The study also highlighted that a “pyramid of interventions” is required to address youth migration for employment. These go beyond education and the attainment of technical skills, to include also soft skills and social behavior change.

This was further reiterated as there is no single definition of TVET, but the understanding about what TVET means is highly context-related and evolving over space and time. As McGrath (quoted in Langthaler & Gündüz, 2020) points out, “(i)n the broadest sense, VET is conventionally understood as encompassing the myriad forms of learning that are primarily aimed at supporting participation in the worlds-of-work, whether in terms of (re)integration into work or increased effectiveness of those currently defined as being in work”. However, he also stresses that any definition of TVET is problematic due to the complexities of defining work. (Langthaler & Gündüz, 2020)

TESDA's Role in the Philippine Migration

The Technical Education Skills and Development Authority (TESDA) has been very much involved in international migration through providing training and skills certification of migrant workers. The agency is expanding and strengthening technical vocational education and training (TVET) programmes and is incorporating entrepreneurship in its

programmes. To promote better job-skills matching, the Asian Development Bank recommends: i) improving the relevance and quality of TVET programmes; ii) strengthening certification frameworks; and iii) providing employment services, such as career guidance and coaching for school-leavers. (OECD/Scalabrini Migration Center, 2017)

1) TESDA's Two-pronged Strategy in Poverty Reduction

Even prior to the pandemic, TESDA in response to the goal of poverty reduction and the overall Reform and Development Agenda of the President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, repositioned the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) towards a two-pronged strategy: TVET for global competitiveness and TVET for social equity.

TVET is recognized to contribute in both economic growth and social equity by providing productive and employable skills needed by the industries, the communities and the individuals. These are all aimed at developing productive and world-class skilled workforce for decent and productive employment to achieve sustainable inclusive growth.

TVET for Global Competitiveness: TVET is recognized as a source of the required skills, knowledge and technology to drive productivity in industries, and consequently,

make them globally competitive. Productivity is the basis for sustained economic growth and wealth accumulation.

TVET for Social Equity: This is based on the universal principle of social inclusion, and places people, particularly those who are socially excluded and displaced; such as the informal workers, indigenous peoples, farmers, fisherfolks, drug dependents, rebel returnees, women victims of abuse and human trafficking, returning OFWs, persons with disabilities (PWDs), among others into the mainstream of society, as beneficiaries and active participants in the development process.

- **OFWs Reintegration**
Part of the TESDA reform and development agenda for the next six years and beyond is the OFWs reintegration, in which interested returning OFWs will be provided with skills training, retooling or skills upgrading being a vital component towards mainstreaming them in Philippine society. This would aid them in their quest for new employment or in putting up his/her enterprise especially for those who will be staying in the country for good.

2) TESDA Migration Related Policies

- a) TESDA Circular 129 s.2019
Implementation of TESDA Overseas Scholarship Program- Provide free quality training programs for OFWs while still in the country where they are working; Support the OFWs who serve as trainers on volunteer basis; and Assist the Filipino organizations and communities in the funding of their training programs.
- b) TESDA Circular 111 s.2019
Payment of Assessment Fees in the Conduct of Overseas Competency Assessment- The assessment fee shall be covered/ subsidized under the Competency Assessment and Certification for Workers (CACW) Program and in accordance with the approved Project Proposal (PP).

One of the notable program of the Agency in extending its services was the free assessment and certification service to Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) through the Overseas Assessment Program (OAP).

In 2019, a total of 2,315 OFWs were assessed at 85.40% certification rate. This translated to 1,977 OFWs certified from Hong Kong SAR, Jeddah, Riyadh, Singapore and United Arab Emirates (Dubai and Abu Dhabi).

- c) TESDA Circular No.89 s.2018
TESDA Overseas TVET Program Registration-Guidelines for entities/parties who want to establish and operate Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions abroad adopting TESDA Training Standards, in reference with Joint Circular with OWWA and DOLE in the Conduct of Onsite Assessment for OFWs issued last April 2016.

TESDA has strengthened its infrastructure overseas through the registration of overseas TVET programs, accreditation of overseas assessment centers and competency assessors. Currently, there are two (2) registered overseas TVET programs in Dubai, and twenty-two (22) accredited Overseas Competency Assessors practicing in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Singapore, Hong Kong SAR and Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

- d) TESDA Circular No.28 s.2016
Reintegration Program for Returning Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW)- The program runs parallel with the National Reintegration Program of the National Reintegration Center for OFWs (NRCO) under the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) which provides project/enterprise development loans, counseling, wage employment referrals, skills training and assistance to distressed OFWs.

3) OTHER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

TESDA, pushes for other programs for the OFWs, especially those repatriated and returning to the country. TESDA has provided training programs to repatriated OFWs through the efforts of the regional and provincial offices.

The Agency also ensures that our OFWs have the necessary skills to either move up in their respective areas or to start a different source of livelihood. For those who wish to learn more skills and add to their qualifications but are otherwise

constrained by their schedules, TESDA offers free TESDA Online Program or TOP. Launched in 2012, the TOP is accessible by anyone with internet connection. Returning OFWs can make use of this opportunity to improve or gain new skills.

Following TESDA Order No. 149, Series of 2018, five international airports, namely NAIA Terminals 1 and 3, Clark International Airport, Mactan International Airport, and Davao-Francisco Bangoy International Airport, have put up TESDA OFW Helpdesks since April 2018 to assist returning OFWs immediately. These OFW Helpdesks, recently renamed as “Malasakit Helpdesks”, attends to queries mostly on competency assessments; certification, authentication, and verification of their National Certificates (NCs); renewal and replacement of NC and Certificate of Competency (COC); and queries on training and scholarship programs.

The Agency also has a One-Stop Service Center for OFWs at the POEA Central Office in Ortigas.

TESDA's Role in International Migration Initiatives

As provided in the ASEAN Services Report (2017), ASEAN is a dynamic economic bloc with a market size of 650 million people, with a significant portion of young labor force. The

dynamism of economic integration as well as diverse landscape of economic development that persists among countries in the region contribute to mobility of ASEAN people within the region, and even beyond.

All ASEAN Member States (AMS) maintain a certain level of policy openness on the entry and stay of foreign service suppliers in various international agreements, bound by their commitments in various agreements especially under the World Trade Organization (WTO), ASEAN Agreement on Movement of Natural Persons (MNP), other Free Trade Agreements (FTA) where they are parties to, or simply their own autonomous liberalization initiatives. (ASEAN Services Report, 2017)

1) Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025

The Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 (MPAC 2025) focuses on five strategic areas: sustainable infrastructure, digital innovation, seamless logistics, regulatory excellence and people mobility.

- a) Enhancing the Competitiveness of ASEAN Human Resources through Responsive TVET Curriculum Supported by Involvement of Industries and Labor Market Information (SLOM)

The project aims to provide in-depth information and assessment of existing

level of TVET responsiveness to labor trends, recurring issues, strategies/mechanisms being implemented in the AMS, and by seeking ways to enhance the effectiveness and responsiveness of their TVET systems to the labor market.

- b) ASEAN-ROK Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Mobility Program (SOM-ED)
- The project aims to strengthen the comparability of selected TVET sectors/areas in ASEAN through quality assurance and intra-ASEAN student mobility through internships to help reduce the gaps between the demand and supply in priority vocational skills in ASEAN.

TESDA provided inputs and comments on the draft Desk Research. It underscored that the Philippine priority TVET sectors based on the OPLAN TESDA Abot Lahat: TVET towards the New Normal, and the National Technical Education and Skills Development Plan (NTESDP) 2018-2022 are

Agriculture, Health; ICT; and Construction.

2) Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Council

The Philippines is the inaugural Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Council for 2020-2022.

The TESDA is the lead proponent of the ASEAN TVET Council, having proposed its establishment in 2017 during the country's Chairship of ASEAN. The main purpose of the ATC is to harmonize regional initiatives on TVET and respond to the changing demands of the labor market caused by the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

Secretary Lapeña noted that the establishment of the ASEAN TVET Council is a landmark achievement in TVET as it affirmed the increasing recognition, confidence, and support of all the ASEAN Member States (AMS) on the role of TVET in attaining socioeconomic development.

3) ASEAN Senior Labour Officials Meeting Working Group (SLOM-WG)

The Philippines through the TESDA shall undertake the following new initiatives/project under thematic area Skills

Development including TVET of the proposed SLOM-WG Work Plan 2021-2025.

During the 13th SLOM WG on Progressive Labour Practices to Enhance the Competitiveness of ASEAN held on 13 October 2020, TESDA presented the status of the ongoing SLOM-WG project titled Enhancing the Competitiveness of ASEAN Human Resources through Responsive TVET Curriculum Supported by Involvement of Industries and Labour Market Information, led by the Philippines, Vietnam, and Thailand.

TESDA reaffirmed its commitment to implement the existing/continuing projects from the previous plan, as well as the new initiatives/projects of the proposed SLOM-WG Work Plan 2021-2025, particularly under the thematic area Skills Development including TVET.

Recommendations

According to the UNESCO-UNEVOC, TVET is best suited to strengthen and facilitate social and labor market integration by providing migrants with skills development, re-skilling opportunities and local work experience. It can also help to identify the labor market's needs and better match employers with suitable employees that can lead to a more significant economic growth.

It was further emphasized by the UNESCO-UNEVOC that TVET plays a vital role in promoting labor, social mobility, and consequently reducing inequalities. Successful school-to-work transition and labor market access leading to decent work and economic growth.

TESDA could look into the existing programs of the UNESCO-UNEVOC specifically in increasing the participation rate of youth and adults in the formal and non-formal education and training by removing obstacles to education and promoting accessible, quality TVET for everybody, as provided under the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.4.

The promotion of quality and accessible TVET would require close international cooperation and TESDA to address the challenges could look into the following:

- 1) The need to develop an international framework for the recognition of foreign qualifications and prior learning,
- 2) Promotion and recognition of the National Certificates and equivalency recognition internationally and/or under the ASEAN qualifications framework,
- 3) Expanding access to education and training through the open distance learning modality,
- 4) Creation and development of new curricula that adapts to international needs especially needed for re-skilling and upskilling,
- 5) Updating the trainer's training methods in reference with international standards.

Other issues and challenges that the TVET sector could consider in response to the specific international initiatives are as follows:

6) In response to the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025

a) From the dimension of physical connectivity, there will be a significant need to upgrade infrastructure to support the urbanization process, the digital economy opportunity, the need to improve key logistics routes, and to address the historical underinvestment in infrastructure.

b) From an institutional connectivity perspective, the rise of the ASEAN consuming class fueling intra-ASEAN trade, the imperative to improve logistics competitiveness, and the need for new frameworks to support the capture of available digital technology opportunities, will require a renewed focus on regulatory issues.

c) From a people-to-people connectivity perspective, capturing the growth of intra-ASEAN tourism will require easing travel restrictions in terms of visas and improving information availability on travel options. There will also need to be a strong focus on capability

building, particularly related to vocational skills, to ensure that ASEAN Member States have a workforce that is well prepared for future needs.

7) In response to the ASEAN Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Council

The Council with the TESDA's leadership may consider its Work Plan to include strategies to enhance industry participation, and address emerging issues brought by the ongoing pandemic, technological transformations, and other developments or disruptions. It shall intensify convergence among the AMS on labor market information system, TVET researches, and capacity-building and quality assessment for trainers. TVET quality assurance in AMS, implementation and financing, and the improvement of TVET image are also among the identified objectives.

8) In response to the ASEAN Senior Labour Officials Meeting Working Group (SLOM-WG), TESDA should continuously work on the development of concepts papers and development of programs that would provide competitiveness for individuals in the AMS. This is to realize the free movement of one person from one member-state to another.

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