

**GRADUATE TRACER STUDY OF THE TSU-LGU SAN JOSE
LEARNING CENTER FROM 2006-2008, TARLAC, PHILIPPINES**

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Abstract

This tracer study aimed to determine the employment status of the skills training graduates of the Tarlac State University and the Local Government of San Jose (TSU-LGU San Jose) Learning Center in Tarlac, Philippines. It also aimed to determine the degree at which the acquired knowledge and skills are applied in the workplace, at home, and in the community. The respondents of the study were 99 graduates of the learning center from 2006 to 2008. Using a survey questionnaire, it has been found that about 29% of the respondents are currently employed. Also, the knowledge and skills of the graduates were found to be seldom applied at work, at home and in community activities. The study also gathered feedback information from the graduates. They found the courses very helpful but too short to cover all the important topics. They added that the provision of complete equipment will facilitate effective learning. The possibility of getting employment assistance after the trainings was also brought up by the graduates. These information will be used to further reinforce the partnership between TSU and San Jose and to improve the quality of trainings to be offered by TSU's University Extension Office (UEO) in the future.

Keywords: Technology, Vocational Education, Training

1. Introduction

One of the targets under the United Nation's first millennium development goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger is to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people [1]. Decent and productive employment offers full access to income earning opportunities for workers. On the other hand, poverty itself hinders people from acquiring decent jobs because of the lack of financial capability to educate themselves.

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) came to being not only to build the capability of countries to compete in the global economy relative to the ever-increasing foreign labor market opportunities and to ensure that priority sectors are assured of their critical skill requirements, but also to provide low-cost and short-term education to poor people who seek employment but lack the necessary education and skill [2].

In the Philippines, private industries, public institutions and local government units have been tapped by the national government to promote and provide TVET to different communities and groups. TESDA classifies TVET providers into three categories: community-based, company-based, and institution-based. Community-based providers are either local government units (LGUs) or non-government organizations (NGOs). Company-based providers are companies that offer apprenticeship and learnership programmes, dual training systems and on-the-job trainings to their current and prospective employees. Institution-based providers, which comprise the largest group of training institutions, consist of registered private institutions and public institutions such as TESDA-administered schools and training centers, state universities and colleges (SUCs), agricultural training institutes, and government agencies [3].

Tarlac State University which used to be a trade school, offered non-degree technical education courses until bachelor's degree programs in several technical fields fully replaced the former. Apart from these, trade courses were also offered by the University Extension Office (UEO) since 1975. At present, UEO offers short-term continuing education and skill training courses among identified clients through its Extension Support Services Program (ESSP). The skills training branch of the program is

basically aimed at developing the skills of out-of-school youth, unemployed adults, and other individuals in order for them to become more productive and functional citizens, increase their chances of getting employed, or enhance their capabilities for self-employment.

The conduct of services under the program is often channeled or coordinated with local government units, civic organizations, sectoral groups, and other institutions in the locality where such classes are held. As experienced, this piecemeal approach poses the problem of sustainability and program continuity. Hence, in 2006, UEO came up with the idea of establishing a learning center in the municipality of San Jose, Tarlac. The approach, aside from the above-stated objectives, was also aimed at forging a strong working relationship with the LGU and other concerned agencies and also to bring TSU right in the doorstep of the locality.

San Jose was chosen as the pilot LGU due to the settlement pattern of the villages which is a dispersed one. Another consideration was the willingness of the municipal mayor and the municipal council to provide support to the program, not to mention the commonly experienced problem of the growing number of out-of-school youth, unemployed, and underemployed residents. On March 30, 2006, a two-year memorandum of agreement was entered into by TSU President, Dr. Priscilla C. Viuya and San Jose Mayor, Hon. Samuel M. Eugenio. On June 19, 2006, the formal launching of the center was held. Thereafter, short-term courses (40-64 hours in length) were held in a renovated building situated near the municipal hall. From 2006-2008, a total of 436 trainees have availed of the training service in 11 different short-term courses.

During its initial year of operation, a total of P158,277.80 or a per capita cost of 688 pesos (energy consumption and room renovation not included) was incurred by the LGU and the University. This amount covered the purchase of training materials and honoraria of trainers. In a study conducted by Peano, et.al. (2008), the average per capita expenditure among SUCs providing TVET is 2,288.63 pesos (An average per trainee expenditure of less than 3,000 pesos is considered an inexpensive course) (p.102). Although the trainings conducted are categorized as inexpensive, substantial amounts of resources, time and effort channeled to the undertaking dictate the importance of determining the status of the trainees after a reasonable period of time has elapsed to be able to assess the impact of the program to the lives of the clientele. Likewise, modifying the contents of the course, training approaches and designs, as well as methodologies in order to enhance program effectiveness as one of the strategies of UEO towards program excellence, necessitates basis in doing it.

2. Objectives

In general, this tracer study aimed to find out the status of the graduates of the short courses offered at the TSU-LGU San Jose Learning Center. Specifically, it aimed to:

- 2.1. determine the employment status of the graduates using the knowledge and skills they have acquired from the program;
- 2.2. determine the degree of application of knowledge and skills acquired in the training to present employment, daily chores, and community activities; and
- 2.3. generate feedback information that could be of use towards improving the quality of content of the course and training design and approaches.

3. Methodology

The study used the descriptive method of research. Ninety-nine trainees served as the respondents of the study. This accounts for 23% of the total number of individuals who graduated from 2006-2008. The governing council of each barangay provided assistance in tracking down the learning center graduates. The respondents came from 7 barangays in San Jose (see Table 1). The settlement pattern in the municipality placed a limitation in getting respondents from 6 other barangays. Random sampling was used in getting the respondents.

All the respondents were asked to answer a survey questionnaire and some were personally interviewed to gather more information. Survey results are presented in tables. Likert scale was used on all survey items that required ratings. Mean and percentage were used as statistical tools in the computation of some items.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Demographics

Majority of those who participated in the survey are males, comprising about 73% of the total number of respondents. This is not a surprising number since most of the courses that were conducted generally required heavy work, and were thus branded as men's courses. On the other hand, UEO always tried to remove this notion and encouraged everyone to enroll in the course that a person finds much interest in, regardless of the gender stereotype each course has.

Survey results revealed that there were more participants in barangays that are relatively larger, highly populated and have clustered settlement patterns, e.g. Mababanaba and Villa Aglipay. The location of the training venue could also possibly had an effect on the number of trainees from each barangay.

Table 1
Profile of Respondents, $N = 99$

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	73	73.7%
Female	26	26.3%
Civil Status		
Married	46	46.5%
Single	32	32.3%
Not specified	21	-
Barangay of Residence		
Burgos	10	10.1%
Iba	2	2.0%
Lawacamulag	6	6.0%
Mababanaba	34	34.3%
Moriones	3	3.0%
Sula	11	11.1%
Villa Aglipay	33	33.3%

Table 2 shows the training courses taken up by the respondents. The summation of frequencies exceeded the total number of respondents because 17 respondents have taken up 2 courses, while one respondent has finished 4 courses over the 2-year period.

The last column also shows the number of times each training course has been conducted from 2006-2008. Building Wiring Installation was the most taught, followed by Basic Clothing, Cosmetology and Shielded Metal Arc Welding.

On the average, one batch had around 21 trainees, way above the average number in a national survey conducted in 2008 among SUCs which is 12 [3].

Table 2.

Number of Respondents per Training Course/Number of Times Training has been Conducted, $N = 99$

Course	Number of respondents	Percentage	Number of times conducted
Arc and Gas Welding	10	10.1%	1
Auto-diesel Mechanic	17	17.2%	1
Auto-Electrical Wiring	1	1.0%	1
Basic Clothing	5	5.1%	3
Basic Culinary Arts	18	18.2%	2
Basic Electronics	5	5.1%	1
Basic Engine Repair	1	1.0%	1
Building Wiring Installation	26	26.3%	4
Cosmetology	7	7.1%	3
Shielded Metal Arc Welding	29	29.3%	3
Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Mechanic	0	0	1
Total	119*	≈100%	21

*Higher than number of respondents since some had enrolled in more than one course

4.2 Employment Status

Twenty-nine respondents indicated that they are currently employed or self-employed. One respondent works in Saudi Arabia and two others work in Subic both as welders, as specified by their wives in the survey questionnaire. Another respondent works in Abu Dhabi as an electrician. Others work as linesman, welders, construction worker, and house helper in different places in Tarlac and in nearby provinces. A few respondents run their own home-based businesses, either on a full-time or part-time basis. Table 3 below shows the breakdown of the current employment of the respondents.

Table 3
Current Work of Respondents

Work	Number Of Respondents
Welder	6
Electrician	2
Driver	1
Security Guard	1
Carpenter	1
House Helper	1
Midwife	1

Teacher	1
Construction Worker	1
Dressmaker	1
Lines man	1
Salesperson	2
Shop owner/Self-employed	10

The number of respondents who are currently employed fell short of the target percentage of participants employed as mentioned in the National Technical Education and Skills Development Plan for 2005-2009, which aimed for at least 60 percent employment among graduates [2]. In 2006, the recorded employment rate (national level) among TVET graduates was 60% [4], [5].

4.3 Degree of Application of Knowledge and Skills at Home and in the Community

When asked about the degree of application of the knowledge and skills acquired in the workplace, the grand mean obtained was 2.041, which indicates that the knowledge and skills they have learned are seldom applied in their current work. This is because the lines of work of some of those who are currently employed are different from the skills training courses they have taken up. Likert scale was used to determine the degrees of application, with 5 corresponding to “always applied” and 1 corresponding to “never applied.”

Based on the frequencies in Table 4, one may wonder why 60 respondents answered that they apply (at different degrees) their acquired skills in their current work, whereas only 29 individuals indicated that they are currently employed (see Table 3). This may be due to the possibility that some of the respondents are employed but have not indicated their employment status in the questionnaire. Other respondents may also have answered this item based on their previous employment. These are the people who have used their acquired skills in their jobs but whose contracts have already ended by the time of the survey.

Table 4
Degree of skill application in the workplace, $N = 99$

Description	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Always applied	10	10.1%	2.041
Often applied	5	5.1%	
Moderately applied	2	2.0%	
Seldom applied	43	43.4%	
Never applied	38	38.4%	
No response	1	-	

As regards to the degree of application of the respondents’ acquired knowledge and skills at home, the computed grand mean was 2.219, which indicates that the knowledge and skills are seldom applied. Only 20 respondents have never applied their acquired skills at home.

Table 5
Degree of skill application at home, $N = 99$

Description	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Always applied	7	7.1%	2.219
Often applied	7	7.1%	
Moderately applied	6	6.1%	
Seldom applied	56	56.6%	
Never applied	20	20.2%	
No response	3	-	

Using the same scale, a grand mean of 1.878 was computed when the respondents were asked if they are able to apply the skills they have learned in conducting community projects and activities. This denotes seldom application of skills in carrying out activities in the community. This may be caused by the lack of opportunities in the community to apply such skills.

Table 6
Degree of skill application in community projects and activities, $N = 99$

Description	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Always applied	5	5.1%	1.878
Often applied	5	5.1%	
Moderately applied	4	4.0%	
Seldom applied	36	36.4%	
Never applied	40	40.4%	
No response	9	-	

4.4 Client Feedback and other Important Information

4.4.1 Financial Benefits

Forty-two respondents said that the skills they have learned were of big help in providing financial benefits. Increase in their incomes ranged from 1,000 to 10,000 pesos per month. On the other hand, 41 respondents said that they did not experience a substantial increase in their incomes from the skills they have learned. From this group, some were unemployed, while some were employed but did not view skills acquisition as a big help in increasing their incomes. Sixteen had no response.

Table 7
Experienced significant financial benefits?, $N = 99$

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	42	42.4%
No	41	41.4%
No Response	16	16.2%

4.4.2 Involvement in Other Skills Training Programs and Organizations

Forty respondents said that they have engaged in other trainings after they have finished their respective courses in the learning center. Some of them have enrolled in advanced trainings of the same course, while some enrolled in courses that are totally different from the ones they took up in the

learning center. Specifically, a number of respondents enrolled at TESDA to qualify for an NC-I or NC-II certificate. There were 42 respondents who had no further training, while 17 had no response.

When asked if they got involved in socio-civic organizations and business linkages as a result of participating in the skills training program, 10 respondents said yes. Two organizations mentioned by the respondents are the *United Ilocandia* and *Kabalikat-Civicom*. 71 respondents said they were not involved in any organization, while 18 had no response.

4.4.3 Client Feedback

Among the comments given by the respondents, the duration of the course and the completeness of training tools and equipment were the most popular responses. The respondents found the duration of each course too short to learn all the fundamentals. Lack of the complete number of tools per training course caused some delays and also deprived some respondents of the time to perform hands-on exercises.

Other respondents pointed out that actual operation of machines and equipment should be demonstrated by the trainers. In some training courses though, a few topics were discussed theoretically but were not demonstrated because of the lack of the necessary equipment. Another respondent commented on the possibility of the provision of more modern equipment to keep up with the latest trends in different skilled-labor professions.

As regards to teaching methods, some respondents suggested that complete handouts should be provided. Others suggested the incorporation of new strategies to facilitate learning among the trainees.

There were also some respondents who mentioned about the possibility of getting assistance for employment after the trainings. On the other hand, graduates of the trainings on Food Processing and Basic Culinary Arts suggested that recipes that can be used for starting a food business be included in the modules.

On the positive side, a number of respondents commended the skills training program and the trainers of courses that were conducted. The respondents cited the good teaching strategies, focused teaching and resourcefulness of the trainers. They also mentioned that the trainers always provided encouragement.

Table 8
Summary of Client Feedback

Comments/Suggestions	Commendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> × Duration of course too short × Equipment and tools not complete × No actual demonstration × Provision of more modern equipment × Complete handouts should be provided × Employment assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Training program is very helpful ✓ Trainers were focused and provided encouragement ✓ Teaching strategies were good ✓ Trainers were resourceful

5. Conclusions

Twenty-nine out of 99 or 29% of the respondents indicated that they are currently employed or have their own businesses. Aside from the 29 respondents, 31 more respondents indicated that they are able to apply the skills they have learned in their work, suggesting that either they just did not indicate their employment status or they answered the survey question based on their previous employment. Of the 29 who have indicated their employment statuses, only one respondent is not able to apply her acquired skills because her current line of work is different from the skills training that she has completed. The remaining number applies the skills at different degrees.

The knowledge and skills acquired by the program beneficiaries are seldom applied at work, at home and in the community. The low degree of application may be brought about by the lack of matching employment opportunities and lack of community projects to get involved in.

The trainees find the duration of the courses too short to cover what they need to learn. They also think that additional tools and equipment should be provided in order for them to learn the hands-on aspect of the courses more effectively. They are also concerned with the possibility of getting employment assistance so that they can apply what they have learned in the trainings.

The trainees commended the service provided by the TSU faculty experts and guest trainers. They mentioned that the trainers are competent, focused, and resourceful.

6. Recommendations

LGU – San Jose, through its employment services office should seek ways on how to provide employment for the graduates of the skills training courses.

TSU-UEO and LGU-San Jose should look into the conceptualization of an incubation center that would be beneficial in improving the skills of new graduates and providing livelihood and income for them through the free use of the equipment in the center. The incubation center will house equipment and tools necessary for performing different types of skilled work (e.g. welding machines, ovens, etc.). Graduates will be allowed to use the facilities and equipment in the center whenever they have job orders.

The local government can provide opportunities for the graduates to apply their acquired knowledge and skills in the community. For example, putting up of small waiting sheds can be carried out by graduates of welding and building wiring.

UEO can look into the creation of advance courses to cover topics beyond the basic, so that the graduates can further hone their skills. Also, the final topics included in the first 64 hours of the basic training course can be moved to the advance course so that the basic course will not be cramped in the limited amount of time.

Further study on the assessment and evaluation of training courses can be carried out. This can look deeper into the components of the training courses in order to determine their strengths and weaknesses and further improve the training programs offered by TSU through UEO.

7. References

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