

TECH-VOC AND THE INDUSTRY: EXAMINING THE GAP BETWEEN EDUCATION AND INDUSTRY REQUIREMENTS

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In today's fast-changing world, industries are constantly evolving, and companies are always looking for workers who can keep up with new technologies and methods. Thus, it is important for educational institutions to produce graduates that are not only competent in academics but also possess necessary skills to compete in the current job market.

This is where technical-vocational education (Tech-Voc) comes in. Tech-Voc programs are designed to equip students with hands-on skills in various fields like automotive repair, welding, electronics, food and beverage services, and many others.

However, despite the availability of these programs, there remains a gap between what is taught in schools and what industries need (Legarde, 2024).

One of the main problems is the outdated curriculum in some tech voc schools. Many training programs still follow traditional methods that do not meet the latest industry standards (Alinea et al., 2024). This may be because it is hard to keep up with most quickly developing industries due to technology integration, such as in the automotive industry, where a shift towards electric vehicles has been observed in the past years. It can also be purely due to lack of revisions from regulatory bodies overseeing Tech-Voc programs in the country.

Regardless, this means that students graduate with skills that may no longer be in demand. To solve this problem, there should be a strong partnership between educational institutions and industry. Companies of concerned industries should be involved in

designing training programs so that students learn exactly what is needed in the real world of work. Curricula should also be regularly updated to keep pace with new developments in the various sectors.

Another challenge is the lack of adequate facilities and equipment in many tech-voc schools. Learning practical skills requires hands-on training, but if schools do not have modern tools and machinery, it becomes difficult for students to gain relevant experience. Industry can help by donating equipment or setting up training centers where students can practice with real, industry-grade tools. Some companies already offer internship programs, but expanding these programs to more students will make a big difference in improving their skills.

Aside from technical skills, companies are also looking for workers who have good communication skills, teamwork, problem-solving skills, and a strong work ethic. Unfortunately, some tech-voc graduates are highly skilled technically but lack these soft skills, making it difficult for them to get a job (Cheng & Hitt, 2018). Schools should incorporate lessons on professionalism in the workplace, customer service, and teamwork to ensure that graduates are well trained and prepared for the real world of work.

Government agencies such as the TESDA (Technical Education and Skills Development Authority) have made efforts to improve tech-voc education in the Philippines, but there is still much room for improvement. More funds should be allocated to modernize training centers, improve teaching methods, and provide scholarships for students who want to enroll in Tech-Voc courses. Collaboration between TESDA, schools and private companies should also be strengthened to ensure that programs are aligned with industry needs.

Bridging the gap between tech-voc education and industry needs is not just about improving graduates' chances of getting a job. It also benefits industry by ensuring that it has a steady supply of skilled workers who can help increase productivity and

innovation. When Tech-Voc graduates are well-trained and ready to work, companies no longer have to spend too much time and resources on additional training. This creates a win-win situation for job seekers and employers.

Ultimately, the key to closing this gap lies in close collaboration between schools, businesses, and the government. With better curriculum updates, improved facilities, well-trained faculty, and stronger partnerships with industry, tech-voc education can truly become a powerful tool for creating jobs and promoting economic growth. Investing in skills development not only helps individuals build a better future for themselves, but also strengthens the nation as a whole.

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