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Students' Experience of Service Quality of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Programs in Philiphines's Private Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs)

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Abstract: This study aimed to describe students' experience of service quality (training quality and delivery, student support, training facilities and student services) while enrolled in various private HEI-TVET programs. Further, it sought to determine if there were differences in the perception of students of the same service quality across work experience, certification, high school curriculum, and availability of scholarship. Following review of TVET literature a multi-aspect researcher-made questionnaire was developed to measure skill development, training delivery and quality, student support and services**.** Students (n=234) enrolled in various technical vocational courses in private HEIs participated in this study. The data was analyzed using independent t-test for comparisons across demographic profiles while Pearson's r was utilized to test relationships between variables**.** Results showed high overall satisfaction on the quality of TVET training of private HEIs. The study found that work experience, certification, high school curriculum, and scholarship make a significant difference in the students' perception in some of the quality indicators of private HEIs TVET courses. The findings are deemed valuable and useful for school and program managers, policy makers and researchers in the training and educational sector. The results imply that HEI's can offer quality higher technical vocational programs including diploma programs and TESDA should encourage HEIs to do so. The results also suggest that TESDA must come up with responsive policy infrastructure for developing training programs that respond to the nuances and needs of changing and diverse clienteles.

Keywords: TVET, higher education, service quality, skills development, school facilities

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1. Introduction

There is broad consensus that technical vocational education and training (TVET) plays a vital and critical role in the social and economic development of a nation (Anane, 2013; Chinyere Shirley et al., 2015; de Oliveira Silva et al., 2019; Paryono, 2017). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) believes that TVET contributes to "sustainable development by empowering individuals, organizations, enterprises and communities and fostering employment, decent work and lifelong learning to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth and competitiveness, social equity and environmental sustainability" (UNESCO, 2015). TVET programs provide opportunities for students to acquire post-secondary education, other than through collegiate or university education. Through TVET the students acquire knowledge and technical and vocational skills to make them work-ready and engage in lifelong learning (Hui & Cheung, 2015). More specifically, it addresses societal expectations related to the youth and adults' employability. It also provides greater social mobility and career development and higher education opportunities to people from lower socioeconomic classes(de Oliveira Silva et al., 2019). Due to its social and economic relevance, TVET has been part of the educational system in many countries including the Philippines.

In the Philippines, Republic Act No. 7796, authorizes the Technical Education and Skills Authority (TESDA) to set directions, policies, and programs for the entire TVET sector including the regulations of training organizations. The law mandates the agency to "provide relevant, accessible, high quality and efficient technical education and skills development in support of the development of high-quality Filipino middle level manpower responsive to and in accordance with the Philippine development goals and priorities" (REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7796, 1994). Since its creation, TESDA has recognized the crucial role of the private sector in TVET. To expand participation, support, and commitment to vocational training and occupational standards of the private sector, the agency recognizes best practices of private technical-vocational institutions (TVIs) by providing them technical assistance as a form of incentive. It also provides student scholarship training vouchers which generate more enrollees to TVIs offering higher technology courses and critical and hard-to-find skills.

Recently, the agency has looked into the credibility of assessment and training delivery due to reported cases of "ghost training" and "ghost schools" arising from the unregistered training course and skills qualification, as well as a failure of the TVIs to update their training programs consistent with the prescribed period indicated in the implementing guidelines of the relevant TESDA training regulations (TESDA, 2019c). Some trainees are dissatisfied with the administrative procedures; the quality and delivery of training; the state of the facilities, tools, equipment, and training materials; and the processes in skills assessment among TVET institutions (TESDA, 2018a). Since private TVIs has very large share (91%) of school-based TVET (TESDA, 2019b) private TVET training programs deserve scrutiny, specifically private HEI TVET providers, because they may also contribute to the above-mentioned failings. Further, since most of the courses HEIs offer fall under another regulatory government agency, the Commission of Higher Education (CHED), TVET courses may fall under the radar of the monitoring body of TESDA. Thus, policy-wise it would be informative to know the experience of students on the quality of HEI-TVET run courses.

Based on the above, this study described perceived training quality and delivery, student support, training facilities and student services among students enrolled in HEI-based TVET programs. Further, this paper sought to determine if there were differences in perceived training quality and delivery, student support, training facilities and student service across students' work experience, certification, high school curriculum, and scholarship.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Quality Indicators

Quality is an important concept in any educational institution. Schools are expected to provide critical and essential features such as the quality of the program and its delivery, adequate school facilities, student support, and student services. For students to achieve the desired learning outcomes (acquisition of knowledge and skills and other competencies) TVET institutions must give importance to the quality of student experience in the school. For this reason, educational institutions measure and monitor regularly indicators of quality in the school (Abdullah, 2006; Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2016; Chinyere Shirley et al., 2015; Pena et al., 2013; Zeithaml & Berry, Leonard L. Parasuraman, 1996) The presence of quality and how quality is achieved and realized determines the service quality of the school (Mokhtar & Husain, 2015). These indicators find theoretical grounding on the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman et al., 1988) that posits that quality of service rests on the following: the availability of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and materials in the institution (tangibility). Further, the employees of the institution must have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that make them dependable and consistent in the performance of service (reliability). They must be capable of assisting and attending promptly to the needs of the clients(responsiveness). They must demonstrate competency, courtesy, credibility that makes the client feel secure (assurance). And they must be accessible and sensitive in attending to the needs of the client in a more individualized way (empathy).

2.2 Students' Experience of Service Quality

The students are the main stakeholders in TVET. It follows that students' perception of training quality and delivery, student support, training facilities, and student services is central to any discussion on the quality of TVET training in any institution (Abdullah, 2006). Educational institutions, government, and the public, in general, cannot underestimate the value of assessing and determining the service quality of TVET schools from the perspective of the students. Given a highly competitive environment emphasis must be placed on meeting the needs and expectations of students (Elliott, 2002). For school management, monitoring and assessing students' perception of quality serves as a feedback mechanism for continuous improvement of the institutions' teaching and learning processes. The satisfaction of students on the schools' service quality could impact the profit and other financial outcomes of the school (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Wiers-jenssen et al., 2010; Zeithaml & Berry, Leonard L. Parasuraman, 1996). Further, the quality of service and instruction has been shown to impact directly on student satisfaction that leads to student retention and lowering of dropout rates and positive impact on the corporate image of the institutions (Hassan & Shamsudin, 2019; Wiers-jenssen et al., 2010). Students favourable perception of TVET, while they are in school or training institutions, would depend on how they experienced the quality of training, adequacy of institutional support, and engaging training environment (Hassan & Shamsudin, 2019; Van der Bijl & Lawrence, 2019). Up to the present TVET has remained poorly perceived and underappreciated in the workplace. There is a persistent view that TVET is a mere alternative for those who are not qualified or cannot afford to go to college (Egunsola, 2016; Mokhtar & Husain, 2015; Winch, 2013). Nonetheless attraction and involvement in TVET of students and other potential consumers, in a larger context, may contribute substantially to the socio-economic development of a country (Winch, 2013). For this reason consistent with its broader social and economic policy objectives, the government has vested interest in the delivery of quality TVET (Preddey, 2009; Karki, 2012).

2.3 Implementation of Skills Training in the Philippines

2.3.1 Quality Assured Philippine TVET

TVET in the Philippines has three modes of delivery: school-based, enterprise-based, and community-based training. The first is technical-vocational training programs that public and private educational institutions offer to students. The second is workplace training and employment programs designed to ensure the availability of qualified skilled workers to meet specific industry requirements. Finally, programs are offered to the poor and marginalized groups who have less or are unable to access formal training. These are skills development training that extends to livelihood enterprises that trainees can implement after the training (TESDA, 2017a). At the outset, all these training modalities are subject to quality assurance.

The law that creates TESDA mandates the government agency to provide TVET that will ensure employment and enhance workers' productivity. And it is assumed that these twin goals are achievable and sustainable only in the presence of quality assured technical-vocational skills training. Notably, quality assurance is the thread that connects all the processes—from the qualification standards development to the unified TVET program registration and accreditation system (UTPRAS), to the competency-based training regulations up to skills assessment and certification. This is illustrated in the quality-assured Philippine Technical Education Skills Development (TESD) system's framework below (Figure 1) (TESDA, 2012).

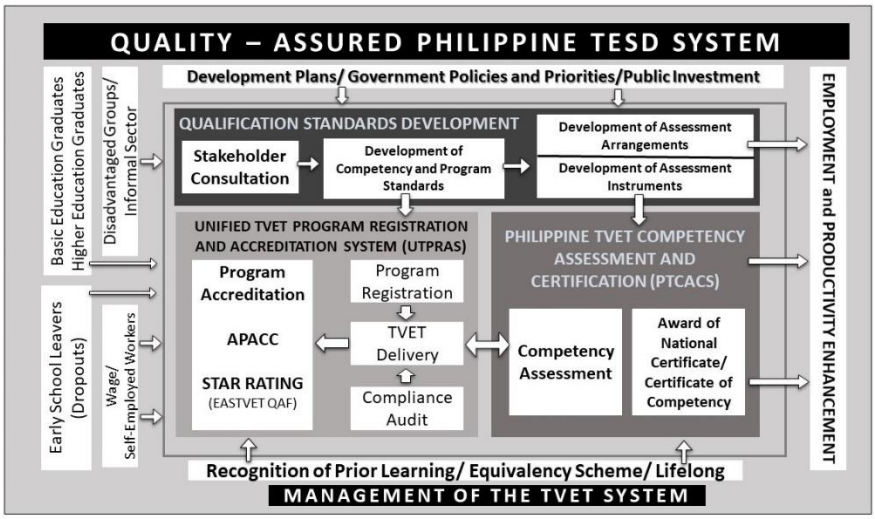

Fig. 1 - Philippine Quality Assured TESD System Framework

This shows the components of the Quality Assured Technical Education Skills Development (TESD) System

Access to TVET is open to secondary-education graduates, school leavers, workers, entrepreneurs, and persons in higher-education institutions. Philippine TVET allows the student to enter and exit at any stage in the system through recognition of prior learning. In the entire management of the TVET system manpower industry associations, experts, and practitioners—including trade unions—play an active role in determining TVET priorities, industry qualification standards, and performance measures. Whenever feasible, international benchmarking against the standards of labour receiving countries is also made to determine work competencies. TESDA requires all Technical Vocational Institutions (TVIs) to comply with the minimum requirements as a necessary condition for these technical vocational schools to operate. The minimum requirements comprise curricular programs, faculty and staff qualifications, physical sites and facilities, tools, equipment, supplies and materials among others (Amended Omnibus Guidelines on Program Registration under the Unified TVET Program Registration and Accreditation System (UTPRAS), 2016). These programs are also subject to a regular compliance audit and special audit in cases where there are complaints (TESDA, 2017a, 2019c).

To bolster quality assurance, in 2016 TESDA introduced the System for TVET Accreditation and Recognition (STAR) program. The agency gives recognition to TVIs that registered programs that exceeded the minimum requirements. The TVIs applying for STAR recognition undergo levels of assessment and evaluation on governance and management of the program, delivery of curriculum and programs, support services, and program performance. TESDA provides the recipients of the STAR award incentives: funding for the procurement of equipment and improvement of facilities, and bigger scholarship allocations (TESDA, 2017a, 2019c).

Further, the law mandates TESDA to produce quality graduates that possess skills, attitudes and values that would enable them to compete globally. To ensure quality assurance among TVET graduates and mid-level skilled workers, TESDA assesses and certifies them through the TVET Competency Assessment and Certification System. It is expected that TESDA certified workers have the skills that will provide them employment security, higher compensation, and more opportunities for better jobs (TESDA, 2017b, 2018a, 2019a).

2.3.2. Private HEI-TVET Providers

The private sector has a significant presence and investments in the institution or school-based training. As of 2019 out of 4,387 accredited TVIs, there are 3,983 private TVET schools (91%) as against 404 (9%) public TVET institutions. Further, among the 3,983 private TVIs there are 551 HEIs, five NGOs, and eight companies or enterprises providing TVET courses. From 2017 to 2019, there were 3,229, 899 and 2,891, 942 enrollees and graduates respectively from private TVIs, as against 3,943,240 and 3,666,713 enrollees and graduates from public TVIs (TESDA, 2019b).

The government also pours significant financial resources to private TVIs in the form of scholarship allocation. The financial viability of many of these schools depends on the scholarship allocation from TESDA. Since government funding is not unlimited (Orbeta & Esguerra, 2016), TESDA must ensure that schools are worthy of incentivizing. Thus, TESDA's allocation of scholarship to these schools depend on the capability of the latter to deliver quality assured programs to students.

2.3.3 Challenges of TVET Training in the Philippines

Since its creation, TESDA has encountered numerous and persistent challenges. Poor compliance of TVET programs to TESDA's promulgated regulations and quality standards remains a problem for many TVIs. In 2017 for example the Director-General ordered a technical audit of TVIs that resulted in the closure of 7,102 (38%) programs out of the 18, 288 registered programs subjected to technical audit. The programs were closed due to various violations and non-compliance with the minimum standards (TESDA, 2017a). In this regard, while the majority of the graduates were satisfied with their training, almost a quarter was dissatisfied (TESDA, 2018a). Many graduates mentioned that they failed to acquire the skills they expect to gain from the program. For some, the skills were under-utilized in the workplace and for many, the skills were different from what the industry required (TESDA, 2018a). The TESDA study made in 2019 yielded similar results. While most 2018 TVET graduates (93% to 98%) across the different program and delivery modes believed that completion of TVET programs helped them acquire the skills, less than half (47.66%) of the employed graduates expressed satisfaction on the usefulness of the skills that they have acquired. And about 29% of them found their trainings useless in their current work. More specifically, about 82% of those who were dissatisfied said that their current occupation (at the time of the survey) was entirely different from the training given them. And that the skills they have acquired were not needed in their actual work (TESDA, 2019a).

The process of voluntary accreditation designed to promote quality and continuous improvement among TVET institutions through periodic review and evaluation (Cheman et al., 2018) failed to capture the interest of private TVIs in the country also. Finally, TESDA certification failed to make much of a difference in increasing the income of employed TVET certificated graduates in comparison with those who are uncertified (TESDA, 2015; TESDA, 2011, 2017b, 2018a, 2019a). Clearly, it remains a challenge for TESDA to convince the industry to put a premium on certification vis-à-vis policies on hiring, promotion, and wage determination.

2.4 Gaps in TVET Literature in the Philippines

A literature search showed wide recognition of the importance of student experience relative to training quality, student support, training facilities and support services that TVET institutions provide(de Oliveira Silva et al., 2019). Hassan and Shamsudin (2019) recommend that a more nuanced and detailed measure of the quality of student services in the areas of "campus environment, physical facilities, training equipment, instructor, curriculum, training delivery, support services, library and management" (p.83) be undertaken in the future This paper took the same direction.

Published studies about the quality of Philippine TVET, especially private HEI-TVET providers are rare. The publications mostly came from TESDA in the form of annual reports and employment studies of TVET graduates (TESDA, 2006, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017b, 2017a, 2018a, 2019c). But these reports failed to distinctly articulate the quality of TVET in private HEIs. One of the reports has recommended conducting another study to determine the specific areas that should enhance the delivery of training (TESDA, 2018a). Consistent with the recommendation, this study investigated the nuances of student experiences on the quality of the implementation of TVET courses of private HEIs.

3. Research Method

3.1 Participants

A total of 234 students enrolled in HEI run technical-vocational courses participated in this study. Among the 234 students, 143 (61.1%) were females. The age of 99 (43 %) respondents ranges from 18 to 22; 49 (21 %) ranges from 23-27, and 61 (26 %) ranges from 28 and above. The participants were enrolled in technical-vocational courses: Food and Beverage Services NC II; Housekeeping NC II; Caregiving NC II; Automotive Servicing NC II; Health Care Services NC II; Bookkeeping NC III; Visual Graphic Design NC III and Agricultural Crops Production NC II.

3.2 Measure

A multi-aspect questionnaire was developed following a review of TVET literature (Hodge, 2007; Mason et al., 2018; TESDA, 2020). To measure skills development, nine items presented in a 4-point Likert scale format were fielded. Consequently, generating a reliability index of α=0.822. Using a 6-point Likert scale, a total of 26 items pertaining to training quality and delivery comprised part two of the questionnaire. A Cronbach α of 0.975 was then generated following pilot testing. Part three of the questionnaire was designed to assess training facilities with 13 items that accounted for α=0.961. Lastly, parts 4 and 5 consisted of 17 and 19 statements to assess student support (α= 0.958) and services (α=0.965), respectively.

3.3 Data Analysis

Cognizant of the objectives of the study, an independent t-test was employed for comparisons across demographic profiles while Pearson's r was utilized to test relationships between variables.

4. Results

Table 1 - Characteristics of study respondents

Characteristics	*N*=234	*%*
Gender		
Male	91	*38.9*
Female	143	*61.1*
Age		
18-22	99	*47.3*
23-27	49	*23.4*
28 & above	61	*29.1*
No Data	25	
Citizenship		
Filipino	234	*100.0*
Others	0	*0*
Previously finished Technical Vocational Program		
Tourism	68	*28.9*
Construction	0	*0*
ICT and IT-BPM	10	*4.3*

Transport, Communication and Storage	0	*0*
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	2	*0.9*
Manufacturing	2	*0.9*
Health, Wellness, and other Social Services	18	*7.7*
Have not completed a Technical Vocational Program	104	*44.3*
Previously completed Technical Vocational Program is not listed	31	*13.0*
Holder of TESDA National certificate/s		
NC1	12	*5.1*
NC2	115	*49.1*
NC3	6	*2.6*
None currently	101	*43.2*
Enrolled under a scholarship program		
Yes	117	*50.0*
No	117	*50.0*
Existing Scholarship		
TESDA's Training for Work Scholarship Program (TWSP)	63	*26.9*
Private Education Student Financial Assistance (PESFA)	38	*16.2*
Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education (UAQTEA)	1	*0.4*
Others	10	*4.3*
Not Applicable	122	*52.1*
Educational attainment before TVET		
Elementary education graduate to senior high school undergraduate	12	*5.1*
Technical Vocational course undergraduate	2	*0.9*
Technical Vocational course graduate	9	*3.8*
Senior high school graduate	60	*25.6*
High school graduate (old curriculum)	34	*14.5*
College level undergraduate	68	*29.1*
College level graduate	49	*20.9*
Work Experience		
Have previous work experience	186	*66.1*
No previous work experience	48	*33.8*

The enrolees of the technical vocational courses are mostly female (61.1 %). More than a third belongs to the age range of 18-22 (47.3%). Most of the enrollees have previous technical vocational training (60 %) while 43% have not undergone any technical vocational training. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of those enrolled are holders of the TESDA national certificate while 43% are not. Fifty percent (50%) of those enrolled enjoy some type of scholarship. Before enrolling in technical-vocational courses most of the students are either Senior high school graduates (26%); High school graduate-old curriculum (15%); College level undergraduate (29%) or College graduates (21%). Sixty-one percent (61%) of the students have previous work experience.

Table 2 - Descriptive statistics for student experience

Variables	**Mean**	**SD**
Skills Development*	2.26	0.84
Training Delivery and Quality	5.25	0.64
Training Facility	5.12	0.77
Student Support	5.13	0.70
Student Service	5.08	0.73

*Using 4-point Likert scale format

The descriptive statistics for student experience is presented in Table 2. As seen, TVET students under study rated their schools positively in all aspects of the student experience, wherein, training delivery and quality ranked the highest (*M=5.25, SD=0.64*) followed by training facility and student support (*M=5.13, SD=0.70*) and training facility (*M=5.12, SD=0.77*).

Table 3 - Significant differences in student experience when grouped according to certification

Variables	With Certification		Without Certification		t-value
	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd	
Skills	2.28	0.87	2.25	0.80	0.25
Training Quality	5.19	0.66	5.30	0.62	-1.32
Training Facility	5.01	0.80	**5.22**	0.73	**-2.09***
Student Support	5.07	0.74	5.19	0.66	-1.38
Student Services	5.05	0.75	5.12	0.72	-0.67

*Significant at 0.05 level
**Significant at 0.01 level

The significant differences in student experience, when grouped according to certification, is shown in table 3. As presented, the 101 students without certification rated training facilities (M= 5.01, SD= 0.8) higher $t(232)$= -2.09, p= 0.035) than the 133 respondents with certification (M= 5.22, SD=0.73). No significant differences exist among other variables.

Table 4 - Significant Differences in Student Experience when Grouped According to Work Experience.

Variables	With experience		Without experience		t-value
	Mean	Sd	Mean	SD	
Skills	**2.39**	0.91	**2.08**	0.68	**2.81****
Training Quality	5.24	0.68	5.25	0.58	-0.17
Training Facility	5.15	0.77	5.07	0.77	0.82
Student Support	5.15	0.74	5.11	0.64	0.40
Student Services	5.05	0.79	5.14	0.64	-0.95

*Significant at 0.05 level
**Significant at 0.01 level

Table 4 presents the significant differences in student experience when grouped according to work experience. As shown, the 186 students with prior work experience (M= 2.39, SD= 0.91) learned more skills $t(232)$= 2.81, p<0.002) than the 48 without work experience (M= 2.08, SD= 0.68). No significant differences exist among other variables.

Table 5 - Significant Differences in Student Experience when Grouped According to High School Curriculum.

Variables	New (K-12)		Old		t-value
	Mean	Sd	Mean	SD	
Skills	2.21	0.87	2.17	0.72	0.23
Training Quality	5.37	0.66	5.25	0.58	0.91
Training Facility	5.27	0.78	5.27	0.66	-0.04
Student Support	5.25	0.72	5.21	0.61	0.29
Student Services	**5.39**	0.63	**5.05**	0.66	**2.53***

*Significant at 0.05 level
**Significant at 0.01 level

The significant differences in student experience, when grouped according to high school curriculum can be seen in Table 5. While there are no significant differences noted in skills, training quality, facility, and support, it is interesting to note that 200 K-12 graduates (M= 5.39, SD= 0.63) provided a higher appreciation of student services $t(232)$= 2.53, p= 0.038) than those the 34 from the old curriculum (M= 5.05, SD= 0.66). While this may be indicative of differences in availability and/or helpfulness of student services, students from the old and new curriculum may also have diverse needs.

Finally, as per Table 6 below, training facility was significantly higher $t(232)= 2.89$, $p= 0.005$ among the 117 students with scholarship ($M= 5.26$, $SD= 0.71$) than the 117 students without scholarship ($M= 54.97$, $SD= 0.81$). Also student support was significantly higher $t(232)= 2.03$, $p= 0.003$) according to the 117 students with scholarship ($M= 5.22$, $SD= 0.65$) than the 117 students not enrolled under scholarship ($M= 5.04$, $SD= 0.74$).

Table 6 - Significant Differences in Student Experience when Grouped According to Scholarship.

Variables	With scholarship		Without scholarship		t-value
	Mean	Sd	Mean	SD	
Skills	2.25	0.82	2.27	0.85	-0.17
Training Quality	5.33	0.61	5.17	0.65	1.93
Training Facility	**5.26**	0.71	4.97	0.81	**2.89****
Student Support	**5.22**	0.65	5.04	0.74	**2.03****
Student Services	5.16	0.73	5.01	0.73	1.557

*Significant at 0.05 level
**Significant at 0.01 level

5. Discussion and Recommendations

The results revealed that there is high overall satisfaction on the quality of TVET training of private HEIs vis-à-vis the quality and delivery of programs, school facilities, student support, and student services. This is consistent with the TESDA reports showing that largely TVET graduates were satisfied with their training programs (TESDA, 2018a, 2019a). In this regard, analysis of the results—recognizing the limitation in the number of respondents, training programs, and the HEIs that participated in this study—one can conclude that TVET programs of private HEIs have a high satisfaction rating among the students. But, it should be noted that the same study as mentioned above showed that less than half of the employed graduates found their TVET training useful in their work (TESDA, 2019a). Therefore, it is recommended that future research assess specifically how TVET graduates of private HEIs found their training relevant to their work.

This study also revealed that students who are currently enjoying scholarships have a significant positive perception of the facilities of the schools as compared with those who lack the scholarship. Students who avail of TESDA scholarships come from the lower socio-economic group. For the reason of poverty, private education remains inaccessible to most of them. Private schools are expensive and less accessible, unlike public schools which offer tuition-free education and training. Nonetheless, while public schools are free, they suffer from bigger class sizes, lack of equipment and teaching materials, and limited resources. Conversely, private HEIs have smaller class sizes and relatively better school resources, equipment, and facilities (Durban & Catalan, 2012). It can be argued that the recipients of the scholarship are naturally predisposed to rate high schools, which they cannot afford sans scholarship, that provide them with the opportunity to acquire technical-vocational skills for free. Further, since they are taking the courses in private HEIs they can compare and see how private HEIs provide better facilities than most public schools. The same explains the significant positive perception of students on the schools' student support services. Resource wise private HEIs have the personnel available to attend promptly and more efficiently to the concerns of students. Students with a scholarship may have recognized that if they have remained enrolled in the public schools, then their concerns would have been ignored due to lack of personnel and a high student population. In this case, it is reasonable to expect that students transported from impoverished public schools to private schools, with better resources and student support, will recognize and appreciate the difference in favour of the latter.

This study revealed further that there was a significant difference in perception on training quality and delivery among students with previous work experience as compared with those lacking work experience prior to training. Those with prior work experience were more deliberate and directed in their choice of courses and training institutions. Further, prior knowledge is important in acquiring new learnings (Rittle-Johnson et al., 2009; Thompson & Zamboanga, 2004). Knowledge obtained from their previous work experiences made their expectations more aligned and allowed them to draw better connections with the current skills training leading to more positive and enriching learning experiences. In contrast, those without prior work experience may have been more challenged to make such connections. It would have been more difficult for them to imagine how their current training could be useful to future jobs and employment opportunities.

This study also showed that students with TESDA national certification before taking the course have a significantly higher negative perception of training facilities in private HEIs as compared to the uncertified students. It is observed that many of them have TESDA National Certification (NCs) including levels 2 and 3. It makes sense that having prior TESDA certification indicates that these students underwent previous technical vocational training (probably in one or more institutions) and most likely have previous work experiences too. These previous training and work experiences could have made them more discriminating and critical in comparing the existing school facilities. They could have easily

identified whatever was lacking in their current school against the former schools in comparison with the uncertified students who would be more tentative and less critical given limited ability to compare or benchmark.

Lastly, students who took the K-12 program, compared with those who studied under the old high school curriculum, have a significantly better perception of student services relative to technical vocational programs offered in private HEIs. Student services which comprise of provisions of health services, referral for on the job-training and active company/industry partnership or dual training program arrangement, assessment, and recognition of prior learning (RPL), and the availability of training advisors among others are part of government regulations that must be satisfied even before a school can offer any technical and vocational training program. Again, private HEIs given their resources can better comply with these requirements. Moreover, graduates of the K-12 program are more familiar with these services, unlike the students who graduated from the old high school curriculum. Notably, prior to the introduction of the K-12 curriculum in 2012, there was no separate technical-vocational track offered in these schools. Moreover, securing government scholarship vouchers for students in need of financial assistance is part of the student services that private HEIs provide. As a matter of policy, the government provides tuition fee assistance to all private school students enrolled in K-12 using scholarship vouchers. In some private schools, the value of the vouchers would answer the full tuition of the students. Moreover, students enrolling for another technical-vocational course after K-12 could also avail of additional scholarship vouchers, this time from TESDA. These scholarship vouchers, however, are all courses through the private schools where the students are enrolled. Thus, all these efforts shape a more positive students' perception of the delivery of student services.

It is a step in the right direction for TESDA to encourage private technical-vocational institutions to offer diploma programs given that private HEIs appear to offer quality technical vocational training (TESDA, 2018b). This is less challenging for private HEIs because they have better resources, facilities, and manpower as compared to other private and public training institutions. Further, the collegiate courses are well established. Consequently, it is easier to transform existing technical-vocational courses into programs where the students' vocational training and TESDA national certificate can be credited and integrated with some collegiate courses for students to obtain and merit a Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) Level 5 (diploma) qualification (TESDA, 2018b). In this way, private HEIs offering TVET courses could play a pivotal role in promoting higher level TVET courses. Accordingly, this study recommends that TESDA pursue more aggressively its advocacy of the diploma programs and takes a closer look at how more private HEIs offering TVET can buy into the program. The recommendation is consistent with the growing recognition of policymakers, scholars, and development practitioners across the world that in order to create greater mobility for the technical-vocational graduates and improve the social status and acceptance of TVET it is necessary to provide pathways from TVET to higher education (Naziz, 2019).

This paper established that students experience school quality (training quality and delivery, school facilities, student support, and student services) differently. Students' work experience and acquired certification prior to training influence their perceptions. In this regard, program offerings of HEIs should also consider the nuances and specific needs of the students. This is consistent with the findings that side by side with the changing requirements and expectations of industry, the kind of students entering technical vocational training is changing as well. Thus, TESDA needs to create a more responsive policy infrastructure for training programs to respond to the needs of the diverse clientele (TESDA, 2018a).

6. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that HEIs offering TVET offer quality programs consistent with the following parameters: training quality and delivery, training facilities student support, and student services. Moreover, students with prior work experiences have a significantly more positive perception of the quality and delivery of skills training compared with students lacking previous work experiences. Further prior certification and scholarships make a significant difference in students' perception of the quality of school facilities and student support compared with students lacking prior TESDA certification and scholarships. Finally, TVET students who underwent the K-12 curriculum have a higher appreciation of the quality of student services compared with graduates of the old high school curriculum.

Lastly, while these are the conclusions reached in this study, its findings and recommendations must be interpreted with caution. As previously mentioned, the respondents, training programs, and the HEIs that participated in this research are limited in number. Thus, this study recommends that further research be made involving more students across different programs and more private HEIs offering technical vocational training.

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