

The Perspective of SUC School Administrators on the Revitalization of the Philippine-Australia Technical and Vocational Project in the Bicol Region

JOSE B. VALENCIA

Bicol State College of Applied Sciences and Technology, Peñafrancia Avenue, Naga City, Philippines

Abstract- This study explored the perspectives of school administrators from State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in the Bicol region regarding the revitalization of the Philippine-Australia Technical and Vocational Education Project (PATVEP). The research investigated the challenges, opportunities, and implications of reintroducing the program, with a specific focus on automotive technology, to enhance local socio-economic development. Conducted through semi-structured interviews with 10 SUC administrators, the study uncovers concerns about the current state of the program, including outdated equipment, insufficient funding, and a lack of effective monitoring. Despite these challenges, administrators recognized the program's historical success in improving the employability of students and acknowledged the importance of TVET in addressing regional socio-economic issues such as unemployment and poverty. The study identified the need for a localized approach to revitalization, recommending curriculum updates to align with industry needs, enhanced collaboration with local industries, and the integration of green technologies. Additionally, administrators advocate for increased funding and resource allocation to support the program's sustainable success. The findings suggest that a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approach involving educational institutions, government agencies, and local industries is essential for the long-term success of PATVEP. This revitalization effort is seen as crucial for equipping the Bicol workforce with the skills necessary to meet the demands of emerging industries, particularly in the automotive and green sectors, and fostering regional economic growth.

Indexed Terms- Revitalization, PATVEP, TVET, SUC Administrators

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, inbound and outbound countries have collaborated to improve technical and vocational education to train the workforce and meet industries' increasing needs. Technical and vocational education has been offered to many institutions to foster work-based opportunities. This program is designed internationally to equip learners with critical abilities that improve employability, and personal growth and at the same time become an active citizen of their country, specifically. Today, TVE is booming which enhances business and personal productivity, competitiveness, research, and innovation.

In the Philippines, the government has emphasized the importance of Technical-Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to equip Filipino learners with relevant skills, thus improving employability and supporting economic growth. As mandated by TESDA under section 21 of RA 7796 (TESDA Law) to provide direction, policies, programs, and standards towards quality education and skills development. The National Technical Education and Skills Development Plan (NTESDP) 2023-2028 designed a comprehensive roadmap to empower the Filipino workforce with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in the rapidly evolving global economy.

Along this area, the Philippine-Australian Technical and Vocational Project was one example that has helped enhance vocational training in different areas in the Philippines. The project was implemented between 1990 and 1994, and aimed to improve the

education and training of technicians and trades persons from selected schools offering technical and vocational programs, to meet industry standards. The Philippine government has always placed its focus on TVET to prepare Filipino youth for the job market and to support the economy through skills training. Before, PATVEP was effective in strengthening TVE institutions' training and curriculum implementation.

On this note, TVE institutions still aim and make efforts to revitalize different vocational programs, specifically in the automotive technology track. It is believed that automotive technology is vital for the country's infrastructure and transportation sectors. Since several schools in the Philippines have long benefited from this international cooperation, there is a need to revitalize the program and seek another opportunity that will enhance economic development through technical proficiency.

There were State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in the Bicol Region that have witnessed the vitality of the PATVEP in delivering specialized education and skills training to automotive technology students. The revitalization of the Philippine-Australia Technical and Vocational Project Region V has sparked an increased focus on programs like Automotive Technology. Notably, this effort will address the region's demand for skilled workers in the automotive and transportation industries. Substantiating its alignment with the Philippines' commitment to highlighting the emphasis on industry-driven programs, there is a need for the region to underscore the tangibility of the program. The perspective of the school administration in the revitalization of PATVEP implementation into a more effective, efficient, and relevant will confirm the need to again prepare the students for a successful career in the automotive sector.

Hence, the objective of this study is to understand the perspective of State Universities and Colleges (SUC) school administrators in the Bicol Region in terms of the revitalization of the Philippine-Australia Technical and Vocational project. This study also explores the viewpoints of the SUC administrators which will provide insights into the challenges, opportunities, and implications of reviving PATVEP

in the context of greening its socio-political and economic aspects.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem being addressed in this research revolved around understanding the perceptions, challenges, and recommendations of SUC school administrators regarding the Philippine-Australia Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Project in the Bicol region.

Specifically, this study sought to explore how these administrators perceive the importance and potential impact of the project, identify the anticipated challenges in revitalizing it within the region, and understand their views on the role of TVET in addressing local socio-economic issues. Additionally, the study aimed to gather insights from administrators on strategies to improve and effectively implement the project to better meet the needs of the community.

This study answered the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of SUC school administrators regarding the impact of the Philippine-Australia Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Project in the Bicol region?
2. What challenges do SUC administrators anticipate in revitalizing the Philippine-Australia TVET Project within the Bicol region?
3. How do SUC administrators view the role of TVET in addressing local socio-economic issues in the Bicol region?
4. What recommendations do SUC administrators have for improving and effectively implementing the Philippine-Australia TVET Project to better meet the needs of the community?

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive-qualitative research approach to understand the perceptions, challenges, and recommendations of school administrators in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in the Bicol region regarding the Philippine-Australia Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Project. The primary data collection of this study was

semi-structured interviews. This method offered flexibility that allowed the researcher to explore specific topics in-depth while also providing the freedom to pursue new areas of discussion during the interview. There were 10 administrators, such as deans and program chairperson, program coordinators, who responded during the interview, and insights were gathered, respectively. Also, a purposive sampling technique was used to select participants according to their roles, experience, and expertise in Automotive Technology and other TVE programs specifically SUCS that were assisted in this project. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns in the data. The study also used ethical guidelines to ensure the participants' participation with confidentiality and informed consent for its publication and their identities would not be revealed. The study aimed to provide actionable recommendations for improving the project's impact on local socio-economic needs by exploring the administrators' perspectives.

IV. FINDINGS

- Perceptions on the Current Implementation of PATVEP:

Many administrators expressed concern about the current state of the program, noting that it was no longer as effective and efficient as it had been in the past. They pointed to the lack of monitoring, outdated equipment, and the retirement of previous program beneficiaries as key challenges. However, they acknowledged the initial success of the project in improving the employability and skills of students, particularly in the automotive technology sector.

- This could be mean that the said project was not substantial in terms of its purpose to help students improve their skills.

The Philippine-Australian Technical and Vocational Education Project in automotive technology is currently underway, I see this as a step in the right direction for raising the standard of technical education. In order to guarantee that graduates are adequately equipped for work in the automotive industry, it improves students' abilities, gives them training pertinent to the industry, and fortifies the

relationship between academic institutions and business. (Participant 2)

V. CHALLENGES IN REVITALIZATION

Administrators highlighted several challenges in revitalizing PATVEP, including insufficient funding, outdated infrastructure, and the need for curriculum updates to meet the changing demands of industries. They stressed that the Bicol region, being geographically and economically disadvantaged, faces particular difficulties in attracting resources and keeping pace with technological advancements.

"The implementation now of the PATVEP program is not effective and efficient unlike before. No more monitoring. Most recipients of the program have retired. Tools and equipment are now obsolete, they need upgrading. However, as an administrator, I recognize that the TVET Project helped the community produce a more skilled and employable workforce especially in the Automotive Technology sector". (Participant 1)

Moreover, one major concern among the administrators was the lack of sufficient funding and infrastructure to fully implement the revitalization of the project. Several administrators noted that the Bicol region, being geographically distant and less economically advanced compared to other regions, often faced difficulties in attracting sufficient resources. *"Funding is always an issue,"* one participant shared. *"While the project had great potential, we struggled with outdated equipment and insufficient training resources to match international standards."* (Participant 4)

- SUC administrators view the role of TVET in addressing local socio-economic issues in the Bicol region

Administrators universally agreed that TVET is crucial for the economic development of the Bicol region. They emphasized that TVET provides pathways to higher-paying jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities, which are particularly important in regions facing issues like poverty and unemployment. They also recognized the need to tailor vocational programs to the region's specific industries in the

transportation and manufacturing sectors like automotive, and automobile.

“I view the partnership as an opportunity for knowledge transfer and better international relations, which could further benefit the region in terms of competitiveness. Before, economically speaking, the project was seen as a key initiative to promote local economic growth in our place by equipping individuals with industry-specific skills, thus attracting both local and international investments.”
(Participant 3)

“There is a need to revitalize the PATVEP because it will address the unemployment in the country. This program, I believe will play a very significant opportunity for the Bicol learners and educators in providing training directly.”

In this aspect, administrators expressed the view that the collaboration between the Philippine government and Australia was critical for the success of the project, especially in terms of knowledge exchange, faculty development, and access to international best practices. However, they also pointed out that the effectiveness of the revitalization effort would depend on how well these partnerships could be sustained.

Furthermore, some administrators highlighted the challenge of updating curricula to keep pace with rapidly evolving industries. This was especially true in sectors like information technology, where the gap between existing skills and new technological developments is significant.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

A common recommendation among participants was the need for a more localized approach to the revitalization of the project. This includes creating specialized programs aligned with the region's socio-economic needs, integrating green technologies into automotive education, and fostering closer collaboration between SUCs, local industries, and government agencies. Administrators also advocated for greater capacity building and continuous

knowledge transfer through sustained international partnerships.

VII. DISCUSSION

The findings from the interviews underscore the significance of TVET in the development of the Bicol region, with administrators highlighting the vital role of skills training in addressing the region's socio-economic challenges. However, several barriers need to be overcome for the successful revitalization of the Philippine-Australia Technical and Vocational Education Project. Notably, the lack of funding, outdated infrastructure, and curriculum gaps hinder the program's effectiveness.

A major theme that emerged was the importance of adapting the curriculum and training to reflect the specific needs of the region, which would help ensure that the skills acquired by students align with the demands of local industries. The administrators' recommendations for integrating green technologies into automotive education also highlight the growing importance of sustainability in technical education. The incorporation of electric vehicle training and eco-friendly practices into automotive programs could equip students with skills relevant to the global green economy.

This study indicates that while the administrators acknowledge the significant potential of the Philippine-Australia Technical and Vocational Project, they also recognize several barriers that need to be addressed for its revitalization to be successful in the Bicol region. The administrators' focus on the need for funding and updated curricula highlights the ongoing challenges in maintaining a modern and effective TVET system. The importance of adapting to the region's specific economic context also emerged as a critical factor in ensuring that the project meets the real needs of local communities.

Furthermore, the administrators' emphasis on building sustainable partnerships and fostering collaboration between SUCs and local industries underscores the importance of creating a multi-stakeholder approach to TVET. Their recommendations reflect a keen understanding of

how to adapt international projects to local realities, ensuring their long-term relevance and effectiveness.

The study also emphasizes the need for long-term, sustainable partnerships between the government, educational institutions, and industries to ensure that the revitalization of PATVEP addresses both the immediate and future needs of the region.

CONCLUSION

The revitalization of the Philippine-Australia Technical and Vocational Education Project in the Bicol region represents a significant opportunity for advancing technical skills and supporting regional economic development. However, for the project to be successful, challenges such as inadequate funding, outdated infrastructure, and curriculum misalignment must be addressed. The perspectives of SUC school administrators suggest that a more localized, sustainable, and collaborative approach to TVET is necessary. By tailoring programs to the region's unique needs, fostering industry partnerships, and integrating modern, green technologies into the curriculum, PATVEP can play a crucial role in preparing the Bicol workforce for the challenges and opportunities of the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to improve the Philippine-Australia Technical and Vocational Education Project (PATVEP) in the Bicol region:

1. **Increased Funding and Resource Allocation:** Government agencies should prioritize funding for the revitalization of the program, ensuring that SUCs have access to up-to-date equipment, facilities, and teaching resources.
2. **Curriculum Reviews and Updates:** Regular reviews of the curriculum are necessary to ensure it is aligned with industry needs and technological advancements, especially in fields like automotive technology and green technologies.
3. **Enhanced Collaboration with Local Industries and Stakeholders:** SUCs should strengthen partnerships with local industries, government agencies, and international stakeholders to foster

continuous knowledge transfer and ensure that training is relevant to the labor market.

4. **Development of Specialized Programs:** Tailor programs to address the region's specific industries, such as agribusiness, eco-tourism, and disaster management, ensuring that graduates meet the local socio-economic needs.

REFERENCES

- [1] TESDA. <https://www.tesda.gov.ph/About/TESDA/28> Retrieved last December 22, 2024
- [2] TESDA. <https://www.tesda.gov.ph/About/TESDA/47>. Retrieved last December 23, 2024
- [3] Allan Kelly, Richard Willing and Marivic Puzon. March 1998. The Philippines Australia Technical and Vocational Education Project (PATVEP): Evaluation No. 4. Australian Government. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Retrieved last December 23, 2024 from <https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/philippines-australia-technical-and-vocational-education-project-patvep-evaluation-no-4>
- [4] TESDA. (2024). *Philippine Technical Education and Skills Development Policies and Programs*. Retrieved from TESDA website.
- [5] Kelly, A., Willing, R., & Puzon, M. (1998). *The Philippines-Australia Technical and Vocational Education Project (PATVEP): Evaluation No. 4*. Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.
- [6] Australian Government (2015). *Philippine-Australia Technical and Vocational Education and Training Partnership Project*.
- [7] Department of Education (2020). *Philippine Technical Education and Skills Development Policies and Programs*.
- [8] Local Government Units of Bicol Region (2023). *Bicol Region Development Plan: Technical Education and Workforce Enhancement*.