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The Second Congressional Commission on Education

Priority Area #21
Ensuring Quality in the Provision of TVET

Rationalizing TVET Provision and Support for Enhanced Public-Private Complementarity

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
APACC	Asia Pacific Accreditation and Certification Commission
BKSTP	Barangay Kabuhayan Skills Training Program
CFSP	Coconut Farmers Scholarship Program
CHED	Commission on Higher Education
DepEd	Department of Education
EDCOM II	Second Congressional Commission on Education
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
LGU	Local Government Unit
LLL	Lifelong Learning
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OWWA	Overseas Workers Welfare Administration Fund
PCC	Philippine Competition Commission
PESFA	Private Education Student Financial Assistance
PTC	Provincial Training Center
RA	Republic Act
RESP	Rice Extension Services Program
RTC	Regional Training Center
RQ	Research Question
SAP	Scholarship Allocation Plan
SIS	Scholarship Information System
STAR	System for TVET Accreditation and Recognition
STEP	Special Training for Employment Program
SUCs	State Universities and Colleges
TDF	TESDA Development Fund
TTI	TESDA Technology Institution
TTSP	Tulong Trabaho Scholarship Program
TVET	Technical-Vocational Education and Training
TVI	Technical Vocational Institution
TWSP	Training for Work Scholarship Program
UAQTEA	Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act

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Executive Summary

This study supports Priority Area: TVET and Lifelong Learning, Issue No. 14 of the Ateneo and EDCOM II Research Fellowship, which emphasizes strengthening complementarity between public and private TVET through improved governance, financing, and stakeholder coordination.

It examines differences in the range and quality of TVET offerings between public and private institutions and assesses how voucher availability shapes these disparities. It identifies the characteristics and institutional profiles of TVET providers that are highly dependent on scholarships or vouchers for their operations, and explores strategies to strengthen complementarity in TVET provision. The study further analyzes how the decentralization of public TVET institutions can enhance complementarity within the TVET system. Finally, it proposes possible amendments to the TESDA Charter, particularly regarding the TESDA Development Fund (TDF), the availability of grants for private TVET institutions, and the establishment of Regional Centers, to support a more coordinated, equitable, and complementary TVET ecosystem.

The study adopted a descriptive–exploratory design with a focus on policy recommendations. Quantitative data were drawn mainly from TESDA scholarship datasets (FY 2019–2024), employment statistics, STAR-rated program data, and relevant annual reports and policy circulars. Qualitative data were gathered through key informant interviews with representatives from TESDA, LGUs, SUCs, private TVIs, industry, trainers, and TVET learners, complemented by policy documents, official reports, and case studies. Data analysis combined descriptive statistics for quantitative data with thematic and content analysis for qualitative and policy information, enabling an integrated assessment of TVET provision and policy reform options.

The following are the key findings:

- Public TVIs typically offer broader and higher-level qualifications due to better funding and infrastructure, while private TVIs, although more numerous, usually focus on a narrower range of programs, often limited to one or two lower-cost, entry-level qualifications.
- Private TVIs lead in enrollment and graduation, with both public and private institutions showing strong certification outcomes; however, a notable gap exists between graduation and assessment, particularly in private TVIs, despite free assessment fees.
- Reported employment outcomes are satisfactory, but methodologically weak due to limited and unrepresentative data.
- Quality gaps persist, with public TVIs dominating STAR-rated programs and showing stronger compliance with TESDA standards, while many private TVIs struggle with resources and voluntary participation in quality assurance programs.
- Private TVIs rely heavily on TESDA vouchers but face unequal access and erratic disbursement.
- Financial instability, understaffing, and inability to upgrade due to lack of support are typical in small private TVIs.
- Vouchers are essential across both sectors for access, quality, and sustainability of TVET programs.
- Although scholarship allocations to the private sector have increased, many private TVIs still receive no slots, in contrast to public TVIs, highlighting an imbalance in the allocation process.

- Several provinces experience overlap in course offerings between public and private TVIs, creating unnecessary competition.
- Stakeholders uphold public-private partnerships, resource sharing, and best practice exchanges.
- TESDA's dual role as regulator and provider undermines collaboration and competition fairness.
- TESDA has shifted from full devolution to focusing on building local government capacity for managing municipal training centers, rather than transferring operational control of existing institutions.
- LGUs and SUCs show growing readiness to manage TVET institutions, but vary in capacity.
- The TDF favors capital investments over inclusive support due to the absence of a lump sum allocation and the unclaimed share from Overseas Workers Welfare Administration Fund (OWWA) funds, affecting its sustainability.
- No TDF grants reached private TVIs during the review period, indicating institutional bias and policy misalignment.
- Perceptions of favoritism and informal barriers undermine trust in scholarship allocation.
- Limited scholarship slots lead to competition and uncertainty for students, especially in private TVIs.
- Stakeholders are calling for the voucher amount to be adjusted in line with inflation and express a preference for upgrading existing facilities, along with providing additional grants, subsidies, and incentives for trainers, rather than investing in the construction of new Regional Centers.

In light of the key findings, the study proposes the following policy recommendations:

1. Reform Scholarship Policies to Promote Equity, Access, and Responsiveness
   - Introduce provisions in the TESDA Charter to mandate equitable and performance-based scholarship distribution, with a fixed percentage reserved for small private TVIs with proven track records.
   - Revise the Omnibus Guidelines for the Implementation of TESDA Scholarship Programs (TESDA Circular No. 4 s. 2024) to include quota-based or needs-based allocation per region that prioritizes underserved private TVIs and avoids duplication in high-capacity areas.
   - Require regular indexation of voucher and scholarship amounts to ref ect inf ation and market costs of training materials and equipment.
   - Include starter kits and assessment fee subsidies as standard entitlements across all major scholarship programs.
   - Mandate the expansion of scholarship coverage and timely fund disbursement through defined service-level standards (e.g., maximum days between scholarship approval and voucher release).
   - Expand eligibility for support to self-paying students and TESDA Online Program completers via partial rebates, discounts, or kit provision.

2. Institutionalize Role Differentiation Between Public and Private TVIs
   - Develop and implement a National TVET Role Differentiation and Program Zoning Policy to reduce duplication, clarify institutional roles, and enhance coordinated service delivery.

- Amend TESDA policies to create distinct program clusters by provider type, and provide funding incentives (e.g., matching grants, training equipment support) to private TVIs offering essential but underrepresented qualifications.
- Launch a "Tiered Provider Framework" similar to SUC leveling, categorizing TVIs by program breadth, trainer qualifications, infrastructure, and strategic alignment.

3. Strengthen Public-Private Coordination through TVET Complementarity Mechanisms
   - Establish a national framework for TVET complementarity that integrates the roles of TESDA, LGUs, industry associations, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in training and skill development, defining clear roles, responsibilities, and collaboration mechanisms between the public and private sectors to enhance training outcomes and workforce development.
   - Establish a TVET Complementarity Planning Board at the regional level (TESDA, LGUs, private TVIs) to coordinate the zoning of programs and allocation of vouchers based on demand and provider capacity.

4. Decentralize Public TVET Governance Based on LGU and SUC Capacity
   - Amend the existing TESDA Charter to refocus its mandate on setting TVET policy directions and quality assurance, giving way to the formal transfer of authority over regional/provincial training centers to LGUs or other capable organizations.
   - Introduce a TVET Decentralization Act that provides a legal framework for devolving operational control of TESDA Technology Institutions (TTIs) to capable LGUs/SUCs, including minimum fiscal and governance readiness criteria.
   - Allocate transition grants and technical assistance to LGUs that opt in, and establish a TVET Decentralization Performance Monitoring System to evaluate effectiveness post-devolution.
   - Encourage integration with SUCs to promote ladderized and lifelong learning pathways.

5. Reorient the TDF for Inclusive Institutional Support
   - A fixed percentage of the OWWA Fund should be set to supplement the TDF, which TESDA should subsequently claim to support quality improvements and capacity-building in TVET.
   - Establish a Small Provider Development Grant under the TDF specifically for private TVIs offering one to two qualifications, aiming to enhance infrastructure, trainer capacity, and program quality.
   - Create an Independent TDF Grants and Oversight Committee with private sector representation to ensure transparency, equity, and alignment with national TVET priorities.
   - Dedicate a percentage of TDF annually for competitive development grants accessible to accredited private TVIs.
   - Introduce additional forms of institutional support, such as accreditation assistance, trainer salary subsidies, and matching grants, to help level the playing field for private TVIs and enhance their capacity to deliver quality, in-demand programs.

Keywords: *TVET, complementarity, vouchers, scholarship, decentralization*

Introduction

Equipping individuals with practical, industry-relevant skills is essential for fostering meaningful employment and boosting productivity across various workforce areas, a role that TVET plays at its core. Public and private training providers are central to delivering these skills and competencies, acting as key facilitators in connecting education with labor market demands (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2022; Melesse et al., 2023; Preddey, 2006). They play a critical role in ensuring that training programs are aligned with current labor market needs, fostering collaboration with industries to keep curricula current and responsive to technological advancements and emerging trends.

In the Philippines, TESDA plays a crucial part in overseeing and supervising TVET providers, ensuring that they meet national standards for quality and relevance. As the primary government agency tasked with promoting and regulating TVET, TESDA is responsible for accrediting training institutions, developing curricula, and monitoring the performance of TVET providers across the country (Edralin & Pastrana, 2023; TESDA, 2023a; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2019). The agency works closely with public and private institutions to ensure that training programs align with the skills demands of various industries, thereby fostering a well-trained, competitive workforce. Through the establishment and enforcement of national standards, TESDA ensures the credibility and consistency of TVET delivery, helping graduates acquire skills recognized and valued by employers.

One key mechanism to improve access to TVET is through scholarship programs. TESDA offers scholarships such as the Training for Work Scholarship Program (TWSP), Special Training for Employment Program (STEP), Private Education Student Financial Assistance (PESFA), Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act (UAQTEA), Tulong Trabaho Scholarship Program (TTSP), Tsuper Iskolar, Rice Extension Services Program (RESP), Barangay Kabuhayan Skills Training Program (BKSTP), and Coconut Farmers Scholarship Program (CFSP) to expand TVET access and develop a skilled workforce for key and emerging industries (Second Congressional Commission on Education [EDCOM II], 2024; TESDA, 2024; TESDA, 2025). These scholarships are commonly implemented through vouchers or scholarship slots allocated to qualified TVET providers, who are then responsible for selecting the beneficiaries based on criteria stipulated in the scholarship guidelines.

On the side of TVET providers, these mechanisms are crucial to their operations, given that TVET is generally regarded as more costly than general education, often requiring smaller class sizes and substantial investment in specialized equipment and training materials (Pavlova & Maclean, 2013). With government support through scholarships and vouchers, TVET institutions benefit from more stable, predictable student enrollment, which provides a steady revenue stream (Maclean et al., 2013). This financial predictability allows institutions to plan and budget more effectively, ensuring they can invest in quality training programs, up-to-date facilities, and skilled instructors.

The per capita cost of scholarship varies depending on the qualification, the type of scholarship, and is computed based on variable costs, such as consumables, utilities, facility, equipment, and tool maintenance, trainer honoraria, and living allowances, and fixed costs, which include miscellaneous fees, national assessment fees, instructional materials, and starter toolkits (TESDA, 2025). For example, based on TESDA's 2025 Schedule of Costs for Scholarship Programs, the cost for the Machining NC II qualification is ₱23,935.00 for TWSP/TTSP/BKSTP scholars, ₱24,435.00 for PESFA scholars, and ₱29,305.00 for Tsuper Iskolar beneficiaries.

To ensure a fair and efficient distribution of scholarship slots for the TESDA Scholarship Programs, a Scholarship Allocation Plan (SAP) will be developed and utilized by the Regions/Provinces to allocate training seats among TVET providers based on: a) absorptive capacity, b) available funds, and c) a percentage share allocation of 30% for TTIs and 70% for both public and private institutions (TESDA, 2024). Moreover, Khatiwada et al. (2021) highlighted that "priority in the allocation of grants is also given to TVIs with a STAR-rated programs, those accredited by the Asia Pacific Accreditation and Certification Commission, and ISO-certified and Philippine Quality Award[s] recipients" (p.192).

Additionally, TESDA Circular No. 4 series of 2024 stipulates the requirements for TVIs without a previous scholarship allocation. These are: (1) Program/s must be registered with, accredited, or recognized by TESDA, (2) TVI is compliant based on the latest applicable inspection and/or audits (e.g., ocular inspection, compliance/internal/on-the-spot/ operations audit), (3) Must have the absorptive capacity encoded in the Scholarship Information System (SIS), and (4) the TVI has programs/qualifications which are aligned with the Regional/Provincial Skills Priorities. For TVIs with previous allocations, the same requirements apply, along with the following additional conditions: (5) The TVI has not been found guilty of any adverse findings, after due process, by the Regional Director as the Disciplining Authority, (6) The TVI must not be a subject of any unsettled Notice of Disallowance, (7) Performance evaluation result of TVIs using the Rubrics for TVI Evaluation.

However, while scholarships and vouchers have significantly expanded access to TVET and supported the growth of training providers, they also raise important concerns regarding sustainability, equity, and overall education quality. For instance, "some TVIs are dependent on the scholarship allocation" (TESDA, 2023a, p. 37), which creates vulnerabilities in their long-term planning and financial stability. Furthermore, EDCOM II (2024) emphasized that "the lack of comprehensive trainee support systems underscores the need for transparency in the allocation of national, regional, and provincial scholarships" (p. 238), highlighting the need for more accountable and equitable funding mechanisms.

Meanwhile, the complementarity of education provision is a fundamental principle that underpins the development of a cohesive, inclusive, and adaptive educational ecosystem. Complementarity may be seen as "public and private institutions...working together harmoniously and collaboratively in the planning and delivery of educational services, sharing resources, expertise, and best practices as appropriate" (DepEd, 2024, p. 3). The main difference between public and private schools is that public schools are funded by local, state, and federal governments, while private schools rely on tuition fees and support from non-public sources such as religious organizations, endowments, grants, and donations (Ashley et al., 2014; Choy, 1997; OECD, 2022). Complementarity connotes equal opportunity for both public and private schools to improve the quality of their programs and to collaborate in enhancing the national capacity to provide quality educational services.

Yet, there is no clear nationwide framework or system to effectively implement complementarity in the provision of quality education (EDCOM II, 2025; Generalao & David, 2022). A Senate resolution was introduced during the 18th Congress, aiming to establish a framework that reinforces the complementarity of public and private institutions to support national objectives and sustainable development goals in education (Gatchalian, 2020), though no further updates have been reported as of this writing.

Using scholarships and vouchers to enhance the complementarity of public and private TVET institutions is a powerful strategy for creating a more inclusive, flexible, and responsive education system. However, to fully realize the potential of scholarships and vouchers in enhancing the complementarity of public and private TVET institutions, their effective implementation requires careful design and coordination to ensure that both sectors truly complement rather than compete in ways that could undermine the quality or accessibility of training.

This research explores strategies for rationalizing TVET provision and enhancing public-private complementarity. In this paper, rationalization refers to aligning and coordinating the roles of public and private institutions to reduce redundancy and improve service delivery. Central to this process is the use of vouchers and scholarships to ensure a more equitable distribution of resources and to enhance coordination between public and private providers, thereby creating a more cohesive training ecosystem.

Also, decentralization is explored as a factor in enhancing complementarity, specifically focusing on TESDA's compliance with the devolution mandate and examining the possibility of LGUs and other capable entities taking over the management of public TVIs.

The study further delves into the roles of key stakeholders, namely the TESDA, LGUs, TVIs, students, trainers, and industries, to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics shaping TVET provision and support. Specifically, the objective is to address five essential questions highlighted in Priority Area: TVET and Lifelong Learning (LLL) Issue No. 14 of the Ateneo and EDCOM-II Research Fellowship.

Overall, this research is hoped to contribute valuable insights that can inform evidence-based policy and practice, paving the way for a more cohesive, effective, and inclusive TVET system in the Philippines. Furthermore, this study establishes a solid basis for actionable recommendations and interventions, propelling the TVET sector to attain greater significance and substantially impacting the country's rapidly evolving socio-economic landscape.

Research Questions

1. What notable differences exist in the range and quality of TVET offerings between public and private institutions, and how are these disparities influenced by the availability of vouchers?
2. What are the characteristics and profiles of TVET institutions that heavily rely on scholarships or vouchers for their operations?
3. How can the achievement of complementarity in TVET provision be enhanced?
4. How could the decentralization of public TVET institutions contribute to improving complementarity in the TVET provision?
5. What amendments to the TESDA Charter, particularly regarding the TDF and grant availability for supporting private TVET institutions and the establishment of Regional Centers, might be necessary to enhance complementarity in TVET provision?

Methodology

Research Design

This paper utilized the descriptive-exploratory research design with an emphasis on policy recommendations.

Participants

A total of 25 participants were purposively selected to participate in this study. There were four officials from TESDA, two from state universities, two from LGUs, seven private TVIs, three private firms, three assessors/trainers, three scholar graduates, and one online course completer. This diverse selection ensures a comprehensive range of perspectives on the provision of TVET and the public-private complementarity in its delivery.

Data Collection

The first Research Question (RQ) examined the notable differences in the range and quality of TVET offerings between public and private institutions, as influenced by voucher availability. The range of TVET offerings described by number, level, and qualifications was derived from raw datasets shared by TESDA via Google Drive in November 2025. These datasets contain details of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 to 2024 Scholarship Programs. Before analysis, the raw datasets underwent extensive cleaning to remove redundant entries, correct unusual or missing punctuation, and address other formatting inconsistencies. From the original datasets containing 4,887 TVIs and 1,532 qualifications, the cleaned datasets yielded 4,791 TVIs and 1,012 qualifications. The details of the FY 2024 Scholarship Programs were then extracted, visualized, and analyzed.

As for the quality of TVET offerings, data on scholarship outcomes, including the number of scholarship slots, enrolled, graduated, assessed, and certified individuals, also came from the FY 2019 to 2024 Scholarship Programs datasets. These datasets were computed and presented in a visualized format. Employment data were provided in July 2025, while information on STAR-rated programs was shared in November 2025. These quantitative findings were further enriched by qualitative insights gathered through interviews with business and shop owners, TESDA officials, and assessors.

The second RQ, which focused on the characteristics and profiles of TVET institutions that rely on scholarships or vouchers, builds on the findings of RQ 1. Institutions found to be offering only one qualification are likely to be more dependent on scholarship support. Their limited program offerings suggest constrained capacity or resources, which may hinder their ability to diversify and expand their services beyond a narrow focus. Interviews were conducted with TESDA officials, TVI owners, managers, and graduates to gain deeper insights into the operational challenges and dependencies faced by these institutions.

Data collection for RQ 3, which examined how to enhance complementarity in TVET provision, was guided by the findings from the first two RQs. RQ 3 explored how the previously identified characteristics and patterns could be strategically leveraged to promote greater coordination and synergy among training providers. One approach involved analyzing how scholarships were allocated between public and private TVET institutions, using the cleaned FY 2019–2024 Scholarship Program datasets and TESDA's Annual Reports for the same period. Another aspect focused on identifying duplicated course offerings at the provincial level, specifically drawing on the FY 2024 Scholarship Programs extracted from these datasets. To further enrich the analysis, interviews were conducted with school managers, owners, trainers, firm representatives, SUCs, and TESDA officials.

For RQ 4, which addressed decentralization, data collection was expanded based on insights drawn from the findings of the first three RQs. This was further enriched through an examination of case studies, policy papers, existing literature on decentralized TVET systems, and relevant TESDA resolutions and circulars. In-depth interviews were also conducted with officials from TESDA, LGUs, and SUCs to gather nuanced perspectives on the decentralization of public TVET institutions.

For RQ 5, which explored potential amendments to the TESDA Charter to promote greater complementarity, data collection was built on insights from the preceding four questions. Supplementary data were sourced from policy papers, TESDA circulars, and official reports. Specific data on the TDF was accessed via a shared Google Drive provided by TESDA. Furthermore, interviews with key stakeholders, including officials from TESDA, LGUs, SUCs, private training institutions, and TVET graduates, offered valuable insights into proposed amendments to the TESDA Charter aimed at enhancing complementarity in the provision of TVET services.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize key characteristics, range, quality, and disparities between public and private TVET institutions while examining the impact of vouchers on these outcomes. Thematic analysis was employed to interpret qualitative data from interviews. Content analysis was used to review and extract insights from policy documents, reports, and case studies, providing a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

Ethical Considerations

Before the interviews, all participants received an informed consent form outlining the study's purpose, their role, and how their data would be used. The form emphasized that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without consequence. Participants signed the form to indicate their understanding and agreement. All identities will be kept confidential, and no personal information will be included in reports or publications.

This research was reviewed and approved by an institutional ethics committee to ensure compliance with ethical standards and guidelines for research involving human subjects.

Findings and Discussion

Disparities in TVET Program Quality and Range Between Public and Private TVIs in Relation to Voucher Support

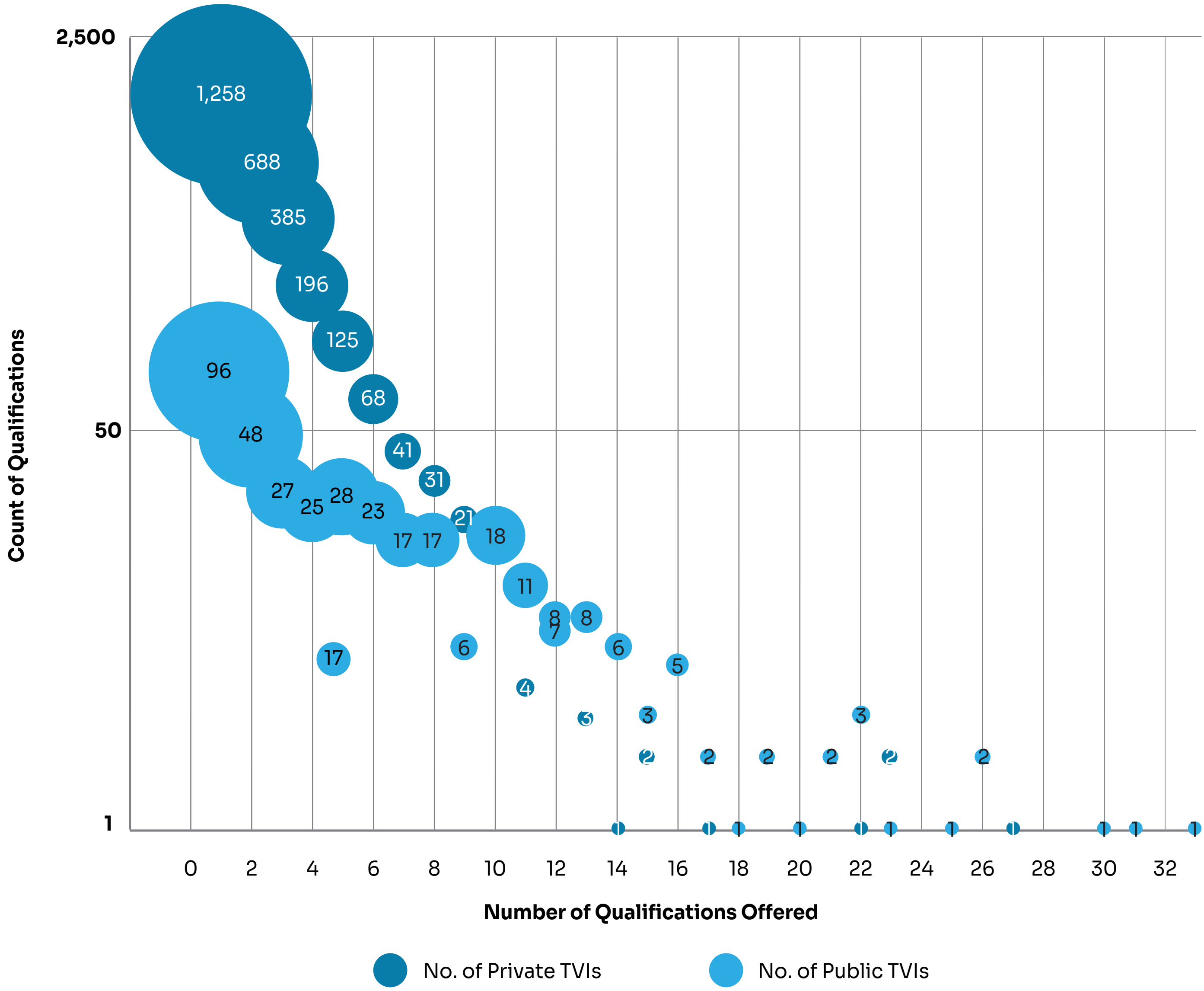
Unless otherwise specified, the data analyzed in this study were derived from raw datasets shared via Google Drive by TESDA that detail the number of scholarship slots per institution for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024. The raw datasets were subsequently cleaned, processed, and organized to ensure consistency and accuracy prior to analysis.

The processed data reveal that TVIs were allocated scholarship slots, of which 2,854 were private institutions, and 358 were public. This distribution indicates a higher participation of private institutions in implementing TESDA's scholarship programs, reflecting their critical role in expanding access to TVET nationwide. Further, this supports global findings that funding private TVIs can be a more efficient way to expand TVET access than building new public centers (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2014).

Despite their relatively low number, Figure 1 shows that public TVIs generally offer more qualifications than private TVIs, with most public institutions offering three to sixteen (56.42%). In comparison, over half of private TVIs provide only one to two qualifications (68.19%). This indicates that public TVIs tend to have broader qualification offerings and more resources, while private TVIs are smaller and focus on just one or two qualification areas. The variation suggests differing capacities, program focus, and a heavier reliance on scholarship funding among private TVIs.

FIGURE 1

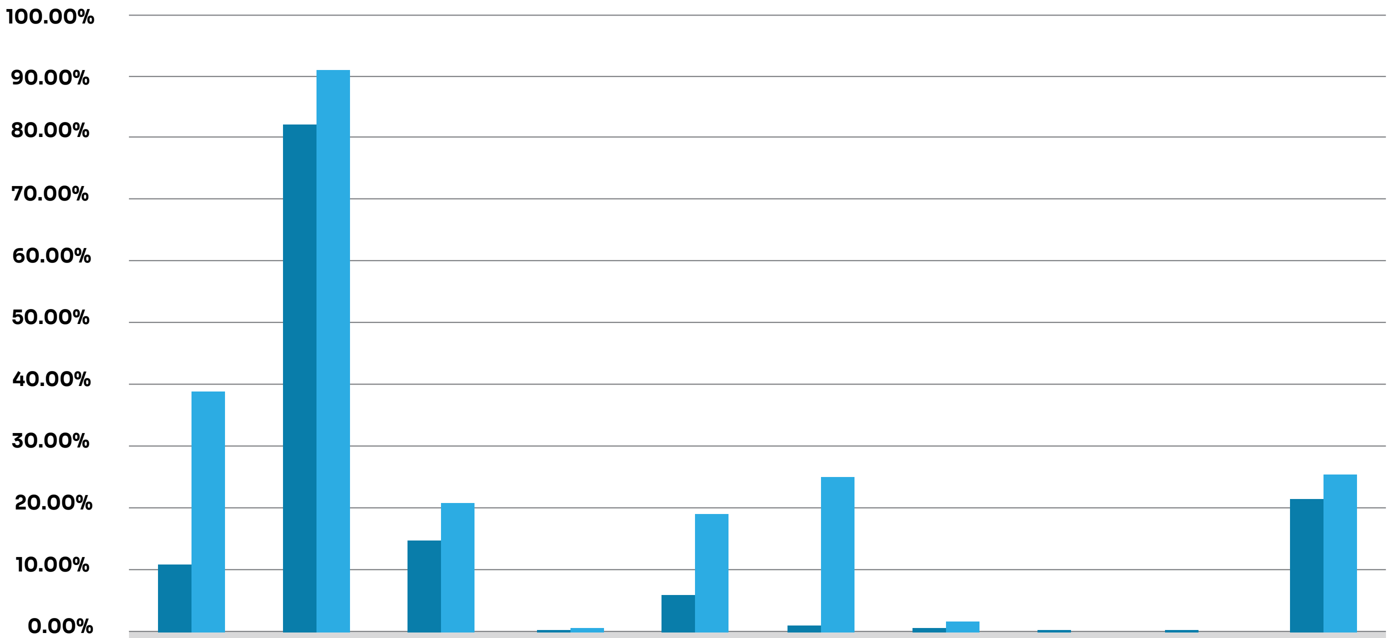
Number of Qualifications offered by Public and Private TVIs with Scholarship slots



Source: Author-processed TESDA raw datasets obtained via shared Google Drive (November 2025).

FIGURE 2

Percentage Distribution of Public and Private TVIs Offering Various Levels of Qualification with Scholarship Slots



	NC 1	NC 11	NC 111	NC IV	Diploma	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV	COC/RTP/ Language
Private	13.24%	82.10%	14.93%	0.11%	5.47%	1.58%	0.67%	0.35%	0.42%	21.93%
Public	38.55%	91.90%	20.95%	0.56%	19.27%	25.42%	2.23%	0.00%	0.00%	25.70%

Source: Author-processed TESDA raw datasets obtained via shared Google Drive (November 2025).

Figure 2 shows that the distribution of qualifications offered by public and private TVIs emphasizes entry-level competencies. A significant majority of these institutions focus on delivering National Certificate (NC) I, NC II, Level I, Certificate of Competency (CoC), Registered Training Program (RTP), and Language qualifications that are typically aligned with foundational skills and basic occupational proficiency. Among these, NC II is the most commonly offered qualification level, provided by 2,343 of the 2,854 private TVIs (82.1%) and 329 of the 358 public TVIs (91.9%). This suggests that TVIs are structured primarily to meet immediate labor-market demand for workers with practical, job-ready skills. The widespread availability of scholarship slots at these levels further reinforces the national strategy to expand access to vocational training and quickly upskill the workforce for employability. However, the offering of CoC programs underscores a continued focus on modular, short-term training that addresses specific competencies rather than comprehensive technical education.

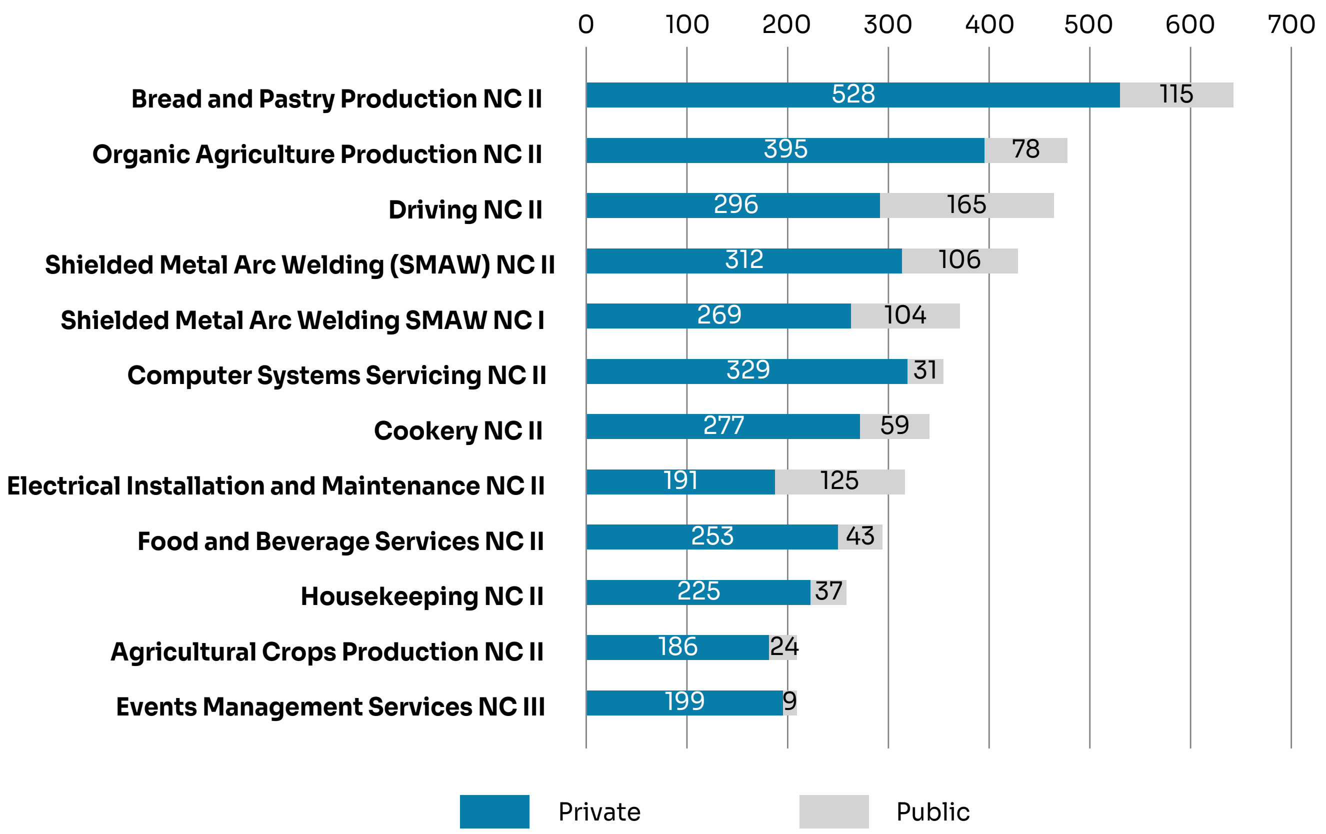
In contrast, higher-level qualifications such as NC III, NC IV, Level III, and Level IV are offered by only a small proportion of institutions. Only 426 private and 75 public TVIs offer programs at the NC III level, while provision at the NC IV level is even scarcer, with only 3 private and 2 public TVIs offering such qualifications. This finding indicates limited institutional capacity or demand for more advanced technical training. Notably, Regional Training Centers (RTCs) and Provincial Training Centers (PTCs), collectively known as TTIs, are at the forefront of offering higher-level qualifications, mainly due to direct government support. As noted in the Commission on Audit (CoA) (2022) report, government support for TTIs extends beyond scholarships and covers operational costs. Since delivering advanced programs requires substantial funding, TTIs are often better positioned to provide these offerings.

Meanwhile, 156 private and 69 public TVIs offer Diploma programs. These programs are longer, structured training programs that require more advanced competencies than NC I–III programs but are not as long or academically oriented as a college degree. They are mostly offered by higher education institutions as part of a ladderized program, allowing students to progress seamlessly from technical-vocational qualifications to higher education degrees. These institutions tend to have stronger financial backing or strategic partnerships that enable them to invest in infrastructure, qualified trainers, and learning resources required for advanced program delivery.

As shown in Figure 3, the distribution of top TESDA qualifications across private and public TVIs reflects a distinct pattern influenced by capital investment requirements, institutional capacity, and alignment with national development priorities. Private TVIs predominantly offer low-capital programs such as Bread and Pastry Production NC II, Cookery NC II, Housekeeping NC II, and Events Management NC III, enabling flexible delivery aligned with local labor market needs. They also lead in priority qualifications like Organic Agriculture Production NC II, Computer Systems Servicing NC II, and Agricultural Crops Production NC II, supported by industry-driven demand.

FIGURE 3

Number of TVIs by Type Offering Top Qualifications (200+ TVIs) with Scholarship Slots



Source: Author-processed TESDA raw datasets obtained via shared Google Drive (November 2025).

In contrast, public TVIs are more represented in moderately capital-intensive programs such as Driving NC II, Shielded Metal Arc Welding NC I and II, and Electrical Installation and Maintenance NC II. Backed by government funding, public institutions are better equipped to manage infrastructure and safety requirements. Notably, private TVIs also maintain strong participation in these areas, indicating a shared commitment to expanding access to mid-level technical skills.

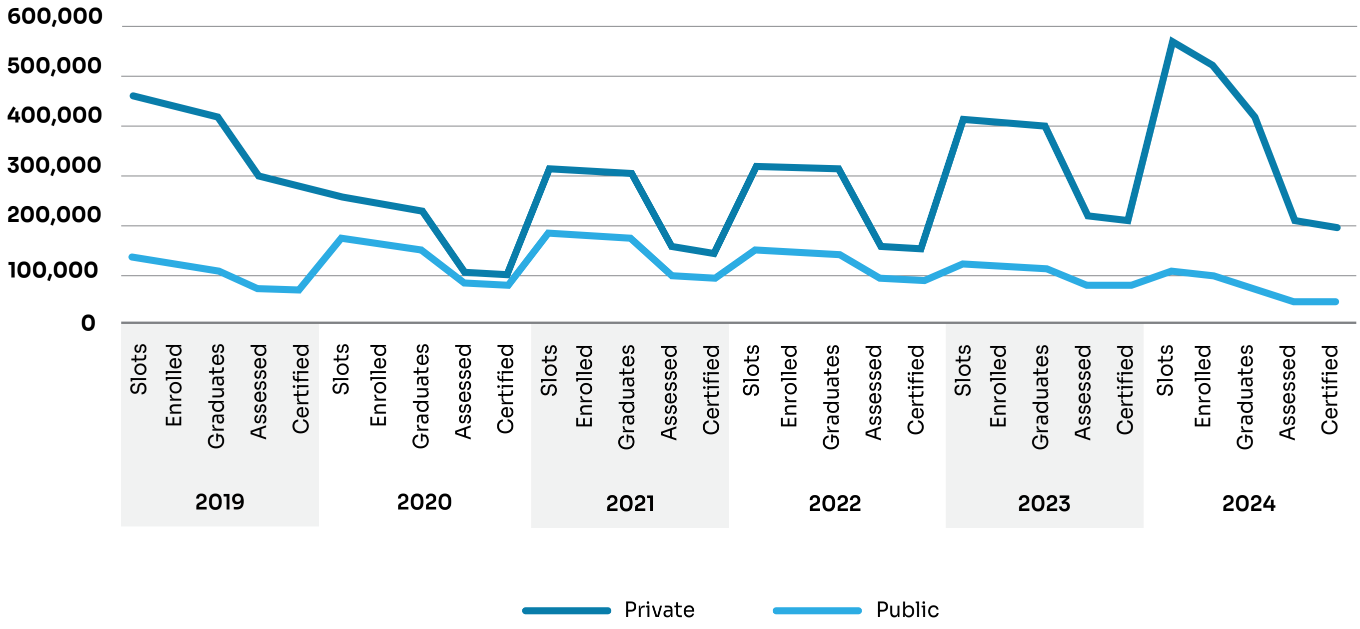
Further available data indicate that high capital-intensive qualifications, such as Heavy Equipment Operation, Automotive Servicing, and Computer Numerical Control Lathe Machine Operation, are offered by a limited number of public and private TVIs, often in partnership with industry stakeholders. This reflects a growing commitment among private institutions to invest in training programs with higher operational complexity, particularly where there is sustained industry demand. Moreover, public TVIs demonstrate institutional leadership not only in delivering moderately to highly capital-intensive programs but also in building national training capacity. This is evident in their dominant role in providing Trainers Methodology Level I, highlighting their contribution to sustaining the TVET ecosystem through continuous trainer development.

Overall, the parallel delivery of these programs reinforces the complementary roles of public and private TVIs in addressing workforce development needs across various sectors, particularly in fields that require a balance of technical capacity and accessible implementation.

As shown in Figure 4, the distribution of top TESDA qualifications across private and public TVIs reflects a distinct pattern influenced by capital investment requirements, institutional capacity, and alignment with national development priorities. Private TVIs predominantly offer low-capital programs such as Bread and Pastry Production NC II, Cookery NC II, and Bookkeeping NC III, enabling flexible delivery aligned with local labor market needs. They also lead in priority qualifications like Computer Systems Servicing NC II and Contact Center Services NC II, supported by industry-driven demand.

FIGURE 4

Scholarship Slots and Outcomes in Public and Private TVIs (2019-2024)



Source: Author's computation based on unpublished data provided by TESDA via Google Drive (November 2025).

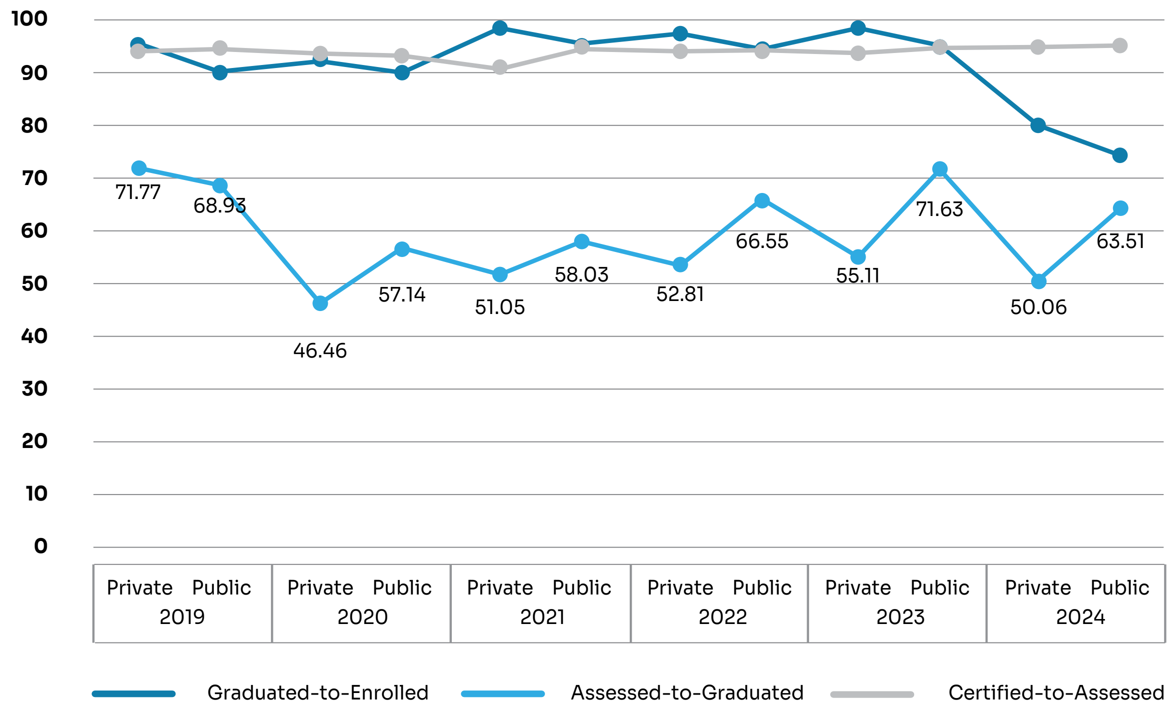
As revealed in Figure 4, the six-year data on TESDA scholarship implementation reveal a consistent pattern, indicating the dominant role of private TVIs in delivering scholarship-funded training programs, particularly in terms of volume and scale.

From 2019 to 2024, data indicate a clear shift toward greater private-sector participation in TESDA scholarship programs. Public TVIs saw peak performance in 2021, followed by steady declines in slots, enrollment, graduation, assessment, and certification figures. In contrast, private TVIs rebounded strongly post-2020, culminating in record-high scholarship slots (572,040) and graduates (419,415) in 2024. These trends reflect a strategic policy shift positioning private TVIs as primary partners in technical-vocational training delivery. As noted by Wu et al. (2019), the dominance of private providers has shaped this policy direction, enabling the government to expand access without significant public infrastructure investment. However, this reliance calls for stronger oversight, alignment with national standards, and targeted support to ensure training quality, labor market relevance, and equitable access across regions.

Figure 5 shows a more detailed view of TESDA Scholarship Outcomes. The six-year data on TESDA performance indicators show encouraging trends in both the graduated-to-enrolled and certified-to-assessed ratios for public and private TVIs. From 2019 to 2023, graduation rates remained consistently high, often above 90%, demonstrating strong completion rates across training institutions. However, stakeholder perspectives indicate that completion does not necessarily equate to readiness. A department supervisor informant noted that across both sectors, the depth of training remains limited to foundational skills, requiring further workplace learning.

FIGURE 5

TESDA Scholarship Outcomes: Transition Ratios (2019-2024)



Source: Author's computation based on unpublished data provided by TESDA via Google Drive (November 2025).

Similarly, certification success rates among those assessed remained stable and impressive, with both sectors maintaining over 90% in most years. This consistency reflects the uniform application of TESDA's assessment standards across institutions, supporting the earlier observation of a trainer informant. A business owner also highlighted the value of TESDA certification in preparing adaptable workers. This reinforces the finding that certified workers consistently perform better than non-certified workers (TESDA, 2021), demonstrating the tangible benefits of certification in equipping individuals with the skills needed to succeed in evolving industries.

On the other hand, the perceived reliability and compliance with standards among TTIs are stronger. A TESDA official emphasizes, "Parehas yung quality. Pero sa akin mas controlled pa rin namin yung mga graduates ng public. Lalo na yung mga TTIs natin, kasi talagang sinusunod nila lahat ng TESDA guidelines and circulars. Kaya model yung mga TTIs pagdating sa program implementation," highlighting the structured compliance culture in public institutions, particularly among TTIs, which are often seen as the benchmark in quality assurance. Likewise, a TESDA assessor reflected the view that public institutions, driven by a service mandate, may produce more competent graduates.

However, the assessed-to-graduated ratio reveals a persistent and concerning gap. Despite high graduation rates, a significant portion of graduates do not proceed to competency assessment, particularly in the private sector. Given that assessment fees are already covered under the scholarship program, this low turnout cannot be attributed to financial barriers. The trend raises critical questions about potential issues, such as a lack of time, the belief that assessment is optional, and assessment scheduling (TESDA, 2023b). This gap undermines the purpose of skills training and highlights the need for targeted policy interventions to ensure that all graduates are seamlessly transitioned into assessment, enabling them to obtain formal certification and realize the full benefits of the program.

The ultimate measure of the quality of TVET programs is graduates' employability. Table 1 presents the estimated employment rates of TESDA graduates from Curriculum Year (CY) 2019 to 2023, disaggregated by TESDA scholars and non-scholars, and by the national employment rate.

TABLE 1
Estimated Employment Rate of TVET Graduates (2019-2023)

Survey Round	CY Graduates	TESDA Scholars	Non-Scholars	National Employment Rate
2020	CY 2019	71.84	69.98	70.51
2021	CY 2020	76.16	80.02	78.57
2022	CY 2021	76.36	77.09	76.69
2023	CY 2022	79.52	78.42	79.00
2024	CY 2023	81.81	84.58	83.34

Data Source: TESDA-Planning Office (Study on the Employment of TVET Graduates - SETG)

While data limitations prevent a comparison between public and private TVIs, the available data show encouraging trends. Stakeholder insights further support these trends. As one graduate noted, "Very in-demand ang Automotive [Servicing] dahil sa dami ng sasakyan. Hindi ako nahirapan maghanap ng trabaho, dahil pag kagraduate ko mga dalawang linggo lang, nagkatrabaho agad ako." In the same way, a TESDA official emphasized the practical benefits of TESDA training: "Maganda ang TESDA courses. Sa maikling panahon na magaaral ang bata, after graduation, puede na siya agad magkatrabaho."

Nevertheless, the employment data presented should be interpreted cautiously due to the limited survey sample sizes. For example, in CY 2021, only 6,208 graduates were surveyed for employment outcomes out of a total of 1,052,623 TVET graduates (TESDA, 2022a). This represents less than 1% of the graduate population, raising concerns about the representativeness of the data and the extent to which the findings can be generalized.

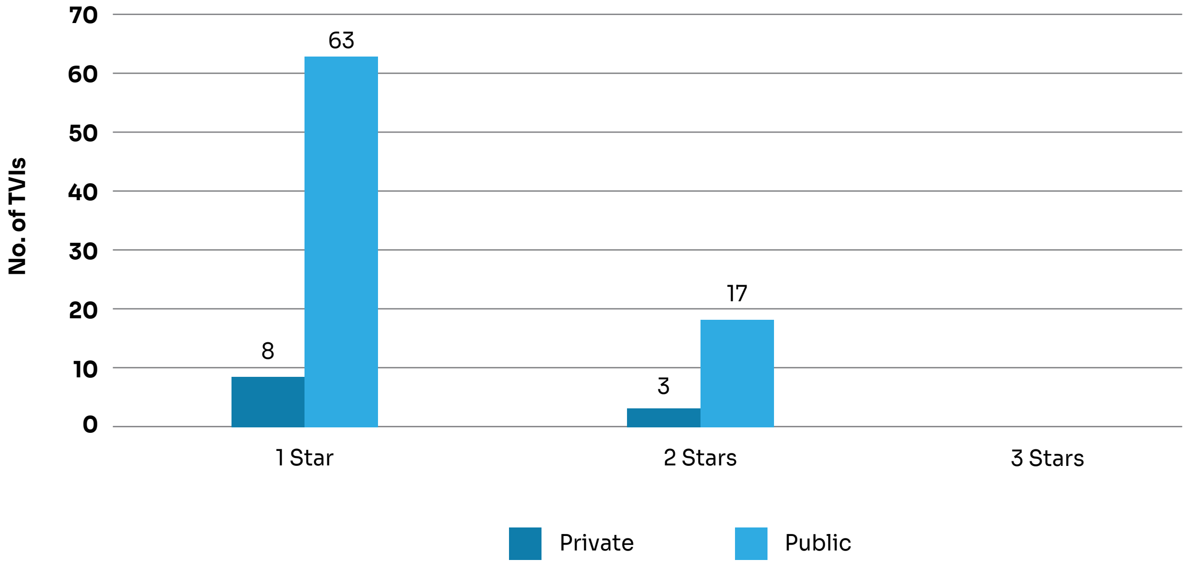
Some informants also reported that certain private TVIs tend to prioritize awarding scholarship slots to individuals who are already gainfully employed, as a strategy to more easily meet TESDA's employment-related requirements for securing slots in the next scholarship cycle. This practice may undermine the objective of expanding access to training for unemployed or underprivileged individuals, who stand to benefit the most from TESDA's scholarship programs.

Figure 6 shows the distribution of TVIs with STAR-rated programs by provider type and rating level. The TESDA STAR Program is an accreditation system that rates TVET institutions on a 1 to 3-star scale to assess and recognize the quality of their training programs, with 3 Stars representing the highest quality (TESDA, 2018a).

The distribution of STAR-rated TVET programs shows a significant disparity between public and private TVIs. Public institutions dominate both the 1-Star and 2-Star levels with 63 and 17 programs, respectively, compared to 8 and 3 programs among private TVIs. No institution, public or private, achieved a 3-Star rating, indicating that meeting the highest quality benchmarks remains a challenge. The lower participation and performance of private TVIs likely reflect the voluntary nature of their engagement in the STAR program, as well as resource and institutional constraints. These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions, including capacity-building, technical support, and funding, to improve quality and promote more equitable access to high-standard TVET programs across both public and private providers.

FIGURE 6

Distribution of TVIs with STAR-Rated Programs by Provider Type and Rating Level (2019-2023)



Source: Author's computation based on unpublished data provided by TESDA via Google Drive
Note: No Data for 2020.

Characteristics and Profiles of TVET Institutions Dependent on Scholarships or Vouchers

Returning to Figure 1, it is evident that among the 2,854 private TVIs that received scholarship slots, 1,258 (44.08%) offer only a single qualification, while 688 (24.10%) provide two qualifications. This limited offering suggests a heavy reliance on scholarship funding, as these institutions may lack the financial and academic capacity to expand their programs independently. While TESDA (2023a) noted that "some TVIs are dependent on scholarship allocations" (p. 37), the data reveal that more than half of private TVIs with allotted scholarship slots rely heavily on such funding to sustain their operations. This heavy reliance underscores the vulnerability of these institutions, as their continued growth and sustainability are often contingent upon the availability of external support.

To further explore the attributes of these institutions, interviews were conducted with TESDA officials, TVET graduates, and TVI owners or managers. Their feedback showed how financial support influences resource use and student enrollment decisions. The following discussion highlights the main patterns and differences across these institutions, as well as how financial aid affects TVET education.

Participants commonly expressed the theme of strategic planning for growth and accessibility in the approach taken for the center's development. One interviewee explained that the decision to select courses that are cost-effective to establish while being in demand in the job market reflects a careful balance between financial prudence and ensuring the relevance of the training offered. This decision is rooted in the desire for long-term sustainability since choosing low-cost options can minimize the center's financial risks, making it easier to operate and expand over time.

The focus on future expansion, contingent on low capital requirements and the availability of TESDA scholarship slots, highlights a flexible and adaptive mindset. It shows an understanding that growth should be based on available resources and external support, rather than pushing beyond financial limits. This reflects a strategy that values gradual, manageable growth over aggressive expansion.

Moreover, reliance on TESDA scholarships suggests the center may face challenges operating independently without external support. Another center owner/manager emphasized that without voucher funding, the center could not offer the course, as enrollment typically declines when students are required to pay fees. The low enrolment underscores the need for sustained financial support. As a potential solution, the manager suggested that making NC certifications mandatory for employment or licensing could serve as a strong incentive, which could boost enrollment in TVET programs.

This reliance on TESDA scholarships could also make the program vulnerable to changes in government policies or funding availability. If TESDA were to reduce or eliminate scholarship opportunities, the center might struggle to maintain student enrollment and, consequently, its financial stability. Therefore, this approach highlights a balance between providing accessible education and the need for a more robust, independent financial strategy in the future. To ensure long-term sustainability, the center may need to explore additional funding sources or partnerships beyond TESDA.

Another recurring theme across the interviews is resource limitation, both at the individual and institutional levels. Two informants shared their sentiments on their educational experiences. The first informant described a lengthy wait before beginning training, citing limited slots and high demand, and noted the strict enforcement of attendance policies tied directly to scholarship allowances. Another informant shared that training materials were provided in only minimal quantities, requiring students to pay out of pocket if they made mistakes. These narratives suggest that scholarships alone are insufficient to cover the whole learning experience and highlight the fragility of student support systems.

Similarly, school owners described operating with skeletal staff structures and minimal operational capacity. One informant explicitly noted that hiring additional personnel would reduce profit margins and that they manage administrative tasks themselves to avoid additional costs. Another informant reinforced this by stating that both staff and trainers are paid on an hourly basis, with the owner even becoming certified to serve as a backup trainer. This lean staffing model, while maximizing short-term profitability, may undermine instructional quality and institutional development.

TVI owners emphasized a significant reliance on TESDA scholarships and vouchers. As one informant explained, their institution could only afford the Unified TVET Program Registration and Accreditation System (UTPRAS) certification, and more advanced forms of accreditation, such as STAR, International Organization for Standardization (ISO), or Asia Pacific Accreditation and Certification Commission (APACC), were considered unattainable without additional funding support. This makes clear the tendency of private TVIs to be non-innovative and concentrate their limited resources on meeting the minimum regulatory standards set by UTPRAS (TESDA, 2023a). It further highlights their reliance on public subsidies, with their ability to achieve higher levels of quality assurance significantly constrained in the absence of targeted grants or financial incentives.

While public TVIs are entirely government-funded, two TESDA officials continue to stress the need for scholarships. RTCs and PTCs reportedly utilize vouchers to upgrade facilities and support operational needs. According to TESDA officials, the limited allocation for (Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses) MOOE constrains the capacity of public TVIs to fulfill the increasing demands placed upon them, an issue also highlighted in TESDA (2023a). These include offering a wider range of qualifications and serving as model institutions for specific programs. Nonetheless, these expanded roles are often not matched with corresponding increases in budgetary support. A major challenge is the rapid obsolescence of high-cost workshop and laboratory equipment, further compounded by the even shorter lifespan of computer technologies (Zarini et al., 2009), which adds pressure on already limited resources. As a result, vouchers and scholarships become vital not only for student access but also for institutional innovation and sustainability. This highlights the broader systemic role of financial aid in enhancing both the quality and reach of TVET programs, even within publicly funded institutions.

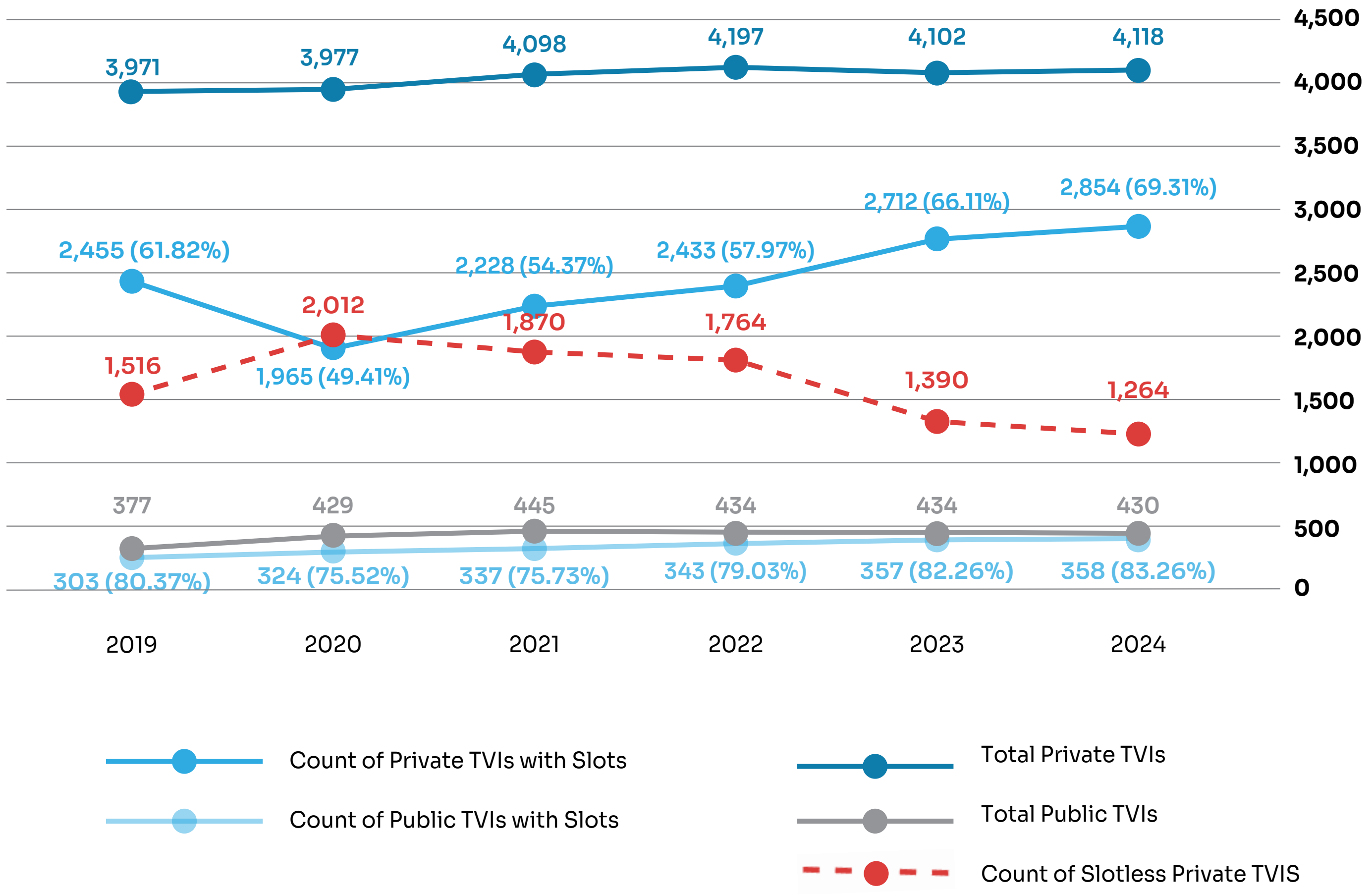
Enhancing Complementarity in TVET Provision

In the context of TVET, complementarity refers to the effective coordination and alignment of roles, resources, and program offerings between public and private training institutions to maximize coverage, minimize duplication, and respond more efficiently to labor market demands. Achieving complementarity ensures that public and private TVIs work synergistically, rather than competitively or redundantly, to expand access, improve quality, and address diverse learner and industry needs.

One key action to truly realize the principle of complementarity in the TVET system is for the government to ensure equitable scholarship allocation between public and private TVIs. However, as shown in Figure 7, the data reveal a clear government bias favoring public institutions. Although private TVIs make up the overwhelming majority of training providers, 4,118 out of 4,476 institutions in 2024, only 2,854 (69.31%) received scholarship support. In stark contrast, 358 out of 430 public TVIs (83.26%) were awarded scholarships. This means that while nearly all public institutions benefit from government-funded slots, 1,264 private TVIs are left without similar support. Alarmingly, more than 1,200 private TVIs remained without slots each year from 2019 to 2024. This gap may be attributed to stringent qualification criteria, lack of applications from private TVIs, or systemic barriers within the allocation process. Regardless of the reason, the exclusion of such a large number of private institutions is cause for concern, though the upward trend in private TVIs with slots from 2020 to 2024 shows that TESDA is gradually closing the gap.

FIGURE 7

Six-Year Overview of Slot Allocation Gaps in Private and Public TVIs (2019-2024)



Source: TESDA Annual Reports (2019-2024) and author-processed TESDA raw datasets obtained via shared Google Drive (November 2025).

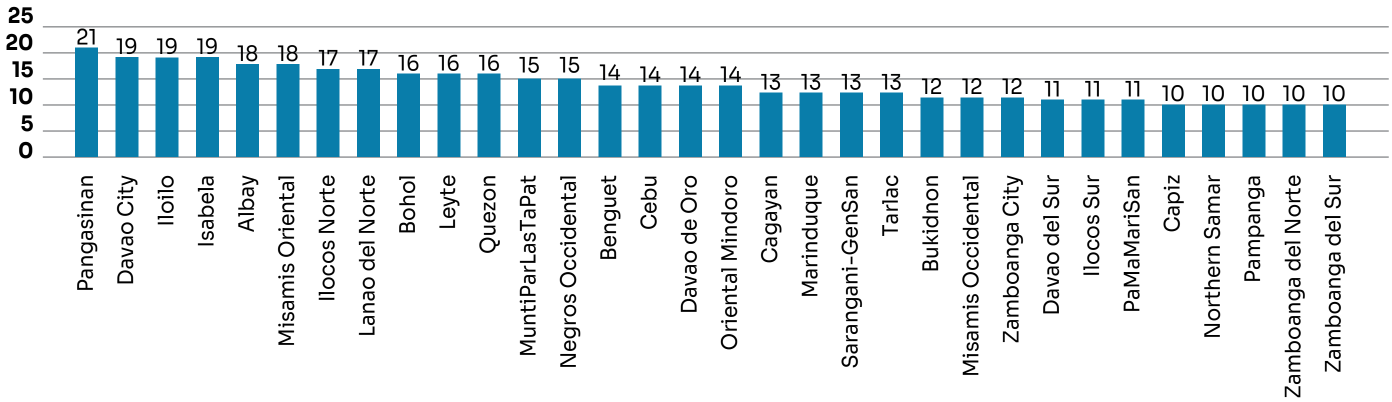
At the same time, public TVIs maintain a stable, high allocation coverage of roughly 75 to 83 percent of their total number per year, likely due to their stronger structural integration into government funding mechanisms. This consistent advantage suggests that public TVIs continue to receive preferential treatment, making the bias evident.

Given that private TVIs play a critical role in expanding access to technical-vocational education, this disparity undermines the principle of complementarity within the TVET system. For the sector to function in a coordinated and efficient manner, policy must ensure more equitable scholarship allocation that reflects the scale, reach, and contribution of both public and private providers.

Another key strategy to prevent unhealthy competition between public and private TVIs is to minimize duplication of course offerings. As illustrated in Figure 8, several provinces still have more than 10 identical qualifications being offered by both public and private TVET institutions, indicating significant overlap in program offerings. This issue persisted despite being flagged by the Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) in 2022. When both sectors deliver the same qualifications within the same geographic areas, often targeting the same pool of trainees, it can create unnecessary competition rather than collaboration. This erodes the intended design of the TVET system, in which public and private institutions are meant to complement and reinforce one another, functioning in coordination rather than in conflict. While some duplication can foster innovation and improve quality through healthy competition (OECD, 2022), it becomes problematic when it occurs in areas where private TVIs already have sufficient capacity to meet demand. In such cases, when public institutions continue to offer the same qualifications, available scholarship slots are split between the two, rather than being strategically allocated to private institutions that rely more heavily on such support for sustainability.

FIGURE 8

Provinces with More Than 10 Similar Offerings Across Private and Public TVIs with Scholarship Slots



Source: Author-processed TESDA raw datasets obtained via shared Google Drive (November 2025)

Unlike public TVIs, which are state-funded and enjoy relatively stable operational budgets, private TVIs depend significantly on scholarship programs to attract and support enrollees. Allocating scholarships to public TVIs in areas where private providers are already meeting demand can unintentionally crowd out private participation, reduce their enrollment, and ultimately undermine their long-term viability. Thus, policies should prioritize strategic scholarship distribution to support a sustainable and balanced TVET system.

A 2022 study by the PCC identified overlaps in program offerings between public and private TVIs. TESDA officials explained that while the agency generally avoids competing with private providers as a matter of policy, such overlaps occasionally occur when public institutions respond to strong local demand for specific training programs (EDCOM II, 2025, p. 331).

The PCC advised TESDA to establish a clear framework affirming that private TVIs operate on equal footing with public institutions, noting that both are subject to the same rules for program registration and accreditation, that private providers are also authorized to manage government-funded scholarship programs, and that TESDA's core mandate is to prioritize services for marginalized sectors of society (PCC, 2022).

Several individuals shared their insights on how to enhance complementarity in TVET provision. A common concern among private TVET instructors and managers is the lack of financial parity with their public counterparts. Private schools are already seen in a disadvantaged position due to the abolition of tuition fees in the public sector and the opening of the education market to foreign institutions (Yee, 2020), as well as consistent pay increases for public teachers (Sinsay-Villanueva & Orbeta, 2023; Yee, 2022). In light of these challenges, one private school trainer cited the example of public high school teachers receiving government salary subsidies, suggesting that similar mechanisms should be extended to TVET instructors in private institutions.

Some respondents expressed support for collaborative arrangements between public and private institutions, including shared use of facilities and benchmarking of best practices. One example of this collaboration is a business owner who emphasized the importance of cooperation between private and public TVET schools, noting that their shop lends equipment to trainees during on-the-job training, a practice that supports shared use of industry resources. Also, a SUC Official emphasized mutual benchmarking among universities as a form of institutional learning. These remarks indicate that voluntary cooperation and cross-sector partnerships could serve as effective strategies for achieving complementarity, particularly in areas where resources are scarce.

Several respondents highlighted concerns about direct competition and program duplication, which validates the studies of PCC (2022), Orbeta and Corpus (2021, 2024), and Sia et al. (2011). Private school owners expressed frustration over nearby public TVIs offering identical courses, often at lower or subsidized costs. They claim this diverts student enrollment and reduces voucher allocations for private institutions. Some proposed that TESDA regulate the opening of new centers or restrict duplication of offerings within geographic areas.

Also, an informant proposed redefining TESDA's role, suggesting it should act primarily as a regulatory and quality assurance body rather than operate its training centers.

> *"In my opinion, TESDA should focus on TVET regulation like CHED doing in higher education. Huwag na silang magoperate at magbukas ng mga training centers. Ang current setup kasi, kakompetensya pa nila yung mga private schools na nagooffer ng TVET courses."*

A SUC official compared this to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), which regulates but does not directly compete with private higher education institutions. This recommendation reflects a broader concern that TESDA's dual role as both provider and regulator creates structural conflicts that limit fair competition and hinder the development of a balanced, complementary TVET ecosystem.

Meanwhile, the statements from TESDA officials reflect a growing recognition of the importance of strategic role differentiation between public and private Technical-Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions to achieve complementarity in service delivery. This theme emphasizes the need to clarify, coordinate, and align the roles of public and private providers in order to build a cohesive and efficient TVET system.

One official acknowledged the high capital requirements associated with establishing training centers, noting that government scholarship allocations to private TVIs serve as a practical mechanism to expand access and share the burden of workforce development. This highlights a policy rationale for public-private collaboration, rather than duplicating efforts, the government leverages the private sector's existing infrastructure to complement public provision.

Another TESDA official proposed a more deliberate approach to differentiation: allocating capital-intensive courses to public institutions (RTCs/PTCs), while assigning less capital-intensive programs to private TVIs. This suggestion reflects a resource-based division of labor, where each sector is tasked with programs suited to its institutional capacity. Importantly, the official emphasized the need for stakeholder consultation, recognizing that sustainable reform must be participatory and context-sensitive.

The analysis reveals a complex dynamic between public and private TVIs, marked by both cooperative intentions and competitive tensions. Key themes include the need for equitable financial support, opportunities for resource sharing, concerns about redundancy, and a call for clearer delineation of TESDA's role. Addressing these issues through targeted policy reforms, such as shared facility agreements, enrollment zoning, voucher provision and enhancements, and strengthened regulation, may provide a path toward more effective complementarity in TVET provision.

Revisiting TESDA's Devolution Mandate to Promote Complementarity in the TVET Sector

The decentralization of public TVIs is anchored in Section 29 of the Republic Act (RA) No. 7796, also known as the TESDA Act of 1994. The provision mandates the devolution of TESDA's training functions to LGUs, in line with broader principles of local governance and community-based development.

Specifically, TESDA is directed to formulate, implement, and finance a comprehensive plan to develop LGUs' institutional and technical capacity so that they can eventually assume full responsibility for delivering community-based Technical Education and Skills Development (TESD) services. Concurrently, the law emphasizes the need to protect and support TESDA personnel who may be affected by the devolution.

In this context, it is understood that the transfer of operational control over TTIs to LGUs is a strategic component of this devolution process. This transfer is expected to occur progressively and in accordance with the readiness and capability of individual LGUs to manage such institutions effectively and sustainably.

Table 2 shows the devolved TTIs from 2004 to 2013. As of this writing, 183 TTIs have yet to be devolved. The current TVET devolution pathways adopted by TESDA, as outlined in Resolution No. 2022-02 (TESDA, 2022b), reflect a more guarded approach. Rather than transferring operational control of existing PTCs and RTCs to LGUs, the strategy focuses on building LGU capacity to establish and manage their municipal training centers. This is being operationalized primarily through the enhancement of Community Training and Employment Coordinators (CTECs), who serve as key local actors in delivering community-based skills training.

TABLE 2

Devolution of TTIs from 2004 to 2013

Region	Name of TTI	Type of Governance/ Recipient LGU	Year / Date of Devolvement
CAR	Baguio City School of Arts and Trade	Devolved to LGU (City)	2004
III	Provincial Training Center Zambales	Devolved to LGU (Municipality)	2006
IV-A	Jacobo Z. Gonzales Memorial School of Arts and Trade	Devolved to NGO	2004
VII	Regional Training Center – Cebu	Devolved to Industry	2005
IX	Dipolog School of Fisheries	Self-Sustaining	2006
NCR	KorPhil IT Center, Quezon City	Quezon City	May 28, 2007
III	Malolos Training Center (Previously known as PTC-Malolos)	Malolos, Bulacan	March 4, 2013
IV-A	Lopez Municipal Training Center (PTC-Lopez)	Lopez, Quezon	June 23, 2009
IV-A	Calamba Manpower Development Annex (PTC-Calamba)	Calamba, Laguna	January 26, 2009

Note: Adapted from EDCOM2 Presentation, TESDA Charter and Mandates Hearing, July 10, 2025, by Yee (2025) and from "Assessment of Devolved TESDA Technology Institutes: Successes, Challenges, and Opportunities," by TESDA (2018b).

Likewise, TESDA has opted to retain direct oversight of PTCs and RTCs, repositioning these institutions as national models for advanced and high-quality TVET delivery. As one informant noted:

> *"Hindi kelangang ipamigay yung mga RTCs/PTCs dahil eto yung kanilang tutularan. Private TVIs should duplicate the quality of our offerings."*

This statement reflects a strategic institutional stance that aligns with TESDA's current devolution pathway. Instead of transferring ownership or operational control of RTCs and PTCs to LGUs, the informant views these institutions as central to its quality assurance and leadership role within the TVET ecosystem.

Meanwhile, under the previous TESDA policy on progressive devolution, the ultimate objective was the systematic transfer of the management and implementation of TESD programs to LGUs, industry associations, and NGOs (ADB, 2009; TESDA, 2004). However, this policy is now deemed "...no longer practical and viable in the context of the new policy environment" (TESDA, 2022b, p. 2), signaling a shift in strategic direction.

While TESDA's policy position reflects a departure from its earlier commitment to progressive devolution, this view is not universally accepted among key stakeholders. One TESDA official argued that the readiness of LGUs has significantly evolved, suggesting a growing capacity and willingness among LGUs to assume a more active role in TESD implementation, potentially challenging the rationale behind the policy shift.

However, LGU perspectives indicate that willingness to assume responsibility for PTCs and RTCs is highly context-dependent. One LGU official noted:

> *"Depende yan tingin ko sa LGU. Pag ang isang LGU e wala pang sariling local college, malamang pabor sila dyan, kukuhanin nila yan. Pero pag may existing college [locally funded college] na, tingin ko e hindi na."*

This sentiment underscores that LGU's interest in taking over TESDA training centers is influenced by existing investments in higher education infrastructure. In areas where LGUs have already established local colleges, the perceived marginal benefit of acquiring additional TVET facilities may be lower. In contrast, LGUs lacking tertiary institutions may view the integration of PTCs as a cost-effective way to address local unemployment and skills gaps. As King (2024) suggests, the push for educational decentralization is often shaped by political interests or budgetary constraints rather than purely educational objectives, a perspective that aligns with how LGUs weigh the benefits of assuming responsibility for training centers in light of their broader strategic priorities and institutional landscape.

The capacity of LGUs to absorb TESDA training functions also varies with their fiscal standing. Another LGU official stated:

> *"Yang devolution ng RTC/PTC, I doubt kung meron municipality na tatanggap. Malaki kasi kelangang budget dyan. Pero kung city, malamang kunin nila yan. Lalo na kung wala pang existing na city college."*

This reflects concerns over resource constraints, especially in lower-income municipalities. A study by TESDA (2018b) acknowledges this issue, indicating that only first and second-class municipalities are likely to have the necessary financial and institutional capacity to sustain such devolved functions. Constraints may arise if the budgets for MOOE and Personnel Services (PS), currently allocated to TESDA's Technical Training Institutes (TTIs), are reallocated without being transferred to the LGUs. However, if full devolution includes the transfer of infrastructure, equipment, and corresponding budgets for MOOE and PS to the absorbing LGUs, the transition is unlikely to pose significant problems.

Recognizing the challenges of full devolution to LGUs, TESDA may consider continuing alternative strategies such as institutional amalgamation. A promising model is the integration of TTIs with nearby SUCs. A cited example is the amalgamation of Maddela Institute of Technology into Quirino Polytechnic University, which has opened opportunities for educational continuity and system efficiency.

One SUC official articulated the potential benefits of this model:

> *"Malaking usapin yan at mahabang proseso. Ang magandang nakikita ko dyan ay mapapalakas yung ladderized education since magiging available na yung infrastructure ng TVET for SUCs na malaking tulong. Sa case namin, puede na mag design ng ladderized engineering/ technology program na kung saan ang mga students ay dadaan muna ng TVET bago maging engineer or technologist. Makabubuti eto sa mga students at industry na kanilang pagtatrabahuhan."*

Such an approach promotes seamless education pathways and leverages existing public education infrastructure, reducing duplication and expanding student opportunities. It also aligns with broader national goals for workforce development and lifelong learning.

The decentralization of TTIs presents a strategic opportunity to enhance complementarity within the TVET system by addressing a long-standing structural imbalance. In the current setup, TESDA functions both as a regulator of the TVET sector and as a direct provider through its training institutions, a dual role that grants TESDA-operated training institutes an undue advantage over private providers (PCC, 2022; Orbeta & Esguerra, 2016; TESDA, 2004). As a regulator, TESDA is expected to enforce standards, ensure quality control, and oversee compliance among various training providers. However, as a provider, the agency competes in the same market it regulates by offering training services through its TTIs. This concentration of regulatory and delivery functions creates a structural conflict of interest, enables institutional self-dealing, and undermines objectivity in policy and resource allocation, as evident in the findings of this paper, particularly in the duplication of programs, unequal scholarship distribution, operational inefficiencies, and unrepresentative employment outcomes.

From a regulatory economics perspective, this dual role compromises regulatory neutrality, distorts market incentives, and leads to allocative inefficiency. Its inherent conflict of interest undermines regulatory neutrality, as TESDA tends to enforce standards less strictly on its own TTIs to protect their operational viability and reputation, while holding private providers to stricter compliance rules, creating an uneven playing field. Moreover, TESDA-operated training institutes often receive preferential access to government scholarships and funding programs, distorting market incentives by limiting private providers' resources to compete or expand. This imbalance is further compounded by program duplication across TESDA TTIs and private TVET institutions, resulting in inefficient resource use, oversaturation in certain fields, neglect of emerging sectors, and reduced healthy competition with private providers.

Under the principal-agent theory, which examines the relationship between a principal who delegates authority and an agent who performs tasks on the principal's behalf, conflicts of interest and information asymmetry can arise (Kivistö, 2008). When TESDA acts as both principal (regulator) and agent (service provider), accountability becomes blurred, reducing transparency and enabling self-serving biases. The lack of independent oversight raises concerns about who holds TESDA accountable, especially when it evaluates its own performance. This self-regulation can erode public trust and encourage preferential treatment, such as disproportionate scholarship funding or lenient compliance standards, for its own TTIs over private providers. Moreover, If the overseers are also the overseen, they might be incentivized to highlight statistics that make them look good, downplay or obscure less favorable data, or selectively report outcomes. Employment rates, graduation rates, or program completion rates could be presented in a way that justifies continued or increased funding, even if the underlying causes for the positive statistics are not as robust as they seem. Therefore, the absence of a clear separation between oversight and service delivery constitutes a form of government failure, where institutional interests overshadow broader sectoral objectives.

In comparison, CHED, being a regulatory body for HEIs in the Philippines, delegates the provision of education to universities and colleges. By not directly operating HEIs, CHED is in a better position to ensure impartiality in quality assurance, resource allocation, and policy development. However, CHED's role as chairperson of the governing boards of SUCs introduces a degree of institutional influence that could raise concerns regarding regulatory impartiality and equitable resource allocation (Aldaba et al., 2024). While CHED does not directly manage or operate higher education institutions, its leadership role on SUC boards provides it with strategic oversight over key decisions, including program approvals, budget allocations, and policy implementation. This dual involvement in both regulation and governance, though less direct than TESDA's dual role, presents potential tensions, particularly when regulatory objectives intersect with institutional interests.

Nevertheless, the extent of this influence is mitigated by the collegiate nature of SUC boards, which include multiple stakeholders such as university presidents, faculty, alumni, and private sector representatives. Unlike TESDA's direct control over its training institutions, CHED's role in SUCs operates within a more distributed and consultative governance framework. This distinction helps clarify how different governance structures influence the risks and consequences of institutional overlap in regulation and service delivery.

In a similar vein, decentralizing public training provision can help resolve TESDA's dual role by more equitably redistributing responsibilities across TVET stakeholders. As Cuenco (2018) notes, both developing countries (e.g., Pakistan, India, Nigeria, South Africa, Brazil, and Mexico) and developed countries (e.g., Australia and Canada) have adopted decentralized delivery/ provision of TVET services, delegating key responsibilities to subnational governments to enhance responsiveness and governance efficiency. Decentralization theory supports the idea that service delivery is more effective when decision-making is closer to the point of implementation, improving responsiveness to local conditions and reducing information asymmetry between central authorities and service beneficiaries (Brosio, 2014; Canare, 2021).

In the Philippine context, decentralizing selected public training institutions, particularly through transfer to capable LGUs, NGOs, industry partners, or even integration with SUCs, is believed to help redistribute operational responsibilities, fostering a more level playing field among TVET providers. Such reforms encourage specialization, reduce service duplication, and enable more responsive, localized program delivery. Furthermore, institutional amalgamation supports the development of ladderized and seamless education pathways, aligning TVET more closely with labor market needs and national workforce development goals.

The decision to revisit or reform TESDA's stance on devolution must therefore consider local government capacity, existing educational infrastructure, and alternative governance models. Rather than a uniform approach, a differentiated and flexible strategy including selective devolution, amalgamation with SUCs, or hybrid models may be more effective in ensuring program sustainability and responsiveness to local needs.

Toward Equitable and Transparent TVET Funding Through Reforms in the TESDA Charter

The TESDA Charter was established through Republic Act No. 7796, also known as the TESDA Act of 1994. The Charter was enacted to unify, coordinate, and oversee the country's Technical Education and Skills Development system. To support the implementation of its mandates, the TESDA Charter also established the TDF under Section 30 of the Act. The income generated shall be used solely for awarding grants and extending support to training institutions, industries, and LGUs to enhance their capacities and to design and implement training programs and related initiatives. The contribution to the fund shall be the following: (1) a one-time lump sum appropriation from the national government; (2) an annual contribution from the OWWA, the amount of which should be part of the study on financing in conjunction with letter (D) of Section 34 of RA 7796; (3) donations, grants, endowments, and other bequests or gifts; and (4) any other income generated by TESDA. The Fund was envisioned as a permanent and self-sustaining financing mechanism to promote TESD nationwide.

Table 3 shows the TDF Utilization Report for the years 2019 to 2024. The most prominent observation is that the vast majority of TDF resources were channeled into investment instruments rather than directly into training or institutional development.

TABLE 3

TDF Utilization Report (2019-2024)

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	TOTAL
Disbursement for CEMMT		625,350.00	7,640,603.22	3,379,098.22			11,645,051.44
Purchase of Investment	79,998,308.36	53,999,209.65	53,999,017.00		75,999,028.14	133,313,290.37	397,308,853.52
Disbursement for NTRA		672,500.00	342,500.00	1,184,879.14			2,199,879.14
Purchase on Check booklet		600.00					600.00
TOTAL	79,998,308.36	55,297,659.65	61,982,120.22	4,563,977.36	75,999,028.14	133,313,290.37	411,154,384.10

Source: TESDA, unpublished data shared via Google Drive (March 2025).

Over a six-year period, a total of ₱397.3 million was allocated to "Purchase of Investment," accounting for over 96% of the total reported disbursements (₱411.15 million). A plausible explanation for this investment-heavy approach is found in the paper by Laya et al. (1997), as cited in TESDA (2003), which notes that the TDF can only become fully operational if a substantial amount is raised as seed capital. In the absence of a one-time lump sum appropriation from the national government and other key funding sources stipulated in RA 7796, only the interest income from these investments can be utilized. Congress has not fulfilled the mandate to allocate the required one-time lump sum for the TDF, and TESDA has also not claimed its mandated share from the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) funds (Sia et al., 2011), which further contributes to the fund's limited size and delayed operationalization. It is estimated that at least ₱5 billion is needed for the Fund to function effectively. Although it was projected to be fully operational by 2017 (TESDA, 2004), the fund remains not fully established, as it has yet to reach the required seed capital, resulting in TESDA's continued focus on prioritizing capital buildup and long-term income generation over direct disbursements. While this strategy may be consistent with preserving the long-term value of the Fund and generating interest income, it also reflects a conservative approach to fund utilization, potentially limiting the fund's immediate developmental impact, especially in terms of expanding or upgrading TVET delivery.

Direct disbursements for core programmatic initiatives were comparatively small and sporadic. For instance, only ₱11.64 million was disbursed from 2020 to 2022 for the Center of Excellence in Modern Manufacturing Technology (CEMMT) of several RTCs/PTCs, an initiative presumably designed to advance high-level technical competencies aligned with Industry 4.0. Likewise, a mere ₱2.2 million was allocated to the National TESD Research Agenda (NTRA) over the same period, despite the growing need for data-driven policy and labor market intelligence in the skills sector. These figures represent only a small fraction, approximately 3.4% of total fund utilization, highlighting the underuse of the Fund's full potential to directly support innovation, institutional upgrading, or capacity development within the TVET ecosystem.

Critically, no disbursements were made to private TVIs despite TESDA's (2002) guidelines stating that the Fund should be inclusive of public and private sector development needs.

This pattern contradicts the intent of the TDF to support broad-based development across the entire TVET ecosystem, including public and private stakeholders. As one TESDA official remarked:

> *"I know may guidelines naman ang TDF utilization pero wala akong experience na nakatanggap kami ng pondo galing dito."*

This statement reflects a broader concern within TESDA's own ranks about the Fund's limited reach and opaque implementation. Another TESDA official emphasized the disconnect between the Fund's stated developmental purpose and its current investment-heavy orientation:

> *"TDF should be spent for development, pang upgrade ng facilities, doing TVET-related researches dahil nga yung word na development e andun. I'm not familiar na iniinvest din pala yung fund na eto kung saan."*

These insights point to a deeper issue of internal awareness, transparency, and alignment. The officials' perspectives suggest that even within TESDA, there is limited clarity about how the Fund is allocated and to whom. The fact that only RTCs/PTCs have benefited from TDF-financed upgrades raises legitimate concerns about institutional bias and the Fund's role in potentially reinforcing TESDA's dual position as both regulator and provider. Without equitable access to development financing, private TVIs remain structurally disadvantaged.

This calls for a comprehensive reassessment of the Fund's governance and disbursement policies to ensure a fair, transparent, and strategic allocation that truly advances the goals of inclusive, high-quality technical education and skills development.

Also, several respondents provided insights as input to policy or amendments to the TESDA Charter that will support private TVIs to enhance complementarity in TVET provision. While TESDA has made strides through the voucher system and scholarship programs, multiple stakeholders report serious gaps in funding adequacy, timeliness, accessibility, and equity, particularly as they relate to private institutions and low-income learners.

A recurring issue raised by private school administrators is the delay and unpredictability of voucher releases. These delays disrupt enrollment cycles, discourage learners from continuing their studies, and place financial strain on private institutions that rely on reimbursements to sustain operations. Key factors contributing to these delays include a shortage of personnel in provincial offices, where existing staff are often burdened with multiple roles, and reliance on job order personnel, whose temporary status and lack of specialization hinder the efficient processing of vouchers. This situation reflects the concern noted by Orbeta and Abrigo (2013), who observed that TESDA has limited administrative capacity in processing scholarship programs. This condition still prevails today and continues to affect the timely implementation of education support mechanisms.

On the same note, TVI owners called for adjustments in voucher values to reflect inflation and provide more reliable income streams for private centers. The impact of inflation has made the current voucher values increasingly inadequate. Training supplies, materials, and equipment have all risen in cost, yet voucher rates have remained largely unchanged. This concern is also echoed by Orbeta and Corpus (2021), who noted that "…scholarships or vouchers are barely enough to cover the cost of the training program…" (p. 18). As a result, to maintain training quality and equity, voucher amounts must be regularly adjusted to reflect real market conditions.

Relatedly, starter kits, which are often only distributed in limited scholarship types, should be made available across all programs. These kits are critical to helping graduates transition into employment, especially in tool-based trades.

There is also a critical shortage of scholarship slots, leading to competitive registration and early cut-offs, particularly at private institutions, as several informants noted. The lack of fixed training schedules and batch completion policies also creates uncertainty for students. Learners are often placed on hold and contacted only when a batch is nearly full. This creates a mismatch between student availability and actual training start dates. One graduate explained:

> *"Problema yung schedule ng training, after mong magpalista, tatawagan ka na lang o itetext kung kelan magsstart ang training dahil magkokompleto pa daw ng batch. Paano kung pag tawag nila ay hindi ka na puede at may biglaan ka na gagawin? Mapupunta na sa iba yung slot mo. Bakit hindi nila kayang gawin na ifixed na yung dates ng training."*

This issue disproportionately affects working students and those with unpredictable life schedules. It calls for more structured enrollment systems and fixed calendar-based program offerings, enhancing student trust and improving program planning.

Another challenge lies in the lack of scholarship dissemination outside TESDA's direct network. An LGU official noted that many residents remain unaware of available programs:

> *"Napansin ko yung mga TESDA schools, kulang ang dissemination about scholarships. Marami dito pa samin nagtatanong. Dapat paramihin pa rin ang scholarships ng maraming makinabang."*

Improving public information campaigns, especially at the community level, and working more closely with LGUs and barangays could enhance reach and promote equitable access.

Equity concerns also extend to students who self-finance their training. Stakeholders suggest that these individuals be provided with subsidized or free assessment opportunities, particularly for first-time test takers:

> *"Doon sa mga students na nagbayad ng sarili nilang tuition [training fee], gawaan sana ng paraan na malibre na sa kanila yung assessment kahit sa 1st take lang or give them 50% discount. Malaking tulong na rin eto sa kanila.*

In parallel, users of TESDA Online Programs also expressed a desire for financial incentives or in-kind support, such as allowances or starter kits, upon course completion:

"Malaking tulong yung mga TESDA Online Courses para sa mga gustong mag-aral kahit nasa bahay lang. Nakatapos na ko ng isa dun at plano ko uli kumuha. Maganda kung magbibigay din ang TESDA ng ayuda, allowance, or kit para sa mga completers ng mga online courses."

With the growing popularity of online and blended learning models, TESDA could expand its support services to ensure that online learners are not left behind in terms of job readiness. In doing so, it may consider the forms of assistance identified by Orbeta and Corpus (2024) as most preferred by youth, including allowance support, information on available jobs, tuition support, assistance in finding employment, and information on TVET programs.

Amid rising demand for public education, a state university official emphasizes the urgent need to expand scholarship slots to accommodate the growing number of students taking entrance examinations following the implementation of free tuition in SUCs. While this policy has broadened access, it has also intensified competition, leaving many applicants unable to secure admission. For those who lack the financial means to enroll in private institutions, TESDA scholarships provide an alternative pathway.

"Walang iba kundi dagdagan pa din nila ang scholarship slots. Dahil free tuition, napakarami ng kumukuha ng entrance exam dito sa amin [university]. Marami din ang hindi nakakapasa. Kung walang pang enrol sa private college, puede sila mag abang ng TESDA scholarship. Kaya dagdagan pa ng gobyerno ang pondo. Kung kaya nga e, tapatan na nila ang pondo sa free tuition ng universities and colleges."

The official advocates for a substantial increase in government funding not only for SUCs but also for TESDA programs, with a specific recommendation to expand TESDA scholarship slots at par with the level of investment allocated for free tuition. This parity would ensure that students who are unable to enter SUCs, due to limited capacity or academic requirements, are not left without viable, state-supported options for post-secondary education and skills development. Such a measure would help bridge the gap between higher education and technical-vocational education, ensuring both are treated as equally valuable routes for personal advancement and national development.

While scholarship programs have expanded access to TVET, concerns persist around the transparency and equity of scholarship allocation. Stakeholder feedback points to informal barriers that may undermine the intended merit- or needs-based principles of the system. As one respondent noted:

"Hindi porket qualified ka sa criteria ng scholarship allocation ay sure na mabibigyan ka. Limited din kasi yang funds ng scholarship. Mas ok kung malakas ka or may kilala kang tagaloob."

highlighting perceptions that even qualified applicants may be excluded due to funding constraints and favoritism. This sentiment reflects broader issues around the perceived politicization of scholarship distribution and the lack of accountability mechanisms at the local level. Such perceptions, whether real or perceived, can erode public trust in government-run scholarship programs and disadvantage students from marginalized backgrounds who lack social or political connections. That is why EDCOM II (2024) calls for greater transparency across all stages of the scholarship process, emphasizing the need for more accountable and equitable systems of allocation, including stronger grievance mechanisms and a data-driven, needs-based approach to ensure scholarships reach the most deserving learners.

Correspondingly, a TESDA official presents a critical perspective on the current scholarship allocation system for TVIs, arguing that it may unintentionally reduce incentives for institutions to improve program quality.

> *"Alam mo ang current setup, yung mga TVIs nag-aapply ng scholarship slots. Dadaan ng evaluation yan. If eligible, magkakaroon sila ng allocation. Pagkatapos etong mga TVIs na may [scholarship] allocations, maghahanap na yan ng trainees. So, ang sistema ay direktang ibinibigay ang scholarship sa mga TVIs. Ngayon, bakit hindi itry na direktang ibigay ang scholarship sa mismong trainees? At etong mga trainees ang bahalang mamili kung saang TVI nila gustong pumasok. Mapipilitan ang mga TVIs na magpaganda at magpataas ng quality para makaattract ng mga trainees. For sure, fly-by-night schools will die naturally."*

Currently, TVIs apply for scholarship slots, undergo an evaluation process, and, if deemed eligible, receive allocations which they then use to recruit trainees. This model places the control of scholarship funds in the hands of institutions rather than the students themselves, thereby centralizing decision-making and limiting learner agency. The official proposes a shift toward a demand-driven model in which scholarships are awarded directly to trainees, allowing them to choose the TVI that best suits their needs and preferences. This model reflects the voucher approach mentioned by West (1997) and ADB (2014), where funding is given to families or individuals rather than institutions, thereby empowering learners and enhancing accountability. Such systems have been adopted in countries like the United Kingdom, France, and Austria (Ziderman, 2018), as well as in Kenya (Hicks et al., 2011), demonstrating both feasibility and effectiveness in improving education outcomes. Such a system would avoid politicizing the distribution of scholarship slots, as raised in the previous remark. Moreover, encourage healthy competition among institutions, compelling them to enhance the quality of their training programs to attract students. In doing so, substandard or opportunistic providers would naturally be phased out, aligning government funding with institutional performance and educational relevance in the TVET sector.

Along the same lines, two quotes from Private School Owners/Managers reflect the clear and practical needs of private TVIs.

> *"Hindi lang scholarship slots, magbigay din sila ng mga grants na ibinibigay ng DepEd and CHED gaya ng scholarship sa mga trainors, salary subsidy, pang upgrade ng facilities at iba pa."*

> *"Magbigay ng pondo pang upgrade ng facilities and equipment, kung puede pati cloud storage dahil plano naming mag-offer ng online courses. Puede rin incentives pag mataas ang certification at employment [rates] ng aming mga graduates. Even research grants, dahil maraming puedeng i-research sa TVET [field]."*

Private TVIs call for a more comprehensive and equitable approach to government support that extends beyond student scholarships. Stakeholders emphasize the need for grants similar to those offered by DepEd and CHED to include funding for trainer development, salary subsidies, and facility upgrades, which are key areas essential to improving instructional quality and institutional capacity. There is also a growing demand for digital infrastructure support, such as cloud storage, to enable online and blended learning delivery. Additionally, private TVIs advocate for performance-based incentives tied to graduate certification and employment outcomes, as well as for research grants to support innovation and evidence-based improvements in the TVET sector.

On the establishment of RTCs, several informants voiced their concerns. While some stakeholders acknowledge the possibility of RTCs in areas without existing government training centers, they caution against creating direct competition for limited scholarship slots, which could disadvantage private TVIs. A dominant view emerges advocating for the reallocation of substantial RTC funding toward upgrading the facilities and equipment of existing private TVIs, thereby maximizing existing infrastructure and enhancing capacity without duplicating services. Others propose converting planned RTC budgets into additional scholarship slots to be distributed across private providers within the target regions, promoting broader access without undermining institutional sustainability. Further, there is a call again for TESDA to focus on its regulatory and strategic mandate rather than direct service delivery. Separating regulatory oversight from the delivery of training programs is essential to ensure impartiality and avoid conflicts of interest (ADB, 2014; Paqueo, et al, 2023; PCC, 2022; TESDA, 2004). These inputs affirm the need for policy approaches that prioritize collaboration, efficient resource utilization, strengthening of existing providers, and a stronger regulatory role for TESDA rather than expanding its involvement in direct training delivery.

Conclusion

The data highlights the critical role of public and private TVIs in expanding access to Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) through scholarship programs. Significant challenges persist, particularly regarding financial disparities, limited program offerings, and quality gaps between public and private institutions. While public TVIs typically possess broader capacities and resources, private TVIs are essential partners in addressing labor market demands, especially for entry-level skills. The increasing reliance on private institutions for training delivery necessitates stronger policy oversight, improved alignment with national standards, and targeted support to ensure equitable access, quality assurance, and better outcomes for graduates. Bridging these disparities and fostering collaboration between public and private TVIs is essential for the sustainable development of the TVET sector and for meeting the country's workforce development needs.

The reliance on TESDA scholarships by both private and public TVIs underscores the critical role financial support plays in maintaining access to TVET programs, ensuring institutional sustainability, and facilitating growth. While private TVIs are highly dependent on scholarships to expand their offerings and remain operational, public TVIs also rely on these funds to upgrade facilities and enhance their capacity to meet the evolving labor market needs. However, this dependence exposes institutions to vulnerabilities, particularly in light of potential shifts in government policy or funding availability. To ensure the long-term success and innovation of TVET institutions, it is essential to diversify funding sources, introduce targeted grants, and implement policy interventions that address immediate operational challenges while simultaneously improving educational quality and accessibility across the sector.

Achieving true complementarity within the TVET system requires a strategic approach that addresses both financial inequities and operational overlaps between public and private TVIs. The current disparity in scholarship allocations, which disproportionately favors public institutions, undermines the potential for collaboration and equitable access to education. Additionally, the duplication of course offerings within geographic regions exacerbates unhealthy competition, particularly when public TVIs continue to operate in areas already well-served by private providers. To create a more balanced and sustainable TVET ecosystem, policy reforms should prioritize equitable scholarship distribution, clearly define the roles of public and private institutions, and encourage collaboration through resource-sharing initiatives. These actions will promote a more cohesive and efficient workforce development strategy, ensuring that resources are better utilized and that training opportunities meet the diverse needs of learners and industries alike.

The decentralization of public TVET institutions presents both challenges and opportunities for improving the TVET system in the Philippines. While TESDA's cautious approach to devolution reflects concerns about the readiness of LGUs and resource constraints, it also presents an opportunity for more flexible, localized solutions, such as integrating training institutions with nearby SUCs or adopting hybrid governance models. This approach can help alleviate structural imbalances, reduce competition between public and private providers, and foster a more coordinated system that better responds to local needs. A careful balance of devolution, integration, and collaboration will strengthen the overall TVET framework, ensuring that services are more efficient, equitable, and aligned with the evolving demands of the workforce.

To enhance complementarity in TVET provision, amendments to the TESDA Charter, particularly regarding the TDF, are crucial. The current investment-heavy strategy of the TDF, driven by the need to reach self-sustainability, has limited its ability to support immediate improvements in TVET delivery. Shifting to a more balanced allocation that prioritizes direct funding for core programs would better support both public and private TVET institutions in meeting labor market needs. Furthermore, the Charter could include provisions for equitable grant distribution to strengthen private TVIs, allowing them to expand offerings, improve facilities, and align with national standards. Instead of establishing regional centers, TESDA's role should focus on its regulatory capacity, ensuring greater coordination between public and private institutions while reducing unnecessary competition. These amendments would strengthen the TVET sector, fostering a more sustainable and responsive system that meets the country's workforce development needs.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, the following are the policy recommendations.

1. **Reform Scholarship Policies to Promote Equity, Access, and Responsiveness**

- Introduce provisions in the TESDA Charter to mandate equitable and performance-based scholarship distribution, with a fixed percentage reserved for small private TVIs with proven track records. For example, at least 25% of scholarships might be set aside for small private TVIs that have been accredited for at least three years, enroll fewer than 300 trainees annually, maintain strong completion and employment rates, and have no serious violations. Scholarship allocations for all TVIs could be based on performance metrics such as training completion, certification, graduate employment, industry partnerships, and learner satisfaction.

- Revise the Omnibus Guidelines for the Implementation of TESDA Scholarship Programs (TESDA Circular No. 4 s. 2024) to include quota-based or needs-based allocation per region that prioritizes underserved private TVIs and avoids duplication in high-capacity areas. Instead of relying mainly on historical slot utilization, allocation may shift toward using socio-economic indicators and regional training demands. A 25% quota could be reserved for small, high-performing private TVIs to address their structural disadvantages. Implementing a training supply-demand audit would help prevent oversaturation in well-served areas. Performance criteria might expand to cover training outcomes, employer alignment, and innovation, while empowering regional offices to tailor distribution plans based on local labor needs. Transparency could improve with annual publication of slot allocations and performance scorecards, and a mid-year review process might allow for dynamic reallocation to address underperformance or emerging gaps.

- Require regular indexation of voucher and scholarship amounts to reflect inflation and market costs of training materials and equipment. TESDA, in coordination with the DBM and PSA, will conduct annual cost reviews and adjust rates based on inflation, training delivery expenses, wage changes, and material price shifts using a transparent, publicly disclosed formula. Adjustments will apply to all TESDA scholarship programs for both public and private TVIs, with regional variations to account for local cost differences. Rates will include a buffer for market fluctuations but remain within a cost-efficiency ceiling.

- Include starter kits and assessment fee subsidies as standard entitlements across all major scholarship programs.

- Mandate the expansion of scholarship coverage and timely fund disbursement through defined service-level standards (e.g., maximum days between scholarship approval and voucher release).

- Expand eligibility for support to self-paying students and TESDA Online Program completers via partial rebates, discounts, or kit provision.

2. **Institutionalize Role Differentiation Between Public and Private TVIs**

- Develop and implement a National TVET Role Differentiation and Program Zoning Policy to reduce duplication, clarify institutional roles, and enhance coordinated service delivery.

- Amend TESDA policies to create distinct program clusters by provider type, and provide funding incentives (e.g., matching grants, training equipment support) to private TVIs offering essential but underrepresented qualifications.

- Launch a "Tiered Provider Framework" similar to SUC leveling, categorizing TVIs by program breadth, trainer qualifications, infrastructure, and strategic alignment. The framework may consist of four tiers. For instance, Tier 1 could include emerging TVIs offering limited, mostly entry-level programs with basic facilities and primarily serving local communities. These providers might be prioritized for starter grants, basic equipment support, and mentorship from higher-tier TVIs. Tier 2 could cover expanding TVIs that offer multiple qualifications in priority sectors, have several certified trainers, and demonstrate improving employment and assessment outcomes; they may be eligible for expanded scholarship allocations and infrastructure upgrades. Tier 3 could consist of advanced TVIs with strong institutional systems, modern facilities, high certification and employment rates, and established regional innovation partnerships; these institutions might receive performance-based bonuses, grants for curriculum innovation, and incentives to strengthen industry linkages. Lastly, Tier 4 could represent strategic or flagship TVIs acting as sector leaders or regional hubs, offering complex, high-level qualifications and conducting innovation or enterprise-based training. These TVIs could be recognized as sector hubs, qualify for flagship program funding, and be granted greater autonomy to offer advanced or pilot qualifications.

3. **Strengthen Public-Private Coordination through TVET Complementarity Mechanisms**

- Establish a national framework for TVET complementarity that integrates the roles of TESDA, LGUs, industry associations, and NGOs in training and skill development, defining clear roles, responsibilities, and collaboration mechanisms between the public and private sectors to enhance training outcomes and workforce development.

- Establish a TVET Complementarity Planning Board at the regional level (TESDA, LGUs, private TVIs) to coordinate the zoning of programs and allocation of vouchers based on demand and provider capacity.

4. **Decentralize Public TVET Governance Based on LGU and SUC Capacity**

- Amend the existing TESDA Charter to refocus its mandate on setting TVET policy directions and quality assurance, giving way to the formal transfer of authority over regional/provincial training centers to LGUs or other capable organizations.

- Introduce a TVET Decentralization Act that provides a legal framework for devolving operational control of public TVIs (TTIs, RTCs, PTCs) to capable LGUs/ SUCs, including minimum fiscal and governance readiness criteria.

- Allocate transition grants and technical assistance to LGUs that opt in, and establish a TVET Decentralization Performance Monitoring System to evaluate effectiveness post-devolution.

- Encourage integration with SUCs to promote ladderized and lifelong learning pathways.

5. **Reorient the TDF for Inclusive Institutional Support**

- A fixed percentage of the OWWA Fund should be set to supplement the TDF, which TESDA should subsequently claim to support quality improvements and capacity-building in TVET.

- Establish a Small Provider Development Grant under the TDF specifically for private TVIs offering one to two qualifications, aiming to enhance infrastructure, trainer capacity, and program quality.

- Create an Independent TDF Grants and Oversight Committee with private sector representation to ensure transparency, equity, and alignment with national TVET priorities.

- Dedicate a percentage of TDF annually for competitive development grants accessible to accredited private TVIs.

- Introduce additional forms of institutional support such as accreditation assistance, trainer salary subsidies, and matching grants, to help level the playing field for private TVIs and enhance their capacity to deliver quality, in-demand programs.

Bionote

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About EDCOM 2

The Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II) is a national Commission established through Republic Act No. 11899, tasked to undertake a comprehensive national assessment and evaluation of the performance of the Philippine education sector, and to propose transformative solutions, from 2023 to 2025. It is composed of lawmakers from both the Senate and the House of Representatives, and is guided by an Advisory Council, and assisted by the Technical Secretariat.

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