



World Vision



A PLACE TO HONE POTENTIALS

Building Young People's Technical and Life Skills Through
the Auto Mechanic Training Centre (AMTraC)

STRATEGY MANAGEMENT, IMPACT, AND LEARNING
WORLD VISION DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research report explores the experiences of graduates from the Auto Mechanic Training Centre (AMTraC), a technical and education and training institution that aims to produce highly qualified and globally competitive automotive technicians in the Philippines. AMTraC is supported through a tripartite partnership between Isuzu Motors Limited (IML), World Vision Development Foundation (WVDF), and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). The center takes a holistic approach to developing the capacity of youth trainees by providing them with the technical skills they need to become globally competitive automotive technicians and by supporting them in non-technical programs, such as values education, leadership skills, and rights awareness.

Through a survey, interviews, and document review, this research report documents the processes that facilitated the employment outcomes of AMTraC graduates. Furthermore, this research analyzes trends in the technical and non-technical skills that graduates developed in the training center, while being attentive to the diversity of graduates' personal backgrounds and experiences.

FIVE KEY FINDINGS

1 Graduates responded positively when asked about their workplace situation after graduating in AMTraC. Survey data shows that the majority of graduates (90%) are employed. The other 10% reported that they are unemployed due to contract expiration or personal reasons. While the survey did not ask whether COVID-19 pandemic was a reason for unemployment, the fact that the majority of graduates surveyed have a Source of income during this global health crisis is a significant success that must be highlighted.

2 Graduates positively perceived the training center's role in helping them achieve and obtain the following: employment opportunities, skills and competencies required for success in their work, social connections, and identifying a career that matches their strengths and interests. While there was no direct evidence of increase in household income due to data limitations, the descriptive data available shows that finding employment through AMTraC had a profound impact for graduates who had limited opportunities prior to their entry in the training center. For graduates, employment was pivotal in achieving their own markers of success, which include their capacity to help their family and to utilize their skills to help others.

3 Graduates cited the various ways they have used technical skills in their current employment. While the level of applicability and relevance depended on their type of work, the technical skills they had developed, overall, enabled them to handle the different roles available in Isuzu dealerships. All graduates shared that, while not all theories taught in the center are relevant to their current role, they would not be able to successfully do their job without the foundational knowledge and skills they acquired through the training center.

4 Data shows that graduates most appreciated the non-technical skills they developed through the center's thematic training and implementation of rules and regulations. Interviewees regarded these skills as life-changing and helpful for improving their personality, career outlook, and relationships.

5 Of the three nontechnical skills dimensions – positive identity, soft skills for life and work, and active citizenship – explored in the survey, active citizenship had the most statements with the least positive responses, specifically statements on participation in socio-civic activities and environmentalism. Nonetheless, the interviewed project staff shared that discussions around the inclusion of these core values in the thematic training and curriculum are already underway, as the center acknowledges that the automotive industry needs to pay attention to environmental preservation. Despite the limited number of graduates who reported participating in socio-civic activities, they showed positive values towards the importance of civic engagement, human rights, and caring for others in the community.



INTRODUCTION

According to recent data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), around 1.7 million young Filipinos are struggling to find employment opportunities.¹ In July 2020, the youth unemployment rate was recorded at 22.4%, which is higher than the 10% total unemployment rate.² However, a closer look at historical data shows that this has always been the trend. Young people consistently comprised most of the unemployed compared to other age groups, based on a time interval analysis of unemployment rate from 2010 to 2019 in the Philippines.³ Data further shows that these young people are mostly high school graduates or at least college undergraduates. They are the sector most vulnerable to economic shock, which often leads to further economic instability, social insecurity, and increased unemployment or underemployment throughout their working life.⁴

In supporting unemployed and out-of-school Filipino youth, the role of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is increasingly recognized. TVET is broadly referred to as “the postsecondary education sector, providing noncredit middle-level skills training to produce skilled workers.”⁵ It is led by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), the mandated government agency that manages and supervises TVET services, such as standards and curriculum development, program implementation, assessment, certification, registration, and accreditation.

The promise of TVET is that it offers a straightforward intervention for two development challenges in the country: job-skills mismatch and unemployment. It allows young people to acquire technical skills recognized in the workforce, making it an economically viable alternative to tertiary education, which entails longer schooling years and higher direct and indirect costs. Those who do not enter higher education after high school may instead choose to earn a

National Certificate (NC), which is an employment credential that is recognized nationwide. With the Philippines' shift to the K-12 education program, TVET tracks are now included in the senior high school curriculum.

Existing studies also show the positive impact of TVET on employment opportunities. A rigorous and systematic review of literature (comprised of TVET-related studies across low- and middle-income countries) points to evidence that TVET interventions have a positive effect on paid employment, formal employment, monthly earnings, and weekly hours worked.⁶ In the Philippines, a statistical analysis of 3,000 household data for 2015 to 2016 shows that TVET graduates earn significantly higher wages and are more likely to be employed relative to those who entered the job market with a secondary school education or below.⁷ TVET addresses the supply side of the labor market. Through strong industry linkage, it produces industry-ready workers who have the skills and qualifications that meet in-demand, hard-to-fill job vacancies and emerging employment opportunities.

However, while TVET indeed offers promise, academics and policy experts call on more empirical evidence to address TVET's limitations. For example, one of the cited limitations of TVET is its “narrowly defined competencies.”⁸ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) argues that there is still much work to be done to ensure that TVET not only prepares young people for entry-level jobs, but for careers where they may transition between jobs with similar skill requirements.⁹ They noted that one way to do this is to strengthen the non-technical skills of young people.

“It is crucial for TVET to ensure a supply of graduates with in-demand technical skills as well as the soft skills required to adapt to the rapidly changing world of work.”¹⁰

¹ Philippines Statistics Authority, “Employment situation in July 2020,” September 3, 2020.

² Philippines Statistics Authority, “Employment situation in July 2020.”

³ John Manuel Villanueva, “Addressing youth unemployed in the Philippines: A policy analysis of JobStart and Enterprise-led Learning Networks (ELLN),” Institute for Labor Studies, Issue Paper 2020-02, September 2020.

⁴ Mark Canlas and Maria Cristina Pardalis, Youth employment in the Philippines, *International Labour Organization*, December 31, 2009.

⁵ Kiran Budhrani, Marc D'Amico and Jose Lloyd Espiritu, “Developing a skilled workforce through technical and vocational education and training in the Philippines,” In *Handbook of Comparative Studies on Community College and Global Counterparts* (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2020).

⁶ Janice Tripney and Jorge Hombrados, “Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) for young people in low- and middle-income countries: A systematic review and meta-analysis,” *Empirical Research in Vocational Education and Training*, Issue 5, Volume 3, 2013. 28 respondents were interviewed during the baseline but only 184 were reached in the evaluation. Some of the baseline respondents were not present in the area during the visits, and some of the children also exceeded five years of age at the time of survey.

⁷ Paul Vandenberg and Jade Laranjo, The Impact of Vocational Training on Labor Market Outcomes in the Philippines, ADB Economic Working Paper Series, Number 621, October 2020.

⁸ Asian Development Bank, Technical and vocational education and training in the Philippines in the age of industry 4.0, March 2021, p. xix.

⁹ Asian Development Bank, Technical and vocational education.

¹⁰ Asian Development Bank, Technical and vocational education, p. xviii.

Unlike technical skills, non-technical skills focus on socio-emotional skills, soft skills, or behavioral skills that “reflect the worker’s personality, attitude, and mindset.” In the age of industry 4.0, non-technical skills help young people navigate complex workplaces and adapt to changes caused by rapid technological advancements, such as automation, artificial intelligence, cloud computing in manufacturing, and other industry services.

Industry partners in the private sector argue that TESDA needs to better institutionalize these non-technical skills in their training programs and curriculum development. While in-demand technical skills are important to address job mismatch, existing studies show that honing soft skills among young people—especially those who have limited employment experience—helps them adapt and thrive in the rapidly changing world of work. An analysis of labor force surveys shows that non-technical skills are strongly related to higher earnings and better employment prospects. For example, a one standard deviation increase in non-technical skills is associated with a 15 percentage point increase in the probability of being employed.

This research report explores the experiences of graduates from the Auto Mechanic Training Centre (AMTraC), a technical education and training institution that aims to produce highly qualified and globally competitive automotive technicians in the Philippines. It provides life skills training to underprivileged youth and aims to increase their capacity to provide for themselves and their families.

Through a survey, interviews, and document review, this research report documents the processes that facilitated the employment outcomes of AMTraC graduates. It analyzes trends in the technical and non-technical skills that graduates developed in the training center, while being attentive to the diversity of graduate’s personal backgrounds and experiences. This report does not aim to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the center’s effectiveness in achieving intended project outcomes. Instead, the goal is to facilitate learning by documenting the processes and lessons that shaped the graduates’ experiences in the center and in their current workplace.

About the Auto Mechanic Training Centre (AMTraC)

The Auto Mechanic Training Centre (AMTraC) is supported through a tripartite partnership between Isuzu Motors Limited (IML), World Vision Development Foundation (WVDF), and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). The center’s mission is to become a dynamic institution that provides a comprehensive training system, in accordance with national and international standards.

To develop qualified and skilled technicians, the center provides a two-year automotive servicing course to youth from poor families. The center takes a holistic approach by providing trainees with the technical skills they need to become globally competitive automotive technicians and by supporting them in non-technical programs, such as values education, leadership skills, and rights awareness. As of October 2020, AMTraC had produced 317 graduates now employed in the automotive industry locally and abroad.

About the Research

The research seeks to understand how AMTraC trainees and graduates have used the skills learned in the training program to improve their quality of life and achieve personal goals. Specifically, this research has two main objectives:

1. To determine AMTraC’s impact on the employment opportunities and life skills of graduates; and
2. To identify the factors and processes that helped trainees achieve their employment objectives and personal development goals.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How did the technical and non-technical skills training improve their employment outcomes among graduates since the center’s inception?

SECONDARY QUESTIONS

1. What were the intended and unexpected benefits of non-technical skills training for the graduates?
2. What processes included in the training enabled and/or hindered them from getting employment opportunities?

¹¹ Pablo Acosta, Takiko Igarashi, Rosechin Olfindo and Jan Rutkowski. *Developing Socioemotional Skills for the Philippines’ Labor market*. (Washington: The World Bank, 2017), p. 1–2.

¹² Pablo Acosta, Takiko Igarashi, Rosechin Olfindo and Jan Rutkowski. *Developing Socioemotional Skills*.

Project overview

TRAINING PROGRAM

The two-year training program teaches the core competencies of automotive servicing, from National Certificate Level I to National Certificate Level IV.

NON-TECHNICAL PROGRAMS FOR LIFE SKILLS AND LEADERSHIP

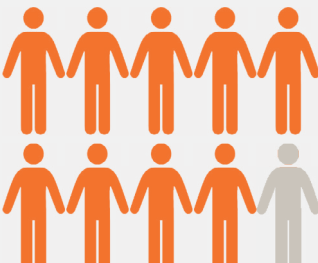


The center also provides training on:

- Child Rights and Responsibilities
- Values Education
- Health and Nutrition Education
- Leadership Training
- Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Awareness
- Fire Safety Orientation

TRAINING COMPLEX

The training facilities include a 2-story workshop building, dormitory, cafeteria and multi-purpose basketball court with an improved water site and water system.



JOB PLACEMENT SYSTEM

90%

Ninety percent (90%) of graduates were employed within one year after completing the program.

INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS AND RECOGNITION

Graduates of the center have won international skills competitions:

- In 2014, trainees Rey Bombita and Roel Gocela won 2nd prize in Category B¹³ of the Isuzu Grand Prix.
- In 2015, trainees Arman Buluhan and Ramie Monterola won 1st place in the same category.
- In 2016, trainees Jumar Verano and Charlie Belano won 2nd prize in the same category.
- In 2018, Khent John Ventura and Jusua Cantre represented the Philippines in the Commercial Vehicle Category of the Isuzu Grand Prix.
- In 2019, Joeminel Cutcharo was awarded the Medallion of Excellence Award and the Best of Nation Award during the World Skills Competition in Kazan, Russia.

NATIONAL COMPETITIONS

Trainees bagged 1st prize in the following competitions:

- Provincial skills competition in 2018 and 2019
- Regional skills competition in 2017 and 2019
- Zonal skills competition in 2017 and 2019

Source: Project Accomplishment Report April 2017 to March 2020; End of Contract Report October 2012 to March 2013

¹³ Grand Prix category B in I-I Grand Prix World Competition refers to countries who are following Euro 4 (European emission standards stage 4) and below with regard to Emission regulation.

METHODOLOGY

The research used a mixed methods approach. Data was drawn from interviews, documents, story capturing, and an online survey. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face interviews were not possible and all engagements with research participants were done online and/or via phone. Data collection happened between February 2021 to April 2021. The rest of this section describes the analysis framework, data collection tools, and ethical considerations that ensured the rights and privacy of respondents were protected in the research process.

Analysis Framework

The analysis framework was developed with World Vision's Youth Livelihoods and Empowerment Theory of Change in mind, which serves as a guide in developing strategies and programming around youth employment. In particular, the research explored the following dimensions in the framework: positive identity, soft skills for life and work, active citizenship, and work readiness. Aside from employment outcomes (which is often the focus of research on TVET), these dimensions could provide insights on how these nontechnical skills are developed in the center and how graduates have applied them in their current employment. The dimensions of positive identity, soft skills for life and work, and active citizenship could also shed light on how the graduates assess the center's role in preparing them for a long-term career by inculcating these non-technical skills alongside the technical skills.

Data Collection Methods

The research utilized mixed methods, including a survey, interviews, document review, and story capturing. Findings from the different tools, as applicable, were compared to triangulate results.

Figure 1. Research Methods



Survey. An online survey was developed to gather quantitative data on the employment trends of graduates, as well as their assessment of how the training program helped them personally and professionally. The survey asked for the graduates' current employment status and feedback on different aspects of AMTraC, including instructional methodology, trainers, facility, technical skills training, non-technical skills training, and job placement system. The survey also explored the non-technical skills dimensions discussed in the analysis framework. Each dimension contained 10 target statements. Respondents were asked to rate the statements based on how each one applies to them. In total, there were 97 anonymous survey respondents.

Interviews. The interviews provided an opportunity to unpack the quantitative data. Interview respondents included both graduates and project staff. Project staff were asked for their assessment of the intended and unintended outcomes of the training center. This helped capture which processes ensured that the training center provided the necessary skills and capacity, as well as the lessons learned in the process.

Interviews with graduates focused on their experiences in AMTraC and in their current employment. The questions asked to graduates and project staff overlapped in areas regarding their assessment of the intended and unintended outcomes of the training center. But primarily, interviews with graduates also explored motivations for applying to the training, skills gained through technical and non-technical training, experiences in job placement, and their overall assessment of their accomplishments after graduation. Interview data was transcribed and analyzed according to the strongest themes that emerged.

The principle of maximum diversity¹⁴ informed the sampling of interview respondents, as the research aimed to capture the widest possible range of experiences in the training center. Beyond purposive sampling following demographic categories of gender and age, second-level sampling also considered employment status of graduates working in the automotive industry and those employed in other industries. Among the graduates interviewed, 33% were female and 77% were male. The majority of interviewees (83%) are employed in the automotive industry while 17% are employed in other industries. All of the graduates are in their

¹⁴ Maximum diversity principle in purposive sampling ensures that there is a wide variety of participants, in order to capture a range of experiences. It also ensures that cases vary from each other as much as possible.

20s with varying years of employment experience, from 1 to 5 years employed. They also came from different batch numbers, from Batch 9 to 12.

Story capturing. Story capturing focuses on the personal experience and journey of graduates. In this report, the stories of five graduates are presented in a visual manner, tracking the ups and downs of each journey, giving the research a human element. Rather than highlight “success stories” based on financial outcomes, story capturing highlights the struggles and processes that lead to the different employment outcomes and characters of graduates. Under each story captured, the following elements are presented:



Key points — Story capturing documents the ups and downs of each graduate's experience by identifying three key points in their journey.



Facilitating factor — Story capturing identifies the enablers of these key points. It answers the question: What facilitated these key experiences in the graduate's journey?



Learning opportunity — Story capturing extracts learnings from each key point of the graduate's journey. It answers the question: What can stakeholders learn from the graduate's experience?

Ethical Considerations

Data collected for this research was kept private and confidential. Informed consent was obtained from all research participants and all participants were given full disclosure of what they were agreeing to participate in. At

no time was any participant required to give any information they were not comfortable divulging.

For story capturing, consent to document the participants' lives was solicited prior to engagement. Written approval to publish the contents of story capturing was sought and participants were given full knowledge of what they were agreeing to participate in. The final contents of story capturing were reviewed and approved by the participants before being published as part of the report.

Limitations

While the research tried to be innovative in its approach to gain a holistic understanding of the graduates' experiences, the following limitations needed to be considered:

- Limited opportunity to survey all graduates. The survey was open for five weeks and graduates were reminded to participate through the graduates' Facebook group. However, not all graduates were active in the Facebook group and the training center had no other means to contact them, hence the limited turnout of survey responses. Indeed, one of the limitations of online surveys is that they are biased towards respondents who have Internet access. In total, 97 anonymous responses were recorded out of the total 284 graduates.
- No opportunity for fieldwork. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were no opportunities for face-to-face interactions and site visits. An opportunity to observe how training is conducted in the center could have provided a better sense of the technical skills and practical exams described by the graduates during interviews.



FINDINGS



1.1. Motivations for Applying

The Auto Mechanic Training Centre (AMTraC) strategically targets out-of-school youth from the poorest communities in Region VI, VII, and VIII and helps them become employed through technical and non-technical life skills training.¹⁵ The survey data here shows that almost all respondents (98%) are high school graduates. The respondents' economic status prior to their entry in AMTraC was also unpacked during interviews. All of them came from low-income households wherein parents had limited capacity to support their tertiary education.

Interview respondents cited various reasons for applying to AMTraC, but only 33% of them said they were interested in automotive servicing prior to their application. Given the chance, respondents would have pursued different college degrees and other career paths, but their limited financial capacity hindered them from doing so.¹⁶ Nonetheless, all respondents saw AMTraC as an opportunity to acquire a credential that would allow them to help their families and themselves. Other trainees also recalled that their parents and relatives played a big role in pushing them to apply despite their lack of interest.¹⁷ For others, they were enticed by the privileges of being a trainee, particularly the provisions of free housing, free food, and free tuition fee.¹⁸

When the AMTraC staff asked me why I am applying, I told her that I don't have a choice. I grabbed the opportunity because there is free tuition, housing, food.¹⁹

I wanted to pursue the college course that I like. I wanted to pursue education or engineering. But I pursued what was available which was AMTraC. I thought I can just study again and pursue the course that I want after.²⁰

Project staff acknowledged that most of the applicants lacked interest in automotive servicing before entering the training center.²¹ This is the reality that trainers highly consider when designing their teaching approach for National Certificate I, in order to help trainees adapt and eventually develop interest in automotive servicing.²² However, project staff also recognized that lack of interest could mean that some graduates will decide to change career paths after gaining employment experience.²³

We, the project staff, have to adjust to the trainees depending on their age. We try to balance it, make the training fun and not too serious so trainees would not be stressed. We know it would be too much for them if they also don't get any breaks. We really have to adjust - it's like we're kids and young again just so we could gain their interest and they would also be motivated.²⁴

¹⁵ Recruitment is temporarily concentrated in Eastern Visayas (Region VIII) at the moment due to COVID-19 until it is safe again to recruit outside the region

¹⁶ Respondent 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

¹⁷ Respondent 7, 10

¹⁸ Respondent 1, 2, 3, 8

¹⁹ Respondent 2

²⁰ Respondent 7

²¹ Respondent 15, 16

²² Respondent 16

²³ Respondent 15

²⁴ Respondent 14

STORY CAPTURING I

Embracing the Automotive Servicing as a Profession is a Process: Jen's Transition from Lack of Interest to Full of Potential

Jen, 25, currently works as Parts Inquiry and Analyst in one of Isuzu's dealerships. She stopped studying after high school due to her family's circumstances. Jen reflected back on how she embraced automotive servicing as a career, despite her lack of interest in it when she learned about AMTraC.

KEY:  Key point  Quote  Facilitating factor  Learning opportunity

FIRST KEY POINT



Embracing a career path in automotive servicing never crossed Jen's mind, as she had always wanted to pursue accountancy or journalism. Despite her lack of interest in it, Jen's parents encouraged her to apply to AMTraC.



I pursued AMTraC for my mother. It was my mother who persuaded me to take the exam. I was hesitant but I took the exam to show my mother that at least I tried.



Aside from her parents, various people encouraged Jen to pursue AMTRaC. Her former classmate, who was already enrolled in AMTraC at the time of Jen's application, highlighted the benefits of the training center, including the employment opportunities awaiting graduates.



To examine how the training program can approach applicants who have zero knowledge of or generally lack interest in the automotive industry

SECOND KEY POINT



Through the help of her senior trainees and trainers who acted as mentors, Jen learned to enjoy her experience in the training center and took initiative in sharpening her skills and knowledge in automotive servicing.



I realized that growing in the training center falls on us - that we need to take it seriously. Even if the trainers are really experts, if we don't take the experience to heart, then nothing would happen.



The training program inculcated a sense of independence and ownership among trainees, which helped Jen discover her own strengths and interests.



To understand the different learning curves of trainees and how the program can further support them by teaching independence and ownership of the process

THIRD KEY POINT



Jen now works as a service advisor in an Isuzu dealership.



I used to dream of achieving a different career goal, but now I don't. I love my work in the dealership. I am able to apply what I learn in AMTraC especially when interacting with customers. In a way, it's like I was able to pursue my dream job of becoming a newscaster because here, I talk to customers a lot.



Jen recognizes how her current work aligns with the dreams she had prior to entering the training program.



To understand that applicants have various motivations for applying to the training center, and that disinterest or lack of knowledge in automotive servicing is not the sole factor determining training outcomes

1.2. Building a Solid Foundation Through Technical Skills

Graduates recalled positive experiences and described their time in the training center as life-changing. While technical and vocational education training (TVET) is often focused on honing specific skill sets in the shortest amount of time possible,²⁵ AMTraC differs in that it takes a holistic approach by dedicating two years to developing the technical and non-technical skills, knowledge, and attitudes that trainees need to become successful. The graduates' overall positive experiences are reflected in the high average ratings they gave for all aspects of AMTraC, including the non-technical training, facilities, job placement, trainers, and instructional methodology, as seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Graduates' Average Rating of AMTraC (With 5 as the Highest Mark)

	AVERAGE RATE
Non-Technical Training	4.77
Facilities	4.76
Job Placement	4.70
Trainers	4.67
Instructional Methodology	4.61

Source: Online survey

The two-year training program is designed to enable trainees to attain four qualification levels in automotive servicing (National Certificate levels I to IV). Each NC level is composed of different competencies taught: basic, common, and core. Some of the technical skills that graduates acquire include: basic knowledge of hand tools, service for diesel engine management systems, service for electronic body management systems, service for diesel injection system components, and service for emission control systems among others.

Trainers use instructional methodology that combines theory and practice. This is to ensure that graduates have a firm grasp of the theory behind the application of different automotive servicing components. Each NC level takes six months to complete and trainees must pass the competency assessment (including the Juku assessment, supervised by Isuzu staff from Japan, that supplements the regularly

provided competency) before progressing to the next NC level. Additionally, each trainee gets an NC II in driving. Obtaining an NC IV qualification in automotive servicing from TESDA is a highly regarded credential, which can be both a Source of confidence and pressure according to graduates.²⁶

*Sometimes I feel pressured because my colleagues know I studied in AMTraC. It is like you need to meet high standards. But I know that's an asset - I even go back to my Notes from time to time. I really make sure to follow Isuzu's standards on automotive servicing.*²⁷

Graduates cited the various ways they have used technical skills in their current employment. While the level of applicability and relevance depended on their type of work, the technical skills they had developed, overall, enabled them to handle the different roles available in Isuzu dealerships. All graduates shared that, while not all theories taught in the center are relevant to their current role, they would not be able to successfully do their job without the foundational knowledge and skills they acquired through the training center. For example, some of the graduates perform desk jobs (e.g. focused customer service relations and technical evaluation), which means they have less opportunity to do hands-on assessments of cars brought to the dealership.²⁸ Others use the technical skills they developed to build a specialization in automotive servicing, as shown in Story Capturing 2: Jerald's Story.

*Only 10 to 20 percent of my overall experience in AMTraC is relevant because in the training center, we dealt with man-made issues as compared in the dealership where the cause of trouble is usually natural like the engine just suddenly stops working. That's when I realized we really have to know all the car functions and all the technical work so we could troubleshoot it right away.*²⁹

Project staff shared that the training center's strong industry linkage is key to ensuring that graduates' skills and knowledge are at par with industry standards.³⁰ They have strived to do this in two ways. First is through training regulation, where industry partners are consulted and engaged in developing

²⁵ Asian Development Bank. *Technical and vocational education and training in the Philippines in the age of industry 4.0*, March 2021.

²⁶ Respondent 1, 2, 4, 6, 8; survey response

²⁷ Respondent 2

²⁸ Respondent 1, 3, 5, 8

²⁹ Respondent 6

³⁰ Respondent 14, 16, 17



the curriculum for automotive servicing. This allows TESDA and industry partners like Isuzu to understand the gaps and discuss emerging technologies that need to be included in the curriculum. For example, with the introduction of hybrid cars in the market, there are plans to include this in the curriculum as well.³¹

The second way is through constant coordination and communication with industry partners during the OJT of graduates. The center has introduced an employer's satisfaction survey and On-The-Job Training Book feedback, where industry partners have the opportunity to comment on how graduates have shown positive work attitude, adapted to the work environment, and become open to learning new things.³² For project staff, strong industry linkage also meant the center maintains a good understanding of the competencies needed in the industry and can keep up to date with the new technologies used.³³

When we endorse the trainees to the dealership, we use that opportunity to benchmark. We ask them, "What are some of the equipment we need to purchase so we could train the trainees on how to use it?" That's important because trainees would then need less supervision in the dealership because they already know how to use the equipment.³⁴

³¹ Respondent 14

³² Respondent 16, Project Accomplishment Report FY April 2017 - March 2020

³³ The project's Liaison Officer plays an important role in doing the coordination work necessary to establish strong industry linkage, however, the project is yet to hire a new officer after the resignation of the previous officer.

³⁴ Respondent 15

STORY CAPTURING 2

Building Expertise in the Automotive Field: Jerald's Story

Jerald, 26, is currently in Japan working as a technical trainee. Jerald reflected back on how he used the technical skills he learned in training to build an expertise in truck automotive servicing.

KEY:  Key point  Quote  Facilitating factor  Learning opportunity

FIRST KEY POINT



Jerald had always been interested in automotive servicing, as his sidelines involved fixing car tires. However, building an expertise in this line of work was not Jerald's main motivation when he applied to the training center.



I applied because I thought it could only be the chance that I could study again. I was excited to train because I am really interested in automotive servicing. Prior to entry, fixing car tires was my sideline. That's also the reason why I got interested.



AMTraC's recruitment process targeted poor families in Jerald's municipality. Their community's barangay officials provided information about AMTraC as well.



To examine existing interests and skills that may align with automotive servicing, and to see future trainees not as blank slates, but as people with existing knowledge and capacity that can be leveraged

SECOND KEY POINT



Jerald discovered the area of automotive servicing he found most interesting, which pushed him to perform his best.



Making it to the top two or three in class was my most memorable experience. I was happy whenever I received an award after completing one NC level because I really studied hard. I felt that my hard work paid off.



Trainees at the center gained hands-on experience in automotive servicing through practical application. This allowed them to discover which areas piqued their interest.



To identify different ways to help trainees hone in on an area of specialization (mechanical, electrical, etc.) based on their interests

THIRD KEY POINT



Jerald was selected as one of the eight graduates to be trained by the Isuzu Global Service Corporation, where trainees develop a specialization in automotive servicing for trucks. He is currently honing this expertise while receiving further training in Japan.



The technical skills I acquired in AMTraC have become my springboard to become employed in Japan. I know that trainees would be 100% skilled after graduating in AMTraC.



Jerald gained a solid foundation in automotive servicing at AMTraC, which was useful in developing expertise in a specialized service.



To determine how the training center can produce different types of specialists in automotive servicing, which could also benefit the development of the Philippines' automotive industry

1.3. Non-Technical Skills as Building Blocks

While technical skills provided a solid foundation for graduates, it is the non-technical skills they develop that are the building blocks to pursuing better employment outcomes. The training center hones non-technical skills like leadership, professionalism, and working with others, among other skills that promote positive work attitude, ignite their curiosity and learning, and help them adapt to work environments.

Qualitative interview data shows that graduates most appreciated the non-technical skills they developed through the center's thematic training and implementation of rules and regulations.³⁵

Interviewees regarded these skills as life-changing and helpful for improving their personality, career outlook, and relationships. For graduates who work as service advisors and perform frontline responsibilities (such as customer relations), interpersonal communication skills allow them to

establish good rapport and negotiate demands from customers and colleagues. For graduates whose primary role is to execute tasks as technicians, leadership skills allow them to delegate tasks to colleagues, while still maintaining positive working relationships. Notwithstanding the struggles of women in a male-dominated field, female graduates have used their non-technical skills to thrive in the automotive industry. Story Capturing 3: Sarah's experience provides this example.

When I entered AMTraC, it was like entering a rehab. I stopped smoking, drinking... It was like I became a different person. The rules and regulations helped in making me a better person.³⁶

I became a different person because of the training and self-discipline. I think that's my best achievement in life. My family couldn't even believe that I changed for the better. That's when I thought, the AMTraC experience is an achievement in itself. And also, I am not unemployed.³⁷

Table 2. Survey Responses on Positive Identity, Soft Skills for Life and Work, and Active Citizenship

	POSITIVE RESPONSES		
	TOTAL POSITIVE RESPONSE	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE
I. Positive Identity			
I.1. I am optimistic most of the time, even during challenging times.	98%	81%	17%
I.2. I know my worth as an individual.	98%	81%	17%
I.3. I know my life purpose.	96%	74%	22%
I.4. I know what I want to become and I am pursuing steps to achieve it.	96%	73%	23%
I.5. I have confidence in my ability to recover from life challenges, no matter how big.	100%	84%	16%
I.6. I prefer to step outside my comfort zone and to explore and try new things.	98%	75%	23%
I.7. I have established healthy and rewarding relationships with peers and family members.	96%	78%	18%
I.8. My colleagues see me as a responsible person.	94%	54%	40%
I.9. I see challenges as opportunities to improve myself to achieve my goals.	100%	85%	15%

³⁵ Respondent 16, Project Accomplishment Report FY April 2017 - March 2020

³⁶ Respondent 2

³⁷ Respondent 8

	POSITIVE RESPONSES		
	TOTAL POSITIVE RESPONSE	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE
2. Soft Skills for Life and Work			
2.1. I am able to maintain good working relationships with my colleagues.	97%	72%	25%
2.2. I work effectively in a team where we plan and accomplish tasks and assess problems in the workplace.	99%	75%	24%
2.3. I know whether the tasks I am working on are high, medium, or low value.	98%	74%	24%
2.4. I maintain balance in my life by ensuring that work does not compromise quality time with myself and family.	95%	67%	28%
2.5. I welcome and act on feedback for my work/ performance.	100%	78%	22%
2.6. My colleagues often comment that I communicate my ideas effectively and concisely.	94%	49%	45%
2.7. My colleagues highly regard my work ethic and can entrust me to accomplish tasks with little supervision.	96%	53%	43%
2.8. I am able to make learning a priority in my own professional life.	99%	67%	32%
3. Active Citizenship			
3.1. In the past year, I have participated in a community initiative that tackled a social problem (e.g. peace and security in the neighborhood, etc.).	42%	18%	24%
3.2. I would describe myself as socially aware of the issues in our country and I try to actively contribute to solutions in my own ways.	100%	77%	23%
3.3. I put in extra effort to educate myself about other cultures.	99%	68%	31%
3.4. I understand and respect human rights.	100%	69%	31%
3.5. I perform my responsibilities to care for others in the community.	98%	70%	28%
3.6. In the past year, I have participated in an activity that aimed to protect the environment.	71%	28%	43%
3.7. I am contributing to solve the country's problems.	85%	25%	60%

Source: Online survey

Note: Only positive responses are shown in the table above. Some target statements received 100% positive responses, but there was a wide gap between the Strongly Agree and Agree survey responses. In survey design literature, the difference between Strongly Agree and Agree are often disregarded. However, understanding which statements received higher Strongly Agree responses (as compared to high Agree responses only and vice versa) could provide insights into which areas trainees strongly felt were relevant to them.

Table 3. Survey Responses on Positive Identity, Soft Skills for Life and Work, and Active Citizenship in Relation to AMTraC Experience

		POSITIVE RESPONSES		
		TOTAL POSITIVE RESPONSE	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE
Positive Identity	Because of AMTraC, I gained self-confidence.	97%	78%	19%
Soft Skills for Life and Work	Because of AMTraC, I learned how to build collegial relationships.	99%	71%	28%
Active Citizenship	Because of AMTraC, I became more conscious of the need to take care of the environment and others.	97%	62%	35%

Source: Online survey

Note: Only positive responses are shown in the table above. Some target statements received 100% positive response, but there was a wide gap between the Strongly Agree and Agree survey responses. In survey design literature, the difference between Strongly Agree and Agree are often disregarded. However, understanding which statements received higher Strongly Agree responses (as compared to high Agree responses only and vice versa) could provide insights into which areas trainees strongly felt were relevant to them.

In order to further explore the non-technical skills of graduates, they were surveyed and asked to assess themselves based on the following dimensions: positive identity, soft skills for life and work, and active citizenship. Analysis of survey results show that statements related to positive identity received higher scores, followed by soft skills for life and work, and active citizenship.

Table 2 shows that statements on having the confidence to bounce back from challenges (1.5, 1.1, and 1.9) received the highest positive responses, while statements on sense of purpose (1.3), goals (1.4), and responsibility (1.8) received the lowest positive responses.

Under soft skills for life and work, statements on openness to feedback (2.5), team work (2.2), and prioritization (2.3) received the highest positive responses. Statements on their colleagues' assessment of their work ethic (2.7) and communication skills (2.6) received relatively lower positive responses. Nonetheless, the overall pattern in soft skills for life and work suggest that graduates are able to foster good working relationships in the workplace, while there are opportunities to strengthen their communication skills.

Of the three dimensions, active citizenship had the most statements with the least positive responses, specifically statements on participation in socio-civic activities (3.1, 3.7)

and environmentalism (3.6). Nonetheless, the interviewed project staff shared that discussions around the inclusion of these core values in the thematic training and curriculum are already underway, as the center acknowledges that the automotive industry needs to pay attention to environmental preservation.³⁸ Despite the limited number of graduates who reported participating in socio-civic activities, they showed positive values towards the importance of civic engagement (3.2), human rights (3.4), and caring for others in the community (3.5).

³⁸ Respondent 14, 15

STORY CAPTURING 3

Overcoming Gender Barriers in the Automotive Industry: Sarah's Experience

Sarah, 26, is currently working as a Service Advisor. Sarah shared how she overcame the struggles of being a woman in a male-dominated job.

KEY:  Key point  Quote  Facilitating factor  Learning opportunity

FIRST KEY POINT



Sarah applied to AMTraC in 2012. She recalled feeling hopeless, thinking there was no spot for an aspiring trainee like her because she perceived automotive servicing as a male-dominated industry.



Sarah's desire to earn a degree and help her family was the decisive factor that motivated her to apply, despite her initial hesitations.



When I was completing the requirements prior to my entry, I thought, "I don't think I could do automotive servicing because this work seems to be for men." At that time, I couldn't see myself removing car tires or fixing car engines. But I also thought, "I'll try because I want to be educated. Whatever course, I'll take it because I want to finish my studies."



To encourage more female applicants and to communicate to aspiring trainees that AMTraC values and practices gender equality as early as the recruitment stage

SECOND KEY POINT



Sarah recalled her experiences carrying heavy machines and lying down underneath a car to inspect its parts in front of male co-trainees. She felt empowered and did not see her gender as a hindrance. She recognizes the risks this type of work brings to all trainees, regardless of gender.



The AMTraC trainers saw all trainees as equal, regardless of gender, and they communicated this to all trainees during training.



I felt like we were all equal in the training center because before the start of the training, they explained to us - what we need to do and that we need courage to do it... It was challenging for me, but at the same time I felt proud that I could do what my male colleagues could do even if I'm a woman.



To see the strengths of all trainees, while acknowledging that the risks of working in the automotive industry (e.g. injuries from carrying heavy equipment) affect everyone regardless of gender

THIRD KEY POINT



Sarah worked in one of the Isuzu branches. She recounted how she used the skills developed at AMTraC to deal with the challenges and opportunities of being a woman in a male-dominated job.



The leadership skills taught in the training program helped Sarah navigate obstacles and build her confidence as a woman in a male-dominated job.



The leadership skills I learned were really relevant. As a job controller, I have to be authoritative, especially since I am a woman and dealing with older male colleagues could sometimes be challenging. I need to be clear and assertive when I give them job orders.



To address perceptions surrounding the automotive industry that may affect the experience of future women trainees

1.4. Employment Status Post-AMTraC

The training center uses the number of graduates employed as one of the main indicators for assessing their impact. As of February 2020, the training center had produced 283 graduates, 90% of whom had been employed by the industry partner who hosted their On-the-Job Training (OJT) after graduation, as seen below.

Survey data also shows that the majority of graduates surveyed (90%) are employed. The other 10% reported that they are unemployed due to contract expiration or personal reasons. Most of them are employed in the automotive

industry. Only four graduates reported that they had decided to work outside the automotive service industry, such as in Story Capturing 4 which features the experience of JR, who is now a technical support representative at a BPO company that services an electronics company. While the survey did not ask about the COVID-19 pandemic as a reason for unemployment, the fact that the majority of graduates surveyed have a Source of income during this global health crisis is a significant success that must be highlighted.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF AMTRaC GRADUATES AND NUMBER OF ENROLLED TRAINEES



283 total graduates

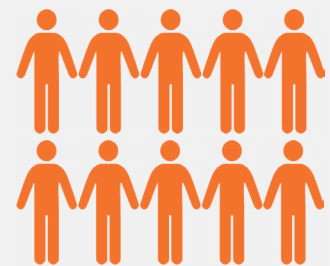
90% employed by the industry partner who hosted their OJT
10% employed by partner automotive industries

204 employed locally
55 employed abroad
17 employed in other industries³⁹

381 total enrolled trainees

18 batches of trainees in total from 2008-2020

309 male
72 female

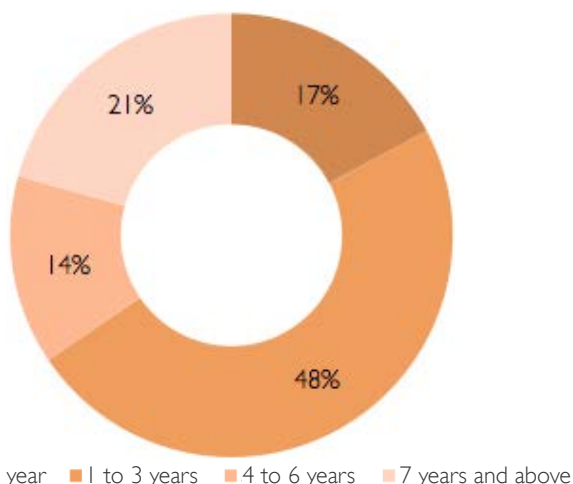


69 trainees enrolled in 2020

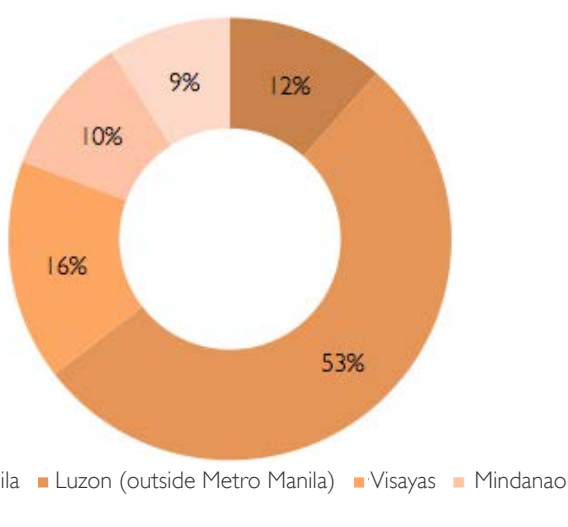
59 male
10 female

Source: Project Accomplishment Report April 2017 to March 2020

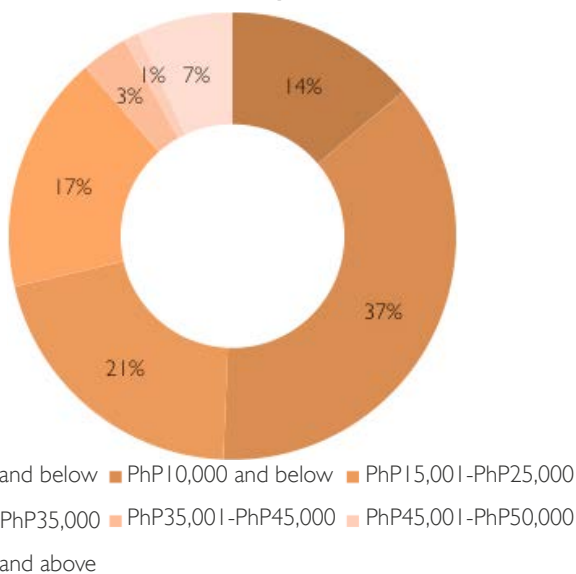
³⁹ These graduates are now working as staff in business process outsourcing (BPO), teachers, trainers, and staff at car dealerships such as Toyota, Hyundai, Mitsubishi, Ford, Nissan, among others

Figure 2. Graduates' Years of Employment Experience


Source: Survey data

Figure 3. Graduates' Employment Location


Source: Survey data

Figure 4. Graduates' Current Salary


Source: Survey data

Table 4. Comparison of Graduates' Income by Years of Employment

	LESS THAN 1 YEAR	1-3 YEARS	4-6 YEARS	7 YEARS AND ABOVE
PhP 10,000 and below	5%	7%	6%	1%
PhP 10,001 to PhP 15,000	8%	17%	4%	4%
PhP 15,001 to PhP 25,000	1%	9%	1%	9%
PhP 25,001 to PhP 35,000	0%	5%	0%	2%
PhP 35,001 to PhP 50,000	0%	0%	1%	1%
PhP 50,001 and above	1%	4%	0%	1%

Note: 10 respondents did not respond to this question.

Table 5. Graduates' Assessment of Their Current Employment

	POSITIVE RESPONSES		
	TOTAL POSITIVE RESPONSES	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE
I am working in a safe and healthy environment.	96%	63%	33%
My job compensates me very well.	95%	60%	35%

Source: Online survey

The survey also looked into the graduates' employment patterns in terms of years of work experience, work location, and income. Most of the graduates surveyed are relatively new to the workforce with 1-3 years employment experience (Figure 2). Among all graduates, 17.2% are newly employed with less than 1 year experience, while 34.5% have longer work experience of 4 years and above. Data on employment location shows that graduates are working across different geographic areas in the Philippines and abroad (Figure 3). Only 11.5% are working in Metro Manila, while the majority of 52.8% are spread across Luzon (outside Metro Manila), 16.1% in Visayas, and 10.3% in Mindanao. The rest are working abroad in Japan, USA, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Australia.

In terms of income, the majority (57.5%) of graduates surveyed are earning between PhP 10,001 to PhP 25,000 (Figure 4). Fourteen percent (14%) of graduates are earning

PhP 10,000 and below, while 11.4% of them are earning PhP 35,001 and PhP 50,000 and above. The survey data on income and years of employment of graduates is further explored in Table 4. It shows that the majority of graduates with less than 1 year of experience are earning PhP 15,000 and below, which is within the Department of Labor and Employment's (DOLE) national salary income data for automotive technician entry-level jobs, which ranges from PhP 8,000 to PhP 17,500.⁴⁰ However, it is also important to Note that 40% of graduates with more years of experience (1-3 years, 4-6 years, and 7 years and above) earn the same entry-level income. All of the surveyed graduates earning PhP 50,000 and above are working abroad, and all except one are working in the automotive industry.

Table 6. Graduates' Assessment of Employment Outcomes

	POSITIVE RESPONSES		
	TOTAL POSITIVE RESPONSE	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE
I.1. AMTraC has opened a variety of employment opportunities to me.	99%	75%	24%
I.2. AMTraC taught me skills and competencies that are required to be successful in my work.	98%	75%	23%
I.3. AMTraC helped me pursue a career that matched my personal strengths and interests.	99%	68%	31%
I.4. AMTraC helped me identify my career goals and I am taking steps to pursue them.	100%	69%	31%
I.5. AMTraC connected me to people who opened up employment/livelihood opportunities to me.	98%	70%	28%
I.6. I am working in a safe and healthy environment.	96%	63%	33%
I.7. My job compensates me very well.	95%	60%	35%
I.8. Because of AMTraC, I am successful in my work.	99%	64%	35%

Source: Online survey

Note: Only positive responses are shown in the table above. Some target statements received 100% positive responses, but there was a wide gap between the Strongly Agree and Agree survey responses. In survey design literature, the difference between Strongly Agree and Agree are often disregarded. However, understanding which statements received higher Strongly Agree responses (as compared to high Agree responses only and vice versa) could provide insights into which areas trainees strongly felt were relevant to them.

⁴⁰ R Bureau of Local Employment (n.d.) Automotive technician. <http://ble.dole.gov.ph/index.php/cg/66-automotive-technician>



The survey also examined how graduates attribute their employment outcomes to their experience in AMTraC. As shown in Table 6, all statements on employment outcomes received positive responses from the graduates. The overall pattern is that graduates positively perceive the training center's role in helping them achieve and obtain the following: employment opportunities, skills and competencies required for success in their work, social connections, and identifying a career that matches their strengths and interests.

Analysis of qualitative data shows that the graduates' main markers of success were based on their capacity to help their families and to utilize the skills to help others. All graduates highlighted that the training center helped them achieve their utmost priority of helping their families.⁴¹ The majority of graduates described themselves as breadwinners, as their income is used to send their siblings to college and to meet their family's basic needs.⁴² Some graduates, such as in the case of Lito in Story Capturing 5, have also started to pay it forward by becoming a trainer in AMTraC and serving as role models to new trainees.

⁴¹ Respondent 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

⁴² Respondent 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9

STORY CAPTURING 4

Bouncing Back from Employment Challenges: JR's Journey to Working Outside the Automotive Industry

JR, 21, is currently employed at a call center company in Cebu. His story documents how graduates may choose to transition out of the automotive industry, while still bringing with them the knowledge, attitude, and skills they learned to be a flexible worker.

KEY:  Key point  Quote  Facilitating factor  Learning opportunity

FIRST KEY POINT



After obtaining a National Certificate level IV in AMTraC, JR accomplished his on-the-job training (OJT) at an Isuzu dealership where he worked as a service advisor.



The training center's strong industry linkage allowed JR to do his OJT immediately after graduation.



When I was a kid, I had a goal to become employed at the age of 18 years old. I'm 21 years old now and AMTraC became my way to achieve that dream.



To continuously engage AMTraC's partner private institutions in OJTs to ensure that the skills developed by trainees are relevant and can be used as building blocks for career opportunities

SECOND KEY POINT



JR recounted having to deal with difficult colleagues, which pushed him to file for resignation three months after his employment at the Isuzu dealership.



JR experienced forms of hostility during communications with his colleagues.



My supervisor scolded me often. I took it as motivation to do better. But at the third month, I just couldn't do it anymore.



To establish ways to ensure that both graduates and managers are accountable for respectful engagement, such as through post-OJT evaluations

THIRD KEY POINT



JR is currently employed as a customer representative at a BPO company, where he applies his non-technical skills and the technical knowledge on electronics he obtained in AMTraC when providing technical support to customers. At age 21, he says he's charting his next plan, such as pursuing a college degree or seeking employment opportunities abroad.



JR recalled that it was easy to find employment opportunities because of his credentials and the soft skills he developed through AMTraC.



To recognize what skills can help AMTraC graduates transition between different jobs and stay adaptable despite challenging circumstances



I planned to study engineering here in Cebu. I know many people here who were able to juggle the responsibilities of a working student because their work schedule allows it. Now with COVID, I think I will go home, and then once things settle, apply for work in Korea.

STORY CAPTURING 5

The Trainee Becomes the Trainer: Lito's Way of Paying it Forward

Lito, 26, is now a trainer at AMTRaC. Lito reflected on how he has used his experience as a former trainee to inspire the current trainees of the center.

KEY:  Key point  Quote  Facilitating factor  Learning opportunity

FIRST KEY POINT



Lito decided to return to the training program after more than a year of waiting, due to delays caused by Typhoon Haiyan. Despite already having a job for a year as an accredited part-time trainer in computer servicing and bookkeeping, he believed that AMTraC would give him better employment opportunities. However, this meant he had to wait for two more years before he could graduate and support himself and his family.



Lito's supportive family encouraged him to pursue the training program, even though it meant they had to wait a few more years to get financial help from Lito.



To communicate to family members that trainees will need their encouragement and support, in order to be successful and remain worry-free while in training



The reason why I was second-guessing if I would continue my training in AMTraC is because at that time, I could already provide for my family's needs. I was afraid - who would provide for them while I am unemployed and training in AMTraC? But what helped me was my parents who encouraged me to go back. My parents were my inspiration.

SECOND KEY POINT



Lito explored other employment opportunities two years after he was hired as a Junior Mechanic at the Isuzu branch, where he was also deployed for his OJT.



Lito did not find it hard to explore job opportunities beyond the Isuzu branch where he was first deployed, as other employers recognized his credentials.



Even if we are not a college degree holder, the dealerships prioritize us because they know we are skilled and we received quality training.



To recognize how AMTRaC can help graduates build a career through transitioning between jobs with similar skill requirements

THIRD KEY POINT



Lito is now a trainer in AMTraC. He finds his current role as a trainer to be a good opportunity to give back and be a role model for current trainees.



Lito's connection with the training center helped him stay in touch and up-to-date on job opportunities.



The trainees would sometimes say they want to become like me. I encourage them to study hard and gain employment opportunities after so they could reach their goals. I am happy that in a way I inspire them.



To understand the value of connecting with graduates even years after they have



CONCLUSION

Insights from the survey and qualitative data have so far demonstrated that both technical and non-technical skills are necessary interventions towards AMTraC graduates' employability. On the one hand, the training center has bolstered the graduates' knowledge and skills through technical training, which prepared them to be responsive to the needs of the automotive industry. On the other hand, AMTraC also facilitated the development of life skills among the youth, including skills that are pertinent to the values of work appreciation and professionalism.

By and large, the majority of graduates all agreed that the training center helped them secure suitable employment, which allowed them to generate income within the social, familial, and financial constraints they faced in their communities. In particular, the research found that AMTraC provided a route for graduates to obtain 1) employment opportunities, 2) the skills and competencies required to be successful in their work, 3) a career that matches their strengths and interests, and 4) social connections. The research also highlighted the high employment rate among graduates amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, graduates positively noted that they are employed in safe working environments and receiving fair wages, which are important qualifiers in employment outcomes. While there was no direct evidence of increase in household income due to data limitations, the descriptive data available shows that finding employment through AMTraC had a profound impact for graduates who had limited opportunities prior to their entry in the training center. For graduates, employment was pivotal in achieving

their own markers of success, which include their capacity to help their family and to utilize their skills to help others.

While the information specified here was not intended to provide statistical accuracy in relation to the sample of respondents, all of the information gathered has relevance. It documents the processes and outcomes among the graduates, relative to the changes that the program has brought about in their lives. Nevertheless, there are opportunities for further study.

The first opportunity is to compare the household income and life skills of trainees before and after graduating from AMTraC. This could help establish stronger evidence of the training center's impact on the economic status of families. The family's perspective is important to include in future studies, in order to gain a richer understanding of the training's impact on household economic status. Additionally, the training center can collect data on how trainees have given back to their communities; for example, through taxes or community outreach programs. By doing so, the training center and its partners can establish how they are helping the Philippine economy and society at large.

AMTraC shows the potential to become a flagship program in the Philippines. By strengthening practices around the communication of rules and regulations, promoting inclusive decision-making processes, and fostering accountability between industry partners and graduates (as elaborated in the Recommendations below), AMTraC can be an example of an effective capacity building program; one built for livelihood development and skills training through technical education.

Recommendations from AMTraC Graduates: Key Practices to Strengthen



Communication of rules and regulations

The training center has a set of rules and regulations that all trainees must abide by in order to avoid termination of scholarship. These rules and regulations were pivotal in developing self-discipline and honing the non-technical skills that graduates have found useful and relevant in the workplace. However, graduates expressed that they found it challenging to comply with the rules and regulations at the onset, as some of them were not used to it. Graduates also shared how the training center could better communicate the rules and regulations to future trainees, who are young people still at the early stages of developing self-awareness and self-discipline. This means highlighting how the rules and regulations are not about constricting them while in training, but about preparing them for the workplace where self-discipline is important. Graduates recommended that this messaging be instilled at the very beginning of training, when trainees feel overwhelmed by the new experiences and adjustments that take place. Nonetheless, all graduates strongly recognized the need for rules and regulations and how they benefited their work life. However, they only realized this importance after graduating.



Decision-making processes

Closely connected to the communication of rules and regulations, participatory governance in decision-making should also be promoted in the training center. While AMTRaC has a culture of providing feedback through feedback boxes and open forums, some graduates reported that they felt hesitant to articulate their thoughts for fear of backlash. They reflected that the center could facilitate better engagement by promoting meaningful participation and making trainees feel heard around decisions made in the center (e.g. when creating new rules to follow). These experiences can then be applied in the workplace. Strengthening participatory decision-making processes also means promoting transparency on how decisions that affect trainees are made.



Support for mental health

The center has existing counseling services to ensure that trainees receive the proper mental health support they need while in training. However, graduates expressed that existing initiatives can be further strengthened. Interviews with graduates revealed that some struggled with depression while in training because of personal circumstances that are sometimes unrelated to AMTraC. While counseling services and peer support are available, some graduates noted that mental health can be better prioritized through physical activities and consultations with external mental health practitioners. They noted that tapping external practitioners could protect their confidentiality and privacy, and relieve their fear of backlash about their mental health struggles.



Promoting mutual accountability between industry partners and graduates

The training center promotes strong industry linkage by providing industry partners the space to give feedback on the performance of graduates. This practice can be further strengthened by making accountability a two-way process. This valuable, albeit unutilized, opportunity can help the center redesign programs that meet the demands of industry partners, while being conscious of the strengths and limitations of young people who have limited work experience.



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