



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
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UNEVOC

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for Technical and Vocational  
Education and Training



# The TESDA Women's Centre: Developing successful entrepreneurs

i-hubs Innovative Practice

## Context

### Providing learners with practical business skills

Hundreds of students, administrators, instructors, guests and local workers pass through the TESDA Women's Centre (TWC) every day, often stopping at Café Juana. This café would be an unremarkable part of any other school campus, but at TWC, it represents much more than just a coffee break: it stands for entrepreneurship, the empowerment of women, successful public-private educational collaboration, and innovation in technical and vocational education and training (TVET). The café is the face of TWC's innovative practice: the Business Incubation Centre (BIC).

### The Business Incubation Centre

TWC has a range of vocational education programmes, many of which are targeted towards women and marginalized groups that seek to be employed or start their own businesses in the tourism sector. These include national certifications (NCs) in barista training and bread and pastry production, the focus areas of the BIC. The BIC is a source of extensive on-the-job training for recent graduates. It also helps to develop their entrepreneurial mindsets and nurture the competencies that would enable them to launch their own businesses.

### Bridging the gap for recent graduates

Since 2019, the first group of bread and pastry production NC II graduates and the second group of graduates from the barista NC II programme have been encouraged to prepare detailed business plans and apply for admission to the BIC. Due to limited capacity in terms of space, equipment, and financial resources, there is a rigid selection process based on the quality of business plans submitted. Those accepted into the programme are then granted access to a variety of services that will help them to get their businesses off the ground.

## Institutional Overview

Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) Women's Centre (TWC), Taguig City, Philippines

Established: 1998

Student body: 1,100 (2019)

Teachers and trainers: 17 (2019)

TESDA is the government agency tasked with managing and supervising technical education and skills development in the Philippines. The TESDA Women's Centre was established through an aid grant from the government of Japan and offers national certification in a number of competence areas relating to manufacturing, tourism and the service sector.

**Mission statement:** "As a leading TVET institution of excellence in women's empowerment, TESDA Women's Centre advocates and provides programmes and services geared towards quality-assured, inclusive and gender-fair TVET."

## Enablers of institutional innovation

The following four dimensions of institutional operation represent the evaluation lens that was applied in the selection of this initiative as an Innovative Practice:

**Ecosystem Relationship Management:** Practical cooperation agreements with key public and private sector partners create conditions for new technical knowledge, competencies, equipment and financial support.

**Strategy and Management:** Top-down strategic focus and support for a new initiative, which was directly linked to institutional mission (empowerment of women through entrepreneurship).

**Teaching and Learning:** Existing national certifications provide natural building blocks for integrating core innovation skills and entrepreneurship competences within mainstream curricula.

**Products and Services:** The Business Incubation Centre (BIC) is an example of a specific, non-traditional product and service that benefits staff, students and external partners. It drives innovation by extending a range of training offerings and other services that engage the different stakeholders of TWC.

**The first TWC programme to make use of the BIC was the national certification (NC) in bread and pastry production. This was not a coincidence - it was brought on by TWC's strong partnership with a large national flour producer and represents excellent innovation in Ecosystem Relationship Management.**

After TESDA completed planned renovations to one of its buildings on campus, TWC realized it would be the perfect location for the BIC. At the same time, a local food company recognized an opportunity to work with TWC students and teach them the latest technologies and techniques in baking. The resulting "Incubation Kitchen" at the BIC was the starting point. Collaboration led to the provision of materials, equipment and facilities, external support for teaching and training, and industry assistance for young entrepreneurs transitioning from the BIC into the labour market.

As the BIC came together, TWC took the opportunity to reinforce relationships with public bodies. One such example was the inclusion of monitoring and coaching offered by the Department of Trade and Industry into the programme. With the establishment of incubation facilities, the TWC Alumni Association identified an opportunity to provide microfinancing assistance to graduates. Establishing 'proof of concept' with the bread and pastry NC has also led to similar collaborations with other sectors on respective NC programmes.

**While financial and material support from public authorities and partners from industries facilitated the launch of the BIC, TWC's Strategy and Management efforts created an Institutional Development Plan that cemented its commitment to the innovative concept.**

First and foremost, TWC's strategy integrated the BIC initiative into the institution's existing core business, thereby empowering women through entrepreneurship. As part of this strategy, BIC development has become one of the priorities of TWC, thereby receiving financial resources and attention in the overall strategic planning.

The Institutional Development Plan sought to inform learners and trainers about the new programme and encourage recent graduates to apply for a spot. Upgrades of training facilities, new physical spaces, as well as the latest technologies and techniques were tangible results of the BIC.

**With the facilities and equipment in place, the BIC triggered a range of innovations in Teaching and Learning at TWC.**

TWC has integrated core innovation skills and entrepreneurship development across all of its NC programmes, all housed or initiated by the BIC. Physical spaces (such as an on-site bakery and café) provide authentic work-based learning opportunities. Other NC programmes, such as barista training and bartending, can make use of the same space. Traditional learning spaces are upgraded and now include coaching and mentoring, networking, marketing assistance and market research. Assistance with accounting and financial management, technology commercialization, and regulatory compliance are also available.

New physical spaces, updated programming and expanded teaching and learning methods at TWC helped bring about changes in the curriculum. New emphasis on skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and those adapted to digitization of and sustainability in the workplace could be implemented much better in the context of the new facilities and revised programmes. Teachers and trainers have also benefitted from opportunities for professional training in the fields of entrepreneurship and innovation.

As the first cohort of TWC graduates are currently taking part in the programme, the BIC is still in the early stages of operations. However, TWC's innovative practice – predominantly women from marginalized groups in society – with knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will help them become empowered and capable members of the workforce, either as entrepreneurs or as employees.

**New teaching and learning opportunities are directly supported by innovative Products and Services.**

The BIC provided a home for testing innovations relating to all other areas of TWC's operations, including the curriculum, work-based learning and physical learning spaces. A walk-in bakehouse, food stalls, and bar and restaurant facilities continue to offer professional products and services made by learners for fellow students, staff, guests and local workers. These on-the-job experiences take place in the same campus facilities as entrepreneurship training and start-up incubation. Through realistic work-based learning, up-and-coming entrepreneurs can make better use of available TWC microloans as they find their footing in the market.



## Insights

### Seek opportunities for collaboration

At TWC, an industry partner's investment and collaboration led to a unique opportunity to procure new facilities and equipment but also to update the curriculum and educational offerings for specific NC programmes. Looking forward, TWC's future plans recognize the need to attract more partners and investors through continuous innovation. Not only will this ensure the BIC's financial future and secure ongoing opportunities for graduates, but by attracting a diverse group of external stakeholders, the scope of the BIC can potentially be expanded to include other fields and disciplines.

### Embed 21st century skills in training

By including 21st century skills into the bakery and pastry production NC II curriculum, issues such as gender equality or sustainability have become a matter of course in entrepreneurial training rather than an afterthought. Practices such as using more sustainable products (e.g. reusable straws) or composting biodegradable waste (e.g. coffee grounds) have become the norm at Café Juana. While the curriculum contains business start-up principles such as bookkeeping, customer satisfaction, and marketing, it also includes learning activities designed to develop modern entrepreneurial skills, including critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, digital literacy, environmental sustainability, and sensitivity training with an emphasis on gender issues in entrepreneurship.

### UNESCO-UNEVOC Innovative Practice

TESDA's Women's Centre has always strived for excellence as a TVET institution, and its innovative collaboration on the BIC between the institution, partner industries and graduates is bringing about a new era of empowerment for Filipino women. Through collaboration with other UNEVOC Centres as part of the i-hubs project, TWC's innovative practices have begun to extend beyond the institutional and national level.

## Learn more

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## Discover other i-hubs innovative practices

Skills for Innovation Hubs (i-hubs) is a global initiative led by UNESCO-UNEVOC and supported by the Beijing Caofeidian International Vocational Education City (BCEC), with contributions from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Learn more at:

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