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CITE: Quality Technical Education for Youth

The Center for Industrial Technology and Enterprise (CITE) was established in Cebu City, Philippines in February 1990. It is an institution committed to provide training in technical skills and entrepreneurship, values formation, and social services to the less privileged youth, their families, the local community and the industrial sector of Visayas and Mindanao.

08/13/2008

At the crack of dawn, 16-year-old Dodong woke up to his usual morning chore, walking 100 meters from home to fetch water for household use. When he returned, his five younger siblings were getting ready for school. His mother was busy preparing breakfast with his 2-year-old brother in tow. On the table were shreds of dried fish soaked in vinegar and leftover rice, barely enough for three.

Disheartened, he had to give way to his younger brothers and sisters who were crowding the table. This was not the first time that he would skip breakfast. When his father lost his job last month due to the economic slump, their family finances went from bad to worse. His sickly mother had accepted more laundry to

augment the family's income. As he left for school, he bade his parents goodbye and said a quick prayer for strength to get through one more day.

Dodong's family situation is common in Cebu and many have learned to accept this "common situation" as a chronic disease of society that cannot be healed. Many are resigned to this condition, but not CITE. When the Center for Industrial Technology and Enterprise (CITE) was established in 1990 through the inspiration of Opus Dei's first prelate, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, the people behind the institution knew that the battle against poverty would literally and figuratively be an uphill climb.

Located on the elevated suburbs of Cebu City, CITE found a solution from its view at the top: quality technical education for less privileged youth. If young people like Dodong were

equipped with functional skills, they could easily find jobs or start a business and thus improve their living condition.

CITE's 3-year flagship program called the Industrial Technician Program (ITP) does that. The program provides top-notch specialized training to male high school graduates in the fields of Mechanical Technology, Industrial Electronics Technology, Electromechanics Technology, and Information Technology. The ITP curriculum answers the rallying call of industries for properly skilled technicians. ITP trains students for one year and a half in the school for theoretical subjects and laboratories related to their fields, then the students are immersed in different industries for another year and a half, with corresponding allowance to help them defray the costs of their meal and transportation needs.

While in school, students benefit from a support system that almost overshadows its main program. Apart from a curriculum that focuses on skill-specific education, CITE gives emphasis to character development activities. Students are provided one tutor each, with whom they can freely confide and seek personal, professional and academic advice.

Guided by St. Josemaría Escrivá's teaching of holiness through work, CITE ensures that the spiritual development of the students is not left out. Recollections, doctrine classes, Holy Mass, Confession and spiritual direction are within everyone's reach. Active student clubs, sports activities, and outreach projects hone the students into physically fit and socially active individuals.

Another component is the scholarship assistance. Students

enjoy either full or partial scholarship grants from alumni, civic groups, government units, private companies and individuals. To sustain the program for the next generation of scholars, students are asked to give back to the school, through its flexible sponsor-a-scholar-later scheme.

During their in-plant training, students put their skills into real-life action, under the watchful eyes of their supervisors. Their training is guided by a clearly defined plan aimed at using the students' potential to the full. The class adviser or tutor makes regular plant visits to ensure that training-related concerns at the plant are immediately addressed.

CITE's unique system considers the family and the faculty as key players in the education of the students. The active involvement of the parents in monthly parenting seminars and

spiritual recollections helps them build a healthy relationship with their sons. Through the advisory meetings, parents get to discuss with the teachers their son's scholastic performance and to exchange notes with other parents. Teachers, on the other hand, have regular professional development activities and programs, designed to help them carry out their task of molding their students into responsible adults and upright citizens.

The odds are practically nil for a CITE student not to land a job after three years of training. CITE graduates are noted for their competence and work values, making them marketable in companies whose entry level requirements are at par with world-class standards. CITE graduates excel in their fields and continue to advance their career by pursuing higher goals. Some have gone to

higher education, while others have put their skills to good use by venturing into business. But one thing is common - they now all have better food on their tables.

CITE's vision to see many of its students rising from poverty has become a beacon of hope for many young aspirants like Dodong who has just started his journey in CITE. Their stories have continually inspired the people behind the institution to remain faithful to their commitment to provide opportunities for those who have less, and give hope to those who have lost it.