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Training for the tourism industry

For more than 20 years, the Foundation for Professional Training, Inc. continues to contribute to the efforts of nation-building through its projects for women-in-development education.

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When President Benigno Aquino III spoke of Public-Private Sector Partnership in his State of the Nation Address last July 26, the foremost industry that came to my mind was

tourism. Probably, with the possible exception of agriculture and agribusiness, tourism will generate the greatest number of jobs especially in the countryside, where 70 percent of the poor in the Philippines live. Various studies have indicated that every tourist – whether domestic or foreign – can generate anywhere from two to three jobs. Training workers for these jobs will be a challenge to the ability of the Government and the private sector – both business and civil society – to work closely together.

The role of the government has been clearly cut out since the days of Adam Smith. This father of free enterprise made it very clear that the state has an indispensable role of building roads and other infrastructures, keeping peace and order and administering justice. Without these indispensable functions of government, tourism

will never flourish in any country even if it is endowed with the most beautiful gifts of nature. For its part, the private sector will have to invest in such tourism facilities as hotels, restaurants, beach resorts, golf courses, amusement parks, museums, and a host of other tourism attractions. But more important than physical facilities is the manpower that would be needed to make them function smoothly.

That is why it is important for all institutions concerned with manpower development to develop programs for the training of entrepreneurs, managers, and workers who will be in great demand as the tourism industry booms in the next five to ten years. With the significant improvements in infrastructures over the last ten years and the expected emphasis on infrastructure development under the present government, it is very

possible that five million foreign tourists will be visiting the Philippines five years from now, without taking into account the close to 20 million domestic tourists who will be eager to get to know their own country. Hotels – large, medium, and small – as well as restaurants will be mushrooming all over the country. Even more rapid will be the increase of bed-and-breakfast facilities in such areas as Laguna, Rizal, Cavite, Bicol, Palawan, Mindoro Oriental, Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, Negros Oriental, Cebu, Bohol, Siquijor, Davao, Infanta, and many other provinces that will become increasingly accessible with better roads, seaports, and airports.

A private initiative I would like to cite that can be a model for manpower training in the tourism industry is the Foundation for Professional Training, Inc. (FPTI), which was established with a vision

to contribute to the efforts of nation-building through its projects for women-in-development education.

FPTI makes training in culinary arts and hotel and restaurant management accessible to young girls coming from poor families in the rural areas. Over the last 20 years, FPTI has set up five training centers – three in Metro Manila, one in Cebu, and one in Southern Tagalog. To date, more than 4,000 low-income beneficiaries have participated in its various programs. The foundation has been very adept in developing linkages for gainful employment with the leading hotels, restaurants, and other establishments that employ the graduates of its training programs. Its multiplier effect has extended to more than 10,000 individuals positively influenced through contact in their workplace and their families.

The training at the centers and schools of FPTI goes much beyond the development of skills. Even more important is the inculcation of virtues and values, especially an authentic spirit of service. Since a good number of them come from the provinces in which tourism can boom, they can actually help their families set up the bed-and-breakfast facilities that will especially cater to domestic tourists.

Anyone of them can single-handedly manage one of these facilities that usually have three to five rooms, with the assistance of other members of the family. I would suggest to those entrepreneurs setting up bed-and-breakfast facilities to contact FPTI to inquire about the graduates of the various centers and schools. Having personally observed the quality of these graduates in several hotels, restaurants, and conference centers, I am confident that they will

fit perfectly into this new burgeoning industry of bed-and-breakfast facilities that will be vital to the success of the Philippine tourism industry.

FPTI training centers and schools are recognized by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and affiliated with institutions and associations such as the Hotel and Restaurant Association of the Philippines, the National Council of Women of the Philippines (NCWP), the Coalition for Better Education (CBE), and the Technical-Vocational Schools Administrators Association (TEVSAA). The training centers have received grants from foreign funding agencies, usually for start-up operations. Local networking with institutions (government and private), women and volunteer groups, and industry partners are constantly being developed for

cooperation, support, and sustainability of its projects. Donations are tax-exempt. FPTI is an outstanding example of what President Benigno Aquino III referred to as Public-Private Sector Partnership. For more information, the email address of FPTI is isfptimanila@gmail.com and tel. 892-2056.

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