

Rethinking College for Filipinos

Tyron James T. Ralar, MAT

*School of Teacher Education, Biliran Province State University, Naval, Biliran 6560, Philippines
Corresponding email: ralartj306@gmail.com*

“Galingan mo sa pag-aaral, laahon mo kami sa hirap.” This line from Filipino parents carries more than just love, it carries a weight of expectation that college will lift families out of poverty. For many young Filipinos, higher education is not merely about getting a diploma; it’s a gamble for a better life. Yet even as college remains the dream, more students are beginning to question whether it truly delivers on that promise.

Santillana et al. (2024) revealed that choosing a course often is not about passion anymore. Many students pick a degree not because it’s what they want, but because it’s the practical choice—the one they think will pay off in the long run. Courses like nursing, engineering, and IT are seen as tickets to better-paying jobs, even if they have no interest in them. Parents push these courses with the best intentions, telling their children, “Piliin mo yung practical para may trabaho ka agad” But deep down, some students feel trapped in paths that don’t speak to their real dreams.

Financial worries shape every step of this decision. College fees are high, and many families take out loans, sell land, or pawn belongings to make sure their child can graduate (Lusardi, 2019). For students, it means juggling studies with side jobs selling snacks, taking call center night shifts, or doing freelance work to pay for books and projects. The stress does not only revolve about money, it’s the fear that one mistake could waste years of effort and money their families can’t afford to lose.

Even with a diploma, the future remains uncertain. “Diba graduate siya ng bachelor degree? Pero yung trabaho, ang baba ng sweldo,” people say when they see graduates in jobs that pay less than they expected. It’s a truth many don’t see coming, college doesn’t always lead to the kind of work that justifies all those years of sacrifice. The expectations between what schools teach and what employers need leaves graduates feeling frustrated, unsure if the path they took was really worth it. Today’s labor market is marked by rapid changes and increasing job insecurity, shaping a

society where stability feels out of reach (Gallie et al., 2017; Kalleberg, 2018; Lübke & Erlinghagen, 2014).

Higher education in the Philippines holds big potential, but it can't stay stuck in a system that values diplomas over real skills. It's time to see that college is more than just a piece of paper, it should be about discovering what students are good at and what they want to do. Courses must not only promise jobs it should spark curiosity, build confidence, and teach students to adapt to whatever comes next. College must stop being a trap of practicality and start being a tool for real lasting growth.

References

- Gallie, D., Felstead, A., Green, F., & Inanc, H. (2017). The hidden face of job insecurity. *Work, Employment and Society*, 31(1), 36–53. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017015624399>
- Kalleberg, A. L. (2018). Job insecurity and well-being in rich democracies: Geary Lecture 2018. *The Economic and Social Review*, 49(30), 241–258.
- Lübke, C., & Erlinghagen, M. (2014). Self-perceived job insecurity across Europe over time: Does changing context matter? *Journal of European Social Policy*, 24(4), 319–336. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928714538215>
- Lusardi, A. Financial literacy and the need for financial education: evidence and implications. *Swiss J Economics Statistics* 155, 1 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41937-019-0027-5>
- Santillana, Ramon & Urrete, Joshua & Garcia, Karen & Cando, Joseph & Mendoza, Veronica. (2024). Impact of Course Selection on Career Paths of Arellano University Students: A Framework for Professional Development. 10.5281/zenodo.11442816.

ARTICLE DETAILS

EIR-0000009; Received: June 1, 2025; Accepted: June 4, 2025; Published: June 6, 2025

CITATION:

Ralar, Tyron James T. (2025). *Rethinking College for Filipinos. Education and Industry Review: Essays and Critiques*. DOI: 10.62596/eir.375ymn13

COPYRIGHT

Copyright © 2025 by author(s). *Education and Industry Review: Essays and Critiques* is published by Stratworks Research Inc. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), allowing redistribution and reproduction in any format or medium, provided the original work is cited or recognized.