

# The draw of blue collar jobs in Taiwan

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**For many Asians, the definition of success is getting a college degree and a white collar job, preferably as a doctor, lawyer or engineer.**

But in Taiwan, an increasing number of people are switching from white collar to blue collar work, partly because degree holders cannot earn the kind of salary they want.

## **'Live happily'**

"We're seeing this trend now perhaps because there are too many college degree holders for the job market. But also people no longer place so much importance on diplomas," said Florence Kao, director of the Taipei Vocational Development Institute.

"They think if they have a vocational skill, they can also live happily."

More than 77% of office workers said they would be willing to switch to certain blue collar work. The main reason: low wages and difficulty in finding well-paying white collar jobs.

After factoring in inflation, Taiwan's real wages were lower than the level they were at 16 years ago. That is especially disappointing to people who spent money and time to get a higher education. And many white collar workers are not paid by the hour; they have to get their work done no matter how long it takes, with no overtime pay.

These factors are leading more young people to ignore their parents' hopes for them to have a cushy desk job in an air conditioned office, and re-evaluate what career happiness means.

Local media have recently reported about people with high education doing manual labor. And there is a wave of young Taiwanese going to Australia to earn high wages in orchards or sheep farms. Others scrape together savings or loans from their parents to open beachside eateries - opting for surfer trunks instead of a suit and tie.

The government has been roundly criticized for not doing enough to lift the economy and provide good jobs, especially for college graduates, but Ms Kao considers the trend of people exploring blue collar work good.

"Through this experience I think what's most important is doing something that interests you and that you're passionate about," said Mr Tsai. "That way you won't feel tired and when you wake up each day and think about going to work, you're happy."

## Questions

1. What is your dream? What kind of job you want to do in the future?
2. For many Asians, the definition of success is being doctor or engineer. What kind of the job do your parents want you to do? If you have a child, what kind of job you want he/she to do?
3. What is your opinion about more and more people turn white collar to blue collar?
4. In the article, some people have to get their work done no matter how long it takes, with no overtime pay. Can you accept this situation? How do you think about working no overtime pay?
5. If you have second chance to choose the high school or vocational school again, do you have the same choice? Why?
6. Do you agree that students study in national universities have better competitiveness?
7. Local media have recently reported about people with high education doing manual labor. Do you think that study for the purpose of application important?
8. Do you have any work experience? Share with us.
9. If there are two jobs you can choose, what is your choice? Why? (First job is your interest but lower pay and second job is that you can do and higher pay. )
10. A lot of young people go abroad for working holiday now. Do you expect a working holiday in your life? Where and when do you want to go?