

IMPROVING QUALITY OF VIETNAM'S LABOR FORCE DURING THE PERIOD OF INTERNATIONAL INTEGRATION

Vu Hong Van*

College of Technology - TNU

SUMMARY

Integration is an objective development trend of the era and, after all, is decided by the constant development of production forces. While staying aware of the numerous challenges to be overcome during the international integration process, the lack of skilled labor is one of major obstacles to further economic development in Vietnam. Shortages of skilled labor, labor market rigidities and an under-developed industrial relations system could delay recovery and constrain future growth. This means that Vietnam cannot continue to rely on the size of its workforce for continued success; it needs to focus on making its workforce more productive.

In this paper, the author presented requirements of integration on current workforce of Vietnam. Through analysis and synthesis the author suggests some useful solutions in training to improve quality of Vietnam's labor force for effective integration.

Keywords: *Integration, labor force, workforce, quality, Vietnam.*

INTRODUCTION

In the new Vietnam, brainpower will be one of the largest factors to the nation's development, but it is still a weak link in Vietnam's reform effort. Compared with other countries, Vietnamese labors lack many skills such as teamwork, presentation, problem handling, listening and communicating ... Besides, foreign language skills are much less compared to other countries in the region. Can not be compared with Singapore, but even with the Philippines or Thailand, we have been left a big gap. Poor language will lead to losing opportunities for learning and professional development. (Nguyễn Thị Vân Anh, *CEO- Navigos Search*)

From the renovation in 1986, national education system in general and higher education system in particular has made significant changes in the structure of the various levels and types of education and training. The national education system has gradually been finalized and agreed on whole national scale but quality of the labor force is not qualified enough to meet the needs of the economy and society. Both employers and

employees recognize that the education system today does not provide graduates with all the needed skills for their enterprises, workplaces, and career aspirations.

REALITY

Vietnam has abundant human resource (nearly 54 million people), but proportion of skilled labors is still very low (18% of the total labor force). Furthermore, Vietnam has approximately 1.5 million people entering the workforce each year.[3] In the labor market, there exists a paradox: labor supply is high, meanwhile enterprises are lacking skilled labors, especially the fields of technique, management, office and sales-services were most often blamed for the lack of skilled applicants. Generally, Vietnam's labor force lacks of soft skills such as creativity, adaptability and good interpersonal communication; technical expertise; work experience; poor cultural fit with the organization; the necessary educational qualifications and requisite language skills. [18][21]

Currently, Vietnam has 440 universities and colleges, in which there are 77 non-public universities. All but one of Vietnam's 63 provinces and cities has at least one higher

* Tel: 0983 004881, Email: vantiu2002@gmail.com

education institution. Overall, Vietnam's universities and colleges serve over 2.5 million students. Each year there are 125 thousands graduates. However, 60% -70% of the workforces need to be trained for further knowledge and skills (Source: Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs).

Issues with formal training are also reflected in productivity of the Vietnam workforce. A report released by the International Labor Organization in 2014 put Vietnam's productivity at 1/15 of Singapore, 1/6 of Malaysia, 1/3 of Thailand and Indonesia and 1/2 of Philippines. Proper training is one of the main reasons for Vietnam's low productivity as less than 20% of the workforce is properly trained, thus unable to meet the requirements of the labor market. [22]

This result from the gaps between vocational training size and economic development requirements, between training activities and the labor market demand, and from the lack of a relevant mechanism to encourage learning and attracting talents in business sector.

Productivity is low and cheap labor also puts Vietnam at a competitive advantage over other nations.

Discuss about this issue, Prof. Dr. Tran Van Hien, Lecturer of Houston University has deeply analyzed about the education of Vietnam and suggested Vietnam should study American education. He emphasis on people training with two important groups of capabilities include the organizing ability and ability of world integration.

Common training program in Vietnam weighs about scientific theory (little at application). Learning environment is lack of group action in which students own, so it does not promote communication skills and leadership, creativity and human style. Besides, teaching methods, training systems and management lack flexibility and do not catch up to the times. Number of employees with professional and technical qualifications have

good theoretical knowledge, but less practical capacity and ability to adapt in a industrially competitive environment; still need additional time or training to use effectively. Skills of teamwork, professionalism, language using as a tool of communication and work are very limited. Responsibility, professional ethics, citizen morals, industrially cultural conscious, labor discipline of a significant division of employees is not high. In the work environment with foreign elements, language and cultural understanding of the world is always a weak point of Vietnamese workers.[24]

We should learn from American education in which teaching at undergraduate level in the United States enhance dynamism, the spirit of responsibility, creativity, communication and leadership for students.

REQUIREMENTS AND REASONS

The AEC is expected to be established in the end of 2015 and Viet Nam will be one of its 10 country members. Existence in the ASEAN Economic Community means that all current economic sectors of Viet Nam should integrate into it step-by-step in those areas where the HR industry has always had a problem. The main purpose of the establishment of the Economic Community is to concentrate on free trade, commerce, the flow of goods, currencies and especially only the skilled-labor workers.

Vietnam's labor force is growing with the rate of 1.5 million each year, which will become one of the largest workforces in the South East Asia Region. Viet Nam is having high demands in high quality of human resource. First, this is due to requirement of globalization. Each country's development needs human resources in science and technology, with professionally standard education and knowledge, and with skills in production and application of new technical advances. This is also a comparative edge of each country. Second, this is due to

requirement for building and developing knowledge economy in new conditions for international economic integration. The Vietnamese government has identified the lack of skilled labor as one of three major obstacles to further economic development (the other two are endemic corruption and poor infrastructure).

Third, the national education system - the key force in the human resources training and development of the country revealed many shortcomings. Specifically: career orientation for junior high school students and high school is not good; vocational training is not really based on social needs, not to attract the participation of employers; teachers and lecturers are lacking in quantity and poor in the profession, there is great gap in the level of development between local regions; system of methods, tools of testing, monitoring, inspection and evaluation of the results of education and training is outdated and inefficient; The universities currently have no links with enterprise research institutions, they also do not pay attention to what the labor market needs. Comprehensive educational goals has not been understood and implemented correctly .

Obviously, shortages of skilled labor, labor market rigidities and an under-developed industrial relations system could delay recovery and constrain future growth. While the size of its workforce is still expanding, its youth population is shrinking. This means that Vietnam cannot continue to rely on the size of its workforce for continued success; it needs to focus on making its workforce more productive and alleviating skills barriers to labor mobility.

SOLUTIONS

International integration is the cause of all the people and the whole political system under the Party's leadership and the State's management All mechanisms and policies should uphold the proactiveness, activeness,

and creativity of all organizations and individuals.

Based on the analysis of a new survey instruments developed by the World Bank, it examines how and when different types of skills are formed and what this means for reforming the education and training systems. It will propose a set of policy recommendations along three steps of a holistic skills strategy: first, promoting school readiness through early childhood development; second, building the cognitive and behavioral (also called 'non-cognitive') foundation in general education; and, third, building job-relevant technical skills through a more connected system.

As such, in developing its own talent, Vietnam also needs broaden beyond formal education to boost life-long learning and growth opportunities linked to professional experience.

In Vietnam, the workforce is in the "gold" period, it will be the implementing motivations of the strategy socio-economic development. However, with methods of education for so long which do not fit the requirements of the new era, is producing passive "people" who is good at theory but bad at practice. Three challenges with our human resources are skills, language and industrial style (discipline and responsibility). [9] About skills, employers identify job-specific technical skills as the most important skill they are looking for when hiring both white and blue collar workers. But employers are equally looking for cognitive skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking, and behavioral skills, such as team work and communication. The skill shortages are reported to be greatest for firms with international links, and among employees expected to do complex tasks of current and future jobs. This summarizes emerging evidence on the formation of cognitive, behavioral and technical skills. Cognitive

skills formation is the most intensive in the very early years in life and continues through adolescence. Behavioral skills are also first formed in childhood, and continue to evolve throughout adult life. Moreover, stronger cognitive and behavioral skills will help workers to continuously update their technical skills during their working lives. This will rise in importance as Vietnam's population ages, as production in Vietnam becomes more technically sophisticated and as workers need to catch up with technological changes occurring during their longer working lives. [11]

Higher education, vocational training and on-the-job training are the key avenues for acquiring technical skills that workers need to work in their chosen profession.

Besides, information is the oxygen of responsive skills development systems. First, without good information about employers' skill needs, conditions in the labor market and returns to certain fields of study, education and training providers cannot make good choices on the programs to develop and offer. Second, without such information, students and parents cannot make good decisions on which school or university and which study program to choose. Third, without information on the quality of education programs and employment success of graduates, prospective students may not be able to make good choices.

The time to modernize skills development is now to ensure that worker skills do not become a bottleneck. Building a highly skilled workforce is a shared responsibility between the Government and all actors in skills development – employers, schools and universities and students and their parents alike. The role of government is to facilitate this change in behavior by helping to ensure a better information flow between all the actors, to address capacity constraints including financing capacity, and to set the right incentives by freeing up universities to

partner more effectively with businesses. Firms and universities need to build close partnerships. It requires a change in behavior by them. Parents need to become more involved in their children's schooling. Students need to expose themselves to the world of work even prior to their graduation [11]. With a population of over 90 million, Vietnam has 21 million students and 1.2 million teachers. The Government spends 20 percent of the total annual budget on education and training [2]. A VND 9.4 trillion (US\$443 million) government project aimed at producing a young, English-proficient workforce by 2020 was shelved indefinitely after being panned for seeking to complete a task that took Vietnam's better-off neighbors several decades to accomplish.[4], [21]

Another project initiated in 2010 to provide 20,000 students overseas masters and doctoral degrees by 2020 has also been criticized as impractical and a waste of resources.

By August 2014, more than 400 joint training programmes with international partners had been approved and launched at Vietnamese universities. The number of Vietnamese students studying overseas jumped from 60,000 in 2008 to 100,000 in 2012, with around 80 percent enrolled in Bachelor degrees. [16]

Thus, it is necessary to adopt appropriate point of view for human resource development. It is to develop science and technology, restructure economy and apply suitable growth model to make high quality human resource a strong point and the most important foundation for sustainable development. The Prime Minister issued Decision No 1216/QĐ-TTg on the Master Plan on Human Resource Development of Viet Nam in the period of 2011-2020. The decision set out expected results and major solutions including:

First, a shift in awareness is necessary to identify that high quality human resources are

the most precious asset of the country. Human resources should be created and used in an appropriate ways to become a driving force for strong and firm socio-economic development;

Second, to build and promulgate a legal framework on human resources, employment, education and training with suitable policies on salary, preferential treatment, commendation, encouragement and respect for talent.

Third, to renovate training and vocational training; to respect and use talents, to assign appropriate roles and create favorable conditions for them to develop and contribute.

Fourth, to renovate vocational training to keep abreast of regional and global levels.

Fifth, to develop human resources right in the power apparatus and this should be a priority among national resources.

Sixth, to build a strategy on human resource development which conform to the overall strategy on socio-economic development of a country with a road map, stages and feasibility.

Lastly, the State should build a mechanism to evaluate, use, screen and supplement policies on human resources. It is important to make high quality human resources a strong force to make contribution to the process of national development in political, economic, cultural and social aspects and national security.[15]

Hence, education and training reform is a key task, major solutions to human resource development in Vietnam in the period from now to 2020 and subsequent periods. In the immediate future, to concentrate on a number of the following in details:

- Improving education systems towards open, integration, promote segregation, streaming, encouraging lifelong learning and build a learning society.
- Innovation programs, common textbooks, training curriculum at university and

professional education towards promoting creative thinking, self study, self-study, increased practice time, focus on content, learners' skills, businesses and society needs, ensuring continuity between the various grades and levels of education, between vocational education and higher education. Diversify training methods. Building mechanism for organizations and individual employers who participate in the construction, adjustment and implementation of training programs and competency assessment of learners.

- Renovating methods of teaching and learning at all educational levels and grades. Reform of the objectives, contents and forms of examination and evaluation of the results of education and training, promoting the application of information technology.

- Innovative policy for teachers, education managers; improve the quality of research and application of science and technology in education and training. Special emphasis on rearranging the organization and complete mechanisms and policies for teacher training colleges whole the country.

- The international initiative to integrate human resource development in Vietnam. Establish national qualifications framework consistent with the region and the world. Construction contents, programs and methods of education and training oriented conformity with international standards and specific to Vietnam; strengthen inter-relations training programs between educational institutions and the educational sector of Vietnam and international; implement an mutual recognition training programs between educational institutions and training of Vietnam and the world; agreement on the recognition of diplomas and certificates of training between Vietnam and other countries. Create favorable environment and conditions to attract teachers, scientists have talent and experience of foreign countries, Vietnam

abroad who participated in the process of university personnel training and scientific research and technology at the tertiary educational institutions in Vietnam. Enhancing teaching and fostering foreign languages (especially English), world culture, adaptive skills in an international competitive environment for the people of Vietnam.

In the scale of this article, the author shows difficulties of Vietnam's labor force and suggests some solutions to improve the quality of Vietnam's human resources to integrate onto the new era, adapt to requirements of the period of international integration.

REFERENCES

1. Workshop on Human Resources Management – a hot job during the 2015 Vietnam Economic Integration <http://gas.hoasen.edu.vn/en/gas-page/workshop-human-resources-management-hot-job-during-2015-viet-nam-economic-integration>
2. *Regional and International Integration* <http://fesvietnam.org/en/programme-areas/regional-and-international-integration>
3. Vietnam's options in international integration <http://en.vietnamplus.vn/Home/Vietnams-options-in-international-integration/201311/42264.vnplus>
4. Phạm, V. L. 2011. Về một số vấn đề nổi cộm trong giáo dục - đào tạo hiện nay. Báo cáo tại kỳ họp Quốc hội Việt Nam
5. Viet Nam. 2014. General statistics office
6. Under-skilled Vietnamese workforce hindering production: survey <http://www.thanhniennews.com/business/underskilled-vietnamese-workforce-hindering-production-survey-4466.html>
7. The opportunity in Vietnam's spat with China <https://vietnomics.wordpress.com/tag/vietnam-workforce/>
8. Ageing and Employment Policies - Statistics on average effective age of retirement <http://www.oecd.org/els/emp/ageingandemploymentpolicies-statisticsonaverageeffectiveageofretirement.htm>
9. Education indicators in focus <http://www.oecd.org/edu/50495363.pdf>
10. <http://www.managingpeoplebook.com/WarForTalentNeverEnded.pdf>
11. OECD (2013): "Skilled for life: Key findings from the survey of adult skills," 2013. (http://skills.oecd.org/SkillsOutlook_2013_KeyFindings.pdf).
12. The Economist Intelligence Unit, "Competing across borders," Apr 2012. (<http://www.economistinsights.com/search/node/competing%20across%20borders>).
13. The Economist Intelligence Unit, "Up or out: next moves for the modern expatriate," 2010. (http://graphics.eiu.com/upload/eb/LON_PL_Regus_WEB2.pdf).
14. Open Secrets blog, "Special interests battle over immigration reform," Mar 4 2013. (<https://www.opensecrets.org/news/2013/03/special-interests-weigh-in-on-immig.html>)
15. Phát triển nguồn nhân lực Việt Nam giai đoạn 2015-2020 đáp ứng yêu cầu đẩy mạnh công nghiệp hóa, hiện đại hóa và hội nhập quốc tế, 17/4/2015 <http://www.tapchiconsan.org.vn/Home/Nghiencuu-Traodoi/2015/32972/Phat-trien-nguon-nhan-luc-Viet-Nam-giai-doan-20152020-dap-ung.aspx>
16. Vietnam-Europe cooperation on education improves workforce <http://en.vietnamplus.vn/Home/VietnamEurope-cooperation-on-education-improves-workforce/201411/57996.vnplus>
17. Giang Thanh Long, Duong Kim Hong, Vietnam Development Forum, 2007: Social issues under economic transformation and integration in Vietnam.
18. Challenges for human resource management and global business strategy <http://futurehtrends.eiu.com/>
19. Vietnam Human Resources <http://businesstimes.com.vn/vietnam-human-resources/>
20. Vietnam Development Report 2014 of World Bank, Christian Bodewig: Skilling up Vietnam: Preparing the workforce for a modern market economy
21. Phát triển nguồn nhân lực Việt Nam giai đoạn 2015-2020 đáp ứng yêu cầu đẩy mạnh công nghiệp hóa, hiện đại hóa và hội nhập quốc tế <http://www.tapchiconsan.org.vn/Home/Nghiencuu-Traodoi/2015/32972/Phat-trien-nguon-nhan-luc-Viet-Nam-giai-doan-20152020-dap-ung.aspx>
22. Growing Vietnam workforce for the future <http://www.adecco.com.vn/jobs/adecco-knowledge-center-detail.aspx?id=171&c=12>

23. Vietnam's workforce lacks professionalism, experts say
<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/business/Vietnams-workforce-lacks-professionalism-experts-s-30244791.html>

24. Giáo dục Việt Nam nên học nền giáo dục nước Mỹ ở điểm nào?
<http://vietbao.vn/Giao-duc/Giao-duc-Viet-Nam-nen-hoc-nen-giao-duc-nuoc-Mỹ-o-diem-nao/55149871/202/>

TÓM TẮT

NÂNG CAO CHẤT LƯỢNG LỰC LƯỢNG LAO ĐỘNG CỦA VIỆT NAM TRONG THỜI KỲ HỘI NHẬP QUỐC TẾ

Vũ Hồng Vân*

Trường Đại học Kỹ thuật Công nghiệp – ĐH Thái Nguyên

Hội nhập là một xu hướng phát triển khách quan của thời đại và được quyết định bởi sự phát triển không ngừng của lực lượng sản xuất. Trong khi nhận thức một số thử thách cần phải vượt qua trong quá trình hội nhập quốc tế, thiếu lao động có tay nghề cao là một trong những trở ngại lớn để phát triển kinh tế ở Việt Nam. Tình trạng thiếu lao động có tay nghề, thị trường lao động cứng nhắc và một hệ thống quan hệ công nghiệp kém phát triển có thể trì hoãn sự phục hồi và hạn chế sự tăng trưởng trong tương lai. Điều này có nghĩa là Việt Nam không thể tiếp tục dựa vào kích thích của lực lượng lao động của mình để tiếp tục thành công mà cần phải tập trung vào việc tăng chất lượng nhân lực hơn nữa.

Trong bài báo này, tác giả tóm tắt những yêu cầu của hội nhập vào thực trạng lực lượng lao động của Việt Nam. Thông qua phân tích và tổng hợp tác giả đề xuất một số giải pháp hữu ích trong việc đào tạo nâng cao chất lượng của lực lượng lao động của Việt Nam để hội nhập có hiệu quả.

Từ khóa: *hội nhập, lực lượng lao động, chất lượng, chất lượng nhân lực, Việt Nam.*

Ngày nhận bài: 20/6/2015; Ngày phản biện: 06/7/2015; Ngày duyệt đăng: 30/7/2015

Phản biện khoa học: Th.S Nguyễn Trường Giang - Trường Đại học Kỹ thuật Công nghiệp - ĐHTN

* Tel: 0983 004881, Email: vantiu2002@gmail.com