

EDUCATION POSITION PAPER

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Introduction

Honourable Ministers, Ambassadors, Consuls, Ladies and Gentlemen, on behalf of the members of the Education and Training Working Group we would like to thank the Vietnamese Government for facilitating this integral and ongoing dialogue with the VBF. We, as in the past, welcome the opportunity to contribute at this forum.

The education and training business community is proud of its contribution to Vietnam's economic development and through this forum would like to encourage new initiatives to further increase growth in the Vietnamese economy. In the present economic climate there are a number of issues, relating to other industrial sectors that need urgent attention. However, the foundation of long term economic success is a robust education system covering all aspects of education.

As we have stated in previous submissions, our Working Group, representing many Chambers of Commerce, is prepared to work closely with MOET, MOLISA and other Government agencies such as the ACAPR. We would also like to liaise closely with educational institutions in addition to the World Bank and Intel who have a substantial interest in this area.

One of the hot topics at the sessions of National Assembly is the provision of high quality Higher Education in Vietnam. There are many reasons for the current situation as well as proposed solutions, however, in this VBF Forum, the Education and Training Working Group would like to focus on the following two sectors:

- 1. Higher Education;*
- 2. Technical and Vocational Education and Training*

1. Higher Education

Within the higher education sector we wish to work much closer with the Ministry of Education and Training in the implementation of the new education law that has recently been approved by the National Assembly.

The spirit of the law is meant to provide non state Vietnamese and Foreign higher education institutions with more autonomy but it will be in the implementation of the law that we can see what happens in practice.

We also note that establishing a branch of a higher education establishment remains a cumbersome process but we hope we a healthy dialogue with the Ministry of Education and Training as well as other Government organisations we can report positive developments by the next forum.

2. Technical and Vocational Education and Training

While higher education is needed to improve research and development capacity in Vietnam, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is also important as the supply source of production engineers and technicians. They are the one who operationalizes ideas and designs developed by engineers, product designers or managers. Despite various policies issues by the Government to strengthen vocational education and training, we have still seen the gaps between demand and supply of highly skilled production engineers of technicians. In particular, we are concerned of two issues which may even widen the demand-and-supply gap: (i) insufficient quality of TVET programs; and (ii) unpopularity of TVET programs among young people.

It seems that many enterprises are not satisfied with the quality of graduates from TVET institutions. TVET institutions should seriously analyze basic skills required in enterprises and improve their training programs, in order to supply human resources who meet industry demand. For this, it is suggested that the responsible government agencies, such as the General Department of Vocational Training (GDVT) under MOLISA, should improve the policies to encourage TVET institutions to actively develop partnerships with industry.

To close the gap in providing up-to-date skills, TVET institutions would need to develop various forms of partnerships with industry such as: (i) periodic survey or dialogue to learn industry needs; (ii) internships which provides students with opportunity to improve their practical skills and business manners and enterprises with opportunity to identify suitable candidates; (iii) short-term training courses for students in collaboration with enterprises; (iv) short-term training courses for technicians in enterprises; and (iv) joint research for applied technology in production sites.

For developing the effective policies to promote partnerships between TVET institutions and industry, we propose the Government to carefully study industry's perception on TVET programs and good practices which some TVET institutions and enterprises have already started. The Higher Engineering Education Alliance Program (HEEAP) brings together government, academia, and industry to modernize Vietnamese public higher education in engineering with an overarching goal is transforming engineering education from passive, purely theory-based instruction to active, applied and theory-based instruction and learning.

^{1,2} Please also refer to Figure 1 below.

¹ Please refer to the Higher Engineering Education Alliance Program (HEEAP). Available in: <http://www.heeap.org/>

Another concern is that TVET programs remain unpopular among young people and their parents. By not attracting enough applicants, TVET institutions will not be able to supply sufficient volume of skilled technicians, even if they try to improve training programs. Unpopularity of TVET programs stems from low status of technicians in the Vietnamese society and unsure career paths of TVET graduates.

In order to attract more young students to TVET programs, the Government would need to organize more public relations activities to improve the social status of skilled technicians. They should also urge TVET institutions to actively build cooperation with high schools. In addition, the Government should push forward the improvement of skill evaluation system, in the way to gain sufficient recognition from industry. Moreover, it is recommended that the Government should support TVET institutions to improve the employment support system, in order to ensure students get appropriate jobs after the training. To begin with, TVET institutions should grasp job hunting results of their students precisely. Then, they may need to introduce career counselling system for their students. Finally, it is suggested that the Government should further improve the paths so that qualified vocational college graduates can transfer to university courses³. This would have already been implemented in several universities, but, if more universities will open the path for transfer from vocational college graduates, more high school graduates would consider TVET programs as an option.

In summary, we want to emphasize the necessity to improve TVET programs by promoting close partnerships with industry and cope with unpopularity of TVET programs among young people, in order to reduce the imbalance between demand and supply of skilled technicians. We believe that business communities such as foreign and local chambers of commerce will support the initiatives by the Government and TVET institutions, if they will seriously commit to tackle those issues in full cooperation with industry. At first, the VBF would be willing to help the Government and TVET institutions understand industry needs on skill development in its members"

Conclusion

The Vietnamese economy needs continued growth and this will be of benefit to the citizens of Vietnam. Quality education lays the foundation the continued growth of its skilled workforce. As mentioned in our introduction this would require the combined efforts of relevant stakeholders working closely together to find effective solutions. The Education and Training Working Group, through the VBF, will continue with its commitment to assist Vietnam in achieving its economic potential.

² For further information about industry's perception of TVET graduates and good practices of TVET institutions in Vietnam, please refer to the following documents:

- Mori, J (2012). "Development of High Skilled Industrial Human Resources in Partnerships with Enterprises". Presentation made in the seminar organized by the Ministry of Industry and Trade and UNIDO on 16 July 2012. Hanoi, Vietnam. Available in: <http://haui.edu.vn/en/page/jicapproject/news/publication>
- Mori, J., Nguyen, T.X.T., Pham, T.H. (2009). "Skill Development for Vietnam's Industrialization: Promotion of Technology Transfer by Partnership between TVET Institutions and FDI Enterprises". *The final report to Hiroshima University's COE project entitled "Research on Cooperation in the Field of Skill Development Education and Economic Development"*. Hiroshima, Japan: Hiroshima University. Available from: http://www.grips.ac.jp/vietnam/VDFTokyo/Doc/Mori_SkillsDevVN.pdf
- Mori, J., Vu, D.T., Do, N.H., Vu., T.K., Duong., T.M. (2012). "Survey Report on Industry's Perception of the Graduates of Hanoi University of Industry's Training and Educational Programs". Hanoi, Vietnam: HaUI-JICA Project. Available from: <http://haui.edu.vn/en/page/jicapproject/news/publication>

³ Refer to: Joint Circular No. 27/2010/TTLT-BGDĐT dated 28 October 2010 issued by the Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs.

We look forward to seeing progress in the above areas and again would like to thank the VBF for inviting us to present at this forum.

Figure 1

