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The State's Orientation Towards the Integration of Human Resource So That Vietnamese People Can Work Everywhere

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Abstract

Viet Nam has been actively participating in the regional and global integration. It has created favorable conditions for Vietnamese workers to work everywhere. However, Vietnamese workers are facing certain limitations including foreign language proficiency, skills and knowledge of cultures of other countries, etc. In order to have Vietnamese people easily find jobs in foreign countries, international organizations and firms, the Government of Viet Nam need to give orientations and solutions to ensure the essential conditions for Vietnamese workers.

Keywords: Vietnamese Workers, Work Everywhere, Essential Conditions, The State's Approach

1. Introduction

Since Doi Moi, Viet Nam has been proactive in integrating regionally and globally. By February, 2020, Viet Nam has signed thirteen FTA. Twelve of which have come to effect. Viet Nam is negotiating three other FTAs (Appendix 1). Moreover, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) was officially formed in 31 December, 2015, including 10 countries with more than 630 million people, whose labor force accounts for more than 50% (approximately 322 million people). Viet Nam is currently a member of several international organizations such as WB, IMF, ADB, UNICEF. Viet Nam is currently an ideal destination for foreign investment. Many Vietnamese and foreign experts have forecasted that Viet Nam might become the new “world manufacturer” in coming years.

All of the above means that the labor market will no longer have national borders. Professional Vietnamese workers will have opportunities to find jobs according to their abilities and needs in other countries or to work for international organizations located oversea or in Viet Nam. However, in order to do so, Vietnamese workers must meet certain minimum conditions. Besides, the Government of Viet Nam needs a clear orientation for human resources to ensure these conditions.

This article mainly focuses on: (1) Overview of the essential conditions for Vietnamese people to be able to work anywhere; (2) The current state of Vietnamese workers regarding the essential conditions to be able to work anywhere; and (3) The State's approach to ensuring the essential conditions for Vietnamese workers.

2. Methodology and Data Sources

This article employs synthesis, statistical analysis, interpretation and inductive research methods.

The data used in this article is secondary data provided by publicly available sources, such as:

- (1) A survey conducted by Alphabet in June 2016, study conducted by Education First (EF), an international education organization specializing in language instruction, tourism combined with education, cultural exchange, and other academic programs, published by the South East Asian ADN Association in 2014;
- (2) Data of the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs and the General Statistics Office on the labor market of Vietnam in the third quarter of 2019 (Q3/2019);
- (3) Some Decisions of the Prime Minister approving: the Vietnam Human Resource Development Strategy for the period 2011-2020; the master plan on human resource development in Vietnam for the period 2011-2020; the National Strategy to protect, care for and improve people's health for the period 2011 - 2020, with a vision to 2030; the adjustment and supplementation of the Scheme on teaching and learning foreign languages in the national education system for the period 2017-2025; and the Vietnam Health Program.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Overview of the essential conditions for Vietnamese people to be able to work anywhere

According to a survey conducted by Alphabet in June 2016 (American Polytechnic College 2019), three factors that determine the success rate for job interviews include: (i) positive attitude; (ii) good skills; and (iii) good knowledge.

Large enterprises highly respect a positive attitude. 93% of enterprises consider this criterion for recruitment. Attitude reflects the tendency of employees to react to the working environment, associated with cognition, emotions and behaviors. Positive attitudes such as eagerness to learn, dynamism, enthusiasm, passion for challenges and hard work are always appreciated by employers. Working attitude is closely related to labor discipline.

Skills are the factor that 46.3% of enterprises expect. The capacity to master a task is referred to as skills. Currently, skills are divided into two groups: technical skills and soft skills. Soft skills include communication and presentation skills, teamwork skills, creative thinking, innovation, working and learning adaptability in the global environment.

37.2% of enterprises based on knowledge when recruiting their employees. Knowledge is defined as the ability to collect data, understand problems, apply know-how, analyze information. These are fundamental skills a person must possess to well perform a job. The more complex the task is, the higher level of knowledge is required. The knowledge will be put into practice based on the unique traits of each business and organization. In addition to common knowledge, businesses and organizations are more interested in professional knowledge (76.7%) than grades (32.6%).

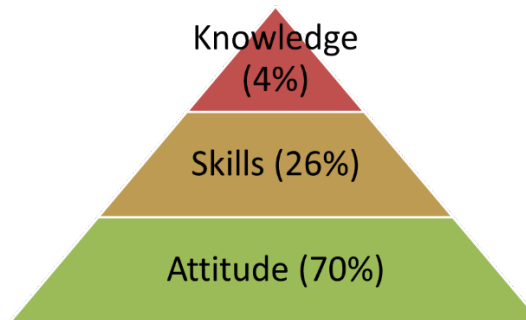


Figure 1: Aptitude triangle (Attitude – Skills – Knowledge) by Alphabet

Source: American Polytechnic College (2019)

Furthermore, in order to work for an international organization or work abroad, some of the following conditions must be met such as foreign language proficiency, knowledge of the host countries' cultures and laws; knowledge or the working culture and regulations of foreign businesses/organizations and fitness/health.

The ability to communicate in a foreign language is essential for those who want to work abroad. According to a poll conducted by Alphabet, 69.8% of Vietnamese enterprises are interested in candidates who can speak a foreign language fluently (usually English). 100% of international firms look for candidates with good foreign language proficiency when recruiting Vietnamese people.

Vietnamese workers face significant challenges due to their lack of knowledge or comprehension of the host country's culture and laws, as well as the enterprises' culture and rules. This lack of understanding is often the basis of many problems and difficulties in the workplace and in workers' lives (for example, in Bulgaria, shaking your head is nodding in Viet Nam and vice versa; in Europe, rubbing heads of other people is a friendly gesture, however in Viet Nam it is considered disrespectful).

Health is also a crucial factor. Even if all of the other conditions are in place, without good health, employees will not be able to work effectively. As a result, many organizations pay close attention to the health of their staff while hiring new employees. For example, many enterprises set a minimum height as a criterion for recruitment.

In summary, Vietnamese people must meet at least the following essential characteristics in order to work effectively everywhere, particularly in foreign countries and international organizations: (i) possessing foreign language proficiency; (ii) having good working knowledge, skills, and attitude; (iii) having an understanding of the host country's culture and laws, as well as the culture and regulations of the organizations or enterprises where they work; (iv) in good physical condition/health.

3. 2. The current situation of Vietnamese workers regarding the essential conditions to be able to work anywhere

3.2.1. Language proficiency

English is now widely regarded as an international language. Vietnamese people must acquire English or local language fluency at a level that supports good job performance when working in foreign nations or international organizations. According to study conducted by EF, people that utilize English effectively usually have a higher standard of living.

Vietnamese people's English competence is on par with the global average. Vietnam has slipped from 41st place in 2018 to 52nd place in 2019.

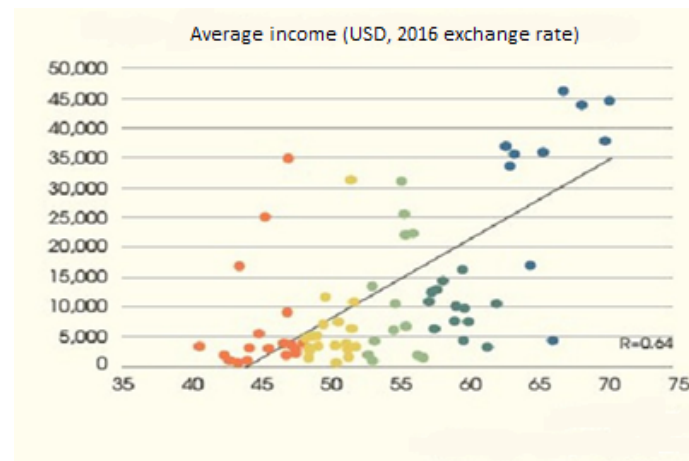


Figure 2: The correlation between English proficiency and level of income

Source: American Polytechnic College (2019)

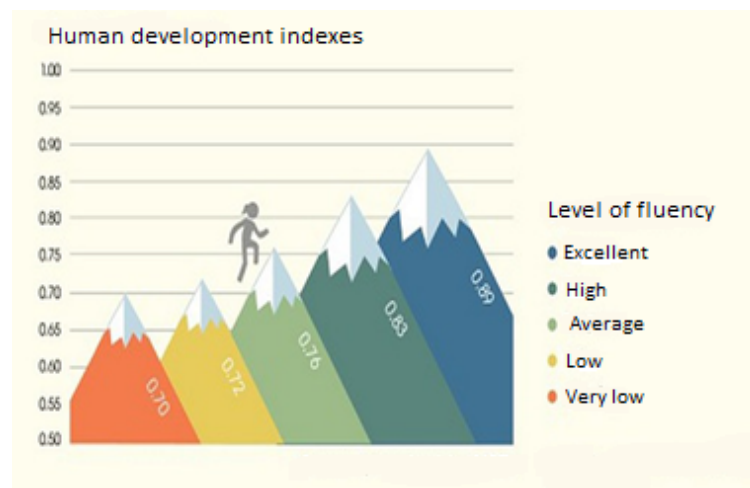


Figure 3: The correlation between English proficiency and quality of life

Source: American Polytechnic College (2019)

VERY HIGH PROFICIENCY		HIGH PROFICIENCY		MODERATE PROFICIENCY			
01 Sweden	70.72	13 Poland	62.45	28 India	57.13	37 Dominican Republic	54.97
02 Netherlands	70.31	14 Philippines	61.84	29 Nigeria	56.72	38 Belarus	53.53
03 Singapore	68.63	15 Switzerland	61.77	30 Hong Kong SAR	56.38	39 Senegal	53.50
04 Norway	68.38	16 Romania	60.31	31 South Korea	56.27	40 Uruguay	53.41
05 Denmark	67.34	17 Croatia	60.16	32 Spain	55.85	41 Vietnam	53.12
06 South Africa	66.52	18 Serbia	60.04	33 Lebanon	55.79	42 Russia	52.96
07 Luxembourg	66.33	19 Portugal	60.02	34 Italy	55.77	43 Ukraine	52.86
08 Finland	65.86	20 Czech Republic	59.99	35 France	55.49	44 Macau SAR	52.57
09 Slovenia	64.84	21 Hungary	59.51	36 Costa Rica	55.01		
10 Germany	63.74	22 Malaysia	59.32				
11 Belgium	63.52	23 Greece	58.49				
12 Austria	63.13	24 Slovakia	58.11				
		25 Bulgaria	57.95				
		26 Lithuania	57.81				
		27 Argentina	57.58				

Figure 4: English proficiency ranking 2018

Source: American Polytechnic College (2019)

Global Ranking of Countries and Regions

Very high	High	Moderate	Low	Very low
01 Netherlands	15 Hungary	30 Costa Rica	47 Belarus	70 U.A.E.
02 Sweden	16 Romania	31 France	48 Russia	71 Bangladesh
03 Norway	17 Serbia	32 Latvia	49 Ukraine	72 Maldives
04 Denmark	18 Kenya	33 Hong Kong, China	50 Albania	73 Venezuela
05 Singapore	19 Switzerland	34 India	51 Bolivia	74 Thailand
06 South Africa	20 Philippines	35 Spain	52 Vietnam	75 Jordan
07 Finland	21 Lithuania	36 Italy	53 Japan	76 Morocco
08 Austria	22 Greece	37 South Korea	54 Pakistan	77 Egypt
09 Luxembourg	23 Czech Republic	38 Taiwan, China	55 Bahrain	78 Sri Lanka
10 Germany	24 Bulgaria	39 Uruguay	56 Georgia	79 Turkey
11 Poland	25 Slovakia	40 China	57 Honduras	80 Qatar
12 Portugal	26 Malaysia	41 Macau, China	58 Peru	81 Ecuador
13 Belgium	27 Argentina	42 Chile	59 Brazil	82 Syria
14 Croatia	28 Estonia	43 Cuba	60 El Salvador	83 Cameroon
	29 Nigeria	44 Dominican Republic	61 Indonesia	84 Kuwait
		45 Paraguay	62 Nicaragua	85 Azerbaijan
		46 Guatemala	63 Ethiopia	86 Myanmar
			64 Panama	87 Sudan
			65 Tunisia	88 Mongolia
			66 Nepal	89 Afghanistan
			67 Mexico	90 Algeria
			68 Colombia	91 Angola
			69 Iran	92 Oman
				93 Kazakhstan
				94 Cambodia
				95 Uzbekistan
				96 Ivory Coast
				97 Iraq
				98 Saudi Arabia
				99 Kyrgyzstan
				100 Libya

Figure 5: English proficiency 2019

Source: Suong (2019)

In recent years, the English proficiency of Vietnamese people has been declining.

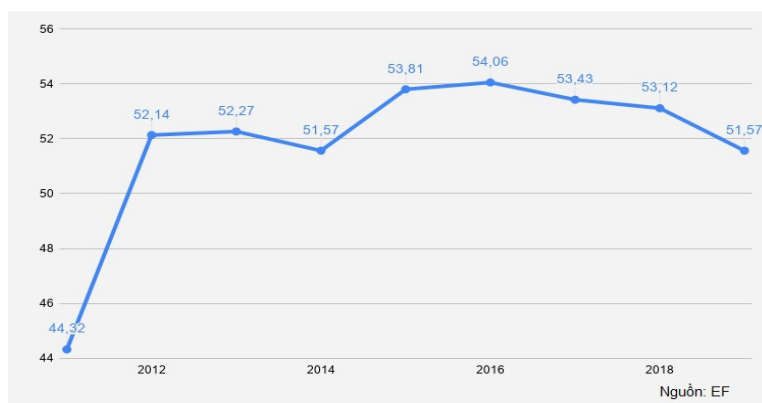


Figure 6: English proficiency of Vietnamese people in recent years

Source: Suong (2019)

The lack of English is a major obstacle for Vietnamese people to obtain a job abroad and in international organizations. It also has a detrimental impact on the country's overall growth.

3.2.2. Knowledge, skills, and working attitude

This short article cannot thoroughly analyze the knowledge, skills and working attitudes of the Vietnamese workforce, but only briefly/generally outlines a few points as follows:

- Although the percentage of Vietnamese workers with professional and technical qualifications has increased every year, it is very slow and still accounts for a small percentage (see Figure 7 below). Vietnamese workers are thought to have high basic knowledge and rapid awareness, but not specialized knowledge.
- Although Vietnamese people usually have adequate knowledge, they often lack technical skills. Knowledge is the ability to fathom. Skills are the ability to apply and practice. When it comes to the comprehension capability, Vietnamese people excel. The results of the OECD's PISA assessment, which has been conducted for many years, have consistently shown that Vietnamese students are among the world's top 10 to 20 in terms of math and science. However, according to the survey made by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2018, Vietnamese students can workers hardly meet the job requirements. Viet Nam ranked 110 in the WEF survey, which was lower than that of Laos and Cambodia, the two countries which are considered less developed than Viet Nam. This is an alarming result showing that there is a huge gap between knowledge and skills in the Vietnamese work force (Dan 2020).
- The education and training in Viet Nam lack programs/activities to improve learners' skillset. As a result, Vietnamese workers take a long time to adjust to their new work environment. This is one of the reasons for the fact that Vietnamese workers often have low salary and find it difficult to join the international work force.
- Labor discipline is generally poor. Vietnamese workers seem to lack working discipline in a multicultural environment. These weakness hampers Vietnamese people to get a job abroad or in international organizations.

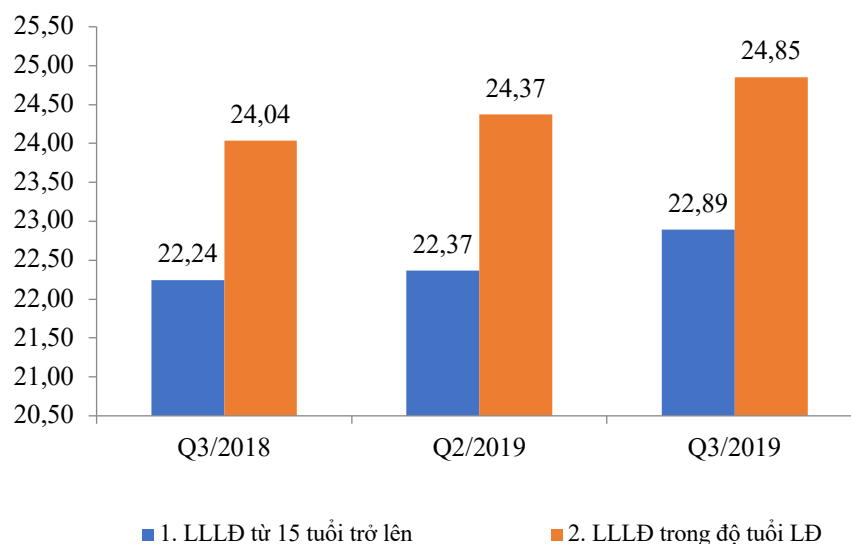


Figure 7: The percentage of trained workers with diplomas, Q3/2018, Q2/2019 và Q3/2019

Source: Ministry of Labor - Invalids and Social affairs and General Statistics Office (2019)

3.2.3. Knowledge of the culture and laws of the host countries

Although certain progress has been made in this regard, it can be concluded that the knowledge of Vietnamese workers about international law, other nations' laws and customs as well as the culture and regulations of foreign enterprises and international organizations are still limited. Typically, the knowledge of Vietnamese workers about

foreign is limited to stereotypes. Therefore, many Vietnamese workers in foreign countries suffer challenges in their daily lives as a result of misunderstanding cultural differences as well as a lack of knowledge of foreign laws.

(iv) Health

There are many criteria for assessing human fitness such as height, weight, endurance, disease frequency and so on. Apparently, Vietnamese people are much shorter than foreign people.

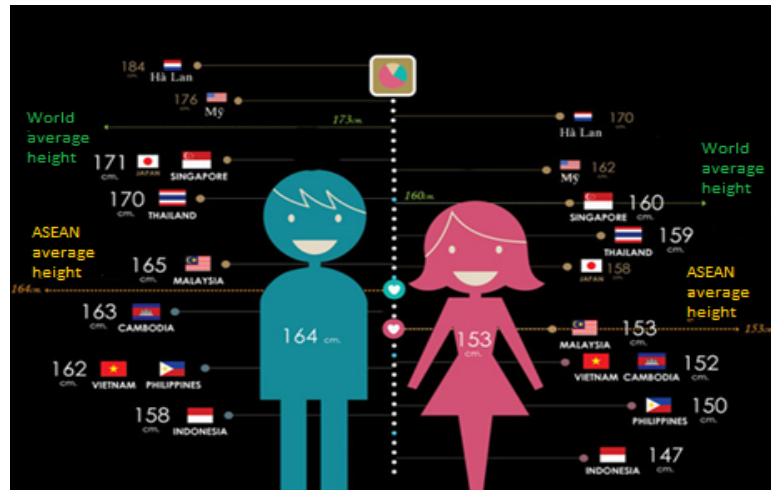


Figure 8: Heights of Vietnamese people in 2014

Source: Hoan (2015)

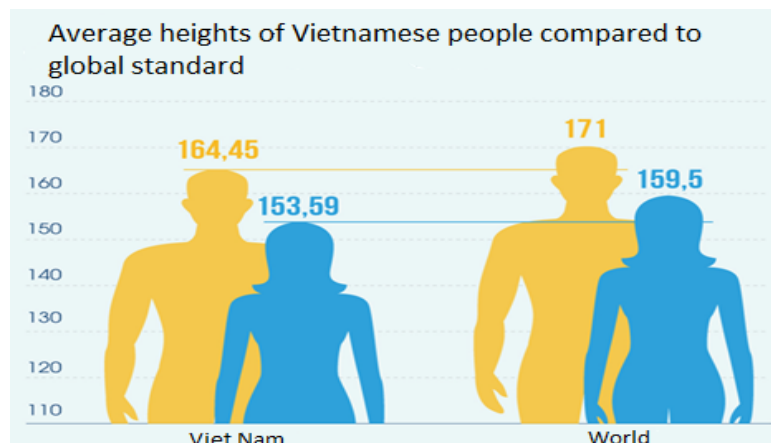


Figure 9: Heights of Vietnamese people in 2019

Source: Hoan (2015)

According to World Population Magazine, the average height of Vietnamese people is 162.1 cm, lower than that of Cambodia (162.5 cm).

Young Vietnamese men are currently 164.4 cm tall, 8 cm shorter than Japanese men and 10 cm shorter than Korean men. An average Vietnamese woman is 153.5 cm tall, 10 cm shorter than the general standard. Vietnamese people have grown taller in the last 30 years, although at a sluggish rate. In the last ten years, they have only grown one centimeter taller.

A study from the National Institute of Nutrition found that the number of persons with hypertension in Vietnam has climbed by more than 1.5 times in the last five years (2013-2018), while the number of diabetes cases has increased by more than 200 percent. In just ten years, Vietnam's obesity rate has risen to 15.6 percent (see Figure 10 below).

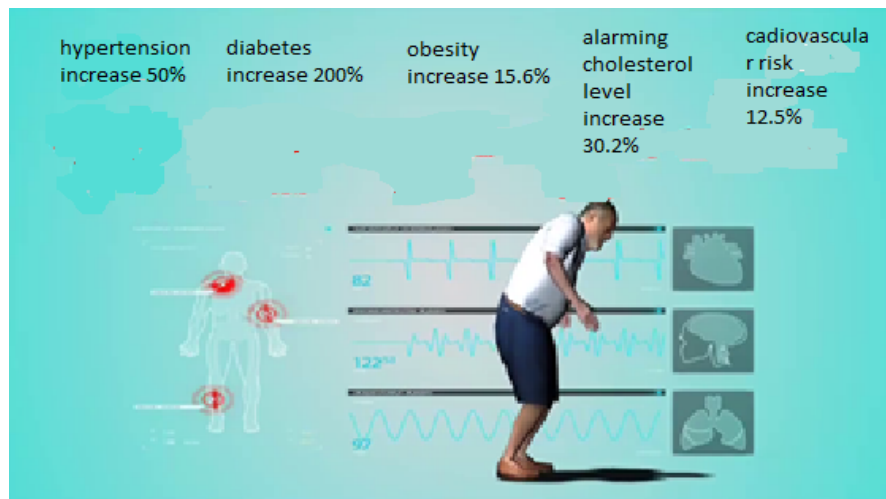


Figure 10: A few common diseases

Source: Vietnam Television (2018)

In general, Vietnamese workers are not physically fit in comparison with foreign workers. Vietnamese laborers frequently only work with short concentration span, fatigue rapidly (Ministry of Labour - Invalids and Social Affairs 2019) due to their lack of physical strength and endurance. It is obvious that fitness is another issue that Vietnamese workers must address if they want to work overseas.

3.2. The Government's orientation in ensuring essential conditions for Vietnamese workers to work abroad

3.2.1. Requirements

In the coming period, in order for Vietnamese workers to be able to work everywhere, human resource development needs to comply with the following requirements:

1. *First*, Viet Nam must have enough human resources capable of working in international organizations, multinational corporations and countries which have good relations with Vietnam, especially economic relations.
2. *Second*, Vietnamese workers must highly adaptable to the unpredictable and rapid changes of the regional and world situation and are capable of devising innovative solutions in the context of the industrial revolution 4.0.
3. *Third*, Vietnamese workers must be qualified enough to participate responsibly and effectively with the regional and international communities to solve global problems (Prime Minister 2011a, 2011b).

3.2.2. General orientation

First, rapidly and forcefully renovate the state management apparatus and human resource development policies.

The human development management apparatus should be improved and completed. The management method should be renewed to enhance the effectiveness of the human development management apparatus. Besides, it is crucial to strengthen the coordination among all levels, sectors and people involving in the human development process. Drastically renew human development policies (such as employment, wage, insurance and social protection) with a focus on policies for high-quality human resources and talents.

Second, financial resources for human development must be ensured.

It is necessary to increase investment in human resource development both by absolute term and by proportion in the total investment. Develop a plan on allocating the state budget focusing on education programs and trainings in accordance with priority objectives. Renovate the support mechanism from the state budget for human resource development by switching from supporting the suppliers to directly supporting the beneficiaries. Increase the mobilization of capital sources for human development from all economic sectors, including foreign capital (such as ODA, FDI and NGOs capital) by promoting socialization.

Third, strongly renew education and training

This topic has received a lot of attention in recent years. Within the scope of this article, the writer only emphasizes the following two issues:

1. An autonomous mechanism for educational and training institutions outside the general education must be implemented promptly and firmly. Universities and vocational training institutes must be autonomous regarding finance, organization, personnel and curriculum.
2. Resolute transformation of the teaching and learning process is required. Switching from passive learning, which consists just of receiving information, to active learning, which includes both gaining information and being creative in learning and expressing learners' ideas. Implement a procedure in which students are allowed to assess (score) teachers at the end of each semester. Anyone who receives a score below the average should not be allowed to teach.

3.2.3. A few specific orientations

1. Enhance foreign language training/education, particularly English. First and foremost, it is critical to effectively implement the Prime Minister's Project on teaching and learning foreign languages in the national education system for the period of 2017-2025, which focuses on implementing the following contents: (i) promulgating and deploying foreign language teaching programs and materials; (ii) innovative testing and assessment in foreign language teaching and learning based in international standard; (iii) increase the number and quality of foreign language teachers; (iv) promote the application of information technology to improve the condition for teaching and learning foreign language; (v) promote communication, international cooperation to build effective foreign language teaching and learning environment; (vi) propose authoritative agency to promulgate mechanism, policies, regulations related to teaching and learning foreign languages; and (vii) promote socialization in teaching and learning foreign language (Prime Minister 2017).
2. Develop educational and training content, programs, and techniques that meet international standards. Promote mutual recognition of training programs, diplomas, and certifications between Vietnam and other nations. Assess and maintain training quality in accordance with international standards (Hoan 2015).
3. Implement feasible policies to attract talented and experienced lecturers and scientists who are Vietnamese living abroad and foreigners into the human resource development process in Vietnam.
4. Increase the practice time and decrease the theoretical teaching time in order to focus on skill training for learners, particularly in vocational institutions. For general training and vocational training, modern and up-to-date equipment is required.
5. Strengthen education and keep abreast of international law, legislation, and culture of countries where many Vietnamese people work or where Vietnam's prospective labor markets are.
6. Increase physical education to improve health/fitness for Vietnamese workers. Effectively implement the National Strategy to protect, care, and improve public health during 2011 - 2020 period, orientation towards 2030 and the Vietnam Health Program. The implementation should focus on the following issues: (i) the authorities at all levels need to be active in making plans and allocate budget to implement the strategy/program; (ii) enhance the responsibility of central and local authorities in coordinating the

execution the policies and activities of the Vietnam Health Program within the scope of their respective domains; (iii) formulating and implementing policies and legal regulations on risk management, health promotion, and disease prevention; (iv) strictly implement the Laws on control of tobacco harms and promote food safety; review and implement mechanism and policies to promote the production, distribution and consumption of healthy and nutritious food; (v) provide the people with public areas and sport facilities; and (vi) promote public transport and non-motorized traffic (Prime Minister 2013 and Prime Minister 2018).

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Appendix 1: Summary of Vietnam's FTAs by February 2020

No	FTA	Status	Partners
In effect FTAs			
1	AFTA	Since 1993	ASEAN
2	ACFTA	Since 2003	ASEAN, China
3	AKFTA	Since 2007	ASEAN, South Korea
4	AJCEP	Since 2008	ASEAN, Japan
5	VJEPA	Since 2009	Viet Nam, Japan
6	AIFTA	Since 2010	ASEAN, India
7	AANZFTA	Since 2010	ASEAN, Australia, New Zealand
8	VCFTA	Since 2014	Viet Nam, Chile
9	VKFTA	Since 2015	Viet Nam, South Korea
10	VN – EAEU FTA	Since 2016	Viet Nam, Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan
11	CPTPP (previously TPP)	Took effect globally as of 30/12/2018, effective for Viet Nam since 14/1/2019	Viet Nam, Canada, Mexico, Peru, Chile, New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia
12	AHKFTA	Effective in Hong Kong (China), Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore and Viet Nam since 11/6/2019	ASEAN, Hong Kong (China)
Signed but not yet effective FTAs			
13	EVFTA	Signed on 30/6/2019	Viet Nam, EU (28-member states)
In negotiation FTA			
14	RCEP	Commencement of negotiation in March 2013, completing negotiations on documents	ASEAN, China, South Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand
15	Viet Nam – EFTA FTA	Commencement of negotiations in May 2012	Vietnam, EFTA (Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein)
16	Viet Nam – Israel FTA	Commencement of negotiation in December, 2015	Viet Nam, Israel

Source: Center for WTO & International Trade.