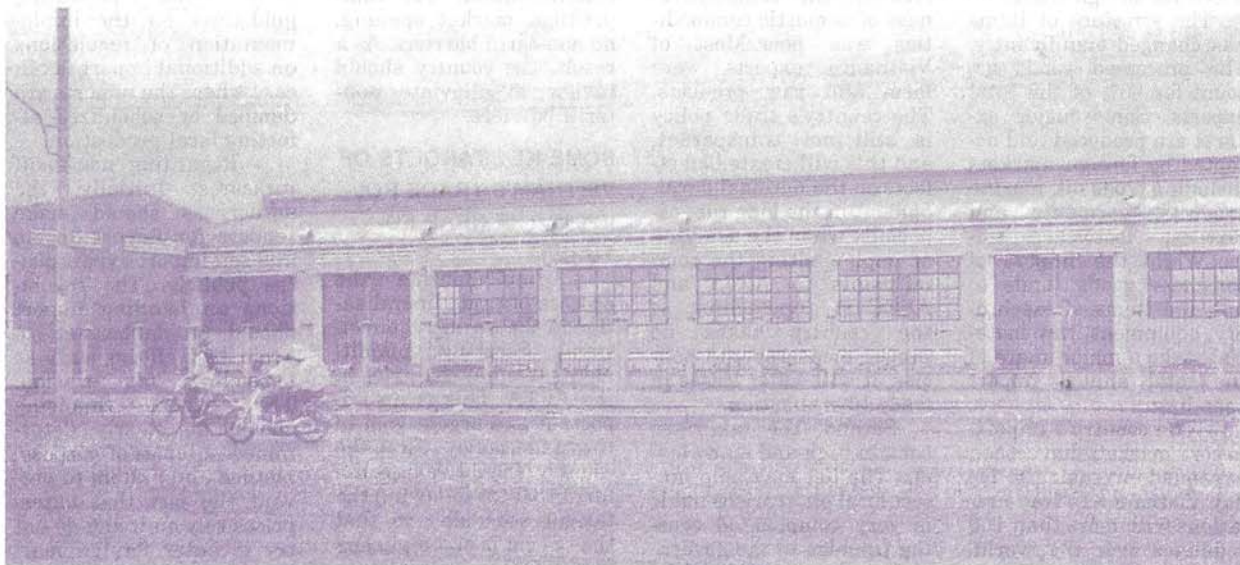


HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AN URGENT TASK IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

by MEcon. BÙI THỊ THANH



At present, the general intellectual level of the people has replaced capital, cheap labor and natural resources as advantageous conditions for fast development. Grey matter becomes a precious resource and a factor that determines the economic growth of a nation. This argument is verified by development of many Asian countries and Vietnam in the past ten years.

1. Human resource in Vietnam

Vietnam has a big labor force: 65.2% of the population is of the 16-35 age bracket but only 50% of this population is employed. Statistics show that unemployment rate in cities rose from 6.01% in 1997 to 6.85% in 1999. In rural areas, 27.65% of the working population needed jobs and 80% of them was untrained laborers.

The working population is on the increase: 2.95% of the population (around one million people) comes to the working age every year. The young working population is of great benefit in the future but it poses a lot of problems at present.

The proportion of trained laborers to the working population is very

low (17.6% in 1998). Non-public sectors employ 86% of the working population but trained laborers represent only 2% of them. At the national level, only 3% of the young people graduated from universities (this percentage is 7% in Malaysia, 10% in Indonesia and 16% in Thailand).

Structure and size of the education system is unreasonable, unbalanced and inappropriate to the demand posed by industries. Proportions of graduates from universities, colleges and technical schools are 1 - 1.6 - 3.6 (These figures in developed countries are 1 - 4 - 10). The army of skilled technicians and workers is too small, equaling one-sixth of the army found in developed countries. In fact, factories and companies in HCMC, Hà Nội, Hải Phòng and Đà Nẵng couldn't recruit enough operatives they need (they could meet only 1/25 of the demand). There are some 4,000 laborers of 6th and 7th classes over the country but most of them are too old to take important positions; and there is a great shortage of skilled managers and executives.

In such a situation, the size and amount of most vocational schools are contracted (from 366 technical schools in 1997 to 129 in 1998, from 200,000 students admitted every year to 60,000 a year). Subsidies from the Government were also reduced (equaling some 4% of the budget expenditure on education service). In short, the vocational education is too small and obsolete to contribute remarkably to the industrialization.

As for higher education, its size has doubled in the past two decades: from 57 universities and colleges in 1997 to 114 in 1999 but facilities and teaching staff of most universities couldn't help with enhancing the quality of education service. In making plans for education service, demand of each industry and province hasn't been taken into consideration with the result that there was a shortage of certain technicians and a surplus of other professionals.

Generally, the education system failed to provide learners with advanced knowledge, working skills, creative ability and adaptability. Many analysts said that the better

part of graduates were trained more in theories than in practices. Most of them lack knowledge of foreign languages and information technology while these skills are indispensable to all technicians in foreign countries. The lack of many qualities (work discipline, managerial skills, community spirit, sense of responsibility, etc.) made the Vietnamese human resource less competitive when integrating into the world labor market.

The distribution of human resource reflects imbalances between zones and provinces: the better part of well-trained laborers is found in big cities (18.2% in Hà Nội and 14% in HCMC) while in the Mekong Delta – the biggest rice supplier of the country- 96.32% of the labor force is untrained; only 1.55% of it is from technical schools and 0.74% from universities.

Inadequacies are also found in the employment of human resource: 65% of graduates work in the service industry; only 20% of university graduates, 34% of graduates from technical schools and 93% of operatives are working in manufacturing and primary sectors. The manufacturing industry employs 10% of the working population but only 46% of its labor force is trained; the corresponding figures in the agriculture are 73% and 15% respectively. In companies, university graduates represent only 32% of the labor force while this percentage is 48% in South Korea, 64.4% in Japan and 58.2% in Thailand.

Of some 9,300 doctors and 900,000 university graduates in Vietnam today, 67,000 persons are working in techno-scientific fields; 94.4% of doctors work in central governmental bodies and 5.6% in provincial governmental offices. Statistics also show that there were only four scientific researchers and engineers among 10,000 people while this figure is 40 in Singapore, 47 in South Korea and 81 in Japan. The much lower proportion of technical workers in the agriculture will cause a lot of difficulties for the industrialization.

In institutes and research centers, the average age of doctors is 52.8, of associate professors 56.4; professors 59.4; directors of institute 55 and their deputies 50. Thus the army of leading intellectuals is ageing. The shortage of young researchers in all fields becomes an alarming problem in the twenty-first century.

The public investment in the education and techno-scientific research isn't big enough to develop the hu-

man resource. The budget expenditure on the education has increased in recent years but it still failed to meet requirements of the industrialization process.

Reality of the education system shows that the Vietnam's potentials for human resource are considerable but it hasn't been fully tapped because of shortcomings in policies, administrative mechanism and historical conditions. Adopting new policies to develop the human resource becomes an urgent task in the industrialization and modernization in this century.

2. Measures to develop the human resource

Many experts are of the opinion that the twenty-first century will see fast development in Asia where the labor force is young, hungry for new knowledge and well attached to cultural traditions.

In Vietnam, the strategy to develop human resource should be oriented towards adjusting the population growth and improving the quality of working population; reforming the education system by diversifying forms of education and linking the education service with the labor market; creating more jobs and reducing the unemployment rate; and ensuring social welfare. The following are our suggestions about measures to develop the human resource.

a. Education for working population

It's estimated that by 2010, the Vietnam's working population will include some 58 million people (around 60.7% of the population); in the years 2001-2010 the working population will increase by 1.3 million people a year. These increases will pose many problems for the education system.

+ Keeping the balance between the size and quality of the education system all over the country: The education system should be developed with a view to meeting the demand posed by the economic growth process. It should supply various training courses at different levels with a view to ensuring that the proportions of graduates from university, colleges and technical schools are 1-3-9. To achieve this aim, the system of vocational and technical schools should be expanded in order to supply trained workers to industrial parks and export processing zones that will be developed in the coming years. More detailed solutions are:

- Developing system of vocational and technical schools by admitting

more students to these schools and equipping these schools with modern facilities with a view to helping students get accustomed to modern technologies used by industries.

- Allowing various forms of technical schools (run by industrial authorities, provincial governments, companies or private persons) various training courses (full-time and part-time ones, workshop) and even studies in foreign countries.

- Opening vocational centers training laborers who are going to work abroad and encouraging industries with potentials for export.

- Offering preferential treatment to students in vocational and technical schools and laborers who do dangerous jobs, and encouraging laborers to take university degrees.

+ Reforming the education system with a view to making it more attached to the industrial production: All education centers should be developed to reach international standards. The target is to increase the proportion of trained laborers to the working population to 30% by 2005 and 40% by 2010.

+ Inspecting regularly the process of training and granting degrees and qualifications in all universities and setting up criteria for evaluating the quality and result of education service: this measure aims at enhancing the quality of the army of intellectuals and educating the young in professional ethics.

b. New policies to develop and employ the human resource

The government should beef up laws on education; increase public investment in education (to 20-25% of the total budget expenditure or 7-8% of the GDP by 2005); and set up a mechanism for employing labor in order to:

+ ensure all laws and regulations on labor are obeyed by employers.

+ enter the foreign labor market with a view offering more employment opportunities to laborers.

+ make information about the supply of and demand for labor available for everybody.

c. Foreign cooperation in developing the human resource

The Government should look for opportunities to have laborers trained in developed countries, especially in high technologies.

Developing the human resource is an urgent task in the industrialization and modernization process. We hope that our suggested measures will help work out a strategy for this task in the twenty-first century ■