

On Training Courses for Ship Crew in the Mekong Delta

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Rivers in the Mekong Delta are principal waterways and play an important role in local economy. Transportation by river ships is cheap and helps develop economic relations between provinces. In recent years when the industrialization process has taken place in Vietnam, the river transport business has diversified its services to meet various demands of the market. New cargo ships and boats have been built and many of them could make from 20 to 30 km per hour.

As the economy grows,

Table 1: Estimated volume of cargo and passenger transport by 2010 and 2020

Services	Unit	2010		2020	
		Volume	%	Volume	%
Cargo transport	Million tons	85		130	
By road		25	30	33	30
By inland ship		60	70	97	70
Passenger	Million passengers	660		1,320	
By road		460	70	990	75
By inland ship		200	30	330	25

the demand for river transport also increases. The following table shows predictions of rises in cargo and passenger transport by river ships.

To meet this increasing demand requires an army of ship crew that has ability to do their job at international standards in order to integrate step by step into the regional and international transport network. Assignment and employment of ship crew must be based on limits on the size of the crew on each kind of ship and boat set by Decision 28/2004 of

the Ministry of Transport dated Dec. 7, 2004 on "Responsibility of crew, captain and co-pilot; and security standards for inland ships."

The ship crew members are prepared for not only existing means of transport but also more modern and forthcoming ones along with state-of-the-art equipment and technologies. General aims of the training program are to provide them with technical expertise in both theory and practice, economic management and basic knowledge of exploitation of the inland ship-

The table shows that with the number of ships and boats established in December 2004, the number of personnel who need to be trained in running these ships and boats

trained officials is not taken into consideration, the shipping service needs 62,340 captains, 63,254 crew members, 22,291 chief mechanics and 22,921 mechanics.

Table 2: Target of the training program

Position	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Total
Captain	914	1,836	59,590	62,340
Chief mechanic	914	1,836	20,171	22,921
Crew member	1,828	1,836	20,171	63,254
Mechanic	914	1,836	20,171	22,921
Total	4,570	7,344	159,522	171,436

According to the prediction, the number of ship crew for the increasing amount of means of river transport in the Mekong Delta up to 2010 is 170,529 persons; crew members represent some 50% of this figure and captains 25%. Up to 2015, the human resource for the river transport business in the Delta is as follows.

According to the above prediction, apart from the personnel that finished their training by 2010 and retired officials the number of laborers that must finish training by 2015 comprises 261,641 captains, chief mechanics, crew members and mechanics in order to operate

Table 3: Demand for personnel for ship transport business in the Mekong Delta

Position	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Total
Captain	1,905	2,858	90,483	95,246
Chief mechanic	1,905	2,858	29,859	34,622
Crew member	3,810	2,858	90,483	97,151
Mechanic	1,905	2,858	29,859	34,622
Total	9,525	11,432	240,684	261,641

the increasing number of ships and boats.

Based on the number of means of transport, the payroll allowed by the Ministry of Transport and the number of driving licenses issued, the required labor force by 2010 comprises 221,676 persons (80,698 captains; 11,648 chief mechanics; 63,254 crew members and 22,921 mechanics. These figures by 2015 are 261,641 (comprising 95,246; 34,622; 97,151; and 34,622 respectively). Up to now, however, ship transport schools in the Delta could only produce some 60% of these figures.

In such a situation, the training program that aims at ensuring the balance between the supply and demand and further development of the ship transport business must solve the following problems:

(1) Expanding training schools:

As for such training schools as the Second Central River Shipping Technical School financed by a Dutch organization that has been developed into a technical high school, it's necessary to improve facilities for study and practice, such as a modern ship for practice, a simulator and other equipment and machines. The curricula



Photo by Huynh Tho

must provide learners with modern knowledge. Short-term courses for teachers are also much needed.

The Third Transportation College has been expanded and upgraded; two ships for practice were bought and a new campus in Bình Chánh is under construction with an outlay of VND55 billion approved by the Ministry of Transport. Its leadership has made plan to develop the college into a major training center for the river transport business in the Delta.

(2) Building new schools:

In the coming years, river shipping schools must be built in provinces with high demand and no schools, such as Hậu Giang, Bạc Liêu, Cà Mau, Long An, Kiên Giang, Trà Vinh, and Bến Tre. This project requires financial support from the central government (Ministry of Transport) and local governments.

(3) Curricula:

The training curricula must comply with Decision 37/2004/QĐ made by the Ministry of Transport on Dec. 24. 2004. Regular training courses must aim at training chief mechanics of level III, crew mem-

bers and pilots. Extra and sandwich courses could be given to captains to help them gain higher levels. These schools can also issue certificates to persons who operate smaller means of river transport.

Schools under the General Department of Waterway Control also help train crew members and their teaching programs must comply with regulations set by the Ministry of Education and Training.

(4) Financial sources:

At present, outlay from the national budget can only cover some 70% of expenditures by these training schools. The outlay for training in the Mekong Delta up to 2010 is estimated at some VND165 billion. This figure is too big for the national budget to cover, therefore, the training of ship crew members in the Delta needs contribution and participation of the private sector.

(5) Army of trainers and teachers:

This army should be improved in terms of both quantity and quality, and it must train learners in theory and practice. In addition, it must train in work ethics because the potential learners usually come from different walks of life and have different levels of knowledge and awareness. ■



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