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SOME SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE HUMAN RESOURCE QUALITY THROUGH LINKAGE ACTIVITIES BETWEEN TRAINING INSTITUTIONS IN LANG SON PROVINCE AND LABOUR USING ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract. This paper examines the current situation of linkage activities between training institutions in Lang Son province and labour using organizations. From this analysis, solutions are proposed to improve the quality of local human resources. Based on surveys of recruitment needs, enterprise evaluations, and the level of alignment between graduates' professional competence and vocational skills, the study identifies limitations in the training and employment linkage. The proposed solutions include co designing training programs, training order and co funding mechanisms, paid internships with job commitment, building a labour market database, standardizing soft skills, developing practice oriented lecturer capacity, and innovating governance mechanisms for partnership management. The study provides scientific and practical evidence to support human resource development policy in Lang Son province in the new period.

Keywords: *Training and employment linkage; human resource quality; training institutions; enterprises; school enterprise cooperation; Lang Son province; human resource development policy.*

1. Introduction

In the context of deep international integration and the strong influence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, human resource quality has become a key factor determining the competitiveness of localities and economic regions. The 13th National Party Congress (2021) emphasized: "Developing human resources, especially high quality human resources, prioritizing human resources for science, technology, innovation and digital transformation associated with scientific and technological application, is one of the strategic breakthroughs to improve labour productivity and national competitiveness amid the Fourth Industrial Revolution and increasingly deep international integration" [6].

As a border province, Lang Son holds advantages in cross border trade, logistics, import export transshipment, agricultural products and tourism. However, a significant gap remains between training outcomes and the requirements of enterprises. Many graduates lack practical skills, soft skills and industrial discipline, while training institutions still face difficulties in adjusting curricula to meet real needs [12].

Currently, colleges in Lang Son province play a core role in human resource training across various vocational education fields such as Languages, Technology, Engineering, Economics, Services, Tourism, Healthcare and Agriculture. Despite innovations in training programs and delivery modes, output quality still falls short of expectations, reflected in skill limitations, inadequate practice facilities and weak linkage with enterprises. In this context, researching and assessing the current situation of human resource training in Lang Son based training institutions, identifying shortcomings, and proposing appropriate solutions is an urgent requirement with practical significance for sustainable provincial development in the new period.

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2. Theoretical Basis and Policy Framework

2.1. Theoretical Basis

The theoretical foundation for training and employment linkage solutions is grounded in modern human resource development theories and policies. First, according to Becker's Human Capital Theory (1993), education and training are considered investments that enhance workers' skills, knowledge and work capacity, thereby increasing labour productivity and personal income while contributing directly to socio economic growth [3].

Second, the School to Work Transition model of the OECD (2010) indicates that the transition from school to the labour market carries potential risks of unemployment, unstable jobs or skill mismatches. Therefore, building a "bridge" between training institutions and enterprises plays a decisive role in improving learner adaptability [8].

From an organizational perspective, numerous national and international studies affirm the effectiveness of the tripartite collaboration model (State, School and Enterprise) in human resource development. This model allows for rational allocation of responsibilities, risks and costs. The State is responsible for policy formulation, legal frameworks and resource support. Training institutions are responsible for organizing training, curriculum development and pedagogical capacity. Enterprises directly participate in training, provide practice environments, assess actual competencies and employ trained graduates.

In Vietnam, this viewpoint is affirmed in Resolution No. 29 NQ/TW dated November 4, 2013 of the Central Committee on fundamental and comprehensive reform of education and training, which states that "education and training together with science and technology are top national priorities, and investment in education is investment in development" [2]. The 2014 Law on Vocational Education further specifies that training must be linked to labour market demand, ensuring practice orientation and learner employability [9]. Recently, the Vocational Education Development Strategy for 2021 to 2030, with a vision to 2045 (Prime Minister, 2021), continues to emphasize strengthening cooperation between vocational education institutions and enterprises, developing dual training models and training order mechanisms based on social demand [11].

Thus, close linkage between training and employment is not only supported by strong theoretical grounds from international literature but is also guaranteed through Vietnam's current policy orientation and legal framework.

2.2. Reference Experiences

International experience shows that the success of many countries in linking training with labour utilization largely depends on establishing substantive cooperation mechanisms between schools and enterprises.

In Germany, the dual training system is a typical example. Programs are co designed according to specific job positions, with approximately 60 to 70 percent of training time spent on enterprise based practice and the remainder on vocational school learning. Enterprises not only provide internship environments but also participate directly in quality assessment and share part of the training cost [7, pp. 16 to 17].

In Singapore, the Government implements Public Private Partnership models in vocational education, encouraging enterprises to co invest in facilities and training equipment, while jointly developing curricula and participating in quality assurance processes [10]. Some ASEAN countries such as Malaysia and Thailand apply the principle of workplace based curricula, emphasising large internship components and financial cost sharing among the State, Schools and Enterprises [1].

In Vietnam, several studies highlight the effectiveness of school enterprise cooperation models. Bui and Luong (2018) suggest that in the Mekong Delta region, enterprises should be deeply involved in practical

training phases to foster industrial discipline and enhance students' vocational skills [4]. In addition, Bui and Luong (2020) developed a vocational training cooperation framework emphasising financial responsibility sharing between training institutions and enterprises to improve training quality [5].

Key principles from international models include co designing job based programs, increasing internship ratios within the total training duration and establishing mechanisms for enterprise co funding and co assessment, all of which significantly shorten occupational adaptation time and enhance graduate employability.

For Lang Son, applying these principles requires adaptation to local characteristics. These include dominant industry sectors, the small scale of most enterprises and the existing capacity of vocational training institutions. This creates a need for flexible cooperation models that both leverage leading enterprises in logistics and border trade and support smaller businesses in participating through industry clusters or professional associations.

3. Current Situation of Linkage between Training Institutions in Lang Son Province and Labour Using Organizations

3.1. Scale of Labour Demand

A survey was conducted with 150 respondents working at 46 labour using organizations inside and outside the province that maintain training cooperation with institutions in Lang Son. These enterprises operate in sectors such as electrical and electronic engineering, healthcare, mechanical processing, agricultural machinery, transportation, information and communications, business services, automotive repair and animal husbandry. The survey took place in November and December 2024 through both direct administration and online formats (Google Form).

Results show that 40.7 percent of enterprises surveyed require more than 50 recruits per year, followed by groups needing 11 to 50 employees (29.3 percent) and 6 to 10 employees (15.3 percent). This reflects a trend of expanding production and business activities, especially in trade logistics, processing industries and service sectors. These findings imply that if training institutions do not organize training at appropriate scale, labour shortages are likely to emerge in some sectors in the short term and skill mismatches may occur in the long term.

3.2. Demand for Labour Qualifications

The same 150 respondents were also surveyed regarding qualification requirements. The results indicate that unskilled workers account for 44.67 percent, intermediate and college level workers account for 47.33 percent, and university and higher levels represent only 6.67 percent. This means the primary demand of the local labour market is for practical and vocational skills at intermediate and college levels rather than academically oriented higher qualifications. The training system should respond by improving vocational education quality, increasing practical skill modules and strengthening cooperation with enterprises to ensure curriculum relevance.

3.3. Percentage of Graduates Working in Their Trained Major

According to assessments from labour using organizations, the percentage of graduates working in their trained specialization is mostly concentrated in the range of 51 to 75 percent (39.3 percent), followed by 26 to 50 percent (28.7 percent), 76 to 100 percent (20.7 percent), while less than 25 percent and no response categories account for 11.3 percent. These results show that the proportion of graduates employed in positions aligned with their training is not high, and many require retraining after recruitment. Reasons include overly theoretical curricula, a lack of practice based job specific modules, short internship duration at enterprises and insufficient enterprise participation in program design. As a result, there remains a practical gap between vocational training and job positions, leading to occupational mismatch.

Qualitative findings reveal that graduates have weaknesses in communication, teamwork, discipline, occupational safety awareness and digital competence. These shortcomings become major barriers that reduce integration speed and initial productivity. The main reason is that training programs do not systematically embed soft skill criteria and do not treat them as mandatory graduation requirements.

4. Causes of the Current Situation of Linkage between Training Institutions in Lang Son Province and Labour Using Organizations

Enterprise Participation in Training. Cooperation with enterprises remains fragmented, mostly limited to internship placement and recruitment. Very few enterprises participate in co designing curricula, assessing learning outcomes or providing long term co funding; there is a lack of framework contracts, batch based training orders and risk sharing mechanisms among training institutions, enterprises and local authorities. As a result, the current linkage model is not sustainable and often stops at the level of receiving interns and recruiting graduates.

In addition, the province does not yet have an open and updated labour market database, causing training institutions to lack timely information for adjusting enrolment policies and curricula. The absence of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for monitoring partnership effectiveness also reduces enterprise motivation to participate.

Policy Mechanism Limitations. In reality, the linkage between training and labour utilization in Lang Son lacks mandatory requirements and financial incentives, making enterprise participation unsustainable. Specific limitations include:

First, the proportion of graduates working in their trained specialization is not high (around 70 percent), reflecting that the linkage between training institutions and labour users remains weak. Therefore, co designing curricula and increasing internship duration are necessary solutions.

Second, soft skills and professional attitudes among learners are still limited, directly affecting job adaptability. It is therefore necessary to build employability skills standards and strengthen industrial discipline development.

Third, enterprise recruitment channels and the connecting role of training institutions have not been optimized. This requires developing a labour data platform called “Lang Son Works” to enhance school enterprise linkage capacity.

Fourth, although demand based training orders have been implemented, their number remains small. To address this, mechanisms for training orders with co funding between state budget and enterprises should be applied.

Fifth, teaching staff are insufficiently connected to real production and business environments, resulting in gaps in practical knowledge. The appropriate solution is to implement dual training and instructor development through collaboration with enterprise experts, accompanied by incentive schemes.

5. Proposed Solutions to Improve Human Resource Quality through Linkage Activities between Training Institutions in Lang Son Province and Labour Using Organizations

5.1. Innovating Training Programs and Processes

Co designing curricula based on job profiles: The gap between training content and job requirements is a key reason for the modest proportion of graduates working correctly in their trained fields. To address this, a job profile based competency framework should be jointly designed for each occupation offered by training institutions, while proposing new programs in services, tourism and agro forestry processing; Labour management authorities should lead the process of collecting labour needs by job position, identifying priority occupations, and organizing tripartite workshops (training institutions, enterprises and professional experts). At these workshops, stakeholders jointly build competency frameworks encompassing

knowledge, technical skills, soft skills and expected learning outcomes; Training programs should be modularized, with at least 30 to 40 percent of learning time spent in enterprises. Job skill modules should adopt work based assessment criteria. The Department of Education and Training plays the coordinating role, training institutions and enterprises implement the modules, and business associations support competence standardization. KPI indicators include the number of co designed programs and enterprise based training duration (minimum target 30 percent).

Employability and soft skill standards: According to enterprise feedback, the greatest barrier to graduate adaptation is the lack of soft skills and digital capabilities. A set of employability skills consisting of 10 to 12 core criteria (punctuality, communication, teamwork, problem solving, occupational safety, basic digital skills, customer service, work discipline, responsibility and service attitude) should be developed; These criteria should be integrated into mandatory modules accounting for 5 to 8 percent of total credits and used as graduation requirements. Assessment should be conducted by inter school and inter enterprise testing centres to ensure objectivity and standardization. The provincial government oversees development and monitoring. Effectiveness is measured through the proportion of graduates meeting the employability standard at graduation.

Paid internships with employment commitments: Current internships are short, unpaid and lack accountability, leading to low motivation among learners and limited enterprise engagement. An apprenticeship model should be applied in which each program requires at least 3 to 6 months of paid internship. Enterprises provide allowances (minimum 30 to 50 percent of sector basic salary) and commit to evaluation and preferential hiring; Internships should be regulated through tri party contracts (training institution, enterprise and student), specifying learning duties, working hours, insurance, assessment criteria and recruitment provisions. Internship outcomes are assessed based on productivity and real work outputs. State labour authorities issue contract templates. Performance is measured by the proportion of interns offered employment.

5.2. Improving Linkage Mechanisms and Policies

Batch based training orders and co funding: High recruitment demand in some enterprises (over 50 employees per year) enables batch based training orders that enhance efficiency and strengthen commitment. Enterprises submit bi annual or annual labour demand plans. Training contracts specify quantity, output standards, hiring commitments and enterprise contributions (internship allowances, equipment support, scholarship funds); The government partly funds training or invests in practical workshops for institutions participating in batch orders. Authorities establish the mechanism; institutions and enterprises sign and implement contracts. KPIs include number of batch training contracts and proportion of ordered trainees recruited after graduation.

Linkage governance based on KPIs and incentives: Lack of evaluation systems and reward sanctions reduces motivation among stakeholders. A shared KPI framework should be created with targets such as:

Table 1. Key Performance Indicators for Training Enterprise Linkage in Lang Son Province Toward 2030)

KPI	Measurement	Target 2030
Graduate job match after 6 months	Percent working in trained job position	≥ 80 percent
Hiring recommendations after internship	Percent of interns recommended for hiring	≥ 60 percent
Median starting income	VND per month	30 percent increase over 2025
Co designed programs	Number	≥ 15 occupations
Enterprise based training duration	Percent of total time	≥ 30 percent

In parallel, incentive measures should be applied such as investment support for practical workshops, internship wage funds, recognition awards like “Enterprise Partner in Vocational Education” linked to

tender priorities or tax incentives (where feasible), and reduced accreditation fees for joint programs. The provincial government leads implementation in coordination with education authorities and business associations.

5.3. Strengthening Resources and Supporting Infrastructure

Developing a provincial labour market data platform (Lang Son Works): A major barrier to adjusting training scale and content is the lack of real time labour market data. To address this, a provincial labour portal should be built integrating functions for job demand posting, supply demand analytics, enterprise directories for internships and catalogues of programs offered by training institutions; The platform should be connected via API with institutions, employment service centres and business associations for data synchronization. It should include KPI dashboards tracking graduate job match, starting income and retention rates after 12 months. The provincial government leads procurement and implementation. Performance indicators include monthly recruitment data updates and proportion of enterprises reporting demand.

Lecturer upskilling and expert exchange: A core problem is that instructors lack real world experience. A dual training scheme is needed: each vocational instructor should spend at least two months per year in enterprise environments, supported by provincial funds for disadvantaged institutions; Enterprises assign experts to teach part time or by module, and may sign long term contracts. At the same time, work based learning training for lecturers should be implemented. Performance indicators include lecturer field participation hours and number of enterprise experts involved.

6. Discussion

Comparison with Theory and International Experience: From the perspective of Human Capital Theory [3] and the School to Work Transition model [8], the skill gap in Lang Son is characteristic of emerging economies where labour markets evolve rapidly but training systems lag behind. Notably, intermediate and college level labour accounts for 47.3 percent, equivalent to the “middle skill tier” defined by the ILO. This implies that focused investment in vocational education will yield higher human capital returns than expanding university level training without labour market alignment. Regarding solution viability, effective implementation requires three preconditions. First, solutions must be institutionalized in provincial policy documents. Second, cost sharing mechanisms are essential, otherwise enterprises will view training as a burden rather than a strategic investment. Third, evaluation must focus on employment outcomes such as job attainment and income, rather than on the number of courses or cooperation agreements. This aligns with findings in [5], which highlight that Vietnamese enterprises often do not see vocational training as a responsibility, thereby necessitating benefit sharing and binding mechanisms.

Barriers in Policy and Practice in Vietnam: Although the 2014 Law on Vocational Education and Decision 2239 QĐ TTg clearly define enterprise responsibilities, enforcement mechanisms remain weak. Enterprises are not required to report manpower demand regularly and face no sanctions for failing to fulfil training commitments. As a result, voluntary participation dominates over obligations, making cooperation unstable when enterprises face difficulties. In addition, financial incentives such as tax benefits or training support funds have not been implemented.

Academic and Practical Significance: This study has three main contributions. First, it provides provincial level empirical data on training enterprise linkage, addressing a local research gap. Second, it proposes an integrated solution system covering curriculum, data and governance aligned with current policies. Third, it suggests a provincial enterprise training linkage model applicable to other mountainous and border regions.

7. Recommendations

For central government: Finalise legal frameworks to encourage enterprise participation in vocational training, including tax deduction or preferential credit policies for enterprises that invest in training; promote outcome based curricula tied to job positions; and develop a national labour market database capable of API connectivity with provinces to support accurate supply demand analysis.

For Lang Son Provincial People's Committee: Issue a Provincial Scheme on High Quality Human Resource Development for 2025 to 2030 as the legal basis for action programs. Implement training orders, data platforms and jointly designed pilot programs. Establish a provincial Training Labour Linkage Council with representatives from departments, training institutions and business associations. Integrate linkage KPIs into performance criteria to enhance accountability and efficiency.

For enterprises: Shift perceptions to view training as a strategic investment rather than a short term cost. Actively report manpower demand, participate in curriculum development, co fund training and transfer technology to vocational institutions. Accept interns under tri party contractual arrangements and commit preferential hiring to enhance cooperation sustainability.

For training institutions: Review and revise programs based on job competency frameworks to ensure relevance. Establish enterprise connection centres to maintain graduate job data and act as bridges to the labour market. Enhance dual training for lecturers, strengthen soft skill training through modules, clubs and community projects, and integrate enterprise feedback into assessment processes.

8. Conclusion

This study analysed the current status of linkage between training institutions and labour using organizations in Lang Son. Findings show gaps such as misalignment between training content and labour demand, insufficient practice time, weak soft skills, superficial enterprise participation and lack of governance tools (data and KPIs).

To enhance human resource quality, a comprehensive solution package is necessary, covering program techniques (job profile based design), governance mechanisms (training orders, KPIs and data platforms) and investment in human capital (lecturer development and enterprise experts). These solutions match national policy frameworks, international experience and local characteristics.

The study emphasises responsibility from four key actors: central government, provincial authorities, enterprises and training institutions. If implemented synchronously, the solutions will enhance human resource quality, reduce training employment gaps and promote socio economic development in Lang Son province in the new period.

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