

## DEVELOPING DISTANCE TRAINING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF UNIVERSITY QUALIFIED HUMAN RESOURCES IN MEKONG DELTA REGION

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**Abstract:** Thanks to its flexibility and agility as well as the impacts and support of science, technology and communication in education, distance training has been considered as a sufficient open access to the development of the university-qualified human resources in the market economy and international integration today. Through research results, the article discusses the needs and activities of organizing university-qualified personnel training through distance training and the management development of distance training at university level of Mekong Delta.

**Keywords:** Distance training, university-qualified manpower, market economy, international integration.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Given the demand for rapidly supplementing high-quality manpower serving the country in the context of market economic development and international integration, distance training well fulfil this role and mission as an advantageous and suitable form of training with the context, conditions of the country, regions as well as the guidelines and policies of the Party and the State to create opportunities for people to access knowledge and support lifelong learning. The Prime Minister's 89/QĐ-TTg decision emphasizes on "promoting distance training activities in educational and training institutions, especially at universities" and decision No. 1559/QĐ-TTg of the Prime Minister issued on 10/09/2015 on approval of the scheme "Developing distance training in the period 2015-2020" clearly articulated the aforementioned requirements and contents.

Mekong Delta is one of the key economic regions of the country with many conditions and potential for development, but in terms of population and quality of the human resources, it is "the sunken area" in comparison with other regions in the country. According to official statistics, the population of Mekong Delta in 2016 is 17.6 million (General Statistics Bureau, 2017a; 78), but the percentage of trained labor force of the entire region is only 12%; especially, the ratio of the workforce having undergraduate degree or above is only 5.4% (General Statistics Bureau, 2017b; 19), which was the lowest proportion in the country. On the other hand, the rate of unemployment and lack of employment in Mekong Delta is the highest in the country at 2.9% (General Statistics Bureau, 2017b; 35).

In education and training, in 2016, the number of university students is 156,949 (General Statistics Bureau, 2017a; 712) and the number of students participating in

distance training of the region only reached a modest number of 14,000 people. The above statistics have provided the panoramic view on human resource training in Mekong Delta. The overall situation of university-qualified personnel and high quality manpower training for the entire region have not satisfied the requirements of the market economy and international integration.

Therefore, it is necessary to conduct investigation into the problem in order to form the scientific basis to create the general framework for distance training, review the situation and propose some management content to develop distance training activities in order to meet the university-qualified manpower requirement nationwide in general and in Mekong Delta where there are still many difficulties in geography, transportation and unfamiliarity with this form of training in particular. This is also an urgent issue that needs addressing to meet the objectives to raise the population's knowledge and training human resources of the Party and the State.

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been many studies nationwide and internationally related to the role of distance training, management of distance training in human resource training. UNESCO in the years 1996 and 2009 conducted the assessment and evaluation of distance training and considered it the most promising form of education of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the most dominant form of education in the future as it actively supports the learning societies. Taylor (2001) also mentioned the issue of world education management with the distance training system and the distribution of technology models and means used for distance training.

In recent years, building learning society, creating conditions for people to have lifelong learning, issues related to distance training in training the human resource

for industrialization, modernization and international integration have also received attention of the society. It is also the research direction of many scientists with various research works. Nguyen Canh Toan (2001) mentioned many problems and different aspects of distance training, especially emphasizing on learners' self-studying and self-research alongside with teachers' support, guidance and instructions. Bui Thanh Giang, Chu Quang Toan and Dao Quang Chieu (2008) stated clearly the advantages as well as limitations of distance training. Dang Van Dan (2015) clarified the basis of the quality assurance of university distance training, the factors that need to be taken into consideration, the components ensuring the system and quality of university distance training.

From the studies mentioned above, it can be concluded that distance education has been used by national as well as international scientists. Its application, development, and practices in education and training system and in the mission of training and development of human resources are also paid attention. However, how distance training can meet the needs of different levels in different conditions and regions is an unanswered question. In this article, we continue to study the development of distance training to meet the needs of market economic conditions and international integration in the context of Mekong Delta.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODS AND RESULTS

#### 3.1. The situation of distance training in Mekong Delta

The survey results in June, 2017 from 42 managers, 545 students, 120 instructors of 03 undergraduate institutions with distance training in Mekong Delta region including Can Tho University, Tra Vinh University and Dong Thap University (now this university has stopped their distance training for the pedagogical majors), suggested the following things:

##### 3.1.1. In terms of the training program

There were 27 distance training disciplines at universities in Mekong Delta in 2017, which indicates that the number of disciplines is not diverse, abundant, not meeting the demands for human resources of local leading industries.

##### 3.1.2. In terms of training content and time

20.8% of lecturers believed that the training content is not suitable due to heavy theoretical workload, limited time for practice, unreasonable time distribution for on-site observation and internship. The training time for completing the course prescribed by the institutions is too long.

##### 3.1.3. In terms of enrollment management

It is shown that students choose to study distance education as it is convenient for their study (accounting

for 42.6%), or because they do not have conditions to study other forms of training (51.0%). Therefore, the majority of distance training learners are adults and/ or has been working on other professions or from remote, border, or island areas.

##### 3.1.4. In terms of management and organization of distance training

Regarding satisfaction level, the proportion of satisfied students is 86.8% while that of lecturers is 55%. This rate indicates that students and lecturers are not yet highly pleased although higher education institutions have issued many documents and administrative procedures related to training to provide regulations and guidance and ensure the implementation of the training process of distance learning. In fact, the procedures that involve the guidelines for instructors and students are often more complex due to the nature of their work. Therefore, this also suggests that higher education institutions should continue to examine and reform procedures to resolve tasks related to the process of training and improve the quality of service.

##### 3.1.5. In terms of teaching and learning activity management

The level of satisfaction of students stood at 13.8% for theory, 3.7% for practice; whereas 14.6% of the students did not satisfy with the theory and 23.9% with the practice. This ratio shows that the teachers' professional level are quite appreciated. However, the unsatisfied level was still high for the extensiveness of expertise, the level of updated information and the appropriateness of teaching method for certain professional theoretical and practical content. This shows that training staff's capacity is not overall equal in the teaching practice for distance training.

##### 3.1.6. In terms of facility and learning resource management

11.24% of students and 14.2% of lecturers believed that there is a lack of learning materials (because some practical resources are still not responding well or maximum for students' self-studying). Equipment and practical tools in some majors have still not fully met the requirements. In addition, most of the universities having distance training of Mekong Delta, except for the Can Tho University, haven't still not been well-equipped with the modern information technology system, application of advances and achievements of science and technology in communication to serve the process of telemetry. Consequently, the teaching, learning and self-learning processes are impeded as teachers and students cannot interact, exchange information or ask questions timely.

### *3.1.7. In terms of the implementation of the regime and policy on distance training to meet the human resource needs*

The sufficiency and appropriateness of the regime and policy of distance training at the university is rated as good by 83.3% of the management staff and not good by 16.7% of the management staff; 55.3% of teachers considered good and 12.5% not good while 62.9% of students reviewed it good, and 35.4% of them assessed it not good. In general, the state's distance training policy and the university institutions in particular still have many deficiencies on the policies of remuneration, priority, reward of distance training process, which indicates the need for adjustments and improvement of the policies and regime for the student and teachers of the distance training.

### *3.1.8. In terms of distance training supervising management*

In fact, university institutions assign teachers in charge of the courses with the tasks of designing, conducting and scoring all progress and end-of-course tests. This shows the respect towards and authorization of the teaching staff, but in principle it does not clearly separate distance training and testing as expected.

It can be said that some of the aforementioned conditions have shown that the distance training management system of universities is still limited, incompleting or insufficient to guarantee the quality from the input stage (admission) to the final stage (evaluation of graduation outcomes) of the training process. Some individuals, units and divisions do not highly appreciate quality assurance of distance training, which reduces the trust from employers and communities. The mechanism and policy on special treatments with distance training have not yet met the requirements of students and instructors. There is no learning material link between the universities and distance training stations, which makes it difficult for the student to access or use materials.

## **3.2. Some suggestions for distance training to meet the demands for human resources in Mekong Delta**

### *3.2.1. Determining the needs for human resource training in market economy and international integration*

In the market economy with a multi-component economy, determining training needs is an important starting point for developing training and supplying manpower for the socio-economic development to meet the demands of the labour market. If training without understanding the need of the labor market, it will lead to the lack of connection, or even the contradiction to the law of supply and demand, resulting in the training process a workforce that is both redundant and insufficient, making it difficult for the implementation of the development objectives of economy and society.

This will also trigger a tremendous waste of human resources, manpower and resources of the State and society. In order to implement an effective form or training program, surveying, identifying training needs is an important task. The need for training needs to be surveyed, assessed both in terms of quality and quantity of the workforce for different professions and levels.

### *3.2.2. Developing distance training program*

The planning of distance training is complicated because the special characteristics of the training are the way of organization and the audience, so the requirement of the program is to ensure flexibility, practicality suitable for all subjects, creating favorable space and time to attract a lot of participants to study. At the same time, proper training time, program content, basic knowledge, basic and specialization requirements as required, the overall standard of undergraduate graduates are ensured.

### *3.2.3. Organizing enrollment process*

The process of recruitment (input) for distance training of universities must ensure the flexibility in the direction of regular, continuous and year-round admission to ensure student resources. Each university needs to focus on and perform a good marketing work in this area; all the announcements are disseminated to the students, affiliated units, organizations and enterprises with training needs. It is also necessary to focus on communication through mass media. Admission information includes legal bases, objects, ranks, branches and training time, location, tuition, benefits, student obligations in the study process as well as job opportunity after graduation. Upon completing the profile, the universities organize the admissions, declare their decision on the acceptance and submission, then send the notice of admission.

### *3.2.4. Recognizing students' learning outcomes*

The institutions should use the training and organization of credit (with many advantages in distance training) and facilitate students with the option of learning sections in accordance with their aspirations, hobbies, education, health, and finances. Students may shorten or extend the deadline. There is no limitation on the number of retaking the tests; universities do not organize the annual class review; universities recognize the learning results and granted learners diplomas.

### *3.2.5. Managing teaching and learning activities of teachers and students*

This is the main activity, which has a huge influence on the reputation and quality of universities. The teaching activities of teachers and students' academic activity create personality, peculiarities of the school, meaningful decision to the success of universities. To

manage this process well, it is vital to manage various fields such as objectives, program content, standards, organizational processes, teaching, as well as testing, evaluation and quality assurance. The training quality determines the existence and development of the training facility, so the training management is essentially a quality management training through the teaching and learning process of teachers and students.

### 3.2.6. Coordinating between training institutions and associated organisations

The relationship among undergraduate institutions should always be consistent, in which the responsibility of the departments of training in undergraduate institutions is to build training programs, appoint the teacher compiling the curriculum, learning materials, and teaching participation in coordination with units such as administrative, organizational, training, inspectors and related centres organize inter-training between universities and localities.

The relationships and responsibilities between universities and coordinated institutions of distance training are clearly assigned and taken seriously to ensure that the process is taking place smoothly, limiting negative limitations and ensuring training quality.

### 3.2.7. Implementing the regulations and policies of distance training

Constructing and completing legal documents for management, development of distance training, fostering management staff, teaching management capacities, program design, studying materials, teaching methods, inspection and evaluation; Enhancing the awareness of the society about distance training so that people and organisations understand the characteristics, benefits and effectiveness of the form, thus voluntarily participating in the career of distance training.

Expanding international cooperation to learn experience, research and application of new technology in accordance with country conditions; Encouraging local and international organizations and individuals to invest, sponsor, contribute experience, training officers, and applying advanced technologies to the distance education system in Vietnam.

### 3.2.8. Managing quality; inspecting and monitoring distance training

The training process without the inspection and supervision will not see the defect and errors. Therefore, the inspection and supervision are of extreme importance in the training, especially for distance training in market economy and international integration. This is an integral key in the training process, with the function of identifying and evaluating the training quality for the

final purpose, i.e. students when graduating meet the requirement of labor market.

## 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the market economy and international integration, the mission is to train promptly and efficiently university-qualified human resources to ensure the rapid and sustainable development of the nation in general, each region and area in particular. Therefore, it is necessary to attentively develop distance training in undergraduate institutions, thereby contributing to other forms of training in the fulfilment of the above tasks. To enhance the thrive and sustainable distance training development in undergraduate institutions, the active participation and cooperation of individuals, authority levels, educational institutions and communities are needed.

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