Vocational Training for Rural Youth in Mekong Delta, Vietnam

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Abstract

The Mekong Delta is the agricultural center of Vietnam, producing annually more than 50% of staples and 66% of aqua-products for the whole country. Yet the rate of unskilled labor, 66% of the regional labor force, ranked 4th out of 8 regions across Vietnam. For the country to make an effective transition to a modernized agriculture, improving the quality of the regional workforce must become a priority. Vocational training programs for rural youth, future leaders of agriculture, hence, play a critical role in the growth process of the region.

This poster depicts the positive influences that vocational trainings have on rural youth’s outlook and level of initiative. The study engaged 100 youth from 11 villages in An Giang province in the Mekong Delta. These youth were enrolling in mobile vocational training courses offered by the provincial Department of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs. The research methods employed were questionnaires for youth and in-depth interviews with local officials.

The local government considers mobile vocational training a practical and innovative approach to reach youth in remote villages who cannot afford to attend courses at the main training centers.

Major Findings:

- Although coming from fairly remote villages, all the youth under 18 and nearly all the youth under 24—contrasting to conventional marriage practices—remain single.
- More than 50% of the youth feel confident that their future will be better. (Only 6% indicates that they do not feel confident). There is also a correlation between this optimism and their belief that they are learning skills currently generating profitable income in their villages.
- About 30% of the youth presently have financial loans. When asked whether they want to borrow more money, the same percentage of youth indicated “yes”. The difference is that the percentage of 19–24 youth who wants to take loans doubled.
- The requested borrowing amounts range from $80 to $3,000. The most requested sum is $800–$1,000. The major reasons for the loans are (1) Setting up small enterprises to utilize the newly learned skills; (2) Investing in cattle purchase (for youth in agricultural training).

Three conclusions were drawn from the findings: 1) An opportunity to pursue vocational training can potentially increase youth’s optimism (there has been substantial research that proves the positive effect of optimism on youth’s resiliency and general well-being); 2) Vocational training, which motivates youth towards building careers, can have constructive socio-cultural impact such as preventing rural youth from early marriages; 3) Rural youth are in dire need of financial capital and they are becoming more bold in their quest for growth; the
increased willingness to take risk, when equipped with trained skills, is fertile soil for entrepreneurship. Rural youth who have access to vocational training and financial capital are then more likely to grow into self-reliant adults and contributing citizens.

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