

BLUE OCEAN STRATEGY AS INCLUSIVE INNOVATION POLICY FOR IMPLEMENTING DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT LEGAL RULES FROM VIETNAMESE ENTERPRISE PERSPECTIVE

ESTRATÉGIA DO OCEANO AZUL COMO POLÍTICA DE INOVAÇÃO INCLUSIVA PARA A IMPLEMENTAÇÃO DE REGRAS LEGAIS DE EMPREGO PARA DEFICIENTES DA PERSPECTIVA DE EMPRESAS VIETNAMITAS*

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Abstract: Implementing disability employment legal rules from Labor Code and other relevant laws is necessary according to the inclusive innovation policy of Vietnam. Statistical reports show that the percentage of people with disabilities who are able to work in Vietnam is quite high, showing the potential of this group of workers. However, research on the exploitation and use of disabled labors that differ from Vietnamese conventional conducts has not yet received widespread attention through the nation. Inspired by the blue ocean strategy proposed by Kim and Mauborgne in 2005, an economic theory targeting at creating an uncontested market space as inclusive innovation policy through simultaneously achieving distinction and low cost, we proposed a preliminary theoretical framework for a strategic blue ocean human resources management. Accordingly, this article investigates four Vietnamese enterprises' disability employment strategies from a blue ocean strategy perspective. Semi-structured interviews with the enterprises' representatives in Hanoi were analyzed through axial coding. The results confirmed that the participant enterprises followed certain strategies in disability employment which were significantly different from the tenets of the blue ocean strategy. Specific recommendations were made as to further confirmation of the proposed framework and actions taken by the stakeholders to promote innovation in disability employment in Vietnam.

* Artigo recebido em 02/09/2022 e aprovado para publicação pelo Conselho Editorial em 20/09/2022.

Key words: Blue ocean strategy. Disability employment. Inclusive innovation policy. Labor laws. Reconstructionist view of strategy.

Resumo: A implementação de regras legais de emprego para deficientes do Código do Trabalho e outras leis relevantes é necessária de acordo com a política de inovação inclusiva do Vietnã. Relatórios estatísticos mostram que a porcentagem de pessoas com deficiência que são capazes de trabalhar no Vietnã é bastante alta, mostrando o potencial deste grupo de trabalhadores. Entretanto, a pesquisa sobre a exploração e o uso de trabalhos com deficiência que diferem das condutas convencionais vietnamitas ainda não recebeu atenção generalizada em toda a nação. Inspirados pela estratégia do oceano azul proposta por Kim e Mauborgne em 2005, uma teoria econômica visando a criação de um espaço de mercado incontestável como política de inovação inclusiva através da obtenção simultânea de distinção e baixo custo, propusemos uma estrutura teórica preliminar para uma gestão estratégica de recursos humanos no oceano azul. Assim, este artigo investiga as estratégias de emprego de quatro empresas vietnamitas com deficiência a partir de uma perspectiva estratégica do oceano azul. As entrevistas semi-estruturadas com os representantes das empresas em Hanói foram analisadas através de codificação axial. Os resultados confirmaram que as empresas participantes seguiram determinadas estratégias de emprego para deficientes que eram significativamente diferentes dos princípios da estratégia do oceano azul. Foram feitas recomendações específicas para confirmar ainda mais a estrutura proposta e as ações tomadas pelas partes interessadas para promover a inovação no emprego de pessoas com deficiência no Vietnã.

Palavras-chave: Estratégia para o Oceano Azul. Emprego para pessoas com deficiência. Política de inovação inclusiva. Leis trabalhistas. Visão reconstrucionista da estratégia.

1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive innovation policy is always one of the top priorities in any government, especially ones like Vietnam where the serious aftermath of wars and poverty has been affecting millions of people. Viet Nam has a promising base of policies that support inclusive innovation while implementing disability employment legal rules is very necessary. Similar to other governments, Vietnam has issued the labor regime of disabled people in its 1994's Labor Code and enterprises' responsibilities in disability employment in 2010's Disability Law to encourage, engage and protect disabled labors. However, enhancing societal participation of people with disabilities has still had the responsible authorities and enterprises frowning due to economic challenges and social discrimination (Duff, Ferguson, & Gilmore, 2007; Lu & Nguyen, 2021) as well as other barriers in education and employment chances (Hästbacka & Nygård, 2019).

Meanwhile, disabled labors have also been documented as a potential “untapped” resources whose job commitment and loyalty are high, and absenteeism is low, but employment rate is far from expectation (Ellinger et al., 2020). It was estimated by Vietnam's Department of Social Protection in 2015 that there were over 7 million disabled people, more than 50% of whom were in

working ages and almost 20% of whom were able to join the labor market. 80% of this working disabled population, however, have been active primarily in self-employment or family business without sustainable working conditions or remuneration. In Vietnam, the enterprises, both private and state, who employ disabled workers are mostly involved in textile and handicrafts, and only a modest number of businesses assimilate people with disabilities in office jobs or information technology. Despite the attempt to promote inclusive employment innovation policy, these enterprises have actually been able to provide jobs for only 15% of the disabled of working ages (Vietnam National Committee on People with disability, 2018). The rapid development of market economy has exposed people with disabilities to tough competitions against other working populations, and required them to keep up with dramatic social changes.

In order to help solve the problem of bringing people with disabilities of working age into the labor market, reduce the burden on society and create new values in terms of economy, education and society, many well-known enterprises around the world has integrated the "blue ocean" strategy (or BOS) proposed by W.Chan Kim and Renee Mauborgne in 2005 into their recruitment process for service, delivery and logistics departments, such as Amazon, Kinopolis, Apple, Walgreens, Procter & Gamble, OfficeMax, XPO Logistics (Ellinger et al., 2020). In their descriptive overview of applying BOS into disability employment in the above manufacturers, Ellinger and colleagues (2020) report a series of effective practices for hiring and assimilating disabled workers, including restructuring working facilities and creating corporate cultures that are disability-friendly, partnering with related authoritative institutions, establishing equal salary and bonus policy between disabled and normally-abled workers, training existing employees and managers of all levels to support and co-work with new disabled colleagues and so on. Employing people with disabilities, in turn, has brought great benefits to these enterprises such as increasing labor productivity, lowering employee turnover, reducing business taxes and promoting corporate prestige (Ellinger et al., 2020).

Although researched to bring direct economic benefits to businesses, BOS with its proposed action principles has been confirmed through the authors' empirical research as not only for business organizations, but also serving people in many aspects such as "the arts, nonprofits, the public sector, even countries" (Kim & Mauborgne, 2015, p.25). Human resource management in general and the use of disabled labor force in particular are not only an indispensable part of business organizations but also related to public policy, economy and social security of a country. However, it remains in doubt whether or not a strategy of recruiting personnel and/or employing

workers with disabilities in Vietnamese enterprises has been based on the "blue ocean" strategy or any other innovative procedures.

The idea of a blue ocean in human resources was thus formed as a reference for the current recruitment and use of disabled labor practices of some enterprises in Vietnam, thereby hopefully making useful suggestions for distinctive, and if possible, more effective use of disabled labors. In essence, this is an exploratory research based on the general theoretical framework of BOS. To do this, the research must develop criteria on policies and practices of recruitment and use of disabled workers based on the action framework and principles of action of BOS as well as theories related to disabled employees' labor. A specific theoretical framework as such, however, does not currently exist. Therefore, this study attempts to propose a preliminary framework for a strategic blue ocean personnel management that builds a certain perspective from which the practices of the examined are analyzed.

In addition, due to the sensitive nature of the research subject being people with disabilities as well as the confidentiality in the recruitment policy and operation of each enterprise, it is not easy to extensively investigate enterprises' disability recruitment strategies. Therefore, the research in this article is restricted to a multiple case study of four enterprises employing disabled workers within the research group's reach in Hanoi to answer the following questions:

- a. What strategies are applied in the surveyed enterprises' disability employment?
- b. To what extent are these strategies analogous to the blue ocean strategy proposed by Kim and Mauborgne (2005)?

To answer these questions, the article is structured as follows. The second section reviews the research literature on disability employment, the theoretical framework of BOS as inclusive innovation policy, thereby providing an interpretation of the theory in respect to human-resource-management in general and its relation to disability employment. The next section describes the methodology of this study, followed by a demonstration and discussion of the outcomes in the fourth section. Finally, this paper will be wrapped up with a conclusion and relevant recommendations for theories and practices in disability employment in the Vietnamese context.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUNDS

2.1. A brief review on disability employment research

Worldwide research on disability varies, ranging from disability medical care to social, institutional and legislative domains. Disability employment in particular has been discussed extensively in terms of establishment, adjustment and effects of state inclusive innovation policy to promote disabled people's labor (e.g., Hästbacka & Nygård, 2019; Mori & Sakamoto, 2018; Vall Castello, 2012), relations between societal participation and the disabled's well-being (e.g., Hall, Kurth, & Hunt, 2013), different social groups' attitudes toward workers with disabilities (e.g., Duff, Ferguson, & Gilmore, 2007; Erbaydar, Caman, & Cilingiroglu, 2013; Luu, 2019; Wegscheider & Guével, 2021), and barriers to disabled labors' access to employment (e.g., Chandola & Rouxel, 2021; Hall, Ipsen, Kurth, McCormick, & Chambless, 2020). Although conducted in different contexts through diverse approaches, these previous studies on disability employment around the globe share some common grounds.

First of all, since labor market participation is among many other societal participation (Hästbacka & Nygård, 2019), most researchers stood on the stance of the social model of disability which posits that an individual's disability is not due to her/his impairment per se: it is caused by "societal failure to accommodate people with impairments and the barriers presented by the failures of accommodation" (Duff, Ferguson, & Gilmore, 2007, p.19). This model has been employed to explain the "socially constructed nature of disability", and at the same time, recognize the "potential to improve the quality of life for disabled people" of the social-model-based research (Duff, Ferguson, & Gilmore, 2007, p.20). These studies also emphasized the disabled's experiences of being "overlooked, excluded, unappreciated, discriminated, labelled, disrespected, even offended", which was "often the case in job interviews" (Hästbacka & Nygård, 2019, p.22).

Secondly, while studies on disability employment have reported the association between employment and disabled workers' better well-being (Hall, Kurth, & Hunt, 2013; Luu, 2019), no clear evidence of the negative effects of employing people with disability on enterprises' profits has been documented (Luu, 2019; Mori & Sakamoto, 2018). In contrast, disabled workers in several famous firms even bring great benefits to their employers in terms of productivity and revenue (Ellinger et al., 2020). These research outcomes undergird the promotion of more job opportunities for disabled people by both manufacturers and authoritative bodies.

It is also noteworthy from the reviewed literature that very little was examined with respect to firms' engagement in increasing disability employment, whereas organizations' and employers' attitudes towards labors with disabilities were widely scrutinized. Rashid, Thompson-Hodgetts, and

Nicholas' (2020) research was one of the few studies that attempted to investigate employers' involvement in hiring and assimilating disabled workers. It was found in their paper that (1) employers believed that people with disabilities should be hired for their capabilities rather than out of pity, (2) employers emphasized there should be clear strategies in employing disabled people to balance between corporate social responsibilities and financial benefits; (3) employers were not fully aware of the extent and costs of accommodations of employing disabled workers, and (4) employer incentives to hire individuals with disabilities were not necessarily a positive strategy to enhance disability employment, except in case of small and medium business or employers who were exclusively active in inclusive employment innovation policy.

The above findings seem to resonate another thing in common among the studies reviewed in this current paper: the fracture in terms of information flow and policy enforcement among people with disabilities, enterprises and the responsible administrative institutions. For example, disabled people's resignation and renouncement of entitlements were reported in Finland due to shortage of information of what service and support for societal participation to apply for and where to get them, which were "sometimes complicated by bureaucracy, regional differences in service provision" and "the lack of professional flexibility and understanding" (Hästbacka & Nygård, 2019, p.21, 22). In Japan and the UK, although an increased levy-grant scheme in disability employment policies has proved some positive effects on encouraging enterprises to hire disabled workers, it was reported to remain somewhat disputable with respect to the retention of the taxes and how much of the quota should be applied (Jones & Cullis, 1988; Mori & Sakamoto, 2018). Also in the UK, despite the establishment of Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) in 1995, people with disabilities were not fully protected from employment discrimination since the DDA is based on the medical model of disability which caused medical evidence, assessment or treatment to greatly affect employment outcomes (Duff, Ferguson, & Gilmore, 2007). Similarly, in the research on the effect of employment on the disabled's health in the US by Hall, Kurth and Hunt (2013), the disabled participants even mentioned "being discouraged from working by medical professionals and federal disability policies" if they wanted to stay eligible for the services and benefits they needed.

In the Vietnamese context, the government has issued policies on vocational training for people with disabilities so that they can actively create jobs or enter the labor market. However, according to Hoang (2020) there are still many shortcomings in relation to the disabled's eligibility of enrolment ages, academic level and the requirement of feasible self-employment plans by the trainees-to-be. Moreover, inaccessibility has still been present in terms of mobility services and

inflexible training course time as well hinders people with disabilities to enroll in vocational training. Another problem is the trained occupations are mainly simple crafts, considering the characteristics of disability without taking into account the needs of the market, which in turn limits employment opportunities of the disabled. Last but not least, the incentives for social enterprises employing people with disabilities are not reasonable as to quotas of disability employment and support system, like subsidies for barrier-free workplaces and job training services, to help enterprises to achieve their quotas (Hoang, 2020).

The above review deems to provide some implications. In the first place, all over the world, people with disabilities have always experienced nuances of discrimination, especially in employment, despite the existence of state disability policies. Secondly, there is a lack of valuable feedback from disabled people, social enterprises, administrative offices to disability legislators when unexpected incidents happen. This may result from what McDonnell and Weale (1984) called “political culture” which exists in many countries and is described as “premised on incremental reform, skeptical of a single solution to problems, shy of litigation, and aware of the career requirements of [their] employees” (cited in Jones & Cullis, 1988, p.42, 43). Most noticeably, while the literature has tapped on employers’ attitudes toward disability employment and related policies, very little has been explored regarding enterprises’ initiative strategies in employing people with disabilities. In conclusion, strategic frameworks of disability employment should be established and suggested to social enterprises alongside state inclusive disability innovation policies.

2.2. Blue ocean strategy (BOS) as inclusive innovation policy and its implications for human-capital-management

Blue ocean strategy (BOS), first coined by W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne in 2004, refers to an innovative economic approach which targets at creating an uncontested market space through simultaneously achieving distinction and low cost. Before Kim and Mauborgne’s introduction of the concept, business innovations had occurred in every shape and size. However, only until the two professors published their book on BOS in 2005 did the strategy become comprehensive and well-known, with more than 150 vivid examples of entrepreneurial and public sector innovation. Since then, BOS has been integrated and examined in a number of domains, including health care (e.g., Kamal & Dionne-Odom, 2016; Slocum & Papa, 2014), banking (e.g., Al Nsour, 2016), manufacturing (e.g., Chang, 2010; Lohtander et al., 2017; Sadiq, 2021), logistics and

services (e.g., Ellinger et al., 2020; Priilaid, Ballantyne, & Packer, 2020), public sectors (e.g., Lindič, Bavdaž, & Kovačič, 2012; Ramli, Ahmad, & Harith, 2016), to name a few.

In Vietnam, the inclusive innovation policy is defined as innovation of, by and for all as both producers/innovators and consumers/users for the purpose of both economic growth and social advancement (Viet Nam's inclusive innovation policy, 2020, p.4). Therefore, BOS is one of the top priority of this innovation policy. In Vietnam, BOS has also been applied by a number of enterprises, typical examples include the Military Telecom Corporation (Viettel), Vietnam Soymilk Company (Vinasoy), Saigon Beverage Company (Tribeco) and Pho 24.

In general, the application of BOS has brought great success and benefits to these Vietnamese businesses (Mai, 2020). Especially in the era of digital technology development, the search for new markets, as well as innovations, helps Vietnamese businesses become more solid in the advent of the digital economy. However, the available reports on the blue ocean strategy of the Vietnamese enterprises mentioned above show that the application of this strategy mainly focuses on value creation, the characteristics of output products, and targeting customers' tastes. Meanwhile, there is no clear data on the blue ocean strategy in human resources, especially the recruitment and training of workers with disabilities in these enterprises.

The question is put forth as to what BOS has to offer to human-capital-management in general and to disability employment in particular. Of all the 8 core premises of BOS, the last principle of aligning value, profit and people propositions provides a bird's eye view on a successful and sustainable business strategy. This principle postulates that motivating employees should be at the heart of and in alignment with reconstructing market boundaries, offering new values to customers, and discovering business model innovation during the implementation of a blue ocean strategy (Kim & Mauborgne, 2015). In other words, for a blue ocean strategy to be effective, all three propositions of value, profit and people must simultaneously achieve distinction and low cost with the people proposition being the enterprise's hallmark which is very challenging to be imitated (Kim & Mauborgne, 2015). Inspired by this premise, the present research is trying to develop relevant propositions to human-capital- management by interpreting the BOS principles and case studies, thereby initiating a first exclusive framework for a strategic blue ocean personnel management (which is illustrated in Figure 1).

2.2.1. Reconstructing recruitment boundaries.

The first proposition draws on the principle of reconstructing market boundaries to break from the competition and creates blue oceans. In addition, this department may have to deal with internal disagreements from other departments of the business such as the salary review committee, reward competition, or state policy and legislation related to recruitment and employment (personal conversation with HR officers of Techcombank Vietnam, 2020). Recruitment of high-quality workers, therefore, may need to change by looking at alternative sources of labor, thereby making competition unnecessary and saving costs. As a result, salary and bonus policies might become more easily adopted.

Moreover, in times of shortage of high quality labors, enterprises can consider eliminating certain factors if they appear irrelevant to the vacant posts, such as age, gender, region, look, health condition, family circumstances, personal history and so on (Nguyen, 2017). Furthermore, enterprises may try looking for a group of workers with a different nature from the one that is currently scarce in the market, but still meet the requirements of the vacancy while still achieve the ultimate goal in the business strategy.

To find the suitable alternative labor sources, employers need to look across alternative suppliers of workers. Enterprises are considered as customers of the labor market, ranging from an existing customer, or a near-future customer who refuses to use a type of employees because it finds it unnecessary or unsuitable, to untapped customers by organizations/individuals providing labor. On the other hand, there exist a great number of passive candidates who never consider working for a certain business or in a certain field due to social barriers (i.e., stereotyping and prejudice) or personal motivations. Finally, while reconstructing the recruitment boundaries, enterprises need to assess and understand the development trends of the workforce and labor market over time. As the labor market becomes richer and richer due to the development of economy, science and education, many multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary labor groups will also develop. Along with these workers come other special groups of labors (e.g., people with disabilities with expertise and skills, artificial intelligence technology, remote workers, freelancers, etc.) who are increasingly participating in socio-economic activities. Accordingly, the quality, principles and procedures for recruiting distinctive and low-cost workers will also change over time. In short, we suggest that reconstruction of recruitment boundaries be the first strategy in a blue ocean human resource management. This proposition entails looking across alternative groups of workers to replace scarce labors, searching for passive candidates and expanding labor supply channels, assessing and understanding the

development trends of the workforce and labor market over time. On the contrary, recruiting new labors should not be the sole answer to workforce scarcity and should also go along with reassessment of the existing employees, because this considerably affects the strategic pricing of labors in particular and of production in general. This leads to the second proposition for human-capital-management based on the BOS framework.

2.2.2. Prioritizing exceptional values of the labors.

One principle that greatly influences an enterprise's success is a right strategic sequence of product utility, strategic pricing, and target costing. This sequence is stated in the BOS framework to produce value innovation which is "based on a win-win game among buyers, companies and society" (Kim & Mauborgne, 2015, p. 191). When a blue ocean strategy is applied, this principle anticipates potential resistance from all stakeholders including its employees, business partners and the general public.

These premises implicit the significance of an enterprise's workforce, which also possesses its own exceptional values that can promote the business operation and that needs assessment as well. The emphasis on labors' exceptional values require evaluation of the effectiveness of the present job to determine the quality of the current personnel. On the other hand, employees with subjectivity or lack of seriousness of some employees who were regarded as high quality, discouragement in difficulties, and so on may hinder the implementation of an enterprise's blue ocean strategy. Two ways to raise these extras in the human resources are either fostering the current employees or recruiting a pool of workers with similar value additions.

To conclude, we propose that prioritizing exceptional values of the labors, which can help solve enterprises' operational problems and promote their prestige, involves evaluating current workforce efficiency and value innovation, identifying factors outside the employees' expertise that bring valuable innovations to enterprises, and increasing additional values of employees through new training or recruitment.

2.2.3. Executing the strategy of using new labors in a fair process.

The aforementioned principle of a right strategic sequence in an economic innovation is once again emphasized by Kim and Mauborgne (2015) in their discussion on how to execute a blue ocean strategy. The most important mission is to "create a culture of trust and commitment that

motivates people to execute the agreed strategy” (Kim & Mauborgne, 2015, p.230) through a “fair process” (p. 233). This managerial procedure consists of 3 factors that complement each other:

- engagement: ask for people’s feedback on the strategic decisions and on other individuals’ perceptions;
- explanation: justify why the strategy has been decided and should be executed and how it is going to affect the stakeholders;
- expectation clarity: make sure every individual understand what their responsibilities are to come to term with the new strategy.

One of the hurdles that an enterprise may have to jump when implementing a new recruitment and human-resource-management approach involves their current employees’ trepidation regarding their job status and incomes, or their pre-existing stereotyping and prejudice (of gender, region or cultural identity), which may in turn affect their willingness to welcome and co-work with new labors.

In a nutshell, the final proposition that we devise is to execute a blue ocean human-resource-management strategy in a fair process, which entails pinpointing execution barriers, eliminating cognitive impediment, redistributing resources, and clearly dividing responsibilities.

2.2.4. Reconstructionist view of strategy.

In their expanded edition of their book, Kim and Mauborgne (2015) discuss how different viewpoints on the relationship between industry structure and enterprises’ strategies affect their actions as well as value innovation. According to the authors, the structuralist view undergirds the causal relation between the market and an enterprise’s performance, which “leads firms to divide industries into attractive and unattractive ones and to decide accordingly whether or not to enter” (p.319). Instead, the reconstructionist aims at the enterprise’s “endogenous growth” as a result of “creative entrepreneur” (p.317), which involves switching emphasis from supply to extra demand, from competition to value innovation.

Inspired by the reconstructionist view, we argue that it provides personnel management with a new paradigm on the role of enterprises in their interaction with job candidates.

Therefore, we suggest that the strategic blue ocean personnel management be based on a reconstructionist view of human resources, which encourages enterprises to actively innovate their values and initiatively turn themselves into destinations for quality workers. Below is the visualization of our proposed framework.

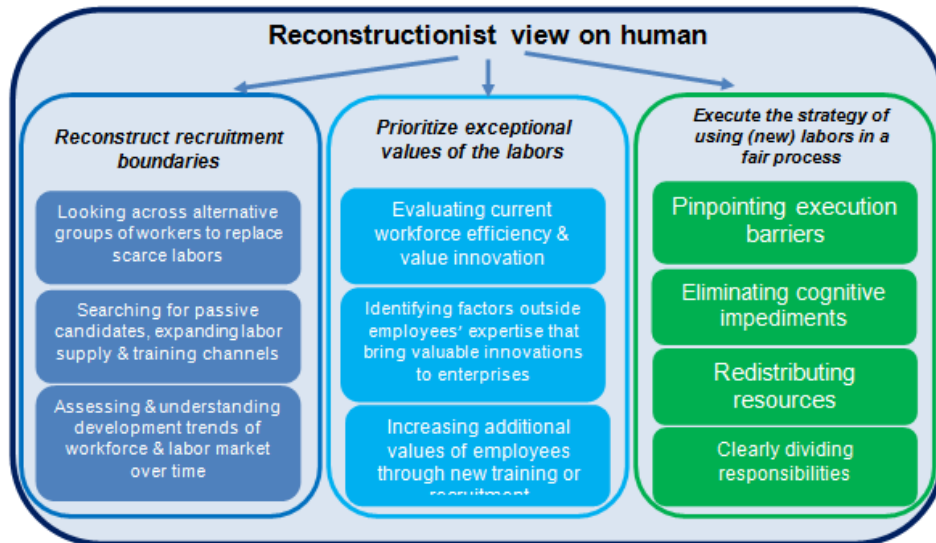


Figure 1. Proposed framework for a strategic blue ocean personnel management (Adapted from Kim & Mauborgne, 2015).

2.3. Strategic blue ocean personnel management and disability employment

As discussed in the previous sections, people with disabilities comprise a potential but untapped human resource. This population nowadays has been supported by technology and armed with knowledge and skills from inclusive educational policies and innovations.

That being said, disability employment also needs to be implemented with clearly defined strategies. In fact, there are social enterprises employing people with disabilities out of pity or benevolence (Luu, 2019; Rashid, Thompson-Hodgetts, & Nicholas, 2020). Other enterprises respond to the state levy-grant schemes by using disabled employees, yet the quotas have not been adequately achieved (Jones & Cullis, 1988; Mori & Sakamoto, 2018). These seemingly impromptu approaches to disability employment may gain positive social feedback but may not guarantee value innovation for anyone. Furthermore, as disabled people have still had to encounter discrimination on various levels, disability recruitment without strategic plans only gives way to perpetuation of stereotypes, prejudice and hostile attitudes.

Consequently, it is suggested that an enterprise's disability employment be investigated following a certain economic strategic framework. In this paper, the answers to our research question will follow our interpreted framework of the BOS. This will help the enterprise revise their practice of human-resource-management in general and disability employment in particular. Regarding its scientific significance, the research is hoped to provide a different perspective toward

Vietnamese employers' present use of disabled labors, thereby encouraging enterprises to revise their practices in so as to fulfill their corporate social responsibilities, adequately respond to state policies, and create new values to their own business, disabled populations and society.

3. METHODOLOGY

The participants partaking our survey were four representatives of four enterprises based in Hanoi. Their pseudo names are Tran, Nguyen, Le and Dao. Tran is the representative of the Hanoi-based office of a joint stock company selling smart, fashionable and hi-tech household products. His company has approximately 500 staff, 172 of whom are disabled employees. Nguyen is the CEO of a bedding wear factory which consists of 100 employees, 40 of whom are permanent workers of disabilities and another 20 disabled workers are seasonal. Le is the head of a small company of 30 workers producing products from indigenous natural materials. Lastly, Dao is the co-founder of a vocational center for teenagers and young adults of disabilities. All four companies are small and medium sized enterprises and all have plans to raise their number of disabled employees in the near future.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in Vietnamese with the four participants. The questions used in the interviews were based on our proposed framework for a strategic blue ocean personnel management in Figure 1. The questions, which can be found in Appendix 1, were then given to a panel of professionals of labor law, disability and human-resource-management in our academic circle to consult for validity before the interviews. Due to social distancing in Vietnam this year, the interview questions were sent to the participants via emails. The respondents' answers went through an initial open coding, and follow-up questions were added so as to get more explanations to unclear or intriguing details.

The collected data was analyzed through qualitative thematic analysis. Inductive and latent approaches were employed so that emergent meanings and subtexts or assumptions underlying the data could be identified. The analysis of our data went through three stages of coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The stage of open coding entailed color-highlighting and labelling every phrase in the respondents' answers based on their contents. In this stage, every interview was looked into thoroughly so that we would not miss any relevant or potentially interesting idea or feeling about disability employment. In the axial coding stage, patterns among the initial codes were determined. The first and second stages were conducted in a non-linear way: we moved back and forth between

the initial codes and the themes to (re)define the categories and subcategories. Finally, the stage of selective coding allowed us to identify the controlling connection of the data. Our participants were asked to double check our interpretations of their discourse in order to ensure the objectivity, credibility and reliability of our data analysis. The following section reports the themes identified from our data.

4. FINDINGS

This section demonstrates the research findings which emerged from the interviews with the four participants. Two central themes were identified in the data set, namely: (1) disability employment strategies used by the surveyed enterprises, and (2) the participants' implicit perceptions of disabled labors' employability.

4.1. The enterprises' strategies of disability employment

In answering the first research question, a pattern in disability employment procedures among the surveyed enterprises has been identified.

4.1.1. motivations for disability employment.

In terms of the rationales for disability employment in their organizations, all representatives of the four enterprises mentioned the benefits of employing disabled workers, ranging from making use of this potential but neglected human resource to bringing profits to the enterprises and helping the businesses to actualize their social missions.

Initially, due to the nature of the work of retail stores and craft workshops where workers work by shift or by product, the surveyed enterprises had to cope with difficulties in operation and employee turnover, which took them a lot of time and money to look for, recruit and train new labors (Tran and Nguyen). The dynamic labor market as opposed to less volatile manual work, according to Le, demotivated her company's current employees while encouraged them to change jobs. In such cases, disability employment helped these enterprises "quickly stabilize their workforce in scarcity" (Dao), "ensure the predetermined quality and plans" (Le), as well as "remarkably reduce the cost of constant recruitments" (Tran). Moreover, the potentiality of disabled labors was also reported to create conditions for businesses to replicate their scale locally. Secondly, it was

acknowledged by the respondents that disability employment brought advantages to their businesses. Tran and Nguyen agreed that employing disabled labors allowed enterprises to enjoy the government's supports in tax exemption and other advantageous conditions for business development. The sustainability of disabled labors was also believed an influential factor on remarkable reduction of constant recruitment costs (Tran). Furthermore, all interviewees mentioned customer satisfaction with exquisite products and polite services by workers with disabilities. On the other hand, disabled people's high spirit of overcoming difficulties "helped motivate the working atmosphere at the enterprise, other workers felt comfortable working with them" (Dao).

The final reason for disability employment in the investigated enterprises was to actualize their social responsibilities. Tran contended that using disabled workers was "one of the business strategies, as well as one of the core values of the business". Other participants also agreed that empathy for workers with disabilities "created an environment for them to integrate and reintegrate into the community" (Nguyen), which was an "expression of humanity" (Le). Dao added that the opportunities to receive vocational training and create certain products by themselves enhanced disabled people's self-esteem. Apparently, disability employment in these enterprises not only benefited their business but also assisted them to contribute to the common good.

4.1.2. Planning for disability employment.

It was documented from the data that the stage of making plans for hiring disabled workers entailed reassessment of current resources, job requirement scaffolding and new system construction.

Tran and Le mentioned their companies' exclusive and detailed plans for disability employment. As such, the plans were divided into pillowing phases which were described as "specific, scientific and lawful" (Le), requiring the board of directors, the HR and finance departments to involve.

4.1.3. Executing disability employment.

It was discovered from the data that the execution of disability employment in the investigated entities happened alongside the planning stage, which caused some overlapped processes. However, this final stage has its exclusive characteristics as follow.

Firstly, all participants discussed their enterprises' disability recruitment approaches, including channels, partners, network, and tools. It was documented in all interviews that Hanoi's

Association of Disabled People was one of a most common and “prioritized partner in searching for disabled labors, followed by other job placement centers and labor promotion businesses” (Dao).

Secondly, during the enterprises’ employment of disabled workers, they had to conduct periodical assessments of the businesses’ current operation. Dao reported about her enterprise quarterly reviewing and evaluating disabled workers to make appropriate adjustments in terms of working conditions or workers’ performances. In addition, the enterprise compared with other units or enterprises using disabled labors to evaluate their own human resource stability, work efficiency, and especially other normally-abled employees’ recognition of workers with disabilities in the company (Dao).

In the third place, the constant assessment of ongoing operation allowed the surveyed enterprises to redistribute their resources for better use. For example, particular jobs that did not require much physical strength such as loading and displaying products onto shop shelves or guiding customers were assigned to disabled labors (Tran). Dao’s center raised more incentives to reward workers with high performance and to encourage the other. The redistribution of resources also covered the investment in disability-friendly facilities.

Last but not least, the researched enterprises had to develop strategies to deal with the typical difficulties as a result of employing disabled workers. For instance, in order to make communication with deaf and muted workers easier, Tran’s company’s retail stores installed simple sign language instructions for customers. Nguyen’s company arrange managers who were able to use sign language or used to communicating with disabled people.

To sum up, the execution of disability employment in the participants’ enterprises encompassed specific approaches to recruitment channels and partners, sourcing networks and tools. Other execution procedures, including onboard training, assessment of ongoing operation, redistribution of resources and establishment of supportive and inclusive innovation policies, were described as follow-up of each other and mutually influencing. Above all, the execution of disability employment took place in the context of difficulties that required the enterprises to enhance their competent communication with and about the disabled.

4.2. The participants' implicit perceptions of disabled labors' employability

The inductive and latent approaches to data analysis allowed us to discover the participants' hidden assumptions of disability employment, and even some contradictory beliefs about this population.

In the first place, all participants believe in positive stereotypes about inherent traits of people with disabilities. Such words as perseverance, diligence, endurance, affection, loyalty and their equivalents kept turning up in the interviewees' explanations to the rationale for disabilities employment.

On the other hand, there seemed to be contradictory perceptions about disabled people's working capacity among the respondents. Nguyen's and Tran's companies recruited disabled workers only for manual jobs, and so did not need those with good qualifications or exceptional skills. They, however, should be "free of mental or intellectual disabilities" (Nguyen). Last but not least, in another remark, Le did not give disability employment the credit of financially benefiting her enterprise because of all the procedures and expenditures they had to undergo.

Apparently, despite their seemingly disparities in disabled job candidates, the enterprises deemed to believe that disabled labors were subject to low paid job which did not require intelligence, intellectuality or sophistication. Besides, the interviews also revealed that intellectual and mental disabled people were not perceived as part of the so-called potential and untapped labor force that these enterprises aimed at.

To sum up, the informants, on the one hand, ascribed to disabled people positive characteristics and expected to possess disabled workers with such traits, while on the other hand, implicitly shared an underestimation of this labor population's capacity.

5. DISCUSSION

The outcomes of the current study revealed the disability employment strategies of the investigated enterprises and their representatives' assumptions of disabled workers. This section discusses these outcomes in light of our proposed framework of strategic blue ocean personnel management and previous research on similar domains.

Generally speaking, the research findings showed scattered similarities between the participant enterprises' disability employment and our proposed framework of strategic blue ocean personnel management inspired by Kim and Mauborgne (2015). Firstly, all participants reported

their enterprises' looking across alternative sources of labor, specifically disabled workers, in labor scarcity. Le's company even searched for passive candidates like pensioners and inexperienced people whose capacity and need for work matched the job criteria. Dao's center conveniently made use of their disabled learners to fill proper vacancies. Secondly, while Nguyen and Le depended on Hanoi Association of Disabled People only for supply of labors, Dao's and Tran's enterprises actively expanded their partners and coordination areas in training and supervising their newbies of disabilities, such as cooperating with experts in special needs education and disabled labor manager. Moreover, the participant enterprises appreciated disabled workers' positive attitudes which were believed to bring about exceptional values to the business such as low employee turnover, customers' satisfaction and empathy, as well as promotion of corporate image. This seemed to be the motivation for the enterprises to attempt to eliminate cognitive barriers through, for example, increased teamwork between disabled and normal-abled workers in Le's company, or increased ingroup communication to raise awareness of disability employment in Tran's. Last but not least, the four enterprises conducted periodical assessments of their ongoing operation with disability employment so as to reasonably redistribute their resources, especially for installing disability-friendly facilities and/or establishing supportive and inclusive policies.

Nevertheless, it was noticeable that all the procedures followed by these enterprises were, in essence, based on a structuralist perspective rather than a reconstructionist one. Initially, the motivation for disability employment in these enterprises was not to create innovation values in either human resources management or manufacture. It was either a consequence of labor scarcity, or in concurrence with previous studies in the same field (e.g., Dibben et al., 2002; Duff & Ferguson, 2007), a means of fulfilling corporate social responsibility and of promoting the business image in the public eyes. Moreover, the enterprises' structuralist approach could also be seen in their requirements of prospective disabled workers: they wanted to have perseverant, hardworking and loyal employees who could take care of themselves in the first place without or before showing the labors the reasons why they should devote all their best to the business. Put another way, these enterprises were looking at things in a one-sided way when they thought that they were the ones who set the criteria and that workers need to meet the standards to be able to work. Meanwhile, qualified disabled employees nowadays are very "realistic about the types of jobs they would apply for" (Williams, 2013, p.97), and therefore might very well have standards and expectations for employers. Lastly, Nguyen and Le's belief that disabled workers earned less than their non-disabled counterparts and that they did not need high qualifications was an expression of underestimation of

the disabled as well as a barrier preventing businesses from expanding their reach to quality disabled workers. Apparently, the approach to disability employment taken by the participant enterprises was by far different from a strategic blue ocean human resources management.

Another issue worth attention in this study was the participants' implicit perceptions of workers with disabilities. Firstly, the positive stereotypes that the informants ascribed to disabled workers implied expectations of the disabled employees' performances. Le even affirmed in the requirements of disabled job candidates' capacity that they must prove the quality of their work, and the products they created would even be better than those of normally-disabled counterparts. Positive stereotyping is, on the one hand, a source of encouragement, and on the other hand, harmful as it makes believers disappointed when things are not up to expectations, and at the same time puts unnecessary pressure on people who are stereotyped (Nguyen, P. M., 2017). Disappointment of disabled workers' performance can lead to the "under-utilization of disabled people's skills and training" (Duff, Ferguson, & Gilmore, 2007, p.17), or even worse, discrimination, instead of making full use of the potential untapped labors as the participants stated before. Secondly, the enterprises' refusal to recruit intellectual or mental disabilities hinted that they either did not bother to learn about such disabilities or perceived that people with intellectual or mental disabilities could not work. This belief was a result of the medical model of disabilities, which was in contrast to the results of previous research on intellectual disability employment. Those studies find that people with intellectual disabilities partook in and enjoyed competitive employment, and "the factors in a competitive work environment, such as interpersonal relationships with other employees, encourage job success, satisfaction, and the quality of work-life" for them (Almalky, 2020, p.4).

6. CONCLUSION

This study has shown that BOS as inclusive innovation policy is necessary for Vietnamese enterprises, which supports disability employment for both social and economic advancement. In fact, the investigated Vietnamese enterprises have been using workers with disabilities following certain procedures, mainly consisting of three stages: identifying motivations, planning and executing the plan. The inductive analysis of qualitative data shows that these processes were not intrinsically similar to the tenets of the blue ocean strategy proposed by Kim and Mauborgne (2015). In addition, the beliefs hidden in the research participants' discourse about the traits and capacity of disabled

workers also indicated the popularity of the medical model of disability in Vietnam's labor market rather than the social one. Therefore, the labor laws and relevant legal rules need to be improved in more detailed way by more specific programs with the aim to support both economic and social advancement.

It is acknowledged that our sample of participants was not statistically representative. Additionally, the validity and credibility of our proposed framework for a strategic blue ocean human resources management needs to be verified by further research. However, in addressing the dearth of research in disability employment in light of an innovation theory, we believe that our work helps further understanding of how Vietnamese enterprises have used and viewed disabled workers.

We do not think there should be more policies to support workers with disabilities because “policies might not lead to desired outcomes” (Lindič, Bavdaž, & Kovačič, 2012, p.936), what we need is that the spirit of the social model of disability can penetrate deeply into the minds of people, especially employers in Vietnam. To do so, we need specific programs and actions. In addition to available scholarships and skill contests for disabled people, the education of labor consciousness and respect for differences should be emphasized in all fields and circumstances, so that the disabled are treated with equity instead of pity. Besides, more connections and coordination should be made among the disabled, their representatives and associations, experts and practitioners in disability, and enterprises so as to enhance the chances of innovative ideas and practices. The model of multilateral cooperation in Dao's center is a vivid example that contributed to optimize disability employment. Also, enterprises should be proactive in attracting and promoting potential workers of disabilities with the businesses' own innovations and exceptional values because the key to successful strategy execution is “not to create a new market but to be the first to develop and exploit that market” ((Lindič, Bavdaž, & Kovačič, 2012, p.936).

Statements and declarations

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request. Moreover, we declare that no potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors of the article.

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