

# INTERNATIONAL INTEGRATION AND ITS IMPACTS ON HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM CURRENTLY

## INTEGRAÇÃO INTERNACIONAL E SEUS IMPACTOS NO DESENVOLVIMENTO DE RECURSOS HUMANOS NO VIETNÃ ATUALMENTE\*

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**Abstract:** International integration is an inevitable and objective trend of history. It is driven by certain economic, political, socio-cultural factors, and is developing strongly in the current period. International integration has been affecting all fields and aspects of social life in general and the development of human resources in particular. In the context of globalization and international economic integration with the strong development of science - technology and the knowledge economy, human resources always play a decisive role in the development of production forces and the economic growth rate of a country. The article uses the dialectical materialism methodology; the principles of comprehensiveness, development and the specific history; and methods of comparison, analysis, synthesis and statistics to clarify the basic contents in the concepts of international integration, human resources, human resource development, thereby revealing the impacts of international integration on human resource development in Vietnam. The analysis of these impacts is of great significance in the development of mechanisms and policies to promote positive impacts and make full use of opportunities, and at the same time, minimize risks and challenges of international integration to the economic-social development in Vietnam currently.

**Keywords:** Development. Human resources. International integration. Vietnam.

**Resumo:** A integração internacional é uma tendência inevitável e objetiva da história. Ela é impulsionada por certos fatores econômicos, políticos e socioculturais, e está se desenvolvendo fortemente no período atual. A integração internacional vem afetando todos os campos e aspectos da vida social em geral e o desenvolvimento dos recursos humanos em particular. No contexto da globalização e da integração econômica internacional com o forte desenvolvimento da ciência - tecnologia e economia do conhecimento, os recursos humanos sempre desempenham um papel decisivo no desenvolvimento das forças de produção e na taxa de crescimento econômico de um país. O artigo utiliza a metodologia do materialismo dialético; os princípios da abrangência, desenvolvimento e história específica; e métodos de comparação, análise, síntese e estatística para esclarecer os conteúdos básicos nos conceitos de integração internacional, recursos humanos, desenvolvimento de recursos humanos, revelando assim os impactos da integração internacional no desenvolvimento de recursos humanos no Vietnã. A análise desses impactos é de grande importância no desenvolvimento de mecanismos e políticas para promover impactos positivos e fazer pleno uso das oportunidades e, ao mesmo tempo,

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minimizar os riscos e desafios da integração internacional para o desenvolvimento econômico-social no Vietnã atualmente.

**Palavras-chave:** Desenvolvimento. Recursos humanos. Integração internacional. Vietnã.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Entering the 21st century, international integration has become a common and inevitable trend of all countries in the world. In the process of international integration, each country has its own way of integration, but historical practice has proven that the key to the success of the international integration process in countries is the right investment in the human factor, considering people as the goal and the driving force of development. International economic integration has been the central theme of Vietnam's reform program from 1986 (To, 2018). The appearance of the term "integration" were marked at the 8th National Congress in the most important documents: "Building an open economy and integrating with the region and the world" (World Trade Organization, 2021, p. 5). For Vietnam, the 10th National Congress of Deputies (2006) marked a breakthrough in the integration process when Vietnam became an official member of the WTO. This helped to pave the way for the stronger integration such as joining the ASEAN Economic Community - AEC (2015) and the Trans-Pacific Partnership - TPP (2016). Up to now, Vietnam has been a member of 63 international organizations and has had relations with more than 1,200 NGOs with more than 500 having regulator operations in the country (Mah, 2021). Vietnam has been active with an increasing role in the United Nations (member of ECOSOC, member of the Executive Council of UNDP, UNFPA and UPU...). Moreover, Vietnam has promoted its active membership of ASEAN, Community of Francophone Countries, Non-Aligned Movement. Currently, Vietnam's international integration is increasingly intensive and widespread, from international economic integration to international integration in all other fields of social life (Nguyen & Doan, 2021; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2021; Nguyen & Pham, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2020; Van & Phuong, 2021). The process of international integration in the context of the fourth industrial revolution, the rapid development of science, and technology, the knowledge economy becoming a characteristic of the new era..., has been creating new opportunities. However, there are also many risks and challenges that require countries to have highly qualified, brave and creative human resources, to play the role of "leading" in orienting, receiving and

meeting the increasingly sophisticated and complex requirements of the science-technology development in the 4.0 revolution era. When looking at the reality of integration over the past time, Vietnam has achieved very important initial achievements in socio-economic development (World Bank, 2020), but those achievements are still mainly based on low-skilled labor (Nguyen et al., 2021) associated with exploitation of natural resources, borrowing the capital and importing the equipment lines from outside. The prevalence of untrained human resources, the lack of management, the low professional qualifications, and low skills; stagnation, conservatism, weak adaptability; the deterioration of political ideology, morality, and lifestyle of a part of human resources, especially human resources in leadership and management roles are causing many pressing problems and serious consequences such as: lagging further behind countries in the region and the world in all aspects, deviating from socialism, corruption, environmental pollution, debt default, or Vietnam could become the world's garbage dump. This is really a big and sensitive political issue, affecting the regime's survival, requiring political actors such as the Party, State, and socio-political organizations to quickly find some effective solutions to solve the problem of integration and development. With the characteristics of being a developing country, the economy is still facing many difficulties, the per-capital income is low, the quality of human resources is still limited, the integration process has been creating new opportunities. However, there are also many risks and challenges for Vietnam in the process of socio-economic development in general and human resource development in particular. The study of the impacts of international integration on the human resource development of Vietnam by pointing out the opportunities and challenges, which Vietnam is facing, is of great significance in formulating the reasonable guidelines, policies in order to overcome challenges, make full use of the opportunities that international integration brings for socio-economic development in general and human resource development in particular.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

*The article uses the following research methods:*

Historical - logical method: This method allows the author to honestly reflect the process of human resource development in the process of international integration in Vietnam, and, at the same time, generalize that process to draw relevant conclusions for the research process.

Analytical and synthetic methods are used to analyze and synthesize the contents related to the concept of international integration, the concept of human resources and the impact of the integration process on the development of human resources in Vietnam.

Statistical methods are used to gather secondary data, such as: quantity, quality, qualifications, degrees, indicators to evaluate and measure the development of human resources in the context of international integration in Vietnam. These data are shown in reports of the General Statistics Office of Vietnam, reports of localities, or in books, newspapers and websites.

The comparative and contrasting methods are used in the article to support the assessment of the human resource development process in Vietnam, compared with the proposed contents and criteria and compared with the human resource development of other countries in the world, thereby pointing out the achievements and limitations in the process of human resource development in Vietnam under the influence of international integration.

In addition to the above methods, the article also uses the secondary-data collection method. Secondary-data sources are collected from books, the articles published in the scientific research journals and the articles on websites on issues related to the content of the article. The purpose of the literature review is to find out the values and limitations of the research works and provide theoretical and practical guidelines for the author to discover, analyze, and generalize the research problem. In summary, with the use of methods of logic, history, analysis, synthesis, statistics, comparison, contrast; and the secondary-data collection methods through the literature review of research works such as books, the scientific articles in journals and documents from websites, the author has clarified a some concepts, including: international integration, human resources, human resource development; Moreover, the author have also assessed the impacts of international integration on human resource development in Vietnam. The issue of human resources and human resource development is considered in the historical development process, in the context of promoting and expanding Vietnam's international relations, thereby generalizing the opportunities and challenges that Vietnam faces in the current international integration.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### *3.1. The concept of international integration*

Since the early 1970s, the idea of international integration has been increasingly utilized to explain national economies' rising interdependence (Panić, 1988, p. 1). International integration is a highly developed form of international cooperation, a process in which countries actively accept, apply and participate in the development of international laws and standards in order to maximize the benefits of each country. The nature of international integration is the process of formulating and applying common laws and standards among countries. Integration takes place in many forms, levels, and in many different fields, following the process from low level to high one. Integration has become an inevitable development trend of the modern world. It strongly affects international relations and the life of each country. Nowadays, international integration is the policy choice of most countries for development.

There are many different interpretations and definitions of the concept of “international integration”. According to the author Nguyen Thanh, international integration is a process associated with globalization with the focus on participating in the assignment of international cooperation, facilitating the effective combination of domestic resources with external resources, expanding space and environment for development, occupying an achievable integrated position in international relations (Nguyen, 2007). And more specifically, Elias C. Grivoyannis indicated that globalization is the outcome of international integration (Grivoyannis, 2019)

According to the author Nguyen Duc Cuong, international integration is the process by which a country participates in common activities of the international community according to principles and standards recognized by the international community (Nguyen, 2006).

Based on the above concepts, the author believes that:

International integration is the act of countries participating in the globalization process intentionally, based on their own advantages and goals to be achieved, on the basis of choosing and accepting the rules of international standards in line with national interests in order to bring maximum benefits to the country.

International economic integration takes place at different levels and in different methods. Depending on the situation, the participation in international economic integration is implemented at different levels: bilateral, triangular, sub-regional, regional, intercontinental and global levels. These levels of integration manifest in many different

forms and are also very diverse in terms of integration. International integration is a complicated process, full of contradictions, both cooperation and struggle. Forces participating in the international integration process include many nationalities and states as well as different economies, the developed, developing and underdeveloped countries.

### ***3.2. The concept of human resources and human resource development***

#### ***3.2.1 The concept of human resource.***

Source is the place of origination and supply. Human resource is the power of human being expressed in three aspects: First, muscular strength (physical strength); second, the level of knowledge, skills and techniques are applied to each individual's working process (intellectual strength); the third is the mental strength (ethical qualities, personality, attitude, working style...). Thus, human resource with its full meaning consists of three elements that have a dialectical relationship with one another, namely physical strength, intellectual strength, and mental strength; and it is the place of origin and supply of human strength in all aspects for social productive labor.

Currently, there are many different conceptions of human resources. Wright and McMahan defined human resource as the pool of human capital under the firm's control in a direct employment relationship (Wright & McMahan, 1992). According to the concept of the World Bank, human resource is the total potential of a person, including the intellectual, mental and physical strength that each individual possesses. The United Nations argues that: "Human resources are all the knowledge, skills, experiences, abilities and creativity of people that are related to the development of each individual and the country." (Central Institute for Economic Management, 2004).

According to the viewpoint of the Communist Party of Vietnam: "Human resources are the most precious asset, play a decisive role, especially for our country when financial resources and material resources are still limited. Those resources are employees with high intelligence, proficient skills, good qualities; they are trained, fostered and promoted by advanced education associated with a modern science" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 1997). With this viewpoint, our Vietnam Party has advocated building and developing a comprehensive education with the goal of improving people's knowledge, training human resources, fostering talents, and considering investment in education as an investment in social development, not merely an investment in social welfare.

Through the above research, we can see that due to different approaches, there are many different conceptions of human resources, but in general, there are two basic understandings. The first way of understanding, that is to uniform human resources with resources who are people (i.e. consider human resources as the entire population as a whole). The second way of understanding, that is to consider human resources as a source of labor (labor force). With this understanding, human resources refer to a part of the population that has the ability to work, has the necessary physical, intellectual, and talent skills to carry out useful labor activities in the economy. Within the scope of the article, the author approaches the concept of human resources in the second way of understanding.

With this approach, the author argues that:

Human resource is the harmonious synthesis of physical, intellectual and mental strength existing in the social labor force of a country or a locality. Human resources have been participating in the production of material and spiritual wealth to promote the socio-economic development of the locality and the country.

### ***3.2.2 The concept of human resource development***

According to the viewpoint of dialectical materialism, development is generally considered to be an upward movement from a low level to a high level, from the simple to the complex, from less complete level to more complete one. It is a change in both quantity and quality of things and phenomena in the direction of becoming more and more perfect. This viewpoint of dialectical materialism on development, which is applied to human research, has emphasized the human development factor, taking people as the center. Human development is both the goal and the driving force of socio-economic development.

Defining human resource development is difficult because of the evolving nature of human resource development (Lee, 2001; Sambrook, 2014). Human resource development is a concept that was formed in the world in the 70s of the twentieth century based on a new concept of development and the position of people in development. There are currently many different concepts on human resource development. There is a viewpoint that: Human resource development is a series of activities that support behavioral change and learning opportunities for employees (Richman, 2015) or more sophisticated the process of increasing the value of people both physically and mentally, both intellectually and spiritually as well as professional skills, thus making employees have new and higher capabilities and qualities, meeting the



increasing and great requirements of the country's socio-economic development (Le, 2010).

Human resource development is a process that changes the quantity, quality and structure of human resources in a positive direction, and at the same time, improves the efficiency of education and training, and rationally allocates and uses human resources through the system of labor division and the job creation for socio-economic development. Within the scope of the article, the author approaches the concept of human resource development according to this concept. With this approach, the author argues that:

Human resource development is a process of growth in quantity, quality and balance in structure of high-quality human resources in line with socio-economic development in each period; at the same time, improves the effectiveness of training, management, use, attraction and remuneration so that they can increasingly promote their role for the country's sustainable development.

Human resource development shows the development in quantity, quality and balance in structure, in which the quality development (physical and mental capacity; qualifications; knowledge and the practical capacity; professional skills, professionalism, the working style and the ethical qualities, etc.) is decisive for the development of human resources.

### ***3.3 Impacts of international integration on human resource development in Vietnam currently***

International integration has had a strong impact on all aspects of social life in general as World Bank (2020) reports that “As a result of its global integration gains, Vietnam’s ratio of trade to gross domestic product (GDP) exceeded 200 percent in 2018” (World Bank, 2020, p. 16) and the development of human resources in particular in Vietnam. International integration brings Vietnam many opportunities but also poses many challenges (Rowley & Truong, 2009; Truong et al., 2010) for human resource development.

#### ***3.3.1 Opportunity***

*Firstly, laborers have more and more job opportunities both at home and abroad.*

Intensive international integration initiatives have created a plethora of options for the Vietnamese labor market, both domestically and globally (Dang & Nguyen,



2021). Vietnam has an abundant labor force and has been experiencing a period of 'golden population structure'(ASEAN, 2021, p. 5). According to statistics of the General Statistics Office, as of April 1, 2021, Vietnam's population has 98 million people, accounting for 1.25% of the world's population. Vietnam is ranked 15th in the world in the ranking of the population of countries and territories. The population in the working-age group from 15 to 64 accounts for more than 70% (ASEAN, 2021, p. 4; Vietnam - General Statistics Office, 2021). With such an abundant labor force and young labor structure(Rowley & Truong, 2009) -“population 45% of which are under 30 years of age” (OECD, 2020, p. 204), creating jobs for workers is a matter of great importance to Vietnam's socio-economic development in particular and the developing countries in general for four reasons: Firstly, labor is an important factor of economic growth; secondly, because of their small economic size and low-labor productivity, these countries often do not have the conditions to create unemployment allowance funds; thirdly, unemployment and underemployment will lead to low income and low purchasing-power of residents, adversely affecting the production and business growth; fourthly, unemployment is one of the main causes of arising and developing social evils, causing harm to society while society must spend a lot of effort and money to prevent and overcome.

With abundant human resources, attracting foreign investment into our country will be much more favorable; many investment projects requiring large human resources have been implemented in our country such as: garment, leather and footwear, seafood processing, mechanics, electronics; thus, creating jobs for a large social labor force. In the context of a common market, Vietnamese laborers not only have many career opportunities in the country but also expand to foreign markets because it is easier and more convenient to send laborers to work abroad due to the opening of the labor market, the loosening of legal barriers on the movement of legal and natural persons, and the establishment of cooperative relations in trade, economy and labor. We have carried out labor export to traditional markets such as Malaysia, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Middle East and North Africa countries; at the same time, we also expand the market to countries with great potentials such as European countries, Australia, North America...thereby, annually earning millions of dollars from labor export. The export of labor is also a good opportunity to build the brand of Vietnam's human resources, and increase competitiveness in the labor market. This is the best opportunity for human resources to develop.

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*Secondly, international integration creates requirements, motivations and conditions to improve the quality of human resources.*

International integration in the knowledge economy and the intellectual civilization provides opportunities for the developing and underdeveloped countries to dominate and absorb the common achievements of mankind in order to narrow the development gap, increase income, shorten the time for industrialization and modernization of the country. Under the influence of globalization and the integration process, the production and management level of domestic enterprises has been increasingly developed; more and more achievements of science and technology, modern machinery, equipment and industrial production lines in the world are imported to Vietnam; the outdated production methods, based mainly on human power, have gradually been replaced by modern production methods. It is clear that international integration has had a strong impact on the position, role and content of human resource development on a global scale. Therefore, it requires each country, each organization, and each individual to always update, adapt and change to catch up with the movement of the times.

*Thirdly, in the context of international integration, Vietnamese laborers have the opportunity to promote their strengths, and at the same time, overcome their limitations.*

The strengths of our country's human resources are often mentioned as: hard work, diligence, thrift in production and daily life. This can be considered as one of the competitive advantages of Vietnamese human resources. Besides, our country's human resources also have many limitations such as: inferiority, conservatism, stagnation, “let the grass grow under your feet”, pettiness, dispersion, individual heroism, poor cooperation in economic development, rationality, scientific analysis, invention, creativity...are undeveloped. Moreover, due to the influence of agricultural style, the sense of labor discipline of our country's human resources is very poor; they often have a habit of working slowly, the “rubber” hours, both work and play. That habit is very bad for production. It is clear that, in the context of globalization and the world economic integration with the rapid progress of modern science and technology, the strong development of the knowledge economy are the factors that strongly affect labors. At the same time, it also creates conditions for Vietnamese workers to bring into play their potential strengths and overcome their inherent limitations so that they can dare to reach out to the international market, know how to promote their internal resources, dare to dream and have great ambition, develop creative thinking...

### **3.3.2 Challenge**

International economic integration brings many opportunities, but it is also putting Vietnamese human resources in front of many challenges.

*Firstly, international integration and the use of modern scientific and technological achievements increase the unemployment risk of human resources in some fields.*

Globalization poses great challenges and threats to employment in all countries of the world. The number of jobs in one sector may increase but in another it will decrease; some new jobs appear but others disappear. The cause of unemployment is that globalization forces businesses to accept the rules of competition. During the competition, many production facilities and many enterprises went bankrupt, or had to conduct downsizing in order to improve production and business efficiency. Some previous studies showed that process of globalization can produce unemployment (Beck, 2018, p. 3), globalization is regarded as “being responsible for the increase in unemployment” (Wagner, 2013, p. 1). Moreover, in the article The overselling of globalization, Stiglitz pointed that “globalization was oversold” and “jobs may have been lost in the process of globalization” (Stiglitz, 2017)

Because of the application of achievements of science and technology to the production process by enterprises, using modern machines to replace manual and outdated production methods, and replacing human labor is also one of the important causes of increasing the unemployment and underemployment of workers.

Not only workers in the industrial sector, agricultural and rural workers are also at risk of losing their jobs, underemployment due to the impact of removing agricultural subsidies, cutting import taxes on agricultural products; the opening of the market led to a massive influx of foreign agricultural products while Vietnamese goods were of poor quality, bad design and packaging, etc. In addition, foreign enterprises' investment is increasing day by day. As more and more people enter into our country, many industrial parks and the export processing zones are born, thereby making agricultural land shrink, farmers have no land for production. Meanwhile, the jobs created from the new industrial parks and export processing zones do not meet the job demand for the agricultural laborers who lost their land. Moreover, agricultural workers also do not meet the requirements of employers, so they do not benefit from the development process brought about by globalization and international economic integration.

*Secondly, the brain drain is going strong*

International integration has made the market economy, knowledge economy and science-technology pervasive and influential on a global scale. In the new economy, knowledge becomes an invaluable asset of countries, the gray matter content existing in products is increasing day by day, the emergence and the growing role of transnational corporations, the international labor division cooperation become a characteristic of the times. With this characteristic, international integration is making the competition for brains and high-quality human resources fierce, sophisticated and complex. High-quality human resources are becoming the most valuable resource of each country, corporation, organization and enterprise; they are more precious than the financial capital and the natural resources. With a strong influence, international integration has made the phenomenon of international migration (including labor export) become more and more popular. In fact, international migration leads to the movement of high-quality human resources or vice versa, the movement of human resources between one country to another, from one region to another, thereby leading to international migration, because they bring family members, dependent people with them. In that flow, the developing and underdeveloped countries are facing a problem that is a brain drain in which high-quality human resources, the talented people move to highly developed countries, making their own country's potential weaker and weaker and this can then lead to a "brain gain" (Pham, 2016). This is a major challenge in policy for the developing and underdeveloped countries in the integration process, and Vietnam is one of them.

Under the impact of globalization, there is an increasing situation, in which "highly-skilled workers"(Pham, 2016) or highly qualified workers (talented) of Vietnam leave the country to find jobs in developed countries and then live there for the rest of their lives. Among these, first of all, it must mention the number of students studying abroad but not returning home. In addition, the current brain drain is not only the fact that scientists and high-tech professionals migrate abroad, the international students study abroad and not return to their home countries, but this situation is also happening within the country themselves - "internal brain drain" (Dang et al., 2019). Foreign companies are always looking for ways to recruit the talented people right from when they are still in school.

There are many causes of brain drain. In the process of globalization and international integration, the development of means of transportation and communication has created conditions for the developed countries to seek and attract high-quality human resources from all over the world. By means of marketing,

advertising, open-door policy, and talent recruitment, the developed countries have little difficulty in attracting brains from developing countries; because there are many disadvantageous factors such as: poor infrastructure for science and technology development, mechanisms and policies that do not really appreciate talents, and have not ensured the most favorable conditions for the talented to develop. It can be said that Vietnam does not have real conditions to provide suitable jobs and favorable environment for the group of qualified, skilled workers.

Moreover, when becoming an official member of the WTO, the labor mobility of Vietnam increases very quickly, because the liberalization of trade and investment will lead to a stronger transformation of labor structure, many jobs in old industries have been lost, the jobs in some new sectors have appeared; this forces workers to find jobs outside. Moreover, the difference in labor prices between the domestic market segments, especially the difference between the domestic and foreign markets will be a strong stimulus for workers to move to new residence to look for higher-paying jobs.

Brain drain for Vietnam is a big matter of concern because every year, Vietnam has to spend a large amount of money to train this workforce while the economy is still facing many difficulties. High-quality human resources (talents) are an important and decisive resource for the socio-economic development of the country, which is inherently lacking, and is even more severely lacking because the impact of the brain drain problem is taking place more and more strongly. That requires Vietnam to research to develop and promulgate reasonable mechanisms and policies to support and create a favorable environment to attract highly-skilled workers, highly qualified officials and international students who return home to work. In addition, we can create “a set of researchers working abroad to perform tasks such as offering expert advice, technical expertise, and participating in workshops in their home countries”(Pham, 2016) like some countries did, so that they can promote and effectively use their knowledge, skills and experience to serve the cause of industrialization and modernization of the country and international economic integration.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

In the process of leading the revolutionary cause of liberating nation and building socialism, the human development strategy has been paid special attention by the Communist Party of Vietnam, considering it both a goal and a driving force of

economic and social development. Over the Congresses, especially in the period of accelerating industrialization, modernization, development of the knowledge economy and international integration, the Party's awareness of the strategy to improve the quality of human resources, bring into play the talents and intelligence of Vietnamese people to build and defend the Fatherland more and more properly and fully. Since the 10<sup>th</sup> Party Congress until now, when Vietnam's accession to the WTO marks a step of deep and wide integration into the international community, the issue of human resource development has been considered as one of the breakthroughs, a factor that ensures the country's rapid and sustainable development. These guidelines are institutionalized by the State in the constitutional and legal system; are built into strategies, master plans, plans and policies on human resource development.

Globalization and international economic integration have been posing opportunities and challenges for the development of human resources in our country. Globalization and international economic integration create a common playing field, with very strict rules for all countries and ethnic groups in the world, including Vietnam. If Vietnam makes good use of opportunities, effectively attracts and uses human resources, especially high-quality human resources, it will promote strong development in all aspects of economy, politics, culture and society...of the country. On the contrary, if we do not make good use of the opportunities brought by globalization, do not train and attract high-quality human resources, it is inevitable that we will not be able to compete and we must be dependent on big countries with a developed economy. In order to improve the competitiveness of human resources, it is required that we implement many measures and policies synchronously at many different levels of both the political system and the laborers themselves. The potentials of our human resources are very great, if we know how to exploit and use them effectively, the level of human resources in our country will gradually narrow the gap compared to the human resources of other countries in the region and the world. Only in this way, can Vietnam avoid the risk of dropping behind, and quickly grasp the development trend of the times, successfully integrate into the common development of the region and the world.



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