



Skilling up Vietnam: Preparing the Workforce for a Modern Market Economy (Directions in Development)

Christian Bodewig, Reena Badiani-Magnusson

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Education has played an important role in making Vietnam a development success story over the last twenty years. In the 1990s and early 2000s Vietnam experienced rapid economic growth and poverty reduction in the wake of a rapid shift of employment from low-productivity agriculture to higher-productivity nonfarm jobs.

Vietnam's committed effort to promote access to quality primary education for all has enabled this transformation and contributed to the country's reputation for having a young, well-educated work force. Skilling Up Vietnam argues that to continue its success story, Vietnam needs to renew its focus on education: not just expanding attainment, but equipping its workforce with the right skills will be needed to foster to Vietnam's continued economic modernization in the coming decade and more. Despite the evidence of impressive basic literacy and numeracy achievements among Vietnamese youth and workers presented in this book, many Vietnamese businesses report that a significant obstacle to their activity is the shortage of workers with adequate skills. Drawing on a survey of employers in urban areas, the book finds that, in addition to job-specific skills, Vietnamese employers value cognitive skills, such as problem solving and critical thinking, and behavioral skills, such as team work and communication. Reorienting Vietnam's education system toward teaching these types of skills will help prepare Vietnamese workers for a modern market economy.

Skilling Up Vietnam proposes a three-step holistic skills strategy that looks at today's workforce as much as the future workforce. Vietnam's skills development efforts should focus on promoting school readiness through early childhood development, ensuring a strong cognitive and behavioral foundation in general education, and building job-relevant technical skills through a more connected system among employers, students and universities, and vocational schools.

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