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UNESCO-UNEVC PROMISING PRACTICES

REACH

Building the skills of disadvantaged youth

2017

REACH

Context

Vietnamese between the ages of 15 and 29 are significantly more likely to be unemployed or underemployed than older age groups (ILO, 2015). Furthermore, unemployed and underemployed youth tend to be from poorer families, rural areas and ethnic minorities, and usually have low levels of education. These disadvantaged youth have difficulty competing in a job market that increasingly demands technical skills (ILO and GSO, 2012).

The formal TVET system in Viet Nam is struggling to respond to the rapidly changing circumstances. Of the 1.4 million new workers who enter the labour market in Viet Nam each year, only 27 per cent have training relevant to their jobs (ILO and GSO, 2012; World Bank, 2014). For instance, the hospitality sector needs three times more workers with job-specific skills than are currently supplied by existing training institutions (ILO and GSO, 2012). REACH has set out to bridge the gap between high youth unemployment and the demand for a skilled workforce.

The initiative and its impact

Since 2008, REACH has trained about 1,200 young people per year. REACH conducts research to identify the types of skills in demand, and the course curricula are then calibrated with industry needs. Training courses include food and beverage

Overview

<i>Implemented by:</i>	REACH Vietnam
<i>Where:</i>	Vietnam, since 2008
<i>Theme:</i>	Youth employment
<i>Funding:</i>	Donor-based
<i>Status:</i>	As of January 2017, five training centres in five provinces in north and central Viet Nam

As Viet Nam's economy has modernized, demand has increased for skilled labour, with the result that unskilled youth have few prospects for finding formal employment.

REACH is a local non-governmental organization that trains young people, particularly those from low-income households, in service industry and ICT skills, so as to give them a better chance of obtaining employment. To ensure a low drop-out rate, REACH actively supports and counsels the trainees throughout.

In partnership with over 1,000 companies, REACH identifies the skills that are in demand, develops matching curricula, and assists graduates to find employment. In 2016, 80 per cent of graduates had found employment within six months.



service, beauty spa and makeup, sales and marketing, web and graphic design, hairdressing and nail art, and housekeeping.

The courses have durations of between three and five months. Aside from normal lessons, the courses feature guest lecturers from businesses, who regularly present insights from their work to the trainees. However, only about 20 per cent of each course curriculum is dedicated to theoretical instruction, the remainder is dedicated to practical lessons. Trainees gain hands-on experience in the workplace either during the programme or at its conclusion.

In addition to practical and technical training, the courses include modules on good work habits and attitudes; 'soft skills' training; and life skill components, such as preparing a curriculum vitae (CV), problem-solving and time and money management. Special attention is paid to confidence building and learning to manage day-to-day activities independently. Trainees also receive sector-specific English language training.

An online platform called 'Ready to Work' enables the trainees to engage with challenges and situations they are likely to encounter in real life, in the form of interactive games, videos, pictures and stories.

The programme has seen positive results. Over 80 per cent of students are in employment six months after graduation. Furthermore, graduates have reported improvements in their quality of life and that of their families.

Insights

Reaching out to disadvantaged youth

Disadvantaged youth often have limited access to information, so they may be unaware of opportunities for training and employment. Therefore, REACH proactively advertises the courses it offers, by contacting local organizations and commune leaders, and by visiting places where young people gather, such as markets and bus stations. REACH also asks its alumni network to identify potential new trainees and refer them to the programme.

Understanding the trainees and Building trust

Before the start of the programme, REACH ensures it has a strong understanding of each trainee's personal situation and their individual needs. This allows REACH to offer the trainees any additional support that they may require, such as counselling and psychological help. To gain this understanding, facilitators visit trainees' homes as soon as an application is accepted, to observe their home

environments and circumstances, which are often challenging. This visit is also a first step towards creating trust

between facilitators and trainees.



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Providing a supportive learning environment

Once in the programme, the trainees benefit from a supportive learning environment. As trainees often come from difficult backgrounds, the REACH staff offer counselling to see them through the programme. Particularly vulnerable persons, such as victims of human trafficking or sexual exploitation, may get more in-depth psychological help, from professional organizations.

Engaging industries to ensure skills match needs

The high employment rate among graduates is linked to REACH's network of businesses. REACH connects with various types of businesses, making them aware of the training programme. REACH then collects information from these businesses. This information enables REACH to identify the types of employment that are open to skilled, yet inexperienced, workers and allows REACH to harmonize the curriculum with labour market demand. The network members are encouraged to offer workplace learning or employment to the programme's graduates. As of 2017, REACH collects data from over 1,000 businesses.

Smoothing the transition from school to work

After graduation, REACH follows the former trainees for six months in order to support them in finding and keeping a job. In particular, REACH trainers are given the added responsibility of assisting trainees to find employment and are expected to have placed 80 per cent of their trainees by the end of each year. This ensures that trainers take an active role in supporting their trainees. REACH also has an appointed 'Business to Youth Coordinator', who is responsible for connecting youth with employers, and it organizes networking events to stimulate alumni to share their experiences and offer support to jobseekers and other alumni.

Looking forward

As of 2017, 85 per cent of REACH's revenue is derived from donors, but the NGO is piloting mechanisms aimed at making the training programme self-sustaining and also at increasing trainees' commitment to the programme.

One such mechanism will involve future trainees sharing some of the costs of the programme. Trainees will be assessed in terms of their economic means and will be divided into four groups. Those with the least means will attend the training free of charge; the second group will contribute 10 per cent of the cost of their training; the third group 15 per cent; and the fourth group 20 per cent.

REACH also plans to set up and run enterprises, the profits of which will be reinvested into the education programme for disadvantaged youth. In addition to generating revenue, these enterprises will provide a learning space for trainees, where they can gain practical experience and gain an edge in the competitive labour market. For instance, REACH plans to set up a hairdressing salon by October 2017. Trainees in the hairdressing and nail painting professions will thereby have an opportunity to work and interact with real customers.

References

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Learn more about REACH

Ms. Pham Thi Thanh Tam — REACH executive director — helped us compile this document. She may answer your questions at Tam.pham@reach.org.vn

You will also find more references on the initiative in our website at: http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/go.php?q=PP_REACH



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