## *DOCTORAL THESIS IN BRIEF*

HA THI MINH DUC. *Vietnamese Skilled Labor Mobility in the ASEAN Community*
*Major: Economic Management*
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Skilled labor mobility is critical to the economic development policies of many countries, including Vietnam. Despite Vietnam's efforts to set out several policies and strategies to foster domestic skilled workers to work abroad, its participation in the domestic and intra-ASEAN labor market has faced numerous challenges. These complex and constantly changing issues relate to both labor, employment, and human resource development as well as regional cooperation with many countries and partners. Therefore, it is necessary to re-evaluate policies, strategies, and trends of Vietnamese skilled labor mobility across ASEAN to find a more effective path.

Towards that end, the thesis contributes to a comprehensive and objective assessment of scientific basis, current situation, context, challenges and sets of viewpoints and solutions to encourage skilled labor mobility in the regional trading bloc and improve the competitiveness of Vietnamese workers in the context of regional integration and the Industry 4.0.

Except for the Introduction, Conclusion, References, and Chapter 1 on Literature Review, the main content of the thesis is presented from chapter 2 to chapter 4.

*Chapter 2: The scientific basis of skilled labor mobility in the regional trading bloc*
The flows of skilled labor in the regional trading bloc are influenced by many internal and external factors focusing mainly on groups of growth needs, the ability to provide skilled labor of each country, and the framework and policies of the region as well as of each member country. Although the cause of the intra-regional labor movement is for the sake of economic benefits due to the natural regulation of labor supply and demand, it will ensure the common market development objectives of the trading bloc that the member countries have participated in to gain benefits for sustainable growth.

The mobility and the ability to move skilled workers in the ASEAN Community is not a separate issue but is part of the overall national labor market development strategy. The thesis analyzes the basics of skill labor movement in the regional trading bloc including the nature, content, influencing factors, evaluation criteria, and simultaneously assess the benefits gained from this work for each member state as well as for the whole bloc. Besides, the thesis shows the experience of the Philippines and Bangladesh in the labor movement in general, as well as skilled labor mobility in particular, solutions to encourage skill labor migration by improving vocational skills in conformity with the requirements of host countries, linking labor supply and demand and recognition of skills, etc. Thereafter, crucial lessons have been drawn for Vietnam on improving the legal framework, renewing the growth model, respecting and protecting workers, enhancing the quality of human resources, and mobility management competence.

*Chapter 3: Situation of skilled labor mobility of Vietnam in ASEAN community*
This chapter outlines Vietnam's macroeconomic context, labor markets,

and skilled labor markets. Accordingly, Vietnam's macroeconomics in recent years has had significant growth with GDP on the continuous increase. The economic restructuring has gone in a positive direction, increasing the proportion of services and reducing the contribution of agriculture to GDP. Against this background, the employment structure of Vietnam has also shifted towards increasing and reducing employment in industry and service sectors, and in agriculture sector respectively, which has had positive impacts on changing the structure of the industry sector towards increasing skilled and specialized labor in the market. However, there exists an irrational structure of skilled labor according to skill levels, reflecting the shortage of practicing engineers and middle and high-level technical workers in the economy. The labor force with technical expertise increases slowly while many university graduates are unemployed due to failure to meet market requirements and demands.

In addition to analyzing the current situation of Vietnam's labor mobility in the international labor market in general concerning the movement of Vietnamese skilled labor in the ASEAN market in particular, the thesis analyzes and assesses the demand for skilled labor of ASEAN member countries, the ability of Vietnam to participate in moving skilled labor in the ASEAN Community. It also focuses on clarifying Vietnam's labor supply based on the ability of the skilled workers themselves (including their knowledge, skills, and attitudes) and influencing factors from several different aspects, especially in terms of ASEAN and Vietnam's legal framework as well as the effectiveness and efficiency of mobility management.

The results of the study indicate that, regardless of what Vietnam and ASEAN members alike do in an attempt to promote economic integration and participate in skilled labor movement in the regional trading bloc, Vietnam's formal participation is considered to be limited and weak in terms of scope, structure, quality of skilled labor, and likewise national interests, labor migration and the effectiveness and efficiency of migration management.

In recent years, Vietnam has exported across ASEAN countries first and foremost unskilled workers in professions that do not require high technical skills, principally handicraft, followed by service industries, low-skilled jobs, and processing industries. The competitiveness of Vietnamese workers cannot be ranked higher than the 6th or 7th position in ASEAN, both in the past and the near future with the imminent era of Industrial Revolution 4.0.

Based on the analysis and assessment of labor participation in 8 occupations in the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and pertinent regional commitments, coupled with the review and comparison of relevant regulations and management capacity of Vietnam, the thesis highlights the advantages as well as limitations and causes in the movement of Vietnam's skilled labor in ASEAN. These include a growth model that has not facilitated active participation in movement and for efficient movement; an incomplete legal framework that has not promoted the skilled labor mobility; weak management capacity; poor competitiveness, quality of human resources as well as system of education and training; unsatisfactory support for mobility of the State and related organizations; low effectiveness of

cooperation between Vietnam and ASEAN member countries; failure to take advantage of the benefits of integration, including the mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) under the AEC.

The thesis stated that low human capital and low labor productivity are the biggest barriers for Vietnamese skilled labor to participate effectively in the ASEAN labor market, which has reduced the competitiveness of Vietnamese workers, creating obstacles to access to secure, knowledge-intensive, or well-paid jobs in the region. Consequently, the income, position, and job satisfaction of workers participating in mobility within ASEAN are restricted; and thus the benefits gained from Vietnam's ASEAN labor mobility in terms of growth, knowledge, and technology improvement and quality of human resources are quite far from the expectation.

*Chapter 4: Perspectives and solutions for skilled labor migration of Vietnam in ASEAN*

The increasingly intensive ASEAN and international integration and the Industrial Revolution 4.0 have been facilitating and challenging in the fields of labor, employment, and the labor market in Vietnam. Joining the AEC brings several benefits but also creates fierce competition for skilled labor among ASEAN member countries. The Industrial Revolution 4.0 made new forms of employment appear. International migration and labor migration trends continue to be powerful, which

benefits all parties. These things show that international migration in general and skilled labor migration in ASEAN in particular will have strong growth prospects in the coming time.

Based on analyzing the context of ASEAN integration in new conditions, assessing opportunities and challenges, scenarios that may occur in the coming period in ASEAN skilled labor movement, the thesis proposes five fundamental perspectives and six types of solutions to enhance the mobility capacity of Vietnamese skilled labor in the ASEAN Community. These solutions focus on renewing the growth model, completing policies and institutions, improving the effectiveness of state management, promoting the quality of human resources, and enhancing the efficiency of the supply system of support services, boosting cooperation between Vietnam and ASEAN member countries and related partners and some specific solutions to promote MRAs in Vietnam, which are strategic and comprehensive to enable Vietnam to effectively integrate labor in the region, taking advantage of the opportunities that the AEC in particular and the ASEAN Community in general.

The thesis was successfully defended before the Academy-level thesis council, held at the Graduate Academy of Social Sciences, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences in 2019.

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