

Exploration of vocational training to cope with the high unemployment rate in Taiwan

*Chin-Ling Lee **Ching-Fang Lin ***Yuh-Sheng Wu **** Ming-Wen Chang
Department of Industrial Education, National Taiwan Normal University
*Nai Kai College, Taiwan, R.O.C.

Abstract

Owing to the rapid change of society, economic recession, transformation of industry structure and different sense of value, the problem of unemployment in Taiwan has been getting serious from 2.99% in 2000 to 5.28% at the end of 2001. This paper is to explore what strategies of vocational training should be taken to deal with environmental changing in Taiwan from the viewpoint of vocational training. Meanwhile, the Vocational Training Agencies of Labor Worker Committee of Executive Yuan has undertaken the transformation and revolution of vocational training, including differentiation of vocational training role, job transformation of trainers, strategy of training for employing and strategy of integrated resources. In this paper, the revolution strategy is illustrated to deal with the development of high-unemployment society in the hope of providing the industry with highly qualified and suitable technical manpower, which may lead to second "Taiwan Economy Miracle."

Introduction

In recent years, the rapid change of society, economic recession, transformation of industry structure and different sense of value has been making the problem of unemployment in Taiwan getting serious from 2.99% in 2000 to 5.28% at the end of 2001. Taking a look at the manufacturing industry, the employee number is increasing while the labor number is decreasing which shows the demand of professionals in management & marketing is rising but the production is decaying (Chung-Chi Wu, 2000). This reveals that the main cause of

high unemployment rate results from the change of domestic industry structure, and that the problem may get worse.

It is that the emphasis of practical training for cultivating technical manpower suitable for the industry needs makes vocational training different from vocational education. Therefore, the Vocational Training Agencies of Labor Worker Committee of Executive Yuan has undertaken the transformation and revolution of vocational training, including differentiation of vocational training role, job transformation of trainers, strategy of training for employing and strategy of integrated resources to deal with it. However, it is worth and important to explore how these revolution strategies works to confront with the impact of high unemployment on the society.

Nowadays there are 13 national vocational training institutes in Taiwan. How they may present effective strategies, such as department field aligning and practical curriculum, then present the mechanism of lifelong learning or recurrent education for the unemployment will be explored in this paper.

The Content of Vocational Training and Its Revolution Strategies

Vocational training, on the one hand, has the features of flexibility and multipurpose to support the government policies on human resource. On the other hand, it has the functions of economy, manpower, education and society to incorporate the policies and strategies with the needs of the industry. This paper is to explore the related issues of vocational training through four dimensions : the content of vocational training, the current situation of vocational

training, the trend of vocational training strategies, and the relationships between vocational training and the industry development.

1. The Content of Vocational Training

According to what the experts define, the content of vocational training can be addressed as follows:

- (1) Purpose: to provide the preparation for the unemployed and career development for the underemployed.
- (2) Goal: to focus on the immediate effectiveness as a short-term target and to foster professional competencies and employment capabilities.
- (3) Human Resource Alignment: to align the human resource plan for the immediate needs of professionals.
- (4) Function: to carry out the individual development, social stability and economic development.
- (5) Instructional Features: to focus on the practice rather than the theory for gaining real effectiveness in the short-term
- (6) Practical Value: to incorporate the practice with the theory.
- (7) Level of skilled manpower: to foster workers with specialty and diverse skills, and to master and advance skills.
- (8) Alignment of subjects: to flexibly align the training subjects to meet the needs of the industry.
- (9) Method of Educational Training: Based on the unit trade courses, to adopt the competence-based training method.
- (10) Tool Equipment: to provide advanced machines for the mastery training as the requirement of the industry.
- (11) Finance Resource: sponsored and supported by the government, engineering institutions, employers, or tuition fee from the trainees.

- (12) Qualification of Enrollment: above 15 years old.
- (13) Curriculum: to focus on mastery not width of courses with 70-75% for the practical training and 25-30% for the theory learning.
- (14) Content of Learning: to aim at the instruction of professional expertise with the learning of cognition, skills and affection.
- (15) Materials: designed by the training advisers and based on the competency-based training.
- (16) Teacher Qualification: with Rank B Professional Certificate.
- (17) Learning Assessment: to offer training certifications and to ordinate passing the test of skills.
- (18) Graduate Path: employment, further study or others, but mainly towards employment.

2. Categories of Training Program in Taiwan's Public Training Agencies

In Taiwan, "public training" is offered for non-specific group of the public. The training programs were designed to meet the government's workforce policy and implemented by the public training agencies. According to the characteristics of public training, employment and vocational training can be classified into several categories as follows.

- (1) Preparatory Training
Preparatory training refers to a long-run and systematic training for those who are pre-employed or trainees to foster basic skills, related knowledge, correct work habits, good work attitude and occupation morn, and to learn how to operate machines.
- (2) Up-grading training
Up-grading training means a training program to enhance the professionals and skills of in-service employees in the hope that they can increase the abilities of adopting with technical innovation or equipment reinforcement.
- (3) Transfer training
Transfer training is presented for those unemployed or job transfers to obtain

the required knowledge and competencies of new jobs through short-term job training.

(4) Supplementary Training

Supplementary training is designed to complement and reinforce in-service employee the practical training beyond formal education in school.

3. Functions of Public Employment and Vocational Training Agencies in Taiwan

(1) Economic Function

Vocational training fosters excellent workforce demanded during the economic development, which can flexibly and effectively integrate all the elements of finance, materials, information and market to overall elevate technical levels and increase labor productivity.

(2) Social Function

Vocational training upgrades manpower quality and transferring which may help decrease unemployed population and lessen its impact on the society.

(3) Education Function

Vocational training is a kind of instruction and learning activity related world of work, which can be complimented for the formal education in school.

(4) Manpower Function

Based on the "Manpower Development Act" and "Cross Century Manpower Development Plan," the national economic construction plan is undertaking to build Taiwan to be the Pacific-Asian Transportation Center and to upgrade national advantage. Employment and vocational training carries out strategies of manpower cultivation and exploration of potential workforce to sufficiently supply qualified manpower.

4. Current Context of Vocational Training in Taiwan

By 1995, Public Employment and Vocational Training Agencies take the main role of national vocation training programs. Accompanied with the advanced

technology, industry transformation, change of workforce structure and high-unemployment rate, the strategy alignment of current vocational training will be essential to meet the future's needs.

(1) Current Organizational System of Vocational Training

There are 13 public employment and vocational training agencies belonged to seven government authorities and more than 200 private ones belonged to the industries.

(2) Enhancing Function of the Public Employment and Vocational Training Agencies

- a. to proceed the alignment of training categories and exploration
- b. to enlarge the number of trainees in engineering techniques and service industry to 28,000 for pre-job or in-service training.
- c. to promote the collaboratively pre-job training for the unemployed with the industries.
- d. To set up the network of vocational training information.

(3) to support or sponsor vocational training for those unemployed and out-of-job.

- a. to sponsor the training program for the professionals on information software as well as the new industry.
- b. To support the community vocational training for the unemployed, aboriginals, housewives, mid- and old- aged people.
- c. To implement the vocational training ticket for the unemployed and specific subjects.
- d. To support the unemployed and miner population with allowance during the vocational training.

5. Problem Analysis of Vocational Training in Taiwan

(1) Ineffective Integration of Vocational Training

There are more than 200 private sector training center, except to the public sector ones. The subject areas and

courses offered are overlapped and causes resource waste, which needs to be integrated.

- (2) Training Outputs are limited
Training programs offered by the public vocational training agencies often could not cope with the change of economic development, while those sponsored couldn't commit for employment after trained.
- (3) Management of Public Vocational Training Agencies is Lack of Market Advantage
Public vocation training agencies have been widely criticized for being poorly planned, managed, and resourced.
- (4) Guidance and Counseling for the Unemployed is Implemented Ineffectively
The enrollment number of the public vocational training agencies is getting largely increasing; on the other hand, the programs offered turn to be lack of guidance and counseling.

6. Revolution Strategies of Vocational Training for Future Development

Henry D. Thoreau, an American "knowledge economist," says that economy recession can turn to be a chance. Although economy may not be elevated immediately, we still can make efforts to up-grade production skills. The government has to support the industry to prepare for future manpower, which is to align the investment plan of core advantages. Therefore, the presentation of a more flexible, active and multipurpose transformation for the development of the public employment and vocational training institutes is essential. According to a speech on "Current Policy of Employment service and Vocational Training" by Fang-Yuh Goe(2002), the ex-director of the Employment and Vocational Training Agency, indicates that the trend of vocational training policy could be:

(1) Transformation of Public Vocational Training Institutes

- a. to align the role function
The role of public vocational training

institutes has transformed from that of "public vocational training provider" to the future role of resources integrator, project purchaser, performance evaluator and counseling provider.

- b. to align the categories of vocational training
The categories of vocational training have to be reexamined carefully to increase or align those subject areas fitted the needs of current human market and eliminate those out-of-date.
- c. to provide training instructors with in-service training
The instructors in the training center are not only the skill trainer but also the coordinator, the counselor, the negotiator of related support and training to the trainees, if they are in the related further training.

(2) Integration of Vocational Training Resources

- a. to create related website providing all the information about vocational training supported or sponsored by training centers in private sectors or public sectors.
- b. To set up a web-based front end (portal) as a national website of vocational training to provide the on-line dynamic information.
- c. To establish "Three-in-One" service with the cooperation of all training institutes, in which service like selecting and distribute trainers to be advisors and counselors or collecting information on occupation and employment is presented.

Preliminary Discussion on the Vocational Training Strategies to Cope with the High-unemployment Rate in Taiwan

The high-unemployment rate in Taiwan is derived from the change of industry structure and employment environment. Therefore, this study tries to present a preliminary discussion on the problem and present suggestions on the vocational training strategies to deal with it.

1. To identify vocational training clearly

and specifically

The current government policy of vocation training is focused on the social placement while the training categories offered in the vocational training centers on the functions of economy, manpower, education. The conflict causes the identity ambiguity and needs to be clarified.

2. To examine the role vocational training is taking

The current vocational training policy, according to the government, is to transform from the role of the designer and implementer to the role of purchasers and integrator of vocational training.

3. To promote skill-based training and design employment-oriented curriculum

There are more than 100 programs designed on skill-based training to provide the unemployed with advanced and continuous training for the enhancement of their employment advantages.

4. To build up interval and recurrent training for lifelong learning

Vocational training should provide employees recurrent training as in-service training for effective learning of theory and practice to cope with the development of economy and the structure alignment of the industry.

5. To strengthen the mechanism of employment-to-employment transition

Lifelong learning has become the mainstream to adopt the impact of information economy era and rapid change of technology on employment market. Therefore, vocational training should focus on the establishment of transitions mechanism to help the unemployed back to work as soon as possible.

6. To reinforce the function of vocational education and vocational training

The high-unemployment rate derived from the rapid change of the industry structure, resulting in the over supply of basic work force and bad demand of professionals. Thus, vocational training should reinforce its functions on fostering professional manpower.

7. To emphasize basic training and cultivate information skill

Most of the unemployed are lacking in the advanced skilled and using tools out-of-date. Vocational training should emphasize basic training and information training to strengthen the employment advantages of the unemployed.

Conclusion

The problem of high-unemployment rate Taiwan is currently encountered is mainly caused by the rapid change and transformation of the industry structure. Besides, the vocational training can not carry out the alignment of subject area to cope with the change and needs of the industry, the education reform impacts the vocational education and the functions of employment training is unspecific. All these make the implementation of vocational training more difficult. In this case, a thorough and overall alignment and strategies to promote the revolution of vocational training are inevitable and important in the hope that the plan of manpower cultivation can qualitatively and quantitatively reach the requirement of the new industry. Eventually, the unemployment rate is reduced and Taiwan's economy is arising.

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