EXPERIENCES IN CONSULTING STARTUPS, TRAINING, AND EMPLOYMENT FOR THE ELDERLY IN BAC NINH

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**Ladies and gentlemen, seminar hosts!**

**Respected delegates and distinguished guests!**

I am honored to attend today's seminar and I would like to wish all the delegates and guests good health and happiness. I wish this seminar great success.

**Ladies and gentlemen, seminar hosts!**

As we all know, vocational guidance and training for workers is the mission of the Party, the State, at all levels, sectors, and society as a whole, aiming at improving the quality of labor to meet the requirements of industrialization, modernization of the country.

Over the years, our country has increased investment in vocational training for workers, with policies to ensure social equality in vocational training opportunities for all workers, encouraging, mobilizing, and creating conditions for the whole society to participate in vocational training for workers. Our Party has defined that vocational training is the right and duty of workers, aiming to create employment, career transition, income increase, and improvement of the quality of life. From practical experience in leading and directing vocational training for workers, our Party has outlined the direction for vocational guidance and training in the coming period**: Intensify vocational training for workers from training based on the existing capacity of training institutions to training based on the vocational training needs of workers and labor market demands;** link vocational training with the national economic and social development strategy, planning, and plans at all levels, sectors, and localities; innovate and develop vocational training for workers towards improving training quality, effectiveness, and creating favorable conditions for workers to participate in vocational training suitable for their educational level, economic conditions, and vocational training needs.

For Bac Ninh Province, a province in the Red River Delta region, one of the eight key economic regions in the North, and the gateway to the Northeast and the connection between the capital Hanoi and the northern mountainous provinces along the economic corridor of Lang Son - Hanoi - Hai Phong - Quang Ninh.

The province's population (as of December 31, 2022) is 1,439,838 people; the elderly population is approximately 234,385, of which the elderly (aged 60 and above) number 191,860 people, **accounting for 13.32% of the population**.

Based on the latest survey conducted to serve the Conference on Recognizing the Elderly as Outstanding Economic Contributors of Bac Ninh Province (held in August 2023), it is evident that over the past five years, the movement "Elderly Excellence" in the field of economic activities has been increasingly widespread and deepened. It has attracted tens of thousands of elderly people to participate, resulting in the emergence of numerous new models, effective practices, and tangible achievements. This has contributed to job creation for workers, economic restructuring, the application of science and technology, business development, participation in charitable and humanitarian activities, and effective contributions to the poverty reduction and new rural development programs and urban civilization.

Through various activities and the "Elderly Excellence" movement in the localities, tens of thousands of elderly association members actively engage in productive, business, and service activities. They are actively contributing to the development of their family income through various and diverse forms of participation.

According to reports from districts, towns, and cities, there are currently **62,176** elderly people directly participating in labor, production, business, and services in the whole province, accounting for **30.29%** of the total elderly population. Among them, **2,208** elderly individuals are farm owners or business owners who have provided jobs for tens of thousands of workers. They have made significant contributions to the economic development and local budget revenue. Furthermore, **1,570** elderly individuals have excelled in business, including **9** individuals who have been recognized as outstanding entrepreneurs at the national level, **36** at the provincial level, and **198** at the district level, **1,327** elderly individuals have achieved the title of excellent economic performance at the commune level.

Many elderly officials and association members have been leveraging their experience and applying advanced scientific, technical, and technological advancements to develop production, businesses, and services, meeting the increasing demands of the market and society. They have been actively involved in charitable and humanitarian work, contributing significantly to enriching their families and society in a legitimate manner. Through the compilation of reports from districts, towns, and cities, it is evident that elderly individuals in the entire province excel in the following economic sectors:

Agriculture: 489 elderly individuals.

Industrial production and construction: 195 elderly individuals.

Small-scale industrial and handicrafts: 125 elderly individuals.

Commercial sector: 296 elderly individuals.

Other services: 465 elderly individuals.

The total revenue from the activities of the elderly in the past 5 years is **1,642.150 billion VND**; their contribution to social charity is **617.409 billion VND**; and they have created jobs for **12,769 laborers**.

It can be said that the elderly have participated in almost all sectors of production and business. From agriculture, forestry, industry, cottage industry to various service activities; with various models such as household economy, cooperative economy, farm economy, small and medium-sized enterprises, production complexes, retail stores, with diverse, abundant, high-quality products, and a good reputation with domestic and international consumers.

Through economic activities, many elderly people from poverty and difficulties have risen to become wealthy and well-off; many elderly members over 70 or 80 years old are still leading businesses, farms, cooperatives, etc.

On the other hand, in the past 5 years, following the Decision No. 1533/QD – TTg, dated August 2, 2016, of the Prime Minister approving the Project "Replicating the Inter-Generational Self-Help Club Model in the 2016 – 2020 period" and Decision No. 1336/QD – TTg, dated August 31, 2023, of the Prime Minister approving the Project "Expanding the Inter-Generational Self-Help Club Model to 2025," to support economically disadvantaged elderly people, eradicate hunger, and reduce poverty; Bac Ninh province has established 41 Inter-Generational Self-Help Clubs. These clubs receive partial financial support from the government to allow club members to borrow funds for economic development, income enhancement, hunger eradication, and poverty reduction. Currently, there are about 2,700 poor elderly people in the entire province who are facing difficulties and are participating in the Inter-Generational Self-Help Clubs. These individuals greatly need vocational training to boost their economic development and increase income for themselves and their families.

Therefore, vocational training for the elderly to enhance their knowledge and professional skills is very necessary, especially in the context of a rapidly aging population as it is today.

In recent years, Bac Ninh province has shown genuine concern for and attention to labor training. The province has issued many documents to lead, direct, and invest in the development of vocational training for the elderly and labor force, including:

* Plan No. 137/KH – UBND dated March 3, 2022, on the Communication Plan for Vocational Education for the 2022 – 2025 period in the province.
* Plan No. 430/KH – UBND dated September 9, 2022, regarding digital transformation in vocational education until 2025, with a focus on the direction towards 2023 in the province.
* Plan No. 454/KH – UBND dated October 10, 2022, on the development strategy of vocational education for the 2022 – 2030 period, with a vision towards 2045 in the province.
* Plan No. 92/KH – UBND dated February 14, 2022, regarding vocational training at the elementary level, training under 03 months in the province in 2022 for rural labor, women, disabled individuals, and young people who have completed military and police service obligations.
* Implementation of policies to support tuition fees for intermediate and college-level vocational education; to that end, the province has supported 2,617 students studying vocational courses with a total budget of 14.67 billion VND.
* Planning and developing a network of vocational education institutions in the province; as of December 2022, there are 53 vocational education institutions in the province, including 13 colleges, 18 vocational schools, 6 Continuing Education Vocational Education Centers, 11 Vocational Education Centers, and 5 other vocational education facilities.

Based on the provincial People's Committee's plans, the vocational education system has actively carried out propaganda and counseling regarding vocational education. They have organized enrollment and vocational training for thousands of students, pupils, and laborers in the province. The results of vocational training have significantly contributed to improving labor quality, positively contributing to local socioeconomic development.

However, Bac Ninh province's vocational training still faces some limitations and challenges, such as:

* The enrollment and vocational training structure are still inadequate, mainly focusing on training at the elementary level (less than 3 months, accounting for 84.9%); enrollment and vocational training in physically demanding, hazardous, and high-demand fields are limited.
* Specifically, the enrollment and vocational training of the elderly are nearly nonexistent (both in planning and in practice). This is the most significant shortcoming in enrollment, vocational training, as well as in guiding, developing policies, and strategic planning.

***Therefore, in the coming time, leadership, guidance, direction, and investment in vocational training for the elderly are highly necessary to help them improve their knowledge and skills in production, business, economic development, hunger eradication, and poverty reduction.***

To achieve this, vocational training for the elderly needs to effectively carry out the following key tasks:

* Strengthen propaganda efforts, raise awareness, and responsibilities of all levels, sectors, and society regarding the role and position of vocational training for the elderly.
* Direct the elderly association at all levels to conduct surveys to accurately determine the number of elderly people engaged in production and business, their respective industries, and their vocational training needs to enhance their production and business skills. This data will serve as a basis for developing specific plans for vocational training for the elderly in the near future.
* Develop specific plans for vocational training for the elderly, including specifying the professions that need training, identifying the required training institutions, budgets, and resources needed for vocational training for the elderly annually and over the entire period.
* Establish funding criteria to support the elderly in vocational training to encourage and motivate them to actively participate in vocational training. Mobilize scientists, artisans, technical experts, engineers, skilled laborers, and successful farmers to teach vocational skills to the elderly at enterprises and production establishments.
* Create specific plans to support resources, taxes, land, and markets for products produced by the elderly. Implement policies to support production and business, encouraging and facilitating the elderly's active participation in labor, production, and business activities, further contributing to local and national socioeconomic development.
* Establish specialized training centers for the elderly. In the short term, pilot models for vocational training for the elderly should be established. Develop programs, content, and curriculum tailored to the needs, capacities, health, and psychology of the elderly and the labor market.
* For Inter-Generational Self-Help Clubs: Focus on vocational training for club members, especially those members seeking loans for production and business development. This will enhance the effectiveness of the loans and create conditions for club members to develop their production and business activities, eradicate hunger, reduce poverty, and improve their quality of life.
* Strengthen international cooperation and take advantage of support and assistance from international organizations to invest in and share experiences in vocational training for the elderly.
* Periodically review, evaluate, and assess the results of vocational training for the elderly. Based on this, draw experiences and lessons to improve the quality of vocational training for the elderly, meet the requirements of economic and social development, and international integration.

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It can be said that in the current context of rapid population aging, the number of elderly people is increasing. However, most elderly people have knowledge, experience, and a desire to continue working and contributing. On the other hand, practical experience has shown that through their labor results in production and business, elderly workers have made significant contributions to the development of the economy and society, poverty reduction, and job creation for many workers. The trend of elderly people with the desire and need to continue working is on the rise. Therefore, to help the elderly improve the quality and effectiveness of their work, it is essential to focus on developing vocational training programs for the elderly. Implementing vocational training for the elderly will bring tangible benefits both to the elderly themselves and to society.

Therefore, the Party and the State need to pay more attention to leadership, guidance, and reasonable investment in vocational training for the elderly in Vietnam in general and in Bac Ninh province in particular.

As for our part, the elderly associations at all levels in Bac Ninh province, based on their functions, tasks, and authority, will actively implement and cooperate with relevant agencies and international organizations to carry out vocational training for the elderly according to approved programs, plans, and projects.

It is anticipated that in the near future, vocational training for the elderly will receive the appropriate level of attention, creating conditions for the elderly to access advanced, modern knowledge and skills in production and business that are in line with the requirements of global economic integration. This will help the elderly develop more effective production and business, contribute to increasing income, reducing poverty, and improving the material and spiritual quality of life for the elderly. This will enable the elderly to truly enjoy a happy, healthy, and fulfilling life within their families and in society.