

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
THAI NGUYEN UNIVERSITY

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**DEVELOPING SOFT SKILLS
FOR ECONOMICS MAJOR STUDENTS TOWARDS
AT COLLEGES IN THE NORTHERN MOUNTAINOUS
MIDLAND REGION**

**Speciality: Theory and history of education
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4. Ta Quang Thao (2014), “Developing soft skills for students at universities and colleges basing on life values”, *Journal of Education (ISSN 2354 0753)*, special volume 9/2014, pp 54-55.
5. Ta Quang Thao, Doan Quang Thang (2014), *A study of building output standard for some majors in Vinh Phuc Technology - Economic College*”, Code 10/ ĐTKHVP-2014, Defense report of provincial Committee: 10/HĐKHHCN-BB, on 17/12/2014.

INTRODUCTION

1. Reasonale for the research

- Education in the modern world focuses on not only training human resouces to meet the economic and social requirements but also developing full life value for each individual. It is the fact that the success of each person depends greatly on supported skills, or soft skills. Many experts state that 75% of people's success is determined by soft skills and EQ. Soft skills do not exits independently but engage closely with technical skill which create working ability for each individual.

- Most of colleges, universities is carrying out innovation in content, teaching syllabus, teaching methodology toward developing capability for students. Ministry of Education and Training required all colleges and universities to build and announce output standard for each training major.

Colleges in the Northen mountainous midland region are far from political, cultural centres and have low intellectual standard of people, under- developed economy and students' access to modern society are still limited. As a result, their soft skills are not very good, therefore, there is an urgent need to carry out research on developing soft skills for students in these colleges.

Developing some soft skills for students of colleges and universities is an objective requirement in order to enhance teaching quality and meet the demand of labour market. Therefore, we decided to carry out the doctoral dissertation: *“Developing soft skills for economics major students towards output standard at colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region”*

2. Purposes of the research

Basing on the literature review of soft skill training in some colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region, the doctoral dissertation was carried out to suggest some measures to develop soft skills for economics major students towards output standard, contribute to the improvement of human resource training in the market economy and international intergration nowadays.

3. Objects, Content and scope of the research

3.1. Objects of the research: the training process for economics major students at colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region.

3.2. Content of the research: Some measures to develop soft skills for economics major students at colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region.

3.3. Scope of the research

- *Content scope:* This doctoral dissertation focused on some main and necessary soft skills for economics major students at colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region including: persuasive skill, answering interview, communication, group work, negotiation and signing the contract, plan making, work arrangement, creative thinking, problem - solving skills, value determination, and be persistent to chosen values, self leadership and self identity.

- *Spatial scope:* Vinh Phuc Technology- Economic College, Thai Nguyen College of Economics and Finance, Phu Tho Economic Technical College, Dien Bien Economic Technical College, Lao Cai Public College.

An experiment is carried out at Vinh Phuc Technology - Economic College.

4. Scientific hypothesis

Education quality of Economics majors in colleges depends partly on developing soft skills for students. If we can establish a system of solutions which is suitable to education goals and content and meets the requirement of graduation outcomes to enhance soft skills for economics major students, education quality of colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region will be likely to be improved.

5. Duties of the research

5.1. Study the literature review about developing soft skills for economics major students at colleges towards output standard.

5.2. To survey, evaluate the reality of soft skill developing for economics major students in colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region towards output standard.

5.3. Recommend some suggestions to develop soft skills for economics major students in colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region towards output standard.

5.4. Carry out an experiment including some of the above suggestions then evaluate their level of suitability and effectiveness.

6. Research method

6.1. The methodology

- Research on developing soft skills for economics major students in colleges is conducted basing on system - structure approach, goals and content setting, methods to develop soft skills for students in unity and dialectic relation to the objectives, content of training programs and how to organize training process.

- Research on developing soft skills for economics major students in colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region is conducted basing on practical viewpoint: there is a need to associated developing soft skills for students in colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region with the practical demands of career, majors in Economics fields in current conditions, attaching to existing conditions of schools and educational institutions, and competence of teaching staff, especially, students' psychological and regional characteristics.

- Research on developing soft skills for economics major students in colleges is conducted basing on the viewpoint of activity and personality, developing soft skills is carried out through teaching activities, education, practical experience toward the aim of learners' personal development, in general and soft skill development, in particular, to meet the occupations and social requirements.

6.2. Research methodology

6.2.1. For the theory

Some methods used in the thesis include: Analysis, synthesis, systematization, generalization related theories in order to build theoretical basis of developing soft skills for economics major students in colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region towards output standard.

6.2.2. For the practical study

Observation, interview, sociology, experience synthesis, experimental method, ask for expert's ideas.

6.2.3. Supported methods

Some mathematic formulations, and Microsoft Excel 2010 were used to process all collected findings.

7. Some main points of the thesis

- Soft skills for economics major students is in connection with working skills and is only formed through activities. Students'

enthusiasm for practicing is the main element determining the process of developing soft skill for students.

- There is a need to choose some basic soft skills which are suitable to standard of implementation capacity of an economic staff and are integrated in teaching curriculum.

- Teaching and outdoor activities in colleges is considered as the main way to impact, to form soft skills for economics major students in order to achieve the education goals of each major.

- To develop soft skills for economics major students in colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region towards output standard, it is essential to develop teaching curriculum including soft skills, organizing education, assessing education and developing teaching environment.

8. New contributions of the thesis

8.1. Theoretical contribution: Make theoretical background of developing soft skills for economics major students more profound.

8.2. Practical contribution:

- Finding out soft skill system needed to develop for economics major students in colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region, its developing process, then pointing out the factors affecting the development of soft skills among students;

- Identify practical base of develop soft skills for economics major students in colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region through research, surveys the current situation; analyzing the causes of the current situation as a basis for proposing measures to development students' soft skills.

- Recommending some measures of teaching soft skills, contribute to improve teaching quality for economic staffs of colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region in the current period.

- The doctoral dissertation would also be a good material for training, practicing soft skills for college students nowadays. This is also considered to be good reference for postgraduated students, doctoral candidates and lecturers in colleges and universities.

9. The structure of the dissertation

Besides Introduction, Conclusion, Recommendations, Reference, the dissertation consists of three chapters:

Chapter 1: Literature review on developing soft skills for economic major students in colleges basing on graduation outcomes.

Chapter 2: Reality of training soft skills for economics major students in colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region towards output standard.

Chapter 3: Suggested measures to develop soft skills for economic major students in colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region towards output standard.

Chapter 1

LITERATURE REVIEW ON DEVELOPING SOFT SKILLS FOR ECONOMICS MAJOR STUDENTS IN COLLEGES TOWARDS OUTPUT STANDARD

1.1. History background

1.1.1. Related foreign studies

The first group: Study skills in close relation to each career and each training activity.

* *Working skill:* Some outstanding researches: Galperin P. Ia., Crutexki V. A., Petropxki P. V.,... Galperin P. Ia. (2005) studied the formation of knowledge and skill basing on the theory of action intellectual formation in each stage, and showed the effects of teaching and education in each stages.

* *Skill of pedagogic activities:* According to Bôndarepxcaia (1969), problem - solving skill was considered to be the most important for each teacher. Besides that Kixegor X. I. (1973) stated the content, ways of organizing pedagogic internship and practicing teaching skill for students among teacher training universities. (Former USSR)...

* *Learning skill:* Xcatkin M. N., Danhilov (1980) showed that reading book was really important and this determined the result of students' self - study process. Ruvinxki L. I. và Xôlôeva A. E. put an emphasis on fostering personality ideal and training future outlook for students.

The second group: Study skill in related to life skill and soft skill.

From ancient to modern time, educators were interested in labour training, health, formation of practicing ability, collaborative capacities. In the 1970s, there were some experimental researches on training life skills in population and environment training,... According to Zilic Z. (1999), soft skills was built and developed through training process and practical experiencing. The world forum on education for everyone in Darka (Senegal, 2000) defined life skills as the 6th top goal of each country.

Elizabeth Dunn và Gordon Arbuckle J. (2003) carried out a research about life skills of children whose parents once committed crimes. Confrennce Board of Canada (2005) drawn out a list of working skills in the 21st century. In addition, Taran G. (2008) also thought that in order to develop soft skills for students, all teaching curricula must be designed with integration of multi - activities. Schulz B. (2008) stated that forming and developing soft skills for students required a number of courses on soft skills, self-practicing, integrating in each subject and teaching toward promoting students' activeness. Rani S. (2010) also pointed out that 75% of the job success is based on the individual's soft skills. Ow S. H. (2008) thought that each group member must be fully developed with both technical skills and good soft skills. González D (2012) stated that soft skills can be divided into four main groups: leadership, management, self awareness and self management. Abdullah AL. M., Kamal N., Saeid M. (2014) believed that the building and developing of soft skill were determined by cultural, social background and was influenced by working, studying environment and family background. According to Greenberg A.D. and Nilssen A.H. (2015), to develop soft skills for learner, there was a need of applying experiencing training, developing professional knowledge, new assessment system, and changing teaching methods.

Recently, in some South East Asia countries, a number of studies about training life skill for both full - time students and in- serviced students was carried out.

In short, researches of skill in relation to career, life skill and soft skills have been an interest for many researchers around the world. However, the number of studies on soft skill which can support for technical knowledge of each specific major is very rare.

1.1.2. Domestic studies

The first group: Studies on soft skills in the aspect of buiding and fostering pedagogic skills for teachers and learning and employment skills for learners.

Ha The Ngu - Dang Vu Hoat (1987) presented the process of building and developing soft skill system. Tran Quoc Thanh (1995) provided a system of essential skills for pedagogic students. Le Van Hong (2001) stated that teaching skills not only was operation skills but also presented capacities of the teachers. The issue of building

study skill for students has been an increasing interest of a number of educators such as: Le Khanh Bang, Nguyen Quang Uan, Vu Trong Ry, Nguyen Van Ho, Dang Thanh Hung, Tran Quoc Thanh, Ha Thi Duc, Pham Hong Quang, ... Nguyen Thi Tinh (2004) carried out a study on organizing indoor and outdoor activities. After the research, Nguyen Minh Chau (2004) suggested some measures in order to improve practical skills for students. Hoang Thi Loi (2006) supplied a system of six measures to practice revising skills for students in ethnic residential high school. Nguyen Thi Huong - Le Cong Phuong (2009), stated the importance of problem - solving relating to healthy life skills and life skills. Nguyen Duc Tri (2010) studied about training employment skills basing on practical capacities. Duong Thi Thoan (2012) conducted a research about pedagogic graduate trainees' teaching skills on credit based course. Most authors mainly focused on fostering pedagogic skills for teachers, employment, and study skill for learners. However, soft skills, especially, developing soft skills for college students has still remained under research.

The second group: Study soft skill under the aspects of life style, life skills of pupils and students.

Pham Minh Hac (1978) stated that soft education was both a goal and a mean to form personality. Hoang Thi Anh (1992) concluded about developing pedagogical communication skills for students of teacher training universities. Thai Duy Tuyen (1995) oriented the view point and then suggested some measures to educate life skills for teenagers. Huynh Van Son (2009) listed out some essential life skills for teenagers. Nguyen Thi Oanh (2008) provided 10 ways for teenagers to practice life skills. Nguyen Thanh Binh (2009) studied key theoretical issues about life skills and life skill education. Nguyen Thi Tinh (2009) conducted a study about developing life skills for primary pupils in the Northern mountainous areas. Phan Thanh Van (2010) studied about training life skills for high school students through outdoor activities. Nguyen Thi Hue (2012) had a study about training life skills for secondary school pupils. Counseling research and Life psychology Company (SHARE) wrote the book named "coaching life skills in school for spoiled pupils, (2010). Nguyen Cong Khanh, Nguyen Thi Kim Lien (2012) presented a mixture model of theoretical and practical experience to organize pupils' club activities effectively. Nguyen Thi My Loc, Dinh Thi Kim Thoa (2012) studied

methodology, implementation of theme - based training life skills and life value for pupils. Dinh Thi Kim Thoa (2012) studies the relationship between life value and life skills.

The third group: Studying soft skills in terms of building and developing social activity skills among students in pedagogic universities.

In 2002 Nguyen Trong Dieu and Dinh Van Tien conducted a research about psychological characteristics of communication. Then in 2004, they continued studying the functions and characteristic of communication in administrative activities. They mentioned some social activity skills which had been discussed by Nguyen Van Ho, Nguyen Nhu An... They studied these skills in the process of building and developing skill system of each specific job, but not considered them as a system of basis skills which help people can ‘know many jobs and be good at one’ and can be successful in their lives.

In short, most domestic authors have been interested in studying skills in relation to career, life skills and soft skills. However, so far, there has been no study which fully looked at soft skills supporting for technical skills in general, and economic staff, in particular.

Conclusion: Through above literature review on skills, in general, and soft skills, in particular, some following conclusions can be drawn:

- There have been a number of studies on training job skills, life skills, and soft skills for both pupils and students in different kinds of jobs.

- There is few studies about develop *Developing soft skills for economics major students towards output standard at colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region*” *Developing soft skills for economics major students towards output standard at colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region*”ing soft skills for college and university students.

- There is even no study about developing soft skills for economics major students of Colleges, in general, and college students in the Northern mountainous midland region, in particular, towards output standard.

Because of these above reasons, the issue: “*Developing soft skills for economics major students towards output standard at colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region*” is becoming essential.

1.2. Some key concepts in the thesis

1.2.1. Skill and kinds of skill

1.2.1.1. Soft skill

Soft skill is a type of action of human beings which is applied creatively knowledge, experience and action method into practice under different specific situations in order to achieve expected goals or purposes.

1.2.1.2. Kinds of soft skill

Basing on the literature review, soft skills include technical or professional skill, life skills, working skills. More technically specific, skill is divided into hard skill, life skill and soft skill.

1.2.2. Life value, life skill, hard skill

1.2.2.1. Life value: Life value is defined as a form of social consciousness, or a system of view points about good, evil in the relation among human beings, it rules over the good oriented behaviours of human beings.

1.2.2.2. Life skill: As defined throughout the thesis, life skills are defined as a system of basic skills for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to show themselves as well as deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.

1.2.2.3. Hard skills: are career skills which shows education level or qualifications and certificates, experience and professional proficiency through each individual's behaviors and actions.

1.2.3. Soft skills

Soft skills refer to a cluster of basic skills which are voluntarily executed basing on individual's knowledge of work, ability of social integration, attitudes and behaviours or interaction with society, friends, community, colleagues, partners, organizations that enhance maximum work effectiveness and success in life.

1.2.4. Definition of developing soft skills

As defined throughout the thesis, developing soft skills of college students means improving students' soft skills in the direction from low level to higher level, from incompleteness to completeness.

1.3. Theories of developing soft skills for college students

1.3.1. The need of developing soft skills for students

1.3.1.1. The relationship between life value, life skills, hard skills and soft skills in career developing

- i) Life value and soft skills

- ii) Life skills and soft skills
- iii) Hard skills and soft skills

1.3.1.2. Requirement of the society and job about college graduate's soft skills

Developing soft skills for students is to meet the objective requirements of society and job of college graduates.

1.3.2. Psychological mechanism of building soft skills

Human beings' psychology is the output and is developed during operation process. Activity consists of two parts: the first part is action orientation and implementation. Psychological action (behavioral habits and skills) of human beings is formed basing on the mechanism from outside to inside, and through practical experiencing action. Skills can not be formed just by speech.

Soft skill is the system of basical skills is formed and developed on the basis of applying the understanding, knowledge, experience, values that are consistent with the specific conditions of work and life through action, live action of each individual; at the same time, it is associated with the formation and development of professional knowledge which is implemented through training activities, professional practicing experience, social activity, self-discipline of each individual...

1.3.3. Purposes, content of developing soft skills for students

1.3.3.1. Purposes

1.3.3.2. Content

1.3.4. Measures, form, methods of developing soft skills for students

1.3.4.1. Measures to develop soft skills for students

- i) By teaching activities*
- ii) By organizing extra outdoor activities*
- iii) By organizing experiencing job activity*
- iv) By organizing activities of community and society*
- v) By self - practice action of students*

1.3.4.2. Form and methods of developing soft skills for students

- i) Form*
- ii) Methods*

1.3.5. Some soft skills need to be developed for college students and levels of soft skills

1.3.5.1. Some basic soft skills need to be developed for students

It is obvious through reality that each position requires employeer different kinds of soft skills. Some basic soft skills need for work force in general, and college students in particular include:

Persuasive skills, communication skills, group work, negotiation, creative thinking, problem - solving, self management, self image, plan making and work organizing.

1.3.5.2. Levels of soft skill development

In order to evaluate level of a skill, it is essential to cover three sides: know how to do (Awarenes of how to do); create result in specific condition; make stable results in different conditions of life. Moreover, it's also vital to base on three main criteria: accuracy, proficiency and flexibility. Students' soft skills are evaluated through three levels: high level, medium level and low level.

1.3.6. The process of forming and developing soft skills

The process of forming and developing soft skills was conducted from low to high, from incomplete to complete; from the formation of individual consciousness to the formation of attitudes, beliefs, feelings and ultimately the formation of behaviors, habits. Behaviors and habits are formed by students' experiencing activity. The process of forming and developing of soft skills of human beings undergoes the following stages: awareness; try; rehearsal; implement; experience and lessons.

1.4. Output standard in developing training programs

1.4.1. An overview of training programs development theory

1.4.1.1. Training programs

Thesis determines: Training program is a set of modules and the activities built to link with the aim of accommodating learners with knowledge, skill, implement attitudes to meet the requirements of major, trained level.

1.4.1.2. Developing training programs

There are many approaches of developing training programs: content, target, system and development. Many researchers have taken the view supporting training program development to meet social requirements.

The purpose of training according to competence: train qualified workforce in which individuals perform labor activities stably in accordance with the standards of job position. The output standard of the major training is towards the aim of training human resources to meet the requirements of society. The output standard is the main target for training implementation, and the development of training program is to fulfill that goal. Developing training program is a

closed process including: 1) Analysis the context and training needs; 2) Determine the profile of students' ability; 3) Identify knowledge modules, courses; 4) Set matrix of courses, create a study timetable; 5) Compile the program content, detail course outline; the conditions ensure the implementation of training program; 6) Evaluate and approve training program; 7) Implement, evaluate, complete training program. Each stage of training program development progress depends on levels of interests that require the involvement of the stakeholders of inside and outside college.

1.4.2. Output standard in training program and the construction method

1.4.2.1. Output standard definition and role:

i) *Definition:* A system of standards of quality, knowledge, skill/technique, personality/behavior and ability/capacity, or more generally, the students' hard skills and soft skills after the end of training programs at colleges.

ii) Role of output standard

- It is considered to be a basis to develop training programs to meet the requirements of the labour market.

- It is a basis to organize training process, to achieve all standard set previously.

- It is also targets of students during learning and training; process-oriented self-study, self-research and professional practice of students.

- It also demonstrates the commitment of the university in the community and the society about their graduates, the quality of training.

1.4.2.2. The basic criteria of output standard

Standard models on the output quality of graduated students consist of the following elements:

- + Ethics
- + Knowledge
- + Capacity
- + Skill
- + Ability
- + IQ, EQ, health ...

1.4.2.3. Measures to create output standard

- i) Establish output standard of each major in training programs.
- ii) Building output standard of courses of training programs.

1.4.3. Output standard structure

1.4.3.1. Output standard structure of training programs

- 1) Introduction;
- 2) The main tasks of the learners after graduation;
- 3) Competent standard of the graduated students (knowledge, skill, attitude);
- 4) Job position after graduation.

1.4.3.2. Structure of the course's output standard

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Competent standard of students (knowledge, skill, attitude);

1.4.4. Soft skill system reflected in output standard of economics major training program

1.4.4.1. Features of economic activities, requirements for quality and competence of the college-level economic staffs

1.4.4.2. Soft skill system reflected in output standard of economics major training programs

The dissertation presents the fundamental and important soft skills for college economics students: persuasion, interviewing skills, communication, teamwork, negotiation and signing economic contracts, planning and organization of work, creative thinking, problem-solving, determining values and preserving selected values, self-leading and self-images.

1.4.5. Developing soft skills for economics major students in colleges towards output standard

1.4.5.1. Output standard approach: This is defined as the process of developing training programs, organizing training procedure, evaluating learner's results, helping the learners achieve output standard after graduation and meet the social requirements.

1.4.5.2. Developing soft skills for economics major students in colleges toward output standard: is a set of viewpoint, educational, training activities, with the aim of determining and implementing measures, forms of impacting the learners; evaluating the outputs basing on soft skills criteria which are reflected in output standard or the training programs (or subjects) in economic field after finishing such programs.

1.5. Factors affecting the soft skill development process for economics major students in colleges according to output standard.

1.5.1. Objective factors

1.5.1.1. Traditional cultural characteristics of ethnic and cultural regions

The characteristics of traditional Vietnamese culture become power that gathers the entire nation into a solid block in stability and development are the fundamental advantages of developing soft skills for students. Students in colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region in difficult economic zones, including ethnic minorities; limited space perception and communication with modern society; many outdated procedures; get difficulties in developing soft skills.

1.5.1.2. Family environment: Good family environment is a place where students form and experience life skills including soft skills. Conversely, bad home environment leads to the inefficiency in training soft skills for students.

1.5.1.3. Social Environment

- Education and training policy of the Government
- Residence in community.
- The development of economics, politics and society
- Friend relationship.

1.5.1.4. School Education: The determinant of training soft skills for students. The training program, the teaching, learning and training method, teachers' teaching soft skill competencies are important and decisive. Other supporting activities such as Youth Union activities, Student Association ...create an environment for students to experience soft skills.

1.5.2. Subjective factors

1.5.2.1. Students' awareness: Students' awareness and knowledge about activities developing soft skills are the basis for training soft skills.

1.5.2.2. Students' motivation: Students' motivation promotes the effectiveness of students' soft skills training and experience process.

1.5.2.3. Students' attitude: The right attitude is one of the important conditions making up the success of students' training soft skills.

Conclusion chapter 1

Soft skills are complementary skills for major skills; have an intimate relationship with the major skills. Soft skills are system of basic skills done voluntarily basing on knowledge work, social integration ability, attitude and behavior and interaction with the

social, community, friends, colleagues, partners, individual organizations in order to maximize job efficiency and success in life.

Develop soft skills for students in college is to make the students' soft skills develop vertically upward from the lower level to higher level, from incomplete to more complete.

The study clarified the theoretical background of developing soft skills for economics major students in colleges basing on output standard is an important basis to study reality of training soft skills for economics major students in colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region.

Chapter 2

REALITY OF TRAINING SOFT SKILLS FOR ECONOMICS MAJOR STUDENTS IN COLLEGES IN THE NORTHERN MOUNTAINOUS MIDLAND REGION TOWARDS OUTPUT STANDARD

2.1. An overview of reality survey

2.1.1. Objects and scope of the research

2.1.1.1. Features of economics major students in colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region

2.1.1.2. Spatial scope, numbers of objects

2.1.2. Design questionnaires

2.1.3. Criteria and rating scale

2.1.3.1. In terms of qualitative

2.1.3.2. In terms of quantitative

2.2. Reality of training soft skills for economics major students in colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region towards output standard

2.2.1. Awareness of managers, teachers, and students about the development of soft skills for students

2.2.1.1. Awareness of managers, teachers, and students about the necessary level of the development of soft skills for students

2.2.1.2. Awareness of students about the role of soft skills in occupation and human life

2.2.1.3. Awareness of students about the significance of training soft skills

2.2.2. Reality of level of soft skills of economics major students in colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region towards output standard

2.2.2.1. Level of persuasion skills

2.2.2.2. Level of respond skills

2.2.2.3. Level of communication skills

2.2.2.4. Level of teamwork skills

2.2.2.5. Level of negotiation, signing contract skills

2.3.2.6. Level of planning and organization of work skills

2.2.2.7. Level of creative thinking skills

2.2.2.8. Level of problem-solving skills

2.2.2.9. Level of determining value and preserving values selected skills

2.2.2.10. Level of leading own self and personal images

2.2.2.11. Overall assessment about reality of students' level of soft skills

Soft skills of economics major students in colleges in the midland, mountainous area in the North is at average level (overall average 1,75); meanwhile lowest levels includes: Interviewing skill, planning and organizing of work, creative thinking

2.2.3. Reality of developing soft skills for students through activities toward output standard

2.2.3.1. Soft skill is reflected in output standard of economics major in colleges

Our college has developed soft skills for students; some soft skills are integrated in output standard of economics major. However, the integrated output standard of economics major are incomplete, only focus on developing the soft skills for education and training. Especially, soft skills reflected in standard outcomes of major training program mainly reflected in level 1; training activities to educate, develop soft skills for students, content, assessment criteria in evaluating the results soft skills of each subject has not been reflected in course syllabus.

2.2.3.2. Reality of the implementation level of active teaching methods in teaching activities of teachers to develop soft skills for students

The methods of active teaching used to train, develop soft skills for students is still limited. The integrated teaching to develop soft skills for students is also inadequate. Teachers have not been trained basically about not only soft skills but also designing lectures and teaching institutions towards training soft skills for students.

2.2.3.3. Reality of use level of developing soft skills for students

Managers, teachers assess teachers in college according to the way to develop soft skills for students in low medium (overall average 1,71). Up to 48.61% of respondents said "unused", only 19.99% of respondents said "use regularly". However, 19.99% of use regularly, the majority of teachers use self-training of students. However, students' soft skills self-training activities were not

oriented to the objectives, content and training techniques by teachers so it's almost students' spontaneity.

2.2.3.4. Reality of use level of the forms of soft skills development for students

Teachers used the forms of soft skills development for students at low levels (overall average 1, 66). Among 6 forms listed in the thesis, only 2 forms: "integration, integrated into the lessons, courses," "visit, practical experience" are at medium levels, the rest remains at low levels.

2.2.3.5. Reality of result assessment of the development soft skills

Teachers only focus on assess knowledge in re-make level; knowledge in applying level is not dominant in content assessment. Especially, teachers are not interested in assessing soft skills; criteria and content evaluation have not been shown in course syllabus.

2.2.4. Factors affecting the soft skills development process for students

2.2.4.1. The assessment of managers, teachers and students on objective factors: Influence at high level; especially, factors related education and training group have important and decisive influence on the soft skills development for students.

2.2.4.2. The assessment of managers, teachers and students on subjective factors: Influence at very high level; and play a directly decisive role in the soft skills development for students.

Conclusion Chapter 2

1. Managers, teachers and students are relatively fully aware of the importance and the necessity of developing the ten soft skills for economics major students towards output standard. This is the basic and important premise useful for the soft skills development activities for students.

2. Students' soft skills are at the level of low medium, and low. The subjective and objective factors are influent on training soft skills for students, the subjective factor of the students played a decisive role directly.

3. Proposed soft skills of economics major in college are concerned the school was concerned, including output standard. However, incomplete.

4. The activities of education, teaching and training to develop soft skills for students are much limited.

Chapter 3
SUGGESTED MEASURES TO DEVELOP SOFT SKILLS
FOR ECONOMICS MAJOR STUDENTS IN COLLEGES IN
THE NORTHERN MOUNTAINOUS MIDLAND REGION
TOWARDS OUTPUT STANDARD

3.1. The rule of suggesting the measures to develop soft skills for economics major in colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region towards output standard

- Ensure the consistency with the training objectives.
- Ensure the integrity of the measures.
- Ensure the practicality and the specificity.
- Ensure the viability.

3.2. Some measures to develop soft skills for economic major students in colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region towards output standard

3.2.1. Developing specialized training programs in economics according to output standard in integrating soft skills

3.2.1.1. The aims and the meanings of the measures

3.2.1.2. The content and the way of conducting

The process of developing the specialized training programs in economics according to output standard with the integration of soft skills includes the following steps: 1) Analyzing, evaluating the setting, the training needs in economics. 2) Defining the competence profile of graduated students (standard outcomes). 3) Defining the modules of knowledge and the subject that meets the described competence. 4) Establishing the matrix of the subjects and defining the learning plan. 5) Compiling the training programs, the detailed outline of the subjects, including the soft skills. 6) Checking and approving the training programs. 7) Conducting and completing the training programs.

3.2.1.3. The condition of implementing the measures

3.2.2. Compiling the teaching guide documents of soft skills for teachers

3.2.2.1. The aims and the meanings of the measures

3.2.2.2. The content and the way of conducting

- i) Some common problems of soft skills
- ii) The guide of designing the curriculum in integrating soft skills

iii) The guide for teachers in designing the lessons in integrating soft skills

iv) The guide of designing the modules in teaching soft skills

v) The guide of teaching the soft skills modules

3.2.2.3. *The condition of implementing the measures*

3.2.3. Teaching soft skills according to the modules

3.2.4.1. *The aims and the meanings of the measures*

3.2.4.2. *The content and the way of conducting*

Teaching soft skills modules are designed in the direction of assembling and developing, linking with the others to not only achieve the training objectives but also develop soft skills for students. The structure of the teaching-soft-skills modules includes system on, module body, system out.

3.2.4.3. *The condition of implementing the measures*

3.2.5. Organizing more outdoor activities to train soft skills for students

3.2.5.1. *The aims and the meanings of the measures*

3.2.5.2. *The content and the way of conducting*

i) Organizing the extra classes of training soft skills

ii) Organizing the activities of the Youth Union and Students' Association in integrating the developing content of soft skills

iii) Encouraging to establish the students' clubs.

iv) Organizing for students to practice and experience the work at the enterprises and the manufacturing business establishments

3.2.5.3. *The condition of implementing the measures*

3.2.6. Innovating the assessment of students' learning results according to the competence

3.2.6.1. *The aims and the meanings of the measures*

3.2.6.2. *The content and the way of conducting*

The design is set the learning objectives integrating with soft skills basing on three different levels: recognize, re-make; apply; apply fluently and creatively, express the individual opinion. Teachers establish the matrix of question bank. Teachers build the tool to assess the knowledge, the skills and the ability of applying. Designing the system of the oriented competence exercises to organize the practice and evaluate students' competence. Combining many forms of assessments such as regular, periodic and total ones, through the situation, the project, the practice and the reality.

3.2.6.3. *The condition of implementing the measures*

3.2.7. The relationship among the measures

The above-mentioned measures have their own aims and meaning; but they have the close relationship. They link, affect and motivate together. Therefore, they need applying together in the activities of education and training of economic major.

3.3. Experimenting the education

3.3.1. Background of the experimental process

3.3.1.1. The aim of the experiment

3.3.1.2. The objects, the content

The experiment is conducted in Vinh Phuc technology economic college with two phases:

- The first phase: teaching the subjects which integrate with soft skills. The experimental class: Economics 5A (35 students), the control group: Economics 5B (35 students).

- The second phase: teaching the soft skills subjects according to the modules, the experimental class: Economics 5A.

3.3.1.3. The experimental hypothesis

- The students' soft skills will gradually develop in the impact of experimental process.

- The soft skills level of the experimental class is higher than that of the control class.

3.3.1.4. The experimental procedure

i) The method:

- With the first experimental phase: The time is from September, 2014 to December, 2014.

- With the second experimental phase: Once conducted from September, 3rd, 2014 to September, 10th, 2015.

ii) Each phase is involved the following steps:

- The stage of preparation:

Step 1: Build the experimental program and content

Step 2: Select the control and experimental group

Step 3: Foster the teachers

- The stage of conducting:

Step 1: Examining, assessing the students' level of soft skills in two groups.

Step 2: Conducting the impact of experiment

Step 3: Test, assess the soft skills ability of the experiment class after the process of impacting and comparing with their level before that process of the control class.

- The stage of processing the results:
- + Processing the quantitative results.
- + Processing the qualitative results.

3.3.1.5. *The criteria of assessing the results*

- i) In terms of quantitative analysis
- ii) In terms of qualitative analysis

3.3.1.6. *The way of processing the results*

- i) In terms of quantitative analysis
- ii) In terms of qualitative analysis

3.3.2. **The result and the assessment**

3.3.2.1. *The experimental result of teaching in integrating soft skills for economic major students (Economics 5A and Economics 5B)*

a. Analyzing the students' learning results

a-1. Analyzing the students' learning results before the experiment:

A number of students are equal and the learning results of two classes are also equal.

a-2. Analyzing the students' learning results after the experiment

* Analyzing the learning results of the control class before and after the experiment: The average mark of the exams before and after the experiment is the same (5,83)

* Analyzing the learning results of the experimental class before and after the experiment: The mark of the exams before and after the experiment considerably changes about the average mark and the level. This proves that the experimental measures have had an impact of the results and contribute to improve the quality and the effectiveness of teaching the subjects.

b. Analyzing the developing level of soft skills when integrating with teaching of financial accounting

b-1. Analyzing the soft skills level before the experiment

b-2. Analyzing the soft skills level after the experiment

*Analyzing the developing level of soft skills in two classes.

1) After the first experiment, the average mark of the students' soft skills of the experimental class (1.89) is higher than that of the control class (1.81)

2) After the second experiment, the average mark of the students' soft skills of the experimental class (1.82) is higher than that of the control class (1.98)

3) The average mark of each soft skill of the experimental class is higher than that of the control class.

3.3.2.2. *The experimental results of teaching the soft skills for students*

The statistics indicate that the developing level of soft skills of the experimental class before and after the experiment changes according to the upwards trend, the average mark before the experiment: 1.87 and before the experiment: 2.19

3.3.2.3. *Comment and assessment*

- The results confirm:
 - + Some measures of developing soft skills for economic major students of colleges in the midland, mountainous area in the North according to standard outcomes have the high viability.
 - + The content of each measure and the experimental process are clear. The teachers apply effectively. This proves that the ability of transferring the suggested measures in the research for the schools is easy and convenient; and the viability of the suggested measures.
- The results of pedagogical experiment is just the beginning. To ensure the stability and the development of the gained value, the above measures need continuing to study and conduct at the larger scope, this will create the great value in training colleges' economic major.

Conclusion chapter 3

1. Basing on the theoretical, practical and scope of the thesis, six measures to develop soft skills for economics major students in colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region are proposed. Measures related closely, intercept, impact, promote each other; and form a system. Therefore, measures in education and training need applying synchronizedly to improve the quality of training, implement human resources to meet the requirements of industrialization, modernization and international integration nowadays.
2. Organization of pedagogical experiment shows the measures of developing soft skills for economic major students in colleges in the midland, mountainous area in the North according to standard outcomes are highly feasible. Explicate about the content and procedures implementing each measure. Teachers apply well and effectively to participate in developing the training programs, integrated soft skills development in teaching subjects and training soft skill modules.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conclusion

1.1. Theoretical studies showed that soft skills are important parts of life skills. Soft skills are systems of basic skills done voluntarily basing on knowledge about work, social integration abilities, attitudes and behavior and interaction with the social, community, friends, colleagues, partners and organizations of every individual to maximize the efficiency of work and success in life. Soft skills help students learn and practice well, solid and successful in career and life after graduation.

1.2. Soft skills are necessary for economics major students. They are: persuasion, interviewing skill, communication, teamwork, negotiation and signing economic contract, planning and organization of work, creative thinking, problem-solving, determining values and preserving selected values, self - leading and self- images.

1.3. Developing soft skills for students is affected by both objective and subjective factors; these factors have organic relations with each other and dominate in forming and developing soft skills for students, but the subjective factor of students played a decisive role directly.

1.4. Practical research results show that: The level of soft skills of economics major students in colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region is only at a low average level. The cause of these results are: Soft skills needed are not fully reflected in output standard of major training program. Develop training programs according to enhancing training soft skills for students is still inadequate. The program content is mainly theory, lack of practice and real experience. The integrated teaching institutions; educational activities, teaching and training to develop soft skills for students are limited. The innovation of teaching methods is still slow; implementation experience in training soft skills for students is much limited.

1.5. The dissertation has proposed 6 measures developing soft skills for economics major students in colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region towards output standard. They are: 1) Developing training programs for economic major students according to standard outcomes integrating soft skills; 2) Compiling teaching soft skills guidelines for teachers; 3) Organizing integrated teaching developing soft skills for students; 4) Organizing teaching soft skills according to module; 5) Strengthening the organization of outside class activities; 6) Innovating the result assessment process according to competence. The

pedagogical experimental results showed that: The proposed measures for soft skills for economics major students in colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region towards output standard are highly feasible. It should be further studied and implemented widely, this will bring great value in training process of economics major in Colleges (can handle for engineering at the appropriate level).

2. Recommendations

2.1. With the Ministry of Education and Training

Evaluating training programs of the College should be done basing on competence. The Ministry of Education - Education should coordinate with other relevant Ministries in order to issue documents providing for a mechanism of coordination between colleges and businesses in building output standard, developing training programs and organizing training.

2.2. With colleges in the Northern mountainous midland region

- Creating consensus and consistency in awareness among officials, teachers, employees and students about the importance of the development of soft skills for students. Developing training programs towards integrating soft skills and training organization according to output standard.

- Establishing mechanisms for coordination between colleges and the relevant authorities (businesses; agencies using graduated students, alumni,...) in determining output standard, developing and conducting training programs; evaluating training results.

- Determining the content, form and method of training, education appropriately and effectively, to develop skills in general, soft skills for students in particular, contribute to improve the quality of college education.

2.3. With the authorities of provinces in the Northern mountainous midland region

- Investing fund, facilities and equipments for colleges to organize education activities, teaching directly, creatively and enhance the activities for students, in order to formulate and develop skills (professional skills, soft skills) for students, enhance the quality of training, provision of training to meet the requirement of labor market.

- Promulgating mechanisms and policies that align closely between colleges and business; agencies and organization in the process of training; training should be done in association with the labor market.