

HIGHER EDUCATION FOR HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM: A CASE STUDY IN HO CHI MINH CITY

ENSINO SUPERIOR PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO DE RECURSOS HUMANOS PARA ATENDER ÀS NECESSIDADES DO DESENVOLVIMENTO SUSTENTÁVEL NO VIETNÃ: UM ESTUDO DE CASO NA CIDADE DE HO CHI MINH

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the role of higher education in human resource development to meet the requirements of sustainable development in Ho Chi Minh City. It emphasizes the importance of improving education quality to cultivate a highly skilled workforce with creative thinking and adaptability to the knowledge economy in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. This study is based on theories of human capital and human resource development, combined with analytical-synthetic, comparative-contrastive methods and data processing. This approach helps assess the current state, identify challenges, and propose solutions to enhance the quality of higher education in Ho Chi Minh City, ensuring alignment with sustainable development goals. The study evaluates the current state and limitations of the higher education system in developing human resources in Ho Chi Minh City. Based on this assessment, it proposes solutions to strengthen the role of higher education in this process. These solutions not only contribute to improving the quality of human resources but also serve as a reference for city authorities in formulating socio-economic development strategies, ensuring the alignment of higher education with real labor market demands. Higher education plays a key role in training high-quality human resources to meet the sustainable development needs of Ho Chi Minh City in the context of international integration and digital transformation. However, the higher education system still requires significant reforms to meet regional and global standards. Implementing comprehensive and coordinated solutions will help Ho Chi Minh City develop an advanced education system, providing a strong foundation for the city's and the nation's sustainable socio-economic growth.

Keywords: Higher education, human resources, current situation, solutions, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

RESUMO

Este estudo analisa o papel do ensino superior no desenvolvimento de recursos humanos para atender aos requisitos do desenvolvimento sustentável na Cidade de Ho Chi Minh. Ele enfatiza a importância de melhorar a qualidade da educação para cultivar uma força de trabalho altamente qualificada com pensamento criativo e adaptabilidade à economia do conhecimento no contexto da Quarta Revolução Industrial. Este estudo é baseado em teorias de capital humano e desenvolvimento de recursos humanos, combinadas com métodos analítico-sintéticos, comparativos-contrastivos e processamento de dados. Esta abordagem ajuda a avaliar o estado atual, identificar desafios e propor soluções para melhorar a qualidade do ensino superior na Cidade de Ho Chi Minh, garantindo o alinhamento com as metas de desenvolvimento sustentável. O estudo avalia o estado atual e as limitações do sistema de ensino superior no desenvolvimento de recursos humanos na Cidade de Ho Chi Minh. Com base nesta avaliação, ele propõe soluções para fortalecer o papel do ensino superior neste processo. Essas soluções não apenas contribuem para melhorar a qualidade dos recursos humanos, mas também servem como referência para as autoridades da cidade na formulação de estratégias de desenvolvimento socioeconômico, garantindo o alinhamento do ensino superior com as demandas reais do mercado de trabalho. O ensino superior desempenha um papel fundamental na formação de recursos humanos de alta qualidade para atender às necessidades de desenvolvimento sustentável da Cidade de Ho Chi Minh no contexto da integração internacional e da transformação digital. No entanto, o sistema de ensino superior ainda requer reformas significativas para atender aos padrões regionais e globais. A implementação de soluções abrangentes e coordenadas ajudará a Cidade de Ho Chi Minh a desenvolver um sistema educacional avançado, fornecendo uma base sólida para o crescimento socioeconômico sustentável da cidade e da nação.

Palavras-chave: Ensino superior, recursos humanos, situação atual, soluções, Cidade de Ho Chi Minh, Vietname.

Introduction

In the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which is profoundly impacting all aspects of social life, higher education plays a pivotal role in training high-quality human resources individuals who are not only equipped with multidisciplinary knowledge in science, culture, politics, and law but also possess the ability to grasp technological development trends, apply, practice, and innovate in modern work environments. At the same time, higher education must ensure the development of responsible citizens who comply with international laws and the commitments that Vietnam has made on the global stage.

Recognizing this, most countries around the world prioritize strong investment in higher education as a decisive factor for economic-social development and global integration. Understanding the critical role of higher education in human resource development, the Communist Party of Vietnam affirms: "Education and training are top national policies, a decisive factor in successfully carrying out the

cause of national construction and defense; they are the responsibility of the Party, the State, and the entire people; investment in education is investment in development and should be prioritized ahead of all economic-social development programs and plans" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2013). Furthermore, the Party emphasizes the need to train individuals comprehensively, instilling ethics, discipline, civic awareness, life skills, work skills, foreign languages, information technology proficiency, creative thinking, and international integration capabilities to develop global citizens (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021, p. 232-233). As the country's leading economic, financial, commercial, scientific-technological, and cultural center, Ho Chi Minh City has clearly defined its mission: "to continuously innovate, enhance labor productivity and competitiveness; build a smart city; develop rapidly and sustainably while maintaining its role as the economic locomotive of the nation; promote cultural progress, social equity, and welfare; and work for the prosperity and happiness of its people and the entire country" (Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee, 2020, p. 303). To achieve this goal, higher education plays a crucial role in supplying high-quality human resources that meet the city's sustainable development needs in the new era.

However, despite its significant contributions to human resource development, higher education in Ho Chi Minh City still faces limitations and challenges that need to be addressed. Key issues include the mismatch between training and actual labor market demands, the practical application capabilities of graduates, and the level of collaboration between universities, businesses, and research institutions. Therefore, proposing practical solutions to enhance the quality of higher education and maximize the role of human resources in the city's development is an urgent and highly relevant requirement in the current context.

Methodology

Theoretical Basis of Higher Education and Human Resource Development

The Role of Higher Education in Human Resource Development. Higher education plays a crucial role in human resource development, especially in the context of the knowledge economy and global integration. According to Becker's Human Capital Theory (1964), education is a form of investment that enhances skills, labor productivity, and individual income, thereby driving economic and social growth. Additionally, modern theories of human resource development emphasize the role of higher education in providing specialized knowledge, professional skills, and innovative thinking. Schultz (1971) argued that high-quality human resources are the key factor determining a nation's long-term sustainable development.

Human Resource Development Model through Higher Education Based on previous studies, the model of human resource development through higher education can be approached from three main aspects: Training Quality: Which includes curriculum design, faculty competency, infrastructure, and teaching methodologies; Alignment with Labor Market Demands: Assesses the connection between academic programs and business requirements, as well as graduates' adaptability; Support Policies and Development Environment: Involves educational policies, state and corporate investments to enhance workforce quality.

This model is reinforced by Thurow's (1975) theory on the link between education and the labor market, emphasizing the necessity of demand-driven training to reduce unemployment and resource wastage.

Higher Education and Human Resource Development in Ho Chi Minh City. As Vietnam's leading economic and educational hub, Ho Chi Minh City is home to many prestigious universities and attracts a highly skilled workforce. According to Regional Development Theory (Richardson, 1978), higher education directly impacts local economic growth by supplying high-quality human resources, fostering innovation, and enhancing competitiveness.

A World Bank (2018) report indicates that the quality of training and the alignment between higher education and the labor market in Ho Chi Minh City are improving. However, several challenges remain, including: Imbalances between labor supply and demand; Shortages in practical skills and creative capacity in training; Limited collaboration between universities and businesses

Theoretical Foundation of the Study. This study is based on theoretical frameworks related to human capital, human resource development, and the connection between education and the labor market. The case study in Ho Chi Minh City aims to assess the current situation, identify influencing factors, and propose solutions to improve human resource quality through higher education, contributing to the city's and the nation's sustainable development.

Results and Discussion

The Current State Of Higher Education In Promoting Human Resources To Meet The Requirements Of Sustainable Development Ho Chi Minh City

In the process of international integration, the education and training sector of Ho Chi Minh City has implemented various pilot policies, initiatives, and projects to translate resolutions into practice. These efforts contribute to enhancing human resource quality, promoting economic restructuring, and increasing competitiveness. These initiatives have yielded significant results:

Higher Education Enhancing Human Resource Quality to Meet International Integration Requirements. Ho Chi Minh City currently has 109 universities and colleges and 78 research institutes, supported by a stable economic foundation. The city allocates over 25% of its budget to recurrent expenditures and infrastructure development, as well as improving faculty quality, thereby fostering education at all levels. Universities and colleges collaborate with youth organizations to promote Party resolutions, organize Marx-Lenin science and Ho Chi Minh ideology Olympiads, and conduct history education programs to instill patriotism. Consequently, the quality of higher education has steadily improved, with the proportion of trained labor reaching 84.79% in 2019 and 85.2% in 2020. Among the

working population, those with university degrees or higher accounted for 18.8%, surpassing the national average of 10.6%, while labor productivity was 2.6 times higher than the national average (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021, p.164). Higher education in Ho Chi Minh City has significantly contributed to economic development, with the city accounting for 22% of the country's GDP and 27% of total national budget revenue from 2016 to 2020.

Table 1 – Technical and professional qualifications of Ho Chi Minh City's workforce from 2011 to 2022

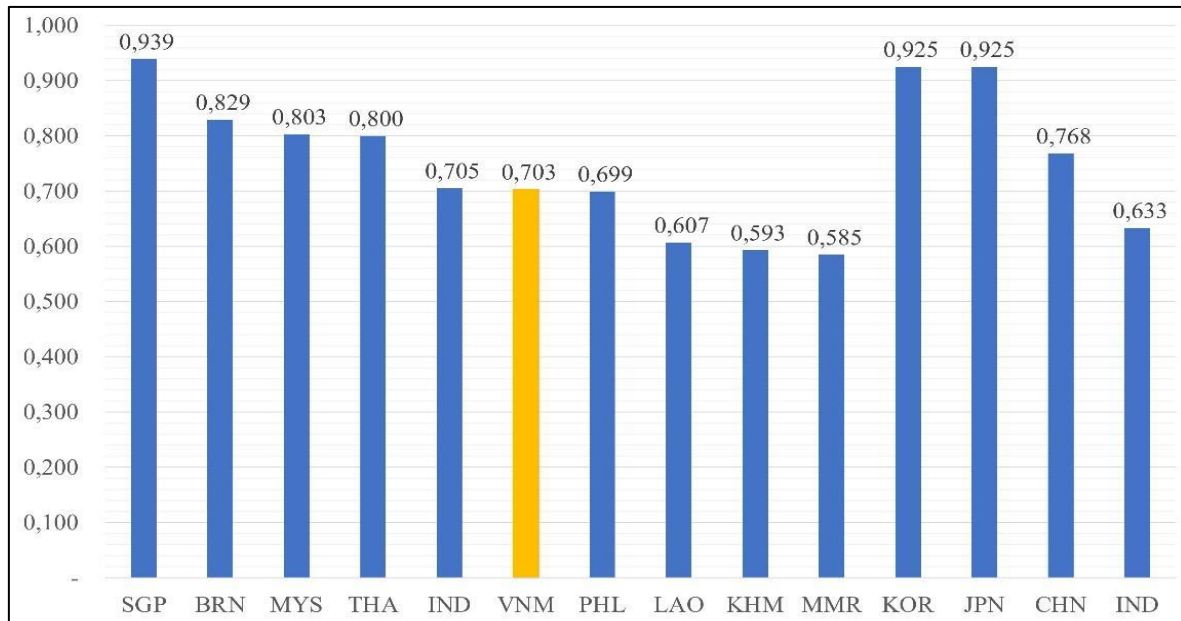
Unit: %

Total	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2022
Untrained labor	38,52	35,70	33,46	30,07	27,67	24,98	22,50	38,7
Primary vocational level	23,68	25,69	24,49	25,05	25,59	26,09	26,69	-
Skilled technical workers	13,44	13,89	16,21	17,38	17,74	18,43	18,81	-
Intermediate level	3,82	4,13	4,21	4,46	4,81	5,25	5,81	4,0
College	3,54	3,69	3,83	4,13	4,38	4,80	5,38	6,1
University or higher	17,00	16,90	17,80	18,91	19,81	20,45	20,81	23,9
Total	100,00	100,00	100,00	100,00	100,00	100,00	100,00	-

Higher Education Promoting Comprehensive Human Resource Development. Ho Chi Minh City ranks second in the country on the Human Development Index (HDI), with a score of 0.820, just behind Ba Ria - Vung Tau. Between 2008 and 2012, the city's HDI increased by an average of 1.57% per year, 1.7 times the national average. The multidimensional poverty rate has steadily declined, reaching 1.45% in 2021. Additionally, significant improvements in public health have been recorded, with the malnutrition rate among children under five dropping from 5.3% in 2011 to 4.1% in 2015. Notably, the vaccination rate for children under one-year-old has

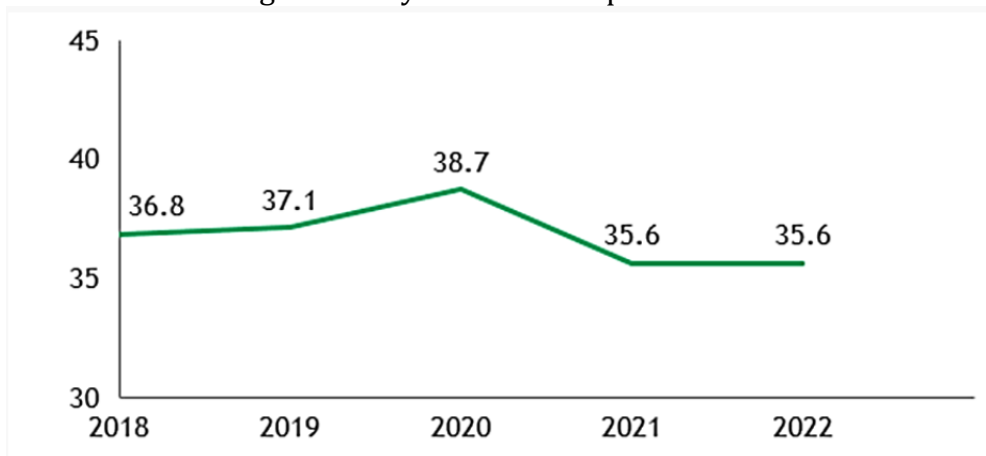
reached nearly 95%, while the under-five mortality rate decreased from 10.04‰ in 2011 to 5‰ in 2015 (Ho Chi Minh City Statistics Office, 2020, p.452). These results highlight the vital role of high-quality human resources in researching, planning, and implementing the city’s social development policies.

Table 2 – HDI values of countries in Southeast Asia and India, Japan, Korea, and China in 2021



Policies for Training and Developing High-Quality Human Resources. Ho Chi Minh City has launched numerous cooperation programs with domestic and international educational institutions to foster high-quality human resources. Since 2001, the city has trained 920 individuals, including 92 Ph.D. and 828 master's degree holders. Among them, 490 were trained domestically, 343 studied abroad, and 87 participated in joint training programs. Additionally, the city is implementing a program to develop young leaders and managers, selecting outstanding university graduates and promising young civil servants. To date, 1,527 candidates have been approved for participation, demonstrating the city’s commitment to investing in human resource development for leadership and governance (Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee, 2022).

Table 3 – Percentage of workers aged 15 years and older who have received training in the city. Ho Chi Minh period 2018-2022



Promoting Scientific Research and Innovation. Ho Chi Minh City has established and maintained numerous science and technology awards, such as the Young Scientific and Technical Innovation Competition, the Euréka Prize, the Pham Ngoc Thach Award, the Information Technology Award, the Environmental Award, the Innovation and Startup Award (I-Star) under the Ho Chi Minh City Innovation and Startup Week (WHISE), and the Ho Chi Minh City Innovation Award. These initiatives encourage students and researchers to develop technological solutions to meet the city's development needs.

The above policies and programs reflect Ho Chi Minh City's efforts to develop higher education in a way that enhances human resource quality, serving the goals of sustainable development and international integration.

Challenges In Higher Education For Sustainable Human Resource Development In Ho Chi Minh City

In the context of globalization, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and rapid digital transformation, Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh is presented with great opportunities to enhance the quality of its human resources, thereby driving socio-economic development. However, to fully capitalize on these opportunities, the higher education system in Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh must confront and address various challenges, including training quality, collaboration models with businesses, management mechanisms, and financial policies.

First, training quality has not met the practical demands of the labor market. Despite certain improvements, higher education in Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh is still considered to be lagging behind the actual needs of the labor market. Several key issues include: **A gap between training programs and real-world business needs:** Many university curricula have not been updated promptly to keep pace with technological advancements and market demands. As a result, graduates often lack practical skills, soft skills, and creative thinking. According to surveys, some businesses in Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh report that they must retrain newly graduated employees for a long period before they can work efficiently. **Lack of soft skills and innovative thinking:** Besides professional knowledge, many students lack skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, critical thinking, and adaptability to an international working environment. This poses a significant barrier to integration and the development of a high-quality workforce. **Uneven training quality among universities:** While some major universities in Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh have achieved international standards in training, many others have not met basic requirements in teaching, research, and infrastructure. This results in disparities in workforce quality, affecting the overall competitiveness of human resources in the labor market.

Second, weak connections between universities and businesses. Although university-business collaboration models have been implemented in many developed countries, such connections in Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh remain ineffective and lack cohesion.

Limited business involvement in curriculum development: Many university curricula are primarily developed based on theoretical research without sufficient consultation from businesses. This results in training content that lags behind real-world needs and fails to promptly meet new labor market requirements.

Internship and recruitment mechanisms are not optimized: Although many universities offer internship programs, their implementation is inconsistent and lacks practical depth. Students often participate in short-term internships without being assigned specialized tasks, leading to limited hands-on experience.

Businesses do not invest significantly in research and development (R&D) at universities: In many developed countries, businesses play a key role in funding and collaborating on research with universities. However, in Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, this collaboration remains limited. Many businesses do not see direct benefits from working with universities, while universities lack effective policies to attract private sector investment.

Third, the higher education system has not kept pace with digital transformation and international integration. Digital transformation is occurring rapidly worldwide, particularly in education. However, the higher education system in Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh has yet to fully leverage the opportunities brought by digital transformation.

Limited use of technology in teaching: Many universities still lack professional online teaching systems and have not effectively utilized artificial intelligence and big data to personalize student learning experiences.

Few interdisciplinary and internationally affiliated training programs: New fields such as data science, artificial intelligence, and financial technology (Fintech) are not yet widely implemented at universities. Additionally, international cooperation mainly consists of short-term student exchange programs rather than in-depth joint training programs with leading global universities.

Fourth, the quantity and quality of university faculty members remain inadequate. Faculty members play a crucial role in improving the quality of higher education, but significant challenges persist:

Shortage of highly qualified lecturers in technology and engineering fields: There is a lack of faculty with expertise in science, technology, artificial intelligence, and digital engineering. Meanwhile, the recruitment and training process for new lecturers faces difficulties due to inflexible policies.

Uncompetitive compensation mechanisms: University lecturers' salaries in many institutions are not attractive enough to retain top talents from the private sector or overseas. This leads to brain drain, with many young lecturers leaving academia for private enterprises or moving abroad for teaching and research opportunities.

Fifth, financial mechanisms and higher education management policies remain inadequate.

University autonomy policies have not been fully implemented: Although many universities have been granted autonomy, they still face difficulties in determining tuition fees, student admissions, and financial management. This mechanism needs improvement to ensure universities have sufficient resources for development while maintaining fairness in education.

Lack of financial resources for scientific research: Research budgets at many universities remain low, failing to create strong incentives for applied research and innovation.

The challenges facing higher education in Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh are not only obstacles but also opportunities for profound reform and breakthroughs in workforce training. Enhancing training quality, strengthening ties with businesses, accelerating digital transformation, attracting high-caliber faculty, and improving financial mechanisms will be essential solutions to help Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh build a modern higher education system that meets the demands of a knowledge-based economy in the new era.

Solutions to Enhance the Role of Higher Education in Developing Human Resources for Sustainable Development in Ho Chi Minh City

To maintain its position as the country's leading economic and science-technology hub while striving to become a global innovation center, improving the quality of higher education is of paramount importance in Ho Chi Minh City. Amid deep international integration and the rapid advancement of the knowledge economy, the city must implement the following comprehensive solutions:

Raising Awareness of Higher Education's Role in Human Resource Development. A clear understanding of higher education's importance in developing high-quality human resources is a prerequisite for fostering innovation and sustainable growth. There must be close coordination between the government, educational authorities, businesses, training institutions, and society to create a sustainable education ecosystem aligned with real-world demands. The city should

intensify public awareness campaigns to ensure that leaders, managers, educators, students, businesses, and workers recognize the vital role of higher education. Additionally, integrating human resource development strategies with economic, social, and scientific-technical development strategies will provide strong momentum for sustainable progress.

Improving Recruitment Policies and Incentives for University Faculty. High-quality human resources in higher education play a crucial role in determining training success. Ho Chi Minh City needs attractive policies to recruit and retain top-tier faculty members and researchers, particularly in key fields such as science and technology, engineering, artificial intelligence, finance and banking, healthcare, and business management. Expanding academic exchange opportunities with top global universities and research institutions while improving working conditions, salaries, and benefits for faculty members will help develop a dedicated and modern teaching workforce.

Innovating University Curricula and Teaching Methods for Global Integration. Higher education must undergo a comprehensive transformation to meet the evolving demands of domestic and international labor markets. Training programs should be modernized, flexible, and closely connected with industry needs while incorporating emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, automation, and digital transformation. Moreover, teaching methodologies should shift towards increased practical application, digital learning integration, and skill-based education to better equip students for global work environments.

Strengthening Scientific Research, Innovation, and International Collaboration. Universities and research institutions in Ho Chi Minh City should identify priority research areas aligned with the city's and nation's scientific-technical development goals. Strengthening collaboration between universities, research institutes, and businesses is essential to promote applied research, technology transfer, and innovation. Additionally, policies should support the development of the Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City and other key universities to meet regional and international standards. The city should also encourage partnerships with international educational institutions to enhance

teaching and research capabilities while providing students and faculty with access to world-class education systems.

Promoting University-Industry Collaboration in Workforce Training. One of the key solutions for improving higher education quality is strengthening partnerships between universities and businesses. Universities should proactively collaborate with companies to design curricula that align with labor market demands. Businesses, in turn, should actively participate in training by: -Providing input on curriculum development and improvement; Sharing workforce needs and essential skill requirements; Organizing forums and industry-specific seminars to connect students with employers; and Offering internship opportunities for students to gain hands-on experience.

Furthermore, the city should encourage businesses to establish internal training programs, support faculty and students in research and product development, and drive technological innovation. Strengthening these connections will not only enhance students' practical skills but also allow businesses to recruit talent that aligns with their development needs.

Higher education plays a decisive role in developing high-quality human resources to meet Ho Chi Minh City's socio-economic development demands in the context of globalization and Industry 4.0. Implementing these solutions will help improve university education quality, laying a solid foundation for the city's sustainable and dynamic growth. This will enable Ho Chi Minh City to progressively realize its goal of becoming a leading economic, financial, and science-technology center in Southeast Asia while maintaining its position as Vietnam's economic powerhouse.

Conclusions

A comprehensive understanding of the current state of higher education and its crucial role in human resource development is a decisive factor in ensuring the sustainable development of Ho Chi Minh City amid deep international integration. Higher education not only supplies highly skilled professionals but also plays a key

role in shaping a workforce with innovative thinking, strong political awareness, and the ability to adapt flexibly to changes in both domestic and international labor markets. This is essential for enhancing labor productivity, driving modern socio-economic development, and fostering both rapid and sustainable growth for the city. However, when compared to regional and global standards, higher education in Ho Chi Minh City still faces certain gaps that need to be addressed. The current training system has not fully met the demands of the knowledge economy and the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The connection between universities and businesses remains limited, and curricula have not kept pace with the rapid advancements in science, technology, and real-world requirements.

To improve the quality of higher education and ensure a high-caliber workforce, Ho Chi Minh City must implement breakthrough solutions effectively and comprehensively. These include: Reforming curricula to be more practice-oriented; Strengthening collaboration between universities and enterprises; Promoting applied scientific research; and Expanding international integration in education and training. Only by addressing these challenges can Ho Chi Minh City realize its goal of becoming a leading hub for industry, services, finance, education, training, and science-technology in Southeast Asia. This will not only contribute to the overall development of Vietnam but also elevate the city's international standing, progressively transforming Ho Chi Minh City into a "prosperous, civilized, modern, and compassionate" metropolis in alignment with its sustainable development strategy for the new era.

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