



COMPILED AND EDITED BY  
**LOU DE CASTRO MYLES**

WOMEN IN VET STORYBOOK (VIETNAM)

# Every Teacher is a Leader



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# **Every Teacher is a Leader**

**Women in Vocational Education and Training (Vietnam)**

Compiled and edited by

**Lou De Castro Myles**

in collaboration with story contributors

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# Table of Contents

Story Contributors .....	3
Foreword .....	9
Teachers Model the Way .....	15
Seeing and Feeling the Change .....	21
Through the Learning Path .....	25
Driving the River Ferry .....	31
Building A Skilled Workforce .....	39
The Challenge to Innovate .....	43
Patience and Persistence Matter .....	47
Enriching Hearts and Minds .....	53
Teaching is Learning .....	59

A Satisfying and Meaningful Career.....	63
In The Most Noble Profession .....	67
Lifelong Learning: A Time-Honoured Tradition .....	73
Nurturing My Love of Country .....	79
Integrating Passion and Compassion .....	83

# Foreword

Vocational education and training (VET) is a key pathway in building people's knowledge and skills for work, and a platform in fostering personal and professional values and behaviours necessary in pursuing an occupation or a career. Vocational education offers tangible and positive outcomes that contribute to our social and economic dynamism.

The VET workforce in Vietnam includes trainers, teachers, curriculum developers, administrators, and various other general staff. The workforce contributes to human capital development through skills and training that aim to respond to industry skills needs. The VET workforce also contributes to community participation and social inclusion.

In the distance training course on *Fostering Female Empowerment and Leadership in VET and Logistics in Vietnam* conducted from June to October 2020, participants were motivated to share their stories. They embarked on listening as well as asserting their awareness and understanding of their personal and professional values. They put forward their diverse approaches in carrying-out their work, how they engaged with their students and colleagues, as well as their personal struggles and challenges. For some of them, it was *the first time that their voices were heard in a safe and secure space of support, empathy, encouragement, and inspiration*.

I had the noble opportunity to design and deliver the program under the auspices of Aus4Skills through the Strategix-QUT partnership delivery. Stories carry a wealth of meaning, and sometimes trigger a powerful emotional charge, both for the storyteller and the audience. I was touched, moved, and inspired by every story and every storyteller. It also became apparent that the role of women in VET needed to be showcased to bring attention their stories (and others like them) in the bigger audience.



**Every Teacher is a Leader (Women in VET Storybook-Vietnam)** extends the stories that inspire and highlight the role of all women in the VET landscape. This compilation features hopes, aspirations, and levels of resilience in a dynamic environment. It highlights some of the barriers and challenges women in VET face; and commends their role in empowering themselves and others.

The use of strengths-based Appreciative Inquiry (AI)<sup>1</sup> to engage with participants and gather their input informed this storybook. A briefing session was conducted with the participants to ascertain storybook's objectives and clarify the scope. Participants provided responses to an AI-designed questionnaire as a basis for this compilation.

Key AI questions included:

1. When and what made you decide to become a VET teacher?
2. What has been the most challenging and/or memorable moment you have experienced as a VET teacher?
3. What is the best part of teaching in VET?
4. How do you see VET in future?

Our Activity Coordinator (Ms Do Thi Kim Thanh) ensured everyone understood the requirements and worked very closely with me in the production of this compilation. Fourteen story contributors validated their respective stories.

Bilingual translation and interpretation supported this Activity. Selected photographs on record were supplemented by photographs supplied by the story contributors. These photographs were integrated in the production of the storybook.

I commend this publication to you. I am grateful for every story contributor for allowing me to peek into their lives and trusting me to write these stories with them. I honour and acknowledge every woman in VET who has dedicated themselves to the teaching profession that adds value to the skills development agenda in Vietnam.

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<sup>1</sup> Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is an engagement strategy that focuses on what's working, provides a platform for discovering individual strengths, and leads people to co-designing a future.



The efforts and achievements of the story contributors make a difference in the lives of people. These story contributors have made a distinctive mark and defeated complex challenges along the way. And it's not over yet. Their strength and dedication will see them through!

My best wishes go to each of the story contributors, and everyone around them, as they continue this great path!

**Lou De Castro Myles**

International Trainer and Facilitator

*Compiler and Editor*

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***Every Teacher is a Leader (Women in VET Storybook - Vietnam)*** extends the stories that inspire, and highlights the role of all women in the VET landscape.

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# Teachers Model the Way

## **Chu Thi Hai**

Secretary of the Party Unit, Chairman of the University Council, Principal of the University Board  
Dien Bien Technical and Economic College

In 1984, I enrolled at the Hanoi Law University and studied Law. At a young age, I was motivated with the desire to have an impact in the lives of others and had a vision for a better place.

I had a lived experience of seeing my peers getting married in their teens (14-15 years old), and children being abused by their parents and family members.

I became aware of young girls being sexually molested while their families were left helpless in dealing with the issue. I had also known of people transporting and trading drugs unaware of the criminal consequences of their actions. The picture was sad and dark. I wanted then to become proficient in law so that I can raise people awareness, provide advice, and protect the people around me.

Upon graduation, starting on April 20, 1989, I worked at my provincial Department of Justice, and soon became a member of the Standing Committee of the provincial Bar Association. My job was to inform people about the law as well as protect and represent people from disadvantaged groups at litigations. Also, in the same year, due to the demand for qualified law educators, I was relocated to Lai Chau Financial Vocational School, now Dien Bien Technical and Economic College.



From then, my inspiration for teaching has grown immensely. The education profession offers a great challenge and a wonderful opportunity that continues to resonate with me. The job demands regular contact with many young students, most of whom are from ethnic minorities. I sensed their high need for understanding of the legal system and the rule of law. They require dedicated and compassionate teachers who will guide them towards a better awareness of the system as well as build their capacity to be better navigating life and its complexities. I am glad to have chosen this job.

As an educator, I am mostly concerned about how my students after graduation will leverage, for themselves and for the people around them, their understanding of the legal system. The reality is that there are still many obsolete traditions and depraved customs that exist. For example teen marriages, bridenapping to force women into marriage, improper marriage registration and birth certification, and so on. There are a lot of people who are unaware of the legal consequences of these outdated customs.

I recall a girl in one of my classes who was performing very well but suddenly wanted to drop out to get married. She was just sixteen years old. I went to her family to explain the consequences of the situation. I persuaded and encouraged them to allow her to continue her studies. Only a very limited number of families understand the consequences of early marriages. This is critical in their decisions in allowing children to continue their education instead of being forced into early marriage. Many people could not win over these customs and had to drop out from their studies.

Later, I returned to that village and met some of the young women who dropped out of their studies. They were exhausted, ragged, impoverished, and unemployed. Some had many children who were malnourished and sickly. Some were in unhappy marriages and unresolved family conflicts; others had committed self-harm and suicide. In contrast, those who finished their studies managed to find jobs as local judicial officers, are leading happy and sustainable lives, and are dedicated to contributing to their communities.

As a vocational educator in Law, I am most satisfied with the fact that I contribute to paving the path and leading the way for young students to pursue legal knowledge. I enjoy my role that guides and nurtures law-abiding characters and behaviours. This contributes to value-adding vocational skills and capacity-building in our communities. I believe that teachers must be devoted to the students and to their careers.



Teachers model the way in building knowledge and developing personal values. We need to foster persistence, good character, and respectful action including how we present ourselves and how we communicate with others. Ho Chi Minh compared children to a shining mirror: *a good teacher would reflect a good image; while a bad teacher, an ugly one*. Dedicated teachers produce good students!

I would like to quote a couple of old sayings: *1) Master one trade and you will have a comfortable life; and 2) Abundant farming land cannot earn you as much as a job*. They assert the impact of job and vocation. To date, these values still remain. I see a strong and stable future for vocational education and training because learning a job guarantees both personal glory and satisfaction.

There are many success stories that started from vocational education. I saw a lot of students who gave up the university pathway and gained better outcomes through VET. The government has been developing many favourable policies for vocational graduates. There are many diverse training programs with over 800 intermediate majors and over 500 college majors in 90 major clusters, covering all aspects of the industry and the economy.

There are also thousands of elementary and short-term vocational programs on offer. The labour market will continue to demand vocationally-trained graduates and there is an abundance of job opportunities with high income. In all these, we need to continue developing training program for people who face multiple disadvantages. We must provide better vocational training access and opportunities for women in rural and mountainous areas to build enterprise skills for self-employment, strengthen the family economy, and reduce poverty.

END

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We need to foster persistence, good character, and respectful action including on how we present ourselves and on how we communicate with others.

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# Seeing and Feeling the Change

## **Nguyen Thi Truc Phuong**

Dean, Faculty of Business Administration  
Ho Chi Minh City College of Economics

In my childhood years, I had unclear career aspirations. Growing up, I did not think of being a teacher in VET, much less what job would suit me best. The career picture for me then was uncertain and not having access to a career counsellor did not help at all.

After graduating from the Ho Chi Minh City University of Economics, I held various positions working in several companies for over ten years. These covered various industries including manufacturing, import and export of wooden furniture, food processing, passenger transport services, car sales, and banking. As a key milestone in my life, I got married and had a boy as my first child.

As a key milestone in my life, I got married and had a boy as my first child. Being a mother for the first time and staying side by side with my kid in his first years of life was a happy but also difficult experience. To be fully engaged in my childcare in this important period, I decided to leave my job. One year later, given things in my daily life had become norms, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to become a vocational teacher. I chose to be a teacher for a simple reason: it offered the flexibility of time that allowed me to care for my little son.

At that time, I reached 31 years old – a peak time for my working life. I began to recognise the educational achievements among my students. During my classes, I learned from the emotional stories of my students. I acknowledged that they need the support and advice from their instructors.



My passion for this job started from there and, each day, I can see clearly and appreciate the dedication, and sacrifices of my colleagues, and can feel the difference that the education profession makes in the lives of young people, our students.

I have been working in the in the Ho Chi Minh City College of Economics for over 9 years now. I see a clearer career picture for me and have taken every opportunity to improve myself as well as achieve a work-life balance.

Over the course of my teaching career, my biggest challenge has been to ensure a sustainable level of energy of motivation, not just for me, but for my colleagues and our students. I acknowledge that the diversity of our experiences can enrich teaching or learning in a dynamic and complex world.

The best part of being an educator is seeing my studento succeed in life as well as build a stable career after graduation. I am confident of a VET future that will continue to develop and thrive. In today's world, I believe that vocational education is the master key for success in the education system and significant attention and investment will be directed to its further development. I can see and feel the change for the better.

END



# Through the Learning Path

## **Pham Thi Duan**

Lecturer, Faculty of Economics

Vocational College of Machinery and Irrigation (Dong Nai)

In my high school days, my world was full of fun. I enjoyed being with friends and participating in public events. I entered poetry writing contests and joined various competitions shining with excellence. I was highly active in the youth union and took on leadership roles. At that time, my dream job was to be a Literature teacher.

After high school, I was confronted by raw reality and not what I expected. I started a job as a worker at a textile company in a place over 1,700 km away from my home. It was hard manual work. One that pushed me to think that there may be better options. There was one choice that appeared bright and tempting: a learning pathway to a better life. I decided to take the university entrance exam and passed the test. I then enrolled in Business Administration. Subsequently, I was studying while working and gradually leading a balanced life.

Soon after completing a university degree, I became a team leader of the sales division at my company. My experience, skills and performance were highly rated by my colleagues and supervisors. I also earned recognition and praise for my passion and capabilities in coaching and training of new employees. I knew then that I am a dedicated and energetic person and willing to share my knowledge and experiences with my colleagues. I felt I need to share my knowledge, skills, and experience with more people.



An opportunity came one day when the vocational college in Dong Nai was recruiting business administration lecturers. I visualised being in front of students and equipped with a strong passion to contribute to their vocational education. I applied for the job as I could meet the skill requirements. I also had the required attributes for the job: dedication, motivation, and experience. Since then, I have enjoyed every aspect of being a VET teacher.

In over ten years working as a teacher, there have been numerous memories and concerns. I have recently been teaching warehouse management in the field of logistics as a new major at my college. Ninety percent of my students are female aged 15-16 years. In one class, I asked the students two questions: 1) What do you know about the Warehouse Management as a career option? and 2) Why did you choose the Warehouse Management as career option?

Their responses were thought-provoking. These included:

- o I don't have a clear picture, but it sounds like this course of study will turn me into a manager.
- o My friends are studying it.
- o My parents advised me to choose this.
- o I can see this is what the market needs.
- o I want to be like you.

These are high expectations, and I felt I needed to unpack and clarify certain assumptions. I decided to spend the entire first class to address respond to any questions they had. At the end of the session, I asked if anyone has changed their decision to be in the course. Everyone agreed that they want to continue their chosen field of study. After nearly 3 months, the number of students remained the same as initially enrolled. I am somewhat relieved but promise myself to make an effort to assist and track their path of learning and development. I also committed to stand ready and firm to challenge them along the way.



There is no greater joy than seeing my students happy with their learning results. I am equally pleased when receiving their texts and calls regarding a job they just landed; or hearing about their promotion at work. I also get wedding invitations or hear about their newborn babies. Knowing about their milestones is a great source of motivation that allows me to overcome any difficulties in my teaching career.

I see a bright future for vocational education in Vietnam in the context of global integration, Industry 4.0, and the increasing demand to build the skills of young people to support our social and economic goals. Similarly, human resource development will continue to be the focus of government policies and strategies through vocational education and training.

Every VET teacher is passionate about their career choice. I know I am. I hope that authorities and stakeholders continue to build VET as the learning pathway of choice. The opportunity to contribute to my community by adding value and fostering skills development will impact on achieving social and economic sustainability, equality, and social inclusion.

END



# Driving the River Ferry

## Le Thi Hong Duyen

Lecturer and Deputy Head, Department of Education Quality Testing and Assurance  
Dien Bien Economic and Technical College

My mother worked as a teacher. She encouraged me to follow the same career path since my childhood. In high school, I was not very keen on becoming a teacher. I wanted to be a good lawyer or a journalist.

I started to take interest in the teaching profession when I was in Grade 10. I observed how my homeroom teacher conducted herself. She was also my History teacher. She was very dedicated in her job and took genuine interest in her students. She was very admirable in her ways. She integrated personal and community values in her lessons – encouraging gratitude, self-sacrifice, and responsibility – for the young generation to contribute to society.

In one extracurricular activity, she organized a visit to a commune near my school. The visit was specifically designed to meet and support five families of seriously wounded soldiers in the commune. On arrival, I was amazed how everyone happily greeted her and welcomed us. I learned later that she spends her weekends providing free literacy and numeracy classes in the commune. She regularly organized extracurricular activities so that her students would have a better awareness and understanding of the people's living conditions. This also provided needed support to families of wounded soldiers and those facing hardship.



Her generosity and kindness helped many people and turned her into a well-loved figure in the commune. This inspired and motivated me to become a teacher. I passed the entrance exam to Hanoi National University of Education, eventually graduated in 2005, and became a lecturer at Dien Bien Economic and Technical College. In the 15 years of working at the college, I have followed her as a role model. I have devoted myself into a career of teaching and organising many activities to help poor students overcome life's challenges and assist them in the pathway to learning and growth.

Teaching in the last fifteen years had been a dynamic experience of joy, and sometimes frustration as I invested love and dedication to the job. At a certain period (2015-2017), I considered choosing a different career path. At that time, the College was directly under the Ministry of Education and Training and the students were receiving professional education. However, graduating students faced limited job opportunities; there was high unemployment, and college enrolment was very low. Educational staff faced a dire employment future and my fellow lecturers considered changing careers.

In 2018, the college switched to providing vocational education. The dedication of College leaders inspired me and my colleagues to transition our training methods and shift from professional education to vocational education. That was a big change that challenged and motivated me to continue working in the field. I invested time in studying about vocational education and the market needs. I conducted research on expected salary and employment outcomes for graduates and realized that vocational training had been a global trend for a long time and the provision of vocational training to address social needs was inevitable. The biggest challenges are to transform the curriculum and to develop new instructional methods that link with industry translate to quality training delivery. Industry linkages is a key element of vocational education and training. Graduates need to have the right skills required for employment in industries.

Recently, I have been working with my colleagues to advise the Board of Management on the required industry linkages in my province and the surrounding areas. We have worked together in developing internship opportunities for students, and for them to understand labour and skills demands of enterprises, as well as promoting employment opportunities for our graduates.



In the last two years, the College has signed Memoranda of Understanding on training cooperation and job placement with various enterprises including Dien Bien Branch - Viettel Company , No. 6 Dien Bien Trade and Construction Company Limited, and the IRE Hai Phong Human Resource Development Investment Company Limited. After internships and educational practicum, many of my students have been employed by these companies. Realising these outcomes, I felt the positive impact of the big changes in our careers.

As teachers, our role in knowledge and skills transfer provides an enabling environment where students can have exposure and access to the labour market. Through VET, they are equipped to take on a job that will alleviate themselves and their family from disadvantage and poverty, as well as allow them to contribute to our society. I feel a sense of satisfaction when seeing my students grow up, land a stable job, and have a happy family. I enjoy sharing my knowledge, experience, and skills to my students. For them, having the right technical skills will allow them to live independently, take care of their family and contribute to the society.

I am proud to be a teacher as this is the most noble of all professions. I am reminded of this metaphorical story wherein teachers are likened to ferry drivers with the students as their passengers:

*“Transporting passengers across a river for an entire life.  
Wondering if one will remember  
Travelling back and forth between riverbanks: rain, shine, or storm  
Seeing them off without expecting anything in return  
Working quietly, with all their hearts and minds.”*

*“One stream of life equals one river  
It is rare for one to just stand and look from the far-flung shore  
One must use the ferry boats in crossing the river  
One must have their ferry drivers to guide them along the way.”*



Over the years, they would be the same ferry drivers that transport generations of passengers across the river of knowledge. Nothing can be more satisfying for a teacher than seeing cohorts of students grow up, one by one. Nothing can be more pleasing than when the passengers would remember the river they have crossed and the unsung ferry drivers that accompanied them in that journey.

Every teacher commits to a sacrifice. Being a teacher requires kindness and thoughtfulness to others. They would trail the long sandy beach and the waves, one after another; tracking previous waves that came along. After each trip, they would come back to the wharf for another group of passengers. They do it while understanding that they, as well as the river, might not be remembered by the previous passengers.

END

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# Building A Skilled Workforce

## **Nguyen Thi Ly**

Principal (retired since October 1, 2020)

Thu Duc College of Technology

My career in vocational education and training has been remarkably satisfying. I took a position as a lecturer from January 1989 to August 30, 1997. I then became Vice Principal from September 1, 1997 to August 30, 2013 and performed as Principal from September 1, 2013 to September 30, 2020. I have effectively retired from October 1, 2020.

Becoming a VET teacher was part of my life path after graduation. My experience in the vocational education environment provided me a great foundation to become a better person. There were dynamic challenges and opportunities that increased my capacity as well as clarified my sense of purpose. Every day of those years was filled with great learning and I will continue to cherish them.

As teachers, we have a role in building people's understanding and resilience. These include unpacking pedagogical situations and engaging with our students. My love of teaching and my fondness of my students grew out of this context; and so did my respect for and readiness to learn from my colleagues. These factors encouraged me to try harder in effectively achieving my tasks and competently perform my leadership responsibilities.

In the execution of my teaching and management duties, I have earned the trust of my students, colleagues, partners, and supervisors. Their high order confidence added great value to me and the institution that I represented as we faced the challenge of developing a pool of quality graduates that met the requirements of employers and our society.



Building a skilled workforce demands deliberate strategies that build people’s motivation and create a brand that inspires a better future. The best part of teaching in VET is seeing the growth and success of students, teachers, and staff members. Above all these, it is the recognition from our partners, the business community, and the wider society, of the quality of our training – reflecting on the great reputation of the college.

Currently, we are experiencing a dynamic momentum about VET in our country. There is a growing government support, both at central and local levels; an increasing awareness from society, businesses, and parents; and a growing demand for vocational skills from young people. I strongly believe that this situation will continue to boost a remarkable development for VET that will build an ethical and skilled workforce that meets labour market demands nationally, regionally, and internationally.

I hope that the COVID-19 pandemic would soon be controlled and that we can start working for a new and better normal in Vietnam, and in the world. I would like to take this opportunity to send my regards to all national and international teachers and experts who have contributed to the successful implementation of various projects in Vietnam.

I hope that the Aus4skills Program will be expanded further by the Australian Government so that vocational training institutions, enterprises, and teachers will receive professional world-class training, share experiences, and learn from our Australian experts. Together, we can continue to build the skills of a strong workforce that meets domestic and international needs. My sincere thanks go to the Australian Government, the Aus4skills Program, and the Vietnamese and the Australian project leaders.

I wish you all good health and success!

END



# The Challenge to Innovate

## **Do Thi Thu Thao**

Head, Business Administration Sub-Division  
Hanoi College of Industrial Economics

As a child, I started thinking of being a teacher. I imagined how exciting it will be to work with children and young people. This idea persisted as I grew up. The thought of having a role guiding people, especially those coming from the different provinces, made me consider the challenge of how best to present my lectures in a dynamic and innovative way.

There have been many challenging and memorable moments I experienced and will continue to experience as a VET teacher. One unforgettable memory occurred in 2006. At that time, I was a first time homeroom teacher in a VET class. I was not much older than my students, but I could feel their respect, love, and admiration.

I can never forget a comment from one of my students: 'As a homeroom teacher, you are closely aligned to how our mind works. You are the most emphatic teacher I have ever worked with.' After more than ten years since then, I have met with that group on a few occasions and relived those moments. I am glad they are doing well and are successful in their endeavours. They also consider me as their close friend.



Teaching is a noble platform that presents many opportunities to see wonderful outcomes. The best part of teaching in VET is seeing the progress of my students. Every success they achieve makes me proud and inspires me to be better at what I do. Every achievement they have lights the fire in me to seek innovative teaching methods that will increase their capacity to achieve their learning goals.

I believe that there is a bright future for vocational education in Vietnam. This is a very important pathway for young people to enter the labour market and contribute to society. There is a strong and growing interest from employers for vocationally-skilled candidates. This is a great opportunity for VET institutions to play a key role in offering quality training and to build on strong linkages with industry and enterprises. More and more, we will see vocational education trainees being offered internships and more vocational graduates getting employment.

Vocational education enables graduates to earn a competitive salary, estimated to be 25.1% higher in comparison with a lower education graduate; and 16.5% higher than that of an intermediate education graduate. In some countries like Australia, the salary of vocational education graduates is higher than that of university graduates.

This makes me very optimistic about a bright future for VET and my students.

END

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# Patience and Persistence Matter

## **Mai Thi Thuy**

Head of the Sub-Division of Economics, Faculty of Engineering Technology  
College of Technology II

From February 2006, I was a visiting lecturer at the college and, in 2009 was officially appointed as Head of the Sub-Division of Economics. In reflecting about when and what made me decide to become a VET teacher, I started to remember the events that led me to this career. I think I might have been born to fulfil this job.

In the early days of 2006 while working at an enterprise, my computer broke down. I needed to finish the company's financial reports and decided to do this at an internet café. While over there, I struck up a conversation with an academic affairs officer of Ho Chi Minh City Vocational College of Technology (now College of Technology II). She mentioned that she was looking for a teacher from the business sector to fill a vacancy to teach accounting. In our conversation, she basically offered me to take up the role and start with one accounting subject. She was very convincing, and I was very excited by the idea as it required teaching what I was doing at work. It took about 4 weeks before I accepted the offer. I had some misgivings then. I wondered whether my knowledge and skills were enough to communicate with the students and guide them in building their knowledge.

The demonstration teaching and exposure to the pedagogical environment further prompted me to share my skills with the students. As time went on, I got better at transferring knowledge and interacting with the students. Their feedback was very positive and encouraging. I refined my skills, and my motivation for the job became clearer. Being a guide in the learning and development pathway for students, I now realise that my bond with the teaching profession has grown naturally over the years.



In the last 10 years of teaching, there have been happy and sad moments, as well as unforgettable memories. The most vivid of those memories is about my first day in class as a teacher. I was very nervous and anxious at that time. The students were quiet when I entered the classroom. As I approached the front of the class, they stood up and greeted me. I was very impressed with their respectful behaviour and I felt very highly regarded.

As I responded to the class greeting, I noticed one student at the back. She did not stand up. I was taken aback. I asked the class to remain standing for another minute. She still did not stand up. At that moment, I considered it was disrespectful of me. I felt dismissed and my body started to develop cold anger inside me. I then asked the student to get out of the class, without giving her any chance to explain herself. From her seat, she started to lift her body and showed her disabled legs crossing in a scissor-like movement. I was surprised, embarrassed, and deeply regretful. I was speechless and unable to apologise at that moment.

However, in a split second, the event was overtaken by the need to start the class right away. I thought then that I would talk to her and apologise the next day. But time passed by so quickly! I completed 75 lessons and eventually farewelled my students. The thought of apologising to that student haunted me since. I was beating myself up, angry at myself for such a thoughtless and hurtful behaviour on my part.

One autumn day five years later, I was walking by the school gate. There was a girl who seemed to have been waiting for me for a long time. As our eyes met, she hastily bowed her head and said: *'Good morning, teacher. Do you still remember me?'* I stopped, looked at her and smiled awkwardly, trying to recall her name. She continued, *'I have some flowers for you, it is November 20. I wish you happiness!'*



I looked straight at her plump face. By this time, my memory was refreshing. I couldn't believe my eyes, it was the same student with a disability in my first day as a teacher, the little girl who struggled to stand up. The same one to whom I owe an apology. I was flustered but remained calm and said: *'Oh, how can I forget you, the one I have wished to meet for many years to tell you something.'* As she handed the fresh bunch of flowers, I happily took them from her hand and asked her to sit with me on the bench nearby. As we sat, my emotions were running high and said: *'I am sorry! I should have apologized five years ago, but I can only speak it out today.'*

I then gave her a big hug and repeated: 'I am sorry.' The interaction taught me a lot about myself. To this day, I continue to be inspired by how she dealt with her struggles, her patience, and her persistence.

The best part of teaching in VET is about our ability to perform a role. We need to have sufficient knowledge, skills, and experience, and to understand that there are no excellent students without a good teacher.

I am a VET teacher; this is a very important part of who I am. I am optimistic about the future of VET. As we move to a competency-based model, the College is also effecting changes that contribute directly to social and economic development. *"Training can respond to social and economic needs and this is not necessarily based on what resources are available in the institution. It requires a genuine relationship with the business sector. Training and business are inseparable elements."* (Dr Nguyen Thi Hang, Principal of College of Technology II, 2010)

As teachers, we need to listen more. Our students are our future, and we must act thoughtfully in guiding them into that future.

Patience and persistence matter!

END



# Enriching Hearts and Minds

## **Lê Thị Mộng Linh**

Lecturer, Business Administration

Thu Duc College of Technology

My childhood dream was to become an entrepreneur in the agricultural industry. This was to follow a family tradition. I attended Ho Chi Minh City University of Agriculture and Forestry and studied Economics. While undertaking university education, I worked as a tutor to cover my living costs.

My first tutorial student was a girl in Grade 7. She would tell me surprising stories about her early years. She told me that when she was very young, she spent a lot of times in the hospital and that she took a lot of medication which affected her memory. She became forgetful and had many tutors since. I was so anxious about her telling me all these, but I was also focussed on trying my best to support and assist her in her learning journey. For five years, I tutored her until she finished Grade 12. A significant period, I must say, and I considered that as an extraordinary experience for me.

I felt very happy and satisfied. I thought then that there may be a lot of students who are like her who may need my help. With this in mind, I decided to change my career. I declared to myself, my family, and friends that I would become a teacher! Subsequent to this, I attended a master training program while continuing to tutor to enrich my teaching experience and professional knowledge. In 2007, I applied to become a lecturer at Thu Duc College of Technology. Luckily, I was recruited and my dream of becoming a teacher was realized.



My experience of being a VET teacher presented me with a lot challenging and joyful memories. One unforgettable incident provided me clarity in my role in enriching the hearts and minds of my students. In 2009, two years after my admission at TDC, I was assigned as a homeroom teacher of a VET class. I was so pleased to accept the role then, and I was confident with my experience, including as a class president for three years during my high school years. I was also leaning on the fact that I used to be a student myself. I was so ready to take on the role!

But then, as always, reality is different from expectation. The students in my class came from a very diverse group of boys and girls. They had completed grade 9, grade 10, grade 11, or grade 12 and did not have a positive attitude towards being in class. They were top students in misbehaviour, and most were unmotivated about vocational training. They would have arguments about small matters, thi and these would end up in fights.

There was a time when a student brought a knife and tried to harm his classmates around the school campus. At this point, my dream job was shattering. Fortunately, there were no serious injuries.

With the enthusiasm of a young teacher and with the initial thoughts that inspired me to pursue my dream of becoming a teacher, I knew I had to find ways to assist him and people like him. I thought then that his parents could provide me some help. So I contacted them to get some advice. In Vietnam, there is a saying: 'When a man is going downhill, everyone will give him a push'. That was my situation by then. His parents said to me: 'He often goes out late at night and joins illegal motorbike racing. He does not care about family at all. We can't do anything. Please help us.'

With the information I gathered and the parents' cry for help, I decided to manage the situation. Using the 'small rain lays great dust' approach, I tried to earn his trust. I engaged in conversation with him; listened and encouraged him to speak-up; and on occasions, clarified some things for him. He began trusting me, and since then he started to get motivated; he listened more and became interested in learning. After a few years, that misbehaving student has now become a successful car salesman – one who has high sense of responsibility to his family and cares for others. To this day, we still keep in touch.



The best part of teaching is the opportunity to listen to the innocent and naive thoughts from my students. I think, as a teacher, apart from the main task of supporting students to acquire knowledge, it is also very important to listen to what they share, their hopes and their fears. Listening allows for better understanding of their aspirations, difficulties, and then problems that they and their friends are facing, both in school and in life.

As a teacher, I believe I have a role in enriching young people's hearts and minds. I can offer advice, guide them to solutions, and motivate them to study better and become happier in life. I myself have become happier and more engaged as I learn to listen more. My previous students have now gone to face their own challenges. Some continue to get in touch with me. I also regularly see some of them in the supermarket, shopping mall or the bank; they greet me and acknowledge me by calling my name. These moments warm my heart.

Today, vocational education and training is getting more and more positive recognition from the community as they hear of many VET students finding suitable jobs after graduation. This is also changing perspectives, especially for parents who have a major role in selecting training programs for their children. The efforts of VET institutions in implementing competency-based education, cooperating with international organisations, and linking with industry are all driving the development of high quality training. Community awareness and career orientation have also been assisting students and parents to better understand VET. All these are creating a dynamic and positive future for VET.

I believe that every VET teacher is a leader. I need to continue to lead myself to grow and contribute to the development of VET. I need to remind myself to listen more and inspire learners to walk together towards the orange line, achieving balance and sustaining success.

END



# Teaching is Learning

## **Luong Thi Hoa**

Lecturer/Leader of Team 3 (Transport, Logistics)

College of Foreign Economic Relations (COFER)

Upon graduation from the university, I worked for a Hong Kong transport company, Hecny Transportation Vietnam, and gained practical experience in the industry. I pursued a graduate level study and eventually finished a master's program. During that time, I had my child. Working and caring for my child occupied most of my time. I also started to think about sharing my knowledge with young people.

I was born from a family of teachers: my parents and my sister were all teachers. They were expecting me to follow a different career path, but I knew then that I have a natural bond with the profession. I felt it was always in my body and in my blood. In August 2010, I became a VET teacher.

Since then, I experienced some challenges and great memories. I remember the most memorable incident that took place in the first few months of my teaching career. At the time, I was a young and enthusiastic teacher and very keen to share my technical knowledge with my students. In my first class in maritime studies, I received a lengthy email from one of my students, Hiep.

In the email, he commented on my dedication as a teacher and wrote down that he was fortunate to have me guide him and motivate him to learn. I felt proud and thought to myself that I must have delivered quality lectures. I continued to read the email to the final statement: "You might not know, sometimes, you are difficult to understand." I felt a moment of vulnerability but was grateful for the feedback.



Since then, I reflected from his comments on my teaching approach. I learned then that my eagerness must be balanced by effective instructional methods.

Teachers are equipped with the knowledge and technical skills that we have gained and applied in our work. The importance of transferring that knowledge to our students requires us to understand their ability to meet us half-way, and for them to absorb such knowledge and achieve their learning goals. This is a continuing challenge. In applying effective teaching methods, I hope to continue to learn to be the best teacher that I can be.

As a teacher, I am provided with a great opportunity to influence the growth and learning of young people. Connecting and engaging are the basic values that I must continue to pursue. I will be a bridge between my college and the business enterprises for developing the skills of a future workforce. I also have the opportunity to share knowledge with my colleagues and to collaborate with others, here in Vietnam and internationally, in developing training programs that will benefit our students.

I believe that vocational education is a key segment of the education system that builds human resources skills for the labour market. VET will continue to be a crucial means of providing knowledge and skills to people across a range of dimensions in the modern world: from enterprise skills, employability skills and through to social and foundation skills. With the right skills and in the right jobs, graduates will contribute much to social and economic development.

In 2020, I had the opportunity to attend short-term training programs organised by Aus4skills. I had the chance to meet dedicated teachers from Vietnam and Australia who presented with their strong passion and dedication. I hope to continue participating in collaborative projects that will allow me to represent my college, as well as share my knowledge.

Teaching is a noble profession and offers great opportunities to engage with students in creating a bright and meaningful future. I am proud of my career choice!

END



# A Satisfying and Meaningful Career

## **Trinh Ngoc Thu Ha**

Dean, Faculty of Economics

Maritime College No. 1 (Hai Phong City)

I spent five years working in business sector before becoming a teacher. This career choice is a predestined journey and gives me a lot of lessons and fun not found in other professions.

As of now, I have been working more than ten years in this education sector and I feel extremely fortunate to work with different groups of students. Ten years is not too long, neither is it too short for me to leave behind all memories and I want to share one of those memorable moments in my career.

I was first assigned to be a homeroom teacher of a class with the most poor-performing and non-compliant students in the Faculty. It was such a difficult responsibility. Driven by the idea that “Ethical education for students would only be successful when there is engagement and coordination of school - family - society”, I would send communication notebooks to my students for their parents to review, sign and return. In one instance and while receiving returned notebooks, I found out that a student had signed on behalf of his parents. He wanted to hide his poor exam results and avoid reprisals from his parents.

I spoke with the student, discussed the consequences of his actions, cautioned him, and advised him never to do it again. I understood then that I needed to develop a better approach to assist him and other students who were performing poorly. Since then, I paid extra attention to him and other students in similar circumstances. I worked with my fellow teachers in providing mentoring which aimed at improving students’ learning results. This way worked well.



At graduation, that student obtained an Excellent Grade Point Average (GPA). I felt proud of his achievement and was satisfied with my approach. He continued on to pursue his undergraduate education pathway.

The last I heard: he is now a sales manager at a large logistics company in Hai Phong City. He has also been accepting Economics students from my College to his company for practice and internships.

Teaching in VET means that one can be both a teacher and a skilled worker, and that one can be both a social scientist and a social activist. I believe that there is a great meaning to what I do and the impact I have in providing guidance to my students. This is satisfying and meaningful career for me!

Vocational education assists our younger generation to participate in the labour market. Their success will depend on how they achieve their learning goals, gain the skills necessary to sustain themselves, and transform to a level of independence from their parents and relatives.

Having the right skills, getting a job, or pursuing further study are positive pathways to that independence. Vocational training education can address the demands of skills development and the required training or retraining of different learners. Particular groups of people who face disadvantage or are vulnerable in the labour market (such as migrants, refugees, low-skilled and unemployed population, women etc.), can be assisted through relevant vocational training programs. Their engagement in VET and gaining the right skills can provide a better choice in their labour market participation. Such participation can contribute positively to their social and economic life in our community.

I believe that VET plays an important role in promoting the employability of graduates as well as in contributing to business productivity and competitiveness. I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the strengthening VET that responds to industry skills' needs and adopts results-based management approaches and work-based training models.

END



# In The Most Noble Profession

## **Dong Phong Huyen**

Vice Dean, Faculty of Economics  
Maritime College No. 1 (Hai Phong City)

Before becoming a teacher, I worked for some enterprises.

My entry to the profession could have been a mere coincidence or it may have been some part of a divine intervention. Members of my family had been pursuing teaching careers and my mother had also encouraged me to follow the same path.

I have been a teacher since 2007. Since that time, I have experienced many dynamic situations that continue to enrich and inspire me to do what I do, and to be better at it.

I remember an incident in one class. I was presenting a lecture one day and I was distracted by one student, Loan, who was not paying attention and was disrupting the others. She was focused on something else. I felt disrespected and was so annoyed. For a moment, I lost my temper. I stopped my lecture, hit the table, and yelled: *“Loan, stop behaving that way. I’ll send you out of the class!”*

The whole class became abuzz. Students turned their attention and looked at me. Loan clearly heard and was aware of the attention directed to her. She responded in an aggressive manner: *“Who the hell is cursing me?”*



I was taken aback and dumbfounded! I thought to myself that over years of teaching, I had never been in this situation. I was angry but I needed to manage the situation. I calmed myself down and in a firm voice said, *“Stand up and tell me again what you said!”*

There was a sudden eerie silence. Even Loan was speechless, and I could see her flustered, yet she remained seated and did not say a word. I directly looked at her and continued with a gentle voice: *“Stand up and I will give you a chance to apologize for what you just said!”*

The room was quiet for a minute or two. No one was saying anything. The tension was building up. I shook my head in disappointment and said: *“I am sorry class; I can’t continue the lesson. You may have to manage on your own in the remainder.”* I then quietly walked out of the classroom.

I continued through my day. I did not know what happened inside the class and what the students discussed. At the end of the session, the class leader came down to the teacher’s waiting room and asked me to come back to the classroom. I went back to the classroom. Loan had red eyes from crying and apologized to me. I gently acknowledged her apology.

After that incident, Loan sent me a report. In the report, she indicated that her action was a very big mistake. She also wrote: *“I am very grateful for your forgiveness and guidance. I have learned my lesson about respect and tolerance.”*

As a teacher in vocational education and training, I have the opportunity to share my technical skills in a profession that creates opportunities for others to thrive.

I can share my knowledge and experience that allows them to develop their understanding and confidence, to gain the skills for work, and to strive for independence as they go through different stages of life.



I am inspired by a quote from Vietnam's late Prime Minister Pham Van Dong who said: *'Teaching is the most noble among the noble professions. It is the most creative of all creative professions as it develops creative minds.'* I am motivated by the words of the great Czech educator Comenxki <sup>2</sup> who said that: *"Under the sun, perhaps there is no occupation more glorious than that of teaching."*

As well, I get the spirit from Guo Moruo, a famous Chinese scholar, who once praised the profession of teaching: *"The sun rises and sets, the moon can be crescent and full, but the light that the teacher shines on us will remain in our entire life."*

Their timeless words affirm the position and role of the teacher in human development and I am proud to be one!

I am optimistic about the future of VET as it is a pathway for the young generation to participate in the labour market. It promotes employability skills that contribute to business productivity and competitiveness. I believe in a learner-centred approach in VET as it creates flexibility and builds a responsive teaching approach in a dynamic learning environment. This includes the need to integrate work-based learning, use of technology, as well as the provision of modern tools and equipment in our training programs. Vocational education must also ensure gender equality that fosters equity of access and opportunities for all, based on learners' needs and balancing this with the requirements of the labour market.

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<sup>2</sup> *Editor's Note: **John Amos Comenius** (Czech: Jan Amos Komenský; German: Johann Amos Comenius; Latinised: Ioannes Amos Comenius; 28 March 1592 – 15 November 1670) was a Czech philosopher, pedagogue and theologian from the Margraviate of Moravia who is considered the father of modern education.*



# Lifelong Learning: A Time-Honoured Tradition

**Nguyen Thi Hang**

Rector, College of Technology II (HCMC)

I consider myself fortunate. I was born and raised in Nguyet Ang village<sup>3</sup> in Thanh Tri District, Hanoi which is famous in the education field. Perhaps this is my biggest motivation for *lifelong learning*<sup>4</sup> and to follow the time-honoured tradition of our ancestors.

I have understood early on that learning does not only develop my core values but also foster my family's prosperity. This was the foundation to how I would lead a meaningful and productive life and not be burden to my family and the society. As well, I was determined to share my knowledge to other people and the community.

When choosing to study a major in university, I asserted to my parents that I would like to pursue a challenging career and not routine jobs that are perceived popular for women. Eventually, my family agreed to let me attend University of Technology and Education with a major in Industrial Electricity. This was the base qualification for my becoming a VET teacher in 1985.

My teaching career has spanned a few decades and I continue enjoy every moment although the challenges are becoming more complex today. I am most concerned about our learning environment and there are three key issues that require deliberate and timely intervention. Firstly, it is the lack of educational facilities and equipment that limits our capacity to deliver quality training, and this impacts negatively in attracting learners to our programs and the college.

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<sup>3</sup> Editor's Note: According to popular literature, Nguyet Ang village in Hanoi's outlying Thanh Tri district is home to many talents who have contributed greatly to the nation.

<sup>4</sup> Editor's Note: Lifelong learning is the idea that learning does not end at the completion of formal education. Instead, we continually learn through our daily experiences throughout our lives. In the professional workplace, this concept is often invoked to refer to ongoing professional development. Lifelong learning can enhance our understanding of the world around us, provide us with more and better opportunities and improve our quality of life.



Secondly, students generally have to pay tuition fees to participate in VET. This is clearly an obstacle for many poor families in Vietnam. To cover fees, many students have to work while studying. And finally, despite the recent reforms in curriculum and teaching methods, there are still too many shortcomings that impede the quality of training delivery.

Teaching is a leading profession. The title 'Teacher' carries with it a sense of pride, respect, and reverence. The sound and meaning warms my heart but always reminds me of my responsibilities as a role model: constantly foster learning, research and innovate to acquire more knowledge and skills, and to contribute to VET development. I continue to get better. In any circumstances, I have learned how to remain calm and confident (in myself and in my teaching abilities), and to bring the best out of my students.

We face a very dynamic future for VET. I believe that without faith, we cannot win. Changing our mindset will change the results. I trust that the VET system will transform in the right direction in the coming time. The challenges will remain, but we need to approach them smartly and work collaboratively towards consistency, specifically in the application of policies and regulations.

Our VET future will be brighter if we integrate the lessons of the Law of Supply and Demand, the Law of Competition, and the Law of Value. We have been experiencing reform strategies facilitated by the Government of Vietnam through the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) and the Directorate and Vocational Education and Training. Many action programs are geared towards the achievement of objectives, including:

- o Developing active, creative, and innovative communication strategies
- o Strengthening human resources forecasting
- o Enhancing international cooperation, learning from experience, and transferring knowledge from developed countries with strong VET systems (such as those through the Aus4Skills program funded by the Australia)
- o Developing market-driven training programs and curriculum
- o Reviewing curriculum and methods of teaching
- o Strengthening autonomy, responsibility, and accountability.

We need to continue to work together and win this future!

END





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The sound and meaning warms my heart but always reminds me of my responsibilities as a role model: constantly foster learning, research and innovate to acquire more knowledge and skills, and to contribute to VET development.

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# Nurturing My Love of Country

**Nguyễn Thị Ánh Nguyệt**

Lecturer, Faculty of Economics  
College of Technology II (HCMC)

In sharing my story, I remember a passage from a poem by Nguyen Khoa Diem:

*"The country has existed long before we grew up. Listening to the stories of "once upon a time" that Mama used to tell."*

Our country has existed long before us. Its history motivates us to be curious and excites us to discover how it all started, how things were set up – our roots. The retrospective journey can inform our life's purpose and allow us to understand our roles and responsibilities in our destiny. Just like a tree, a person's life begins from a little sprout that will grow and learn to mature enough and offer its shade to future generations.

For a tree to grow healthy, it requires the basic yet essential elements, such as soil and water. Just like nature, I grew up with the same principles – as innocent as the little trees swaying in the winds; sometimes lonely, sometimes shining bright as the roses in bloom. There were challenges which required strength and fortitude; while there were moments that brought me cheer and joy.

Everyone has their own way of loving their home country. I choose to express my love through diligent teaching sessions, and passionately empowering my students by sharing my knowledge and skills. Each day, I would carefully plan and prepare my teaching materials and with the hope that I can show my students how much I treasure their learning efforts. I do my best to support them as they start their careers and help them develop their very own skill sets.



My role in engaging students through teaching is aimed at fostering their motivation and aspirations to become self-sufficient, to be able to support their family, and to positively contribute to our society.

College of Technology II is my workplace. The college provides education programs to a diverse group of students coming from many regions, cultures, and backgrounds. In over ten years of teaching, I have come across many people's lives but the year 2020 has been full of confronting challenges, some are unforgettable and will leave lasting memories.

Starting at the beginning 2020, we have been experiencing the catastrophic impact of the Coronavirus pandemic that is deeply impacting our daily lives and the economy, in Vietnam and all over the world. In October of 2020, Central Vietnam suffered consecutive record-breaking flooding that destroyed infrastructure, property, and human lives. Many of my students were affected.

One student who comes from the impacted area had to work on late night shifts in a factory while studying in the morning so he can support himself and send money back home to his family. His family's produce was swept away in the floods. He started to consider difficult choices, and he thought of discontinuing his studies. Soon as I found out about his difficult situation, I encouraged him to continue studying and offered to pay his tuition. With resiliency and fighting spirit (having come from the country's toughest region) he promised to continue his studies and proposed to contribute to paying the tuition with me. He told me: *"I know a teacher's wage is not that much but the fact that you are willing to help has made me so happy"*. We gently smiled at each other, compassion in our teary eyes.

He hurried on to his next class. I prepared for my next session, humming this melody from a composition by Pham Duy in my heart:

*"I love my country, and from the time I enter my friends' lives  
My mother's distant lyrics soothed me into sleep.  
Immortal sounds!"*

Oh, how I love my homeland and my fellow Vietnamese compatriots!

END



# Integrating Passion and Compassion

## **Nguyễn Thị Bích**

Lecturer in Logistics, Economics Department  
Nguyen Huu Canh School of Technology (HCMC)

I was born and raised in Central of Vietnam where the locals must toil and moil every single day while having to survive constant flooding and storms. Children were not encouraged to go to school and young girls were prone to get married early. People work very hard through the year in the muddy fields, yet they struggle to make ends meet. The situation challenged me to rise from the mud, push myself to study, and aspire to become a teacher to nurture the future generations.

I moved to Ho Chi Minh City to work in the import and export industry, at a deep-water port. From this job, I realized how important was the need to study to gain new skills, to earn a better income, and to grow as a person. I studied and worked at the same time, and eventually graduated from Ho Chi Minh City University of Transport. Soon after, I obtained a bachelor's degree and gained sufficient practical industry experience. Again, I heard my inner voice, encouraging me to become a teacher, to transfer my accumulated knowledge to the young generation.

I joined Nguyen Huu Canh School of Technology, initially as a guest lecturer then officially as a teacher after demonstrating a satisfactory performance of my capability. From this opportunity, my childhood dream has come true! In my teaching years, there have been many ups and downs. I've come to know many students, mostly junior high schoolers coming from different backgrounds, and with different attitudes. Some are timid, passive and even disengaged from communication.



I believe that teachers have both a nurturing role and an education role. We are passionate about what we do, and we are very good at sharing our knowledge and skills. But passion and compassion can be integrated. Compassion requires us to seek and show genuine understanding. Students will engage better if they feel supported. As a teacher, I value critical moments when students open with their emotions and accept guidance and support to overcome their difficulties. These incidents will clearly assist in achieving their learning goals and aspirations.

What concerns me most in the vocational schools right now is the increase in student dropouts. The students in their teenage years may not be aware of their career choices and their need for work skills. They have uninformed perception of the value of vocational education and have a limiting belief that vocational education is not important. Students who drop out are generally from divorced parents or from families that are experiencing financial difficulties. They are facing dysfunctional characteristics like parental neglect and juvenile truancy. As a result, these students have very low self-esteem and are presenting anti-social behaviours.

When I was a homeroom teacher, I will always remember one student in my class. He had a bright face but would always sit in a corner, never saying a word. During a lesson, I posed a question and called on him to provide me a response. I had to repeat his name three times until he stood up, but then again, stayed silent. Unhappy with his reaction, I yelled: *"Are you mocking me? Are you being disrespectful? Haven't your parents taught you any manners?"*

He remained silent, faced down with tears running on his cheeks. I was angry and disappointed, and even thought that he may be unteachable. One week passed and I did not pay any attention to him. The other students started to whisper to each other. The student still attended my class on time but with very sorrowful eyes. One day, I decided to approach him. I sat next to him and put my hand on his shoulder asked: *"What is making you unhappy? Why did you not answer my question?"*



In a faltering voice, he replied: *"I am very sad. My parents are always fighting. My dad hit my mom many times, and they are already divorced. My mom is sick. I am so scared. I don't know who to share my worries to, so I don't want to talk. I'm sorry."*

After the class, I reflected on our conversation and contacted his parents. Knowing their difficult situation, I empathized with the student, and decided to support him more. Whenever he had to answer a question in class, I would directly approach him and encouraged him to become more confident, reassuring him that I would be by his side.

As time went by, the student became more open and confident. Later, he graduated with good results and I introduced him to work in a Logistics company. The company has highly rated his performance. From time to time, I would receive a message of thanks from his mother.

I realized that as a teacher, we need to continue building our understanding of our students and their situations. We need to dig deeper and listen more. Empathy and compassion go a long way to sustain a young person's soul. I am very happy with the outcome. It was one of the many beautiful memories in my teaching career!

Being a VET teacher in Logistics, I also act as a career navigator. My role offers me the opportunity to empower and show my students the essential industry knowledge they need. I have a responsibility to guide them to develop a strong character and good behavior, to work with passion, and enrich themselves and the community with their skills.

Teaching is about cultivating our knowledge and skills to transfer them to our students. Our passion for the job carries a responsibility to be a role model, to present contemporary intellect, due diligence, and professionalism. There is a saying that *"the good teacher makes a poor student, good; and makes the good student, superior."* I believe that a teacher must have a kind heart, be passionate about their job, empathize with others, and be fair.



In recent years and with the development of technology in Vietnam, vocational education is becoming highly valued. The government had placed it on the top list of development priorities to meet the demands of enterprises and the society. VET has been considered the key to sustainable development strategies and poverty eradication, in promoting peace, in protecting the environment, and in enhancing the quality of life for all. Being on the top development priorities will further assist us in achieving sustainable growth.

I see a brighter future for VET because of the following developments:

- o Vocational education is still the top choice for many parents because it will bring stable job and life's security to many individuals. Many graduates have become so successful that even university students want to drop-out and opt for the vocational education pathway
- o Government policy support for vocational education students: for example, free tuition for junior high students who want to study VET. There are also scholarships for students with good academic results.
- o Government and the schools open many doors to diverse choices of professions, covering all aspects of the economy. There are also primary and short-term training courses on offer.
- o VET has a shorter training timeframe; the training programs are very practical. College time is only from 2 - 2,5 years, intermediate education from 1 - 2 years, primary education from 03 months to less than 01 year, depending on the training program.

The training programs are mostly practical:

- For intermediate education: practical, internship, laboratory work account for up to 75% training time
- For college education: practical, internship, laboratory work account for up to 70% training time.
- The training process is strongly connected with the practical aspect to meet enterprise demand; therefore, implementing an internship will facilitate the learners to receive "dual training" by working at the enterprise's worksite, providing them hands-on experience with facilities and equipment in a real business environment.
- o Increased job opportunities for VET graduates for jobs with stable income; the labour market demands highly skilled employees.



I have participated in several programs organised by Aus4Skills in Vietnam sponsored by Australia. I learned a lot of knowledge as well as teaching methodologies from the Australian experts. This has provided me with a solid foundation to refine my skills and develop the best ways to transfer them to my students.

I hope Vietnam will continue to collaborate with Australia and other countries, and to create relevant training programs with a GEDSI focus, such as for rural female workers and those people from the remote regions. We need to increase their capacity to improve familial economy and help eradicate poverty. From this, I am certain that vocational education in Vietnam will continue to grow and thrive with sustainability.

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I believe that teachers have both a nurturing role and an education role. We are passionate about what we do, and we are very good at sharing our knowledge and skills.

But passion and compassion can be integrated. Compassion requires us to seek and show genuine understanding. Students will engage better if they feel supported.

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