

## Development of High-Quality Human Resources for Tourism in Quang Binh Province in the Context of International Integration



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**ABSTRACT:** According to the economic and social development plan with a vision towards 2030, Quang Binh province identifies tourism as a key economic sector. To achieve this goal, alongside its natural and human resource advantages, the high-quality workforce is a crucial factor in determining the development of tourism in Quang Binh. Through the use of analytical and synthesis methods, and historical and logical comparisons, we have conducted research to identify one of the key factors influencing the transformation of the quality of tourism in Quang Binh is the high-quality workforce. From analyzing the role of developing a high-quality workforce, and understanding the achievements, limitations, and challenges posed in the development of a high-quality tourism workforce in Quang Binh today, this article focuses on several solution groups such as: i) strengthening the state's management role in developing high-quality tourism workforce, ii) enhancing the quality of training for high-quality tourism workforce, iii) raising awareness of the role, position, and importance of high-quality workforce in tourism development.

**KEYWORDS:** High-quality human resources, international integration, tourism

### INTRODUCTION

Humans are not only the primary agents of material production activities, but they also play a pivotal role that determines the productive forces within society. Furthermore, individuals serve as the driving force behind the historical process. The general trend of societal development is shaped by the advancement of the social productive forces, which encompass both humans and the labor tools created by them. As production becomes increasingly socialized, it demands entirely new individuals - individuals with comprehensive development capabilities. In turn, the economic system will give rise to new individuals who are members of society with the ability to fully utilize their development potential. The process of international integration is a prevailing trend of our era, bringing about fundamental and profound changes in all aspects of societal life, placing high demands on individuals as "actors" within this process. Therefore, under these new circumstances, Quang Binh tourism is regarded as the "emerald gemstone" within the Vietnamese tourism industry. The 17th Quang Binh Provincial Party Congress, for the term 2020-2025, has identified the development of tourism as a spearhead economic sector and one of the four breakthroughs of the Party organization. Simultaneously, the Provincial Party Committee clearly stated the task: "Create a strong change in the exploitation and promotion of tourism potentials and strengths. Increasing investment in tourism infrastructure development... By 2025, tourists will reach 07-08 million arrivals, of which international visitors will account for 10-20%. Strongly increase the contribution of tourism to economic growth. Improve the quality of services, develop tourism synchronously and effectively, and continue to affirm the Quang Binh tourism brand as the top attractive destination on the tourist map of Vietnam, the image and brand of Vietnam's tourism industry. Vietnam in the world tourism market" (Quang Binh Provincial Party Committee, 2020). To further strengthen Quang Binh's tourism brand on the Vietnamese tourism map and on the global stage, high-quality human resources play a crucial role as the most important driving force. The quality of the tourism workforce directly affects the quality of services and tourism products. However, due to various reasons, including the impact of the pandemic, building a high-quality tourism workforce in Quang Binh has become a challenging task. Timely supplementation and development of human resources to meet the requirements in the international integration phase present both opportunities and significant challenges. It is a prerequisite and vital necessity for every business and the tourism industry in Quang Binh in general.

### METHODS

Based on worldview, methodology of dialectical materialism, and historical materialism, we use analytical and synthesis methods; a method that combines history and logic to conduct research.

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### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Overview of developing high-quality human resources in tourism

##### *Concepts of Tourism and developing high-quality human resources*

Since ancient times in human history, tourism has been recognized as a hobby, a positive leisure activity for people. Nowadays, tourism has become an essential need in socio-cultural life. The term "tourism" in many languages originates from the Greek word meaning "to go on a journey." This term was Latinized to "tornus" and later became "tourisme" in French and "tourism" in English. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) provides the following definition: "Tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes." It includes activities such as sightseeing, exploring, experiencing, resting, entertaining, and relaxing.

The International Conference on Travel and Tourism held in Ottawa, Canada in June 1991 defined tourism as: "Tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes".

According to Article 3, Chapter I of the Tourism Law (2017), the definition of tourism is as follows: "Tourism refers to activities related to people's trips outside their regular place of residence for a period not exceeding one year continuously to satisfy the needs of sightseeing, vacation, recreation, learning, exploring tourism resources, or combined with other lawful purposes".

The group of authors, namely Nguyen Van Dinh and Tran Minh Hoa, have provided a definition: "Tourism is a business sector that includes activities of tour organization, production, exchange of goods and services by enterprises to meet the needs of travel, accommodation, dining, sightseeing, entertainment, learning, and other needs of tourists. These activities must bring tangible economic and socio-political benefits to the country as a tourist destination and to the enterprises themselves" (Nguyen Van Dinh, Tran Minh Hoa, 2006, p.19).

Therefore, it can be seen that tourism is the activity of tourists, organizations, tourism businesses, and the local community in invaluable natural and cultural destinations that are exploited and invested in during the process of tourism development. Up to now, tourism has been both an economic sector and a social phenomenon that plays a role in improving people's intellectual level, restoring community health, nurturing patriotism, fostering a unity spirit, as well as promoting cultural exchange activities.

Under the strong influence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and international integration, internationalization requirements for tourism activities and the capabilities of tourism human resources have emerged. In particular, high-quality human resources, meaning individuals who are invested in development, and equipped with skills, knowledge, expertise, experience, and creative capacity, have become an essential requirement.

Human resources encompass the overall labor potential of an organization, a locality, or a country, within the framework of the unified organic system of social capacity (physical, intellectual, and personality) and the social dynamic characteristics of individuals belonging to those groups. Thanks to this unity, human resources are transformed into human capital, meeting development requirements.

"Developing human resources is a set of initial activities aimed at creating a workforce with quantity and quality that meets the socio-economic development needs of the country while ensuring the development of each individual" (Nguyen Tien, 2008, p.7).

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), "developing human resources involves not only acquiring vocational skills but also developing capabilities that enable individuals to effectively use those skills for productive employment and to meet their professional and personal aspirations".

Author Pham Minh Hac provides a broader perspective on this term, stating that "high-quality human resources refer to a team of highly skilled and capable individuals who actively receive advanced technology transfer, achieve results in applying it to the conditions of our country, and act as the core workforce in industrialization and modernization" (Pham Minh Hac, 2001).

According to Le Anh Tuan and Nguyen Thi Mai Sinh (2015, p.167), tourism human resources consist of both direct and indirect workforce, including current and potential personnel in the tourism industry. In this context, indirect labor refers to the workforce that does not have direct contact with tourists. This category includes individuals working in various roles such as government tourism management agencies, tourism business owners, executives, and managers within tourism enterprises, lodging establishments, travel agencies, researchers, educators, and more. Conversely, direct labor comprises those individuals who have direct interactions with tourists in various tourism-related activities. This group includes front desk personnel, room attendants, restaurant servers, tour guides, chefs, and others who directly engage with tourists during their travel experiences.

Developing high-quality human resources in tourism is closely linked to increasing the quantity and improving the structure and quality of the workforce. This is reflected in raising the level of national education, technical skills, specialization, health, and physical fitness, as well as the consciousness and ethics of the workforce. Each activity, each stage in the travel journey, such as tour operations, dining, and accommodation, involves the role of human resources. Therefore, the workforce needs to meet both quantity and quality requirements.

In terms of quantity, it is necessary to ensure the workforce meets the demand according to the structure of service types. In terms of quality, the competence of the workforce is demonstrated by their ability to fulfill the requirements of each job position, and it is

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evaluated based on three aspects: knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the employees. In practice, apart from the initial assessment of qualifications, knowledge, and skills, the capacity of tourism human resources is also evaluated based on their professionalism in performing job positions.

Tourism is an interdisciplinary and highly socialized field with deep cultural characteristics. Therefore, in addition to specialized skills and expertise, tourism workers need to have an understanding of various fields such as economics, culture, and society, as well as knowledge about people and the local area where they work. Broad knowledge combined with good professional skills will shape the professional demeanor of the workforce.

Therefore, it can be understood that developing high-quality human resources in tourism involves various forms, methods, policies, and measures to increase the quantity, improve and enhance the quality of tourism human resources (intellectual, physical, and socio-psychological attributes), adjust the workforce structure appropriately, and allocate, utilize, and maximize the effectiveness of human resources to meet the needs of each organization, industry, locality, country, region, and the world in each stage of tourism development.

### *The necessity of developing high-quality human resources in tourism in the context of international integration*

Speaking of human resources means discussing the entities involved in the process of production and development. However, these entities are not isolated individuals; rather, they are organized into a unified force of thought and action. The synthesis of these entities is not merely a simple accumulation of individuals but rather a collective power that governs human behavior. This power originates primarily from the inherent qualities of each entity and is magnified manifold in practical activities. Humans are the creative subjects responsible for generating all material and spiritual values in society. In the process of producing material wealth, humans are both the organizing force behind the social production system and active participants in the production process, serving as a vital component of the productive force. In this sense, humans are one of the elements of the productive force, but they are the most fundamental element, the subject that determines the development of the productive force. As humans create the productive force, they simultaneously elevate their own production capabilities to that level.

Along with the strong development of science and technology, which has propelled significant advancements in various aspects of social life, high levels of socialization in the production force have surpassed national borders and become increasingly globalized. International integration has become an essential and inevitable process. International integration deepens and encompasses bilateral and multilateral relations in economic, cultural, social, and environmental fields, and common issues aimed at achieving millennium goals, thus promoting development while also creating opportunities and challenges for tourism in Vietnam in general and Quang Binh province in particular. International integration offers opportunities for the development of the tourism economy by expanding the tourist market and promoting the national and regional image. Additionally, international integration enables the advancement of tourism activities through experience exchange with partners and the adoption of advanced scientific and technological applications. As a result, tourism businesses in different countries have the opportunity to collaborate with foreign enterprises, create diverse and attractive tourism products that reflect the national and regional identity, align with modern development trends, and yield significant economic benefits. Furthermore, in the context of integration, there is an opportunity to innovate thinking to meet the requirements of developing tourism into a spearhead economic sector commensurate with its potential. Innovative thinking ensures the effective utilization of potential and strengths and creates competitive tourism products that have cultural value and align with trends. However, any phenomenon has two sides. Alongside the benefits, international integration also poses challenges to the development of tourism, such as preserving the cultural values of ethnic groups. The increasing intermingling of cultures may lead to the dilution and erosion of unique cultural characteristics and traditional values if they are not affirmed, preserved, and promoted. Moreover, the process of international integration intensifies competition pressures on the tourism economy of each country, necessitating substantial capital resources, tourism infrastructure, and, particularly, high-quality human resources to support tourism development.

To leverage the opportunities and address the challenges posed by international integration, it is necessary to consider the role of human resources in comparison with other resources. Resources such as capital, natural resources, geographic location, etc., exist only as potential and are only effective when coupled with human consciousness. Humans are the only resource that possesses the ability to think, intellect, and willpower to influence and control other resources, integrating them into a collective strength and impacting the production process. Therefore, among the components of the production force, the workforce is the most crucial factor.

Currently, globalization and international integration are deepening, driving profound labor division and the formation of global value chains. The world is entering a new stage with groundbreaking achievements, where the central factor determining the qualitative transformation of the economy is human resources, especially high-quality human resources. The 13th National Party Congress of Vietnam has set a specific goal: "By 2045, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, our country will become a developed country with high income" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021b, p.327). To achieve this goal, our Party advocates: "placing human beings at the center, as the subject, the most important resource,

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and the goal of development; taking the cultural values and the Vietnamese people as the foundation, the internal strength ensuring sustainable development" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021a, pp.215-216).

To implement the above guideline, the 13th National Party Congress has clearly stated: "Building comprehensive development for the Vietnamese people, with good health, capabilities, qualifications, consciousness, and high responsibility towards themselves, families, society, and the country. Promoting the development of human resources, especially high-quality human resources, to meet the requirements of the fourth industrial revolution and international integration..." (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021a, p.231).

To create a complete tourism product, human resources are considered a key to unlocking quality for that product. The role of human resources cannot be denied, as it is the factor that influences the psychology, emotions, and satisfaction of tourists towards a destination. When we talk about human resources in tourism, we are talking about the subjects participating in the process of tourism and socio-economic development. These human resources are not isolated individuals or groups but are organized as a unified force in terms of ideology and action. When we speak of human resources in tourism as a driving force in the tourism development process, we are referring to the positive qualities of the collective subjects that manifest during this process and stimulate its development. At the same time, efforts are made to minimize the negative aspects and limitations of tourism human resources.

The role of tourism human resources in transforming potential resources for tourism development into reality is increasingly recognized. High-quality tourism human resources play a pioneering role in creating tourism values within the international labor division context of deepening and comprehensive international integration. The individuals and tourism workforce themselves are both capable of integrating and harnessing the internal strength of the nation, as well as being recipients and contributors of the advanced experiences and knowledge in tourism development from around the world, towards sustainable tourism development.

### **The current situation of high-quality tourism human resources in Quang Binh province**

*Several achievements of the high-quality tourism workforce development process in Quang Binh Province at the present stage are as follows:*

After the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism in Quang Binh is experiencing a strong recovery, making a significant contribution to the province's socio-economic development. According to statistics from the Quang Binh Department of Tourism, in the first quarter of 2023, the total number of tourists visiting Quang Binh is estimated at 648,819, an increase of 4.45 times compared to the same period in 2022 and 1.09 times compared to the plan. Of these, international tourists are estimated at 20,815, an increase of 17.59 times compared to the same period in 2022. Total tourism revenue is estimated at 733.165 billion VND, an increase of 4.37 times compared to the same period in 2022. The number of overnight tourists is estimated at 294,013, an increase of 2.12 times compared to the same period in 2022; revenue from accommodation services is estimated at 94.017 billion VND, an increase of 2.1 times compared to the same period in 2022. Revenue from dining services is estimated at 1,084.289 billion VND, an increase of 1.39 times compared to the same period in 2022. The tourism brand of Quang Binh is increasingly affirmed and highly regarded domestically and internationally.

Currently, some enterprises have begun to implement advanced human resource management models, excelling in the stages of recruitment, training, utilization, and retention of their workforce. Particularly, joint ventures with foreign countries and large travel companies have a workforce of relatively high quality. This is evident in various aspects, including professionalism, attitude, practical skills, knowledge, and foreign language communication proficiency. There has been a noticeable shift in the awareness of the importance of high-quality human resources for the efficiency of tourism business operations. Some tourism enterprises, especially lodging establishments, have increased their investment in human resource development. International cooperation in human resource development is also on the rise. In 2022, the Department of Tourism organized training and workshops for nearly 800 participants on skills, professional knowledge in the tourism industry, and knowledge enhancement for tour guides. However, the number of individuals trained and educated is still limited compared to the demand. As of March 2023, there were 345 active tour guides, including 184 international tour guides (mainly proficient in English, Thai, Chinese, Russian, and Korean, and a few with proficiency in French, Japanese, and German) and 161 domestic tour guides.

According to forecasts, by 2025, Quang Binh province is expected to receive about 7 million tourists per year, which poses a significant challenge in terms of both the quality and quantity of tourism human resources. Furthermore, according to the conclusion of the Comprehensive Report on the Tourism Development Master Plan of Quang Binh Province from 2020 to the vision of 2025, the demand for human resources in tourism businesses in Quang Binh Province is projected to be very high, reaching 91,500 people, including 28,600 direct workers and 62,900 indirect workers by 2025. This requires appropriate policies to attract and develop human resources to have a relatively large workforce with sufficient knowledge, skills, and experience to meet the requirements.

*The limitations of the process of developing high-quality tourism human resources in Quang Binh province at the current stage are as follows:*

To create competitive tourism products, the quality of tourism human resources plays a decisive role. Only when the development of high-quality tourism human resources receives adequate and appropriate attention can the brand and service quality be maintained in the context of international integration. However, in reality, compared to other provinces in the country, the quality of tourism

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services in Quang Binh is still limited. One of the fundamental reasons for this situation is the shortage of tourism human resources in terms of both quantity and expertise, which results in low-quality of tourism services.

According to a report from the Quang Binh Department of Tourism by the end of 2022, the total tourism workforce in Quang Binh only reached about 60% compared to 2020, with nearly 4,000 direct workers and around 7,000 indirect workers. Although the number of tourism workers in Quang Binh has increased, they still lack expertise. The efficiency of labor, communication skills, problem-solving skills, customer care, and foreign language proficiency are low and do not meet practical needs, especially in the current context of international integration. Moreover, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the past two years has led to workforce reductions, closures, or temporary suspensions of operations in 90% of small and medium-sized travel companies and accommodation establishments. The ability to meet the demand for tourism human resources in the locality is not guaranteed, and local training institutions have not been able to provide high-quality human resources. Overall, the proportion of properly trained workers accounts for only 36%, while the majority of workers have different levels of expertise, and a relatively large proportion of workers require retraining.

Currently, Quang Binh has 531 accommodation establishments, of which only 38 have personnel that meet the requirements specified in the Tourism Law TCVN 4391:2015. The majority of accommodation establishments, including guesthouses, homestays, and hotels, employ mainly untrained or minimally trained family members. Only about 30%-35% of the total workforce in accommodation establishments, travel agencies, and certified tourist service facilities are proficient in foreign languages. The professionalism of tourism workers after completing their training programs is still very low. Among them, nearly 50% have intermediate qualifications, and 18% have college degrees. Only about 15% of the tour guides have received systematic training in their field, while the rest have undergone short-term vocational training. Many tour guides only sign contracts for individual tours in their spare time and consider it as part-time work, resulting in low-quality work.

*The reasons for these limitations are as follows:*

Firstly, there is a disparity between the supply and demand for high-quality tourism human resources. The rapid growth of the tourism industry has led to a high demand for human resources, while the development of human resources requires specific conditions and time, which cannot keep up with the industry's pace of growth. This results in a labor market that cannot meet both the quantity and quality requirements.

Secondly, some restaurants, hotels, and tourism enterprises have underestimated the contributions of their managerial and service staff. This has led to inadequate attention to professional training, compensation, bonuses, and other benefits for employees. Consequently, these staff members often work with lower productivity and quality, lack enthusiasm, and experience instability in their employment.

Thirdly, there is a lack of integration between businesses and training institutions. The current tourism training activities at various educational institutions within the region exhibit shortcomings and a significant gap in terms of scale, quality, and alignment of training programs with the actual labor needs of enterprises. The awareness of both businesses and workers regarding the importance of high-quality tourism workforce training is not yet sufficient, leading to inadequate investment in the development of high-quality human resources.

### **Some solutions for developing high-quality tourism human resources in Quang Binh province in the context of international integration**

To achieve the goal of making tourism in Quang Binh a spearhead economic sector, sustainable development, and a significant contribution to socio-economic development, breakthrough policies, and comprehensive solutions are needed to address difficulties and create conditions for tourism development. In this regard, the development of tourism human resources, especially high-quality human resources, poses a challenge to meet the requirements of international integration. Therefore, Quang Binh needs to focus on the following measures:

The first set of solutions involves enhancing the role of the state in the development of high-quality tourism human resources:

Actively innovate and improve the system of mechanisms and policies related to the construction and development of high-quality tourism human resources. Develop and refine policies, mechanisms, and legal documents regarding the identification, nurturing, training, and utilization of tourism human resources at the local level. Aim to create a favorable environment that promotes the socialization of human resource development and implement a market-oriented approach with state oversight to foster human resource growth. Implement effective financial policies for training and nurturing human resources. Establish and develop an information system for the tourism labor market to serve the identification of needs, forecasting, and matching of supply and demand for tourism human resources. Reform administrative procedures in managing the development of tourism human resources with specific, clear, and well-defined delegation of responsibilities and rights for all stakeholders involved in human resource development. The renewal and improvement of mechanisms and policies to incentivize the development of high-quality human resources must be carried out coherently across various dimensions, such as education and training, employment policies, income, social welfare, insurance, healthcare, and labor market development policies. Special attention should be given to creating mechanisms and policies to attract, utilize, and reward high-quality human resources.

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The second set of solutions aims to enhance the quality of high-quality tourism human resource training:

Promote comprehensive, fundamental, and synchronized educational and training reforms. Utilize and implement the Vietnam Tourism Occupational Standards (VTOS) and the Mutual Recognition Arrangement on Tourism Professionals (MRA-TP) in the training of high-quality tourism human resources. The VTOS standards should be expanded to cover areas identified as crucial for the tourism industry in Vietnam, both in general and specifically for Quang Binh. VTOS standards will contribute to raising the quality of the tourism sector through implementation, training guidance, and integration. MRA-TP will be a significant driver in elevating tourism standards and improving the skill levels of tourism labor within ASEAN. Tourism professionals with VTOS certifications can have their skills synchronized with the ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals (ACCSTP). There is a need to restructure the training and vocational education system and research institutions at all levels, updating the content, programs, and training methods. Currently, Quang Binh University and Vocational College of Tourism and Technology No. 9 are the primary institutions responsible for training the majority of tourism human resources in the province. Investment should focus on upgrading and modernizing existing training institutions to meet standards in terms of infrastructure and technical resources, faculty quality, curriculum development, and training activities. These institutions should serve as the core of training and connecting vocational training centers and tourism skill development centers in the region. Additionally, there is a need to strengthen international cooperation in tourism human resource training to gradually professionalize the workforce in the tourism industry, enhance service quality, and build Quang Binh's image as a safe, friendly, and hospitable destination. To ensure the right quantity of required labor for the market, it is essential to establish a tripartite collaboration among businesses, labor forces, and training institutions.

The third set of solutions focuses on raising awareness of the role, position, and importance of high-quality human resources in tourism development.

Employers and employees need to recognize that high-quality human resources are the most valuable and forefront asset, ensuring the rapid and sustainable development of tourism. This is a crucial aspect that holds the top significance in ensuring the continuous, focused, and targeted development of high-quality tourism human resources to meet the set objectives and requirements. Efforts should be made to excel in career guidance, and advocacy, and create a strong shift in public awareness regarding the position, importance, goals, content, and direction of building and developing high-quality human resources in the province under the influence of international integration. Particularly, there is a need for a shift in mindset when it comes to recruitment, evaluation, and treatment of human resources based on their competence and job effectiveness. This serves as the driving force for individuals to continually learn, enhance their professional skills, and increase productivity, thus asserting their "high quality." In addition to improving academic qualifications and professional skills, employees should also focus on cultivating ethics, lifestyle, and personality, paying attention to their physical health. Individuals should embrace self-improvement from awareness to action, becoming pioneers in innovation, reform, and creativity to ensure sustainable integration.

### CONCLUSION

International integration has had significant impacts on the tourism sector and society as a whole. Recognizing the influence of international integration on the tourism industry is crucial for formulating effective solutions, including the development of high-quality human resources. Human resources are the key factor in all activities, from small organizations to large nations, and Quang Binh remains an attractive tourist destination. Despite the achievements in developing the tourism industry in Quang Binh, there are still challenges that need to be addressed, particularly in terms of high-quality human resources. To achieve sustainable development and enhance the quality of the tourism sector, it is essential to focus on developing high-quality human resources, considering the practical requirements. Efforts to develop human resources in the tourism sector in Quang Binh have yielded certain results, but there are still limitations that need to be overcome.

To meet the goals and directions of the tourism industry, specific and practical solutions are needed, taking into account the local context. Developing high-quality human resources in the tourism sector is an important and practical solution. It requires enhancing awareness of the role of high-quality human resources in the rapid and sustainable development of the tourism industry. This should be based on the realities and needs of Quang Binh province.

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