

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Training Programs for Management Staff in Colleges in Vietnam's Southwest Region using the Kirkpatrick Model

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ABSTRACT: This study applies the Kirkpatrick model to evaluate the effectiveness of training programs for management staff at colleges in Vietnam's Southwest region. The author conducted a survey using questionnaires for 121 management staff, 572 learners, 150 specialists, lecturers, and employees, along with in-depth interviews with 20 management staff and 20 learners currently studying and working at colleges in 13 provinces and cities in the Southwest region and Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs. Through this, the author analyzed and assessed the current state of training evaluation activities for management staff and proposed some recommendations and solutions to further enhance the quality of training for educational management leaders at Vietnamese colleges in general.

KEYWORDS: Evaluation, effectiveness, training program, management staff, Kirkpatrick model

I. INTRODUCTION

The Southwest region is a key economic, cultural, and political area in southern Vietnam. Despite government efforts and investment, the region still lags behind others in terms of education, training, and vocational education. The quality of human resources and indicators related to education and training in the region are lower than the national average, with the proportion of the labor force having college or university degrees (6.8%) being the lowest nationwide (VCCI and Fulbright, 2022).

In the 2023 - 2024 academic year, vocational education enrolled 2.4 million people, mostly at intermediate, elementary levels, and other vocational programs (accounting for 90%), while college-level enrollment accounted for only around 10%, or about 230,000 people. Of the total enrollment target, the Southwest region accounted for only 11.3% (Directorate of Vocational Education and Training, 2023).

One of the causes of these limitations is the insufficient number and quality of vocational education teachers and management staff. Training and professional development efforts have not fundamentally improved the competencies of managers. There is a lack of specialized training institutions, and most vocational education managers have not received systematic, formal management training. Their leadership and management skills remain inadequate and unprofessional, relying mostly on personal experience. Coordination between departments within vocational institutions remains weak, failing to generate collective strength in school operations (Directorate of Vocational Education and Training, 2023).

Given current challenges and the demands of reform, management staff at colleges in the Southwest region—especially principals—must undergo better training to professionalize their management skills and enhance institutional development and training quality.

This study applies the Kirkpatrick model (2006) to evaluate the effectiveness of training programs for college management staff in the Southwest region of Vietnam across four levels:

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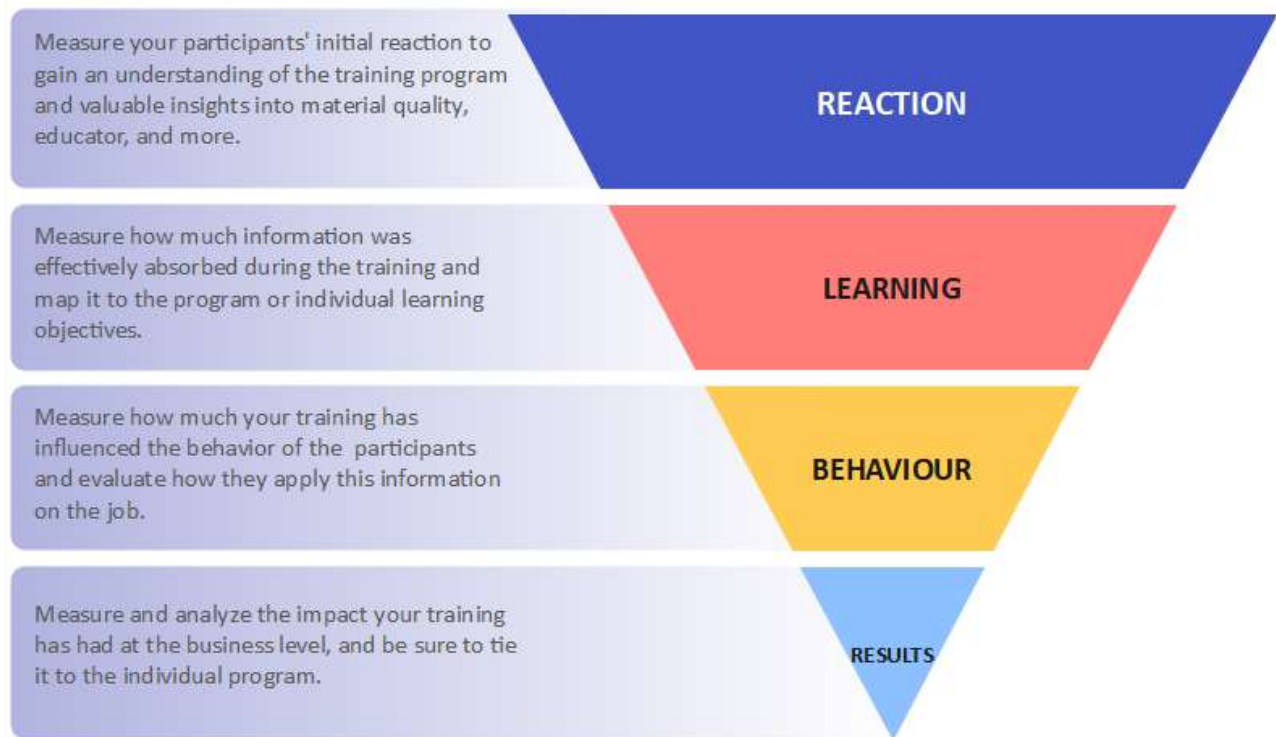


Figure 1. The four-level Kirkpatrick model
(Source: EdrawMax Online)

II. RESEARCH METHODS

The author used both quantitative and qualitative research methods to evaluate the effectiveness of training programs for management staff at colleges in the Southwest region of Vietnam, applying the Kirkpatrick model. Surveys were conducted using questionnaires distributed to 121 management staff, 572 learners, and 150 specialists, lecturers, and employees. In-depth interviews were also conducted with 20 management staff and 20 learners who are currently studying and working at colleges across the 13 provinces and municipalities listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Number of respondents by group

No.	Province/City	Number of colleges	Management staff	Learners (planned for leadership)	Specialists, lecturers, staff
1	An Giang	2	5	28	8
2	Ben Tre	2	5	28	8
3	Bac Lieu	3	5	42	12
4	Ca Mau	3	5	42	12
5	Dong Thap	2	4	28	8
6	Hau Giang	2	5	28	8
7	Kien Giang	3	5	42	12
8	Long An	2	4	28	8
9	Soc Trang	2	4	28	8
10	Tien Giang	3	5	42	12
11	Tra Vinh	2	4	28	8
12	Vinh Long	3	5	42	12
13	Can Tho	10	12	166	34
14	The Ministry of Labor, War invalids and Social Affairs	/	53	/	/
Total		39	121	572	150

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III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Evaluation of training effectiveness – Level 1: Reaction

Table 2. Survey responses on Level 1 evaluation: Reaction

No.	Content	Satisfaction level (%)					Avg. Score	Std. Dev.	Rank
		1	2	3	4	5			
R1	Learners are satisfied with the training objectives and content	0.3	1.4	10.4	80.5	7.4	3.93	0.51	2
R2	Learners are satisfied with the instructors	0.1	0.7	3.0	84.0	12.1	4.07	0.43	1
R3	Learners are satisfied with training materials	0.4	3.5	16.3	75.8	4.0	3.80	0.58	3
R4	Learners are satisfied with facilities and equipment	0.6	3.8	19.8	72.9	3.0	3.74	0.60	4
R5	Learners are satisfied with the assessment and evaluation process	0.7	3.8	24.1	70.0	1.4	3.68	0.60	6
R6	Learners are satisfied with support services and training organization	0.4	5.5	20.9	70.1	3.0	3.70	0.64	5
Overall average							3.82	0.56	

The Table 2 shows that learners rated the effectiveness of training at Level 1 (Reaction) as fairly good. The overall average score was 3.82 with a standard deviation of 0.56.

- The highest-rated item was R2: satisfaction with instructors, with an average of 4.07.
- Other highly rated items include R1 (training objectives and content), R3 (materials), R4 (facilities and equipment), and R6 (support services and organization).
- The lowest-rated item was R5: assessment and evaluation process, with an average score of 3.68.

This is consistent with earlier evaluations of training programs for college principals in the Southwest region. Learners highly appreciated the instructors but identified assessment methods as an area for improvement.

B. Evaluation of training effectiveness – Level 2: Learning

Table 3. Survey responses on Level 2 evaluation: Learning

No.	Content	Satisfaction level (%)					Avg. Score	Std. Dev.	Rank
		1	2	3	4	5			
L1	Learners remember most of the key knowledge and skills after the training	0.6	7.1	5.1	80.1	7.2	3.86	0.66	1
L2	Learners can explain the content to colleagues after training	0.4	6.6	9.2	76.5	7.2	3.83	0.66	2
L3	Learners' knowledge and skills improved after training	0.3	2.9	17.9	73.2	5.8	3.81	0.59	3
L4	The knowledge and skills gained helped improve learners' work performance	0.4	6.5	19.5	70.0	3.6	3.70	0.66	4
Overall average							3.80	0.64	

The Table 3 shows that learners rated the Level 2 training effectiveness (Learning) as fairly good. The average score was 3.80, with a standard deviation of 0.64.

- L1: remembering key knowledge and skills was the highest rated, followed by L2: ability to explain content to colleagues, and L3: improvement of knowledge and skills.
- The lowest-rated item was L4: applying knowledge to improve work performance, with a score of 3.70.

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Learner #18 shared that most participants absorbed the training content well. However, memory retention depended on the individual. Content directly related to daily work was easier to remember. Less relevant topics were harder to retain, which may explain why some learners rated their learning lower.

C. Evaluation of training effectiveness – Level 3: Behaviour

Table 4. Survey results on Level 3 evaluation: Behaviour

No.	Content	Satisfaction level (%)					Avg. Score	Std. Dev.	Rank
		1	2	3	4	5			
B1	Learners are able to apply new knowledge and skills in daily work	0.3	2.9	15.4	75.6	5.8	3.84	0.57	1
B2	Applying new knowledge and skills has improved learners' job performance	0.4	3.0	16.5	75.6	4.5	3.81	0.58	2
B3	After the training, learners make faster decisions in their job	0.4	3.6	19.8	72.9	3.3	3.75	0.59	3
B4	After the training, learners solve job-related problems more effectively	0.4	4.6	19.5	71.4	4.0	3.74	0.63	4
Overall average							3.78	0.59	

Learners rated the effectiveness of Level 3 (Behaviour) as fairly good. The overall average score was 3.78, with a standard deviation of 0.59.

- The highest-rated item was B1: applying new knowledge and skills in daily work, with an average score of 3.84.
- This was followed by B2: improvements in work, B3: faster decision-making, and B4: better problem-solving, which was rated the lowest with a score of 3.74.

Learner #19 shared that the training programs included situational exercises, discussions, and experience-sharing. However, due to the extensive content and large class size, discussion time was limited. The application of knowledge and skills depends on each individual and their actual work conditions, which may explain why some learners rated application outcomes less highly.

D. Evaluation of training effectiveness – Level 4: Results

The research team conducted a survey to evaluate the Level 4 effectiveness (results and impact on colleges). To ensure objectivity and a multi-perspective view, they compared the responses from learners, management staff, and 150 lecturers and staff members.

Table 5. Survey results on Level 4 evaluation: Results

No.	Content	Management Staff		Learners		Staff, lecturers		Overall		
		Avg. Score	Rank	Avg. Score	Rank	Avg. Score	Rank	Avg. Score	Std. Dev.	Rank
RE1	Training helps improve school management efficiency	3.79	3	3.80	3	3.82	3	3.80	0.42	2
RE2	Learners feel more connected to their organization after training	3.83	1	3.82	1	3.85	1	3.83	0.53	1
RE3	Training improves the quality and effectiveness of institutional training	3.74	4	3.71	5	3.73	4	3.73	0.61	3
RE4	Training increases satisfaction among lecturers, staff,	3.73	5	3.72	4	3.70	5	3.72	0.48	4

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	students, and businesses toward the school									
RE5	Training is a valuable investment for learners and their institutions	3.83	1	3.82	1	3.84	2	3.83	0.64	1
Overall average		3.78		3.77		3.79		3.78	0.54	

Respondents from all groups rated Level 4 training effectiveness (results and impact on colleges) as fairly good, with an overall average score of 3.78 and a standard deviation of 0.54.

- The most highly rated aspects were: RE2: Learners feel more connected to their workplace after training; RE5: Training is considered a valuable investment for both learners and their institutions (both with an average score of 3.83).
- These were followed by RE1 (school management improvement) and RE3 (training effectiveness).
- The lowest-rated was RE4: increased satisfaction among school stakeholders, with a score of 3.72.

There was strong consistency among all respondent groups in their ratings. All groups highly rated RE2 and RE5, and gave the lowest ratings to RE3 and RE4.

Management Staff #20 shared that after training, learners are often designated or promoted to leadership positions, leading to increased commitment and opportunities to apply their learning in practice. Investment in training was seen as both appropriate and necessary.

Learner #20 added that after training, participants gained new knowledge and skills, leading to better communication with supervisors and colleagues, smoother implementation of directives, and improvements in school management.

Lecturers and staff commented that trained leaders had more information and tools to carry out their management roles. However, individual leadership styles were not likely to change immediately. Moreover, institutional outcomes depend on multiple departments and individuals, making short-term evaluation difficult.

This may explain why immediate impacts, such as increased connection to the workplace, were rated higher than long-term effects like training quality and stakeholder satisfaction.

Research on actual outputs and operational reports from colleges in the Southwest region shows that:

- *School management*: Operations are stable and well-maintained; nearly 50% of the schools have implemented software-based management and administration systems.
- *Student training*: Enrollment scale and the quality of student training have been well maintained.
- *Quality assessment*: Self-assessment is carried out regularly, and nearly 50% of the schools have met the accreditation standards for vocational education quality.
- *Student dropout rate*: The dropout rate is low. However, about 20% of the schools report dropout rates ranging from 10–20%. In some exceptional cases, the dropout rate exceeds 30%.
- *Employment rate within 12 months after graduation*: 80% of the schools report that 70–90% of their graduates find suitable employment within 12 months. However, in 20% of the schools, the rate is below 70%.

These results indicate that the actual operations of colleges in the Southwest region are fairly stable, with several positive outcomes in school management, student training, and quality assessment. These outcomes also partly demonstrate that the training of college management staff has had a practical and effective impact on school governance and the enhancement of training quality. However, there are still certain limitations in terms of student dropout rates and the rate of graduates obtaining suitable employment, which need further improvement.

In summary, the survey and interview results show that the respondents rated the effectiveness of Level 4 training (results and impact on colleges) as fairly good. The average rating by learners on this aspect was 3.77, slightly lower than the average rating of 3.78 from the management staff group, and 3.79 from the lecturers and staff group. However, these differences are negligible. The One-way ANOVA analysis on the differences between groups yielded a Sig value of 0.312, which is greater than 0.05, indicating that there is no statistically significant difference between the management staff group, the learner group, and the lecturers and staff group.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of evaluation of the effectiveness of management staff training at colleges in the Southwest region of Vietnam using the four-level Kirkpatrick model are as follows: both management staff and learners rated the highest level of satisfaction at

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Level 1 – “Reaction” (Average Score = 3.82), followed by Level 2 – “Learning” (Average Score = 3.80), then Level 3 – “Behaviour” (Average Score = 3.78), and finally Level 4 – “Results” (also with an Average Score = 3.78).

Based on these research findings, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of training for management staff at Vietnamese colleges:

First, raise awareness among management staff about the role and importance of participating in training programs, enhancing their capacity, skills, and professional qualifications. There should also be a focus on evaluating the quality and effectiveness of training activities within their institutions.

Second, the Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs should develop and regularly update a standardized training framework for management staff that aligns with regional and international standards, enabling vocational colleges in Vietnam to implement and apply it effectively.

Third, training institutions should establish dedicated units responsible for organizing the training of vocational education management staff. These units should conduct needs assessments for training and evaluate the quality and performance of the management staff within the institution.

Fourth, develop a performance evaluation system for training programs based on specific criteria to ensure transparency and fairness. Furthermore, there should be policies for evaluating, appointing, and developing management personnel based on their actual performance and contributions to the institution.

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