



**EVALUATION REPORT
OF
THE SWISS-AIT-VIETNAM (SAV)
MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROJECT**

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Executive Summary

The SAV Programme is fulfilling its overall goal of supporting Vietnam in its transition from a centrally planned to a market economy. The Programme is perceived as very successful in building up human capital, promoting teaching and research capabilities, enhancing career prospects, developing an international perspective among faculty involved and equipping participants with contemporary management methods and subjects.

The main recommendations of the peer review are that the existing cooperation between institutions should continue and develop to include new strategic partners; the Faculty Development Programme should be detached from the PhD programme and reformulated in order to attract more participants, and that the four partner universities should develop distinctive profiles which would allow them to both compete and cooperate according to the circumstances. It is furthermore recommended that the Business and Research Centres (BARCs) be established and developed quickly.

The peer reviewers conclude that the second intake of the PhD programme should begin soon. Moreover, the establishment of the BARCs will contribute significantly to the sustainability of the SAV Programme and will ensure the continuation of the benefits of the Programme after its conclusion. However, the BARCs require more financial and practical support than is currently envisaged, if they are to succeed.

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1. Introduction

The aims of the evaluation were specified in the Final Draft of the Swiss-AIT-Vietnam (SAV) Management Development Project Document of 21 May 2001 and comprised:

- i) analysis of a SAV self-report;
- ii) institutional visits to observe and conduct interviews (peer-review);
- iii) submission of an Evaluation Report containing proposals to the SAV Steering Committee.

Following the submission of the Evaluation Report the Project Document indicated that the SAV-SC would decide on:

- i) the curriculum and timing of the second intake of the non-residential PhD programme and Faculty Development Programme;
- ii) the further implementation of the Programme through the BARIs (BARCs)¹.

The peer review is embedded in the Project's overall goal of supporting Vietnam in its transition from a centrally planned to a market economy.

¹ Business and Research Institute (Business and Research Centre)

2. Peer Review Timing, Methods and Limitations

2.1 Timing

The evaluation was conducted in the period 24 October to 6 December 2002. This evaluation included a peer-review visit to Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) in the period 18-22 November inclusive (for peer review visit programme see Appendix 1). The peers, R. Bühner and V. Edwards, were accompanied by Mr. S. Arnold from the evaluation agency ZEvA.

2.2 Methods

Prior to the visit to HCMC the main method used was the analysis and evaluation of various documentary evidence. This initial method was supplemented during the stay in HCMC by:

- analysis and evaluation of additional documentary evidence, including PhDs completed at overseas universities, MBA dissertations, module documentation and student feedback, conference proceedings and resulting publications and other documentation (for a list of the main documents see Appendix 2);
- interviews with representatives of SAV, Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), the four partner universities (PUs) and representatives of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) as well as with former and current students (MBA and PhD);
- observation of teaching (PhD Module 2), library facilities, computer rooms, classrooms, the SAV office and attendance at the Working Group meeting of 21 November 2002.

2.3 Limitations

Limitations of the peer review included the following:

- i Advance notice and time scale of the review were brief so that there was only limited time available to prepare for, conduct and write up the review.
- ii No visit was made to the two partner universities in Hanoi, the National Economics University and the University of Technology.
- iii No self-report was available, as recommended in the Project Document of 21.5.2001 (p.13).

3. Commendations and Recommendations

This section contains the commendations and recommendations of the peer reviewers. Commendations indicate significant achievements of the Programme and evidence of good practice. Recommendations relate to issues to which the respective participants in the Programme should give particular consideration and, following this, decide and initiate actions, if and when appropriate.

3.1 Commendations

The modularized SAV Programme is perceived by the 4 PUs as very successful in terms of:

- building up human capital;
- promoting teaching and research capabilities;
- enhancing career prospects of the participants;
- internationalising the faculty involved;
- familiarising the participants with contemporary management methods and subjects.

In our view, the success of the project stems from a well designed modularized programme, especially regarding the context of Vietnam's education system, from an approach that allows room for participation, permitting the participants to present and incorporate their own perspectives and from the participants' selection of highly motivated students. The Programme, moreover, is based on the concept of training the trainers which has magnified the resulting outputs and benefits.

Further commendations include the following:

- i About 200 students have completed the diploma and around 165 have achieved the MBA. The graduates are mainly employed in teaching in the four PUs, although a number are working in other Vietnamese universities and a small number in business organisations. By their involvement in teaching and, to a lesser extent, training, the graduates have created a multiplier effect as the impact of the Programme is transmitted through undergraduate teaching as well as training.
- ii The students were of a high quality and very motivated and both current and past students complimented the MBA and PhD programme highly. In general, student evaluation of the taught modules is extremely positive.
- iii The Programme has raised awareness and knowledge of educational management and SAV alumni have been appointed to managerial positions within the four PUs, including vice rector, dean and BARC director.
- iv The Programme offers courses which embody an international perspective, both from the point of view of content and teaching approach: this aspect is vital for the general raising of the quality of university education in the context of the transition to a market-oriented economy. The PUs themselves stressed strongly the benefits received from the Programme with regard to the development of market-oriented curricula, teaching methodologies, international management, information technologies and the development of academic staff (especially younger academics).
- v The Faculty Development Programme has been delivered in Hanoi and HCMC and is contributing to the development of a student-centred approach to teaching and learning, including new teaching methods and increased active student participation in classes. This has benefited a large number of students in Vietnamese universities.

- vi Two BARCs have been established in 2002 at HCMC University of Technology and the National Economics University in Hanoi and the two outstanding BARCs are expected to be established soon.

- vii The SAV Programme is considered by the four PUs as a role model for the development of other MBA programmes and cooperation with other foreign universities. It is outstanding because it is initiated and implemented in an unselfish manner and the programme emphasises student orientation. It is moreover controlled efficiently for student success.

- viii The 2001 conference was successful in that it focused on issues relevant to business and management practice and the economic development of Vietnam and attracted participants from overseas as well as Vietnam. Furthermore, the two volumes edited by T Quang (2000 and 2001) brought selected examples of the MBA students' empirical research to the attention of a wider audience;

- ix Prudent financial management and control as well as committed and sensitive treatment of programme and participant issues have been exercised by Dr Stoessel and his staff and Dr Stoessel and his team have acted as a human anchor for student concerns.

3.2 Recommendations

The recommendations relate to the four main points of the SAV Programme, namely the non-residential PhD (doctoral) programme, the Faculty Development Programme, Business Executive Development Programme and the institutionalisation of the SAV Programme.

Our general recommendations are that:

- i The cooperation between SAV, AIT and the 4 PUs should continue and enable the inclusion of new strategic partners which will help the PUs to develop their own distinctive profile. Strategic partnership refers to universities besides AIT and the Swiss University of Fribourg as well as to business organisations, consultancy firms and senior managers. As SAV will terminate its activities in 2007, it is imperative that the 4 PUs develop an infrastructure that builds on and develops the foundations provided by the SAV programme.
- ii The linkages between the PhD programme and the Faculty Development Programme should be reconsidered in order to increase and enhance that aspect of the Programme that aims to raise the quality of business and management education in Vietnamese universities, by renewing curricula in response to the move to a market economy as well as raising the quality of teaching by upgrading methodologies and methods. The Faculty Development Programme should be reformulated so as to increase the number of participants in its courses and consequently the wider dissemination of new teaching methodologies, methods and curricula.
- iii The four PUs should consider the relative benefits of competition and cooperation, based on their respective distinctive competencies. As a market for higher education develops as a result of the entry of foreign universities and courses, the four PUs will need to develop a distinctive

profile in order to continue attracting students and offer other courses. In so doing, they will hopefully develop areas of expertise which will permit them to stand firmly on their own feet. In other instances, however, there may be opportunities for teaching, consultancy and training which require cooperation with other strategic partners.

3.2.1 The non-residential PhD programme

The modules are regarded as appropriate and very useful. The quality of the student intake should be maintained in order to adhere to the high standard of the first intake. However, the programme organisers might consider the following:

- i The relative student workload of individual PhD taught modules (AIT should re-evaluate the modules in order to equalise the overall demands on students with regard to preparation and assessment). The students mentioned especially, that the credit points do not reflect their individual class participation.
- ii The overall timescale of each module, for instance, completing each module (including assessment) before the next module begins as students have to combine their commitment to the module with their teaching responsibilities.
- iii Further development of students' analytical and conceptual skills in the taught part of the programme so that students have a stronger foundation for high-level independent study: this is particularly important as they progress to the PhD. A possible methodology could be role plays, business games or interdisciplinary case studies which reflect the content of two or more taught modules.
- iv Giving greater emphasis to application of knowledge and skills in the taught modules, including assessment, so that students can transfer more readily the knowledge they acquire (both regarding

subject content and teaching method) to their own teaching. This requires more Vietnamese cases which should be used in the classes.

- v Introducing a small number of elective modules which might be taken abroad (eg AIT) so that individual students can pursue specialist interests which could benefit either their PhD studies or professional development.

The peer reviewers also identified a number of other issues, which in their view would merit being discussed and considered by the relevant programme participants. These issues include: increasing coverage of qualitative research methods and approaches alongside quantitative methodologies and increased treatment of financial analysis; extending the students' study period abroad to at least 6 months in order to give students more time to access literature, consult with supervisors, etc.; expanding the number of universities receiving PhD students so as to avoid sending a group of students to one university (the reviewers appreciate that this requires early contact to be made with potential receiving institutions); facilitating early contact between AIT supervisor and PhD student; facilitating student networking during the PhD stage so that students can learn from and support each other; upgrading email, Internet and journal facilities (including e-journals) as the library facilities of the PUs require substantial development and investment; 'ring-fencing' a part of student funding for data collection during fieldwork subject to appropriate accountability.

Whilst we would expect the respective participants to consider the issues we have raised, decisions in response and subsequent actions clearly require prioritisation with regard to timing and resources.

3.2.2 Faculty Development Programme

The programme organisers should consider offering a separate faculty development programme. This should be not intertwined with the PhD programme. Rather it should focus on teaching methodologies and methods and respond to the identified needs of faculty and educational managers (deans, vice rectors, etc) in view of the limited motivation and participation of non-SAV faculty. More specifically, the programme organisers should consider:

- i offering short (eg half-day and one-day) and practice-oriented courses so that a larger group of potential beneficiaries can be attracted to attend and acquire knowledge and skills to improve teaching practice;
- ii offering courses equipping participants with new knowledge and skills which can be used directly in teaching, for example, writing and using case studies, including Vietnamese case studies, stimulating groupwork to improve student learning and curriculum development to upgrade courses;
- iii assisting and encouraging the PUs to assume responsibility for the Faculty Development Programme so that courses are increasingly delivered by PU staff (eg BARC and SAV alumni), who act as trainers for PU faculty, and also in the Vietnamese language;
- iv encouraging the PUs to provide incentives for staff to participate in and deliver the Faculty Development Programme in order to increase participation.

3.2.3 Business Executive Development Programme

There is evidence that the 4 PUs are already offering some executive development and training courses. However, we strongly recommend that:

- i consultancy and training activities for business and faculty are expanded in order to further develop the human resource base in Vietnam, assist economic development and generate income;
- ii these activities become financially and organisationally secure;
- iii SAV support the 4 PUs in terms of training so that they acquire the competences needed to undertake consultancy and business training and manage the respective organisational structures effectively;
- iv the 4 PUs draw on the expertise of SAV alumni, some of whom are already engaged in training and consultancy;
- v appropriate advisors and experienced practitioners in the respective fields are involved in training and advising faculty in the 4 PUs engaged in consultancy and business training. One area of particular relevance would be project management and planned order winning (each PU should identify its preferred partner and approach with regard to this);
- vi opportunities be investigated for faculty involved in consultancy and training to undertake placements with established consultancy and training firms;
- vii the Business Executive Development Programme is integrated within the BARCs;

viii faculty involved in training and consultancy are appropriately rewarded.

3.2.4 Institutionalisation of the SAV Programme

The SAV Programme is based on the principle of providing help in order to create a situation in which the recipients can help themselves. It is therefore imperative that the benefits of the SAV Programme are institutionalised so that sustainability is ensured following the conclusion of the programme in 2007.

It is consequently recommended that:

- i the BARCs are quickly established and functioning (so that BARC members can continue benefiting from the SAV Programme and gain experience while the Programme is still operational);
- ii the revised Faculty Development Programme is implemented and managed by the BARCs (see the recommendations in 3.2.2);
- iii the BARCs establish an Advisory Board including international experts and domestic and foreign practitioners, including representatives of Vietnamese companies;
- iv international expertise be utilised to strengthen the capabilities of the BARCs;
- v a formal organisation be established for the SAV alumni.

4. Conclusions

We recommend that the second intake of the non-residential PhD programme should begin as soon as considered appropriate. In our judgment the SAV PhD programme has made and will continue to make a positive and substantial contribution to the development of human resources and economic progress towards a market economy in Vietnam. This has benefited particularly the four PUs. The SAV Programme is acknowledged as one of the outstanding projects of its kind in Vietnam. Its specific merit is that it has trained the trainer and has had a multiplier effect. It is also recognised as an unselfish contribution to the Vietnamese university system.

We consider the establishment of the BARCs as an appropriate and imaginative response to the need to transfer the benefits of the SAV Programme and to develop further human resource competences for the advantage of the higher education system and business. If the BARCs are successfully established (see 3.2.4), the SAV Programme will have achieved a long term impact on the transformation to a market-driven economy. Sustainability will thus be assured.

In view of the developing circumstances in Vietnam, the SAV Programme supports the ability of the PUs to adapt and transform. As the BARCs become more confident in their capabilities, the SAV Programme will assist them to develop their own distinctive profiles and international orientation. This is particularly important as more foreign universities operate in Vietnam and the PUs will need to compete against them. However, the BARCs, in order to be successful, will need to become oriented to business practice. For this to be achieved, they will initially need practical support in areas such as training for consultancy, exposure to international practice and real-life projects. In this regard, SAV should extend its financial and other support for the BARCs so that they develop into robust institutions. This support should include, as well as longer term financial help than is currently proposed, training in managing and running institutions of this kind.