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WORKING PAPER ON THE PROJECT OF

"EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION BROADCAST ON 'THE STRUCTURE OF MARKET ECONOMY' IN VIETNAM"

Written by

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper addresses the possibility of developing human resources in Asia through the use of mass media. It introduces a project entitled "Educational Television Broadcast on The Structure of Market Economy in Vietnam," implemented by The Sasakawa Peace Foundation in 1996. This was the first time for Vietnam to use a media-mix method, i.e., a TV program and an accompanying textbook, in mass education.

In countries such as Vietnam where a powerful government is attempting to reform the economic system from a planned to a market-oriented one, education can be a primary key to achieving the success of this transition. Nevertheless, such countries often lack the needed education facilities and study/learning materials. Moreover, there are not enough qualified instructors in their schools who know how and what to teach about economic transition, particularly in such a rapidly changing environment.

Although mass media has the potential to play an instrumental role in mass education, few attempts have been made so far in the Southeast Asian countries to exploit it for this purpose. When the BBC produced an educational TV program about market economics for the Russian people, and it was received there with a high degree of interest. Similar results can be expected in Southeast Asia.

In presenting this paper, I would like to encourage more effort to use mass media in Southeast Asian countries for public education,
not only in economics but across a broad range of other fields including law, politics, and culture. I also wish to encourage potential donors and media people in Asia to cooperate with each other in producing more tailored and effective educational programs for the citizens of the countries of Southeast Asia. More and more, a wealth of experiences and ideas needs to be incorporated in public education programs for broadcast in the region.
2. BACKGROUND

Since its establishment within The Sasakawa Peace Foundation in 1992, The Sasakawa Southeast Asia Cooperation Fund (SSACF) has been carrying out a wide agenda of self-operated and grant-making activities designed to help advance socio-economic and human-resource development in Indochina, specifically Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar.

At the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s, we observed that such centrally planned economies faced a host of difficulties in their attempts to reform their economic systems. Needless to say, these countries have been undaunted in their reform efforts, and are making significant strides in their transitions to market economies. Considering such reform to be essential to social/civic development as well as to economic growth, SSACF has placed the primary focus of its program on supporting the market transition process in the subject countries.

Most salient among the four countries for its economic dynamism is Vietnam. Since announcing its open policy of Doi Moi, Vietnam's market-creating reforms have become a benchmark for successful socio-economic transformation. These strides notwithstanding, the country's progress is burdened by high rates of inflation, inefficient financial and monetary systems, and a large disparity in the standard of living between residents of urban centers and of rural communities.
Furthermore, since Vietnam became an official member of ASEAN in July 1995, it has been facing ever more intensive international competition. Accordingly, it will be imperative for Vietnam to ready its industry and people for the rigors of international competition by enhancing their sophistication and performance.

In this sense, Vietnam is, as a transitional economy, now facing a clear hurdle: the fundamental need for its citizens to learn about and come to grips with the changing situation of the nation's economy. There is no doubt that making changes to the system is crucial in carrying out the country's economic transition, but, as importantly, it will be the people themselves who must create, modify, and operate that system. In other words, economic transition does not only require systemic changes, but also transformation of people's perspectives.
3. PROJECT OVERVIEW

In Vietnam, however, there are few means available to citizens to study the nature and function of market-oriented economy. For example, there are not many academic facilities, such as schools or vocational training centers, in this field. Moreover, there are few teachers who have a firm understanding of the concepts and workings of market economics. In addition, there is also a lack of effective study materials, such as textbooks, in this area.

Under these circumstances, the mass media, if effectively organized and operated, is in a position to play a crucial role in the process of public education. It was upon this premise that SSACF initiated a project, entitled "Educational Television Broadcast on The Structure of Market Economy in Vietnam" in April 1996. Responding to the emerging need to educate ordinary Vietnamese citizens, this project supported the production and broadcast of an educational TV program on building and operating a market economy.

The basic TV program was originally created in 1992 by The Sasakawa Central Europe Fund for broadcast in central European countries, such as the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, and the Baltic States. It entrusted Dentsu Ltd., one of the world's premier media companies, to produce this educational program under the direction of Dr. Kimio Uno, Dean of the Department of Media and Governance at Keio University. The broadcast of the program, which consisted of six, 30-minute segments, was well-received in those transitional economies during the period of
1992-1993. Among the topics covered in it were competition, inflation, banking, and productivity.

The Vietnam Youth Union, the implementing organization of the Vietnamese project, distributed in advance 40,000 copies of the accompanying textbook through its extensive network to people with limited access to bookstores around the country. Vietnam Central Television (VTV), the project's cooperating agency, broadcast the program during the period of August-October 1996.

To tailor the program closely to the needs and interests of the Vietnamese people and to make it a prototype for other productions to follow, the Vietnam Youth Union added a dimension of local content and flavor to it. Initially, it organized a workshop of local researchers and business people to discuss the Vietnamese content of the TV program and the translation and editing of the textbooks. Afterwards, it conducted a pair of viewer survey on the results of the broadcast, aimed at ascertaining differences in people's knowledge of the subjects before and after viewing the program. The results of this survey were published in both Vietnamese and English, and were submitted to the Vietnamese government. Furthermore, the entire process involved in implementing the project—including the textbook distribution, the two surveys, and the workshops before and after the broadcast—was compiled into documentary, which was broadcast at the end of the project.
4. PROJECT DETAILS

(1) Objectives and Targets:

The project had the following three major objectives (targeted people are underlined):

a) To educate Vietnamese citizens with regard to the process of transition to a market-oriented economy.

b) Through surveys, for teachers and media producers to accumulate a body of know-how that can be used in education and in the production of public education TV programs.

c) In the course of this process, to submit progressive reports to the government of Vietnam so as to aid it in its effort to reform the nation's media and educational policies.

(2) Funding Organization:

The Sasakawa Southeast Asia Cooperation Fund (SSACF)

SSACF was founded with an endowment of four billion yen in April 1992 in response to the immense demand for development assistance in the Southeast Asian region.

(3) Implementing Organization:

Vietnam Youth Union

This organization has seven-million members ranging from 14 to 28 years of age, out of 21 million in this age group throughout Vietnam. Membership in the
The communist party is no longer a requirement for joining the Union.

(4) Cooperating Agency:

Vietnam Central Television (VTV)

VTV operates three channels and is the largest national TV broadcaster in Vietnam. It is the only one with a nation-wide network.

(5) Other Organizations Concerned:

Various other organizations were interested in this project. The project report was submitted to the following government agencies:

a) Ministry of Planning and Investment in Vietnam
b) Ministry of Education and Training in Vietnam
c) Ministry of Information in Vietnam
d) Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vietnam

(6) Duration and Time Table:

The project was carried out for one year during FY 1996 (from April 1996 through March 1997). The project's timetable was as follows:
Table 1: Project Timetable

(7) TV Program

The series consisted of six episodes, each of which ran for 30 minutes. The titles of each episode were as follows:

- Episode 1: How to Start a Business?
- Episode 2: How to Compete?
- Episode 3: How Financial Institutions Support Market Economies?
- Episode 4: How to Combat Inflation?
- Episode 5: How to Improve Productivity?
- Episode 6: How to Grow?
(8) Workshops:

The program featured two components, namely a localized drama and a lecture by Dr. Kimio Uno, Dean of the Department of Media and Governance, Keio University. Although the basic production was well-dramatized and easy for anyone to understand, the Vietnamese side wanted to make it more digestible for the local people by adding a touch of Vietnamese flavor to it. They held the first workshop for that purpose, which was participated in by the following kinds of people:

a) College professors  
b) Business people  
c) Media producers  
d) Representatives of the Vietnam Youth Union.

A second workshop was held for evaluation of the program after the broadcast.

(9) Surveys:

a) Four Survey Areas  
   i) City of Hanoi  
   ii) Ha Tay Province  
   iii) Thanh Hoa  
   iv) Nghe An Province

b) Number of Samples

The total of 360 people were surveyed. The number of male and female samples were well-balanced, as indicated below in the table and bar chart. To determine what, if any, progress had been made through viewing the broadcast, the same people were surveyed before and after it.
Table 2: Number of Samples in Each Area

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<th>Area</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha Tay</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanh Hoa</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nghe An</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
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Chart 1: Sample Structure by Gender

(10) Publicity:

  a) The Vietnam Youth Union conducted a press conference for publicize the program via such media as radio, television, magazines, and newspapers. Over 25 press and media
agencies, including both their local and international representatives, attended the event.

b) The Vietnam Youth Union also conducted a campaign to disseminate information about the TV program and textbook to its members through its youth club activities and through its monthly "Youth & Happiness" magazine. This campaign was also conducted over TV and radio.

(11) Broadcast:

The TV program was broadcast once a week in the evening and was repeated the following morning.

a) Duration: Every Thursday

From August 29, 1996 to October 3, 1996

b) Time: 19:00-19:30 and 9:00-9:30 the following morning

c) Channel: VTV 3 (Nation-wide Educational Channel)
5. SOME INTERESTING FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEYS

Comparing the results of the surveys taken before and after the broadcast showed a dramatic difference in people's understanding of the introduced basic concepts of market economy. Before the broadcast, only 17% knew how pricing is done, while 89% said they now understood the process after viewing the broadcast. Of special note is that the vast majority of viewers learned for the very first time about the concept of "added value" in pricing mechanisms.

Question: Do you know how to do pricing?

Before

Yes
17%

No
83%

After

No
11%

Yes
89%
With regard to how profit is made, before the broadcast only 8% said that it was necessary to reduce production cost, while afterwards 61% recognized this need.

*Question:* To increase profit, reducing production cost is necessary. Yes?

**Before**

- Yes 8%
- No 92%

**After**

- No 39%
- Yes 61%

Regarding the impact of market competition, before the broadcast only 20% said it could benefit the consumer; afterwards 67% recognized its value.

*Question:* Will market competition lead to more benefit for the customers?
With regard to inflation, before the broadcast 81% did not know what it was, while only 13% said that they still did not understand it after viewing the broadcast.

Question: Do you know what inflation is?

Before

Yes
19%

No
81%
6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The project was very successful in that it gave the Vietnamese people an effective opportunity to learn the basic concepts of market economics. Furthermore, I believe that it has encouraged many Vietnamese to participate in the emerging market economy. (When I was in Hanoi for the follow-up survey, a number of young people told me that they now want to start up their own small businesses.) Such people are the budding entrepreneurs who will lead Vietnam's business and civic sectors in coming years.

In December 1996, the Vietnamese Communist Party declared that reform of the nation's education policy will be important for the long-term development of Vietnam. I see in this declaration three policy pillars:

(1) Modernizing and making more effective the educational system from the elementary to the college level
(2) Fostering more new teachers and retraining existing ones
(3) Increasing the number of schools especially in rural areas by inviting as much foreign investment as possible.

In its effort to promote educational reform, the party has directed the radio/television networks to air educational programs for a certain amount of their broadcast time. I feel that our media project has helped to spearhead initiatives in the direction of mass education.

It is my recommendation now that potential donors, both public and private, and Asia's media community work together to create
programs that make innovative utilization of the many mediums and resources at their disposal in a concerted effort to assist the region's countries and citizens in their transitions to more open and fruitful market economies. With modern communications technology, information knows no borders.