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Training Professional Broadcasters In Vietnam

By

Nguyen Tien Long
TRAINING PROFESSIONAL BROADCASTERS IN VIETNAM

In Vietnam, Radio is a young medium founded in 1945. Over the past half-century, despite numerous difficulties, a broadcasting system has been established nationwide. This includes the Voice of Vietnam as the National Radio. There are local radio stations in all 53 provinces and cities and broadcasting facilities and transmission network in 500 districts.

Of the total 6,000 professional journalists, one third are broadcasters. Although this contingent is large, their professional qualifications leave much to be desired. Training is therefore of a high priority.

1- Current status of Broadcasters in Vietnam.

Previously, there were no broadcasters training schools or institutions in Vietnam. In recent years, training has been done by the Journalism College and the Journalism faculties of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh Universities. Yet this training is far from satisfactory. Most Vietnamese broadcasters haven't got official training. These broadcasters are those who either have a talent for journalism or a liking for radio who have not graduated from a college or university. Their professional background is only accumulated from their work and from short-term training courses.

Apart from this, few Vietnamese broadcasters have a good command of foreign languages which impedes them from learning modern broadcasting
technology. Take the staff of the Voice of Vietnam as an example. At present 20% of reporters and desk people haven't got a university degree, about 80% are unable to speak a foreign language, while 40-year-old or over account for three fourths of the total staff.

Vietnam's broadcasting technology is old and backward. Most of the programs with a total transmission time of 68 hours are pre-recorded. Live broadcast is not more than 5 per thousand of total air time.

Due to such a technology, procedures for a radio reporter is almost the same as those of a newspaper journalist. A radio reporter usually goes through the following three stages to accomplish his final products:

- First stage: The reporter gets information to feed his story from his local field trips. He is equipped mainly with a ball point pen, a notebook and a recorder.

- Second stage: He writes the story in the office either by hand-writing or typing.

- Third stage: He has his story edited, programmed, recorded and put onto air. This stage is conducted mostly by presenters and technicians.

The current status of technology, expertise and such procedures have badly affected the broadcasting quality in Vietnam. There is delay in information, waste of material and lack of knowhow.

2- Training Trends for Vietnamese Broadcasters:
In order to have a contingent of highly qualified broadcasters to meet information needs, we have paid attention to three links. These are pre-service training, in-service training and recruiting staff.

The Journalism College and Journalism Faculties of the Universities of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City have their broadcasting training sections equipped with necessary teaching and learning aids. Each year, these institutions are able to graduate about 100 broadcasting journalists. The knowledge they acquire from these training courses provides them with a foundation to work at radio stations and facilitates their further training in-house.

In the course of recruiting staff, radio stations give priority to those with an aptitude for spoken journalism. Apart from the common norms, they must have a good microphone voice, and an ability to present and improvise on air.

The Voice of Vietnam is executing a plan to train radio people to grasp modern broadcasting techniques. We are bringing in modern technology to upgrade the production process, changing reporters' workstyle for the better to ensure they are genuine broadcasters especially during their field trips. When they go to locations for information, they will resort mainly to using the recorder and voice inserts (rather than ball point pens and notebooks). Back in their office, instead of using their ball point pens and type writers to complete their stories, they use computers which also help them store and search necessary data and information. In the transmitting studio, the reporter will present his own story and work as a technical operator as well. Technicians will only provide help when necessary.
With regard to further training, attention is paid to enhancing foreign language competency so that in the future we’ll have a staff of broadcasters who are not only professionally qualified and proficient in foreign languages but also able to handle modern broadcasting facilities.

To this end, the broadcasting branch in Vietnam has so far taken many measures. Apart from our own efforts, we have received valuable assistance from colleagues and friends elsewhere in the world. The presence of two Vietnamese participants to this seminar will help us better implement our work regarding managing and training professional broadcasters in Vietnam. Thank you.

TRAN QUANG KHAI
VIET NAM
ROLE AND OBLIGATIONS OF RADIO IN VIETNAM 
AT PRESENT AND IN THE FUTURE

When Radio was first introduced and became popular, many people felt its development would lessen the role and popularity of the print media. In fact it has not been so. Each form of medium has its own strengths and disadvantages and they compliment each other.

In Vietnam, the print media has a century-old history but it was not until 1945 when radio was founded. And much later, in 1970, television was set up. Since its foundation, radio has played an important role. In the current renovation process, the role and obligations of radio are all the more felt.

1- Vietnam is a stretch of land, 1700 km long from North to South and has an area of over 300,000 square kilometres. The bottleneck width from East to West is only 50 km. The population is scattered, mostly settled on the plain. Mountains account for two thirds of the whole national area but house as little as 10% of the total population. Due to such geography and allocation of population, radio has had numerous constraints during its half-century performance, resulting primarily in low coverage of transmission of population areas.

As the National Radio, the Voice of Vietnam has a transmitting system with a capacity of 1000 KW. Now it can provide direct coverage for less than one-forth of the territory to which half of the population has access.
Whereas the transmission coverage is still limited, receivers are not sufficient. The whole country has about 7 million radio sets or radio-cassettes. This means that every two households (each comprising an average of 5 members) share a radio. This is a low average compared with developed and other regional countries. Furthermore, there is a disparity in the allocation of receivers. 70 - 80% or radios are concentrated in cities and towns where there is more economic-cultural development. There are few radios in the rural and mountain areas. Therefore, more than half of the Vietnamese population have no access to information. To solve this problem rests primarily with the role and obligations of radio stations.

2- Results of listeners' surveys in Vietnam show that over 60% of the polled people said they have first hand information from the radio; 28% rely on television and 10% newspapers.

In reply to a questionnaire on listeners' feedback, a farmer, Mr. Lam Van Sinh of Thanh Loi village, Vu Ban district, Nam Ha province (50 km south of Hanoi) wrote, "Everyday, I tune in to the Voice of Vietnam, first of all to find out what's new today and what are the concerns of society. Does it have something to do with me? What are the pluses and minuses of that event towards myself? And finally I listen for something amusing to relax my mind."

It is obvious that the audience, especially those in out-of-town areas want to listen to the radio for information, events that concern themselves and entertainment.
The question is if television and newspapers can replace radio with regard to those role and obligations.

It has been proven by reality over the past years that different forms of media cannot replace each other, but instead modify and compliment each other. In Europe, they have a very short and subtle expression about the role played by each medium. "When an event occurs, the radio informs, television demonstrates and newspapers explain." (Perhaps this expression is only able to highlight the major features or advantages of each form of medium rather than give an all-round evaluation).

At present, in Vietnam, on average there is a television set in one of every three households and newspapers are insufficient. Against this background, radio is always a leading medium in informing and entertaining. Even when television coverage is further expanded along with future social development, it won't be able to replace radio because radio is immediate and how people get information while working, walking or doing physical labour. This is the ultimate advantage of radio over the other media forms.

3- Fully aware of the role and obligations of radio at present as well as in the future, the Vietnamese state has invested considerably in broadcasting. As the national radio, the Voice of Vietnam transmits a total of 68 hours per day in 14 languages (11 languages for overseas audiences).

All 53 cities and provinces throughout Vietnam have their own radio stations. In some provinces, besides the programs broadcast in Vietnamese,
there are programs in ethnic dialects. All the districts, totalling 500, have broadcasting facilities, or FM stations or wire transmission units.

Although the national broadcasting system has been established, there remains a backward technology and unqualified broadcasters. Vietnam is making all-out efforts to move forward and seek assistance from our counterparts elsewhere in the world. We highly appreciate any form of cooperation and assistance from colleagues and international and national broadcasting organizations. Thank you.

NGUYEN TIEN LONG

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