

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS IN THE FIRST YEAR AFTER ITS ESTABLISHMENT

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The University of Economics (UE) within the Vietnam National University-HCMC is a multidisciplinary institute in the South. The UE always pays attention to the task of carrying out scientific researches and combining them with economic activity besides the task of giving training courses in economics. In the open economy, the UE has also tried to expand its cooperative relations with foreign institutes with a view to improving its training programs and quality of its staff.

The following are main achievements in the field of scientific research and international cooperation of the UE.

I. SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

1. Objectives of the UE's researches and production activity

- To carry out scientific researches in order to innovate the system of curricula and textbooks, and supply more reference materials.

- To improve knowledge and researching skills of the teaching staff with a view to enhancing the quality of training process.

- To help with solving socio-economic problems arising from the economic reform.

- To help companies solve difficulties in improving their performance.

- To cooperate with foreign counterparts on research projects with a view to gaining access to new sources of information, methods and financial support.

2. Achievements in scientific research

a. Scientific researches serving the Government's policy making process

This was one of main tasks of the UE's research operation last year. Results of scientific researches

carried out by the UE last year were of great service to the Party and Government in their policy-making process. The UE mobilized most of its lecturers to undertake, or take part in, major research projects ordered by the Government.

Last year, besides the Project KX-03-21C "Economic-Managerial and Organizational Measures to Develop Commercial Farming and Change the Economic Structure in the South" which was appreciated by the Ministry of Science-Technology and Environment, the UE was assigned by the Central Theoretical Council (a department under the Politburo) a project on "Vietnamese Capitalist in the Industrialization in a Multi-sector Economy with Socialist Orientation". This project was undertaken by a group of researchers headed by Prof. Nguyễn Thanh Tuyền, Rector of the UE.

The UE's researches contributing to the Government research projects were recognized to be profound enough to reflect potentials and characteristics of the South.

b. Researches into theoretical problems of management

These researches are carried out according to requirements of government ministries or the UE itself. These researches are usually completed within one year or two.

Carrying out researches to order placed by ministries is always considered as one of main and regular tasks of the UE staff. All researches carried out last year have helped to solved many problems arising from the socio-economic development in HCMC and southern provinces, have helped regulators improve their supervision and contributed a lot to studying and training process.

Completing perfectly and on time all researches ordered by ministries has justified the ability of the UE staff to combine theories and practices, and the position of the UE in society.

In the school year 1996-1997,

the UE undertook 15 projects proposed by ministries and 30 projects by the UE. Six projects at ministerial level and all 30 projects ordered by the UE were completed last year to the satisfaction of clients.

c. Researches on problems arising from economic activity

The UE has contracted to carry out researches with many companies and organizations. In recent years, the amount of contracted researches has increased and many researches were appreciated by clients, such as the research project on "Application of information technology to the process of selecting and making plans for socio-economic development in HCMC" carried out under the direction of Dr. Lê Văn Phi.

In carrying out these researches the UE staff-especially young lecturers-have chances to put their skill and knowledge into practice and to have a good look at realities of economic development.

d. Scientific researches and the task of innovating training programs and compiling new textbooks

To produce new textbooks and reference materials is one of main objectives of the UE's scientific researches. Last year, the UE leadership assigned its staff to compile or translate textbooks, especially a system of standard courses for both the first and second stages of study in all branches, gave financial support to compilers and translators and had the UE Scientific Council perfect and evaluate these courses and textbooks. The following are results of this activity last year:

- The course "Macro-Economics" was completed and used as official courses in the UE and other universities within the Vietnam National University-HCMC with the formal approval of the President.

- Many courses were used as main textbooks after being evaluated by the Scientific Council.

- All faculties had their systems

f textbook printed.

e. Researches carried out by students

To encourage students to do researches has been one of teaching methods applied in the UE for years, and this became one policy adopted by the UE leadership last year. The Association of Students and Youth League have helped the UE leadership mobilize students to take part in this activity in order to:

- Help students get accustomed to researching methods and enhance quality of their graduation essays.

- Provide students with chances to assist their teachers in doing researches.

- Encourage students, especially seniors and juniors, to carry out researches independently while making their graduation essays or doing researches to order placed by companies.

Last year, many researches done by students were sent to science competitions organized by HCMC government, HCMC Youth League and the Ministry of Education. In 1996, three students of the UE won awards given by the Minister of Education for their researches.

At present, all students, especially seniors, are competing for prizes for scientific research given by the Ministry of Education in the school year 1996-1997.

f. Researches done by the UE study and service centers

Many study and service centers established by the UE have carried out researches or supplied services on contracts with clients. These centers have mobilized a lot of professors and students to take part in research activity, and become a bridge between the UE and local or foreign economic concerns.

In information service, the UE has published *Phát Triển Kinh Tế* Magazine in both Vietnamese and English in order to publicize studies made by its staff and supply information needed for studying and teaching activities.

II. ACHIEVEMENTS IN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

1. Forms and contents of International cooperation in the UE

a. The protocols of educational cooperation

The UE has had chances to cooperate with foreign institutes within the framework of protocols exchanged by Vietnam and foreign governments by:

- Organizing training projects fi-

nanced by foreign partners: Many projects of this kind were carried out in the UE last year such as Fulbright-Vietnam, SAV, UOE-ISS, UOE-AUPLF-UREF, and UOE-CFVG. Projects of this kind obtained a lot of approval and produced good results because they enabled many students and professors to take part in them.

- Sending delegates abroad to make studies of foreign teaching and organizing methods.

- Exchanging students and professors with foreign universities: This is the best way to help the UE staff to make studies for postgraduate degrees. Many foreign students and professors (from the US, Belgium...) have come to make studies at the UE.

b. Bilateral Cooperation between the UE and foreign universities

Due to the open policy, the UE has been able to expand the bilateral cooperation with foreign universities by:

- Organizing training projects in cooperation with foreign partners (the project to give Master course in business administration in cooperation with the Quebec University for example).

- Having professors make studies abroad with scholarship given by foreign universities.

- Hosting many groups of foreign researchers.

- Cooperating with foreign institutes to organize seminars and workshops.

- Exchanging information, reference and library materials.

- Carrying out research projects in cooperation with foreign universities, such as the project on Vietnamese economy financed by the Australian Government and directed by the ANU.

2. Achievements

a. Impact of international cooperation on scientific research

In the UE, those two activities really interact with each other. The international cooperation offers the UE staff a lot of chances to communicate with foreign counterparts and to gain access to modern scientific knowledge.

Through international cooperation, the UE research activity produced good results last year and contributed a lot to the perfection of the UE training programs.

b. Improvement in the quality of teaching staff

In the past ten years when Vietnam shifted to the market economy,

the source of knowledge from the former USSR and Eastern European bloc proved to be of little avail, the international cooperation has helped the UE to find out new chances to improve the quality of its staff. In the school year 1996-1997, around 20% of its staff was sent abroad to make short-term studies or to do postgraduate courses at foreign universities. Thus, the international cooperation not only helps to improve the quality of the UE teaching staff but also provides a basis for the development strategy of the UE.

c. Source of facilities for study and new technology

In the last year, through international cooperation, the UE received a lot of financial support from foreign institutes in the form of facilities for study (computers, audiovisual aids, etc.) Moreover, many modern methods of teaching and studying were introduced to the UE by foreign universities.

III. CONCLUSION

In the last year, the UE inherited achievements obtained by its unit members in the past 20 years and made new developments under the direction of the UE leadership. However, there are many problems must be dealt with in order to improve the research and international cooperation activities in the coming years. These problems are as follows:

- To make the best use of existing resources to develop scientific research and international cooperation.

- To improve the quality of researches done by the UE staff: this is the most important factor that determines the position of the UE in society.

- To give financial support to researchers with a view to removing imbalances between them and lecturers.

- To beef up study and service centers, especially well-managed centers, because they provide the UE with an advantage in establishing relations with economic concerns.

- To expand more aggressively the international cooperation in order to absorb new training and managing methods and improve the research ability of the teaching staff.

To make the best use of all opportunities is the right way to develop the UE research and international cooperation activities in the future ■