

Mike

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Comments

I am not sure that business administration training is a high priority need in Viet Nam at this time--I would want to know a lot more about the socio-economic situation than I do now. But assuming that it is a worthwhile project, and assuming that Uncle Sam is prepared to pick up the tab, my off-hand judgment is that vocational as opposed to professional training would be more productive. If my judgment is correct, and I am not at all sure that it is, then it seems to me that the NIA is not the appropriate vehicle for the program. Business training would require a program of a different order from that which now exists at the NIA, one which would impair the already too low academic prestige of the NIA.

If, however, the technical assistance program is to take the form of professional training, as I suspect it will, the NIA is probably the logical place for the program. As in the case with the present public administration program, it could provide a training ground for junior and middle level executives who will form a pool of administrative talent.

Although it would obviously require an expansion of faculty and facilities, the NIA has the advantage of being a going concern and much of its program could be readily adapted to business administration: (1) its programs in economics and sociology could provide "basic" training for business as well as public administration, (2) its programs in administrative techniques could be applied to business as well as public administration, and (3) the programs in finance could be modified and enlarged to include the field of business finance. In fact, given the local economic environment, and the prospects of extensive joint public-private enterprise, there is probably more justification for a school of business and public administration here than is true in the U.S.

While it is true that the NIA curriculum lacks courses in the sciences and humanities, I would think that this is a less serious gap than would be the case in the U.S. The French-type of training received in the secondary schools of Viet Nam has a strong liberal arts content—even though it may not conform to our concepts "general education." Nevertheless, shortcomings, especially in science, ~~which~~ might need correction through expansion of the NIA curriculum or by assistance from the University of Saigon. (Incidentally, I wonder if the NIA might not eventually be absorbed by the University -- the Faculty of Administration? Thuc was telling me the other day that he feels that the University of Saigon has need of a more "applied" curriculum and less need for liberal studies.)

My main worry in connection with any business administration program is the question of the market for the product. Who would employ these people? Is private enterprise, or public-private enterprise sufficiently developed so that it will absorb graduates of the program? Or would <sup>we</sup> be producing people whose competence would be redundant and whose expectations would exceed their prospects? I think this question should be examined carefully.

One gratuitous remark: I share your misgivings about this assignment. None of us is especially qualified by virtue of background, training, or interest, to solve these problems. However, I would avoid apology, stick to generalizations, and then recommend that "extensive research in depth be undertaken by a select committee of persons with appropriate expertise."

In short, a select committee should address the question: Has the Vietnamese economy reached a stage at which it can absorb persons trained in business administration? Assuming that this question is answered affirmatively, this committee must determine the quality of that training, professional or vocational? If it is the latter, a business college should be established. If it is the former, the NIA or another vehicle should be selected. If the NIA is chosen, then there should be careful study to determine the necessary modifications and expansion of the NIA curriculum and staff.