

Tran Qui Than

REPORT TO VIETNAM PROJECT  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing Mich.

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## Report to Vietnam Project.

The progress made by a participant is the result of many factors.

Perhaps the most important one is the university chosen, its location, the department of the participant's field and its professors.

Equally important are the requirements of the Ph.D. program which vary from one university to another. For instance some allow prospective foreign candidates to take English as a second language, some do not; for students in Economics, calculus may be a compulsory subject etc....

Some Vietnamese graduates including myself received their degrees from European Universities where the credit system did not exist. To avoid unpleasant surprise a participant accustomed to the less intensive rate of work in the European and or native universities should have a clear idea of what would represent the amount of effort required to fulfill a 3 point credit course. The American system with its weekly written tests and one or two midterm examinations in addition to its compulsory research papers is much more demanding to a graduate Vietnamese student than the latter usually expected.

While in Europe a Ph.D candidate has practically no choice of the courses within his field of specialization here he is relatively freer to make this choice. A sound selection of the courses at the start would save him a good deal of time and spare him of the painful decision to change to other courses at a later date.

Those various factors are new to a Vietnamese student, and in his own interest as well as in the interest of the sponsoring organization a participant must be fed with as much information as possible so that he could reach the most suitable decision regarding the choice of university and the selection of courses.

In my case I was accepted by Berkeley, Columbia and Cornell. My main reason for selecting Cornell Business School was that it was located in a small town and therefore the cost of living there was believed to be lower than in New York. Not only this is untrue - Ithaca is nearly as expensive as New York City - but also this typifies the most irrational decision making. With such scanty information at best this kind of decision is a shot in the dark. Even if Cornell School turned out to be a better than expected this would not remove the fact that the decision was reached in a most unscientific manner. That Cornell is as well known as Columbia does not mean that each Cornell department or school can match Columbia, and in the case of the Business School, Columbia with its longer traditions, its professors and its nearness to the world biggest commercial and financial center certainly offers to its students many more advantages.

What has been said above is not intended to discredit Cornell Business School which indeed is a good one, but only to illustrate the lack of essential information which a participant has to content with in his selection of alternatives.

Because of his unpreparedness a Vietnamese participant usually spends the first semester to adjust himself to the new environments and in particular to the exigencies of the American doctoral program. Not much should be expected of him during this period. In my case I took 15 credit point courses and was fairly satisfied with my work. The progress in the second semester at Columbia Business School was in a way cumulative, and again I took 5 courses and did reasonably well.

After the first year the participant would be faced with another alternative: either to devote more time to course work or to start preparing right away for his thesis. This ~~is~~, of course, conditioned upon his completion of all the requirements of the Ph.D. program. In my opinion the more time a Ph.D. candidate spends on course work the better equipped he will be to teach later at the NIA in Saigon. The knowledge he gets out of attending courses could be used for teaching purpose while his thesis is something of a personal affair and usually focuses on a too specialized aspect of his field of concentration to be easily adaptable to the subject which he will lecture on later.

For this reason I have decided to spend one more year taking courses and hope to have the member of my doctoral committee agreed on scheduling my preliminary ~~ex~~ examination in the Spring semester of 1960. I spend all this summer reading most of the assigned books and articles relevant to the three subjects required for the Preliminary examination namely Managerial Economics, Personnel Administration and Business Finance.

This will leave me only one year to work out the outline of my thesis, have it accepted, gather the materials, process them, write up the thesis, have it typed and defense it. My guess is that one year is too short a time. Both my advisors at Cornell and the professors at Columbia agree that a longer period should be allowed and point out that American students usually spend more than a year for their thesis.

It is my hope that Vietnam Project will also agree on this point and will consider the possibility of extending this three year program to all Ph.D. candidates.