



# University-Based Continuing Education In Vietnam

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## Introduction

Continuing Education, Extended Education, Lifelong Learning, Adult Education and Professional Development are terms which are often used interchangeably to describe personal or professional training/instruction beyond the traditional academic degree program. Rather than attempt to selectively use all of these terms to describe specific educational approaches, the term Continuing Education (CE) will be used throughout this article.

Continuing Education has become a respected part of higher education's evolving role to expand the traditional models of instructional delivery. "It generates and makes accessible a great deal of the knowledge that drives our economy; it helps develop an

understanding of our society and the world for millions of students; and it helps develop the personal, social, and human competencies without which, to use the words of Thomas Hobbes, life would be poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Schejbal, David and Wilson, David.2008).As the entrepreneurial programming unit of the university, Continuing Education extends the intellectual assets of the campus by combining the research outcomes from faculty and staff with the personal and professional interests of the community at large.

Many universities in the United States, Australia, Western Europe, Singapore and Hong Kong have adopted the longitudinal view that education is a lifetime pursuit rather than just a four-year interlude as a young adult. Access to data and information is continuously expanding, technological innovations are changing workplace responsibilities and a person's

occupational goals and interests may result in 4-5 career changes within a university graduates lifetime. Some individuals may prefer returning to the campus to acquire a new academic degree or to prepare for a career change, whereas others may be better served by accessing relevant non-credit professional development instruction from a university's Continuing Education unit. For those individuals who are not seeking a career change but only want to expand their workplace skills with updated training in new technologies their needs could also be met with programming from a university-based Continuing Education provider.

The descriptor 'university based' is an important consideration when discussing Continuing Education. There are numerous private for-profit professional development agencies specializing in a field of instruction that may be



of interest to numerous businesses and individuals. Their short-term training programs often feature prominent instructors and provide relevant and useful information for their customers. As a rule most of their programming is expensive and priced at the top end of the educational market while being limited to specific areas of expertise (e.g., leadership and management, customer service, business technology applications, etc.). Even though most of the agencies involved in private for-profit professional development provide a valuable service to the business community they lack the capacity to deliver comprehensive full service programming as required by the learning community.

University-based Continuing Education provides multi-discipline full-service instruction featuring both non-credit professional development programming and innovative credit-based academic degrees. A full service university-based Continuing Education unit also offers short term personal development instruction designed to enhance a student's quality of life and/or improve an individual's base of knowledge. Offering short-term or long-term courses with the combined instructional efforts of experienced practitioners from business and industry partnering with established faculty from the university creates a learning environment that is of great value to the participating student.

Being able to quickly develop and implement a broad range of relevant high quality educational offerings is an operational advantage that has made Continuing

Education so popular. University-based Continuing Education units are able to schedule new non-credit professional development programming in a shorter period of time because of an accelerated program review process. The C.E. student also benefits from timely market-relevant instruction at a time and at a place that is convenient in terms of location and schedule.

Another educational service provided by a C.E. unit is a program called 'contract training'. Contract Training is a contractual instructional partnership with local businesses and community industries to provide targeted educational services directly to the contractor's employees (management and/or staff). As is common with most C.E. programs, the instruction (and its delivery) in contract training is focused upon the specific learning needs of the student. The curriculum and course lessons, the scheduling of classes and the location where courses will be delivered are all determined in concurrence with the sponsoring organization and the C.E. student.

The economics of university-based Continuing Education vary from institution to institution depending upon their method of organization. Some institutions and their communities of service believe that Continuing Education activities and programs should be subsidized by local, state and/or national funding channeled through the university, which allows for a greater number of offerings. The breadth of programming offered through centralized support will generally be quite extensive since there will be minimal pressure to

cancel or postpone courses due to low enrollment. Another advantage of this type of C.E. funding is the ability to offer subsidized/lower enrollment fees. Depending upon how the fiscal operation has been established, university channeled funding could also represent a drain on the operating budget of the university. In times of economic stress funding non-academic Continuing Education programming could be viewed as negatively impacting the operating budget of the university...that however, need not be the case.

At the other end of the fiscal foundation for university-based Continuing Education is self-support funding. The C.E. unit develops each course and program to be student-fee driven with provisions for both overhead charges and profit margins for future program development. In this 100% fee-based scenario all personnel, operational and instructional costs are paid for by program revenue. And if managed properly a self-support C.E. unit could also provide additional revenue for participating campus departments, extra income for university faculty and contributions to the operational costs of the university. It is important to note that even though a university-based Continuing Education unit is a non-profit entity it operates as a profit generating business. All resulting profits are either returned as program development funds or given to other campus units for the greater good of the university.

A self-support fiscal operation is a bit more challenging to initiate, as C.E. personnel in this scenario



need to develop self-support fiscal skills which includes costing program expenses, pricing course delivery, and effectively marketing all programming. Operational skills such as moving programming from concept, to development and then to implementation also need to be built into staff selection and training. If a university elects to move toward a self-support C.E. operation it is likely that it will need to provide the initial funding to organize the unit for a maximum period of five years. C.E. revenues should naturally increase with each successive year until full self-support is reached. All investment would be returned to the university (with interest) during the pay-back period of development.

### **University-Based Continuing Education In Other Countries**

#### ***United States***

Continuing Education in the U.S. is generally the first educational unit within the university invited to respond to the changing employment patterns of the community or society at large. The response often results in timely state-of-the-art professional development instruction with teachers recruited from the ranks of the current practitioners of innovation. Historically this has also resulted in the development and first use of mediated delivery systems ranging from fixed-point broadcasting to online instruction.

A significant number of special format or exceptionally scheduled MBA programs are also offered by the university Continuing Education unit. The ability to market programming, provide

additional customer service for students beyond the timelines of campus services, access to off-campus facilities and the ownership of a pricing structure that provides greater flexibility are just a few of the incentives for C.E. units to offer MBA degree programs. Many university-based Continuing Education units offer a variety of degree programs appealing to different audiences with fees independently established according to both developmental and operational costs and expected revenue return.

Either through real-time advanced training in business, engineering, health care, and many other academic disciplines, university-based Continuing Education has provided students with the means to advance their skill sets and contribute to the efficient development of the local economy. As a case in point Continuing Education units in the U.S. are independently developing programming responses to a growing trend called the Encore Career. The Encore Career is “the pursuit of purpose-driven work in the second half of life” (Freedman and Segal, 2008). “The tens of millions of people in this group hope to use their midlife experience to help solve the problems only human talent can solve. They want to work in fields now facing severe labor shortages, such as education, public service, health care, and a diverse range of nonprofit jobs, all deeply dependent on talent to be effective” (Freedman and Segal, 2008).

#### ***China***

When the Western concept of Continuing Education first entered the educational scene in China in the 1980's it was generally viewed to be the specific purview of technical/scientific staff and managers who already had a university degree. Even though the scope of Continuing Education in China was very narrow, its purpose to upgrade occupational knowledge and expand a student's technological skill sets followed the broader definition. It took China approximately 20 years to expand the application of Continuing Education beyond its humble beginnings and become a vibrant educational option for a much wider range of students. In the year 2000 the Chinese government “issued regulations that highlighted the need to create a lifelong learning education system and to provide more resources to improve training and continuing education for different groups of people” (Chen and Davey, 2008, p. 5). In 2004 Chairman Hu Jintao publicly stated that China needs to “improve its continuing education system” (Chen and Davey, 2008, p. 5). Governmental encouragement has certainly helped to bring more visibility to university-based Continuing Education in China. But verbal support from the government has not automatically translated into enrollment gains—even in the popular area of technology instruction.

The reputation of university-based Continuing Education in China has proven to be a stumbling block to greater acceptance. The instructional methods in C.E.





programming are often identical to those employed in the traditional college classroom—with the same faculty providing minimal differentiation from the university campus. The curriculum “is considered less developed and lacks rigour” and as a consequence “continuing education is considered amateurish and of less value” to the learning public in China (Chen and Davey, 2008, p. 7). The inherent advantages of university-based Continuing Education have been lost as “most continuing education still relies on traditional education methods, and lacks innovative teaching methods” (Chen and Davey, 2008, p. 7).

China certainly has issues of scale trying to provide C.E. programming to the greater population. While there is growing interest in the economic outcomes for participation in university-based Continuing Education, it appears that access to C.E. programming, even for university graduates, is an evolving process as the supply of quality instruction has failed to meet current needs. Greater participation and involvement from reputable universities in addition

to support from the government would go a long way to upgrade public perception and the values attached to C.E. programming.

### *Hong Kong*

Continuing Education in Hong Kong is associated with what is viewed as the formal education sector. Many universities in Hong Kong have established associated schools of Continuing Education to provide the public with broad access to lifelong learning. A series of six studies conducted on alternating years beginning in 1999 to 2009 and initiated by the School of Professional and Continuing Education at the University of Hong Kong researched the participation rate of the local populace in C.E. programming. What the researchers discovered was that among 18-64 year olds participation rates increased each year with the largest increase (28%) being witnessed between the years 2007 and 2008. “As Hong Kong is rapidly transforming itself into a knowledge-based society, the general public has embraced lifelong learning - not only as a way but also as a necessary part of life”

(Centre for Research in Continuing Education & Lifelong Learning).

The popularity of Continuing Education in Hong Kong in some ways is a direct result stemming from the encouragement of the government to promote continuing education and lifelong learning. The motivation of the government is to prepare a workforce capable of meeting the present and future high-skilled labor needs of Hong Kong as they attempt to become a knowledge-based society. The benefits to business and industry include continuous access to a labor force that is well-prepared for the needs of the 21st century marketplace. Universities in turn are recognized for being integral parts of the economic structure of Hong Kong and receive revenue to reinforce that perception.

Because most of the university-based Continuing Education programs are fee-based and self-supporting, the C.E. student must find ways to pay for his/her C.E. programming. The government of Hong Kong has made this a bit easier by sponsoring (beginning in 2002) a \$5 billion (HKD) fund to subsidize the learning needs of the population. The primary burden in accessing these funds is that the learning must be within eight specific fields of inquiry. (tourism industry, logistics, financial services, business services, product and digital design, language, creative industries, inter- and intra-personal skills for the workplace).

It is quite evident that collectively business and industry, the government, higher education and the learning society of Hong Kong have created an environment



which promotes educational opportunities for the benefit of targeted participants...but limiting educational funding to only eight fields of inquiry may prove to be a limitation to innovation and exploration.

### **The Need for University-Based Continuing Education in Vietnam**

“Vietnamese education needs to focus on the practical everyday needs of the economy” (ThanhNien News.com. March 1, 2010). This popular sentiment expressed by Vietnamese educators at a recent U.S. Ambassador Conference on Higher Education in Vietnam provides timely support for the widespread implementation of university-based Continuing Education. “Only 30 percent of university and college graduates met requirements for their jobs, state-run VietnamNet quoted the Ministry of Education and Training as saying...In IT, Vietnam’s universities and junior colleges mint 110,000 new engineers a year but only 10 percent become “effective employees” (Ruwitch, 2009). Re-training recent graduates and upgrading the workplace skills of current employees is in large part an activity currently being managed by employers or for-profit private training firms (some of which have ironically formed programming partnerships with public universities). Each month the business and trade journals being published throughout Vietnam feature new training opportunities which advertise an increasing number of non-university training firms. This is not to suggest that the for-profit training firms offer

an inferior product—rather they may in fact exceed the training expectations of their clients. The question is if Continuing Education has become an attractive business opportunity why have universities (public and private), been slow to recognize this evolving yet vital population of potential students?

Higher education in Vietnam is admittedly faced with numerous challenges ranging from the improvement of teaching methodology to the modernization of program curriculum. Rather than being perceived as another modernization task, the advancement of university-based Continuing Education should be viewed as an opportunity to upgrade the knowledge base and professional skills of Vietnam’s evolving workforce, to gain a reputation for offering the most timely and relevant training programs and to generate revenue.

One of the main obstacles that universities will face when they seek to develop a full-service Continuing Education unit is the negative stereotypical view of C.E. programming. “In Vietnamese, the term ‘dốt chuyên tu, ngu tại chức’ (‘as ignorant as a learner of a crash course, as stupid as in-service training’) refers to someone who is incapable of officially entering a university, but who has taken evening class to get a degree” (Nguyen and Johanson, 2008). The value designation associated with one class of learning over another must be modified as all modes of instruction and all forms of educational delivery systems should be actively encouraged and made available to all Continuing

Education students. One of the widely acknowledged advantages of C.E. programming is the ability to respond to and meet the degree and non-degree learning needs of students in a schedule format conducive to their work responsibilities.

The negative connotation associated with fully-employed degree programs or non-degree learning can in great part be alleviated through the conscientious development of high quality C.E. programming. By offering occupationally-relevant instruction which features the acknowledged experts within an industry, a university-based Continuing Education unit may be able to rebrand the public perception of non-traditional university education. The need for high quality C.E. instruction in areas such as human capital, executive education, and information technology is already at a level where instruction is failing to meet the demand. “The demand for education at the post-secondary level is enormous. Demand way outstrips supply, said Jeffrey Waite, who follows education in Vietnam for the World Bank. The system is under enormous pressure to respond by expanding access, and there’s always the risk of expanding access at the cost of quality ... Quality is of real concern” (Ruwitch, 2009). Because the demand for quality instruction is increasing, individual companies are expanding the use of their internal training resources to upgrade the skills of their employees.

Large employers are able to fiscally manage an internal training operation because of

scale but medium-sized to small companies must depend upon outside resources for their training needs. “Medium-sized companies in Vietnam are less likely to offer computer, teamwork, or basic education training. In addition, as outsourcing of training increases, much of the training provided will be by consultants outside these companies”. (Buyens, Ngo and Nguyen, 2008).

Open enrollment programming or contract training instruction, both initiated by a university-based Continuing Education unit, would provide basic education training (often in customer service) for existing employees and provide another means for recent university graduates to build upon their employability status. All local companies, regardless of their size, should in reality be able to look toward their local universities to provide them with high quality Continuing Education instruction.

While there appears to be a limited amount of official encouragement in developing full-service university-based Continuing Education units throughout Vietnam, there does appear to be documented support for the goals of continuous learning. The Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) uses the term Continuing Education in a much narrower application than that which has been presented in this paper, but by MoET definition, Continuing Education’s purpose is to provide for “the continuous learning needs of everyone, in every age and at every level” (Ministry of Education and Training, Solutions for Educational Development,

updated 2/10/06).

### *Excerpts:*

5.4. To continue improving the structure of the national education system and to develop the network of schools, classes, education institutions

a) To restructure the education system to meet the needs of country in the period of industrialization and modernization; to selectively adapt international experiences on the organization of advanced education system in accordance with Vietnamese conditions. To restructure the training qualifications following international standards. To change the learning system, to renovate the entrance examinations, to diversify the modes of training, to build up the rules of transference between different levels, different education institutions and to carry out other measures for adjustment of education system structure.

g)...To be active in finding forms, mechanisms closely linking training, research and practical application, to take effectiveness of practical application for the direction, to link training with research, to make training and research suitable to market mechanisms, contributing directly to the increase of competitiveness of Vietnamese goods.

h) To consolidate and to establish more continuing education institutions such as continuing education centres, community learning centres, supplementary education schools meeting the continuous learning needs of everyone, in every age and at every level.

Continuing Education is also endorsed in the 2003 National

Education for All Action Plan (2003-2015) under the concept of Non-formal Education.

Non-formal Education “spans complementary education programmes, continuing education and life skills development activities aimed at the different learning needs of different categories of youth and adults. NFE does not necessarily follow the structure of the formal system. It may be of varying duration, and may or may not confer certification of the learning achieved. In the EFA Plan, NFE comprises complementary primary and lower secondary programmes, life skills programmes, and literacy training”. (p.xxi) (Lam, 2007)

The definition of non-formal education includes the concept of Continuing Education and in some limited manner even provides operational definitions legitimizing its purpose (e.g., students elevating their professional standards, C.E. programs of varying duration, C.E. programs may or may not confer certification of learning, etc.). Even though the definition of Non-formal Education indicates that the structure of C.E. programming may not follow the traditional educational format there is an inference within the definition that C.E. programming could have a relationship with formal education—and following the premise of this paper—C.E. programming should have a relationship with formal education.

An ‘unofficial’ survey of the websites for many of the 376 (as of 1/1/2010) universities and colleges currently authorized to provide instruction in Vietnam, provides a imprecise yet evolving





picture on the status of university-based Continuing Education in Vietnam (ThanhNien News.com., 1/10/2010). Few of the traditional universities that have been in existence for many years have active Continuing Education programs. C.E. programming currently being offered appears to be isolated short-term non-formal lifelong training courses and programs. Most if not all of these short-term courses and programs are associated with a faculty/school/college of business or a business related center which is focused upon one specific area or academic discipline (e.g., Investment/Banking, Finance, Tourism, and Accounting).

It is understandable that universities and colleges that service smaller communities—which possess a narrow range of business and industry—may not be able to structure a fiscally viable Continuing Education unit. The operational advantage for a university or college which operates in Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi and to a lesser extent those higher educational institutions in other metropolitan areas such as Haiphong, Da Nang, Bien Hoa, or Hue, is the abundance of potential students as well as a broad array of businesses and industries seeking training partners. The need for comprehensive training services is continuously being documented in conversations and discussions throughout Vietnam. In a recent online article focusing upon the lack of trained workers in Hanoi it was noted that “...it’s time to open professional vocational training centres to provide workers with knowledge and experience

at college or university level” (VoxNews, 3/27/2010).

A full service university-based Continuing Education unit based in Ho Chi Minh City or in Hanoi, should be expected to fulfill the learning needs of a multi-varied audience. And by the nature of its business plan that same Continuing Education unit should in return expect to receive a multi-source revenue stream. For example, let’s assume that a private non-profit university in Ho Chi Minh City has just established a College of Continuing Education (CCE). The business plan for the CCE indicates that the revenue stream will vary according to the learning needs of the community, but it will be consistent due to its ability to balance risk with variety. If one program exceeds revenue projections those profits could be used to offset the lack of revenue from another program which has higher costs and lower fees resulting in minimal profit margins. A full-service CCE could be faced with the need to offer programming that is of vital interest to a targeted minority in the community but which does not cover its overheads or generate revenue. But the CCE is still able to meet its fiscal obligations by providing a balance between highly marketable/profitable programming with socially responsible (yet fiscally limited) programming. And as the educational marketplace increases in numbers and begins to demand more sophisticated and pertinent instruction, the university-based CCE is branded as the go-to lifelong learning provider. This is a scenario which is replicated in educational

markets throughout the world and it certainly can become a viable option for Vietnam.

A concluding program example may help to illustrate the value of a university-based Continuing Education unit as a tool to help respond to a current challenge/problem. In recent months there has been a considerable amount of media attention devoted to the growing problem of bullying and student-to-student violence in Vietnam schools. Many commentators have voiced and penned numerous opinions concerning this evolving problem, but notable solutions have been missing. Bullying and student-to-student violence has also been an issue of concern with many school districts throughout the U.S. But one of the solutions, often supported by a university-based Continuing Education unit, is the teaching of a concept called Character Education. By partnering with private educators, who have developed the Character Education curriculum, university-based Continuing Education units contract with local school districts to provide training for individual schools. The program instructors either work directly with classroom teachers on the promotion of Character Education or they teach the principles of Character Education directly to students. In this type of public service program the university-based C.E. unit doesn’t earn much revenue, but it does gain acceptance as the community resource for all types of training needs. Plus the C.E. unit is able to demonstrate its ability to quickly respond to community problems through targeted



educational programming.

University-based Continuing Education will someday become an integral part of the academic structure of most public and private universities in Vietnam. The determination as to when that will happen is dependent upon the number of enterprising university administrators whose vision will lead their institution(s) to champion Continuing Education/Lifelong Learning in their communities of service. ●

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## Phân tích hệ thống giám sát...

(Tiếp theo trang 11)

### Hạn chế và nghiên cứu tiếp theo

Hệ thống các chỉ tiêu mà tác giả sử dụng trong nghiên cứu này là chưa đầy đủ bởi nhiều lý do như: Số liệu thực tế không có, và một số chỉ tiêu tác giả nhận thấy không thực. Hơn nữa việc xây dựng một hệ thống các chỉ tiêu đầy đủ để đánh giá một cách đúng đắn tính hiệu quả của hệ thống tài chính từng quốc gia (cụ thể là VN) đòi hỏi công sức và trí tuệ của nhiều người, một mình tác giả khó mà xây dựng được. Tác giả chỉ đưa vào hệ thống đo lường một số chỉ tiêu mà chính tác giả tiếp cận, thu thập và tính toán được số liệu. Tuy chưa hoàn toàn đầy đủ và chính xác, nhưng các kết quả này cũng phản ánh được phần nào thực tế.

Nghiên cứu này chỉ gợi ý một hướng nghiên cứu lượng hóa việc đánh giá hệ thống GSTC. Các nghiên cứu tiếp theo cần bổ sung thêm các chỉ tiêu có liên quan nhằm cải thiện tính đầy đủ và chính xác của chỉ số GSTC tổng hợp để chỉ số GSTC tổng hợp là một thước đo thật sự hữu ích trong quá trình giám sát tài chính ngân hàng. ●

### TÀI LIỆU THAM KHẢO

Báo cáo thường niên ngành ngân hàng, Ngân hàng Nhà nước VN

Báo cáo tài chính của 21 ngân hàng thương mại: VCB; Vietinbank; BIDV; Agribank; MHB; ACB; STB; EIB; TCB; EAB; MB; SGB; VIB; OCB; PNB; VPB; NAB; HDB; ABB; GDB; SCB.

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