

PUBLICATION OF SOCIAL SCIENCE BOOKS IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL INTEGRATION (THE CASE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES PUBLISHING HOUSE)

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Social Sciences Publishing House (SSPH) is a public organization under Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences - VASS^(*). With functions and tasks assigned, SSPH has published valuable scientific publications to enhance scientific level and position of Vietnam regionally and globally; published fundamental researches in the field of Social sciences and Humanities to develop theoretics and provide scientific foundation for strategic planning, socio-economic development policies, completed key science and technology tasks for national defense and security, coping with climate change and developing marine economy, as well as participated in editing and publishing national key social science projects^(**). Especially, SSPH has published in-depth researches despite of narrow range of reader to preserve precious quintessence

for the society and permanently serve scientific researches and socio-economic development.

SSPH has published many typical scientific works, great book series representing Vietnamese and the world's quintessence and intellect as well as serving the research and knowledge dissemination of Social sciences. Those publications have contributed in honoring scientists who have won Hồ Chí Minh prize, State prize in Science and Technology, annual Vietnam Book Award for interesting books and beautiful books etc. These awards are for massive book series in term of not only size, thickness but also knowledge value contained therein. One of SSPH's significant efforts is maintaining and developing their specialized books in Social Science researches, avoiding following common preferences, maintaining traditions and functions of publishing Social Science books.

Generally, SSPH's recent activities have

^(*) Refer to: Decree no. 109/2012/ND-CP dated 26/12/2012 of the Government defining the functions, tasks, powers and organizational structure of VASS.

^(**) Refer to: Decision no. 1244/QĐ-TTg dated 25/7/2011 of the Prime Minister on approving Scheme on social science research, reviewing practices, building scientific foundation for the Party and State's guidelines and policies to promote industrialization and modernization of the country in socialist orientation.

^(*) Social Sciences Publishing House, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences.

made important achievements which contribute significantly to the fulfillment of VASS' political tasks. However, SSPH's publishing capability in general and social science book publishing capability in particular (publication editing, printing and publishing capabilities to deliver information and meet readers' demands to achieve publishing objectives and deliver certain socio-economic benefits) are still limited and unable to satisfy readers' increasing demand. This has become a huge challenge for SSPH's development.

In the new context of international market and economic integration and political tasks assigned, it is necessary to research SSPH's recent publishing capability systematically, to point out achievements as well as limitations, to propose solutions to enhance SSPH's publishing capability up to 2020. These are the contents of this article.

1. Current status of SSPH's publishing capability during period 2007-2013

Basically, SSPH's publishing capability can be reviewed based on some major activities as follows:

- Through each different stage of development, SSPH's structure and apparatus have been gradually perfected and completed in accordance with functions and tasks assigned to limit overlaps and shortcomings to deliver the best results. Compared to before, SSPH's personnel has not increased much, yet their qualifications have been increasingly improved and professional activities related to editing and publishing have been enhanced and matured remarkably. Most of the staff is graduated with major in Social Sciences and Humanities, in which 30% are postgraduate level. 40% of editors have attended intermediate and advanced political theory

classes. They have mastered Marxism-Leninism, Hồ Chí Minh ideology and the Party's perspectives on key socio-political areas. This is an important human resource contributing to the quality of publications by evaluating and editing manuscripts in proper political orientation which does not violate the Party and State's perspectives, guidelines and policies. The number of staff working in planning – production, book distribution, administration – personnel etc. departments basically meets the requirements of assigned works.

For stability and development, SSPH has implemented plans to train, foster, organize managers and executives reasonably; to regularly send staff for annual and long-term training, retraining and advanced professional training, to focus on improving professional skills, political theory, and state management, to foster editing – publishing profession... On the basis of organizing executive, SSPH has followed the process properly, ensured democracy, publicity and objectivity in appointing departmental- and equivalent level staff. The average age is under 40, of which 60% are female. These are qualified staff with development capabilities.

- Editing is the central stage of the entire publishing process and determined as the backbone of publishing activities. It helps to motivate related departments and directly affects SSPH's reputation. The editorial team is responsible for editing Social Sciences and Humanities manuscripts and translated books. In order to deliver a complete work, editor has to spend a lot of time to evaluate, edit and discuss with author for agreement in collaborative process. The level and quality of editing are influential factors which directly control printing and publishing schedule.

SSPH's editorial process is quite strict. From evaluation, editing, department's to Editor-in-Chief's approval are done strictly. Hence, most publications satisfy both content and design requirements and are trusted and highly appreciated by readers.

Joint publishing activities initially expand to organizations, institutes, universities, authors, bookstores and book distribution companies nationally, focus on reference books, textbooks, reference materials for researching, studying and teaching. With its credibility and brand, SSPH has strong partnership with collaborators who are leading scientists, experts in different fields and contributing to quality manuscripts. This has brought encouraging results, joint publications account for about 3/4th of SSPH's annual published books.

- Overall, SSPH's publications have gradually created its own style with impressive book covers which match with genre and content of social science books.

- Book distribution is one of the essential publishing activities in Vietnam. Revenues from book distribution will determine SSPH's total revenue. Based on market demand, since 2010 until now, SSPH's publishing center has been established and gradually put into order. This is an

important turning point for SSPH. This center focuses in developing and expanding customer network, advertising etc. By using SSPH's website, it regularly updates and introduces publications according to published fields such as economics, philosophy, law, sociology, literature, languages, psychology, history, archeology, ethnography, family and gender, international research, regional research etc. timely on the market. In period 2007-2013 specifically, 60% of SSPH's publications are VASS-level schemes as prescribed.

- SSPH has gradually paid attention to expanding international cooperation in publishing and fulfilled necessary requirements to promote publications to overseas markets such as: cooperating with Korean Culture Foundation to translate,

Book publishing situation of SSPH in 2007-2013

Year	No. of published books	No. of VASS's books	No. of prints	No. of pages when converted to size 14.5x20.5	No. of pages when converted to size 13x19
2007	160	40	86,380	57,142,890	68,571,468
2008	132	38	78,600	42,642,850	51,171,420
2009	200	53	171,460	99,744,300	119,693,160
2010	151	31	127,300	71,449,100	85,738,920
2011	130	30	79,940	44,185,680	53,022,816
2012	114	40	61,926	29,373,136	35,247,763
2013	129	56	68,570	37,737,460	45,284,952
Total	1016	288	674,176	382,275,416	458,730,499

print and publish *A Nine Cloud Dream*/Kim Vân Trọng (2008); cooperating with Japan Foundation Center for Cultural Exchange to translate *Past and Present* (2012); signing a cooperation agreement on publishing with Hồng Hà Institute – China (2012) etc.; translating publication titles, indexes and

summaries to English, assigning International Standard Book Number (ISBN) to publications in order to promote books to overseas. However, these activities are still limited.

- Compared with narrow working place and hardly having any equipment for editing – publishing activities previously, to date, SSPH's facilities have been improved better and better, more spacious working place, more adequate equipments. However, compared to real demands, SSPH's facilities and equipments are still poor and not sufficient enough to publish and distribute electronic publications...

- From being funded entirely by State budget (in salaries, operation, plans to publish, print and distribute etc.) to being 100% autonomous in organization, payroll and finance, currently, SSPH is partially autonomous under Decree No. 43/2006/ND-CP dated 25/4/2006 of the Government. Accordingly, SSPH has built *Internal expenditure regulation* and implemented financial regulations as specified in current legal documents.

In the period 2007-2013, SSPH's deemed-to-be "stable" revenue sources which are used to pay for operation, payroll, payroll-related expenditures, insurances, fixed asset depreciation accounts for 35-40% of total expenditures. Of which, revenues from publishing VASS' books account for 15-20%. Thus, SSPH's balance sheets faces many difficulties, income is unstable and unable to maintain regular activities.

Despite many efforts, its performance is not satisfactory. The average number of published books in period 2007-2013 was 150 per annum. If 160 titles were published in 2007, total 86,380 of copies were printed, equivalent to 57,142,890 pages when

converted to size 14.5 x 20.5 cm. The corresponding figures for 2013 were 129 titles, 68,570 copies and 37,737,460 pages (*refer to Table*). In which, SSPH has published 288 titles assigned by VASS (41.1 titles per annum on average) which were accounted for VASS's 70% of manuscripts per annum (40 titles were published in 2007, 38 in 2008, 53 in 2009, 31 in 2010, 30 in 2011, 40 in 2012 and 56 in 2013 correspondingly).

Thus, it can be said, despite of the current difficult, challenging condition and specialty of social science publications which are basic researches and have narrow range of readers, many scientific books or book series are still being published to satisfy the society's demands directly and promptly, as well as to preserve precious quintessence and permanently serve scientific researches and country's development. Operational objectives are still scientific ideology and quality of each publication and not being commercialized. Quality of SSPH's publications is increasingly improved and contributes in asserting SSPH's "brand". Moreover, along with media and communication of Social Sciences, publication is one of the crucial stages which "...is not only for VASS' scientific research but also a channel for VASS to regularly contribute to long-term development of national Social Sciences, construct advanced culture which is imbued with national identity"^(*).

However, despite of having the right to autonomy and self-responsibility for many years, SSPH's business performance is still poor. Due to being dependent on manuscript

^(*) General Secretary Nguyễn Phú Trọng's speech at the 60th Anniversary of Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, *Nhân dân* Newspaper dated 03/12/2013.

sources from VASS's research topics and affiliate partners' topics, SSPH has not been active in building publication plan. SSPH's primary revenue is from affiliation activities and publishing service is being increasingly narrowed. Financial capacity and facilities are still weak and insufficient; there is no funding; quality of human resources is still limited; minimum requirements to publish and distribute e-books cannot be met; there is no active plan to approach domestic and foreign markets which does not satisfy VASS' requirements and tasks in promoting industrialization and modernization of the country.

SSPH's executives and managers have not focused in researching and proposing solutions to overcome difficulties and timely resolve shortcomings in publication. Number of editors who are qualified and educated in political theories, foreign languages and IT do not meet the real demand. For example, unsatisfied general knowledge; lack of dynamism in fostering self-knowledge, lack of ability to detect problems, set requirements, suggest and revise contents; limited in organizing and reviewing manuscripts; passive in organizing collaborator network; lack of understanding in editorial process and regulations ...

SSPH has not had appropriate mechanism to attract quality personnel; hence staff is inadequate, recruited staff does not meet positions' requirements, some positions are being held concurrently. Most editors are unable to perform well in both reviewing and handling manuscripts; not responsive and adapted to the market mechanism to review and organize manuscripts. The biggest shortcoming is shortage of highly qualified editors who are experienced in

organizing, evaluating and editing manuscripts. Therefore, SSPH faces difficulties when handling difficult and "sensitive" manuscripts which impacts significantly on the quality of publications... Most experienced editors who have ability to work independently have retired. Meanwhile, newly-recruited young editors still lack in knowledge, expertise and profession. Some editors are weak on theoretics, profession, and political awareness and unable to approach, discuss, build collaborator network.

On the other hand, investments for training staff, especially highly qualified editors, on expertise and profession have not been done appropriately.

Joint publication still faces many difficulties in proper implementation in accordance with provisions of Law on Publishing. Quality of some joint publications has not been ensured, especially in terms of content. Book illustration and design (cover, marquette, typography etc.) are still poorly done. Some books are stiff, heavy and unattractive to readers. Modern technology is not updated, hence design is done unprofessionally. There is no concern on preservation and storage of softwares containing manuscripts (which are considered to be SSPH's assets), which need measures against illegal printing and reproduction.

Publishing activities have not brought desired results. One of the reasons is due to high academic nature of SSPH's publications and many in-depth researches^(*). Another reason is lack of

(*) Such as basic researches on the country's ocean, development history etc. through Sinitic Vietnamese, English, French etc. documents in the archives of research institutes of social sciences in Vietnam.

funding and nationwide book distribution establishment system, lack of support from managing body. Meanwhile, in order to publish well, it is necessary to have great support in huge traditional market share, publication distributions system from the central to grassroots, national and sector projects etc. Besides, SSPH has not introduced brokerage commission scheme and spent on marketing and publishing management to encourage sale of in-stock books and accelerate sale of print books.

The abovementioned shortcomings and limitations are due to many different subjective and objective reasons. The main reasons are:

- *First*, legal documents on publishing are still incomplete, inconsistent and policy mechanism is still unclear. Many mechanisms and policies on tax, investment and human resources have not been paid adequate attention. State managing body for publishing activities has not held regular trainings to foster and enhance executives and editors' awareness, ideology and professional qualifications.

Publishing activities are strongly influenced by many sides. Publishing market in Vietnam is increasingly being socialized strongly by many socio-economic sectors and organizations with intertwined publishing fields. There are currently 65 publishing houses nationwide.

The first and main limitation and shortcoming is the 100% financial autonomy (before 2013). Due to specialty of social science publications, SSPH's survival and stable development face huge challenges. SSPH's the first and foremost concerns are revenue and profit when there is lacking of State's support. To get funding for payroll and regular operation in order to

firstly survive then to develop subsequently, SSPH's publications are hardly able to maintain scientific value as well as complete assigned political tasks.

Second, besides publication and distribution of VASS – managing body of SSPH which is no longer suitable, there is no department engaged in helping the publication. Publishing support fund do not have any influence on researching subjects, organizing manuscripts, editing, presenting, printing, purchasing copyright, publishing etc. domestically as well as promoting publications internationally... The publishing coordination between central State managing body and VASS is not tight enough.

- *Third*, since other publishing houses also have similar functions and tasks as SSPH, the fluctuating publishing market becomes increasingly complicated, adverse and unfair. Printing materials have increased which lead to higher book prices and buyers' reluctance. There are many difficulties in publishing healthy and quality social science books. This is the influential and dominant factor which increases competitiveness of social science book market fiercely and impacts adversely on SSPH's self-financing activity.

Managers' capability does not meet the real demand. Due to financial difficulty, SSPH has not paid attention to training and fostering editorial – publishing staff, publishing social science books to meet the requirements of development and modernization in the new situation.

Joint publishing is still limited, main reasons are: *first*, SSPH has not been able to develop specific regulations to provide a legal framework for joint activities such as: Joint publishing regulation, regulation and process of joint manuscript evaluating and

editing (from receiving topics/manuscript, evaluating, editing, special cases); not taken conditions specified in joint publishing contracts seriously, not decisively implemented legal provisions to ensure legality and responsibilities of affiliate partners; not organized customer conference to compliment and listen to comments in order to improve quality of publications and enhance association between SSPH and affiliate partners; not timely praised excellent editors etc.; *second*, on affiliate partners' side, since primary purpose of some affiliate partners is profitability of publications (high and fast sales to recover capital...), the compliance with the State's regulations on publishing is not emphasized. On the other hand, affiliate partners implement most publishing stages from organizing manuscript, purchasing copyright, translating (for foreign books) to editing, printing and publishing, while SSPH only issues permit to publish so it is difficult to tightly control the process of publishing joint publications.

Finally, a contradiction in publishing activities which should be mentioned is the inability to achieve two objectives simultaneously. One is *survival* to ensure independent business funding (preference-based business). One is *stable growth* to ensure the implementation of political tasks assigned (shaping the society's fundamentals through publishing publications with lasting value).

2. Solutions to enhance SSPH's publishing capability in the context of international integration

Nowadays, with the strong development of science and technology globally which leads to changes in every aspect of socio-economic life, publishing activity is no

exception. When assessing global publishing industry in the period of globalization and international integration, it is said by researchers that publishing industry is currently in crisis with following prominent characteristics: 1/ Low profit; 2/ Difficulties when developing into multimedia corporations due to scattered investments; 3/ Towards bestsellers which gradually breaks 3 traditional functions, especially spiritual function; 4/ The internalization of publishing requires high investment and faces many complex legal mechanisms; especially the introduction of internet globally, the rapid emergence of e-book publication and distribution.

Due to SSPH's publishing capacity in the recent period and new domestic and international context, it is necessary to "...restructure the organization and develop better operational mechanism to consist with market economy conditions, international integration and rapid development of IT and digital. To reinforce and enhance publishing houses' brands and scientific journals by valuable and high quality publications and works"^(*). In the immediate future, some following basic solutions should be focused on:

1. For State managing body

First, to institutionalize State's guidelines and perspectives into policies and laws on publishing. To strengthen coordination between bodies involved in developing legislation to timely institutionalize State's guidelines and perspectives into laws in order to bring the Party's principles and

^(*) General Secretary Nguyễn Phú Trọng's speech at the 60th Anniversary of Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, *Nhân dân* Newspaper dated 03/12/2013.

guidance to social life in the trend of increasingly intensive global integration.

Second, to establish policies and incentives regime for publishing activities, to research and adjust tax policy and investment incentives to support publishing activities in accordance with publishing practices in new context: reduction of corporation income tax (even though many publishing houses do not operate under corporate law) such as applying tax rate of 5% generally (for those who are subject to tax rate of 5% and 10%; applying tax rate of 2-3% (for those who are non-taxable) as many other ASEAN countries currently.

To research and supplement the salary scheme for editors to ensure compliance with State's regulations.

To review State's funding in ordering, sponsoring and investing in publishing activities.

Third, to have operating model to suit each type of publishing house, on the basis on operational nature and scale, managing body's functions and tasks, to research the transformation of publishing house's organizational model accordingly. To strengthen necessary capability for stable and proper development in accordance with publishing houses' principles and objectives. Under the market mechanism and requirements of international integration process as well as negative impacts on publication such as limitations on facilities, techniques, capital scale and ability to attract high quality human resources, publishing houses can hardly perform their political tasks well. Therefore, the coordination of government bodies and departments is needed. However, the first and foremost, role of bodies managing

publishing houses is crucial. To adopt appropriate policies and mechanisms to invest in publishing houses' capital, facilities, techniques, offices, orders and to focus on publishing books and documents...

2. For SSPH

First, to regularly follow the Party's guidelines and perspectives, State's policies and laws in the development, amendment and promulgation of internal rules and regulations as well as operational procedures for each area of expertise. It can be considered as an important legal framework to create favourable conditions for SSPH to operate more effectively. To apply ISO in SSPH's management, to gradually develop SSPH in professional and modern manner.

Second, to have master plan based on SSPH's development strategy to 2020. To pay attention to the characteristic of a specialized publishing house whose profitability is not the ultimate objective as pursuing profitability is not in accordance ideological – cultural functions and VASS's functions and tasks.

Third, to develop staffing strategy and structure for each phase reasonably. On the basis of approved SSPH's staff planning for period 2016-2021, to regularly rotate department-level staff to improve management capability. To promote and arrange staff timely in accordance with proposed standards, planning and reality. To send staff to visit, study and train at home and abroad, including sending staff to postgraduate study. To plan and standardize editorial – publishing staff professionally in consistent with the requirements of modern publishing industry. To develop policies to attract young personnel with high

professional competence who is directly or indirectly involved in editing – publishing activities; to expand application of concurrent editing positions and ensure having specialized editors for all fields, categories and subjects.

- To establish a team of collaborators who can perform well their functions and tasks as well as the progress of subject developed and find subjects which the society is interested in.

- To issue *Joint publishing* regulation as a basis for joint publishing activities. Accordingly, to have specific mechanism for SSPH's staff and editors when participating in reviewing joint manuscripts in particular and self-published manuscripts in general.

- To continue expanding distribution network, to effectively implement publication promoting, advertising, marketing activities, to introduce SSPH's subjects at home and abroad in order to meet political demands and tasks in the new context.

- To research the establishment of SSPH's branches in some provinces and cities such as Đà Nẵng, Buôn Ma Thuột to enhance publishing competitiveness and develop SSPH's "brand" stably □

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