



Executive summary of the End-Term Review

Facility for Capacity Building (FCB)

VIE1188811

Vietnam

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1 Presentation of the evaluation

For over 40 years the Belgian government is supporting Vietnam's education sector with academic scholarships. Both the Masters and PhD studies in Belgium are widely respected in the country. In an effort to creating more coherence among the various non-project academic support interventions, the Belgian government initiated in 2011 a strategy that aimed to combine these various activities in the respective partner countries. The Facility for Capacity Building (FCB) in Vietnam is an example of this strategy, trying to link individual with organisational capacity development. Implementation period is December 2014 – June 2019. The implementing agency is the International Cooperation Department (ICD) of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). A minor part, the international study tours, were carried out under the responsibility of the Ministry of Planning and Investment.

FCB is a capacity building programme that aims to link individual training results with improved performance of the organisations in which these individuals are working. The project distinguishes three results:

1. Effective approaches and practices of training/ capacity building are used by beneficiary institutions
2. Capacity for innovation and management is developed through master scholarships & follow-up
3. Management and professional skills are strengthened through short-term training and other embedded capacity building initiatives

FCB worked towards these results using two strategies:

- Finalise the scholarship programme with Belgian universities that already started before FCB, provide small fellowship grants for alumni and create an effective alumni network beneficial for both countries (Result 2)
- Support the organisational improvement of selected Universities and provincial government agencies working in the priority areas of Vietnamese-Belgian cooperation (Results 1 and 3)

This End-Term Review (ETR) took place in March 2019 and is a follow-up of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of late 2017. The goal of this evaluation was to assess FCB progress and achievements using three main entry points: the project's results framework, the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria and the specific questions requested by the Terms of Reference (ToR) of this evaluation assignment. These questions concern the project's monitoring & evaluation (M&E) system, the linkages between FCB and the larger ongoing ETEP Programme, and the options FCB may have provided for future bi-lateral cooperation.

The mission comprised of the following activities and approach:

- Document study.
- Briefing sessions at Enabel headquarters.
- Briefing sessions at Enabel Hanoi and PMU at the start of the field mission
- Stakeholder interviews.
- Analysis and triangulation
- Report writing and debriefing with Enabel HQ

2 Results and conclusions

The project was in line with the Government of Vietnam's (GoV) emphasis on Human Resource Development (HRD) in its Socio-Economic Development Strategy (SEDS) and its directions to make universities more accountable for the quality of their programmes and making them more self-sustainable. The same goes for the Provincial Departments of Education and Training (DOET) and the Departments of Home Affairs (DOHA) who are also asked to provide services in line with the demands of society and lower state budget contributions.

The scholarship and fellowship programmes have been effectively implemented; 107 students have graduated from Belgian Universities (85% Masters, 15% PhD) and 17 alumni used the small fellowship grants. Almost all study topics were selected from the priorities in the Indicative Cooperation Programme (ICP) between the two countries: Water and Sanitation management in the framework of Urbanization and Climate Change, and Governance in areas of Public Administration. More than half of the students and fellowship grantees were female. There is a strong interest among alumni to continue cooperation with Belgian Universities and private sector.

The organisational support to universities and provincial government agencies took off late 2017 after 20 sub-projects were approved: 7 for Lead Teacher Training Universities (LTTU), 7 for other (mainly technical) Universities, and 6 for Provincial Government Agencies. One additional sub-project worked on improving the alumni association. Preparatory activities had been implemented in the form of awareness creation workshops on organisational development (OD) and HRD, formulation of concept notes and support in preparing project proposals.

Even though the sub-projects had only roughly one year to achieve their results, most of the sub-projects could show organisational improvements after implementing their activities. For the Universities, these improvements relate to formulating a strategic plan to be ready for increased autonomy, setting up a teacher performance evaluation system or introducing a competency-based teaching methodology. The government agencies worked on topics like introducing new school management software or creating sustainable Community Learning Centres. The report provides a series of examples in separate boxes.

2.1 Performance criteria

The mission used the standard evaluation criteria as one of its guidelines, in summary:

- **Relevance:** The project was not only relevant because of its compliance to both countries' policy directions, it was also an intervention that strengthened academic relationships between the two countries. These relationships will be an important contribution to the future relationship between Belgium and Vietnam; from development cooperation to international cooperation.
- **Effectiveness:** At both individual and organisational level the project was effective, as evidenced by scholarships, fellowships and sub-project results. Effects for MOET were limited since the project was seen as the core responsibility of the International Cooperation Department with limited bearing on the other Departments.
- **Efficiency:** After delays during the first two years, the project managed to increase its disbursement considerably. Sub-project managers specifically mentioned the impressive results with relatively small project budgets (±€80,000)

- **Impact:** Too early to say, but meaningful steps towards university autonomy have been taken. Also, the results in the seven LTTUs have opened up linkages with the World Bank supported Enhancing Teaching Education Programme (ETEP). Less impact expected towards MOET.
- **Sustainability:** For half of the sub-projects, a point of no return has been achieved; they will continue on their paths of organisational improvements. The others will need further emphasis. Especially the structuring of a future alumni organisation will need attention.

2.2 Specific questions

The ETR Terms of Reference (ToR) mentioned three specific questions, the answers to which are provided in the report and summarized below:

- Performance of the M&E system: The project made the initial results framework more measurable in 2018, leading to better progress reports. Still, the measurement framework remains rather individual and subjective; acquired skills and application according to the trainees themselves. Organisational results are sometimes mentioned in the final sub-project reports and tracer survey on the scholarships. Linking activities to results was evident for the sub-project managers, but they had difficulty in reporting these linkages in the M&E system.
- Was FCB a support to ETEP? : FCB and ETEP, both work on capacity development of LTTUs, they contribute to the same objectives and synergies between the two projects are possible. The seven LTTUs that were part of FCB have started to improve their capacities and are aware of needed actions to create more operational linkages. The ETEP Programme Management Unit has agreed to use the FCB experiences in the further planning of ETEP.
- Post-ODA international cooperation: After the bilateral development cooperation ends, a small fund will remain to support university cooperation. The challenge during the next two years will be to create an effective structure that will form the bridge between the academic and private sectors of both countries. From all sides there is interest to create this structure. Important first step would be to engage the main Belgian community-based stakeholders in finding a feasible solution; Flanders Invest and Trade (FIT), the Wallonia Foreign Trade & Investment Agency (AWEX) and Brussels Invest & Export. The Vietnamese alumni associations are eager to join these discussions.

3 Recommendations

3.1 Short term

For Enabel and MOET

Immediate actions after closing the project; suggestions how to make the FCB achievements of use for other interested parties:

- Use the *two handbooks* developed for the CD/HRD workshops for a larger public. These handbooks include tools and guidelines that are applicable for universities and provincial agencies. MOET could make them available via its website and/or can make an (online) course based on these handbooks, e.g. via NAEM. NAEM is part of MOET and responsible for providing training to school managers. A discussion between FCB-PMU and NAEM is needed to find a way to incorporate the handbooks into their current training curriculum. Since NAEM was also responsible for one of the most successful FCB sub-projects, this discussion will be easy to organise.

- Link up the *foreign universities* that were part of the sub-projects with the ETEP support programme. Especially the LTTUs can benefit from this action; these university relations have already been tested and proven effective. ETEP may continue supporting these relationships, and will not need to look for other support agencies. In addition, the World Bank is also looking for support opportunities to other universities, so the seven non-LTTU universities participating in FCB could also benefit.

These topics are suggested to be included in the 31 May FCB closing conference. After the conference they can be elaborated further. Important conditions for this conference to be successful are the active participation of the ETEP PMU and a follow-up action plan with responsible actors.

3.2 Medium term

For the Belgian Embassy in Hanoi

For the medium term, the coming two years, the mission suggests to work on practical ways of moving from a development cooperation structure towards an international cooperation structure:

- Work on a cooperation programme between universities of the two countries on governance issues. The FCB experience has shown that co-funding of such a programme by Vietnamese Universities is feasible. Belgian universities have ample experience on these topics and can be of added value to local universities. Starting point would be the already existing university contacts.
- Work towards a platform for information exchange, networking and collaboration. Stakeholders in this platform are the academic and private communities of both countries. The alumni, part of them academics and part working as private sector managers, will form a cornerstone of this platform. To avoid complexity and make it manageable, a differentiation in thematic areas (water, food security, etc.) may be a solution. Feasibility of such a platform is to be agreed by FIT, AWEX, BIE, VLIR and ARES (possibly others).

The Belgian Embassy in Hanoi could be the most appropriate organisation to take the initiative and investigate if these programmes would be feasible to develop further. In two years' time the programmes may have found momentum to run without external coordination.

3.3 Medium term

For Enabel

FCB was an example of the 2011 Belgian directions towards a New Scholarship Programme Strategy (see MTR, p. 14). From the experience of FCB in Vietnam, the mission would like to suggest taking into account the specific context for this kind of support. For instance, a country like Vietnam – with lower levels of ODA, higher levels of technical expertise, thriving private sector and increasing level of funds to cover for their own education – will have different educational cooperation needs than countries in fragility or countries with higher levels of ODA dependency. Vietnam needs fewer individual scholarships, less technical inputs and more cooperation on governance and institutional change. A diversified approach to capacity development would be preferred.

4 Lessons learned

For the 20 sub-projects, FCB came at the right time; their managers were aware of shrinking government subsidies and the subsequent need to prepare their organisations for a different future. Because FCB aimed at organisational change, the ETR concludes that there are four conditions responsible for the organisational change to take place:

- The sub-project addresses a (national) policy priority, e.g. working towards autonomy, gaining accreditation, improving quality assurance, achieving international standards for higher education institutions, changing the teaching methodology or introducing a performance monitoring system in government agencies.
- Organisational leadership actively promotes the changes towards the levels below
- Middle-management is aware of and agree with the proposed changes (momentum for change)
- Quality experts are hired to guide the changes (both contents and process expertise)

These four conditions may also be suitable for other countries in which similar Enabel support interventions take place and are important building blocks to ensure that training activities and workshops will lead to organisational change. The feasibility of linking training to organisational change was not yet evident during the MTR. The ETR realised that the concept of change as a project result is clear to all, but that the reporting mind-set is still based on the traditional 'activities implemented' habit, less on 'results achieved'. Further progressing on the path towards autonomy will lead to a more results-based and wider approach to capacity development.