

REPORT ON THE LONG DAT VOCATIONAL COLLEGE **BA RIA – VUNG TAU PROVINCE, VIETNAM**

By Barry Casey, AVVRG

Background

According to the Vietnam Economic News (No 2, Vol.IX from 11 Jan to 17 Jan 2000), "throughout the years, little attention has been paid to developing the network of vocational training facilities. As a result of insufficient money, the facilities and equipment of many vocational schools are lacking; and they operate with outmoded equipment - quality of training cannot meet requirements. Further, several existing policies concerning the providing of vocational training are unintelligent and fail to encourage both teachers and trainees."

Secondary vocational and craft-teaching schools in Vietnam were administered by the Department of Education and Training until 1998. Due to criticism from industry that there was too much emphasis on academic qualifications and not enough on vocational training, the decision was taken to shift responsibility for vocational training to the Department of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs (DELISA).

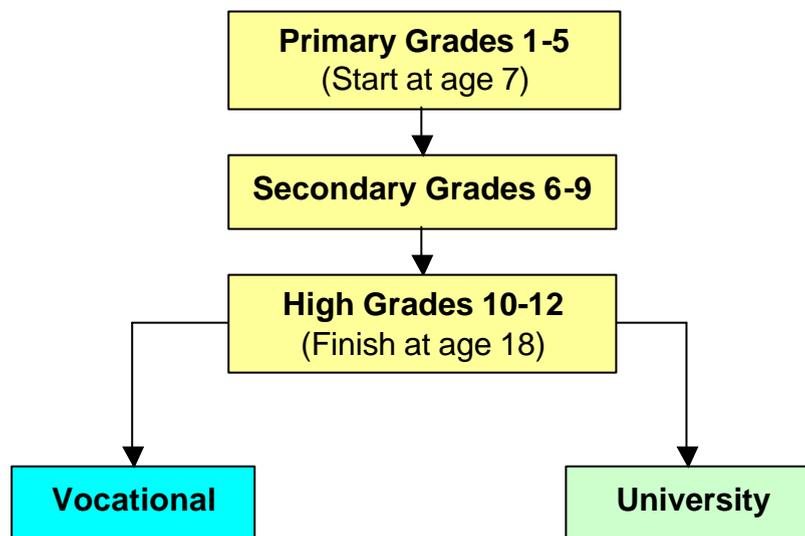


Ba Ria-Vung Tau DELISA is responsible for providing job protection, creating jobs for the unemployed, training the unskilled, assisting drug addicts, and assisting war invalids, the aged and orphans in that province. DELISA is therefore responsible for the administration of the first vocational training school in the Ba Ria - Vung Tau Province, which commenced classes in December 1999.

The school was previously used as a hospital and prior to that a military facility. There is ample space for expanding the training facilities.



Vietnam's education system is structured as follows:



Access can be gained to some vocational courses prior to the end of high school. Disadvantaged children can get access to all vocational courses from lower grades provided they continue to study general education as well.

Parents must pay fees for children to attend every level of education. Students are required to pass an examination to complete one level of education and pass another examination to be accepted into the next level of education. Fee waiver and special entry arrangements are available to disadvantaged students (e.g. orphans).

At the initial meeting in country concerns were expressed by the senior executive of DELISA about the practical ability of graduates from the vocational college. The Principal of the college stated that he needed outside assistance in training the teachers.



In response to this request, the authors coordinated a full day seminar at the school on teaching skills, the theory of learning, problem solving and study skills. This seminar was also attended by teachers from the Tourism School, The Driving School and the Vietsovetro School. Throughout the day an average of 45 teachers attended the seminar.

There are 450 students (45 female and 405 male) aged between 18 years and 22 years studying the following subjects at the college:

Subject	Number
Domestic Science (sewing, cooking & housework)	53
Industrial Electricity	263
Domestic Electrical repairs	
Electronics (radio/TV/cassette repairs)	
Welding & Drilling	25
Mechanical repairs of motor bikes and cars	109

Note: Driver training will be introduced in late 2000. All students can study computers and languages (Chinese and English).

Depending on the course monthly tuition fees range from 110,000 to 150,000 Vietnamese dong or A\$14 to A\$19 per month). It is estimated that the parents of students currently studying at Long Dat provide an allowance of around 150,000 to 200,000 Vietnamese dong (A\$20 to A\$25) per month to cover their living expenses and material costs (students can live at the college).



Teaching Methods

The curriculum for all Vietnam's vocational schools is standardised nationally by DELISA's national training department. Teachers are given specific criteria that must be covered in each lesson. For example:

- Electrical wiring for a domestic airconditioner
- Operation of a 4 speed continuous gearbox
- Drawing a Pattern for a traditional 'au dai' dress
- Electrical wiring for on/off control switch
- Connecting a circuit board to electricity
- Understanding static electricity

A space has been set aside for a library at sometime in the future but the principal expected that funds would not be available for many years. Several teachers asked whether it would be possible to attain technical manuals from Australia.

Apart from blackboard and chalk, no teaching aids are used. In every class across all the disciplines taught over a two-week period, students copied into exercise books directly from the blackboard. The teachers displayed exceptional artistic ability with the diagrams of gearboxes, switchboards, power boards etc. that they drew on the blackboards. They then inspected the student's exercise books to ensure they had accurately copied the diagrams.

To gain access to the school students sit for examinations that have an emphasis on Year 12 level Maths and Physics, presumably to test aptitude. Some 473 candidates attended the first examinations to select its first students, with 328 passing to become the schools official students. A good student at the college is judged by examining their ability to recall facts and diagrams in formal written examinations.

It is intended that students will do a 2 month practicum at local "factories" in the province during the 5th and 6th month of most courses and another 2

month practicum towards the end of their course. Duration of courses is between 18 months and 24 months. The college has links with the Vietnam/Soviet joint venture company "Vietsovet" and it is intended that many of their students studying industrial subjects will complete practicums in plants operated by that company. However, most will complete practicums at small "factories" in Ba Ria-Vung Tau.

Students can enter Domestic Science courses with lower education levels and the length of courses vary 6 to 12 months, depending on whether they are furthering general education in conjunction with vocational training. DELISA expects that many of these graduates will gain employment as 'export labourers' working in countries like Taiwan.



At the several computer classes attended, the students familiarised themselves with word processing software. It would seem that it is too early for advanced computer instruction at the college. Internet access is not yet available. At various meetings with both DELISA and at the vocational college, it was repeatedly stated that internet access is too expensive in Vietnam. Information sheets outlining effective internet searching and detailing academic search engines and databases were photocopied and supplied to college administration and individual teachers involved in computer training.



At the only practical class observed during the two weeks, students were at workbenches filing metal rods. This was the only class when resources of any nature (materials or texts) were made available for students (or teacher) use.

Equipment Levels

There are four well-equipped teaching rooms at the Long Dat Vocational College:

1. Electric Motor Equipment Room
2. Electronics Equipment Room
3. Mechanical Equipment Room
4. Sewing Equipment Room

The heavy equipment area is outdoors and drilling and mechanical equipment is very outdated.

During the two weeks of observations at the college the only equipment used was the sewing machines (on one morning only students were practicing stitches).

It must be acknowledged that equipment in these rooms are for observation only and not designed so that students can develop practical application skills.

It is interesting to note that requests were made for equipment funding at every meeting with both DELISA and college staff. DELISA's Training Manager was sent from Vung Tau to Long Dat for two days to reinforce the message on equipment funding.

In Ba Ria, "Vietsovpetro" operate a training facility for their staff. They currently have 30 teachers and 200 students who are trained in disciplines associated with the petrochemical industry. The Principal of the Long Dat College arranged a visit to this facility to observe the equipment available.

There is little doubt that the Long Dat Vocational College urgently needs a practical training area with workbenches, welding booths and modern equipment that the students across all disciplines can actually develop practical application skills. There is also no doubt that the existing teachers do not appear sufficiently experienced to deliver the level of training required.

Needs Analysis

DELISA submitted a five year projection of labour/vocational training needs for Ba Ria – Vung Tau Province. In an attempt to verify this data in the marketplace, industrial plants in Vung Tau and Ho Chi Minh City were visited and senior personnel were asked to comment on the current

position with regards to recruitment of tradepersons and the level of expertise.



The Mechanical and Power Repair Division of “Vietsovetro” is located in Vung Tau. Some of the students from the Long Dat College will complete practicums at this plant and in the future hope to gain employment here or on the company’s offshore oil platforms. It should be noted that many women are employed in the lower level engineering positions.



A West Australian Engineering firm is also in Vung Tau constructing a deck extension for an offshore oil platform operated by Japan Vietnam Petroleum Co Ltd. The emphasis on safety is evident at the front gate when you must don a safety helmet before entering. Throughout the plant the safety measures are very evident and the management is proud of their safety record.



The Saigon Shipyard Limited, which is 100% foreign owned by Asis Technical Maritime Services, has established a heavy industry and marine facility on the Dong Nai River near Ho Chi Minh City. It services onshore and offshore petroleum related industries and is currently developing a ship repair and maintenance facility. They plan to build one luxury cruiser (US\$1.5 million) per month in the future. Their current labour force consists of 250 welders, pipefitters, fabricators and associated trades. At their peak, they had a workforce of 800 but due to the downturn in foreign investment have had to reduce their operations during the past few years. The safety program is well developed and most evident in this facility.

The comments regarding labour details below are not solely attributable to management of the above mentioned facilities, but are rather the group opinion of these and other employers who prefer not to be named.

1. There is no apprenticeship system in Vietnam.
2. Graduates from vocational schools have no practical application skills.
3. Some workers have very basic skills and it is necessary to train them again “in house” – the level of expertise is similar to a first year apprentice in Australia.
4. Many firms bring expatriate tradesmen into the country temporarily to teach employees advance skills eg Saigon Shipyards have many years brought retired tradesmen from Holland to teach master welding techniques.
5. Female engineering workers are most reliable and capable if trained “in house”.
6. Would hire young apprentices if they could display practical skills.
7. Vietnamese tradesmen are very willing to learn and once taught, they never forget.
8. Vietnamese tradesmen are willing workers but lack organizational skills.
9. It is often necessary to consider political implications in hiring and firing staff.

Barry Casey, AVVRG

August 2000

Barry also produced a Report on the Vocational Education needs of the Hoa Long Orphanage during this visit – The report is available via the AVVRG Web Site at <http://www.powerup.com.au/~avvrg>