

# Contributions of Collaborative Academic Programs on Developing Countries

## A Case Study of Master Program of Public Management

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**Abstract.** Since 2009, with a well designed curriculum, taught by high qualified lecturers from University of Economics and Business, Vietnam National University, Ha Noi (VNU-UEB) and Uppsala University (UU), Sweden, the Master program of Public Management (MPPM) - a joint training program between the two universities has been known as one of the most successful joint training programs in Hanoi in terms of high-quality and effective contributions in the on-going process of public sector reform in Vietnam. This paper studies the contributions of the collaborative academic programs on developing countries in term of capacity building for universities, increasing number of public servants holding an international master degree trained in public management and contributions to Vietnam's public sector reform which will increase transparency and promote anti-corruption efforts through public service officials for management positions. This paper also recommends conditions for a successful collaborative academic program including: the objectives of the program should be well defined for academic values, the collaborative programs should be organized well based on the laws and regulations of international collaborative programs in developing countries while they should still meet requirements of international universities and international accreditations, the collaborative programs also should be based on the curriculum and standards of teaching materials and methods of international universities but having suitable adjustments to conditions of developing countries.

**Keywords:** Collaborative Academic Programs, developing countries, Master Program of Public Management, University of Economics and Business, Vietnam National University (VNU-UEB), Uppsala University (UU).

### 1. Introduction

According to the report of Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), in 2011 there were 1,964,598 applicants applying to

undergraduate programs at colleges and universities in Vietnam [1]. However, based on the capacity of colleges and universities in Vietnam, MOET allowed colleges and universities to accept only 548,000 students [2]. There are 500,000 SMEs in Vietnam now and the number will be 1.2-1.3 million in 2015 [6]. There is no report about the total number of accepted

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students at graduate level in 2011 but above numbers show the huge demand of education for both undergraduate and graduate levels in Vietnam. Due to this fact, collaborative programs have become a popular choice of study in Vietnam. Until now, there are about 258 approved joint training programs in Vietnam. These programs are created by wonderful universities thousands of miles apart with proud history of educating people of their countries. They have tried to reach a common goal. That goal is to provide an opportunity for Vietnamese students to receive a degree from an overseas university without having to leave home. These programs can be a good way to foster students' ability to successfully take advantage of the opportunities arising from Vietnam becoming a global knowledge-based economy. This article explores the contributions of MPPM to the development of VNU-UEB in particular and to the development of Vietnam with 4 areas as follows:

## 2. Development of VNU-UEB

In the year of 2008, VNU-UEB and UU cooperated to design the Master Program of Public Management (MPPM) based on the demand for training in the Vietnamese higher education market.

One of the most important goals of the cooperation between VNU-UEB and UU is to give VNU-UEB influence and experience in how UU is dealing with research connected higher education.

### *Curriculum, teaching material and teaching method exchange between two universities*

VNU-UEB and UU cooperated to design a curriculum of MPPM based on the curriculum of the most famous universities in Europe and consult of Vietnamese experts of public sector [7]. The curriculum is the harmonious combination between theories and practice, between worldwide experience and practical environment of the public sector in Vietnam. In December 2009, UU and VNU-UEB jointly presented a proposal to SIDA for funding from the Partner Driven Cooperation fund for the establishment of

the MPPM. UU has been responsible for the proposal, and in March 2010 an agreement between SIDA and UU was signed. In relation to the funding from SIDA, the primary object of the programme is to “*contribute to Vietnam’s public sector reform which will increase transparency and promote anti-corruption efforts through public service officials for management positions who can become change agents or champions in the reform work*”.

With support of SIDA funding, the curriculum is often checked and revised to be suitable with the contents of Vietnam.

Based on the feed back of intake 1’s students, the consults of both Vietnamese and Swedish experts, the curriculum was revised for the first time in 2010. In the curriculum, 5 courses are taught by Vietnamese lecturers, 5 courses are taught by UU and SIPU<sup>(1)</sup> international’s lecturers. In each course taught by a Swedish lecturer (s), there is a co-teacher and a teaching assistant from VNU-UEB working and attending the class with a Swedish lecturer (s). Thanks to the co-working and teaching in the class, VNU-UEB lecturers have learnt a lot from Swedish lecturers in terms of teaching materials, teaching contents and teaching methods and from time to time, VNU-UEB lecturers not only learn but also use the international teaching format for their lectures. On the other hand, Swedish lecturers have been provided a lot of facts, figures and real cases of the public sector in Vietnam to a deep understanding of the on-going process of public sector reform in Vietnam.

This is a beautiful and effective way to exchange teaching experience of lecturers from two universities.

This program is also very successful with the great improvement of teaching method of VNU-UEB lecturers.

### *Lecturers, staff and manager capacity building*

The program helps to transfer knowledge and expertise from UU to VNU-UEB and enhanced

<sup>(1)</sup> Swedish consultancy and training organization specializing in capacity building and institutional development in transitional and developing countries.

knowledge in the field of public management as well as teaching methodologies.

Supervision by lecturer is organizing along courses. This activity comprises co-teaching which will be carried out throughout the programme as Swedish lecturers from UU work closely with Vietnamese VNU-UEB teachers in each course and also in the master thesis. The UU teachers will involve the VNU-UEB teachers in the course preparation and implementation (simultaneous teaching) and examination of students. The VNU-UEB teachers play an important role since the UU teachers coach the students through the VNU-UEB teachers. VNU-UEB's rector assigned local lecturers to assist Swedish lecturers in courses of UU for intake 1 and intake 2 (8 courses/16 rounds): in this activity local lecturers support Swedish lecturers to manage the group discussions, group grade. Before each class, local lecturers read books and met Swedish lecturers to discuss about the contents of the course. Moreover, VNU-UEB assigned local supervisors to work with Swedish supervisors during thesis process for intake 1 and intake 2 (one intake had about 15 thesis). Thanks to this activity, local lecturers have studied a lot from Swedish supervisors the way to guide the students do their thesis. The local supervisors attend scientific writing class of Swedish supervisors to know how the students can write their thesis, local supervisors and Swedish supervisors discussed in the video-conference as well as one the first round of thesis supervision.

There is a special teacher training program called Training of Trainers (ToT) Program organized along with the program. The program has a focus in social science method. First of all, teachers from VNU-UEB have had special seminars in social science method both in Hanoi and Uppsala. This is a separate training activity focusing on the collaboration between all the teachers involving in the programme. The training is designed to include both technical and methodological/practical training, exchanges of experiences, development of course content, etc. It is well aware that the knowledge and skills need

to be provided through participatory approach and learning experiences. All the contents of the training contents were introduced through participatory approach including brainstorming and discussion on case studies. The efforts to relate the discussed issues with the examples from reality have been made. Each session had a combination of activity, discussion, inputs and synthesis. Relevant Vietnamese and practical scenarios have been introduced for discussion. This program builds capacity for VNU-UEB and its teachers and transfers knowledge on technical content, teaching methodologies and how to assess the students. In this process, UU will also assist VNU-UEB to implement all teaching and research processes and methods in accordance with UU standards. VNU-UEB will provide the Swedish teachers with background on the public sector in Vietnam.

Over the time, VNU-UEB lecturers adapt to the international teaching format; not only by learning but also by doing. In return, Swedish lecturers have been provided facts, figures and real cases of public sector activities in Vietnam. Swedish lecturers therefore gradually possess a deeper understanding of the on-going process of public sector reform in Vietnam as a result of their teaching in the MPPM.

There is also another special teacher training program called ToT focusing on the collaboration between all the teachers on the programme. The training is designed to include different teaching methodologies/practises as well as exchange of teaching experiences between 20 faculties from both universities. UU also assisted VNU-UEB to implement all teaching and research processes and methods in accordance with the UU standards.

### **3. Increased Number of Public Servants Holding an International Master Degree Trained in Public Management and Improves Quality of the Workforce**

To June 2012, there are 181 students who have received the master degree of Public Management. More than that number, students have made good progress in the way that they

view, analyze and solve problems in the public sector; including the way they lead, manage, control and evaluate their units or staff. This progress will enable the students, as managers and staff in public organizations, to better perform their duties and produce better services for citizens/organizations in the near future.

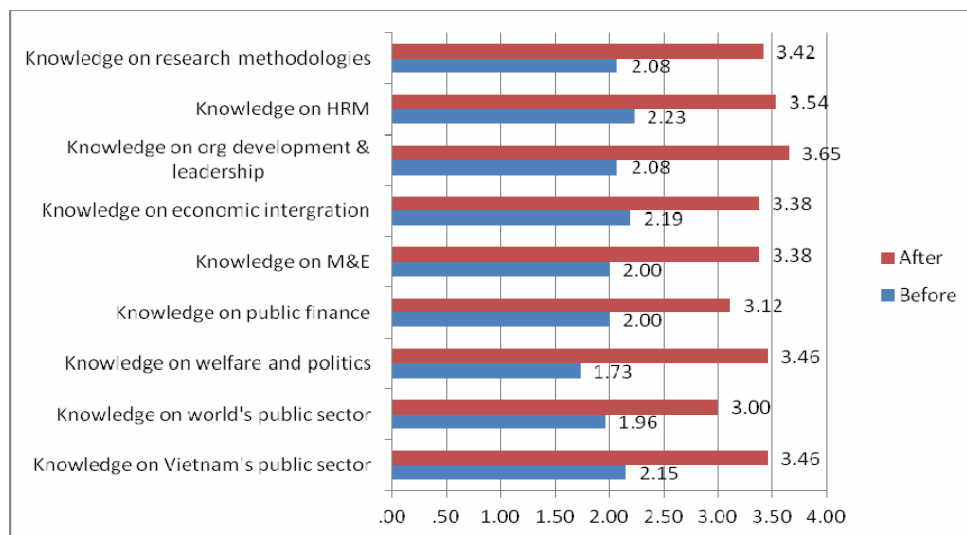
A survey of the training impact for VNU-UEB and UU graduates was carried out in May 2012. The questionnaire is presented in Figure 1. This survey aims to examine how the knowledge and skills taught in the MPPM have had impacts on the job of the students. As at job level, there may be many factors that support or oppose the application of new learning by the learners into their work; this evaluation also tries to identify the reasons for success or failure of the application of the learning.

Data from the Figure shows that after the training, knowledge progress is reflected in most areas, particularly in:

- Organizational development and leadership (mean = 3.65/4)
- Human Resources Management (mean = 3.54/4)
- Vietnam’s public sector (mean = 3.46/4)
- Comparative politics and welfare system (mean = 3.46/4)
- Monitoring and Evaluation in public agencies (mean = 3.38/4)
- Economic integration (mean = 3.38/4)
- Research methodologies (mean = 3.42/4)

Knowledge progress seems to be still limited in two areas:

- World’s public sector (mean = 3/4)
- Public finance (mean = 3.12/4)



Note: Maximum score is 4.00.

Figure 1: Student’s knowledge gained as a result of the MPPM.

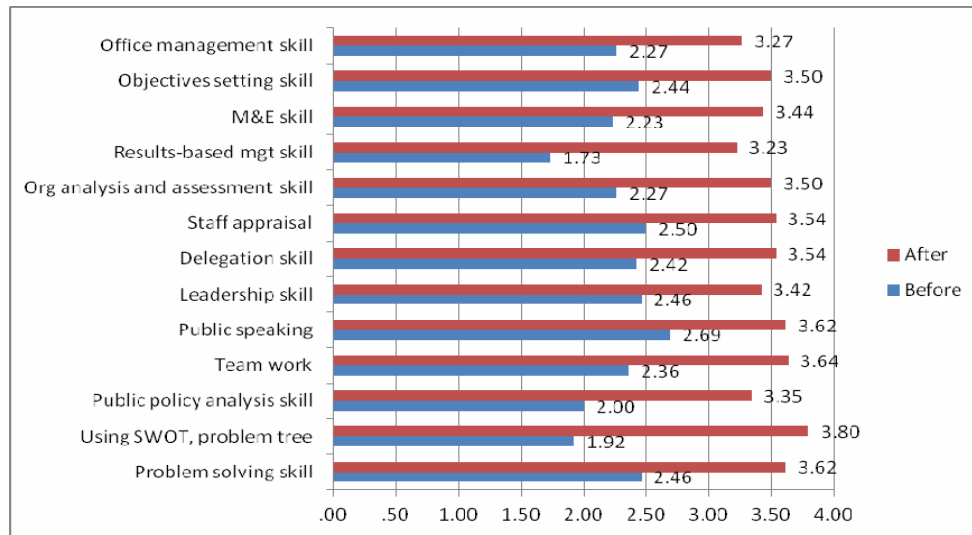
From Figure 1, there is a big gap of knowledge between before and after attending the program.

From Figure 2, it can be concluded that skill gained by students after the training has been satisfactory in most areas, particularly in “using SWOT, problem tree tools” (3.80/4), “teamwork” (3.64/4), delegation skill (3.58/4), “public speaking” (3.64/4), and “problem solving skill” (3.64/4).

From the findings of the survey, it can be concluded that learning from the MPPM has had positive impacts on working approaches and the perspective of the students. Most of students have made good progress in developing their knowledge, skill and attitudes at the end of the training program. And these knowledge and skills taught in the MPPM will have ongoing positive impacts on the jobs that the students take.

As the results of the survey, 62.5% of respondents have promoted to more qualified positions due to their achievements in MPPM and 100% of them believe that they are able to influence others at their workplace with the new knowledge from the MPPM. 62.5% of them state that the way that they influence others by sharing their knowledge, 87.5% of them will influence others by introducing new perspectives and 68.8% by introducing new administrative routines.

100% of graduates are confident to state that they have been able to change and develop (*develop* should be changed for *improve*) their workplace with the new knowledge gained from the MPPM. 50% of respondents will change or develop their workplace by sharing their knowledge in a structured matter, 87.5% by introducing new practices, 65.6% by re-organizing the administrative process and 87.5% by introducing new administrative routines.



Note: Maximum score is 4.00.

Figure 2: Student's skill gained as a result of the MPPM.

Table 1: Graduates have changed to a more qualified position

Changed to a more qualified position	Frequency	Percent
Yes	20	62.5%
No	12	37.5%
Total	32	100%

In Table 1, 62.5% said that they changed to a more qualified position. In Table 2, the result shows the fact that 100% of respondents are confident that they are able to influence others at the workplace thanks to the new knowledge they learnt from the MPPM.

The popular ways that graduates influence others at their workplace are introducing new perspective (87.5%), by example (75%) and by introducing new administrative routines (68.8%) (Table 3).

More than that, 100% respondents confident that they are able to change or develop the workplace/organization with the new knowledge from the MPPM (Table 4).

And the most popular ways that graduates believe they can apply to change or develop the workplace with the new knowledge from the MPPM are introducing new practices (87.5%) and introducing new administrative routines (87.5%) (Table 5).

Table 2: Graduates are able to influence others at the workplace with the new knowledge from the MPPM

<b>Able to influence others at the workplace with the new knowledge from the MPPM</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	32	100%
No	0	0%
Total	32	100%

35

Table 3: Way that graduates influence others at their workplace

<b>Way that graduates influence others at their workplace</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
By sharing knowledge	20	62.5%
By introducing new perspective	28	87.5%
By asking questions	12	37.5%
By introducing new administrative routines	22	68.8%
By example	24	75%

Table 4: Graduates are able to change or develop the workplace/organization with the new knowledge from the MPPM

<b>Able to change or develop the workplace/organization with the new knowledge from the MPPM</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	32	100%
No	0	0%
Total	32	100%

Table 5: Way that graduates change or develop the workplace/organization with the new knowledge from the MPPM

<b>Way that graduates change or develop the workplace with the new knowledge from the MPPM</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
By sharing knowledge in a structured matter	16	50%
By introducing new practices	28	87.5%
By re-organizing the administrative process	21	65.6%
By introducing new administrative routines	25	87.5%

#### 4. Public Sector Reform

It is believed that a contingent of managers and future leaders that are well trained in public sector skills and knowledge will make an effective contribution to the on-going process of public sector reform by providing support to economic and democratic development and improving service delivery to Vietnam's citizens. Among several international joint master programs introduced to the Steering Committee of the Program 165 (a special program of the Government of Vietnam aimed at fostering a highly qualified contingent of future leaders for the country), MPPM had many strengths and a good reputation of the two universities that were

considered as one of the key and first programs to be implemented under this ambitious training program. The MPPM program was also chosen by the Committee for Ethnic Minorities Affairs (CEMA) to train their outstanding officials. There are about 100 outstanding government officials, considered as 'future leaders' in Programme 165 and CEMA that had been selected and graduated from MPPM. The knowledge and skills gained in the MPPM programme that senior staff or high ranking managers of many public organizations now have are expected to make an effective contribution to the developments of their organizations and to the reform process of the public sector in Vietnam.

Teachers of MPPM also tried to mainstream gender awareness and anti-corruption matters in their lectures or in thesis supervision. It's expected that at the end of the master program, students will adopt new behavior towards gender equality and corruption. Two universities also organized one workshop on gender awareness and one on anti-corruption with a view to train VNU-UEB's teachers about these issues.

### 5. Culture Exchange Between Two Countries

Sweden was the first European country that recognized and set up a relationship with Vietnam in 1969. The knowledge about the two countries varied a lot. Many Vietnamese think of Sweden as a kind of paradise with democracy and wealth. That dream might not be totally realistic but nevertheless it is not easy to reach. In Sweden, the older generation, who know Vietnam through the news about the war in Vietnam from 1954-1975 have a clear image of Vietnam as a country destroyed by the wars, while most of young people know nothing about Vietnam. Vietnam in Southwest Asia and Sweden in Northwest Europe still are a thousand miles apart in terms of culture exchange. The exchange of 181 alumni, 100 current students and about 50 visitors (including lecturers, students, staff and managers) from each university might be small numbers but it does quantify a cultural exchange between people from two countries through a joint training program in perspectives of students, teacher, program management and other related people. Through different ways of contact and cooperation, MPPM is a meaningful tool to improve the understanding between the academic cultures in the two countries. For Vietnamese lecturers, it has been a good chance for them to learn from lecturers of a high ranking University in the world, for the Swedish teachers it has been a very rewarding time to meet colleagues and students. All the theses of students provide a collection of knowledge about the current situation in Vietnam.

### 6. Conclusion

It can be concluded that the MPPM has made a significant contribution to the development of VNU-UEB by transferring knowledge and expertise from UU to VNU-UEB, enhancing VNU-UEB teacher's knowledge in the field of public management as well as teaching methodologies of VNU-UEB's faculties. By providing civil servants and cadres of public organizations with updated knowledge and professional management skills, the MPPM, to a large extent, has supported the Public Administration Reform (PAR) process in Vietnam. The program has also helped to improve the understanding between the academic cultures in the two countries.

Finally the MPPM program can and will stimulate research cooperation between researchers at VNU and UU within the field of public management and also broader fields within other social sciences disciplines.

Through this case study, it is recommended that international collaborative programs can be driven by academic values rather than commercialism and should disseminate further in developing countries if they are developed and run in following conditions:

1. The objectives of the program should be well defined for academic values.
2. The collaborative programs should be organized well based on the laws and regulations of international collaborative programs in developing countries while they should still meet requirements of international universities and international accreditations if any.
3. The collaborative programs should be based on the curriculum and standards of teaching materials and methods of international universities with suitable adjustments to conditions of developing countries.
4. The collaborative programs should be developed based on the real training demand of the developing country's society.



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**APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIR FOR  
MASTER PROGRAM OF PUBLIC MANAGEMENT  
TRAINING IMPACT ASSESSMENT**



Name: ..... Current organization: .....

Section 1. Assessment on the progress of the interviewee in terms of knowledge, skill and attitude as a result of the MPPM

**Note:** 1 = Not possessing this knowledge

2 = Possessing this knowledge at basic level

3 = Possessing holistic understanding of this knowledge and can transfer it to others

4 = Possessing deep understanding of this knowledge, with analytical thinking and can apply into reality

Before MPPM				Knowledge	After MPPM			
1	2	3	4	Knowledge on the fundamentals of public management in Vietnam, its challenges, opportunities and development trends	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	Knowledge on the fundamentals of public management in the world, its challenges, opportunities and development trends	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	Knowledge on comparative politics, welfare system in Vietnam and Sweden	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	Knowledge on the status and trends of public finance in Vietnam and in the world	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	Knowledge on Monitoring and Evaluation in public organizations	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	Knowledge on international economic integration of Vietnam and in the region	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	Knowledge on organizational development, leadership and change	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	Knowledge on HRM in public sector	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	Knowledge on scientific research methodologies	1	2	3	4

**Note:** 1 = Not possessing this skill

2 = Possessing this skill but not having application opportunities

3 = Possessing this skill but not mastering it

4 = Possessing, mastering this skill and having applied it into work

Before MPPM				Skill	After MPPM			
1	2	3	4	Problem analyzing and problem solving skill	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	Using SWOT, problem tree tools into work	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	Analysing and evaluating public policies	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	Teamwork	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	Presentation and public speaking skill	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	Leadership skill	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	Delegation skill	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	Staff appraisal	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	Organization analyzing and assessing skill	1	2	3	4



1	2	3	4	Results-based management skill	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	M&E skill	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	Objective setting skill	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	Office management skill	1	2	3	4

Section 2: Assessment on the progress of the interviewee in terms of promotion and influence of the graduates in their workplace

Since the exam, have you changed position or employer (workplace)?

Yes  No

1. If yes on 1, have you changed to a more qualified position?

Yes  No

2. If yes on 1, in your perspective, was this change due to your achievements in MPPM?

Yes  No

3. In your opinion, have you been able to influence others at your workplace with the new knowledge from the MPPM?

Yes  No

4. If yes on 4, in what way have you been able to influence others

a.  By sharing my knowledge

b.  By introducing new perspectives

c.  By asking questions

d.  By introducing new administrative routines

e.  By example

f.  Other:

In your opinion have you been able to change or develop your workplace/organisation with the new knowledge gained from the MPPM?

Yes  No

1. If yes on 6, in what way have you been able to change and develop your workplace

a.  By sharing my knowledge in a structured matter (workshops, seminars, etc)

b.  By introducing new practices

c.  By re-organizing the administrative process

d.  By introducing new administrative routines

e.  Other:

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# Những đóng góp của các chương trình liên kết đào tạo quốc tế đối với các quốc gia đang phát triển: Tình huống điển hình Chương trình Thạc sĩ Quản lý công

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**Tóm tắt.** Từ năm 2009, với khung chương trình đào tạo tiên tiến, được giảng dạy bởi các giảng viên, chuyên gia hàng đầu của Việt Nam và Thụy Điển, Chương trình Thạc sĩ Quản lý công liên kết giữa Trường Đại học Kinh tế, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội và Đại học Uppsala, Thụy Điển được biết đến như là một trong những chương trình hợp tác đào tạo thành công nhất ở Hà Nội xét trên khía cạnh là chương trình đào tạo chất lượng cao và có sự ảnh hưởng tích cực đến công cuộc đổi mới hành chính công ở Việt Nam. Bài viết nghiên cứu những đóng góp của Chương trình Thạc sĩ Quản lý công đối với sự phát triển của Trường Đại học Kinh tế, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội cũng như những đóng góp của Chương trình đối với công cuộc đổi mới hành chính công ở Việt Nam thông qua việc đào tạo các kiến thức quản lý hành chính công mới cho đội ngũ lãnh đạo trong lĩnh vực công nhằm hướng tới một nền hành chính chống tham nhũng và minh bạch. Bài viết cũng đề xuất một số giải pháp để các chương trình liên kết đào tạo quốc tế thành công, trong đó quan trọng nhất là hướng mục tiêu của Chương trình tới các giá trị đào tạo, quản lý tốt quá trình vận hành chương trình giáo dục của Việt Nam trong khi vẫn đáp ứng được các yêu cầu của đại học nước ngoài.