

The Effects of the Self-financing Application at the International University Vietnam National University- Ho Chi Minh City

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Received 19 March 2015

Accepted 20 December 2015

Abstract: International University, Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City, established in 2003, is a young institution, however, comes with great responsibility to develop a breakthrough university model and offer high quality education among the existing members of Vietnam National University –HCMC. Facing such challenges, IU authorities have identified: "People are the important factors in the development of a unit." In order to create a good environment to attract lectures and staff members to IU as well as for them to develop their careers, International University has taken the initiative to ask for VNU-HCMC's permission to be of financial autonomy under Decree 43/2006/ND-CP. After 8 years of implementation, IU has achieved certain success not only in the development of a strong and solid team of faculty members and staffs but also in fostering a positive working condition and continuous facility advancement. My paper will elaborate how the self-financing model has been applied at IU and also highlights achievements that IU has gained over the period.

1. Introduction

Founded in December 2003, the International University (IU) was young and lacked facilities in the first phase. In the meantime, IU faced the difficult tasks: providing a high-quality education and building a breakthrough model in the Vietnam National University-Ho Chi Minh City, VNU HCM.

IU set a goal that, within 5 years, it would strive to have the minimum conditions of quality assurance and a good management.

Facing such challenges, IU authorities have identified: "People are the important factors in the development of a unit." The urgent questions that need quick answers are: How can IU lecturers and staff members work at ease? Where are the resources? What are the policies? What is a good environment to attract lectures and staff members to IU and what are the working conditions for them to develop their careers at IU? After the discussion in the party committee and the consensus among the Board of Rectors, the lecturers and the staff members, IU asked the Vietnam National University-Ho Chi Minh City for permission to be of financial

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autonomy under Government Decree 43 and the approved tuition fee project to build a mechanism of task-based payment. This greatly helps lecturers and staff members work at ease.

2. The main point in the policy of human resources development

2.1. Advanced salary mechanism:

Since 2007, IU has promoted the implementation of financial autonomy under Government Decree 43/2006/ND-CP dated 25/4/2006, which assigns IU as a public university the autonomy and self-responsibility to organize tasks, human resources, payroll, finance, and to charge tuition fees under the specific regulations for IU. Lecturers are paid every month for the teaching, doing scientific research and services. Since the salary is not paid by the teaching hour, lecturers spend more time doing scientific research and contacting students. Therefore, the teaching quality becomes better.

Applying the mechanism of financial autonomy ensures the recurrent expenditure, IU considers the conditions for lecturers and staff members to get higher incomes, and often makes adjustments so that the average income increases compared with the previous position. The gradual increase in incomes makes IU lecturers and staff members feel comfortable at work while prices are increasing and the country's economic situation is in difficulty.

In addition to the salary mechanism for Vietnamese teachers and staff members, IU also builds a flexible salary mechanism for foreigners to attract foreign faculty and professionals and overseas Vietnamese to IU.

2.2. Creating a competitive environment, openness and transparency:

2.2.1. Recruitment process:

IU's recruitment process was to ensure openness, transparency and continuity, which includes record review, interview and teaching demonstration (for lecturers). Every year, the Human Resources Department works with school and department heads on the number of lecturers and reports to the Board of Rectors. After the Rectors' approval, the recruitment information is posted on IU's website and other professional websites such as Vietnam works and Academicjobsonline.org.

The process is performed continuously throughout the year and is scheduled weekly. Through the active recruitment, the well-qualified lecturers and staff members increasingly come to work at IU

2.2.2. Focusing on training young lecturers:

Through the empirical recruitment, IU has found that the majority of lecturers were well-trained abroad with very good knowledge in the field, but lacked exposure to real teaching environments. Therefore, IU has worked a new policy. Each young lecturer will be guided by an experienced lecturer (mentor). The young lecturer must observe experienced lecturers' classes, preparing the lessons and giving 3 teaching demonstrations for the school/department's board of professionals. Upon the good result and feedback, a proposal will be made to the Board of Rectors for the final teaching demonstration. If accepted, the young lecturer will be officially appointed as lecturer under the arrangement of the School/Department. As a result, lecturers feel more confident when actually coming to class thanks to good and thorough preparation. IU receives better and better feedback from

students on the teaching quality of young lecturers. Also, IU conducts surveys every semester to get students' feedback on each subject with a well-designed questionnaire so that students can assess many aspects of teaching. This is a very effective method to get feedback from the learners, which considers learners as the center of all activities. Almost all lecturers support this and strive to get good evaluation results.

IU also spends a significant amount of expenditure training young lecturers for one-semester at partner universities such as Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, and Seattle University. Thanks to this policy, young lecturers have an opportunity to encounter new teaching methods and choose research orientation appropriate for their professional ability. Back from the training period, young lecturers can hold seminars in order to share acquired knowledge and experience with colleagues.

2.2.3. Encouraging lecturers to do scientific research:

- Considering scientific research one of the major responsibilities of the lecturers, IU has established the requirements as follows:

+ Lecturer with the title of Professor: 2 international articles/ year

+ Lecturer with the title of Associate Professor: 1.5 international articles/ year (equivalent to 1 international and 1 national article/ year)

+ Lecturer holding PhD degree: 1 international article/ year

+ Lecturer holding MA degree: 1 international article / 2 years (equivalent to 1 national article/ year)

- IU has a reward policy for lecturers and researchers who fulfill more research

requirement than assigned. One extra ISI international paper is rewarded with US\$ 1.500.

- Lecturers who present their papers at international and national conferences will be sponsored for return air tickets.

2.2.4. Creating good working environments for the productivity of lecturers and staff members:

- IU provides lecturers with a desktop computer and private working section, and still in connection with other members in the faculty. Lecturers successfully carry out activities and services such as meeting students and partner companies, doing research on campus.

- In addition, IU builds and upgrades the laboratories to meet the need for research of lecturers and researchers. While assuring good salary to attract and keep high quality lecturers is essential, providing and maintaining good conditions for them to work and keep on with their research even plays a much more important role.

- Also, IU implement the policies to support lecturers with paperwork and procedure to have overseas training, further study abroad and to encourage PhD lecturers to register for the title of Associate professor.

- IU has just made some adjustments and completed the set of evaluation, through which staff members and lecturers can have a look at their own performance. With the set of criteria, quick encouragement can be given to staff members and lecturers with successful task fulfillment and in-time warnings can be given to unqualified staff members and lecturers with more emphasis on the weaknesses they need to improve.

- The career path for lecturers has been clearly outlined. Consequently, many young

lecturers with outstanding achievements in teaching and excellent publications can shorten the time to struggle and gain the title of Associate professor.

In addition to rewarding staff members and lecturers according to the State system of emulation and reward, IU developed a separate rewarding system including the following honorable titles: Lecturer of the Year, Officer of the Year, Manager of the Year, Academic Unit of the Year, Service Unit of the Year. IU also awards extra bonuses to individuals or groups with good merits in performance.

3. Achievements

3.1. Quantity and quality of staff members and lecturers

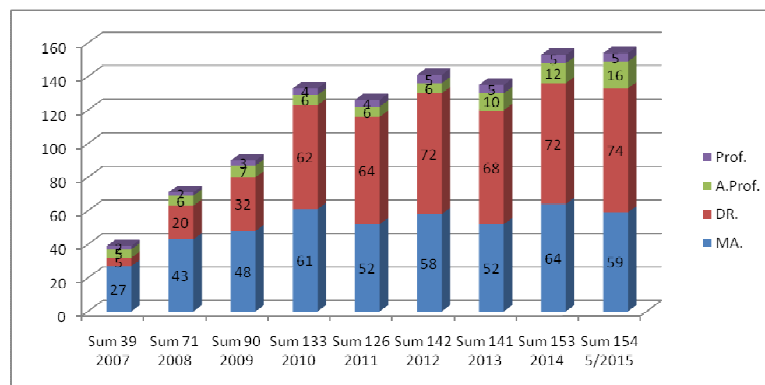


Fig.1. Staff members and lecturers growth 2007 – 5/2015
(Source: Office of Human Resources Management, International University)

Along with the high expertise and professional attitude of all staff members, IU takes its pride in the quality of students services (rated very good and excellent – equivalent to the scores of 4 and 5 on a 1-5 point scale – by more than 80% students and 90% lecturers in a

Up till May 31, 2015, IU has employed 358 staff members and lecturers, including 5 Professors, 16 Associate Professors, 74 Doctors, and 59 Masters. This raises the proportion of lecturers with postgraduate degrees to 100%, 62% of which hold Doctorate Degrees. The effects of attracting well-qualified staff members and lecturers have led to the great improvement of the teacher-student ratio, the consistency of teaching, as well as the quality of graduate programs and the twinning programs combined with the high-ranking programs in the US, the UK, Australia, and Ireland.

IU has 4 programs accredited by the AUN: Information Technology, Biotechnology, Business Administration, and Electronics Engineering. The Industrial and Systems Engineering and Biomedical Engineering programs are also about to be accredited.

survey by the Center for Quality Management, International University, Dec/2014).

3.2. Scientific research publications:

Specific requirements for scientific publications for lecturers have led to a huge

shift in IU core values, creating an academic environment equal to that of the most advanced regional universities.

This fundamental change in the management of work volume and work quality, in coordination with the semestrial teaching evaluation, and especially the mechanism to facilitate favorable conditions regarding travel expenses and time for teachers to attend workshops and conferences have all created a positive transformation in the quality of

teaching and scientific research. Especially, since the Decree 43/2006/ND-CP was implemented, both the number of scientific research projects and the funding for them at IU has continued rising, with more and more State and Ministry – level projects. According to the statistics, the number of international journal articles published by IU staff held a high ranking position in comparison with the Vietnam National University – HCMC's common ground.

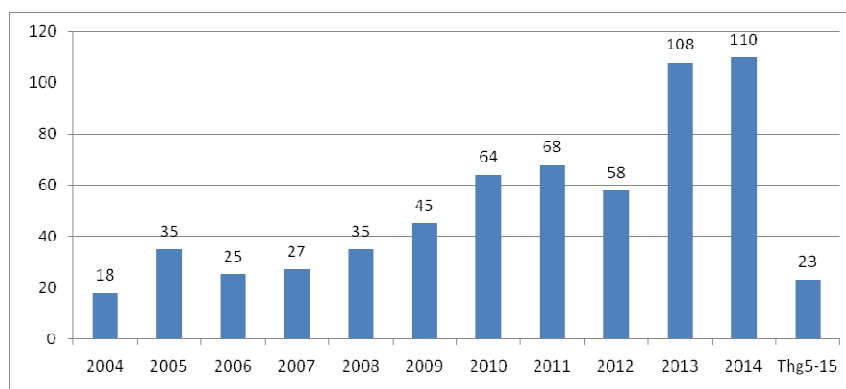


Fig. 2: The number of international scientific articles from 2004 to May 2015. (Source: Office of Research and Development, International University)

Articles published in international and national journals, and proceedings in international conferences increased both in terms of quantity and quality. Especially, the number of articles on prestigious journals with ISI (Institute for Scientific Information) in 2014 reached the ratio at 0.81 article/lecturer with PhD/year; articles in international journals at 1.24 article/lecturer with PhD/year; and scientific research 1.73 article/lecturer/year on average (Source: Office of Research and Development, International University). Since 2008, IU has continuously witnessed a number of Schools/Departments and individuals receiving awards from VNU-HCMC for excellent performance in scientific research.

4. Conclusion

In accordance with a lot of studies and personal viewpoint, the writer proposed the holistic, continuous and ultimate goal of developing and managing human resource of an organization, especially a university, is to establish an advanced paying policy, a scientific, competitive but fair policy in assigning tasks and evaluating task performance. IU should provide a working environment where lecturers and staff have joy and happiness when going to work. In such an environment, lecturers and staff members should be provided with good conditions ensuring teaching, researching, and supporting,

with good salary for personal and family needs, and with a transparent career future. In such an environment, colleagues care for and support one another, and superiors offer convenient conditions to employees to fulfill the task, and everyone can work and develop oneself to the fullest. Also in such an environment, excellent lecturers and staff members would definitely attract excellent students to come and study. With the above features, the aim of becoming a high-quality university with high ranking and great renown is completely feasible.

IU over the period between 2008 and 2015 (after following the financial autonomy scheme) has basically achieved the aims mentioned above in terms of salary, welfare,

and methods of task assignment and evaluation. The working environment in IU ensures lecturers and staff full conditions to develop. As analyzed above, the dramatically great effort of the whole university has brought about results that are beyond expectation.

References

Decree 43/2006/ND-CP, Providing for the right to autonomy and self-responsibility for task performance, organizational apparatus, payroll and finance of public non-business units, (2006)