Early Signs of Success in Higher Education Partnerships

Ezra Simon, USAID/Vietnam Team Lead on Social Development

2015 Global Education Summit
Higher Education Portfolio

Building University-Industry Learning and Development through Innovation and Technology (BUILD-IT)
Expanding institutional policy change, student learning, maker innovation spaces, faculty instructional innovation, and applied curricula in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM)
2015-2020; $5.7 million; Arizona State University with Catholic University and Portland State University

Vocational and University Leadership Innovation Institute (VULII)
Advancing institutional reforms in technical universities and vocational colleges through planning, data-driven-decision making models, quality assurance, and accreditation
2012-2016; $2.5 million; Arizona State University
Social Work Education Enhancement Program (SWEEP)
Improving quality of social work education through competency-based curriculum, instituting field practice, and developing a highly skilled workforce qualified to address Vietnam’s emerging social needs
2012-2016; $2.5 million; San Jose State University

Lower Mekong Public Policy Initiative (LMPPI)
Building network for cross-disciplinary research on sustainable development, academic programs and course development, promoting teaching and study of policy challenges associated with natural resources management, expanding course offerings in environmental policy, actionable research, policy dialog and outreach
2013-2017; $4 million; Harvard Kennedy School Ash Center
Overall Operations Principles

Local grounding and indigenization of content formation

Seasonality of operations needs to fit the needs

Broad-ranging and sizeable resident staff with aptitude and connections to operate

Sizeable numbers of people benefitting with limited cascades
Satisfying a Need

Students reap direct gains rather than secondary assistance.

Reach into secondary education from university & vocational school level.

Curriculum standards updates and dissemination via learning management systems.

Inclusion of specific groups: ethnic minorities, female learners, persons with disabilities.
Balance local universities where quick wins are possible vs. utmost demands and limited initial success

Involvement of ministries vis-à-vis individual university networks

Track reform legislation that affects education sector

Level of sophistication when viewing perception of US imported ideas
Achievements in Global Development Alliances and Higher Education

• Understanding corporate interests and genealogies
• Liaising with chambers of commerce, industry associations, Foreign Commercial Service, and diplomatic networks—while reaching beyond US firms
• Encourage contagion effect among sister companies to act as influencers
• Industry partners effective at exerting influence on policy change
• Foster continued growth of additional industry partners if they bring value
• Dollar value not necessarily primary concern or accurate indicator
• Engagement of private sector as integral partner shaping curriculum; student career development; staff from companies working on the program
• Ongoing drive toward increased relevance and quality by searching for signals of contributions being well-matched with project components
• Tax exemptions and credits as incentives, but also enhanced public standing