

Third Party Evaluator's Opinion on Strengthening Vocational and Technical Manpower Production

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Relevance

The project's objectives are consistent with Thailand's needs and priorities. Thailand's industrialization process is on - going, transforming the economy from an agro – based to more and more industry based. This process of industrialization requires well trained technicians. And the policy of decentralization has resulted in several industrial centers away from Bangkok. Providing equipments to vocational and technical colleges in these centers have made these colleges stronger in terms of their capability in training.

Efficiency

Based on the survey information, the implementation of the project by the executing agency has been found to be satisfactory. The time delay in the project implementation could be partly explained by the project period, which overlapped with the period of a severe economic crisis in Thailand during 1997-1998. This crisis affected not only the economy, but also the government and the entire administration including the program to improve the education system.

Effectiveness

The survey has found that the project achieved a certain degree of effectiveness. But based on the survey information, it is this evaluator's opinion that the effectiveness was still limited. It seems the utilization rate of the equipments for training was very low, partly because of the availability of the trainers, and partly because of the bureaucracy.

To improve effectiveness of such a project in the future the procurement of equipments should be made conditional upon the availability of trainers to be provided by the Thai government.

Impacts

Nevertheless, since 2001 it seems that industries in Thailand have been able to recover very well from the economic crisis. There is relatively little complaint about the shortage of technicians needed. Also the strong growth of manufactured exports, produced from all regions in Thailand, demonstrate high quality of skilled technicians.

This high growth of manufactured exports, averaging about 15 % annually during 2001-2004 taking place in the midst of high competition from products from several low cost countries, could be cited as evidence confirming the strong competitiveness of the Thai workforce.

Sustainability

Recently the vocational and technical colleges have been reorganized into one system called “ Rajmongkol Institute of Technology ”, with a much more efficient administrative structure. Thus the vocational and technical colleges involved in the project should be able to sustain their training capability, particularly with the equipments provided by the project.

Of course this sustainability could not be taken for granted. The most important issue is about the maintenance of the equipments. As often the case, the bureaucracy in Thailand has not been found to be efficient particularly in the area of equipment maintenance. Every year the Thai government spends a large amount of the budget, acquiring state-of-the-art machinery and equipments. Most of the cases, unfortunately, because of poor maintenance routine, these machinery and equipments could not deliver what they were supposed to deliver.

If possible JBIC should include in the loan program a provision for maintenance expenses for about 10 years. In this case the equipments will be in the condition ready to be used to strengthen vocational and technical manpower production in Thailand.