

A philosophical evaluation of the internationalization of higher education: A case study on the public universities in Vietnam

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Abstract

The internationalization of higher education is a common development trend of universities in the world. For Vietnam, the globalization of education, the most important of which is higher education, is an essential and vital issue in the country's development strategy. However, at the same time, the international context is also posing many challenges for Vietnam when it comes to the competitiveness of highly-qualified workers in relation to other countries in the region, the existing skill gap of good post-graduates, the brain drain phenomenon, etc. Besides analyzing current trends and their corresponding philosophical underpinning, this article focuses on ways of coping with these challenges. In addition to existing guidelines and policies of the state and universities in Vietnam, primarily concerning public universities (which account for over 70% of the universities in Vietnam), our study critically evaluates the following four groups of solutions: (1) improvement of university governance and enhancement of university autonomy; (2) strengthening joint training programs and quality assurance, while regularly updating and renovating training programs in line with general regional and world trends; (3) enhancing learners' exchange; and (4) strengthening cooperation in scientific research and international publications.

Key words: International cooperation, globalization, Internationalization of Higher education, Higher education, Public University, Philosophy of education

Introduction

The world has been witnessing profound changes taking place in the continuous development of higher education. The processes of globalization and economic integration among countries occur extensively and at unprecedented speed; The fast progress of science and technology changes both the content and forms of education in each nation. A significant indicator of the profound changes in education is its rising internationalization (especially that of higher education), which has now become a common trend for all higher education institutions in the world.

According to Knight (2012), the international dimension of the curriculum has progressed from an 'area study' and foreign language approach to the integration of international, global, intercultural, and comparative perspectives into the teaching/learning process and program content. According to Knight (2012), internationalization at the national, sector, and institutional levels are defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of postsecondary education. There are three important points in Knight's definition. Firstly, the author emphasizes that internationalization is an ongoing effort. Secondly, internationalization does not only involve integration between countries, but it is also an acknowledgment of each other's cultural diversity on a global scale. Thirdly, the integration process is expressed in many different aspects of higher education, including the roles, tasks, characteristics, and training programs provided by the education system in general and in higher education institutions in particular (Tran, Marginson, 2018).

In the process, systems with developed higher education lead the game and influence underdeveloped countries in many ways. This complex process of internationalization and integration can be considered an import-export process, similar to that in

international trade, where the import-export balance between countries is often unbalanced. The "export" direction is mainly from developed countries, while the "import" direction is mainly from low and middle-income countries in Asia and Latin America (Tran, Marginson, 2018).

On the level of universities, internationalization is implemented in many forms, such as opening training institutions abroad, opening international programs taught in English, transferring programs and degree-issuing brands, cooperating in training, and issuing diplomas with universities in the host country. The internationalization takes place at both the micro-level (as in lecturer practice, in program development, training organization, management, governance, and university quality assurance), and the macro-level (in model and education policy formulation). In this context, the question "How to adapt to the internationalization process?" is posed for all universities - in the developed countries, the developing countries in general and in Vietnam in particular. In fact, each country has a different understanding and response to this problem.

This article will thus focus on the study of regional and global contexts, and the related issues for public universities in Vietnam in the context of globalization of higher education. It will also analyze responses of the public universities in Vietnam to the internationalization of higher education, and propose some recommendations for the development of Vietnam's public higher education in the future. The desired changes in the Vietnamese academic environment in general will require a new philosophy of education, as well as a more global, cosmopolitan cultural outlook.

Research Methods

Exploring the value of internationalization of higher education in Vietnam today, while also considering the global context and experience, demands an interdisciplinary scientific approach. The method of critical analysis and subsequent interpretation of available data related to public universities in Vietnam will be the main method used in this study. In addition, the author will conduct her analysis and interpretations in the context of a broader philosophical evaluation of the given phenomenon, identifying the existing philosophical presuppositions and normative ideas as well as their potential ethical impact.

International and Regional Context

With the coming of the 21st century, on an international scale and in Southeast Asia, education has moved to a new, higher, and more complex stage of development. The establishment of the WTO and the formation of the General Agreement on Trades and Services (GATS) has facilitated the increase in imports, trade liberalization, and support services for higher education development. The 2009 World Conference on Higher Education held by UNESCO in Paris observed that higher education is moving under the impacts of new motivations. Among these belong increasing demand for admission, diversification of universities and sources, cooperation between universities and networking, the need for lifelong learning, the impacts of information and communication technology, social responsibility of universities, and changes in the role of the Government. The list of motivating factors described above is a concrete manifestation of a globalized world in higher education (UNESCO, 2010). According to T. Friedman (Friedman, 2005), it is a flat world where geographical, economic, and political barriers are being removed. This flat world is also making education "flat" in the sense of creating a flat, networked educational playground where everyone can learn, cultivate knowledge, develop skills, and all nations and organizations can participate in providing education, both cooperating and competing equally. As a result of this development, each higher education institution involved in the global competition needs to develop its own initiative in designing long-term, medium and short-term strategies, roadmaps, and action plans for the

internationalization of their organization so that they can respond more dynamically, more effectively and more directly to the needs of their country's development.

On the regional level, the ASEAN Economic Community was officially launched in December 2015 with one of the common characteristics of mutual recognition of workers' qualifications, setting an important milestone in the regional economic integration process. Besides great opportunities, the formation of the ASEAN economic community also poses significant challenges for higher education institutions and countries. While the reality is that the universities' capital, qualifications, technology, staff resources, and reputation are not the same, the quality of education must be similar across the region. The main concern is how the regional higher education institutions and national governments of regional member countries can adjust and improve themselves to meet international standards to cope with challenges and competition with other educational institutions in the region.

In Vietnam, the issue of integration and internationalization of higher education is not new. The Party, National Assembly, and the Government of Vietnam have many policies and guidelines to promote educational integration quickly and effectively. This effort is utterly relevant as it remains an undeniable fact that the international competitiveness of Vietnamese education is currently weak compared to other countries in the world. Therefore, Vietnam is faced with the challenging need to build a system of high-quality universities of international standards to be able to "stand" (i.e., to withstand the pressure of competition) in the mechanism of free trade openness. It is an enormous challenge, but it is also an opportunity to force educational institutions in Vietnam, above all the public higher education institutions (accounting for more than 70% of the total number of universities in Vietnam), to make the necessary efforts to improve the effectiveness of training activities and to solidify their position to be able to create their own brands through international competitiveness.

Issues raised for Public Universities in Vietnam in the context of globalization of higher education

The author focused her research on public universities in Vietnam for the following reasons: In the current higher education system in Vietnam, the number of public universities still accounts for a decisive proportion of the existing institutions of higher learning (Table 1). Currently, Vietnam has 172 public universities out of 237 universities nationwide. This number is 2.7 times higher than in 1987, accounting for a large portion of the total number of universities in Vietnam (over 70 %).

Year	Public university	Non-public university	100% foreign-invested university	Total number of universities	Percentage of public universities/total number of universities in Vietnam
1987	63	0		63	100%
2009	116	44		150	77.3%
2018	172	60	5	237	72.5%

Table 1: Number of public higher education institutions in Vietnam over the years

(Source: Data from report No.: 760/BC-BGDDT, report on the development of the higher education system, solutions to ensure and improve the quality of training in 2009; summary report for the academic year 2018 - 2019, deploying the tasks for the academic year 2019 - 2020)

The existing student structure exhibits a strong preference for the system of public universities. As of the 2017-2018 academic year, according to the Ministry of Education and Training's report, out of 1,707,025 university students, there were 1,439,495 public students (accounting for 84.3%) (Linh, 2018).

A public university is a state-funded (central or local) university that finances its expenditures and facilities (land, housing) and operates primarily with funding from public financial sources or nonprofit contributions and is different from private universities that operate on donations and student fees. In this setting, students tend to be viewed as paying customers.

The common characteristic of public universities in Vietnam is that they are operated on the principle of serving the society. Such non-business activities are always promoted and governed by the socio-economic development programs of the State. Most public universities now receive full or partial state funding from the state. The high pace of economic development of Vietnam, however, results in the fact that despite the rapid increase in the number of universities and the offered study programs, the scale of highly skilled labor is still small compared to the requirements of the process of industrialization, modernization, and international integration.

For Vietnam, a developing country in Southeast Asia, the concept of internationalization of higher education is quite new. After more than 30 years of national renovation (the so-called Doi Moi), after 9 years of implementing the education innovation strategy of the 2001-2010 period, and another 9 years of implementing the 2011-2020 educational development strategy, Vietnam's higher education has been gradually developed in terms of scale, diverse types of universities and forms of training. In parallel with the attained achievements, the international context also puts Vietnam's higher education in the face of enormous challenges, especially its public universities. Globalization and internationalization, on the one hand, increase knowledge and economic competition among countries around the world, and it is this race that has partly turned higher education into one of the important tools to improve the nation's competitiveness. However, Vietnam, like many other developing countries, seems to be participating in this process rather passively because of its limitations in science, technology, and economics. The internationalization of higher education in Vietnam is being evaluated as a "goal" rather than a "process." The fact remains that awareness and practice of implementing this process at higher education institutions have not been synchronized and have not achieved the expectations set by the government (Tran, Marginson, 2018).

The first is the issue related to competitiveness in the region and the world. As of March 2019, the flow of foreign direct investment (FDI) into Vietnam increased sharply both in the number of projects and the scale of investment capital. Generally, in the first three months of 2019 (as of March 20, 2019), the total of newly and additionally registered capital, capital contributed, and shares purchased by foreign investors reached US\$ 10.8 billion, up by 86.2% over the same period in 2018 (FIA, 2019). According to Bloomberg's statistics, Vietnam ranked No. 1 among seven emerging economies in Asia in terms of destination for manufacturing-processing enterprises. The Natixis SA's assessment was based on factors such as population structure, wages, electricity prices, business environment rankings, logistics and the share of manufacturing-processing sector in foreign direct investment (FDI) in each country. According to Bloomberg, there are many factors that make Vietnam attractive to foreign investors, including cheap production costs. At the same time, growth and stability is a great attraction for FDI inflows into Vietnam. According to Forbes, Vietnam is an attractive destination for many multinational companies because it has many advantages to export goods without tax. (Hoang, 2019).

In this context, Vietnamese workers have countless opportunities, and their skills such as soft skills, communication skills, problem-solving skills, creative thinking skills, and critical thinking play a very important role; therefore, students who are fully equipped with these skills will be more likely to meet employers' requirements and find well-paid jobs.

The reality, however, is less optimistic. Vietnamese workers still rank very low in comparison with other countries in the ASEAN region and the world. According to the Human Capital Outlook Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) report at the World Economic Forum in 2016, the rate of low-skilled labor in Vietnam was 41%, the highest in the region (Briefing, 2016). (Figure 1, Figure 2), the quality of the education system is lower than the world average and many countries in the region such as Thailand, Singapore, Philippines, Indonesia, etc.

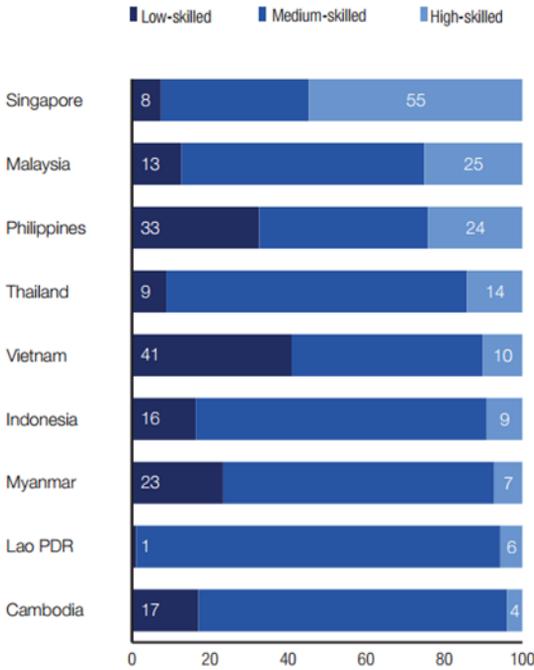


Figure 1: Employment share
 (Source: Human Capital Outlook Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the WEF 2016)

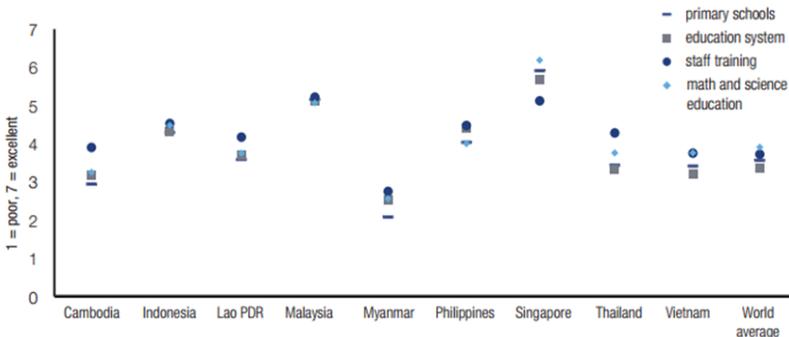


Figure 2: Quality of education as perceived by countries' business community
 (Source: Human Capital Outlook Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the WEF 2016)

There is still quite a large gap between Vietnam's labor productivity and the productivity of other developed and developing countries in Asia, as can be seen in Figure 2 (Tsychiya, 2015). The figure for labor productivity of Vietnam and some Asian countries from 1982 to 2013 below shows the clear difference in the labor productivity level of developed countries such as Singapore, Japan, Korea, and other countries. Considering the average and average-fair labor productivity group, the leading productivity level is in Thailand, followed by Indonesia and the Philippines. Vietnam is in the low productivity group.

Year 1990			Year 2000			Year 2010			Year 2013		
Country	Labor productivity (1000 USD)	Compared to Vietnam (VN = 1)	Country	Labor productivity (1000 USD)	Compared to Vietnam (VN = 1)	Country	Labor productivity (1000 USD)	Compared to Vietnam (VN = 1)	Country	Labor productivity (1000 USD)	Compared to Vietnam (VN = 1)
Singapore	65.6	23.4	Singapore	96.7	20.6	Singapore	116.9	15.6	Singapore	121.9	14.5
Japan	57.4	20.5	Taiwan	64.3	13.7	Taiwan	873	11.7	Taiwan	90.6	10.8
Taiwan	38.5	13.8	Japan	63.5	13.5	Japan	69.7	9.3	Japan	71.4	8.5
Malaysia	26	93	South Korea	42.8	9.1	South Korea	59.3	7.9	South Korea	61.5	7.3
South Korea	25.6	9.1	Malaysia	38.1	8.1	Malaysia	47.9	6.4	Malaysia	50.2	6.0
Thailand	11.3	4.0	Thailand	17.4	3.7	Thailand	22.4	3.0	Thailand	24.5	2.9
Indonesia	10.9	3.9	Indonesia	13.9	3.0	Indonesia	19.2	2.6	Indonesia	21.9	2.6
Philippines	10.1	33	Philippines	11.5	2.4	China	15	2.0	China	18.8	2.2
Laos	3.2	1.1	China	53	1.2	Philippines	14	1.9	Philippines	15.7	1.9
Vietnam	2.8	1	Vietnam	4.7	1	Vietnam	7.5	1	Laos	8.4	1.0
China	2.4	0.9	Laos	4.6	0.98	Laos	7.2	0.96	Vietnam	8.4	1
Myanmar	1.6	0.6	Cambodia	2.7	0.57	Myanmar	6.6	0.88	Myanmar	7.7	0.92
			Myanmar	2.5	0.53	Cambodia	4.1	0.55	Cambodia	4.9	0.58
USA	72.8	26.0	USA	88	18.7	USA	105.7	14.1	USA	107.6	12.8
Average of ASEAN	10.1	3.3	Average of ASEAN	13	2.8	Average of ASEAN	17.5	2.3	Average of ASEAN	19.4	2.3

Table 2: Comparison of Vietnam's labor productivity with some countries
Labor productivity by GDP and purchasing power at a fixed price in 2011
 (Source: APO Productivity Databook 2015)

According to the 2018 report on future production readiness prepared by the World Economic Forum (WEF), out of 100 countries assessed, Vietnam was in the group of countries with a low readiness level for the IR 4.0 revolution but with good potential. Among the foundational standards for assessing future production readiness, the factors of human resource development and technological innovation - which are directly related to IR 4.0 preparation of Vietnam, have low scores. Specifically: (1) Vietnam ranked only 70/100 in terms of human resources, in which the indicators of highly specialized labor, university quality ranked 81/100 and 75/100 respectively (VNEP, 2018); and (2) Vietnam ranked only 90/100 in technology and innovation, in which, 92/100 in technology platform (Technology Platform), and 77/100 in creative capacity. Compared to its neighboring countries in Southeast Asia, Vietnam ranked behind Malaysia (23/100 in technology and innovation and 21/100 in human resources), Thailand (41/100 in technology and innovation, 53/100 in human resources), or the Philippines (59/100 in technology and innovation and 66/100 in human resources). Vietnam ranked only close to Cambodia (with ratings respectively 83/100 and 86/100) (VNEP, 2018). This situation shows that there are many limitations in quality and quantity for Vietnam to meet the requirements of the trend and the context of global integration. The existing dynamics of globalization, as well as the domestic struggle for progress and sustainability, constitute an acute demand to “explore new insights, perspectives and ways of thinking about science, technology and engineering education in the new era” (Valco, Xing, 2019: 458).

One of the reasons behind the low rankings of Vietnam is the low starting point of labor productivity in Vietnam before 1986 when Vietnam was still a subsidized country whose economy was largely based on agriculture. The developed countries in South-East Asia and in the West had a relatively strong industry together with highly-developed science and technology at this time. Moreover, weak foreign language skills are also one of the factors that reduce Vietnam's labor competitiveness compared to other countries. According to Mr. Nguyen Minh Son, Rector of Hanoi University of Science and Technology, “the capacity to train high-quality human resources, high-level research capacity, and innovation capacity will be a measure of the university's level and a measure of competitiveness for each country.” (Van, 2016) If not promptly overcome, the labor productivity gap between Vietnam and other countries in the region and the world will continue to widen further. This places a heavy burden of responsibility on the higher education institutions, as they are the actors with the most important role in improving the quality of the nation's human resources. The task is clear: there is an urgent need to make continuous efforts to adapt to the changing needs of the region and the world and to close the gap in knowledge and skills of the students. A major part of how this can be achieved has to do with the modification and updating of university curricula. As President Tran Dai Quang (2016) emphasized: “If there is no suitable strategy, no education, and training, economic restructuring, development of science and technology, the development pressure on Vietnam will be much bigger, the distance between our country and developed countries will increase.” (Van, 2016)

The second is the problem related to the skills gap of students after graduation. Skilled workforce is central to the modernization of Vietnam's economy. As a middle-income developing country in Southeast Asia, Vietnamese society has a tradition of consensus about the importance of education. The interest in education is evident through the increased investment in education by both the government and educational institutions, as well as the people who are being educated or whose family members are being educated. On the other hand, there is a broad social agreement that Vietnam needs to do more to develop the “skills” and “quality” of its workforce. These needs are reflected in one of the essential goals of its 10-year national socio-economic development strategy in the 2011-2020 period (Prime Minister, 2012).

With the accession to the WTO and the ASEAN economic community, it has become more obvious that the explosion of the 4.0 revolution poses a considerable challenge for higher education institutions, as the requirements of the labor market change quickly in this new environment. The higher education institutions are thus confronted with the question: how can higher education programs also change quickly to meet market requirements?

However, despite a great deal of effort in improving the quality of graduate students (Harman, Hayden, Nghi, 2010), the situation is still alarming as hundreds of thousands of college graduates cannot find suitable jobs after graduation. For example, the statistics from October 2012 showed that a total of 165,000 graduates were unemployed, equivalent to 17% of the total number of unemployed workers (Pham, 2013). According to the statistical report of the Institute of Labor, Science and Social Affairs, in the fourth quarter of 2018 (October, November, December 2018), up to 135.8 thousand workers with tertiary education or higher were unemployed, accounting for 12.9% of total unemployed workers (GSO, 2018). Through a survey of a total of 251 department managers and 2,555 students, the authors Quang and William (2009) found that the skill development in Vietnamese universities did not match the needs of employers, especially technical skills, interpersonal skills, and teamwork skills. According to the survey of the authors Le & Nghia (2018), the results showed that there exists a considerable skill gap between what the graduates could offer and the skills required by the workplace (Figure 3).

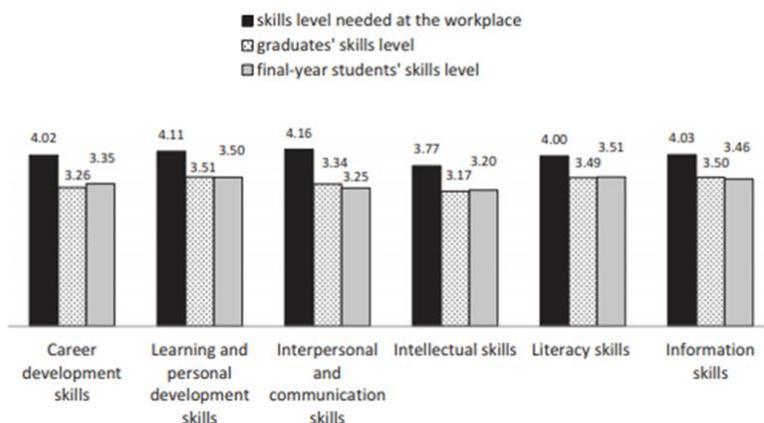


Figure 3: Vietnamese final-year students' and graduates' skill gap

(Source: *The skills gap of Vietnamese graduates and final-year university students*, Le & Nghia, 2018)

The constantly changing demands of the labor market can partially be blamed for this. Each area of expertise has a different rate of development, and the skills needs differ depending on the particular job. Some fields grow so fast that the supply side (i.e., universities, graduates) cannot meet the actual demand for skills, such as the current IT field (Le - Nghia, 2018). Although Vietnamese education has a tradition of doing very well in providing basic skills (World Bank, 2014), the educational system now faces greater challenges in training advanced skills as well as the 'on-demand' skills, the need for which will increase in the coming years. If not changed and improved, the skills gap after graduation will result in wasting educational resources, which will have a serious impact on the socio-economic development (World Bank, 2008). Therefore, equipping workers with the necessary skills will be an important part of

Vietnam's efforts to accelerate economic growth and continue the process of modernizing the economy in the next decade as well as the more distant future.

Thirdly, the problem is related to an ongoing brain drain. "Brain drain" is defined as the departure of educated or professional people from one country, economic sector, or field to another usually for better pay or living conditions (Meriam-Webster Dictionary, 2020). For nearly 10 years, from 2000 to October 2009, the Ministry of Education and Training sent 7,039 overseas students to study abroad, which was financed by the State budget (MOET, 2009). By 2017, the number of Vietnamese students studying abroad was around 94,662 (UNESCO, 2017). Vietnam ranks 6th (24,325 people) in the number of international students in the United States (IIE, 2018) and second (72,354 people - Figure 3) in the number of international students in Japan (JASSO, 2018). Meanwhile, in 2019, Vietnam received about 21,000 international students to study in Vietnam (Report on the Conference on summarizing the 2018-2019 school year and implementing the 2019-2020 school year mission of the Ministry of Education and Training), which only accounts for half of the number of international students studying abroad.

No.	Country (region)	Number of people
1	China	114,950
2	Vietnam	72,354
3	Nepal	24,311
4	Korea Republic	17,012
5	Taiwan	9,524
6	Sri Lanka	8,329
7	Indonesia	6,277
8	Myanmar	5,928
9	Thailand	3,962
10	Bangladesh	3,640

Table 3: Number of international students in Japan by country (region)

(Source: Survey on the situation of international students in 2018

<https://www.jasso.go.jp/about/statistics/intlstudente/2018/index.html>)

In fact, the competitive pressure of higher education institutions and university rankings is increasing. Due to the disproportion in support for universities in Vietnam and the developed world, attracting and retaining talented people is proving to be a difficult task for most public universities in Vietnam. According to World Bank statistics, when compared to neighboring countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, China and Malaysia, Vietnam has the highest percentage of skilled workers in the fields of engineering and technology employed in the United States. As many as 81.8% Vietnamese graduates of engineering find a job in the US; for the graduates from Thailand, the number was 29.7%, Indonesia 10.2%, China 14.9%, and Malaysia 43.3% (The World Bank, 2003); OECD Reviews of Innovation Policy Science, Technology and Innovation in Viet Nam). The above figures show that the "brain drain" in Vietnam is very high and many times higher than in other countries in the region, especially in the field of science and technology. The problem for Vietnamese universities is how to continue improving the quality of training, attract learners from countries around the world, and meet the needs of domestic learners.

Responses of the Public Universities in Vietnam to the internationalization of higher education

The internationalization of education will help domestic universities to improve their quality in the direction of training global citizens. Emphasis is laid on attracting international students to Vietnam and inviting talented people to research and teach,

which helps improving the ranking of Vietnamese universities. To overcome these challenges and to achieve these goals, the Vietnam Public Universities have been focusing on the following:

(1) *Firstly, giving priority to improving university governance and enhancing university autonomy.* The situation of Vietnamese universities before the renovation reflected the characteristics of an economy governed by the centralized management mechanism, administration, orders, and subsidies. Thus, higher education in Vietnam was also managed under centralized management, bureaucracy, and state subsidy. According to this governance model, the position and role of academic institutions and scholars was small and limited only to the scope of the task of executing the administrative decisions from the top down. This model of state-based university governance was the only existing model prior to Doi Moi in 1986. It did not allow any space for a combination of the three powers of the state, the market, and the scientific world, but rather promoted a model of governance based entirely on the state. The role of governance of science only focused on the field of professional activities "as regulated" by the state. Under this model, state management agencies directly performed the functions of distributing state budgets and resources and, at the same time, planning and organizing, directing, operating and supervising all higher education activities. All university faculties, subjects and units were placed under the jurisdiction of the managing ministries (Hung, 2019).

Vietnam's contemporary university administration has been developed according to a more modern and professional model. "Giant" universities have been previously divided into groups of universities competing with each other in different types of markets. In public areas, there are (i) national universities, (ii) regional universities, (iii) local universities, (iv) universities under ministries, (v) universities under corporations or other groups, and (vi) higher education institutions of central agencies and socio-political organizations (Hung, 2019).

Along with this new classification, public universities have been increasingly decentralized and became more autonomous. The new University Charter, promulgated under the Prime Minister's Decision No. 58/2010/QĐ-TTg in Article 6, states that "universities have autonomy and self-responsibility in accordance with the law." The Charter sets new rules for "planning and developing universities, organizing training activities, science, technology, finance, international relations, organization, and personnel." (Prime Minister, 2010: 3-4) The Education Law, issued in July 2005, stated explicitly in its Article 14 the goal of decentralization of education management, and enhancement of autonomy and self-responsibility of educational institutions. The Government's Resolution 14 (14/2005/NQ-CP issued on November 2, 2005) on the basic and comprehensive innovation of Vietnam's higher education in the 2006-2020 period also affirmed the importance of perfecting the higher education development policy in the direction of ensuring the autonomy and social responsibility of higher education institutions. New models of state management and the role of social supervision and evaluation of the higher education are to be developed, thereby renewing the management mechanism. Resolution 14 sees it necessary to change public higher education institutions in such manner so as to operate more autonomously as full legal entities, have the right to decide and take responsibility for training, research, organization, personnel, and finance; to abolish the mechanism of managing ministries, and to develop in its place a mechanism of state ownership representation of public higher education institutions. The Joint Circular of the Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Home Affairs (07/2009/TTLT-BGDĐT-BNV dated April 2009) provided new guidelines for developing the autonomy and self-responsibility for task performance, organizational structure and payroll for public non-business units of education and training. The units' autonomy is clearly stated in determining tasks of formulating plans and

organizing their implementation, in organizational structure and staffing of the unit, as well as in the recruitment, management, and employment of cadres, civil servants and public employees.

Accordingly, universities have increased autonomy in enrollment, training, personnel acquisition and organization, finance, and deciding how to attract the participation of lecturers, students, and other stakeholders; the educational quality accreditation mechanism is implemented according to domestic standards and international integration orientations. By the end of the 2016-2017 school year, there were only 23 public universities in the public university area, which were approved by the Prime Minister to pilot the project of autonomy in renovating the operation mechanism. By August 2018, only 45% of universities established university councils. The whole country had 5 institutions devoted to higher education quality accreditation, and 117 universities were accredited after having met the accreditation standards. As of September 30, 2019, 124 universities were accredited to satisfy the testing quality, 7 university met foreign accreditation standards; in addition, there were 158 accredited training programs, including 19 evaluation programs that complied with the domestic standards and 139 assessment programs according to regional and international standards (updated list as of August 31, 2019) (MOET, 2019).

Moreover, many cooperation projects with foreign partners to improve the capacity of managers and lecturers have been effectively exploited and implemented by universities. For example, VNU cooperated with the Creative Institute, University of Dublin, Ireland to organize the training course "Enhancing the capacity of VNU lecturers and managers according to the approach of innovative and entrepreneurial thinking (thinking towards efficiency) to promote and enhance skills in the 21st century and foster entrepreneurship and innovation in students." Thai Nguyen University and the University of Agriculture and Forestry (Thai Nguyen University) signed a cooperation agreement with the "Australia with Vietnam Human Resource Development" Program (Aus4Skill), which included many critical activities to be implemented, such as training in leadership development and management, as well as the planning skills for leaders and senior managers of universities; accrediting the quality of higher education and renovating the curriculum for department heads and senior managers; integration method for teachers, supporting disadvantaged students to achieve high results in learning; attending seminars on teaching skills for ethnic minority students and study the gap between the skills of graduate students and the requirements of employers in the Northern mountainous area, etc. These programs are based on international best practices for teaching and learning from reputable institutions and universities around the world.

(2) *The second measure pertains strengthening joint training programs and quality assurance, regularly updating and renovating training programs following the regional, national, and world trends.* With the aim of improving and renovating their training programs, many Vietnamese universities are looking forward to cooperating with foreign partners to implement high-quality training programs or joint training programs and dual-degree programs. In return, because of the prevailing trend of globalization of higher education, there are also many international higher education institutions that wish to provide their training programs to Vietnam through cooperation with Vietnamese universities. Although the issue of ensuring quality, managing and improving the quality of joint training programs in Vietnam has until now been very concerning, it cannot be denied that with many joint-training programs and models currently taking place at Vietnamese Universities, this process has made an important contribution to helping public universities promote the internationalization of higher education in their own institutions. It contributed in part to improve the quality of training programs, provide necessary skills, and enhance knowledge and skills for students after graduation. At the same time, this process contributes to creating the desired change, overcoming five weaknesses of the current

Vietnamese universities: (i) backwardness of training programs and training methods; (ii) backwardness and lack of facilities, especially laboratories; (iii) backward management methods; (iv) weaknesses in qualifications and competencies of faculty members; and (v) lack of practical relevance of the existing training and scientific research due to insufficient exposure to real-world environment.

As of the end of 2019, according to the statistics of the Ministry of Education and Training, there have been more than 500 training cooperation programs and cooperation programs licensed. Vietnamese higher education institutions conduct joint training with more than 200 higher education institutions in 30 countries and territories. These joint training programs with foreign countries are implemented in many forms: Full training in Vietnam or partly in Vietnam and partly abroad; training by foreign programs or programs jointly developed by partners or under a "franchising" arrangement, in which foreign educational institutions transfer training programs to Vietnamese educational institutions, while conducting quality assurance monitoring (Van, 2017). The advantage of these programs is that Vietnamese universities, lecturers, and students have access to advanced training programs that are common elsewhere in the world, but their training takes place in Vietnam with moderate learning costs compared to studying abroad. On the other hand, active cooperation with foreign partners in designing and implementing high-quality training programs that meet international standards also contributes to "retaining" domestic learners and attracting overseas students to Vietnam. This has proven to be an effective way of reducing the brain drain in Vietnam.

However, the challenge that Vietnam's public universities will have to wrestle with in the near future is to pay more attention to quality issues, while addressing current issues related to the implementation of programs, such as choosing the right partners, programs and standards; updating curricula and learning materials in accordance with domestic and international conditions; innovating teaching and learning methods; and improving practical skills of students.

(3) *Third, increase student exchange.* In recent years, Vietnamese universities have been promoting student exchange programs with partner universities abroad, opening up an international learning environment as well as many opportunities for Vietnamese students to practice skills, foreign languages, and knowledge relevant for international integration. On the receiving end, universities are constantly improving the quality and diversity of the offered programs for international students. They also develop new policies to support, take care of and attract foreign learners, such as tuition fee exemptions, or a reduction / exemption of dormitory fees. They Regularly organize cultural, physical training and sports activities, traditional New Year holidays, field trips and practical experiences for foreign students (Glavica, 2019). On the other hand, outward mobilities are encouraged, as universities also promote sending students to study at partner universities on short and long-term courses. Short-term exchange programs can include summer camps, the Asian Students GPAC, Global Partnership of Asian Colleges GPAC, the International Students Forum, the Art Exchange Program, and various other designed programs. The long-term program includes a credit exchange program, 1 + 3, 2 + 2, 3 + 1 (etc.) programs and various exchange scholarship programs.

For nearly ten years, from 2000 to October 2009, the Ministry of Education and Training sent 7,039 overseas students to study abroad sponsored by the State budget (of which there were 2,029 doctoral students, 1,598 Master degree students, and 626 trainees, i.e., 2,786 university students); on average, over 700 students were sent abroad to study abroad per year. In the school year 2008-2009, over 1,000 people were sent to study abroad, of which over 700 were enrolled in doctoral, master's degree and trainee programs funded by the state budget, excluding other sources. In the first ten months of 2009 alone, 900 people were sent to study abroad, including

585 (330 for doctoral studies, 184 for master's degrees and 71 for trainees) (MOET, 2009). In 2019, the number of Vietnamese students studying abroad under the agreements and schemes of the Government and managed by the Ministry of Education and Training is 6,067 (Xuan, 2019). The total number of Vietnamese students studying abroad has also increased rapidly over the years (Table 4).

Year	Quantity
2013	55,979
2014	59,468
2015	68,045
2016	82,668
2017	94,662

Table 4: Number of overseas Vietnamese students studying abroad over the years

(Source: <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>)

(4) *Fourthly, strengthening scientific research cooperation and international publication.* It can be said that scientific research and international publication are considered to be good measures of the level of scientific and technological development and competitiveness of many countries (Cao, 2020). Scientific research is also a measure of research capacity and integration ability of scientists. According to the university ranking criteria, the number of articles/lecturers and the number of citations of the published papers are belong among important criteria of evaluation and ranking. This has put great pressure on all universities in the world. In an open and digitized knowledge space, the level of internationalization is not limited only to student and faculty exchange activities but comprises also scientific research aimed towards community service. Universities clearly define that to internationalize higher education, it is necessary to improve the capacity of scientific research. This task is directly related to internationalization. Expanded international relations will provide students with an understanding of other cultures, academic environments, as well as new ways of contributing to one's society. Becoming global citizens entails this complex learning and sharing process.

Public universities in Vietnam, therefore, emphasize the development of science and technology and highly applicable researches, dedicating large amounts of funding for related activities. Some universities see the development of science and technology as a key to generate revenue for their internal activities. In 2018, the Ministry of Education and Training issued the Decision No. 2981/QĐ-BGDĐT on rewarding articles published in prestigious international scientific journals in the list of ISI, SCI, and SCIE (published in 2017) with a total reward of VND 5 billion. The minimum reward for an article was VND 2 million (approx. 80 EUR). Along with the incentive mechanism for the S&T activities of state management agencies, many universities also issued appropriate policies to encourage officials and lecturers to international publications. Such incentives help keep the scientists' dedication at a high level, while also attracting scholars and students from abroad to come back to work in their home country.

This can be very effective especially if the scholarly dedicated teacher adopts a student-centered approach to education, tending to the concrete needs and capacities of the learners (Nguyen – Vo, 2019). VNU-HCM has stipulated a reward for science and technology activities with a maximum reward equivalent to 30 times of to the basic salary for a project (equivalent to VND 40 million). Since 2010, VNU University of Social Sciences and Humanities (VNU-HN) has a support policy of VND 5-10 million per international article and VND 15 million for an article in ISI and Scopus magazines with high citation index. In 2018, the university supported VND 100-250 million for monographs and proceedings of internationally-published

scientific seminars. The University of Science - Thai Nguyen University awards VND 20 million to individuals who publish an article in a journal indexed in the ISI, without receiving financial support from any agency.

Thanks to such practical policies, the international publication results of many universities have been improved in a short period. The number of articles published in ISI by Vietnamese scholars is constantly growing, so its scientific position has also improved continuously since 2000, remaining closely after Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore in the ASEAN region. Vietnam moved from rank 75 to rank 50 in the world scientific ranking from 2000 to 2018 (Table 5).

Year	Rank	Documents	Citable documents	Citations	Self-Citations	Citations per Document	H index
2018	50	8837	7908	5741	1900	0.65	198
2015	58	4530	4363	43190	6701	9.53	198
2010	64	2196	2082	37865	5258	17.24	198
2000	75	402	394	12889	1391	32.06	198

Table 5: Ranking of Vietnam's international publications by year

(Source: <https://www.scimagojr.com/countryrank>)

In the past 10 years, the number of international publications indexed in Scopus in Vietnam has increased nearly 5 times, from 1,764 articles published in 2009, to 8,234 articles in 2018 (Source: Scopus's database, retrieved on January 7, 2019). The number and quality of research and publications are constantly increasing. Statistics adopted from Scopus' Database show that the number of international published works of Vietnam has had a stable growth rate in ASEAN, of which the highest was in 2016 (40.97%).

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Malaysia	11,945	15,778	20,760	22,873	25,440	28,777	27,436	30,228	32,774	30,892
Singapore	14,052	15,704	16,640	18,358	19,284	19,923	20,519	21,501	22,172	21,872
Thailand	8,531	10,107	10,735	12,040	12,393	13,615	13,149	14,818	16,430	16,713
Indonesia	2,108	2,833	3,434	4,079	5,305	6,699	8,278	12,341	20,405	29,031
Vietnam	1,764	2,190	2,414	3,154	3,758	4,061	4,159	5,863	6,578	8,234
Philippines	1,248	1,347	1,621	1,767	1,973	2,240	2,688	3,076	3,364	3,456
Myanmar	139	117	167	121	112	153	223	308	436	514
Cambodia	189	196	223	265	271	329	358	400	430	476
Laos	103	138	157	212	205	224	246	270	238	300
Brunei	119	124	173	247	292	390	440	526	514	460

Table 6: International publication of Scopus for ASEAN countries in 2009-2018

(Source: Nguyen Thu Thuy and Tran Tu Uyen, "In 10 years, the number of international publications in Vietnam has increased nearly 5 times"; Retrieved from <https://dantri.com.vn/giao-duc-khuyen-hoc/10-nam-so-luong-cong-bo-quoc-te-cua-viet-nam-tang-gan-5-lan-20190115081238291.htm>)

With the continuous and proactive efforts of universities directed at international integration, on September 11, 2019, the Times Higher Education (THE) announced the results of the World University Rankings 2020 during the academic summit of THE held in Zurich (Switzerland). Accordingly, for the first time, Vietnam National University - Hanoi (VNU) and two Vietnamese higher education institutions were ranked by THE together with nearly 1,400 leading universities in the world. Based on the 2020 ranking, Vietnam National University - Hanoi and Hanoi University of Science and Technology belongs to the world group of 801-1000; followed by Vietnam National University - Ho Chi Minh City in the 1000+ group (Table 7). Vietnam National University - Hanoi has the index of teaching, scientific research, and international integration, which is at the top of Vietnam's group of higher education institutions in the Ranking. Vietnam National University - Ho Chi Minh City ranks first in the corporate income index. Meanwhile, Hanoi and Hanoi University of Science and Technology has the highest scientific citation index, achieving the goal of having four higher education institutions in the top 1,000 in the world, as part of the Project on improving the higher education quality in the 2019 - 2025 period (approved by the Prime Minister).

Rank	Name	Overall	Teaching	Research	Citations	Industry Income	International Outlook
801-1000	Vietnam National University, Hanoi 🇻🇳 Vietnam	22.2-28.2	21.9	9.1	38.8	36.5	47.4
801-1000	Hanoi University of Science and Technology 🇻🇳 Vietnam	22.2-28.2	14.7	8.4	42.3	37.2	44.6
1001+	Vietnam National University (Ho Chi Minh City) 🇻🇳 Vietnam	10.7-22.1	14.1	8.7	16.0	42.8	40.3

1 to 3 of 3 - Page 1 of 1 (filtered from 1,396 total entries) Show 25 entries

Table 7. Rankings of Vietnamese universities in THE World Rankings.

(Source: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2020/world-ranking>)

Along with THE, QS rankings are rankings of the most prestigious universities in the world. Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) from the UK published the University Rankings of Asia in 2019. Based on this ranking, Vietnam has seven universities in the rankings,

including Vietnam National University - Hanoi, Vietnam National University - Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi University of Science and Technology, Ton Duc Thang University, Can Tho University, Hue University, and Da Nang University. Meanwhile, Vietnam National University - Hanoi and Vietnam National University - Ho Chi Minh City were the only two universities listed in the 201+ group of the rankings in 2013. After five years, Vietnam National University - Hanoi has climbed 76 places, and the number of ranked universities in Vietnam has increased by five.

# RANK	UNIVERSITY	LOCATION	COMPARE	STARS™
2019	University search	Vietnam		<input type="checkbox"/> Rated only
= 124	 Vietnam National University, Hanoi More	Vietnam	<input type="checkbox"/>	
144	 Vietnam National University - Ho Chi Minh City (VNU-HCM) More	Vietnam	<input type="checkbox"/>	
261-270	 Hanoi University of Science and Technology More	Vietnam	<input type="checkbox"/>	
291-300	 Ton Duc Thang University More	Vietnam	<input type="checkbox"/>	4★ RATING
351-400	 Can Tho University More	Vietnam	<input type="checkbox"/>	
451-500	 Hue University More	Vietnam	<input type="checkbox"/>	
451-500	 University of Da Nang More	Vietnam	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Ranking 7 of 7 (498 items) 1 Results per page: 25

Conclusion

Thus, we can confirm that the internationalization of higher education is an indispensable process in the existence and development of public universities in Vietnam. In parallel with the policies of the state, there have been many efforts implemented by public universities to improve both the quality and quantity of training, integration, as well as to enhance competitiveness with universities in the world and in the region.

However, we should openly acknowledge that the internationalization process at public universities, in particular, and in Vietnam, in general, is in its beginning phase. This implies that in the coming time, Vietnamese public universities will need to increase their autonomy in expanding their international partnerships, innovating their training programs, strengthening cooperation, academic exchange, and exchange of lecturers and students. These appear to be indispensable prerequisites for the Vietnamese universities to be able to improve their position on the international scale and to increase the effectiveness and relevance of their contribution to Vietnam's socio-economic and political development. Also important is to emphasize true “‘democratic governance’ with an intentional exercise of political authority” – both in education as well as other sectors of the society – so as to avoid “a new social paradigm, in which a select few enjoy immense benefits at the expense of many” (Valco, 2015: 132).

To facilitate this process, a change of mindset in the area of philosophy of education will need to take place (Ibragimova et al., 2020). First of all, further economic development should be an intentional, concerted effort of the government and private sector, as we see in the developed countries. This leads us to believe that “Vietnam’s government should promote public-private partnership in innovative activities” and follow through with its “decision No. 592/QĐ-TTg dated 22/5/2012 on the program on supporting the development of science and technology enterprises and science and technology organizations implementing the mechanism of autonomy and self-responsibility” (Nguyen – Nguyen, 2018: 62-63).

Furthermore, the vision of Vietnam’s development should not be exclusively focused on crude economic growth as measured by GDP and GDI (Growth Development Index) but rather should include the perspective of human development (measured in the so-called Human Development Index, HDI). Any growth without such holistic development is bound to create social and economic imbalances that will, in the long run, destabilize the Vietnamese society. We must not settle for an economic growth that “does not consider the human (i.e. the human being as a person endowed with intrinsic dignity and value) as the goal of development,” because “such growth can lead to a lot of risks such as: increase in the unemployment; exclusive growth (due to only a few people getting their benefits from the economic growth); growth with no voice (because the growth does not guarantee democracy); growth with no origin (because the growth takes place, but loses its cultural identity); growth with no future (because the growth lacks sustainability)” (Truong, 2020: 1). Existing economic and political theories should be reevaluated in light of this new goal and complemented by a new, comprehensive philosophical outlook that takes into account the goals of human development and long-term sustainability. This includes upholding the notions of human rights and dignity, which are “related to a more comprehensive notion of common humanism among the citizens,” with the potential to “enhance a common understanding and ... active practicing of human rights by socially connected individuals” (Do – Valco, 2018: 621)

This new philosophy of social and economic development requires a new philosophy of education. It will no longer be enough to develop scientific knowledge, critical thinking, IT skills, and foreign languages competency through the programs offered by the Vietnamese higher education institutions. Instead, a new focus on personality development, including the soft skills and moral responsibility of the students, will need to be implemented. A philosophy of education for the 21st century will likely reflect the ‘student centered approach’ to education, as opposed to the traditional models centered more on teachers and curriculums’ content, as Truong (2019) rightly observes after analyzing educational programs of the more developed East Asian countries. Educators there “understand the value of increasing the student’s initiative and autonomy (primarily in terms of a developed sense of personal responsibility), increasing adaptability, moving towards a lifelong learning society, supporting the workers to improve their skills as well as to re-train the workers to adapt to a rapidly changing job market.” (Truong, 2019: 207). This is yet another good example of the importance of the internationalization of higher education – Vietnam can learn from international experiences, ideas and trends and then implement these carefully and sensitively in its own cultural and social context.

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