

**Opportunities and Challenges for Vietnam's Higher Education
on the globalisational process:
Experiences from VNU-USSH-Hanoi**

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Abstract: From the manifest of Doi Moi's policy (Renew Policy) in 1986 and on the globalisational process as well, Vietnam's education in general and higher education in particular is facing the big challenges and opportunities. This process witness the wide ranges of chances, especially in terms of the higher education's philosophy, internationalising curriculum, international co-operations, getting more supports on training the human resources, updating the learning materials and facilities as well. However, with the present conditions, Vietnam's higher education is also facing the challenges and dilemma in areas of internationalising curriculums and human resources capacity, between the development of public university and private university; in changing the university administration and quality assurance and accreditation. This paper aims at identifying the main opportunities and challenges for Vietnam higher education, especially in area of social sciences and focuses on the main solutions for keeping the balance development during the globalisational process.

Keywords: Vietnam, Higher Education, Globalisation, University Government, Social Sciences

Vietnam Higher Education system: A brief overview

Setting for higher education in Vietnam

The higher education system in Vietnam is in a phase of rapid and sustained change. Since 1993, when the Fourth Plenum of the Communist Party Central Committee declared education as a priority area for national investment, the proportion of the relevant age group participating in higher education has increased from 2 per cent to over 13 per cent, and a higher education system that was comprised of small, specialised institutions has been transformed into one in which a small number of leading universities are large, multidisciplinary and progressively developing a research capability.

The changes of the system are witnessed with rapid changes recently. Some special

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resolutions implemented as the national strategies for social development in Vietnam:

- A Higher Education Reform Agenda (Resolution 14/2005/NQ-CP) adopted in 2005 introduced measures intended to achieve further significant growth and change in the system by 2020. It is planned, for example, that, by 2020, 45 per cent of the relevant age group will participate in higher education, that higher education institutions will be more financially self-reliant, and that as many as 40 per cent of all enrolments will be in the non-public (or private) sector of higher education;
- The Government has clear goals for higher education in its “Socio-Economic Development Plan 2006-2010,” (SEDP). The SEDP aims for an overall quantitative goal of “increasing enrolment in universities and colleges by 10 percent annually, to reach a level of 200 students over 10,000 population by 2010” and an overall qualitative goal of “approaching the advanced education standards of the region and the world,” specifically inter alia by: renovating curricula and teaching methods; developing systems that increase study opportunities through transfers; renovating financial mechanisms and policies to make institutions more pro-active and responsible for finance, staff and organization; renovating management with stronger decentralization, and clearer responsibilities and authorities for different entities; implementing quality assurance and accreditation schemes, gradually applying standards and criteria used by developed countries and joining international educational quality accreditation systems; encouraging the establishment of private institutions, including high-quality, accredited and 100 percent foreign-invested institutions in science, technology, and economic management; encouraging foreign scientific and educational experts and Vietnamese expatriates to teach in Vietnam;
- The Government has detailed its aspirations for higher education in the “Higher Education Reform Agenda” (HERA). HERA develops a strategy for the development of higher education and research. The main objectives of the strategy are: (i) a dramatic increase in capacity to allow an increase of the participation rate in higher education (or tertiary) institutions, which implies huge investments in infrastructure and in training of new lecturers and faculty; (ii) simultaneous increase in quality and/or efficiency of the system; (iii) the introduction or reinforcement of research in universities -- in order better to train the future new teachers, to enrich and upgrade present teachers’teaching and to upgrade the quality level and international visibility of Vietnamese universities; and (iv) improved governance of the higher education and research system at both national and regional levels, as well as of universities. These goals imply greater autonomy for individual institutions and measures that create a climate of competition between and within institutions. In HERA, the Government has set the following targets for the higher education sector: (i) revenue from science and

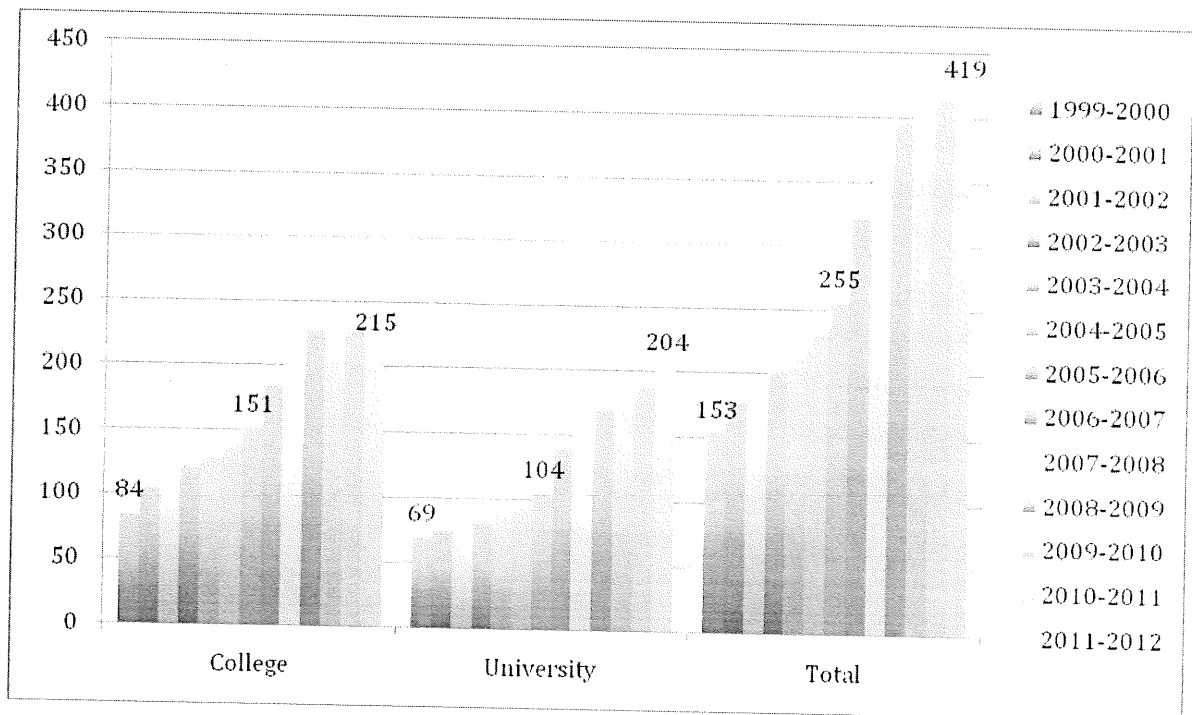
technology activities increased to 15 percent of total university revenue by 2010, and to 25 percent by 2020; (ii) the proportion of university teaching staff with masters level degrees increased to 40 percent by 2010, and to 60 percent by 2020; (iii) the proportion of university teaching staff with doctoral level degrees increased to 25 percent by 2010, and to 35 percent by 2020; and (iv) the ratio of university students to teaching staff reduced to 20:1 by 2020;

(Source: <http://moet.edu.vn>)

Higher education size and resources

Higher education in Viet Nam has a long tradition. The ancient system was established in the 11th century with Quoc Tu Giam, Vietnam's first university. The current system dates from 1904, when a part of the University of IndoChina was established in Hanoi. Since the August Revolution of 1945, and especially after the victory in the war of resistance against the French in 1954, the number of universities and colleges increased substantially. In the last 25 years or so growth has been particularly rapid – from 101 universities and colleges in 1987 to the present total of 419¹. Among them, there are 307 newly established and upgraded institutions in last decade. Nearly all provinces have at least one university or college (62 provinces among 64). Besides such number of higher education's institutions, there is also an existence of military and police's institutions, 22 and 6 institutions respectively.

Chart 1: the increase of number of higher education system:



¹Report by MOET 2012

(Source: <http://moet.edu.vn>)

In the nearly 30 years since Doi Moi, the higher education system in Vietnam has expanded in both scale and scope- driven by strong household and labor market demand for higher education. There are now 2.1 million Vietnamese enrolled in 419 higher education institutions, compared with just 162,000 students in 110 institutions in 1993, transforming the system from one that was reserved for the very elite- to one that provides education to a wider population.

Statistical data on Vietnam's Higher education-Academic year 2011-2012

Number of Higher education institutions	419
- University	214
- College	205
Including	
- Nonpublic Institutions	82
- Public institutions	337
Number of students	2,204,313
Number of graduates in 2012	402,277
Faculty staff in 2012	
- Doctor	9,152
- Master and advanced professionals	36,803

(Source: <http://moet.edu.vn>)

Time series data on the growth of higher education system in Vietnam

	1987	1997	2009	2012
No of institutions	101	126	336	419
No of students	133,136	715,231	1,719,419	2,204,313
No of graduatees	19,900	73,736	222,665	402,277
No of academic staff	20,172	20,112	61,190	84,109

(Source: <http://moet.edu.vn>)

Globalisation process: Opportunities and challenges to Vietnam's Higher Education

Globalisation process is highly emerged recently, which is acknowledged as the changing factors:

“Universities no longer have a monopoly on the production of knowledge. They will be competing with suppliers of information and ideas who have no need of expensive campuses, athletic fields, or faculty clubs” (Atkitson 2010).

In a much-quoted interview a few years ago, American management expert Peter Drucker said that “thirty years from now the big university campus will be a relic. Universities won’t survive in their present form. The main reason is the shift to the continuing education of already highly educated adults as the center and growth sector of education.” Higher education’s system is in changing process, in terms of size, structure, model as well as the diverse model, popualisation, aiming at the learner-centered approach, and information-centered model as well.

In such process, Vietnamese Higher education system has been changed fundamentally (Kim, NV 2012, Nha, NV 2012 and Hartman et al. 2010) on the basis of visionary, roles on contributing to human resources as well as on adapting to the social requirements on learning outcomes. Particularly, ideas by Son, Nguyen Hong (2012) strongly emphasis on opportunities and challenges for higher education in Vietnam in different aspects, especially in terms of international cooperation, and curriculum internationalised process.

Opportunities

On the process of being globalised, Vietnam higher education has been witnessed changes in terms of:

(a) from providing the human resources for administrative system to meeting the requirements of socialism oriented-economic market; (b) from mostly based on governmental budget on training to motivate the various resources; (c) from scholarship distribution to all students into student’s fee contribution; (d) from single disciplinary training into the multi-disciplinary.

(Nha, 2012)

Such changes contributed opportunities throughout the following aspects:

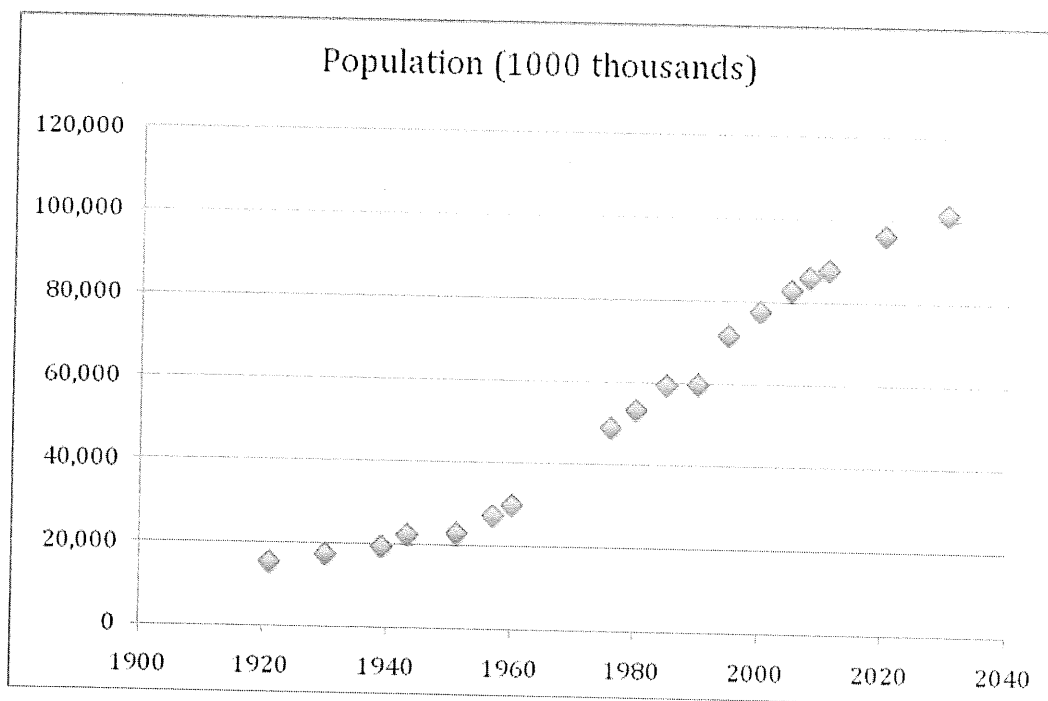
- The first opportunity is acknowledged in term of curriculum internalisation with significant chance on receiving and accessing the advanced and updated professional knowledge and information. In additions, it is a significant chance for Vietnam higher education on getting the experiences from other regional and international countries on training, organising higher educational process, and university administration in the chaos time as well;
- Secondly, the higher education’s programs are being internationalised in the aspects of international cooperation, international linkage on training, researching with interdisciplinary and inter-regional projects;

- Thirdly, the globalisational process also contributes the great impacts to each faculty and student's self-image and self-motivation on adapting the active learning and teaching methods to improve the academic capacity on learning and researching;
- Finally but not limited that there will be a great chance to have the comprehensive application on teaching, assessing and accrediting methodology and methods following the international and regional standards. The model of learning outcomes for all curriculums now are based on CDIO's initiatives, with skilled expectations for the graduated students. The changes in the structure of undergraduated programs with such initiatives in last few years are the great evidence for higher education in Vietnam.

Challenges

From recent reports and research by MOET, it is found that there are wide ranges of challenges for Vietnam Higher Education, in terms of:

- The rapid population growth and requirements on promoting the intellectual and professional skill are the first challenges for constructing the higher education system in Vietnam.



-It is required to update and internationalise curriculum frequently with the widely acknowledgement of graduated qualification which is followed the international and regional standards. The utmost challenge is in term of program's structure and contents, and also in expectation of how to develop the applicable programs with international standards. The existed sandwich training programs, modules of 1+1 at master level or 2+2 or 3+1 at undergraduate levels are such significant examples. In fact, the ideas on multi-nationalisation in curriculum design also contribute to the inequality on training cooperation, because there is

existed unbalance on the roles and responsibilities between Vietnamese institutions with lower priorities and the partners, in both programs and models of training and administrating. The international partners are responsible on programs and its name on the qualification while the Vietnamese institutions are in charge of all program process which negative impact to the qualification holders;

- It is also expected to get the fruitful outcomes from renovation in university administration, with aligned tasks on strengthening the faculty's academic and administrative abilities: There are significant existed reasons for limitations of Vietnam's higher education system, in terms of management, quality assurance and less-planned innovation for the system. The educational qualification, especially at graduated level is still limited and which also contributed to the social and economic development in following years;

- It is also urgent request to apply the international standards on quality accreditation for all training programs. This process is still complicated with different social constructed standards to be applied in Vietnamese university contexts where there are lack of facilities for academic supports and placement. It is acknowledged as the main challenge for Vietnam higher education at the gate of globalisational process. This aspect also contributes to the challenges between acquired quality and international standards. Almost universities have the center or task force of quality assurance, currently making the reports with national and regional standards

3. Experiences of Hanoi University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University in process of globalisation

3.1. Brief history

Hanoi University of Arts established by the Decree No.45 signed by President Ho Chi Minh on October 10, 1945 and the Hanoi General University established on June 5, 1956 was the precursors of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University-Hanoi. The Prime Minister issued the Decree No. 97/CP to set up Vietnam National University-Hanoi on December 10, 1993. The University of Social Sciences and Humanities, member of Vietnam National University-Hanoi, founded base on the former Faculties of Social Sciences of Hanoi General University.

However, the university history dates back to the Temple of Literature, the first university established in 1076 in Vietnam. Since its inception, the University has been being a place to assemble revolutionary intellectuals and erudite scholars. Amongst those there was a number of famous scholars who established the social sciences and humanities of the New Vietnam and brought fame to this country. Pioneer spirit, creativeness and moral standards are key traditions of the university, which are inherited and developed by the university's generations.

3.2. Facts and figures

There are 27 undergraduate programs, 29 master programs and 31 programs at PhD level. The university consists of 16 faculties and 13 research centers. The total staffs, both academic and nonacademic, are 488, comprising from 133 PhD, 147 Master. There are 75 professors and associate professors among them. The total students in all programs and model (fulltime and part-time) are 13,059 including 562 international students at undergraduate and graduate levels.

Having accompanied with renovation and integration process in Vietnam, international cooperation has been being considered one of the major tasks in development strategy of the university. At present, the university has signed cooperative agreements with more than 100 international partners including universities, institutions, foundations, agencies, and organisations from many countries.

3.3. Vision and mission:

As a traditionally prestigious, leading and long-history one, the University of Social Sciences and Humanities-Hanoi has a mission of the leading center to pass on knowledge and educate qualified human resource in social sciences and humanities in service of national construction and development.

The University will be the leading one nationwide in the areas of social sciences and humanities and be equally recognized as regional universities on order to well serve the cause of national industrialization and modernization.

Concentrating on building and developing some majors and specialties at international standards on the basis of internationalizing curricula, promoting academic activities and expanding international cooperation with regional and international advanced partners.

Source: <http://ussh.vnu.edu.vn>

3.4. Specific challenges and dilemma for the social sciences in Vietnam in general and the VNU-USSH in particular

Firstly, the input for training process is at low quality level, which is impacted by that almost, high school's students are aiming at the economic, financial training programs. In addition the output of such process is expected to get the highest quality. That is the inevitable dilemma in the globalisation process in early 21st century;

Secondly, the aims of undergraduate training are at high quality but the human resources and facilities are still under-expected to level at the international standards;

Thirdly, the staffs in social sciences in general and in the USSH in particular are still facing difficulties on professional and English on making the fruitful dialogues with international scholars;

Fourthly, the graduates are expected to work in global settings and globalisational environment, however the training process is also facing the challenges on applying the new teaching methods; critical theories and methodology in researching and applying social research outcomes in reality. Many faculties are at low level of changing and self-satisfied with ad-hoc academic position;

Fifthly, people who are working in the social science and humanity area get lower income in comparing with those in economic, service and technical sector which also contribute to the challenges for social sciences on motivating good students and support student with self-confident in the training process;

And finally, on taking part in the globalisational process, the ability on using English as an official language is the biggest challenges for Vietnam scholar in general and for those who are working and studying in social sciences in particular. Courses in English account a great amount of credits in undergraduate program. As an example in Vietnam National University-Hanoi, the credit of these courses account up to 12% of the whole program.

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