



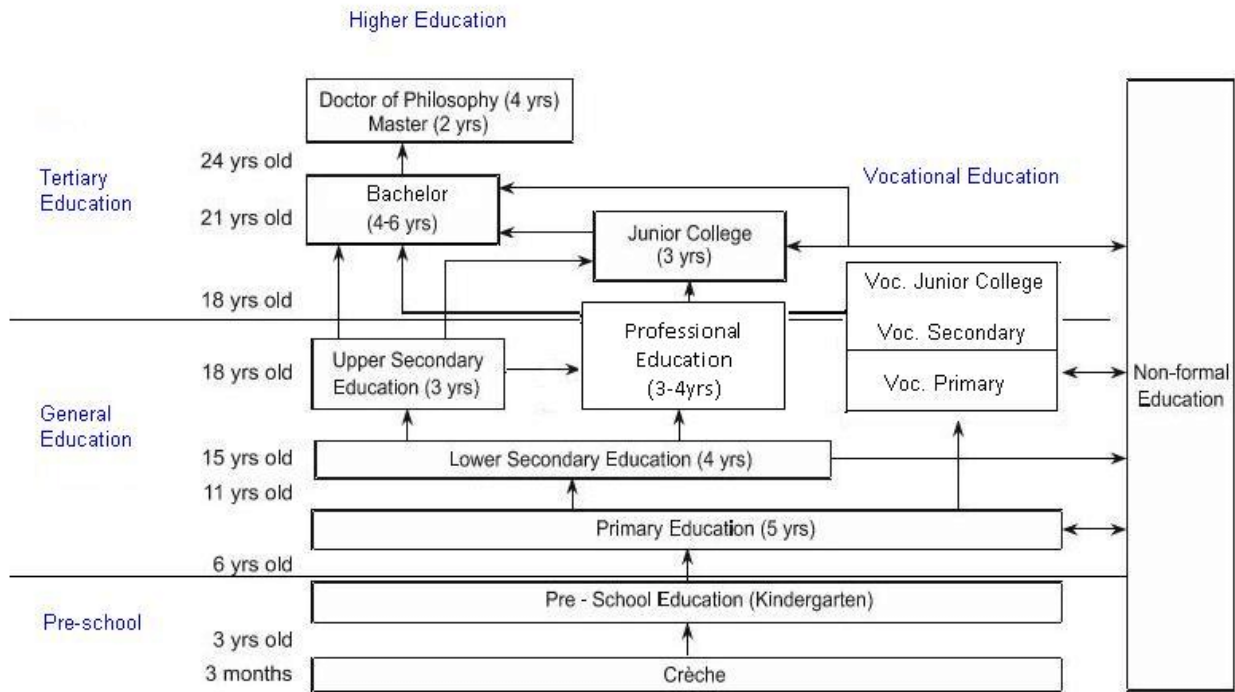
3.5 National Recommendations for International Cooperation in Teaching, Learning and Research (T/L/R)

Country: Vietnam

1. Higher education system in Vietnam

Education is a highly valued and respected activity in Vietnam for thousands of years. Everyday, 25% of the population is directly participating in education and training activities either teachers or students. Therefore, it is a main preoccupation of the Government with a considerable share of the overall State budget which accounts for 5.8% of GDP excluding further about 2.2% of GDP from household expenditure on education (Phung Xuan Nha, 2019).

In Vietnam, children participate in education ladder at the early age with pre-school level called as crèche and kindergarten and gradually up to higher education. According to Vietnam Education Law 2009, the education system of Vietnam is described in the following chart:



1.1. Types of universities

According to the traditional concept, most Vietnamese people consider higher education is the precious key to the success of every person’s life, therefore, the race to have a seat at the university is rather fierce and competitive for both parents and students. Along with the economy market and especially the globalization in education, the number of universities ranging from private to foreign-owned universities has been growing rapidly in recent years. As of 2016, there are total 235 universities and institutions nationwide including 170 public, 60 private and 05 foreign-owned universities as well as 37 research institutes nominated PhD trainings only and 33 pedagogical colleges and 02 professional secondary schools.

Higher education programs in Vietnam consist of short-cycle programs which last three to three and a half years, and offered mainly by colleges or junior colleges (“cao dang”). In addition to short-cycle programs, there are long-cycle bachelor degree programs offered at universities (“dai hoc”) and postgraduate programs at master and



doctoral levels. According to the report from the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), the number of annual enrollments of all study levels is slightly increasing. For example, in the academic year 2015/16, the total higher education enrollments was 1.767.879 - increasing by 0.8% compared to previous school year. Most students pursued Maths and Statistics, Computing and Information Technology, Engineering Technology, Processing Production, Architecture and Constructions, Agriculture and Forestry, Marine Aquaculture, Management, Law. The post-graduate education enrollments was 105.801, rising 12.8% compared to the previous year. In similar, the enrollments for PhD training is 13.587 increasing 25% compared to the previous year.

1.2. The Ministry of Education and Training: Administration and Finance of Education

In Vietnam, MOET is the Ministry specializing in planning and directly for the national education and training as well as for many aspects of curriculum development and production of teaching and learning materials. It also participates partially along with the Ministry of Finance and the Prime's Minister Office in broader decisions of policy formulation, target setting, and sectoral financing. However, it is said that the management and financing of education and training are getting decentralized. Since Vietnam gained independence, the system was built following the old Soviet system, where all higher education institutions (HEIs) were small, mono-disciplinary, or in other words, very specialized to train the labour force to meet the projected labour requirements of each sector (George, 2010). Originally, many universities were formed by and under their line ministries. For example, Posts and Telecommunications Institute of Technology (PTIT) was placed under the Ministry of Information and Communications, the University of Health was put under the Ministry of Health and so on.

For over the past five years, the Vietnam Government has promoted the university autonomy in which the universities are able to take their own decisions in line with the related state regulations and the MOET only investigate the whole process periodically



or anytime needed. Until now, there are about 20 universities in Vietnam are running with autonomy mechanism.

2. National policies and programs for the internationalization of HEIs

According to Resolution No. 14/2005/NQ-CP dated November 02 2005 on substantial and comprehensive renewal of Vietnam's tertiary education in the 2006-2020 period, international integration is considered as an important task to be implemented for the educational reform. In the Resolution, it figured out the following objectives for internationalization:

- To formulate a strategy on international integration, raise the cooperation capability and competitiveness of Vietnam's tertiary education in the implementation of international treaties and commitments.
- To organize teaching and learning in foreign languages, especially in English for the immediate futures; to improve the quality of training and research programs which can attract foreigners; in the world; to reach agreements on equivalent diplomas and training programs with tertiary education institutions in the world; to encourage various forms of high-quality training cooperation, and exchange of lectures and experts with foreign countries; to encourage overseas Vietnamese lecturers to give lectures in Vietnam; to increase the number of foreign students in Vietnam. To encourage study at home under foreign training programs; to adopt an appropriate consultancy and management mechanism to help Vietnamese students study overseas choose study disciplines, subject and schools, and achieve good study results and high efficiency.
- To create mechanism and favorable conditions for investors and prestigious tertiary education institutions in the world to open international tertiary education institutions in Vietnam or enter into training cooperation with Vietnamese tertiary education institutions.



In order to formalize the mentioned-above objectives, the Government has issued a number of policies to carry out different internationalized academic programs at universities nationwide. It can be listed as the Decree No. 86/2018/ND-CP on foreign cooperation and investment in education from early childhood education, school to high education sectors. It regulates foreign cooperation on investment activities in form of:

- Joint education with foreign partners in early childhood education and at school level;
- Joint training with foreign partners at the tertiary level;
- Foreign-invested education institutions at all education levels; and
- Representative offices of foreign education institutions and organizations.

3. Internationalization of universities in Vietnam

In order to carry out the mission of internationalization that the State and Government points out, Vietnamese universities have been carrying out a number of outstanding programs with the aim to access to high quality training program of renowned universities in the world. Each program has their own advantage and disadvantage and it has been always changing to keep up with the ever-changing educational approaches and new economical status of the country.

3.1. Advanced Bachelor's program

Advanced Bachelor's program has the following features: the curricula are imported from the foreign universities so that students can get closest access to the modern and advanced knowledge which are being implemented in developed countries. The language of teaching is in English with the participation of some foreign professors during the course. Therefore, the students enrolling this program benefits a lot from the program quality and language proficiency. For over the past 10 years, there are



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total 37 Bachelor's programs taken at 24 different universities with 24 foreign universities in Vietnam.

However, it is the fact that the Advanced Bachelor's program also reveals some backwards during its implementation. First, the English barrier makes the communication between teachers and students difficult, sometimes, they have to use their mother language to explain or present a specific topic. Second, reference books in English is quite limited so students find it hard to cultivate their knowledge at higher level. Third, the number of native teachers who should have attended classes is limited due to a very high cost for travelling and staying.

3.2. Joint Training with foreign partners at tertiary level

This kind of program allows students to study half or more than half of the undergraduate training programs in Vietnam and be transferred to complete their program at foreign partner universities. This model helps Vietnamese students to reduce the total cost including tuition fee and cost of stay because of the shortened time staying in overseas. The tuition fee for students to enroll this program in Vietnam is normally 2,5 or 3 times higher than regular students (equivalent to 3000USD/year).

For over the past 10 years, there are a lot of joint international training programs in Vietnam in most of the universities. According to the data from MOET, at the end of July 2017, there are in total 531 joint training programs with 258 foreign HEIs in 33 countries and territories all over the world, of which 306 programs were approved by MOET and 225 were approved by autonomus universities and mainly at master's and bachelor's level. Most of these programs is taught in English, other media of instruction are French, Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Russian. From 2006 to 2017, there were nearly 90,000 students enrolled in joint programs and about 48,000 graduate students. Europe is the Vietnam's biggest partner with 238 joint training programs, followed by Asia with 26%. In terms of nations, France, England and the



USA are the top three foreign countries collaborating with VN in offering respectively 86, 85, 84 joint programs. In terms of the fields of study, Economics and Business Management are the most popular majors of joint training programs.

However, the success of this model is something to be questioned. According to the data from International Cooperation Department, MOET, more and more programs have been closed recently due to the low enrollment of students. It can be due to the same disadvantages of the said-above Advanced Bachelor's Programs and the emerging foreign-invested universities like RMIT (Australia), BUV (Britain), and so on.

3.3. Student and Staff Exchange Programs

In tradition, most Vietnamese universities have to do exchange programs on their own from seeking foreign partners, comparing curricula and reaching to a mutual agreement. Therefore, only national and well-known universities with good language background could carry out this program successfully. For the recent years, thanks to Erasmus program funded by EU, more universities can access to those exchange program with highly favorable conditions in financial issues which facilitates the participation of Vietnamese teachers and students. Moreover, effective policies of Vietnamese government, remarkable efforts of MOET in expanding its relationships with a wide range of countries, international organizations and institutions, and an increase in living standards and family incomes are key elements for the significant growth in the number of Vietnamese students studying abroad in recent years.

If there were only 1,139 students studying abroad in 1990, this number was increased to 25,505 in 2005. According to the latest statistic from MOET, there were about 130,000 Vietnamese students studying overseas at all levels, mainly in higher education. These students fall into three categories: i) those who receive scholarships from foreign countries, institutions or organizations; ii) the Vietnamese government scholarship recipients; and iii) self-financed students. Japan is the world's leading host



of Vietnamese students with 38,000 students in 2016 and it is followed by Australia (31,000) the USA (28,000), China (13,000) and England (11,000). The number of Vietnamese government scholarship recipients accounts for 0.04% of the total number of students abroad, and the majority of which are undergraduate and PhD students.

4. Problems and Challenges

4.1. Problems

- The Vietnamese universities are not really ready in terms of resources for the internationalisation, especially infrastructure, outdated training programs, human quality, international networks, language barrier and high cost. Therefore, implementation of internationalisation in accordance with the major guidelines of the State (joint training and advanced programs) is often unsustainable: good initial enrollment because of the attractiveness of the program, but later failure to ensure quality standards;
- Most of universities have not established policies for general international cooperation as well as internationalisation strategies with specific goals and actions. The model of international cooperation management is mainly top-down, causing many shortcomings in handling procedures and papers, limiting the flexibility and creativity of both academic and non-academic staff;
- Non-academic staff, lecturers and students have not acknowledged the importance and urgency of internationalisation;
- Not every training program meet international standards. The different educational system between Vietnam and partner universities also causes difficulties in program mapping and recognition of certificates and diplomas.



4.2. Challenges

- Vietnamese universities with limited resources are now facing the continuous changes in education technology: technological advancements in teaching methods (online and blended learning) or innovation and changes in thinking and teaching equipment; phenomenon "brain drain" (unable to retain talents); regularly updated policies which are more flexible for mode of cooperation but strict quality control; and lack of attractiveness for international students to come to study in Vietnam.

5. Conclusions and National Recommendations

- **Highly demand a particular and specific policy for H.E internationalization** because the Decrees from National Assembly or Prime Minister are still general, without orientation of which fields should be focused on. The Decree No.86 is more open but no detailed guideline is given to carry out blended and online joint learning. It is also necessary to develop a stricter and more effective legal framework for quality assurance, accreditation and recognition of joint training programs;
- **More dissemination activities to strengthen local and international networks**, for example workshop and conferences to raise the awareness of local universities about the importance and benefits of internationalization; best practices from renowned universities about their process of internationalization; international conferences, education fairs bridges local and international universities under the support of MOET;
- **Encouraging the accreditation based on international standards (AUN-QA, ABET...)** in order to set the goal for the whole universities as well as the internationalization purpose; to help HEIs review and re-evaluate the internal



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teaching quality, curriculum, research activities, international affairs; and to increase the inter-links among universities in the region or in the world;

- **Encouraging HEIs to apply for international ranking (THE, QS, Shanghai...)** to affirm the status of Vietnam educational quality in international stage; to increase the international cooperation programs between universities and to motivate local universities to strengthen internationalization in their current teaching, learning and research.