

WORLD CONFERENCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher Education in the Twenty-first Century

Vision and Action

UNESCO, Paris, 5 – 9 October 1998

VOLUME V – PLENARY

Vietnam

Note1: To meet UNESCO publishing standards, some editing of papers has been required.

Note2: Authors are responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts contained in signed articles and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.

Ministry of Education and Training**PREFACE**

Like the rest of the world, Vietnam is preparing to enter the new century with many opportunities but, at the same time, it will have to face possible new challenges in many fields. The on-going renovation in Vietnam over the recent years has contributed to freeing Vietnam from the being in the social-economic crises which took place during the early years of the 1980s, and has created progress in the economy, culture, society and education, particularly in the field of higher education. The development of higher education in Vietnam during recent years, especially in the training scale, has resulted in the development of human resources of a high level, thus meeting economic and social requirements, and creating good opportunities for citizens of various backgrounds who have the desire and the ability to keep up with their studies of higher education, improving the common cultural standard in the whole country. However, in face of new requirements stemming from continuing industrialization and modernization of Vietnam, education in Vietnam in general and higher education in particular, is still faced with many difficulties and inadequacies, chiefly in the areas of training capacity and qualities in the universities as well as the management and development of the whole educational system. It is therefore, necessary to continue with the renovation in higher education so as to meet the needs created by the development of the country and to be in step with the mankind's increasing trend of globalization as Vietnam enters the twenty-first century.

I. HIGHER EDUCATION IN VIETNAM: IN THE PAST AND AT PRESENT.**1.1. The history of educational development in Vietnam.**

Vietnam is a country with a history of 4.000 years of civilization with many rich cultures. In the process of the development of the nation, education in general and higher education in particular was organized early. In 1076, under the LY dynasty in the capital Thang Long (The current Hanoi), the royal college was founded the first public school in Vietnam. By organizing national examinations so as to select talented men, awarding high university degrees and carving the names of those who achieved doctorates on stelae, the royal college became the country's cultural and educational centre, a unique school in the history of Vietnam that had contributed to the formation and development of the nation' elite intellectual team. This was a place where many famous cultural specialists and educationalists as well as pre-eminent politicians and military officers were trained and all of these men made great contributions to the process of the history of Vietnam.

During the period of French rule in the early years of the 20th century, together Vietnam' education in general and higher education in particular essentially formed from a feudal education system to a French-style model with founding of the Indochina university (1906) which included school of law and administration, science, medicine and pharmacy, engineering and culture. Though the numbers admitted remained limited, the Indochina University laid the groundwork for the establishment of different types of universities and colleges with content, scientific and technological programs and training levels similar to those in French colleges and universities, and based on the model of The Institute of Indochina higher education during the period 1940-1945. During this period, the higher education training scale of the Institute of Indochina University was also limited. In the 1943-1944 only 1,111 students were admitted to colleges; over half among studied at the law school. Meanwhile, the Scientific College had 175 students and the Civil Engineering College had 84 students (Vietnam's population by that time was estimated at 25 million).

The system of higher education in Vietnam entered a new period of development after the foundation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1945) based on the scientific development and the needs of the nation. Higher education at that time was directed to serve the resistance against foreign invaders and national construction.

From 1956 to 1975, the system of higher education was developed vigorously in North Vietnam with different types of universities such as the Hanoi University, the Hanoi Polytechnic University and other speciality university attached to social-economic fields such as agriculture, construction, communications and economics. In 1975, there were 30 universities in North Vietnam with 8,400 professors and teachers and about 56,000 students. Meanwhile in South Vietnam there were 7 institutes of higher education and 7 private universities and colleges with about 166,000 students.

From 1975 to 1990, the system of education in Vietnam was developed a united educational system throughout the country with a network of universities based on the education model of the (former) Soviet Union with the opening of universities such us the Hanoi University of Technology, the Hanoi University and other professional universities.

From 1990 onwards, the system of universities in Vietnam has made fundamental changes with the establishment of universities and a network of local universities and colleges.

1.2. The current system of higher education in Vietnam.

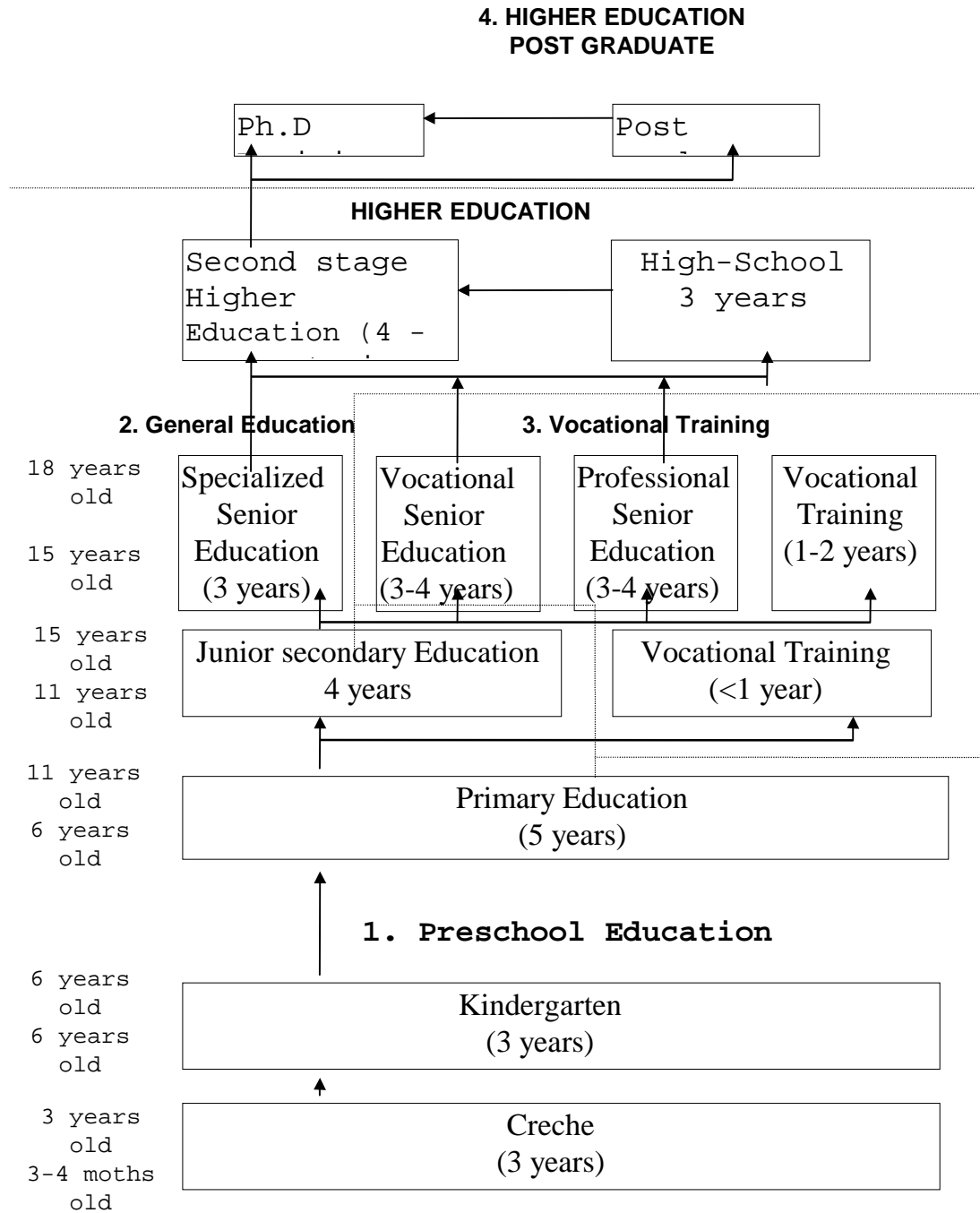
In furtherance of the ordinance No.90.CP issued by the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the system of national education of Vietnam includes the following sectors (Diagram No.1)

Pre-school education includes the system of kindergartens, admitting children from the ages 2 to 36 months old, and another system of kindergartens where the children from the ages of 3 to 6 are admitted.

The system of 12 years-general education starts with Primary education for children at the age of 6 (from grate 1 to grate 5), primary secondary school (grate 6 to grate 9) and secondary school (from grate 10 to grate 12).

Vocational education, includes different forms of technical-vocational training directed at graduates from junior schools, with various types of schools, such as vocational secondary school, job-training secondary schools, job-training schools and short term job-training.

Sketch 1. Frame Structure of the National education system



Higher education for training bachelors, M.A. (postgraduate) and Ph.D.

The current higher education of Vietnam includes different types of schools, most of them based Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. While others are based in the Northern mountainous regions, the Highlands and the Mekong River delta. Apart from the specialized universities such as the Universities of Mining and Geology, Construction and Agriculture, there are different subjects university (in Thanh Hoa province), Hai Phong University which are part of the country's system of higher education. Meanwhile, a system of private universities of higher education have been encouraged to develop. Up to now, two Open Institutes of Higher Education have been established. Since 1992, the post graduate training has been developed and expanded to include almost all fields of science, technology and economic management, thus contributing to the training of a high-level of expertise in the fields of economics and social development.

1.3. Guidelines for the development of higher education in Vietnam since Doi Moi (1986 onwards)

Entering to the period of Doi Moi and the change to a market-oriented economy, Vietnam's system of higher education has been feeling the impact of economic difficulties. As a result, there has been a continual downgrading in terms of numbers of students, training quality and efficiency, material resources and in addition the quality and motivation of staff and management resources, particularly financial, are quite limited, and organizational capacity have been poor. To deal with such a situation, higher education has followed a series of guidelines attached to Doi Moi, focusing on the following issues:

- To ensure higher education training is aimed at not only meeting the demands for staff and officials to work in government offices and the state-run economic sectors, but also at satisfying the various demands of all people who wish to obtain higher education degrees of different levels.
- To complete networks of universities. To develop different forms of multi-faculty universities and colleges in localities where demand is high. To open private universities. To diversify training to include: regular-irregular training; open-university and correspondence training.
- To diversify financial resources for education and training, i.e. apart from the sum of money funded from the state budget, the financial resources will be added to by tuition fees paid by the students; the money offered by foreign countries and international organizations; earnings from conducting scientific research, production of goods and involvement in different forms of social services conducted by the universities.
- To reform the procedures of higher education training by putting the process of higher education into two stages of practice: Fundamental training and specialised training. To implement the change of the system of training according to the yearly system into a yearly system combined with a course and credit system. To reform methods of teaching and facilitate the supervision and assessment of the process of higher education objectively.

The implementation of the guidelines attached to Doi Moi in terms of higher education over recent years has been shown to be making active contributions to the process of consolidating and developing higher education in many areas; namely the number of student in higher education has been quickly increased and training qualities in some fields has been greatly improved. However, during the first stage of the nation's on going industrialization and modernization, contradictions must be solved between the questions of increasing the number of students receivers training while-ensuring quality is maintained and effectiveness increased in conditions of quite limited resources.

Vietnam's higher education is, therefore, continuing to develop in the following ways:

- Higher education must be considered as the responsibility the whole party, the State and the entire people. The development of higher education must be tightly directed to the demands of social and economic development as well as progress to be defense and security. Importance should be attached to the expansion, improvement in quality and improved effectiveness of higher education.
- Social fairness must be achieved in higher education. To apply regulations giving priority to the poor as well as others being given preferential treatment, as stipulated in the government's current policies, including women, ethic minorities, those credited with serves to the State and the disabled. Higher education must contribute to offering more opportunities to people from every walk of life to obtain a continuing education.
- To maintain the core role being played by public universities while diversifying to include private universities and other forms of training based on a single government-controlled system of aims,

curriculum, programs, teaching and learning regulations, examinations, diplomas and quality and qualifications of universities lecturers.

- Higher education must aim at achieving the development and self-improvement and the sense of citizenship of the Vietnamese in a modern society with a distinct national character so as to contribute to the construction and defense of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the trend to follow progressive development.

II. HIGHER EDUCATION IN VIETNAM DIRECTED TO MEET THE DEMANDS FOR THE COUNTRY'S FUTURE DEVELOPMENT.

II.1. Goals for future development.

Like the rest of the world, Vietnam is entering the new stage of development oriented to industrialization and modernization amid fast changes taking place in the world in the areas of society, politics, economy, culture and environment. Due to the application of the gained achievements during the process of the modern revolution, in science and technology, in which the contributions by the universities are notable as a centres of science and technology, there have been fundamental change in modern production and social services. The role played by resources and investment capital, with large scale production, has been being reduced while the role played by the intellectual circles has been being reduced while the role played by the intellectual circles has been rapidly strengthened. People have now become the most valuable resource of the newly-emerged nation in the race to the twenty-first century. In this regard in Vietnam, despite its plentiful human resources, the question of skilled workers, fostering talented people has become the task of Vietnam's education in general and of higher education in particular so as to meet the demands and trend of the country's social development during the period of industrialization and modernization.

The process of apply modern technologies and expanding and accelerating international exchange relations is at one and the same them the process of Vietnam continually integrating itself in the world wide trend towards globalization. Like other developing countries, Vietnam has been faced with both new opportunities and challenges as a result of the process of globalisation. During this period, each nation must strive to go forward by itself through both the process of co-operation and through fierce competition, Vietnam is in a favourable position in that the competitive advantage formerly based on abundant natural resources and the large scale capital investment will now be based on skilled management; the mission of higher education is, therefore, in need of change. In Vietnam, the mission of training teams of peoples with good capabilities dine by higher education so farm has proved that the country's higher education is capable of adjusting itself to the changes talking place in technology, economic structure and cultural exchange relations in the region and the world. Education in general and higher education in particular has to create a good intellectual foundation so as to accelerate the firm development of each nation in line with the trend of globalization.

II.2. Demands to be met by higher education in Vietnam for the country's cause of industrialization and modernization.

Vietnam has been in the process of new development directed to industrialized country with a modern technical and material base, a rational economic structure and progressive productive relationships by the year 2020 so as to achieve development forces of production, improved material and spiritual life, firm national defense and security, a prosperous country and fair and civilized society.

The process of industrialization means a process of essential and comprehensive changes taking place in economic and social activities from their being based mainly on handicraft into a well-trained labour force using advanced technology and modern productive tolls. The process of modernization will turn Vietnamese society into a modern and civilized one with advanced and strong national identity. That society will demonstrate universal valves in which living standards of a great number of people will be improved materially and educationally. If people are capable of changing jobs, adapting rapidly to progress made in technology, quickly adjusting themselves to changes made in production, they will be then given more opportunities to join every activity of economic and social life.

It is clear that in the face of the vigorous changes taking place, during the process of industrialization and modernization in Vietnam in the coming years; in social economic, economical structure, cultural and spiritual lives of people of all walks of life as well as level of development in terms of science and technology, there will be new and ever higher demands to be met by the country's education system in general and the higher education system in particular in terms of both numbers of students and training

quality and effectiveness. Meanwhile many favourable preconditions have been being created for the acceleration of higher education in both the region and the world.

II.3. Strategies for the development of Higher Education in Vietnam towards 2020.

Higher education has so far been considered as one of the priorities in the country's strategy for the development of education and training towards the year 2020 aimed at building a modern system of education in Vietnam capable of training professionals with the high level of education demanded by the causes of industrialization and modernization, and a secure development of the country as well. Higher education must at the same time contribute to improving the education level, building a rich cultural life for people from various backgrounds and improving their competitive in the world arena.

Alongside with the consolidation of a network universities, it is necessary to build an additional number of high-quality universities, increasing investment in terms of material base and training conditions; the scope of higher education must be enlarged in conformity with the demands for both educated workers and the improvement of people's standard of higher education. The number of students is estimated to increase from 74 per ten thousand people (1997) to 90 per ten thousand (2000); 140 per 10,000 (2005); 200 (2010) and about 300 by the year 2020. To reach that end the process of Doi Moi in the country's higher education system needs to be continued and completed based on the following measure;

- To complete the system of higher education organization and management with the aim of increasing management effectiveness of the central governing body to every university, building and completing the laws relating to higher education. To expand the right of self management hand in hand with heightening the responsibilities of universities as regards their training, scientific research and productive. To develop a system of assessment and supervision of the quality of higher education, advancing to control the quality of the teaching and training and classification universities based on a single set of criteria.
- To reform the curriculum and methodology in the of universities, to modernize the training curriculum, by adding more scientific content and applied technology, developing capabilities with economic requirements, advancing to bring into higher education programs at the universities in the region and the world. To reform the methodology used in higher education by doing away with the current way of teacher centered education by student's creativity. To gradually apply advanced teaching methods and modern equipment. To ensure the time and conditions for self-study by students.
- To develop management and teaching staff in higher education. To standardize the requirements for university teachings in terms of qualifications and skill and knowledge of politics, foreign language and computer, increasing the number of university lecturers with qualifications from M.A upwards from 20-30% to 50- 60 %, in which, importance should be attached to the development of top experts with good background in science (Ph.D., Professor) in universities. To mobilize most of lectures to join the scientific research activities and pass on technology and other products and social service activities to the community.
- To diversify and increase resources for higher education from the state budget, fees paid by students; resources gained from doing scientific research and productive activities, resources offered by economic and social organization, from individuals and from aid and loans lent by foreign governments and international organization. To improve the mechanism of distributing and manage financial resources for educational training on the basis of encouraging institutions of good quality, improving the effectiveness of investment. To modernize higher education institutions beginning with selected universities.
- To explain and accelerate international co-operations in the field of higher education, making full use financial and technical support from foreign countries and international organizations, to serve training programmes of high qualities. To encourage the openings of educational training and cultural institutions of foreign countries in Vietnam. To create favourable conditions so that domestic universities can join in every activities by international organizations and university associations from ASEAN, Asia-pacific and international organizations such as UNESCO and UNDP. To send excellent students to obtain higher education and post-graduate training in countries with advanced science and technology, based on the requirements for the development of science and technology being given priority in Vietnam. To prepare for the gradual integration into the international community in the field of higher education, first in the area of diplomas issued in Vietnam corresponding to those in ASEAN and other countries in the world.

III. TO PROMOTE INTERNAL RESOURCE WHILE STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE AREA OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Being a poor and developing country, the GDP income per person remains low (about USD 25 per person per year in 1996). The financial resources reserved for the development of higher education are still quite limited. In such circumstance, the mobilization of creative capabilities, cleverness and traditional fondness for learning of the Vietnamese, combined with international co-operation and support has been an important factor in accelerating the process of the development of higher education in Vietnam during the recent year, at well as in the future. In that spirit, Vietnam will focus on increasing the mobilization of education, promoting fully the internal power of the Vietnamese, their knowledge, and at the same time expanding co-operation and making full use of supports from international and regional organizations such as UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF, SEAMEO, WB and ADB. In addition, using countries with a high level of science and technology for consolidating the system of higher education and training a team with a good command of science and technology to work in areas being given priority which are necessary for the cause of industrialization and modernization in Vietnam. Apart from spending a part of money from the state budget for students to receive training from foreign countries, the Vietnamese state is encouraging every Vietnamese citizen who meets the criteria set by the government to conduct self-sufficient training in foreign countries (mainly in universities) aimed at making a creating a work force with a high level of education for the cause of development of the country.

In the coming years, international co-operation in the field of higher education in Vietnam will be directed in the following ways:

- To promote and expand the high education with ASEAN countries within the frame work of SEAMEO and other bilateral relationships between nations in the region as this will contribute to consolidating co-operations and the exchange of experience, in forming, training and fostering officials with a good command of science and technology in which the Vietnamese are believed to be making an active contribution to the development of higher education in the region.
- To expand the cooperation on higher education with countries the Asia-Pacific, a region where active development are taken place and which is playing an important role in the process of world's development in the coming century with economic power like Japan, the (NICs) like South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan as well as Australia and India. Those are countries with developed systems of higher education with different models, capable of supporting the development of higher education in Vietnam in various forms as well as valuable experiences and good lessons for the cause of developing higher education in Vietnam.
- EU and other European countries have always been important partners of Vietnam during the later process of Doi Moi and renovation being carried out in the field of higher education and directed to achieving better quality and institutions. Those are the countries with long- standing developed systems of higher education with traditional highly developed science and technology sectors.
- To develop diverse areas of cooperation, with higher education in Canada and the United States has also been an aim to be given priority. The mode of higher education prevailing in North American has been being observed during the process of determining a strategy for the development of higher education in Vietnam in the coming years.
- Vietnam is determined to maintain and develop multi-facted cooperation including the field of higher education with the Russia Federation and other Eastern European countries. They are the countries with traditional long-standing friendship and cooperation with Vietnam which have supported and trained in Vietnam a team of cadres of a high-level of cultural standards who are working in most economic, cultural, scientific and technological sectors in the country. During the new process of development, there has been many opportunities and vast potential for long-term cooperation between Vietnam and the Federal of Russia and other Eastern European countries.

A conclusion may be reached that in accordance with the on-going policies of the Party and State of Vietnam in conformity with the statement "Vietnam wishes to be a friend with all of the countries in the world community", the strengthening and expansion of cooperation in higher education by Vietnam with other countries in the world has been an aim reflecting the necessary trend of development of the country's education in preparation for entering the twenty-first century.

CONCLUSION

As higher education in general and higher education in Vietnam in particular enters the new century, with an ever-important role in the process of development of Vietnam, oriented to industrialization and modernization. The development of modern education in Vietnam is in conformity with economic and social development, thus creating a great motivation and constituting as important condition so that Vietnam can "be on par with super powers in five continents" as was the desire of the late President Ho Chi Minh, a great cultural activist, a national hero solemnly remembered by UNESCO on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of his birthday.

DOCUMENTS FOR REFERENCE

1. Resolution adopted at the 2nd conference of the party central committee (VIII session) on the strategic orientation on the education and training development during the period of industrialization - modernization. The National - political Publishing House - Hanoi 1997.
2. Review and Assessment conducted in 10 year of renovation in Education and Training. General and detailed Report. Hanoi 1997.
3. Strategy for the development of Education and Training toward the year 2020 (drafted report 5/1998). The Ministry of Education and Training- Hanoi 1998.
4. Summary Record of Conference on Higher Education Training. The Ministry of Education and Training - Hanoi, April 1998.
5. Report on International Cooperation by the Ministry of Education and training in 10 years of renovation and orientation in the next 5 years. The Ministry of Education and Training Hanoi, January, 1998.
6. Dang Ba Lam - Higher Education Development in Vietnam, Status, Trends and Policy. Fifth RIHED's Governing Board Meeting Ho Chi Minh City 21-22, August, 1997.
7. Proceedings of the World Congress on Higher Education - June 23-25, 1997 Manila, Philippines.