

## CHALLENGES TO THE HIGHER EDUCATION OF VIETNAM IN THE TIME OF INTERNATIONAL INTEGRATION

### *DESAFIOS À EDUCAÇÃO SUPERIOR DO VIETNÃ EM TEMPOS DE INTEGRAÇÃO INTERNACIONAL*

---

**Lai Quoc Khanh**

Assoc. Professor, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National  
University, Hanoi, Vietnam

[khanhlq.nv@gmail.com](mailto:khanhlq.nv@gmail.com)

---

#### **ABSTRACT**

Vietnam is a developing country. Over roughly 40 years of Innovation, Vietnam has seen remarkable development achievements in all aspects of social life carrying significant historical meaning. However, Vietnam is still facing many challenges, especially from the sustainable development perspective. One of such significant challenges is the need for more high-quality human resources. While the demand for high-quality human resources for the labor market is increasing and has not been met, the percentage of students enrolling in universities and colleges in Vietnam is too low and gradually reducing. The article aims to highlight the prevailing challenges and solutions to such problems that Vietnamese higher education institutions are facing

**Keywords:** Higher education, Universities in Vietnam, situation of higher education, solutions to Vietnamese higher education.

#### **RESUMO**

O Vietnã é um país em desenvolvimento. Ao longo de cerca de 40 anos de Inovação, o Vietnã registou conquistas de desenvolvimento notáveis em todos os aspectos da vida social, com um significado histórico significativo. No entanto, o Vietnã ainda enfrenta muitos desafios, especialmente do ponto de vista do desenvolvimento sustentável. Um desses desafios significativos é a necessidade de mais recursos humanos de alta qualidade. Embora a procura de recursos humanos de elevada qualidade para o mercado de trabalho esteja a aumentar e não tenha sido satisfeita, a percentagem de estudantes matriculados em universidades e faculdades no Vietnã é demasiado baixa e está a diminuir gradualmente. O artigo tem como objetivo destacar os desafios e soluções prevaletentes para esses problemas que as instituições de ensino superior vietnamitas enfrentam

**Palavras-chave:** Ensino superior, Universidades no Vietnã, situação do ensino superior, soluções para o ensino superior vietnamita.

## Introduction

Vietnam is a developing country. Over roughly 40 years of Innovation, Vietnam has seen remarkable development achievements in all aspects of social life carrying significant historical meaning. Nguyen Phu Trong, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, noted that “Based on our remarkable achievements, we can affirm that our country has never had the fortune, potential, position, and prestige as it is today” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021,p.322).

In terms of the economic aspect, for example, in the context of many complex challenges of the world economy and inflation deemed as the top concern of many economies, the signs of global economic recession are increasingly prominent. In contrast, Vietnam's economic growth in 2022 has reached 8.02% (Ngoc, p.2022), a breakthrough many countries with more potential than Vietnam dream of.

Access to tertiary education in Vietnam is a very competitive endeavor. In Vietnam, the generally accepted perception is that success in one's career is pegged on the kind of university one enrolls in. Moreover, the higher education sphere has to deal with the fact that post-graduate programmes and the number of scientific publications is still quite low. In addition, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, Vietnam's tertiary institutions had to transform rapidly to deal with the challenges arising from the pandemic. For example, tertiary institutions had to adapt very quickly and embrace online classes and exams during the 2020-2021 COVID-19 lockdown period (Nguyen, 2022).

On October 12, 2022, Times Higher Education (THE), a world university ranking organization, announced the World University Rankings 2023 (THE WUR, 2023). Based on the ranking, 6 higher education institutions in Vietnam have been mentioned in THE WUR 2023. The rankings indicate that the integration of Vietnamese higher education with world higher education is gradually developing and significantly increasing (Van & An, 2023).

On the contrary, Vietnam is still facing many challenges, especially from the sustainable development perspective. One of such significant challenges is the need for more high-quality human resources. The *10-year socio-economic development*

*strategy 2021-2030* of the Communist Party of Vietnam clearly states: “The quality of human resources, especially high-quality ones, has not satisfied the requirements” (Communist Party of Vietnam Online Newspaper, 2021b). While the demand for high-quality human resources for the labor market is increasing and has not been met, the percentage of students enrolling in universities and colleges in Vietnam is too low and gradually reducing. According to the August 2022 report of the World Bank (WB), the enrollment percentage of Vietnamese students in universities and colleges in 2019 was 28.6%. This percentage is relatively low compared to other ASEAN countries and only half that of upper-middle-income countries (55.1%) (Hang, 2022b).

### **Tertiary Education in the ASEAN Region**

The ASEAN comprises 10 South East Asia Nations. The 10 countries are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The ASEAN occupies an expansive tract of the South East Asian Region. By 2020, it was estimated that ASEAN countries had a combined population of 661 826,000 people. Of these, 51% of the population was within the 20-54 years age bracket, with the section of the population below 20 years accounting for a third of the entire population (Lim et al., nd)

Despite the fact that all ASEAN countries have free and compulsory basic education systems. Each of the ASEAN member states has a minimum 9-year free and compulsory education system. However, despite the obvious benefits of higher (tertiary) education, it is not free. Among the member states, the quality of tertiary education, the management of programs and the quality of teachers has been an issue of concern. Each country tends to pass policies that recognize and bolster its economic and social development agenda. (AICHR,2019, p.13)

Recent studies show that over the past forty years (1980-2020), access to tertiary education has been increasing in South East Asia. However, it is noteworthy that this access is not uniform in all ASEAN member states. Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar seem to be lagging (Lim et al., nd, p.19 ). The expanding access to higher

education has seen an expansion of the number of private institutions in some ASEAN member states. According to Lim et al. (and, p.21), more than 50% of higher education institutions in Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines are privately owned. Furthermore, Atherton et al. (2018), cited in Lim et al. (nd., p.21), notes that from 2010-2012 and 2015-2017, the number of higher education institutions had increased in all ASEAN countries apart from Indonesia and Singapore.

## Method

The article is based on a library-based study and analysis of existing data in the field. The author has analyzed data from existing publications to come up with the article.

## Results

### ***Challenges of higher education in Vietnam***

*The Vietnamese Party and State attach great importance to education and training. In the early stage of Innovation, the viewpoint "Education and training is the leading national policy" was presented for the first time in Resolution No. 04-NQ/TW dated January 14, 1993, of the Communist Party of Vietnam on continuing to innovate education and training, and has always been affirmed. Under the efforts made by the leaders of the country and the whole society, education and training, in general, and higher education in particular, have made remarkable developments. Based on statistics released by the Ministry of Education and Training in 2021, the total number of universities has increased from 2015-2020, from 223 in the school year 2015-2016 to 237 universities in 2019-2020. Several Vietnamese higher education institutions' numbers and international rankings have also significantly improved recently.*

*As stated in the 2019 rankings of Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), the world-leading prestigious university ranking organization based in the UK, Vietnam has the first two representatives, including Vietnam National University, Hanoi, and Vietnam National*

*University, Ho Chi Minh City. By 2023, the rankings placed five Vietnamese universities, including Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam National University, Hanoi and Duy Tan University, within position 801-1000, Ton Duc Thang University ranked 1001-1200, and Hanoi University of Science and Technology ranked 1201-1400.*

*Furthermore, most recently, on June 1, 2023, THE announced THE Impact Rankings 2023, which has referred to the Vietnamese higher education institutions such as Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Hanoi University of Science and Technology, Ton Duc Thang University, Phenikaa University, Duy Tan University, FPT University, National Economics University, University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City and Ho Chi Minh City Open University (VNU Media, 2023).*

*Nonetheless, experts hold the view that Vietnamese higher education is lagging behind its comparators in Southeast Asia and is facing lots of challenges, of which the following are major ones:*

*Firstly, the quality of education and training still needs to be improved than the human resources requirements for national socio-economic development, and cohesion with the labor market needs to be ensured.*

The number of higher education institutions is currently increasing. According to Nguyen (2023a), in 2020, there were 176 and 66 public and private universities, respectively, in Vietnam. Further, Nguyen (2023b) reports that in 2020, there were approximately 1.9 million students enrolled in tertiary institutions in Vietnam. In the same year, Vietnam recorded approximately 242,400 new university graduates (Nguyen, 2023c).

However, quality education is generally not guaranteed because of the pursuit of appearance perfection and vainglory or false advertising of school brands, misleading learners and students. Some institutions have degraded infrastructure and need more equipment, premises, or space for study, research, and teaching. Thus, they must rent or borrow them in many locations and facilities. As required by the planning, the others are required to move out of the inner city, but they have delayed, causing confusion and anxiety among their lecturers and students. Some universities were built on a large scale, licensed to teach and enroll students.

However, due to the limited vision or market assessment of students' needs and organizational apparatus and structure, they could not enroll and were abandoned, which is a tremendous waste. Furthermore, the rapid establishment of higher education institutions, upgrading and conversion of colleges to universities, school name changing, training field expansion, and enrollment increase without education quality improvement have eroded their prestige, image, sympathy, and trust of society.

Education and training are not associated with the practical needs and requirements of society, resulting in the wastage of human resources, finance, and time and a slowdown in the development of society, and simultaneously creating more social problems when various graduates have no jobs or get jobs but need to be trained further. In 2020, Vietnam had 225,000 bachelors, engineers, and masters who could not find a job or accepted jobs different from their majors. The General Statistics Office states that the number of people with Associate's or Bachelor's degrees or higher, among 1.2 million unemployed, accounts for 30.8%, nearly 369,600 people (Communist Party of Vietnam Online Newspaper 2022).

The survey was undertaken at 60 businesses and companies engaging in industrial services in Ho Chi Minh City concerning the "Assessment of satisfaction of businesses and companies with the quality of graduates in the first year after graduation" (the set of criteria for such assessment consists of theoretical knowledge, practical skills, foreign language proficiency, working style, and professional skills), only 5% of survey participants were assessed very good, 15% good, 30% average and 40% unsatisfactory (Tuyet 2022).

Inability to secure employment after graduation is one reason why many high school students choose vocational training, study abroad, and labor export or freelance jobs instead of undergraduate education. Therefore, the number of students studying abroad has increased significantly. As reported by the statistics of the International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Education and Training, about 190,000 Vietnamese students are studying and researching abroad. The countries with the highest number of Vietnamese students are Australia, the USA, Canada, the UK, and China, with 30,000, 29,000, 21,000, 12,000, and 11,000

students, respectively (Hop, 2023), which shows an unambiguous signal of increasing unattractiveness of higher education in our country.

Because of the reduction in enrollment or financial autonomy, many universities have lowered their admission standards, adopted various admission methods, and even invited students. However, they still need to meet the number of required students. The target of quantity, lowering admission standards, and lecturers' psychological insecurity pose the risk of decreasing educational quality. In addition, the university entrance exam was deemed to have high-stakes competition, so success in such an exam would become a great honor. On the contrary, because of the policies mentioned above, joining universities now is not exciting and attractive to students anymore because if they cannot enter top universities, they can enter the lower quality ones. It reduces learning motivation and may be more severe if the students join universities without motivation. Moreover, the graduates will get too low pay in the future.

*Secondly*, despite recent developments, the quality and quantity of university lecturers still need to be high; the environment and working conditions in many universities cannot promote the capacity of lecturers, making it challenging to attract and retain qualified lecturers. According to

Nguyen (2023d), in 2020, there were about 76.6 thousand university lectures in Vietnamese universities. The same data is affirmed by another report that concurs that as of 2020, the number of lecturers in Vietnamese universities reached 76,600 (The Statistical Yearbook, September 2021), of which the number of lecturers with doctoral degrees and title of professor or associate professor is 21,977 (accounting for 28.7%) and 4,865 (accounting for 6.3%) respectively. These percentages are low compared to the general situation of higher education in the country and the world. Specifically, the "student/lecturer ratio is approximately 26/1 while, in the countries with advanced higher education, this ratio is 15-20/1. Harvard University, in particular, has a student/faculty ratio of 23/2" (Chung, 2016p.85). This fact requires the continuous improvement of lecturers' qualifications, especially essential and leading lecturers and managers of some teacher training institutions. In addition, on the journey of international integration, the quantity and quality of

work appearing in international scientific publications have become a significant measure of the quality of higher education in countries. However, it is shown in reality that the number of international publications of universities in Vietnam is still inferior to many countries in the region. The impact index of scientific research work in Vietnam is also lower than in some countries, such as Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore. The number of patents per 1 million people, some of which are held by higher education institutions, also measures university lecturers' quality. That number in Vietnam is still too low (Hang, 2022a).

One of the significant challenges of higher education is the poor working environment and conditions. Many inflexible regulations and bureaucracy prevent lecturers from achieving the full potential of their talents and dedication to research and teaching. The salary, allowances, and preferential policies for talented young lecturers with excellent prospects in teaching and scientific research need to be revised. There are many problems in the policies of attracting, retaining, treating, and availing suitable jobs for young, competent, and qualified lecturers who have been educated and trained abroad. It causes job dissatisfaction and movement from public to private universities or other fields, causing confusion and brain drain. Following the report in 2022, "the whole country has 16,000 teachers leaving their jobs. In other words, one out of 100 teachers leaves the job on average" (Hai, 2022). The Rector of Tay Nguyen University pointed out:

It is not easy to recruit a doctorate to be a lecturer at the university, especially in the healthcare sector. For example, after being facilitated by the university to study abroad for a doctorate, a lecturer left the job and found a better opportunity at a city university with pay of hundreds of millions of Vietnamese dong per month. The extra income of the university depends on the situation of admissions. The smaller the admission number of such a university is, the lower the lecturers' income is. Low income creates more difficulties in professor and doctorate recruitment. This problem remains unsolved over time (Quyên 2022).

*Thirdly*, financial resources for higher education development are minimal and must meet the requirements.



*Regarding budget*, although education and training are considered a leading national policy, the investment in education and training in general and higher education, in particular, is minimal. In the Workshop organized by the Committee for Culture, Education, Youth, Adolescents and Children in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Training and several higher education institutions on November 27, 2020, the representative of the World Bank pointed out that Vietnam allocates more than 5% of GDP in public resources to education, however, of which the investment in higher education is currently meager, accounting for only 0.33% (out of a total of 6.1% of government investment in education and training). Meanwhile, this rate is much higher in other countries (Hung and Linh, 2020).

The official figures of the Ministry of Finance have revealed that, in 2020, the planned budget for higher education is less than VND 17,000 billion. However, the actual expenditure is less than VND 12,000 billion. Based on such actual expenditure, the ratio of expenditure on higher education to GDP is 0.18%, much lower than that of countries in the region and the world (Hien, 2022). In recent times, at the National Scientific Conference organized by the Association of Vietnam Universities and Colleges in collaboration with Can Tho University on May 12, 2023, it was indicated by the data of the Ministry of Finance that the total State budget for education usually is 5-6% of GDP, but the one for higher education accounts for only 0.27% of GDP (Minh, 2023).

The allocation of the State budget to higher education institutions is based on budget limit and input factors only (quantity or number of students; number of staff; history of State budget allocation in previous years, etc.) without considering the quality and output results or policies on bidding or ordering public service rendering. Different governing bodies carry out the allocation; thus, it is inconsistent across relevant criteria and does not bring equity for beneficiaries. With such a budget, it is difficult for higher education institutions in Vietnam to make breakthroughs in improving their training and scientific research quality.

Regarding university autonomy, it is a significant policy of the Vietnamese Party, and the State is institutionalized into perfect regulations and guidelines. The perception of the stakeholders about university autonomy has also had many

positive changes. Many higher education institutions pioneering university autonomy have obtained impressive achievements, which has provided motivation and confidence for this policy to spread widely. In 2014, when the Government issued Decree No. 77/NQ-CP dated October 24, 2014, “on the pilot renovation of the operation mechanism of public tertiary education institutions during 2014-2017”, only four universities, including National Economics University, the University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City, Foreign Trade University and Hanoi University, applied this Decree, and, by the end of 2022, 154/170 public higher education institutions have set up their school councils starting operating, accounting for 90.6%, of which 36/36 public higher education institutions under the control of the Ministry of Education and Training have established school councils. The rate of universities under ministries, branches, and local governments establishing school councils reached 91.18%; 142/232 universities are eligible for autonomy in line with Law No. 34/2018/QH14; 32.7% of universities can afford recurrent and investment expenses; 13.7% of schools guarantee recurrent expenditure. The total revenue of autonomous higher education institutions increased noticeably. The average income of lecturers and administrators increased by 20.8% and 18.7%, respectively (Ha and Sang 2022). Conversely, many problems have occurred, such as the limited awareness of society, authorities, and higher education institutions on university autonomy; unclear division of roles and responsibilities of party committees, school councils, and administrators in institutions, causing coincidental functions and duties, and even conflicts in some places. These have slowed down progress and limited the effectiveness of university autonomy, resulting in unsatisfactory mobilization of social resources for higher education development.

Moreover, the financial autonomy in Vietnam has given rise to the challenge that, without synchronous solutions, it will limit the opportunity to access higher education for many students under challenging circumstances. Furthermore, the institutions will encourage the disciplines or majors that are easy to enroll in, causing an unbalanced human resources system for the national development strategy.

Regarding the relationship between higher education institutions and companies, it is a critical channel that can help higher education institutions get many resources for their development, including financial resources. Despite initial positive changes, this relationship still needs improvement in Vietnam. In the Report issued at the First Session of the Committee on Education and Human Resources Development under the National Council on Sustainable Development and Competitiveness Enhancement held on the morning of August 18, 2022, lots of relevant data related to such relationship has been announced by the Ministry of Education and Training: The reports of nearly 50% of higher education institutions (June 2021) point out that up to 93,3% of universities remain the cooperation with companies; For the companies, 6,126 companies are in cooperation with 135 higher education institutions, reaching an average rate of 60 companies/institutions. Those figures seem impressive! Nonetheless, the Ministry of Education and Training also pointed out that such cooperation focuses on dispatching students to companies for internships, companies scholarships to students, organization job fairs, and recruitment of new graduates; offering bits of advice to training programs, participation in teaching (Education Communication Center 2022). Hence, the quality and effectiveness of cooperation between higher education institutions and companies could be better. The institutions have not attracted many resources, especially financial resources, from companies for their development, and companies have yet to consider such institutions as a source of high-quality human resources.

The quality and effectiveness of education and training do not match the socio-economic development requirements of the country without cohesion with the labor market. Currently, many new universities provide what they have only but not what society needs. That is one of the reasons why, in 2020, 225,000 bachelors, engineers, and masters in Vietnam could not find a job or were accepted to take jobs different from their majors, causing severe wastage. As shown by the survey conducted at 60 companies engaging in industrial services in Ho Chi Minh City on “Assessment of satisfaction of businesses and companies with the quality of graduates in the first year after graduation (the set of criteria for such assessment

consists of theoretical knowledge, practical skills, foreign language proficiency, working style, and professional skills), only 5% of survey participants were assessed very good, 15% good, 30% average and 40% unsatisfactory.

Fourthly, Vietnamese higher education is relatively “closed” and has not yet created domestic and international connections.

In the country, despite the general management of the Ministry of Education and Training, the ability to communicate knowledge between higher education institutions is limited. The recognition of credits and student exchange between domestic higher education institutions are limited, so students need help in multi-university and inter-university study, and it is difficult for institutions to link and use shared resources, including high-quality lecturers.

The universities in Vietnam, usually under the specialized university system, such as the University of Water Resources, University of Medicine, University of Pharmacy, University of Economics and Finance, University of Foreign Trade, etc., have started multidisciplinary teaching but, fundamentally, are specialized universities. Their programs “focus on” theory, “disregard” in practice, and knowledge application.

Vietnamese higher education is relatively “closed” and has not yet created a connection between domestic and international higher education standards. In the country, despite the general management of the Ministry of Education and Training, the ability to communicate knowledge between higher education institutions is limited. Universities and majors rarely recognize each other’s training results, so students will have difficulties transferring universities or majors. Knowledge communication between domestic and foreign higher education institutions is even more difficult due to the differences in teaching objectives, curriculums, and methods (except agreed international programs).

It is even more challenging to communicate knowledge between domestic and foreign higher education institutions because of differences in teaching objectives, curriculums, and methods (except agreed international programs) and others. Many countries worldwide have yet to recognize higher education diplomas conferred by Vietnam, which requires many domestic students wishing to study in

advanced foreign programs to start over from scratch. As a result, the attractiveness of domestic higher education institutions will decrease. At the same time, the improvement of education and training quality associated with international cooperation of Vietnamese institutions will also be limited.

## Discussion

### **Review:**

The sources used in this article give useful insights on the multifaceted landscape of higher education. They touch upon factors such as student enrollment and the rate of students that graduates, the rate of employment of the graduates and the amount of financial investment in education. All this provides a good foundation for the understanding of the opportunities and complexities in Vietnam's higher learning institutions.

### **Comparison:**

*Enrollment and graduation rates:* as per the Statista data, there is a great increase in the number of university students enrolling and graduating in Vietnam from 2016 to 2020. However, Hang, Thanh (2022b) reports a lower rate of Vietnamese students enrolling to universities and colleges, signifying the potential challenge of access to higher education.

*Investment in universities and colleges:* a lot of scholars like Nguyet (2020) and Mihn, Pham (2023) shed light on the low level of investment in higher education institutions. The consistent shedding of light by various scholars shows the need to increase funding to the higher learning institutions.

*Employment rate of the graduates:* Hang, thanh (2022a) notes that there is large number of unemployed university graduates than technical school graduates. This shows the mismatch between education and the opportunities of employment.

*Autonomy in universities:* Ha, D.H.H, and Sang, N.D (2022) discuss issues about implementing university autonomy. This shows the challenges in the higher education systems.

**Analysis:**

*Access and quality:* despite the increase in student enrolment to higher education institutions, the low rates of admission and the low quality of higher education shows the need to make reforms to improve the access and the quality of education.

*Funding:* due to the consistent concern about the low funding of higher education by the government, creates concern about the government increasing funding and allocate more resources like faculty improvement and schools infrastructure.

*Employment:* the higher employment of technical students that university graduates signifies the mismatch between the knowledge and skills acquired in higher institutions and the need for a job vacancies. This raises a concern to align curriculum with industry demands.

*University autonomy:* the reported cases of difficulty in the implementation of university autonomy signifies that even if university autonomy is a positive step, it needs to be carefully planned and managed for it to be effective.

**Solutions**

In order for Vietnamese higher education to overcome the above challenges, some solutions can be proposed below:

*Firstly,* higher education institutions need to prioritize and improve their education and training quality.

Priority should be given to the investment in personnel, especially leading experts and high-quality lecturers, including environment, working conditions, opportunities to promote and develop professional capacities, and income policies. It is necessary to adopt policies on strengthening the attraction of highly qualified lecturers from other universities and foreign universities in the case of regular or visiting lecturers or experts. Developing research groups with great capacity, key research centers, etc., should be encouraged. Promoting university rankings goes hand in hand with enhancing teaching staff quality according to international

standards. Previously, recognizing professors, associate professors, and doctoral degrees did not require internationally published articles. However, since 2018, the candidates must have such articles in the list of prestigious journals, such as ISI or Scopus, etc., under new regulations. In 2019, the total number of Vietnamese scientific articles published on ISI or the Scopus system was 12,475 articles, ranking 49th in the world (2.7 times higher than that in 2015). Until 2020, the percentage of lecturers holding the title of professor or associate professor and doctorate in the Vietnamese education system reached 6% and 22.7%, respectively.

In addition, it is required to vigorously renew the curriculum and teaching methods towards modernity and international integration. Curriculums and textbooks need to be designed, developed, and deployed in an open direction (multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary; regular updates on domestic and foreign knowledge; flexible use of textbooks and learning materials from domestic high-quality or reputable foreign institutions, etc.), the curriculums must be oriented towards the development of learners' qualities and abilities, and adhere to and meet the requirements of a specific field in society pursued by learners; streamlining theoretical knowledge, expanding and enhancing practical and applied contents, etc. The application of modern teaching methods has also increased. We should attempt to invest in developing innovative and creative spaces, practices, internships, laboratories, "incubators" for young scientists, etc.

Moreover, universities must perform quality assurance, promote the accreditation of training programs, develop their information technology, digital transformation, communication, and brand management, improve the quality of learner care, provide job search support for graduates, etc., to attract more and more learners, making them willing to pay high costs to get the best educational and training services as well as the best job opportunities after graduation, and at the same time, there introduce policy for learning benefits of students in difficult circumstances.

With the trend of educating global citizens capable of competing in the labor market in Vietnam and the world, continuous innovation of education methods is essential to approach common standards of world higher education (Tuyet 2022).

*Secondly*, it is necessary to increase the mobilization of investment resources for the development of higher education institutions, of which:

An enormous difficulty in promoting the quality and scale of higher education is limited financial resources, which affects human resources and infrastructure (Hien) 2022).

It is required to perfect the institutional framework, renovate the state management of higher education institutions, and simultaneously create strong motivations for university autonomy. Besides, building an organizational model of higher education institutions appropriate to public, private, or foreign-invested institutions is necessary. The study of higher education institution models of qualified religious organizations should be done to meet the learning requirements of religious followers.

We need to increase the budget for higher education, which is the success and experience of many countries. Education and training play a significant role in every country. Therefore, investment in higher education cannot be the sole responsibility of society. The State should arrange resources for a budget increase in combination with the selection of investment priorities, for example, shared resource platforms of higher education institutions for scientific fields with complex enrolment. However, it is the foundation of scientific and training fields in which the State, particularly the political system, requires high-quality human resources, etc. Budget increases and centralized investment projects shall be a big push for Vietnamese higher education institutions to overcome the low-middle-income trap and achieve the expected development.

Another solution is to promote propaganda, develop mechanisms and policies, and create the most favorable conditions for connecting education and training institutions and companies. It must still be considered a fundamental and long-term solution, promoting society's initiative, dynamism, and self-regulation mechanism to optimize social resources for higher education development.

Furthermore, we need to pay attention to digital transformation in higher education as the database of higher education is one of the essential contents to be perfected and put into operation soon to help improve the quality of State



management associated with higher education, effectively support policy-making, etc. The digital transformation of higher education also requires building pilot models of digital higher education, digital training programs, etc. Information technology and digital transformation have been gradually applied in universities for teaching and learning. In the school year 2020-2021, in the context of the complicated and unpredictable COVID-19 epidemic, all universities have deployed online teaching to guarantee the quality of teaching and learning within the required period.

Learners do not have to take classes to listen to the professors' lectures or go to the laboratories to practice. Instead, they may practice, experience, and acquire knowledge at home through technology. The initial efforts of some local universities to bring virtual reality and artificial intelligence technologies into the enrollment process, such as National Economics University or curriculum design and development support technology based on output standards of University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, are advanced steps to be recognized. The technology is not only to equip students with information but also to play the role of a bridge to access quality education, remove the limitations of time and place, promote lifelong learning opportunities for all people, and encourage creativity, curiosity, collaboration, and personalized learning.

Even though the education system is getting used to the traditional way of teaching and learning, with teachers reading and students recording such information every day in classes before the strong impact of the epidemic, Vietnamese universities have been able to adapt to the sudden change to online teaching with totally changed teaching and learning methods, regardless of affected learning results. Online teaching has forced a review of concepts of time and space in the educational world and expanded the forms of combined learning. Combined learning not only means combining a virtual and physical class but also enables genuinely immersive and experiential learning, allowing students to apply concepts learned in the classes to the world. Therefore, instead of "learning anywhere" providing flexibility for programs, Vietnamese higher education institutions, by

increasing the proportion of self-study modules, are gradually transitioning to an approach of “learning from anywhere” and “learning from everyone” (Better learn your friend than your teacher) providing integration in the courses and classes. These changes are also initially recognized in the quality control results.

*Thirdly*, the State should pay the necessary attention and produce institutional solutions to remove obstacles in increasing connection between domestic higher education institutions.

For a developing country like Vietnam, where the resources of domestic higher education institutions are limited, the connection will undoubtedly be a valuable solution to maximize the efficiency of national higher education resources, from personnel to facilities, equipment, etc. In addition, the State is also responsible for removing international legal barriers (for example, becoming a member of the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education 1983, referred to as the Tokyo Convention 2011) and local legal barriers, and regulating support mechanism of international connection for Vietnamese higher education institutions. The Vietnamese higher education institutions have needs and sufficient capacity for domestic and international connection. However, the most critical issue is such barriers, and thus, the Vietnamese State takes a highly significant role and responsibility in such cases.

“In a millennium, knowledge has become a new kind of economic capital, universities, traditional providers of knowledge, face enormous challenges they must adapt and the enormous opportunities they must grasp,” wrote Frank H. T. Rhodes, “one of the most authoritative and inspiring persons among contemporary educational leaders,” in his famous work: *The Creation of the Future, The Role of the American University*: (Rhodes 2009:19). Higher education in Vietnam is facing many challenges, but also many development opportunities. The most necessary things at present are the right direction, the strong desire for development, and high political determination for a developed education in general and a developed higher education in particular, making a worthy contribution to “a prosperous and happy Vietnam on a par with the great powers worldwide, successfully fulfillment of the

wish of great President Ho Chi Minh and aspiration of our entire nation” (Communist Party of Vietnam Online Newspaper 2021a).

## Conclusion

“Teaching is to teach how to learn, inspire, discuss, and solve problems. Learning is to learn how to learn, the spirit of self-study, debate, criticism, and lifelong learning. Assessment of learning outcomes must focus on assessing learning capacity, learning ability, objective review of the whole process, not just testing obtained knowledge” (Anh and Thuong 2018). Therefore, it is necessary to concentrate on adjusting and standardizing curriculums, output standards, training quality and effectiveness, scientific research, etc.

## REFERENCES

Anh, N.N and Thuong, N.K.L (2018): “*Education of Vietnam: Situation, opportunities and challenges*,” Theoretical Education Online Journal, No. 279 (9/2018), p. 54-60.

ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Right (AICHR)(2019)Thematic Study on Right to Education: Promoting of Access to Tertiary Education in ASEAN. ASEAN

Communist Party of Vietnam (2021): *Document of the 13<sup>th</sup> National Congress of Deputies, Volume II*, National Political Publishing House.

Communist Party of Vietnam Online Newspaper (2021a): “*Political Report of the 12<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of Communist Party of Vietnam at the 13<sup>th</sup> National Congress of Deputies*,” <https://tulieuvankien.dangcongsan.vn/ban-chap-hanh-trung-uong-dang/dai-hoi-dang/lan-thu-xiii/bao-cao-chinh-tri-cua-ban-chap-hanh-trung-uong-dang-khoa-xii-tai-dai-hoi-dai-bieu-toan-quoc-lan-thu-xiii-cua-3734>.

Communist Party of Vietnam Online Newspaper (2021b): “*10-year socio-economic development strategy for 2021-2030 period*,” <https://tulieuvankien.dangcongsan.vn/ban-chap-hanh-trung-uong-dang/dai-hoi-dang/lan-thu-xiii/chien-luoc-phat-trien-kinh-te-xa-hoi-10-nam-2021-2030-3735>

Communist Party of Vietnam Online Newspaper (2022): “*The information “The employees with college or university degrees or higher are unemployed account for 30.8%” is incorrect,*” <https://dangcongsan.vn/giao-duc/thong-tin-lao-dong-co-trinh-do-cao-dang-dai-hoc-tro-len-that-nghiep-chiem-ti-le-30-8-la-khong-chinh-xac-621659.html>

Chung, D.N (2016): “*Intellectuals of education sector in Vietnam today,*” Vietnam Journal of Social Sciences, No. 9 (2016), p. 84-90.

Education Communication Center (2022): “*Proposed policy on the support and promotion of cooperation between universities and companies,*” <https://moet.gov.vn/tintuc/Pages/tin-tong-hop.aspx?ItemID=8061>

Ha, D.H.H and Sang, N.D (2022), “*Some problems arising in the conduct of university autonomy,*” <https://tuyengiao.vn/khoa-giao/giao-duc/mot-so-van-de-dat-ra-trong-thuc-hien-tu-chu-dai-hoc-142152>

Hai, Vo (2022): “*16.000 teachers quitting their job during 2022,*” <https://vnexpress.net/16-000-giao-vien-bo-viec-trong-nam-2022-4517768.html>

Hang, Thanh (2022a): “*Number of unemployed university graduates is higher than technical school ones,*” <https://vnexpress.net/cu-nhan-dai-hoc-that-nghiep-nhieu-hon-trung-cap-4497162.html>

Hang, Thanh (2022b): “*Low rate of Vietnamese students admitted to universities and colleges,*” <https://vnexpress.net/ty-le-hoc-sinh-viet-vao-dai-hoc-cao-dang-thap-4508007.html#:~:text=T%E1%BB%B7%20l%E1%Bbuh%20%87%20nh%E1%BA%ADp%20h%E1%BB%8Dc%20%C4%91%E1%BA%A1i,thu%20nh%E1%BA%ADp%20trung%20b%C3%ACnh%20cao>

Hien, Quy (2022), “*Universities desire to improve their education quality, but the investment is too low,*” <https://thanhvien.vn/dai-hoc-muon-nang-chat-luong-nhung-dau-tu-qua-thap-1851511926.htm>

Hop, Do (2023), “*New points in the picture of studying abroad 2023,*” <https://tienphong.vn/nhung-diem-moi-trong-buc-tranh-du-hoc-nam-2023-post1500283.tpo#:~:text=N%C4%83m%202023%2C%20h%E1%BB%8Dc%20sinh%20ch%E1%BB%8Dn,Anh%2012.000%2C%20Trung%20Qu%E1%BB%91c%2011.000%E2%80%A6>

Hung, Thanh, and Linh, Nguyet (2020), “*The investment in higher education of Vietnam is too small,*” <https://vietnamnet.vn/dau-tu-cho-giao-duc-dai-hoc-o-viet-nam-rat-thap-692856.html>

Lim, M.A., Anabo, F.I., Quynh, A.N., Elepaño, M.A., & Kuntamarat, G. () The State of Higher Education in Southeast Asia. SHARE project Management Office. ASEAN Secretariat.

Minh, Pham (2023): "Low investment budget for higher education, despite autonomy policy, but universities have to manage to solve all problems by themselves," <https://giaoduc.net.vn/ngan-sach-dau-tu-cho-gddh-thap-tu-chu-nhung-thuc-te-cac-truong-phai-tu-lo-post235074.gd>

Ngoc, Minh (2022): "GDP 2022 is estimated to increase by 8.02%, setting a record for the past 10 years," <https://baochinhphu.vn/gdp-nam-2022-uoc-tang-802-lap-ky-luc-trong-hon-10-nam-qua-102221229093749292.htm>

Nguyen, Minh-Ngoc .(2023, July 14b). Number of University students in Vietnam from 2016-2020. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/815091/number-of-university-students-in-vietnam/>

Nguyen, Minh-Ngoc .(2023, July 14c). Number of University graduates in Vietnam from 2016-2020. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/815123/number-of-university-graduates-in-vietnam/>

Nguyen, Minh-Ngoc .(2023, July 14d). Number of University teachers in Vietnam from 2016-2020. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/815234/number-of-university-teachers-in-vietnam/>

Nguyen, Minh-Ngoc.(2022, Aug 22). Higher education in Vietnam- Statistics & facts. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/topics/6227/higher-education-in-vietnam/#dossier-chapter3>

Nguyen, Minh-Ngoc.(2023, July 14a). Number of Universities in Vietnam from 2016-2020. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/814940/number-of-universities-in-vietnam/>

Quyen, My (2022): "Salary of VND 6 million per month, doctors intends to quit their jobs," <https://thanhvien.vn/luong-6-trieu-dongthang-tien-si-co-y-dinh-nghi-viec-1851515083.htm>

Rhodes, F.H.T (2009): *Building the future – The Role of the American University*, Saigon Cultural Publishing House.

Tuyet, T.T.M (2022): "Higher education innovation in Vietnam. Situation and solutions," [https://www.tapchiconsan.org.vn/web/guest/van\\_hoa\\_xa\\_hoi/-/2018/825408/doi-moi-giao-duc-dai-hoc-o-viet-nam--thuc-trang-va-giai-phap.aspx](https://www.tapchiconsan.org.vn/web/guest/van_hoa_xa_hoi/-/2018/825408/doi-moi-giao-duc-dai-hoc-o-viet-nam--thuc-trang-va-giai-phap.aspx)

Van, D.U. and An, N.T. (2023): "Five trends and five challenges of higher education,"  
<https://daibieunhandan.vn/giao-duc--y-te1/5-xu-huong-va-5-thach-thuc-cua-giao-duc-dai-hoc--i314613/>

VNU Media (2023), "Ranked in the list of top 70 educational institutions in the world with respect to Quality Education, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, has improved rapidly its ranking in Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2023,"  
<https://ueb.edu.vn/Gioi-Thieu/THONG-TIN-VNU/2173/34035>