



## MASTER PLAN FOR VIETNAM'S HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM - THE STATUS OF EDUCATION PLANNING AT VIETNAM NATIONAL UNIVERSITY\*

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### ABSTRACT

*Master plan of Higher education (HE) plays an important role which should be based on the model of university governance in each country. Vietnam has undergone a major renovation of higher education since 2009. Reorganizing and rearranging the system of universities and colleges is one of the solutions for the development of higher education. The status of training plan has changed in line with the international trends. This paper analyzes the policy of curriculum development of undergraduate, master and doctoral training fields promulgated by the Ministry of Education and Training and by Vietnam National University (VNU). The national university model has been given a high level of autonomy in the curriculum development. VNU develops cutting-edge scientific disciplines, adjusting training programs to meet the diverse and increasingly demands of domestic and international labor markets.*

**Keywords:** higher education institution, governance, autonomy, master plan, training program.

### TÓM TẮT

#### *Quy hoạch giáo dục đại học*

#### *- Thực trạng quy hoạch ngành đào tạo tại Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội*

*Quy hoạch giáo dục đại học có vai trò quan trọng và cần dựa theo mô hình quản trị đại học của từng quốc gia. Việt Nam tiến hành đổi mới giáo dục đại học mạnh mẽ từ năm 2009. Chấn chỉnh, sắp xếp lại hệ thống các trường đại học, cao đẳng là một trong những giải pháp để phát triển giáo dục đại học. Thực trạng quy hoạch ngành đào tạo đại học đã có thay đổi theo xu hướng quốc tế. Bài báo phân tích chính sách xây dựng và quản lý danh mục ngành đào tạo đại học, thạc sĩ, tiến sĩ do Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo ban hành; đồng thời, so sánh chính sách giữa Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo với các quy định hiện hành của Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội. Mô hình đại học quốc gia được Chính phủ Việt Nam trao quyền tự chủ cao trong phát triển chương trình đào tạo kể từ khi thành lập. Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội phát triển những ngành khoa học mũi nhọn, điều chỉnh chương trình đào tạo đáp ứng nhu cầu đa dạng và ngày càng khắt khe của thị trường lao động trong nước và quốc tế.*

**Từ khóa:** trường đại học, quản trị, tự chủ, quy hoạch, ngành đào tạo.

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## 1. Literature review

Many models of university governance have been identified during the past of HE system in the world (Clark, 1983). These models aim to explain in conceptual terms the ways in which different forms of university governance seek to reconcile the needs of scholarly communities for institutional autonomy with both the needs of stakeholders (particularly the state) for accountability and the needs of markets for price-responsiveness. A simple distinction may be drawn between two basic models: a corporate model (also often referred to as an Anglo-American model, because of its adoption by the UK, the USA and nearly all former British colonies), and a civil-service model (also known as a continental European model because of its adoption by most continental European countries) (Martin Hayden, 2012).

One of key elements in a higher education law is the definition of the legal status of public universities. There is a spectrum of positions ranging from tight control over them by the state to their enjoying full independence and autonomy. The typology of Four Models from Control to Autonomy represents just four of the many possible points on the spectrum which included State Control, Semi-Autonomous, Semi-Independent, Independent. Accordingly, the countries who are the highest status of public universities, Australia, United Kingdom. Institutional Governance Model of State Control is Malaysia who can be agency of the MOE, or a state-owned corporation (John Fielden, 2008).

The effectiveness of managing a university's resources seems particularly important for achieving outstanding research results. An exploration of factors associated with research performance across ten European higher education systems. Our main result is not simply that more money or more autonomy is good for research performance. Having more money has much more impact when it is combined with budget autonomy. To be more precise, we found that having budget autonomy doubles the effect of additional money on university research performance (Aghion et al., 2008: 38).

Higher education system will develop with good plan. There are multiple plans for the development of the higher education system in the world. Each country has a pathway to develop higher education in line with its socio-economic development. Master plan, as employed in the context of higher education, was given a particular meaning by the highly successful blueprint developed in 1960 for the public higher education system in the State of California in the United States (California 1960). This master plan was developed in the context of a need to preserve research universities at a time of rapid expansion in the demand for higher education and in the number and variety of higher education institutions (HEI) being proposed for establishment.

Briefly, the California master plan proposed the establishment of: (a) a University of California network of research-focused universities – offering awards up to and including the doctoral level; (b) a California State University system – offering awards up to and including the master's level; and (c) a California Community College system – offering

academic programs to cover the first two years of undergraduate education as well as other programs of vocational training. The University of California network was permitted to select from among the top 12.5% of the high school graduates in terms of academic merit; the California State University system was permitted to select from the top 33.3% of high school graduates in terms of academic merit; and the California Community Colleges system was permitted to admit all applicants considered capable of benefitting from postsecondary education. A statutory coordinating body, which in 1973 came to be called the California Postsecondary Education Commission, was established to ensure effective coordination across the public higher education system.

In 2010, China has produced its fifth master plan for the whole of its education system (2010). Regarding higher education, the main elements of the plan are as follows (Wu Zhenjun, 2010). First, the size of the system should continue to expand, to reach an age-related participation rate in higher education of 40% by 2020. Second, there should be an increased emphasis on improvements in quality: universities are to attach a higher priority to teaching; a credit-based curriculum is to be adopted across all universities; there is to be more collaboration between universities and industry; teaching and research are to be better integrated with each other and with industry needs; and innovation is to be encouraged within universities. Third, there should be an increased self-management capacity within higher education: the governance of HEIs should encourage increased social accountability, and universities are to be given more control over teaching, research and staff management. Fourth, the level of public investment in universities should increase, with particular emphasis on expenditure on research and innovation, and on the establishment of more ‘world-class’ research universities. Finally, there should be a renewed effort to increase internationalization, by encouraging the use of English as the language of instruction at top universities, by conducting dual-degree programs with foreign universities, and by inviting top foreign universities to establish campuses in China. A feature of China’s master plan is its formulaic manner of presentation: it starts with guidelines and executive principles, then it identifies strategic goals, then it declares specific missions for the different sectors of education, then it states specific system reforms, and finally it specifies actions to be taken and practices to be stopped. This master plan shows that acceptance of the controlling role of the Party and of the State. It seems to express the commitment to achieve a gap between universities and the State, a hierarchy of control whereby the State Council controls the Ministry of Education, which in turn controls local education departments at the provincial and municipal levels, which in turn have control of key leadership positions in universities, remains implicit.

Malaysia does not have any master plan for its higher education system. However, it introduced a three-year National Higher Education Strategic Plan, with strategies focused on recognizing six HEIs as peak research universities, supported by 20 centers of research excellence that are expected to achieve and maintain international standard in 2007. The Strategic Plan also commits to ensuring that 10% of all research products are

commercialized, and it puts in place a human capacity building program expected by 2020 to produce 100 research scientists and engineers for every 10.000 persons in the labor force. The Master Plan had its genesis in a series of reports and other planning documents produced between 2005 and 2007 for the Ministry of Higher Education. The driving force for the Plan is an economic such as: Malaysia cannot afford to lag behind. Malaysia has decided that it can no longer rely on foreign direct investments in low-cost labor-intensive industries for its future economic growth. To remain competitive in these changing market conditions, we must generate high value-add capabilities to raise our position in the global value chain. This will enable us to not only attract higher value-add knowledge-intensive investments, but also to export our own product and service innovations to other markets.

Review of the international research on higher educational master plan shows that each country that have their own strategic plan of development in higher education. Higher education master plan for training to be required by the world of work and the trends of internationalization.

## **2. Some policies on higher education renovation in Vietnam**

### ***2.1. Decision the 2011-2020 education development strategy***

The notice of Conclusion 242-TB/TW dated 15 April of the Politburo to continue to implement the Central Resolution 2 (Session VIII). The second solution to develop education to 2020 is to reform vigorously the state management of education and training in general and the university in particular, includes: (i) Strengthening the leadership of the Party, the management of the State, the role of the Fatherland Front and mass organizations at all levels, the role of the education and training sector in the development of education; (ii) Renovating the policy of employing staff in the direction of respecting quality and practical capacity... To reorganize and rearrange the system of universities and colleges; To overcome the situation of establishment in new places and areas not qualified for the contingent of lecturers, the facilities, equipment and inputs of students; does not maintain poor quality schools.

### ***2.2. Basic renewal, comprehensive education and training***

- Resolution No.29-NQ/TW of the 8th Congress of the Party Central Committee XI dated 04/11/2013 on the radical and comprehensive renovation of education and training to meet the requirements of industrialization and modernization in the context of the socialist-oriented market economy and extensive international integration.

The solutions of the Resolution include 9 groups of key, autonomy and self-responsibility as reflected in the task of Resolution No. 5: Development of teachers and officials, public servants and education administrators; ensuring education quality accreditation.

### **2.3. University Charter**

University Charter issued in 2014 stipulate: Tasks and powers; organization and management of universities; training activities, scientific and technological activities, international cooperation activities; lecturers and learners; finance and property; the relationship between university, family and society; To organize the implementation of the university regulations. Article 5: Tasks, powers, autonomy and accountability of universities according to the Law on Higher Education; Article 35. Curriculum, curriculum and instructional materials provided under the Higher Education Act, including: (i) The training program is designed in a research oriented or applied orientation to a training level of a discipline or discipline; (ii) The university is self-reliant and self-responsible in developing, evaluating and promulgating training programs.

### **2.4. On pilot renovation of the operation mechanism of public tertiary education institutions during 2014 - 2017**

The Resolution No. 77/NQ-CP dated October 24, 2014 by the Government on pilot renovation of the operation mechanism of public tertiary education institutions during 2014-2017.

A public tertiary education institution, when committing to covering all expenses for its regular operation and investment, may enjoy autonomy and take comprehensive accountability, specifically as follows: (i) Regarding the performance of training and scientific research tasks; (ii) Regarding organizational apparatus and personnel; (iii). Regarding finance; (iv). Regarding policies on scholarships and tuition fees for social policy beneficiaries; (v). Investment and purchase; (vi). Public tertiary education institutions shall exercise other autonomy contents under relevant regulations in addition to this Resolution.

## **3. The status of the master plan for higher education system**

### **3.1. The status of implementing master plan for Vietnam's higher education system**

Training the high-skilled labor is the aim of universities. It is very important to develop a training program that meets the social needs. In theory, it is necessary to investigate the social needs on employment to establish training programs.

In Vietnam, MOET establishes and manages the classification of undergraduate, master and doctoral program. Pursuant to the classification of MOET, universities planning to add new major need to develop a proposal and ask for permission from MOET.

The training programs of universities in Vietnam have to follow some rules of MOET. For the undergraduate education: MOET assigns 6 compulsory subjects including 27 credits, account for 20% in the time of training program. For the graduate education: MOET assigns 2 compulsory subjects including 8 credits, account for 12% in the time of training program. For the doctoral program education: MOET assigns no compulsory subject, the subjects in training program are decided by the university. MOET manages

and edits the syllabus of all the above subjects. These syllabus will be used in all universities in Vietnam.

### 3.2. *The status of the master plan for training program system at VNU*

#### 3.2.1. *The opening of the new training program at VNU*

Unlike other universities, the VNU model has been assigned the autonomy in the training program development since its inception. With the highest autonomy, VNU is always keen to develop the pioneer science and train to meet the diverse and increasingly demanding needs of the domestic and international labor markets.

VNU develops the master plan for higher education system by itself. Every year, based on the needs of society, especially the high-skilled labor needs of the domestic and international business, VNU has the right to add the new majors outside of MOET's training category. VNU Higher Education Institution have power to identify the needs of new industries, study the socio-economic development trends inside and outside Vietnam, conduct social surveys on human resource needs and forecast future human resource needs to propose educational planning. Pursuing the proposals of VNU Higher Education Institution, VNU evaluates and makes decision on issuing the educational planning document lasted for 5 years. In the process of implementation, if there are new demands on human resources, VNU Higher Education Institution proposes VNU to adjust the educational planning for the following years.

According to the regulations of the undergraduate education of VNU, VNU Higher Education Institution actively develop a proposal for opening new educational planning following the list of VNU training majors. VNU sets the minimum amount of knowledge and the structure of curriculum. In order to carry out the bridge program among departments, VNU has developed 212 general and major syllabus. VNU maintains the A+B model in undergraduate education. When developing the new educational planning, the training departments must follow the general syllabus set by VNU. For these general syllabus, students are able to study at any department in VNU. This ensures the training efficiency and saves the training cost.

**Table 1.** *The master plan of training program at VNU*

No	VNU Higher Education Institution	Number of bachelor programs	Number of master programs	Number of doctoral programs
1	VNU University of Science	24	47	59
2	VNU University of Social Sciences and Humanities	27	38	31
3	VNU University of Languages and International Studies	14	12	9

4	VNU University Engineering and Technology	14	16	10
5	VNU University of Economics	7	14	6
6	VNU University of Education	11	14	5
7	VNU Hanoi School of Law	3	12	9
8	VNU Hanoi School of Medicine and Pharmacy	4	4	0
9	VNU Hanoi International School	6	4	2
10	VNU Hanoi School of Interdisciplinary Studies	0	3	1
11	VNU Hanoi School of Business	0	2	0
12	VNU Institute of Vietnamese Studies and Development Sciences	0	0	2
13	VNU Institute of Microbiology & Biotechnology	0	0	1
14	VNU Hanoi Information Technology Institute	0	0	2
15	VNU International Francophone Institute (In French)	0	2	0

The new training program opening is conducted in the 4 following steps: VNU Higher Education Institution develops the proposal of opening training planning and appraises at base level; VNU operates appraisal and issues the new training planning; Department prepares the conditions to ensure the training quality; VNU appraises the conditions and assigns the training task to the department. Every year, VNU opens 8 to 10 new training programs.

### 3.2.2. *The status of the adjustment of training programs at VNU*

During the implementation of the training program, VNU Higher Education Institution actively update the syllabus. The member institution inform to the VNU the change in the name of the module or the duration of the module. Updating the contents of the syllabus is the annual work of the instructor to adapt the changing labor market and the development of science and technology. The syllabus of the training units updated regularly, on average 3 years, up to every 5 years. Every time a printed copy of the curriculum is updated, the instructors update the latest knowledge of the curriculum.

### 3.2.3. *The status of approving training program at VNU*

Updating and adjusting training program is as followed: Faculty/Department suggests updating and adjusting training program and syllabus; the Council of Training and Science (Training unit) meets and assesses the updated program; the training unit submits VNU for approval.

Assessing and approving training program is decided by VNU. If the content updates and adjusts 20% or more of the current training program, VNU holds a professional appraisal council and issues the new training program.

**Table 2.** *Comparison of autonomy in the planning of training institutions (higher education institutions) under the Ministry of Education and Training (higher education institutions /member universities) of the VNU*

No	Contents	Members of VNU	Members of MOET
1	List of majors	Use by the list of majors of the MOET and by the reform subject codes of the VNU	Use by the list of majors of the MOET
2	The opening of the new training program	<p>The training departments actively develop a proposal for opening new educational planning following the list of VNU training majors and of MOET training majors.</p> <p>The training departments actively to build for the educational planning approving</p> <p>The VNU assesses the educational program</p> <p>The VNU approve the training program</p>	<p>The training departments actively develop a proposal for opening new educational planning following the list of MOET training majors.</p> <p>The training departments actively to build for the educational planning approving</p> <p>The training departments report to the MOET</p> <p>The MOET approve the training program</p>
3	Adjusting training program	<p>The training departments actively adjust and assess the educational program</p> <p>The training departments report to the VNU</p> <p>The VNU approve the training program</p>	<p>The training departments actively adjust and assess the educational program</p> <p>The training departments approve the training program</p> <p>After the approving of the training program, the training departments report to the MOET</p>

### 3.2.4. The Favorableness and the difficult for the autonomy on the master plan of the VNU Higher Education Institution and of the MOET Higher Education Institution

There is a difference between the MOET higher education institution and the VNU higher education institution. Because of the autonomy in university administration, VNU has the flexibility and use the common resources of VNU, especially for general courses, can open interdisciplinary training programs. VNU is the leading higher education institution.

There is a difference between higher education institutions under MOET and VNU. Because of the autonomy given out by the government, VNU has the flexibility and use the common resources of VNU, especially for general courses, to open interdisciplinary training programs.

**Table 3.** Comparison of the autonomy on the training plan of the VNU Higher Education Institution and of the MOET Higher Education Institution

	VNU Higher Education Institution	MOET Higher Education Institution
<b>Favorableness</b>	Flexibility and use of common resources of VNU, especially for general courses. Open interdisciplinary training programs, which can be difficult to implement in non-VNU institutions. Increasing connectivity, helping the units develop the industry properly, to meet the needs of society.	Observe the labor market needs for new occupations Actively select and open of the new training programs
<b>Difficult</b>	Member universities do not open branches close to units in VNU A model of VNU has not really promoted its role in the registration of general courses	The unit operates independently so there is less interconnection, training in association; There are conditions to open the program of interdisciplinary, inter-field training.

## 4. Conclusions

The Master Plan for Vietnam's Higher Education System presents options and recommendations for further reform of the higher education system. The recommendations proposed are informed by an appraisal of relevant international and regional experience, and by a comprehensive review of the current situation in Vietnam. According to Martin Hayden (2012), Master Plan of Vietnam Higher Education needs a better -integrated post-secondary education system that is guided by the principles of the quality; efficiency; unity; equity; and internationalization – the system should engage in the global community

through student and staff mobility and the exchange of knowledge and ideas; and its performance should routinely be benchmarked against models of best practice from elsewhere in the region as well as globally. The system should provide universities, in particular, with levels of institutional autonomy that are adequate to their particular needs and circumstances – within an appropriate framework of social accountability.

Training plan is essential in the master plan for higher education. This plan should ensure the principles set out above to ensure successful reform of higher education.

VNU is one of the two HEIs that have the highest autonomy in the Vietnamese higher education system. Accordingly, VNU is developing a strategy for the development of VNU by 2020, with a vision to 2030. The fields are planned to develop according to the strategic objectives. The training plan is developed and implemented in the period of 2014-2020 with 110 training programs for bachelors, 168 for masters and 137 for PhD. The HEI in VNU are allowed to propose the training plan and request VNU to be approved. Based on the proposals of the HEI, VNU organized evaluation and made the decision to approve the training plan in 5 years. In fact, the autonomy in the development training plan helps VNU HEIs to be self-reliant in the management of the university and adapt to the requirements of the developed society.

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