

MANAGEMENT EDUCATION IN VIETNAM IN THE 21ST CENTURY: ENHANCEMENT THROUGH INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

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ABSTRACT: *On the eve of the new 21st century – the age of globalization and information, there is an increased awareness of the vitally important role of higher education, especially management education, to the socio-cultural, economic and politic development of the country. The second half of the 20th century went down in the history of higher education as the period of its most spectacular expansion, but it is also the period which has seen the gap between industrially developed, developing countries, and in particular the least developed countries with regard to access and resources for higher learning, particularly for management education, already enormous, becoming even wider. It has also been a period of increased socio-economic stratification and greater difference in education opportunity within countries. Like all changes, globalization and information technology development have been producing their own set of unique benefits and problems.*

This paper aims at presenting an analysis of weaknesses of higher education in general and management education in particular, mentioning different main factors that pose different impacts on the management education in Vietnam and suggesting possibly appropriate strategies for solution, for catching up and for meeting with unprecedented demand, and even more, for enhancement of management education of Vietnam in the new environment - the Digital Age: through international cooperation.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Current tendency of socio-economic and cultural integration in the region

Uniting in building up a strong community with sustainable development and mutual collaboration of Asia-Pacific nations is a common goal of Asia-Pacific peoples and at the same time, their aspiration. Just as the sub-regional cultures share certain common values basing upon characteristics of natural and socio-historical environment of the region, such as North Asia, the Americas, Southeast Asia and the Australia, the Asia-Pacific has its own culture and identities as a whole entity.

The second half of this century has shown that regionalization and internationalization play a crucially important role in the socio-economic, cultural and political sustainable development of the nations. It is the period which has also seen the establishment of many big organizations and associations in the region such as ASEAN, AIA (ASEAN Investment Area), APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation), AFTA (ASEAN Free Trade Area), NAFTA, WTO and so on. The pace of change in national and international economies requires higher education to encourage the development of people who can act effectively in turbulent circumstances (Yorke, 1999). Despite that each nation is an independent entity which has its own sovereignty and security, and that countries have different interests, different regulatory and stimulating policies, there are also factors leading to the formation of regional economic blocs: the impact of widening and deepening international division of labour,

the limit and weakness of bilateral integration, the development of the market economy, the rapid development of information technology, and the unequal development between economies. Economic integration - the harmonization of all material and financial relations between member countries by definite agreement is to eliminate all kinds of discrimination. Economic integration is based on international division of labour (IDL). By taking part in IDL, every country can specialize on production of goods that they have absolute and rational advantage, and as a result, factors of production can be wholly and rationally exploited. Socio-economic development is a decisive and crucial factor leading to the development of the region.

Cultural integration plays an important role as well. It is a vital road to exist and to develop. Cultural integration and preservation of national identity are two inseparable sides of only one problem and it becomes a general rule in human life. Any culture has its own weaknesses and advantages compared with the others. People have to keep the balance between integrating with other culture and preserving their own national identity. The most important matter here is that we should know how to converge but still preserve national identity.

1.2 Economic and educational background of Vietnam

The main characteristics of the Vietnamese economy in the transitional period is the remarkable change from the central-planned economy to socialism-oriented market economy. The centralized policy that was compatible with the existing situation of the country for such a long time has deep and strong impacts on every social aspect. However, new age always requires new ways of thinking and doing. While the former still leaves behind it a considerable amount of backward vestige, the latter continuously initiates a series of challenges, which creates a big question mark for the society. The centralized and subsidized economy applied to Vietnam by that time to overcome what the war has left is now no longer suitable to the new circumstance. There are vital needs for much more activeness and flexibility so as to adjust and to open the nation's economy itself not only for self-improvement but for integration as well. Demands for higher educational development, especially in management education, therefore, are rising remarkably and strongly than ever. Education in general, and management education in particular may not be able to solve all these challenges, but they are surely a reliable approach to facilitate human progress in terms of management, as they are always considered a crucial factor for coping with not only many economic challenges but personal and social ones as well.

II. ENHANCEMENT OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATION IN VIET NAM THROUGH INTL' COOPERATION

2.1 Existing weaknesses of management education in Vietnam

The world has changed, and universities, instead of leading the change, are lagging behind it or even resisting it. A long period after war, education has been aimed to publicly erase illiteracy and ways of backward thinking, rather than directed to an academic and technological intellectual excellence. This has caused a considerable gap in the field between Vietnam and other countries in the region. The concept of management, obviously which was hardly an exception, was shaped accordingly to the centrally-democratic orientation. It is no longer compatible, and efforts for a reform have been being made. In the same vein, Thiep, L.Q. (1998) pointed out some critical issues for VN higher education system such as the current teaching methods have not been improved, most of faculty and students are not ready

for innovative teaching and learning methods, and faculty qualification in general do not meet the country requirements. However, reality shows that the *quality and effectiveness* of management education and training in Vietnam is still so low compared with others in the region.

Looking at *curriculum reform* efforts, while the socio-economic development keeps on changing upward, they are mostly reclassifying and rearranging old knowledge in familiar academic boxes or subjects. The academic curriculum including design, content, and organization is essentially a vehicle through which other attributes are delivered (Fallows and Steven, 2000). Therefore, curriculum has become a specialized craft, thus there is a temptation to feed upon itself and, in the name of continuity, to keep packaging the same basic things, forgetting to raise more difficult and more basic questions of whether the content should be overhauled. Constable and McCormick (1987) also concluded that a high proportion of course content was irrelevant to the needs of practicing managers. Behrman and Levin (1984), Deutschman (1997) et al., and Haynes (1991) criticised graduates business programmes as focusing on technical skills to the exclusion of communication skills; doing not teaching their graduates leadership, creativity and entrepreneurship; ignoring the importance of teamwork; being theory – oriented and narrowly focused; lacking integration and global perspective. These complaints are also true for Vietnam. And as a result, the time has come for a fundamental re-thinking of the way we classify and package essential learning content.

Another problem is the conflict between *demand and supply*. For a long time, university access has been a big problem for one's schooling progress and presently still poses a pressure on the learners and on the society as well. Statistics shows that the average ratio of students accepted to the university was one tenth and the growth of student number increased more than 22% during the last ten years. This means among ten people who wish to enter the university sitting for the entrance exam each year, only one has access for their schooling at higher education. Then the question is that where for the rest to go.

Table 1 below illustrates the number of full-time students enrolled in management field in the last 5 years of the two Universities of Economics in HCM City and in Hanoi:

Table 1: Number of students in the two Universities of Economics

Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
University					
HCMC University of Economics,	6041	3975	6136	4721	6154
National University of Economics, HaNoi		3562	3710	3989	4803

Besides, *teaching methodology* has been being out-of-date and backward. Stensaasen (1995) believed that the role of lecturers in HE would be better considered as that of a leader who helps people to do a better job than of an instructor. One-way teaching not only discourages students from expressing their creativity and flexible thinking but even worse, makes them step by step become more passive in logical thinking, brainstorming and learning involvement. Students usually work individually in the learning environment where teachers are considered to be knowledge-transfer people who draw the road and students are the ones who just simply follow the trace. This kind of methodology obviously does not encourage what we call "team-work" spirit which might be the cradle of productive initiative.

Although *information technology* has recently entered into every aspects of public life, it is not a major part of education to get this kind of advanced technology involved in its methodology. And all of us can clearly understand that, the later we apply this technology to our teaching and learning method, the farther distance we make between our country and other developing neighbours, that is not mention to the developed ones all over the world.

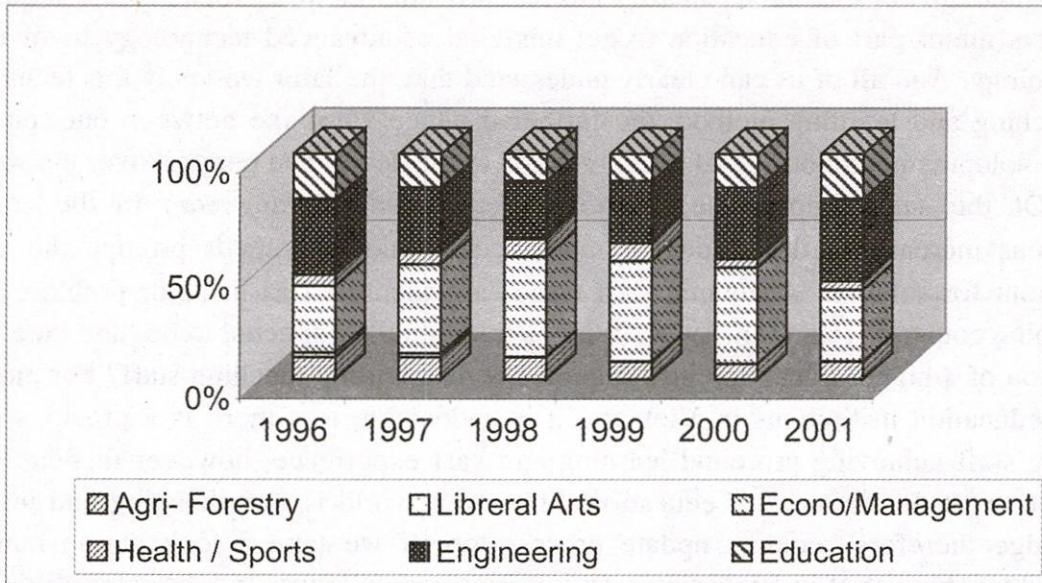
Of the same importance, *shortage of qualified teaching staff* in the context of continuous increase of the student number is an issue that needs prompt and effective investment for solution. Academic staff issues are identified as a major problem in many developing countries (Harman, 1996). What is traditionally expected to be “the face” and the reputation of a higher education institution if not its qualified teaching staff? For most of the higher education institutions in Vietnam, it is undeniable that there is a precious circle of teaching staff achieving profound learning and vast experience, however this circle cannot afford to meet the demand of education. Moreover, world is everchanging and intellectual knowledge therefore requires update process too. If we take a look at the numbers of qualified teaching staff in Vietnamese universities and colleges, and the ratio of teacher and student in the table 2 below, we will see a definite current situation of shortage.

Table 2: Number of qualified teaching staff in VN Universities and colleges:

	Number	Percentage
Total teaching staff	24080	100%
Doctor/ Ph.D.	3566	14,8%
Master	3583	14,9%
Professor	290	1,2%
Associate Professor	1169	4,9%
	Number	Percentage

Source: Statistical figure from Institute of Education Development, 1998

Also, reality shows that during the past period, there was always an unbalance in the *fields of training*, which was due to either subjective or objective factors and seemed not to be put under good control. We often do not manage to offer an effective orientation for our students in choosing the appropriate field of learning that both best fits with their individual capability and special talent and best meets with the economic and social requirements for development. This creates a situation where qualified personnel is simultaneously short and abundant in a system and can be seen in the column chart below. The highest percentages of training field belonged to economics/management, then engineering and education. Already considerably low, the percentages of Health / Sports, and Agri-Forestry gradually fell down, or even Liberal Arts disappeared. (See chart below)



Last but not least, the *relation between university and business* section is very weak and dim. This shortage of linkage results in the gaps between graduate demand and supply; between training content, training quality and real requirements or conditions, between theory and practice. By consulting with employers and taking their contribution into account, educational institutions would develop more suitable curriculum, which in turn would help students to develop the necessary knowledge and skills. Through communication with employers, the tertiary institutions could learn about the strengths and weaknesses of their graduates as well as to learn about the latest issues in business (Neelankavil, 1994), and hence improve their programs. Therefore, only when such connection is well and carefully built up can the products of education be practically effective.

2.2 Factors that impact management education in Vietnam

The *world economy* is gradually becoming *more globalized*, as barriers to the international movement of capital, goods and people are reduced. Globalization is frequently portrayed as a threat, but what it often means at first is simply that people from different parts of the world can trade with each other on the same terms that they can trade with people in their own nations. Then globalization means we will be unable to develop firmly, entirely and strongly if we stand alone, if we do not take part in that global trend of integration.

In that context, the economy of Vietnam has also changed itself to be able to cope with the trend the era. The *multi-sector market economy with socialism orientation* has been opening various opportunities as well as different new challenges for the country. This core transfer generated and resulted in a series of other changes in various aspects of society including education, requiring a necessary harmony to maintain sustainable development of society as a whole complete entity.

Technology has been and is a continuing democratizing influence. Many people now have, via computers and telephones, access to information and an ability to communicate that was available previously only to a wealthy few, if it was available at all. Technology has dramatically reduced the significant of what we might call "the tyranny of distance". Now it costs no more to send an e-mail around the world than it does to send one next door. The significance of this for maintaining international links is very great.

The potential of new information technologies for the renewal of management education by extending and diversifying delivery, and by making knowledge and information available to a wider range of learners can be fully utilized. Equitable access to these can be assured through international cooperation and support. In the current economic environment so-called the "Knowledge Economy", information and communication technologies are playing an extremely significant role which is undoubtedly a crucial impact on the change of teaching & learning methods in management education. Today, candidates can never succeed in applying for a managing position in a well-known enterprise if they fail to show and to prove their excellent professional managerial skills and their active creativity and responsibility.

Internationalization and regionalization of higher education is also a common tendency of the period that helps to bring universities in all different part of the world together in sharing some common educational philosophy. Internationalization of education creates more equal and open access for learners to gain wider and diverse education for a long-life learning. Regionalization encourages countries sharing certain common geographic identities to collaborate in establishing a network in order to best explore and enhance the strengths of the region.

So far, Vietnam has found itself as a well-integrated part of the regional networks and simultaneously a separate entity with its own specialized identities. Vietnamese higher education, to some extent, along its road to adapt to regional and global integration, has been gradually accredited and completely recognized. Many international cooperation programs were established between Vietnamese institutions and different foreign partners that bring good benefits for both sides.

2.3 Strategies for adaptation and enhancement through international cooperation

Strategies for delivery of management education should be changed to reflect and to cope with the technological, economic and sociological developments of recent years. In the period of rapid growth and increased demand, institutions of management education can enhance the access of students to the best of teaching and the richest sources through *constructive interrelationships*. The effectiveness of research can also be enhanced through the development of networks for particular topics and emphases. The new technology greatly enriches such possibilities, but a genuine openness is required between the various institutions of management education. International cooperation is important in every sector of education, but management education is well placed to play an especially important role. In systematic education, it is encouraged that developing countries should be shared curriculum and supported with materials by developed countries. More attention should also be paid on the following collaborative activities:

- conducting joint studies and research in area of mutual interest
- encouraging joint development of course readings, school textbooks or learning modules
- assisting with bilateral and multilateral teachers and students exchanges
- conducting training workshops for policy makers and practitioners on materials development, policy formulation, model building and utilization of research finding in this area.

For the new environment, it's time for us to take serious consideration on the re-adjustment of learning content and teaching methodology, modern technologies application, and upgrading facilities as well. In preparing for Vietnam to become an AFTA member,

Vietnamese businessmen and managerial policy makers and practitioners need to be equipped with international understanding of the new business environment in order to upgrade and improve their professional skills. The future great demand in Business/Management training leads our consideration to necessary training development in following categories:

2.3.1 Teacher's role and teacher's involvement:

Recognizing the particular problems of management education in coping with massive increases in demand, under difficult finance circumstances, and the corresponding need to widen access to management education, we are seeking a major move forward in the achievement of management education in our country, an improvement that is crucial if we are to see the level of social advance needed for the new century. It is clear to us that any significant improvement in learning requires the active involvement and support of teachers, that is not to mention to the crucial and vital involvement of the teachers of management who educate learners to be performing in managing activities.

Then our concerns should include:

- Re-defining roles and professional requirements of teachers
- The selection of teachers and of candidates for teaching
- The education and training of those preparing for teaching
- The career development of teachers
- Continuing professional education for teachers
- The conditions for teachers
- The status of teachers as professionals
- The recognition that teachers have a key responsibility beyond knowing their subject matter and their pedagogy, to know, to understand and to challenge their students

Whereas before there were gatherers and classifiers of information, now with multiple accessible sources of vast information already surrounding the learner, they have to be the guides and sorters of information already gathered and classified. It is as if the learner were no longer, as once before, in the desert of ignorance looking for an oasis of knowledge somewhere. Rather, he is an ocean of information. Therefore, the teacher must also change his conception of himself or herself. The teacher is no longer a source of information, no longer an oasis in the desert, but rather a fellow passenger in the same boat, helping the student sort out and make sense of the information around him or her.

In too many reforms, the teacher has been presented as part of the problem rather than part of the solution. This has resulted in a significant loss of morale among teachers and an attitude of cynicism towards reform. No reform related to the improvement of learning can occur without the cooperation of teachers and it is vital to develop this, initially. Further, recent research is revealing the importance of the teacher in bridging the learning gap for those students who are disadvantaged and whom schools so often fail to help. No short-term dramatic solution is likely here but a carefully planned effort, involving wide discussion between the key groups and the establishment of partnerships, if necessary.

2.3.2 Curriculum system and teaching content

Curriculum system and teaching content must be reformed for the new age in the way they should be flexible and adaptable. International cooperation plays core role in setting up collaborative environment where people can sit together to share opinion and experience.

Curriculum-makers must be experts who have specialized skills, deciding what should be taught, and figuring out what techniques and methods to use to teach these. The content of learning must include more than information, and learners should know the law of distinction between the need for scientific and technical knowledge, the need for economic and commercial knowledge, and the need for ethical and cultural knowledge. In short, the most important thing to know is how to know, learning to learn. And learners must also have the tools to analyze and organize the knowledge and then manage it, and finally put it to good use.

Omni-disciplinary is a receding target, no longer reachable in an information age. Complementarity, competitiveness and differentialization of work task demand that individual focus on specialization and specific expertise. Nevertheless, a balance is needed between the two. If a person is too narrow a specialist, it cuts him or her off from necessary wider communication and other specific knowledge area, at the intersection of which the best advances in knowledge and research take place. Today a really well-trained mind needs a broad background and the opportunity to study a small number of subjects in depth. The challenge to us and to *curriculum makers and developers* worldwide then is to determine what should be included in that necessary broad background.

Since appropriate education and preparation for work in the current broad society of the 21st century are essential and increasingly complex, it is recommended to policy-makers that the *education programs* offered are as broad as possible, and avoid early specialization, which would limit options available to students. In addition, care should be taken to ensure that those in the workforce who have been trained in an earlier era are brought up to date with training programs in new skills required in the workplace environment.

2.3.3 Teaching methods

Methodology must be changed from traditional approach to the new one in the light of considering students as the “central” part in the process of teaching. Students and their needs should be placed at the center of all concerns. Management institutions should:

- Further develop counseling and guidance and should consider students as major partners and responsible stakeholders in the renewal of management education
- Actively encourage the maximum possible diversity and choice for users of education and training services.
- Facilitate choice of school and specialization and developing a competitive national management training market
- Seek to make the system more responsive to student choice.

All of this is about opportunities for enterprises / organizations and individuals: opportunities to obtain management education and training best fitted to learner talents, their wishes and their potential contribution. It is also part of the further responsibility of society – the development of management education and training that is not only accountable to society but also responsive to individual needs.

The teaching process has to be more interactive. Learning needs to be more learner-centered and learner-driven, with the teacher as a guide, a facilitator, and an organizer of learning activities and students as explorers, creators who, besides individual talent, are encouraged to work collaboratively to foster collective intellectual strength. Also, activity methods which are conducive to individual initiatives, creativity and active participation of

students should be encouraged. In any circumstance, a good, right and flexible combination between traditional and modern methods which we learn through international cooperation will promise to be effective and productive.

2.3.4 Information technology application

Full and creative use should be made of modern educational technologies and *information networks* including the Internet, as powerful of learning and communication.

Nowadays, technological change is placing formal education courses under pressure and educational institutions require up-to-date facilities to prepare young people for the technological world they will face. Taking into account the stage of economic growth of the nation and its long-term objectives, it is recommended that considerable attention should be paid to adequate recourse systems of management education which deliver quality outcomes, especially in the fields of computing and information technology. While Vietnam still has very limited resources, there is a crucial need for an adequate supply of well-trained teachers coping with new technologies, especially Information Technology. Teachers should be provided with opportunities to gain additional experience in these areas, so that their students will be better prepared to enter the workforce. All staff is encouraged to use multimedia in teaching and making use of the advantage of Internet for teaching and learning support.

To make the above-mentioned feasible, management education of Vietnam is encouraged to engage in the network established among the countries in the region so that we can take advantage of the pool of expertise consisting of people with skills and experience in the delivery of training programs developed in the region to develop and enhance such skills in our country where this expertise is lacking. However, in this cross-country learning, study and good practice must be identified to indicate which technologies can be best applied to particular conditions of our own.

2.3.5 Scientific research and application

Vietnam is now member of many important international organizations. This gives us various conditions for our people to set up and to participate in joint research and application activities where we can learn much from our partners' advanced experience.

It is not early at all, but still not too late for us to fill the deep gap between learning / research and practice in management education which is debilitating to both. We therefore need to point out useful approaches to enhance both the quality of learning/ research and also its likelihood of application.

2.3.6 Implementation of quality assurance

Though the practice is quite new to us, it is necessary to focus on the procedures of how to implement the quality assurance of management education. Quality in management education is a multidimensional concept which should embrace all its functions and activities: teaching and academic programs, research and scholarship, staffing, students, infrastructure and academic environment. It should be committed to internal and external evaluation. Again, international cooperation works. Accreditation criteria need to be carefully discussed before being applied. However, this must be context-specific to ensure the most appropriate methodology.

III. CONCLUSION

Needless to say, there is a vital, organic link between educational development and economic improvement. No country can have a well-developed economy without establishing an integrated educational system. Only when an educational system is modernized can

human resources be used effectively, and economic development be assured. Conversely, a developing economy integrating into the development tendency of the system continually demands an adequate qualified and responsible human resource which is no doubt a previous product of an advanced educational system. It is especially management education that plays even more crucial role. It might be considered as something like a head since it helps to foster intellectual human force who are expected to perform their excellence in the field of management widely from macro to microscope. What happens if policy-makers perform their accountability and run their nation, or even managing directors operate their small business without recognized and updated knowledge of management or at least a background of management education? It is the time for us to pay attention to opening our educational system, liberate ourselves from the restrictive conventions and paradigms of the past. Learn from the innovation of our fellow administrators from around the region. And better still, learn from the lessons of the past experience of our own educational systems. A truly appropriate and effective management education in Vietnam in the 21st century obviously will not only help make the country well integrate into social, economic, cultural and politic development worldwide, but also well manage to protect and maintain our own leading political policies, preserve and enhance the traditional cultures and national identities in the context of cultural pluralism and diversity.

GIÁO DỤC QUẢN LÝ TRONG THẾ KỶ 21 Ở VIỆT NAM: TĂNG CƯỜNG THÔNG QUA HỢP TÁC QUỐC TẾ TRONG ĐÀO TẠO

Trương Quang Được

Khoa Quản lý Công nghiệp, Trường ĐH Bách Khoa – ĐHQG-HCM

TÓM TẮT: Trước thềm thế kỷ 21 – thời đại thông tin và toàn cầu hóa, nhận thức về tầm quan trọng của giáo dục đại học, đặc biệt là giáo dục quản lý, đối với sự phát triển văn hóa, xã hội, kinh tế và chính trị của đất nước ngày càng gia tăng. Những năm cuối thế kỷ 20 được xem là thời kỳ phát triển ngoạn mục trong lịch sử giáo dục đại học nhưng đồng thời cũng là giai đoạn mà khoảng cách về nguồn lực và cách tiếp cận với giáo dục đại học, cụ thể là giáo dục quản lý, giữa những nước công nghiệp phát triển với những nước đang phát triển, đặc biệt là những nước kém phát triển ngày càng to lớn. Đây cũng là thời kỳ phân tầng kinh tế và xã hội sâu sắc với sự cách biệt rõ nét hơn về cơ hội giáo dục ở các nước. Cũng như mọi biến đổi khác, toàn cầu hóa và sự phát triển công nghệ thông tin đã mang lại những lợi ích và các vấn đề đặc trưng.

Bài viết này nhằm phân tích những nhược điểm của giáo dục đại học nói chung và giáo dục quản lý nói riêng, qua đó, trình bày các yếu tố chính ảnh hưởng đến giáo dục quản lý ở Việt Nam và đề xuất những chiến lược thích hợp nhằm giải quyết, đáp ứng các yêu cầu cấp bách nhưng quan trọng hơn cả là nâng cao công tác giáo dục quản lý ở Việt Nam trong thời đại kỹ thuật số thông qua hợp tác quốc tế trong đào tạo.

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