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### INNOVATION OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN VIETNAM (2010 - 2020): SITUATION AND SOLUTIONS

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Innovation in higher education in Vietnam is an issue that has always been concerned and posed under many different angles from time to time and the requirements of the society.

With the system-structure approach, the article analyzes and assesses the current situation of higher education in Vietnam. On that basis, the article suggests a few solutions to innovate higher education in terms of objectives, content, teaching and learning methods in the direction suitable to the changes in the nature and content of the labor, to meet the aspirations, expectations and conditions of learners, in the direction of gradually increasing the "gray matter" content of learners; develop practice skills and create favorable conditions for job change; increase the quality of labor in terms of quality, morality and behavior; increase flexibility, creativity, and adaptability; improve foreign language knowledge, informatics, social understanding...

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Renovating education in general and higher education in particular are the requirements of the society, country and inevitable in historical trends. The views of the Party and State of Vietnam on higher education innovation are aimed at creating a drastic change in the quality and efficiency of education, to better meet the people's learning needs. The university education reform must ensure the systematic, comprehensive, fundamental, long-term vision suitable for each type of object, from the educational level, with a synchronous, feasible and solution, appropriate point, route and step; inheritance; developing new factors; selectively absorb the world's experiences.

For Vietnam, innovation of higher education is to create a strong breakthrough in the innovation of content, curriculum and teaching methods, in order to meet the increasing demands of society in the conditions of the economy and integration. Because at present, Vietnam's higher education has not met the needs of employers. According to a 2013 study by the Lumina Foundation/Gallup found that only 11% of business leaders rated college graduates working efficiently. This figure is far from the 96% of the training staff in universities and colleges who are very confident that their school is training students for future careers. The size of skills shortages differs depending on the industry. A survey by the Manufacturing Institute and Deloitte with 450 manufacturing executives shows that the areas where workers are most unskilled are: Technology and computers (70%), problem solving (69%), basic technical training (67%) and calculation skills (60%). Industry 4.0 has a direct and biggest impact on education - which directly trains human resources to serve Industry 4.0. In order to meet the demand for human resources for the new industry, while taking advantages of information technology (IT), many universities around the world have been innovating comprehensively, education 4.0 is being assessed as an appropriate model (Ha, 2020).

Many people believe that, university training should not be perceived as just vocational training, even as a high-level profession. Since the renewal of higher education, the Ministry of Education and Training has advocated introducing liberal education into the bachelor program. In the 1990s, in the reform effort, general education was designed to ensure college graduates have a vision, a method of thinking, and a human affection. However, in the early years of the twenty-first century, the need for "soft skills" for graduates emerged, and many universities introduced some content on their curricular and extracurricular programs "Vietnam can believe that when society changes rapidly towards digital technology along with globalization and international integration, the spirit of liberal education will be confirmed in the higher education program" (Lam, 2017).

### **THE CURRENT SITUATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN VIETNAM**

The activities of renovating higher education in Vietnam have been mentioned and implemented in recent decades. This is a prominent issue that has been mentioned at all times, everywhere and sometimes fiercely in scientific conferences, in newspapers and at many forums of the National Assembly. Teachers and scientists have proposed solutions to renovate higher education, but the transformation is very slow. Meanwhile, Vietnam's socio-economy is increasingly integrated into the world, emerging many new trends that directly impact the cause of education, such as the socialization of open schools at all levels, requires a new human resource, with qualifications and capacities consistent with the country's development and international integration; schools have to compete to attract learners.

While the world is changing rapidly, Vietnam's higher education still seems to be "stalled" in place. Many people believe that Vietnam's education is among the worst in the world, not the most advanced in the world. If there is no

change, it will increasingly lag behind (Minh, 2019). Then 50% of Vietnamese students graduate without a job in their area of expertise. Thousands of graduate students are not allowed to teach, meanwhile, the social needs are in desperate need of this human resource. If the lucky graduate student finds a job suitable or relatively suitable for the training profession, they must retrain. However, being able to go to work is not a lucky thing. Many young people join the team of teachers, enjoying a poor salary, whether they can stay with the job or not is another matter.

The reason for the gap between the social needs and job opportunities for university graduates is still large because the school and society do not have a common voice. On the part of the school, the training and management have not kept pace with the development of the market economy, society, and international integration. Many ideas are reasonable to think that “The domestic universities also place a heavy emphasis on equipping students with knowledge without paying attention to developing the capacity of awareness and understanding, and not focusing properly on the development of critical thinking, ability to solve problems” (Dao, 2008). Or “one-way teaching, monotonous learning activities that teacher talks - students listen, teacher reads - students write, teacher performs - students watch, and examinations for memory assessment - re current ” (Le, 2019).

There are many reasons for the above-mentioned limitations such as the majority of schools have too crowded classrooms, with classes up to 200, even up to 400 students. The content of the subject is too long and the time is not adequate, especially in the current transition period, many schools are moving to study according to the credit regime. Many subjects and subjects previously taught 60, 75 periods, now shortened to only 30 periods. This reduction itself is not really scientific and reasonable, depending on the subjective feelings of the manager, which makes the teacher always face the challenge of both ensuring quality and ensuring time. And in a short time they hardly have the optimal choice, ensuring the quality of teaching. Another reason, comes from the learner side. Our students in particular, Vietnamese people in general often absorb ideas and knowledge in a one-way direction, with little criticism, always being imposed. Therefore, students are familiar with the "traditional" way of learning, listening to lecturers as main, with little or no participation in lesson development. This may also be due to the fact that the instructors' questioning is so monotonous that students do not like to respond - there are even students who consider studying as an obsession because it is both boring and heavy (Kim, 2018).

There is a basic reason that in many seminars and public opinion, domestic and foreign press often discusses the philosophy and orientation of higher education in Vietnam. Although some opinions exchanged on this issue have not come to a high consensus, all are aware of the difference between Vietnam's higher education philosophy and Western countries in higher education. Vietnam pays attention to comprehensive training from ethics, mastery of the policy on the road to professional skills... while for the Western higher education, it pays great attention to training skills to solve real problem. Since then, the university training in Vietnam has no conditions to specialize,

does not promote independence, autonomy, creativity, interest in research, learning... of learners, so The training efficiency is not high (Pham, 2013). Even the mentality of the person who builds the training program to the manager of higher education carries heavily the thought of "perfectionism", to train the next generation of "both rosy and professional", ensuring both "virtue and talent "but forget one thing that humanity has summarized since ancient times: Human life is finite, knowledge is infinite. Therefore, there is no higher education in the world that can train and "come out" with great products like the Vietnamese way of saying "both pink and professional", ensuring both "German and talent". To achieve this requires the main effort from the learners themselves, secondly, to mention the regime, teaching methods and then to mention other conditions such as the social learning environment. Knowing not to achieve and never to achieve, what must Vietnam higher education have to propose so heavily?

But to get rid of this stubbornness is hard. More than twenty years of reforming higher education are still struggling with the philosophy, direction and educational goals. The Education Law (2019) clearly states that the goal of higher education is to train people with political qualities, ethics, a sense of service to the people, with adequate knowledge and capacity to practice, with a training level, good health, meeting the requirements of building and protecting the country.

The requirements of political and ethical qualities, a sense of serving the people, meeting the requirements of building and defending the Fatherland are common requirements for any citizen, Education to ensure these qualities and requirements are the whole society the political system and the whole family and is the responsibility of each person. Is attaching this responsibility to higher education necessary now? Let the university autonomously implement its mandate, practice learning and teaching according to adult learning, studying independently, freely, creatively, knowledge and capacity to practice careers commensurate with the training level (Do, 2018). ]

It can be said that conservatism is a very prominent character of Vietnam's higher education. Today, university training daring to overcome the fixed regulations is sure to face a series of obstacles of conservative barriers erected over thousands of years. For example, to evaluate a teacher the problem that educational leaders must consider first is political qualities, ethics, a sense of serving the people, meeting the requirements of construction and protect the country then you can teach it well or not. In the reports of the schools, from elementary to university, all use it as a measure and a standard to evaluate teachers and are always proud of those qualities with little emphasis on the quality of teaching, criticism, evaluation of learners.

In general, conservatism is deeply rooted in Vietnam's higher education. Basically, the leaders of higher education and schools are not interested in change - in a very fashionable and political way, "innovation". Why? Simply put, they are no use at all. Benefits belong to future generations. So let the future worry about the future, nothing for them to change, because they are

looking for leisurely, entertaining, and frivolous. The nature of Vietnamese society is harmonious, afraid to change.

Therefore, to innovate higher education in the direction of matching changes in the nature and content of labor, social needs, and meeting the aspirations and conditions of learners. The innovation process must be ensured in the direction of gradually increasing the "gray matter" content of learners; develop practice skills and create favorable conditions for job change; enhancing the quality of labor in terms of quality, morality and behavior; increase flexibility, creativity, and adaptability; improve foreign language, computer skills, and social understanding.

In the context of the current exciting development of science and technology, especially when the economies of many countries develop on the knowledge economic ladder, leading to the phenomenon of "explosion" of information. The amount of human knowledge will increase rapidly over time, so students who have just graduated from the school for 1-2 years are likely to fall behind in their knowledge, especially in the social sciences and humanities. Therefore, renovating higher education should choose the main "broad" training method, adjust the teaching content, the training time can be shortened. Strengthening the capacity for practical solving for learners, linking the teaching of each subject with equipping learners with the ability to independently solve problems, self-study rather than experience in solving problems.

Over the years, Vietnam has maintained the view that education must equip learners with as much knowledge as possible to help them have a strong foundation upon graduation to live and practice for a long time. Meanwhile, the educational trend of the advanced countries in the world is that education only needs to teach learners how to solve problems posed in life rather than focus on filling existing knowledge. Therefore, to innovate university teaching methods is to shift from the method of transmitting "as much knowledge as possible" to teaching "problem solving skills posed in life". To do that, at present, many universities in Vietnam innovate the university teaching method, focusing on implementing "student-centered", "applying computer in teaching" and applying teaching methods to students get together "group discussion", student-centered under the guidance of the teacher.

### **SUGGEST SOLUTIONS TO RENOVATE HIGHER EDUCATION IN VIETNAM**

Vietnam's higher education is a fairly comprehensive and profound reflection on Vietnamese society. The "chronic" diseases of Vietnam easily find in higher education. This situation is a deep worry of the whole society, because it is associated with each family and the future development of the country.

To be fair, higher education innovation has been mentioned and implemented over the past few decades. This is a prominent issue that has been mentioned at all times, everywhere and sometimes fiercely in scientific conferences, in newspapers and at many forums of the National Assembly. Teachers and scientists have proposed and proposed solutions to renovate higher education,

but the transformation is very slow. Meanwhile, Vietnam's socio-economy is increasingly integrated into the world, emerging many new trends that directly impact the cause of education, such as the socialization of open schools at all levels, requires a new human resource, with qualifications and capacities consistent with the country's development and international integration. Schools must compete to attract learners.

Education development trends in Vietnam and the world have a strong impact on the innovation of higher education include: mass training, easy enrollment and rigorous screening during training, lifelong learning, continuing through different forms of training, interdisciplinary training, combine training functions with scientific research and technology knowledge transfer functions.

Therefore, university education innovation must innovate teaching and learning objectives, contents, methods in the direction of suitability to changes in the nature and content of labor, to meet learners' aspirations and conditions. "The innovation process must ensure the direction of gradually increasing the" gray matter "content of learners; develop practice skills and create favorable conditions for job change; enhancing the quality of labor in terms of quality, morality and behavior; increase flexibility, creativity, and adaptability; improve the level of knowledge of foreign languages, information technology, social understanding" (Dao, 2008).

Innovating teaching and learning methods towards promoting students' initiative and creativity and directing learners to the path of "lifelong learning" (Nguyen, 2021, p.35). As when teaching about a certain historical event, the teacher will be able to spend about one or two sessions (sometimes more) just talking about that event. Students not only read books but also watch movies, go to museums that display artifacts or historical relics related to the lesson. Then each student has to find information on the internet, old books, then make an essay to submit to the teacher or make a big poster, stick up pictures and related objects and use it to present to the class. Teachers should also create conditions for students to group themselves and then write scripts according to a certain historical event and edit films. The incarnation into historical figures makes students feel very excited and very interesting. Certainly, after many years, students cannot forget that lesson (Bich, 2015). They will bring the joy, that excitement, to the next generations of students. That is the focus on learning methods to maximize students' creativity (Mai, 2020). Any subject, from social sciences to nature, students may have to create posters to decorate a problem at the request of the instructor, and the fine arts are also graded. Even beautiful posters will be used for teaching or advertising... Depending on the lecturer, teaching methods are also very different. It is the same book, but teachers have the right to choose how to teach and freely create methods of imparting knowledge; create conditions for both students and faculty to promote their creativity.

In the context of the current exciting development of science and technology, especially when the economies of many countries develop on the knowledge economic ladder, leading to the phenomenon of "explosion" of information.

The amount of human knowledge will increase rapidly over time, so students who have just trained for 1-2 years are likely to fall behind in their knowledge, especially in the social sciences and human knowledge Literature. Therefore, innovation of higher education should choose the main "broad" training method, adjust the teaching content, the training time can be shortened, aiming to train learners to become global citizens (Bui & Dang, 2020). Strengthening the capacity of practical solving for students associating the teaching of each subject with equipping students with the ability to independently solve problems, the ability to self-study rather than the experience to solve problems current practical problems (Nguyen, 2011).

In addition, the current salary of teachers is also a matter of concern. Try making a small comparison if a student graduated from economics, law, information technology... enters a certain bank (state or joint stock) their starting income is 4 - 7 million VND / month, while a good graduate student is kept with the school, the salary is only 2-3 million / month; and this gap has widened over time, towards lower and lower income for teachers. Don't say that far away, even the salary of university lecturers at the top of the frame of the "lecturer" rank of 9 (coefficient 4.98) is only 4.7 million VND / month. While my students graduate from school only need 3 to 5 years working in economics, finance, insurance... their salaries are 3, 5 times that of the teacher? Recently in the article "Where's the scientific talent" of Dong Hoa on the Nguoi Lao Dong Online newspaper, a situation about the teacher's salary is as follows: "Several years ago, when Professor Ngo Bao Chau gave a lecture at the Institute of Mathematics Although Director Ngo Viet Trung tried to apply all current regulations on salary, he could only sign a contract with Professor Ngo Bao Chau 5 million VND / month. Below is the comment of "Village Teacher": I do not know if the Minister of Education and Training has any ideas. Wages don't change, education will never change!" (Dong, 2012).

## CONCLUSION

Innovation in higher education is an issue that is always concerned and posed under many different angles from time to time and the requirements of the society. Today, that requirement is posed more urgently because Vietnam's higher education is still lagging in many ways compared to the world development level. The majority of lecturers in class still use outdated teaching methods, do not create excitement for students, teachers impart knowledge to learners in one-way relationships, learners are passive in acquiring. In addition, higher education innovation also faces barriers, such as conservatism, stagnation in awareness, interests in innovation, or the lack of modern higher education faculty and knowledge in a Not a small part of lecturers (Nhat, 2020). In addition, the current rate of class time students is too high, time for self-study is limited. The number of classrooms is lacking, there are very few classrooms designed to have specific use functions, thus limiting multi-dimensional interaction in the classroom. The poor working conditions of lecturers, teaching equipment, internships, and scientific research also cause difficulties for innovation. The specific program objectives of each discipline and each module have not been paid enough attention, leading to the focus on

knowledge by lecturers without adequate attention to teaching skills and professional qualities to students...

With strong and profound changes in the current situation in the country and in the world, at the same time with the Party and State's policy of renewing education in order to build a "learning society" that takes "normal study throughout life", "learning citizens", "global citizens"... require continuing to innovate higher education in the integration period, to meet the educational development of the country.

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