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**UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE IN THE CONDITION OF AUTHORITY  
IN VIETNAM TODAY**

*Tran Mai Uoc<sup>1</sup>, Vu Thi Thu Huyen<sup>2</sup>, Tran Thi Hoa<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Banking University of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

<sup>2</sup> Thu Duc college of Technology

<sup>3</sup> Tran Dai Nghia University, Vietnam

E-mail: <sup>2</sup>vuhuyen@tdc.edu.vn; <sup>3</sup>hoatranhn1986@gmail.com

Corresponding Author's: Tran Mai Uoc, E-mail: maiuoctran@gmail.com

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**ABSTRACT:**

In the current context, under the impact of globalization and the influence of the industrial revolution 4.0, higher education in Vietnam is facing many challenges. With the Law amending and supplementing several articles of the Higher Education Law effective from July 1, 2019, to present (2021), it has helped to complete the legal framework for the renovation of the management of educational institutions university, including content related to autonomy. Autonomy is a necessary condition for the implementation of advanced university administration methods to improve and improve the training quality of higher education institutions in the current period. From the philosophical approach, educational philosophy, and literary studies, through the study and analysis of Vietnamese state legal documents and other relevant documents, this article focuses on studying public university governance study in the conditions of autonomy in Vietnam today. The study shows the basic advantages, disadvantages and challenges through the practical implementation of school governance for (public) higher education institutions in the autonomous condition in Vietnam. The solutions that the article mentions and analyzes to improve university governance in the current state of autonomy are also valuable and make certain contributions to the practice in Vietnam today.

**INTRODUCTION**

Both practice and theory in the past have shown us that university autonomy will make an important contribution to help higher education institutions operate more effectively, increase

competition among universities and higher education institutions, creating conditions to diversify higher education activities. This, in essence, is also consistent with the objective trend of development, which is the paradigm shift from state control to state-supervised models. With university governance in the current technologically developed era, it is not an exception to this trend. To realize the issue of university autonomy, higher education institutions need a university management strategy. University governance in the context of autonomy has created for universities certain opportunities as well as challenges in the development process. Research questions:

Question 1: What are the advantages, limitations and challenges for public higher education institutions in terms of autonomy?

Question 2: What are the basic solutions to improve university governance in the context of university autonomy at current public higher education institutions in Vietnam?

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### *Research purposes*

The purpose of the article is to analyze and clarify the content and ideological characteristics of people in the philosophy of Confucius, thereby pointing out the points that apply to Vietnamese society today.

### *Research Methods*

The article uses a combination of specific research methods such as analysis and synthesis, deductive and inductive, logic and history, comparison and contrast between theory and practice, and literary method.

### *Research overview*

It is possible to generalize the research works related to university governance in general and university governance in terms of autonomy in Vietnam with some typical works such as the research of Dennis, Tewarie & White. (2003), "Effective University Governance in the 21st Century"; John Fielden (2008), "Global Trends in University Governance"; Pavel Zgaga (2008), "University governance, autonomy and management in higher education". For Vietnam, since the transition to a socialist-oriented market economy and deep integration into the world economy, especially in recent times, there have been many research works on governance. University associated with higher education practice in Vietnam, as the author's study Dao Van Khanh (2010), "What direction for innovation in university governance in Vietnam"; Pham Thi Ly (2008), "Building an effective university governance system - US experience and applicability in Vietnam"; Nguyen Dong Phong & Nguyen Huu Huy Nhut (2013), "University governance and models for higher education institutions in the economic sector in Vietnam". In general, the above contents are topical, attracting the attention of many scholars and managers. These studies are constantly being supplemented and perfected, many valuable research works, many works have different approaches, depending on the subject, scope and purpose of the research of the authors and attached according to different approaches on university governance terminology in terms of autonomy.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

**The basic advantages and disadvantages through the practical implementation of school administration work for higher education institutions (public) in the condition of autonomy in Vietnam**

Understood in the most general sense, university governance is the process of building and gathering rules and systems to manage and control the entire operation of a university. The university administrator will be accountable to the school, community and learners for the reliability, adaptability and cost-effectiveness of governance through the division of responsibilities, resources and effective control and effectiveness. The functions of university governance involve the following activities: Planning, organizing, leading and controlling for different levels of governance.

In the current era of technology development, the educational environment has changed rapidly, requiring innovation in management as well as new approaches. That is why higher education institutions sometimes have to perform the same task as a business. If operating in the old way will be extremely backward and underdeveloped. University governance is most commonly understood as the activities of leadership, management and administration of the university so that the university can develop and achieve the highest efficiency. University governance is also the process of building and gathering rules and systems to manage and control the entire operation of a university. The university administrator will be accountable to the school, community and learners for the reliability, adaptability and cost-effectiveness of administration through the division of responsibilities, resources and effective control and effectiveness. The functions of university governance are related to the following activities: planning, organizing, leading and controlling for different levels of governance, in which university autonomy is considered as a basic issue of university governance.

Currently, we can generalize four (04) university governance models, representing the legal status of higher education institutions in society, including i) State control<sup>1</sup> model; ii) Semi-autonomous<sup>2</sup> model; iii) Semi-independent<sup>3</sup> model; iv) Independent<sup>4</sup> model. Each university governance model shows autonomy to different degrees. Under the state-controlled model, higher education institutions still have a certain degree of autonomy in performing their professional and financial tasks. In contrast, the independent model (Supervisory State) clearly shows that the state only plays a role in monitoring the university quality assurance system and maintains a high degree of autonomy and responsibility for higher education institutions.

For Vietnam, especially for public higher education institutions, which are gradually shifting from a state-controlled model to a state-supervised model with ever-expanding university autonomy, this creates an environment that allows the market to be self-determined and responsible to cope with financial pressures and rapid changes in the economy. This trend also reduces the traditional value of the relationship between the state and the university, whereby increasing power at the university level also means reducing the power of state management agencies.

University autonomy is understood as the initiative in the management of a legal university organization in the following aspects:

*Academic freedom* is the freedom of higher education institutions to decide on academic matters.

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<sup>1</sup> Latin America, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup> France and New Zealand

<sup>3</sup> Singapore

<sup>4</sup> USA, UK, Australia

*Organizational autonomy* is the freedom of a training institution in arranging and organizing events, relationships related to planning, organization and coordination of higher education institutions.

*Financial autonomy* is the freedom of the training institution in using financial resources according to the preferred strategy of choice. In essence, it is proactive about ensuring internal resources for training and scientific research activities of the university.

In the current situation of autonomy in Vietnam, through the practice of implementing school governance for (public) higher education institutions, the advantages and disadvantages are revealed through the following basic points:

**\* *Basic advantages:***

*Firstly*, the 2018 revised Higher Education Law, effective from July 1, 2019, is an important and necessary legal corridor to expand the autonomy of academic, organizational, personnel, and financial institutions of the Department of Higher Education.

*Secondly*, according to relevant regulations, the chairpersons of the university councils of the current higher education institutions are all full-time, on the official payroll of the higher education institution, without those holding positions in the management agencies of the higher education institutions and under the Ministry of Finance, is mainly responsible for the assigned tasks at the agency, the position of the school council president is only part-time, which greatly affects the school board's management.

*Thirdly*, the transition from a control mechanism to a supervisory mechanism of state higher education institutions will make the apparatus of the institutions more streamlined, compact and operate more effectively.

*Fourthly*, the new governance environment at higher education institutions will create motivation and favourable conditions for lecturers to complete three tasks, which are teaching, research and self-responsibility to the community. As for students, internationalization will create a modern learning environment that helps students to be dynamic and confident in acquiring knowledge. In addition, the internationalization model built in the direction of modernization and professionalization has contributed to expanding higher education opportunities in society.

*Fifthly*, the allocation of the state budget is renewed from the Ask-give mechanism to an investment mechanism based on the administrative capacity of schools combined with direct investment in learners; higher education institutions have increased autonomy in enrollment, training, personnel organization, finance and involvement of lecturers, students and stakeholders; the education quality accreditation mechanism is implemented according to domestic standards and international integration orientation.

*Sixthly*, with the current development and competition trend of higher education institutions, many universities have not paid much attention and focus on predicting the changing trend of the economy and society; the operation plan is made without specific indicators; management capacity, management and administration methods have not kept pace in the new context. The work of building a governance model from the planning stage of development strategy to the formulation and implementation of action plans suitable to the characteristics of each higher education institution has not yet received due attention.

**\* *Disadvantage, basic limitations:***

*Firstly*, it has not changed the thinking, perception and practices in the internal management of the school to be ready to adapt to innovation in the direction of autonomy. Habits in leadership, management and administration activities have not been radically changed due to the influence of the previous subsidy mechanism.

*Secondly*, in essence, the current university council has not fully promoted its role in higher education institutions. Members in higher education institutions still account for a large proportion of the university council (over 70%)<sup>5</sup>, most of which is the management board, the heads of the units affiliated to the university, so it is difficult to have objective opinions while studying the decision-making of the school board, because they both have the role of orientation and supervision and are also responsible for managing, implementing, and taking responsibility for university's activities before the school board. In this respect, considering the low proportion of members outside the school, it is difficult for the school council to perform the role of the highest authority and independent of the Principal, but only in favour of advising the Principal.

*Thirdly*, most higher education institutions have not yet boldly innovated to implement internal financial mechanisms in the direction of contracting, self-financing recurrent expenditures for units affiliated with the university. Especially for some units capable of implementing this form based on the needs of society and the reality of the unit itself<sup>6</sup>. Many higher education institutions do not have a feasible plan to enhance their autonomy and improve and stabilize their financial resources in the long term, especially since the revenues from scientific research activities have not been exploited as effectively as other institutions largest higher education institutions in the world.

*Fourthly*, it is a fact to be acknowledged that, for a long time, the connection between schools and enterprises is still loose, the goal of the cooperation is often formal (Figure above). It seems that this relationship is still two parallel lines. The school assessed that the enterprise was not attached to the school, and the enterprise said that the training was poor, the labourers could not be used, and had to be retrained. The two sides mainly stopped at sending students to practice at enterprises. Effectively implementing the link between higher education institutions and enterprises, from enrollment, training, training internship, production practice, to recruitment and employment... is something that needs to be implemented. The strong will be an important breakthrough that affects the innovation of university administration in the current technological era.

*Fifthly*, the policy-forming and decision-making mechanism in higher education institutions today places little emphasis on the authority and authority of academic staff, but rather devotes a high level of power to the administrative departments executive management.

### **Challenges for higher education institutions related to university governance to exercise autonomy**

In the current context, the industrial revolution 4.0 has led to a drastic change in the structure of human resources; changes in competitiveness; changes in the structure of the workforce.

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<sup>5</sup> For Banking University of Ho Chi Minh City, it is 11/6 out of 17 members of the school council for the 2020-2025 term.

<sup>6</sup> Usually will focus on Centers related to the following areas: International cooperation; foreign Language; information technology

The downside of Industry 4.0 is that it can disrupt the labour market. When automation replaces manual labour in the economy, when robots replace humans in many fields, millions of workers around the world may fall into unemployment, especially those working in the insurance sector, real estate brokerage, financial consulting, transportation, banking, management information system... This forces higher education institutions to change their training disciplines, training fields, and related activities to enrollment..., especially for schools in the fields of economics, business and management to better match the development trend of the labour market in the 4.0 industrial revolution.

Vietnam has abundant human resources, abundant labour, and low labour costs. However, with technology, companies can coordinate and implement jobs that previously only large enterprises could do, mainly focusing on applying technology to new business models to create a different competitive ability, so this advantage will gradually disappear. The unemployment rate is likely to increase if real demand is not met...

In general, the organizational model of education and training management also shows irrationality. The system of universities is not of high quality. The transfer of schools from intermediate to college, from college to university, and the birth of many universities (*in stages, every ministry has a university, even many ministries, there are many higher education institutions spread across all regions of the country*) has dragged down the quality of higher education, not on par with other countries in the region and the world. In particular, the planning of the network of higher education institutions so that poor quality schools can be converted, the construction of a world-class Vietnamese university system has not been given due attention. In the current period, the challenges for higher education institutions related to university governance to exercise autonomy will be:

*Improve self-management capacity for leaders and managers at all levels of higher education institutions*

This is one of the important relevant factors in university governance to exercise autonomy. These managers are mostly appointed by lecturers and managers, but still participate in professional teaching and lack management experience; Knowledge and skills about management in general and autonomous management, in particular, are mainly acquired through experience.

*Completing the management apparatus and management processes of higher education institutions*

The operational efficiency of the current apparatus, based on the implementation of training and development goals, has not brought into play its strengths, promptly detected shortcomings and limitations as a basis for consideration to adjust and restructure the organizational structure to suit the autonomy conditions as well as the actual situation of the sector and locality. The coordination mechanism and process between units and individuals are not smooth and effective, and the management and implementation processes of each department/unit have not been implemented for each job in the process. task execution.

*The culture of autonomy and social responsibility in the university has not been properly built and invested*

With the autonomy given back in the current competitive environment, universities to survive and develop must constantly explore new things, create and change to suit reality. However, each university has not yet built and maintained a unique culture, promoted the capacity,

promoted the creativity, dedication and contribution of everyone to the achievement of the university's common goals...

*The construction of the internal quality assurance system and the internal control system is still slow and lacks synchronization*

Quality assurance is the continuous, systematic, structured improvement to quality in maintaining and enhancing quality. Internal quality assurance system refers to the quality system established and operated by the higher education institutions themselves. Although schools establish an internal quality assurance system that meets the basic requirements of quality monitoring, evaluation and improvement. However, implementation practice often ignores the elements, which are: Planning; Do; Check and Action (referred to as P-D-C-A).

In addition, issues related to the diversification of revenue sources based on promoting the creative dynamism of units and individuals in the university; application of information technology in all fields of school management such as training management, human resource management, financial management, student management, facilities management, information management information ... are also barriers of higher education institutions in the face of the current requirement of renovating governance in the direction of autonomy.

### **Basic solutions to improve university governance in the context of autonomy in Vietnam today**

*Firstly*, higher education institutions should organize and manage like a business, with effective operation and supervision mechanisms. This is also a model of universities applying advanced management methods. The enterprise model university does not pursue economic goals but integrates with the development of scientific knowledge, aiming to create a more practical and effective resonance value.

*Secondly*, focus on increasing revenue through scientific research activities and technology transfer. In the long run, this is also one of the core trends that universities are self-directed towards, both as a way for the university to be economically autonomous but also as a lever to improve the quality of training before the diverse, equally fierce competition among higher education institutions today.

*Thirdly*, the organizational culture and vision of leaders at higher education institutions need to be raised to a new level to adapt to the change in the changing global management environment. When the organizational culture and vision of leaders change, raise to a new level, it will govern and regulate issues related to higher education institutions, including vision, values, relationships systems, products and services, etc. of the higher education institution itself.

*Fourthly*, promote the effectiveness and substance of the school council. The school board must be truly the organization responsible for deciding the direction of the school's operations, mobilizing and monitoring the use of resources for the school, linking the school to the community and society, and ensuring accomplish educational goals.

*Fifthly*, focus on building a contingent of managers and lecturers with good moral quality, high expertise, sufficient quantity, advanced and modern teaching and management style. Paying attention to the renovation of program content and teaching methods in an open direction, teaching content associated with the practical requirements of the training sector and major.

### **CONCLUSION**

Currently, university autonomy is considered a basic and core condition for implementing advanced university governance methods, creating a driving force for Vietnamese higher education institutions to innovate and create breakthroughs in the field of higher education quality and integration. Autonomy will help universities perform their training and research

tasks better and faster to respond to the diverse needs of the labour market. Universities are proactive in performing their functions and tasks according to their strategies and plans, thereby promoting their initiative and creativity and exploiting the strengths of each university. With autonomy, universities are easier to change and adjust training programs, as well as to choose appropriate studies when socio-economic conditions change, to respond well to societal needs. University autonomy not only brings many opportunities but also puts universities in front of great challenges. That is the governance capacity and willingness of universities to exercise autonomy and self-responsibility.

In Vietnam, when the Law on Higher Education (amended) came into effect and took effect, higher education was intertwined with many opportunities and challenges. To promote autonomy, each higher education institution must have sufficient resources, associated with the process of partial autonomy, then to full autonomy. A good implementation of the issue of university autonomy will open up great development opportunities for public universities in general and regional universities in particular, and to do that well, higher education institutions must have a strategic plan. university management strategy. University governance in the context of autonomy has created certain opportunities and challenges for universities in the process of change and development of higher education in the current technological era.

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