

Higher Education Today Integration and Development

by Ass. Prof. Dr. NGUYỄN QUỐC TẾ

1. Higher education of Southeast Asian countries in the context of globalization

Higher education of the world in general and of Southeast Asia in particular is facing increasing difficulties when entering the 21st century – a century of knowledge-based economy with sharp challenges of globalization.

In the globalized economy, each country, each organization or each individual is building its future relying on universities and colleges. In order to enhance higher education role, each school has to change or adjust their structure, objectives, missions, methods, contents and training curricula in order to meet the flexibility required by the market and increasing demand of society. It is clear that the higher education of each country has change to meet future demand.

When changing, universities have to face with following challenges:

- Socialization of higher education, removal of frontier: Globalization demands for integration. The integration helps deal with international or global issues, and leads to indispensable international competition on the other hand. Scope of university can not be self-contained, but need to be conducted in a far and wide vision on international interaction and cooperation.

- Setting up interdisciplinary curricula to meet the demand for flexible education: Learners, especially those of postgraduate programs, want to have more inter-related curricula and fully absorb teacher's knowledge and experiences so that they could apply their knowledge into reality faster. This trend becomes stronger when most students want to understand

the whole problem, not part of it.

- Building a qualified teaching and researching staff: Developing the teaching staff quantitatively and qualitatively is a matter of life and death to the development of higher education today.

In developing countries, building a qualified teaching staff is facing the conflict between the increasing number of students, and the demand for more time for scientific research and improvement in the living standard of the teaching staff.

Integration and expanding international cooperation require faculty member to participate in teaching not only at domestic schools but also at foreign ones as visiting scholars.

- Changes in supply-demand relation in the labor market: The knowledge-based economy, under impact of globalization and integration, has

created sudden change in the labor market. And the fact that this market is not limited in a country or a region have affected to structure of occupations. Innovation of training technology, transferring credits, lifetime study are posed not only for each specific organization, school but for the whole society as well.

Above issues are considered as basic ones of higher education in the context of international integration and globalization.

2. Higher education of Vietnam: issues raised

2.1. Situation

During its development process, the higher education of Vietnam has faced some difficulties which limited its quality and efficiency, such as:

- Network of universities and colleges in the country is irrational.

- "Socialization" policy of higher education is cor-



rect [socialization means allowing all classes to engage in the field in question]. But it does not mean that socialization must be carried out without bases, without taking into account of correlation of socio-economic factors, that is, without ensuring necessary factors of the higher education.

- Structure of faculties, subjects, and curricula is still inadequate, inflexible, and does not meet various demands of the market.

Training objectives have already changed. Demand for labor has also changed. But changes in the education service today, especially expertise issues in certain bodies, seem slower than the market demand with the result that the education service fails to supply updated knowledge, practical skills and professional skills.

- There is a conflict between increases in the number of students and education quality

- Both teaching and administrative staff of many universities are still not adequate.

2.2. Further reform in the higher education for integration and development

To make universities and colleges solid foundation for each nation, each

organization and individual in the future, we suggest the followings:

- + How to make universities (in both developing and developed countries) stand firm on their feet in the severely competitive environment for integration and development?

- + What universities have to do to fulfill the above-mentioned requirements?

Before going into details, we need to go through some features the higher education of the region in general and of Vietnam in particular has to take into account, they are:

- Keener and keener competition: Universities and colleges are facing competition from many directions: domestic universities (including private ones) or from foreign universities or both.

- Severe decrease in government financial support: Government budget allocation for higher education severely decreases as the education socialization starts. In some countries, the decrease mainly caused by two changes in perception:

- + Education is not longer a public interest, but private one.

- + Budget for education is not an investment but an expense.

- Government intervention through development policies are more widespread.

- Learner's rights increase.

Having to pay increasing tuition fee, students and the society as well have strated requiring higher quality of training.

- There are more impacts of IT and communications on universities. At the moment, universities that want to survive and have committed on high quality and updated knowledge have to think of computerization and broader use of the Internet.

Therefore, the higher education in the region in general and in Vietnam in particular should work out effective solutions for their development. We want to present here two groups of solutions: at national level and university one.

a. Solutions at national level:

- At the national level, it is needed to have policies which strengthen government role of control and supervision, and allow more autonomy and responsibility for universities.

- Socialization of the higher education must be accelerated, thereby attracting more capital to this service. The government could focus more on managing universities by law.

- International cooperation in education must be encouraged. The domestic market must be open to foreign universities (in-country-training form) in order to create the environment for fair competition.

b. Solution at university level:

We think that in the coming years, universities in the region should have closer cooperation in:

- Assisting one another in developing new curricula.

- Exchanging students and staff.

- Exchanging necessary information.

- Helping the teaching staff take part in international research programs.

- Giving financial support to universities facing difficulties in order to help them integrate into regional higher education community.

Besides, each university has to improve itself for further development in the severe competition. Therefore, in each period, in order to fulfill its mission, each university has to focus on the following issues:

- Often renovating curricula and considering them as the key factor in current period.

- Renovating training technology, linking training with scientific research, applying training and research outcome into reality.

- Focusing on training and retraining faculty members.

- Improving and expanding international cooperation.

- Investing more in facilities and advanced technology for training and scientific research.

Entering the 21st century, the higher education needs a new vision. The HCMC University of Economics - a big university in Vietnam - is also well aware of our responsibility and position in training and scientific research.

In order to develop the university, we are trying our best to improve ourselves for one thing, and for another, we really need assistance from other universities in the region which the workshop held by Chengkung University, Taiwan today and the chance of interaction between universities during the workshop is an example. We do hope we will receive more assistance from you and on our side, we will do our best to become your trustworthy partner in Vietnam. ■

