Higher Education Governance in Vietnam: University Action, the State and Changing Relationships

DISSERTATION

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Thi Lan Phuong Pham

Kassel, July 2013

Abbreviations

ABET	Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AUN	Association of Southeast Asia Nation's University Network
B.A.	Bachelor of Arts
B.Ed.	Bachelor of Education
B.Sc.	Bachelor of Science
CDIO	Conceive - Design - Implement - Operate, which is an educational framework for engineering education
CPV	Communist Party of Vietnam
CTS	Credit-based Training System
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training - Australian Government
GDTA	General Department for Testing and Accreditation
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HERA	Higher Education Reform Agenda
IPC	Institutional Party Committee
IT	Information Technology
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
NPM	New Public Management
NU	National University
NUEE	National University Entrance Examination
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAR	Public Administration Reform
Ph.D.	Doctor of Philosophy
PI	Performance Indicator
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
RDT	Resource Dependence Theory
SAR	Self-assessment Report
U.S.	United States
UE	University of Economics
UK	United Kingdom
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UP	University of Pedagogy
US	University of Science
UT	University of Technology
VND	Vietnamese Dong, the currency of Vietnam
WB	World Bank

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Zusammenfassung (Summary in German)

Das generelle Thema der Doktorarbeit ist Governance der Hochschulsektors. Dabei wird im Gegensatz zur zentralen staatlichen Steuerung Governance als eine Form der kollektiven Steuerung verstanden. Ein eher technischer Aspekt der Governance ist das Management des jeweiligen Systems. Das ist ein Grund warum Governancehäufig synonym mit Management verwendet wird.

Governance umfasst im Hochschulbereich zwei wichtige Aufgaben: die Beziehung zwischen Staat und den Institutionen der Hochschulen sowie das interne Management der Hochschulen. Ein Großteil der Literatur zur Governance im der Hochschulsektor untersucht entweder das Verhältnis zwischen Staat und Hochschulen oder wie das Management von Hochschulen von der Änderung äußerer Rahmenbedingungen beeinflusst wird. Ein anderer Teil der Literatur untersucht das Management von Universitäten als Bestandteile der organisatorischen Merkmale der Universitäten. Der Mangel an kombinierten Makro- und Mikro-Theorien zum Studium der Hochschul-Governance ist Ausgangspunkt für die Zielsetzung dieser Arbeit, das Wechselspiel zwischen Staat und Universitäten bei der Entwicklung des Hochschulsystems mit einem breiteren Ansatz zu fassen.

Vietnam strebt die Förderung der Effizienz bei der Bereitstellung öffentlicher Dienste durch die verstärkte Anwendung von Markt-Mechanismen an, was eine weit verbreitete Praxis des so genannten New Public Management (NPM) ist. Jedoch hält Vietnam dabei, im Gegensatz zum weltweit vorherrschenden Ansatz, an der regulierten Marktwirtschaft und einer zentralisierten staatlichen Management-Struktur fest. Das Land hat eine umfassende Reform der öffentlichen Verwaltung hinter sich, wobei es allerdings keiner einheitlichen Idee gefolgt ist, aus der sich die Reformen des Hochschulsektors klar ableiten ließen. Eines der wesentlichen Ziele bei Erneuerung der Hochschulbildung in Vietnam ist es, das System durch die Mobilisierung von Ressourcen aus der Gesellschaft zu erweitern. Um die Bedeutung der Erweiterung der Ressourcen im Hochschulbereich in Vietnam angemessen zu berücksichtigen, wird in dieser Arbeit auf den organisationstheoretischen Ansatz der Resource Dependence Theory (RDT) zurückgegriffen, mit der die Verhaltensweisen und Leistungen der Hochschulen abgebildet werden.

Für diese Arbeit wurde eine empirische Studie durchgeführt, um die Veränderungen der Governance in der Hochschulbildung in Vietnam zu erfassen. Diese Veränderungen werden als Ergebnisse der Veränderungen der Interaktion zwischen Staat und Hochschulen verstanden. Eine Multiple-Case-Studie wurde eingesetzt, um eine empirische Untersuchung zur Erforschung der Strukturen, Verfahren und Praktiken in den vietnamesischen Hochschulen durchzuführen. Die Analyse der nationalen Governance basiert auf offiziellen Dokumenten sowieden Praktiken innerhalb der Universitäten, die aus den Fallstudienund der Sekundärliteratur abgeleitet wurden. Dabei untersucht die Studie die Änderungen der Governance im vietnamesischen Hochschulsektor im Zeitraum von 1987 bis 2010.

Die wichtigsten Ergebnisse der Studie werden im Folgenden zusammengefasst, wobei die Antworten auf die drei Forschungsfragen der Studie jeweils unter den Fragen widergegeben sind:

Aus welchen Gründen verändert sich die Governance des Hochschulsektors in Vietnam?

In Anlehnung an die Praxis in der Wirtschaft wurde an Hochschulen in Vietnam mit Marktmechanismen zu experimentieren begonnen. Die Erhöhung des Angebots von Studienplätzen zur besseren Befriedigung der Nachfrage in der Mitte der 1980er Jahre war gefolgt von der Erhebung von Studiengebühren bei zusätzlich zugelassenen Studenten mit schlechteren Noten bei den Eingangsprüfungen. 1993 brachte die Kommunistische Partei Vietnams eine radikale Bildungsreform auf den Weg, mit der allen Lernenden Studiengebühren auferlegt wurden, die Gründung privater Bildungseinrichtungen angeregt, Hochschulen und Forschungsinstitute reorganisiert und der Ausbau der Hochschulen vorangetrieben wurde. Die initiierende Resolution zu dieser Reform kann als wichtigster Meilenstein der Hochschulbildungs-Governance in Vietnam gelten.

Im Zuge der Ausweitung des Zugangs zu höherer Bildung hat sich die Zahl der Einschreibungen an Hochschulen rasant erhöht, während hingegen die Zahl der Hochschullehrer und die öffentliche Finanzierung viel langsamer wuchs. Mit dem Ziel, die Qualität zu verbessern, wurde 2010 eine Reform des Hochschulmanagements auf den Weg gebracht. Im Wesentlichen fand hier keine Erneuerung des Managements statt sondern eine Korrektur der staatliche Misswirtschaft der vorangegangenen Periode. Im Zeitraum 2010-2012 wurden viele Neuregelungen verabschiedet, um die Verantwortung der Akteure zu

definieren, Kontroll-Mechanismen einzurichten und wirtschaftliche Anreize für Hochschulen zu schaffen. Derzeit liegt der Schwerpunkt der Governance des Hochschulsektors in Vietnam auf der Qualitätsverbesserung. Das Bildungsministerium (Ministry of Higher Education and Training - MOET) nutzt drei Maßnahmen zur Steuerung der Ausbildungsqualität: (1) der Teil der Hochschulen, die nahe an zuvor formulierten Qualitätsstandards operieren, wird genau beobachtet, (2) dem Teil, der die Standards nicht erfüllt, droht die Auflösung, (3) der Teil, der sich oberhalb der Standards bewegt, wird mit Hilfe von ökonomischen Anreizen zur Verbesserung animiert. Die neuen Maßnahmen scheinen insbesondere durch die Verringerung schlechter Praktiken positive Ergebnisse zu zeitigen.

Die Hochschulbildungs-Governance in Vietnam bedarf weiterer Schritte der Erneuerung, um den Aufbau eines effektiven Aufsichts-Systems zu gewährleisten, in dem gesellschaftliche Kontrolle über die Hochschulen und das MOET ausgeübt wird. Gleichzeitig sollte auch ein höherer Grad an Hochschulautonomie erreicht werden.

Wie geht es weiter mit der Governance-Erneuerung?

Einerseits sorgt die vietnamesische Regierung oft für große Veränderungen im Bereich der Hochschulbildung. Auf der anderen Seite beruhen große Veränderungen im System oft auf der Verallgemeinerung kleiner Experimente und Reformversuchen an den Hochschulen. Aufgrund der Marktkräfte sind Hochschulen gezwungen, auf die sozio-ökonomischen Anforderungen zu reagieren und die Initiative zu ergreifen, während sie gleichzeitig durch zentrale Regelungen in ihren Möglichkeiten begrenzt sind. Die Absicht der Regierung, ermutigende Marktmechanismen zu implementieren und gleichzeitig die zentralisierte Politikgestaltung beizubehalten, ist widersprüchlich.

Zwischen 1993 und 2003 lag der Schwerpunkt der Hochschulbildung in Vietnam in folgender Reihenfolge auf Zugang, Effizienz und Relevanz für den Arbeitsmarkt. Rechenschaftspflichten gegenüber der Öffentlichkeit wurden ignoriert, da der Glaube an die Berichterstattungsmechanismen gegenüber der staatlichen Verwaltung nach wie sehr ausgeprägt war. Die Auffassung, dass Unterrichtsqualität in der Erfüllung der Anforderungen der Gesellschaft besteht, wurde während dieser Zeit allgemein akzeptiert. Von 2004 bis 2009, hat die Einführung und Nutzung von Bewertungs-Werkzeugen zur externen Qualitätssicherung und zur Akkreditierung durch den Staat ein besseres

Verständnis für gute Qualität-Management-Systeme und unzweideutige Belege der Leistungsfähigkeit von Hochschulen mit sich gebracht. Jedoch zog die Überbetonung des Verständnisses von Qualität als Eignung für einen Zweck, oder als Erfüllung der Anforderungen der Gesellschaft die Vernachlässigung der Unterrichtsqualität in Bezug auf die Lernergebnisse der Studenten selbst nach sich. Dem Muster der Vorperiode folgend, waren die dominierenden Kriterien für die Beurteilung der Hochschulbildung von 2004 bis 2009 in der Reihenfolge Zugang, Effizienz, Relevanz und Qualität gestaffelt. Im Zeitraum 2010-2012 führte die Regierung viele Neuregelungen ein und nahm zahlreiche Änderungen an bestehenden Vorschriften vor. Die Qualität der Lehre war die oberste Priorität des MOET in dieser Periode. Auch wenn Effizienz noch immer von größter Bedeutung für die Akademiker war, konzentrierten sie sich zunehmend auf die Verbesserung der Qualität. Aufgrund des dominierenden Einflusses des MOET war die Reihung der zentralen Bewertungskriterien für den vietnamesischen Hochschulsektor in diesem Zeitraum Qualität, Relevanz, Effizienz und Zugang.

Heute gibt es einige Anzeichen für eine positive Entwicklung der Hochschulbildung in Vietnam. Die Zahl der Akademiker, die mit der westlichen Ideologie ausgestattet sind, in der akademische Normen und akademische Freiheit hoch bewertet werden, steigt immer weiter. Zudem verbessert sich das allgemeine Verständnis von dem was Qualität der Bildung bedeutet. Es ist wahrscheinlich, dass zukünftig akademischer Fortschritt das Hauptanliegen von Akademikern werden wird. In der Zwischenzeit wird der Zweck der Universität klar definiert werden und zwischen Einkommensmotivation und der Gewichtung akademischer Peer-Normen wird sich ein Gleichgewicht herausbilden. Das Hochschulsystem in Vietnam wird angesichts der umfassenden Reformen besser organisiert. Einige der führenden Universitäten eignen sich immer mehr grundlegende Merkmale akademischer Organisationen an. Guten Universitäten gelingt es, das Vertrauen der Gesellschaft in ihre Fähigkeiten zur Selbst-Governance zu festigen. Der Trend, der sich seit 2010 abzeichnet, wird sich demnach konsolidieren. Daher ist es sehr wahrscheinlich, dass die Gewichtung der Top-Kriterien zur Bewertung der Hochschulbildung in Vietnam Qualität, Relevanz, Effizienz und Zugang sein werden.

Eng verbunden mit der Erneuerung des Managements der Hochschulen in Vietnam, steht die Frage der Hochschulautonomie immer oben auf der Tagesordnung. Die Regierung hat dahingehend die Bereiche ausgeweitet, über die die Universitäten vollständig selber

entscheiden können. Aufgrund der Tatsache, dass die inneren Angelegenheiten der Universitäten vor allem von Akademikern und weniger von Verwaltungsangestellten geregelt werden, führt die Zunahme der Hochschulautonomie zu zunehmender akademischer Selbst-Governance. Das Organisationsmanagement in vietnamesischen Universitäten ist durch eine gemeinsame Governance von Akademikern, Top-Managern und Administratoren charakterisiert.

Die wichtigsten Stakeholder der vietnamesischen Hochschulen sind der Staat, Akademiker und Haushalte beziehungsweise Studenten. Daher muss bei der Anwendung der RDT eine gleichgewichtige Konfiguration der Governance zwischen staatlicher Regulierung, akademischer Selbstverwaltung und marktwirtschaftlichem Wettbewerb angelegt werden. Die gegenwärtige Situation der Hochschulbildungs-Governance in Vietnam ist Folgende: (1) es hat eine graduelle Verschiebung von staatlicher Kontrolle hin zu staatlicher Supervision gegeben, (2) es besteht eine Lücke zwischen der formalen und echter Autonomie für die Hochschulen, (3) die Hochschullandschaft ist zunehmend von Wettbewerb geprägt, (4) externe Stakeholder sind wenig involviert, (5) es gibt mehr akademische Selbst-Governance, die jedoch durch die oben skizzierten widersprüchlichen Interessen beeinflusst ist, (6) auch die politische Führung spielt keine unwichtige Rolle. Die akademische Selbst-Governance gewinnt jedoch infolge des Wachstums der Anzahl qualifizierter Akademiker an Vertrauen, weshalb sich Vietnam in einem Prozess der Annäherung an einen Gleichgewichtszustand befindet.

Was sind die Ergebnisse in Bezug auf die Qualität der Lehre?

In der ersten Phase der Weiterentwicklung der Hochschulbildung von 1987 bis 2003 konzentrierte sich die vietnamesische Regierung auf die Felder Zugang und Effizienz, wozu marktähnliche Mechanismen eingeführt wurden. Dabei steigerten die Hochschulen die Zahl der Studenten zu schnell, worunter die Qualität litt. In der zweiten Phase von 2004 bis 2009 konzentrierten sich die Bemühungen um die Hochschulbildung vor allem auf Relevanz und gute Managementpraktiken. Die Übertragung des Konzepts der Qualität auf die Eignung zum Zweck oder die Erfüllung der Anforderungen der Gesellschaft führte zu einer Konfusion von Relevanz und Qualität. Obwohl das MOET neue Instrumente für das Qualitätsmanagement entwickelte, einschließlich externer Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung, hat es das Ziel der Qualitätspflege insgesamt verfehlt. In der dritten Phase ab 2010 hat die Regierung eine strengere Aufsicht von Hochschulen und weitere

Regulierungsmechanismen eingeführt. Die neuen Regelungen haben dabei geholfen, die Qualitätsabnahme zu stoppen und die gesetzten Qualitätsstandards wieder einzuhalten. Qualität wurde bei der Regierungspolitik oberste Priorität eingeräumt. Das Ziel einer Qualitätsverbesserung wird allerdings erfolgreicher erreicht werden, wenn es in der Stärkung akademischen Peer-Normen gründet. Die mit den Studiengebühren verbundenen Rahmenbedingungen haben seit 2010 die Entwicklung qualitativ hochwertiger Studiengänge befördert. Die Verbesserung der Unterrichtsqualität im Bereich der Hochschulen oberhalb des gesetzten Qualitäts-Schwellenwerts ist realistisch und wird ebenfalls dazu beitragen, die Qualität des gesamten Systems zu erhöhen.

Die Ergebnisse der Studie sind sowohl für die existierende Theorie als auch für die Regierungspolitik und die zukünftige Forschung von Bedeutung. Die komplementären Blickwinkel aus der Governance/NPM-Perspektive einerseits und der RDT andererseits haben geholfen, ein gutes Verständnis von den Interdependenzen der Ursachen, Prozesse und Ergebnisse der Governance in der vietnamesischen Hochschulbildung während der letzten zweieinhalb Jahrzehnten zu erlangen. Die Nützlichkeit der Kombination dieser zwei Theorien für die Anleitung zum zukünftigen Forschungsdesign und zu künftigen Untersuchung sowie zur Interpretation der Phänomene in Vietnam legt nahe, dass eine Kombination von Theorien, die die Makro- und die Mikroebene abbilden, ein zielführendes Konzept ist. Dieser Ansatz bietet einerseits eine umfassende Sicht auf Governance Phänomene und eröffnet andererseits den Blick auf Schnittstellen zwischen den beiden Ebenen, an denen neue Erkenntnisse zu Tage gefördert werden können.

Die Anwendung der RDT im Rahmen der Arbeitermöglicht ein besseres Verständnis der Reaktionen der vietnamesischen Universitäten auf die veränderten Rahmenbedingungen, die sich durch sozioökonomische Faktoren und staatliche Lenkung in einem sehr schnellen Wandel vollzogen haben. Die Analyseergebnisse der Arbeit legen nahe, dass reagierende und proaktive Maßnahmen eher von solchen Universitäten ergriffen werden, die sich pragmatisch auf die Mittelbeschaffung konzentrieren. Die Nutzung von RDT wäre auch interessant, um den Betrieb von Universitäten unter anderen nationalen Rahmenbedingungen zu untersuchen, bei denen die pragmatischen Ziele der Universitäten von großer Bedeutung sind oder wo die Universitäten mit einer Verringerung der öffentlichen Finanzierung konfrontiert sind. Solche Anwendungen wären im Feld des

Studiums von Organisationstrukturen von großem Interesse oder um tieferes Verständnis der Prozesse des organisatorischen Wandels in Universitäten zu gewinnen.

Gemäß der RDT handeln Manager gezielt um die Autonomie und die Rentabilität ihrer Organisationen zu vergrößern. Das Streben nach mehr Autonomie ist auch an Hochschulen üblich, allerdings streben Universitäten nicht oft nach Gewinn. Dem Geist der Universitäten entspricht es eher, akademische Peer Normen anstatt wirtschaftliche Vorteile zu priorisieren. An den Universitäten haben institutionelle Kräfte ausgehend von akademischen Gemeinschaften und Werten Einfluss auf die Haltung und die Entscheidungen des Managements. Daher wäre es erfolgversprechender sowohl RDT als auch die Theorie des Neo-Institutionalismus zu verwenden, um die Dimension der Selbstverwaltung durch das Management in Universitäten zu erforschen, anstatt sich hier allein auf RDT zu stützen.

Die Partei-Resolution von 1993 hat die Struktur der vietnamesischen Hochschulen radikal verändert. Die Art der Organisation, die Rechtsformen und das Profil sowie Spektrum der Aufgaben der Hochschulen haben sich seither deutlich diversifiziert. Allerdings haben neu Richtlinien meist nur auf Managementstools abgezielt, ohne dass in angemessenem Umfang auf eine Anpassung des Zwecks der Hochschulbildung und die rechtliche Etablierung der Hochschulautonomie geachtet worden ist. Ohne eine neue Philosophie für die Hochschulbildung, die zu einem System passt, das den Weg von einer Eliteeinrichtung zur Institution für eine breite Masse durchläuft und dabei auch zunehmend Forschungsfunktionen erfüllen soll, konnte keine neue Governance-Idee entwickelt und implementiert werden.

Die Studie zeigt, dass mit dem gewählten Ansatz zur empirischen Erforschung der Governance im vietnamesischen Hochschulwesen aussagekräftige Forschungsergebnisse erzielt werden können. Die Anzahl der Universitäten, die im Rahmen dieser Studie untersucht werden konnten, war eng begrenzt. Um die Aussagekraft der Studienergebnisse weiter zu erhöhen und eine noch größere Verlässlichkeit der Ergebnisse zu erreichen, wäre eine Studie mit größeren Fallzahlen wünschenswert. Die Ausweitung der verwendeten Methode auf andere Länder scheint empfehlenswert. Auf diese Weise könnten mit ihr zudem noch mehr Erfahrungen unter verschiedensten Rahmenbedingungen gesammelt werden, was wiederum zu Verfeinerung der Methode an sich und der Interpretation der mit ihr erzielten Ergebnisse führen könnte.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Higher education systems over the world have experienced critical changes resulting from socioeconomic factors and a revision of the role of the state in higher education. Consequently, a considerable part of literature on higher education over the last decades has reflected the dynamics of the structures and processes of higher education governance. In Western Europe and Australia, new governing ideologies have been adopted into higher education with the aim of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the sector (Neave, 1988; Braun & Merrien, 1999; Kogan & Hanney, 2000; Amaral, Meek & Larsen, 2003; Paradeise et al., 2009). Many higher education systems in Asia have followed the movement of public management reform originated in the Western developed countries (Mok, 2007a; Mok, 2007b). Vietnam is not an exception. It officially started renewing higher education in the mid-1990s. The country has not only imported trendy ideas and practices from overseas predecessors, but it has also adapted them to fit into its particular national setting and distinctive administrative regime. The structure and governance of Vietnamese higher education have remarkably changed over the past two decades. This dissertation is a report of a study on changes in higher education governance in Vietnam.

Background of the Study

In 1986, Vietnam started economic renovation, which is often referred to as economic reform[1]. The economic reform replaced a central planning economy with a regulated market one, contributing to the country's high economic growth rates since the late 1980s (WB, 2012). The new governing philosophy of economic activities had gradually penetrated into the education sector. In 1993, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam released Resolution 04-NQ/HNTW on education renovation continuation that crucially directed the higher education development. The resolution refers to diversifying funding and types of institutions, and restructuring and expanding the higher education system.

[1] In Vietnam, official documents are very much careful about the use of the words "renovation" and "reform". Reform means a comprehensive and radical change while renovation means gradual adaptation to new models and ideas. The public debate about the nature of the state has never been opened in Vietnam, and the policy discourse has attempted to use the vocabulary of scientific management theories (Chauncey, 1998). Therefore, the mainstream information channels often use the word "renovation" to refer to changes in the social sector.

The policy had effects immediately. The number of higher education students increased very rapidly, leading to worries about teaching quality. However, documentation about the state of affairs of teaching had not been well established by 2006. From the information provided in Nguyen, K.D. (2002) about an action research project on internal quality assurance processes at Vietnamese higher education institutions (HEIs) in 1996 with the funding of the World Bank (WB), it appears that the first effort to investigate thoroughly the real state of teaching dated in this year. Later on, the well-designed and informative studies by Director et al. (2006) and WB (2008) convincingly documented the poor conditions of teaching and learning at Vietnamese HEIs. In 2009, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) of Vietnam confessed that "we have not performed the task of supervision of higher education quality effectively,… ; not maintained standards of many higher education inputs" (Report 760/BC-BGDĐT: p. 9). Two years later, MOET released national statistics on the numbers of students, HEIs, and teachers for the period of 1999-2011 (MOET, 2011a). The public has gradually had information about the status quo of teaching and learning at HEIs.

Early in 2010, the Prime Minister considered the renovation of higher education management as an urgent task and "a breakthrough element in order to enhance the quality and comprehensive development of higher education" for the period of 2010-2012 (Directive 296/2010/CT-TTg). The government has expected to manage the quality of higher education through the higher education management renovation. This policy gives an impression that the Vietnamese government started higher education management renovation in 2010, and that the goal of the renovation is quality enhancement rather than efficiency and new governing ideologies for the sector. This seemingly particular feature of the higher education management renovation in Vietnam has been worth research-based explanations.

At the same time, Vietnamese universities have been increasingly asking for a higher level of autonomy. In 1993 and 1995, the government established two national universities enjoying greater latitude of decision-making than other universities. However, according to George (2011) after more than a decade of experiment, opinions around who are suitable actors, MOET or universities, to make specific decisions to ensure the quality of higher education have still been very divergent. Universities as proactive claimers for their autonomy have not provided convincing evidence of what would be their better performance resulting from increased autonomy. The lack of well-designed investigations

of the behavior and practices of Vietnamese universities partly contributes to slowness in developing an effective oversight framework for the expanding and diversifying higher education system.

In the field of higher education research, literature on higher education governance often focuses on either the changing role of the state and the changing relationships with HEIs (Neave & Van Vught, 1991; Neave & Van Vught, 1994; Henkel & Little, 1999; Kogan & Hanney, 2000), or changing internal governance of HEIs (Braun & Merrien, 1999; Amaral, Jones & Karseth, 2002; Amaral, Meek & Larsen, 2003). This body of literature uses diverse theoretical approaches, mostly political science, public management, and organization study to investigate the changing nature of the state in higher education and the impacts of the institutional contexts on management of and in HEIs. Besides, there are also a number of publications using a solely organization study approach to the transformation of university characteristics and designs (Sporn, 1999; Clark, 1998). This body of literature treats universities as the key study object and investigates the responses of universities to multiple demands emanating from the environments surrounding universities. Detailed accounts of the dynamics of higher education governance as the result of back-and-forth interactions between governmental steering, which is an influential element in the general environment, and university actions are not much and still need adding.

Goal of the Study

Within the critically changing social and economic environment since the country adopted a regulated market economy, Vietnamese HEIs have been forced to fulfill a great number of emerging demands, such as increasing access, diversifying financial sources, reducing costs, and achieving quality and relevance. While being expected to be responsive to multiple social needs, Vietnamese public HEIs as a public service agency are still under the control of line ministries[2]. It seems that the relationship between the state and HEIs has not been in balance. The dispute about what areas of operation should be decided by HEIs

[2] A line ministry of a Vietnamese university is a governmental agency to which the university reports its activities and asks for ratification of important policies and decisions. There is an exception for affiliated universities within federal universities, for example, national or regional universities. Affiliated universities report to the offices of federal universities.

and what should be decision-making processes in a given area has been persistently on top of the higher education agenda.

Influenced by this reality, one of the objectives of this doctoral research project is to examine the nature of the relationship between the Vietnamese state and HEIs, which is one of the two focal issues of higher education governance. The nature of and shift in this power relationship partly depends on socio-economic resources and the usefulness of each of the actors. The social power of HEIs is determined by the accumulation of resources, internal governance, and their usefulness. Thus, it turns out that an understanding of the behavior, achievements, and internal management of HEIs helps to explain the HEI-state relationship. I also believe that Vietnamese HEIs are a proactive actor that strongly contributes to changes in the HEI-state relationship. Therefore, the second objective of this study is to investigate what Vietnamese universities do to respond to the emerging social environment and to alter their relationship with the state.

Higher education in Vietnam mainly deals with teaching because the research mission of universities is still underdeveloped and constitutes only a small proportion of academic activities[3]. The procedures and practices in the universities are highly representative for the entire higher education sector because the functions and missions of the universities are inclusive and broader than those of colleges. For these reasons, the study aims to investigate only activities associated with teaching at universities.

Like other developing countries, the Vietnamese government often initiates directions of change in higher education. On the one hand, the enthusiasm and conformity of universities to the government policies play an important role for the success of such governmental steering. On the other hand, universities may be active in altering the governmental directions. The term “governance”, which does not have an equivalent word in Vietnamese, is used to address the importance of the universities in the management of higher education. The important role of Vietnamese universities in higher education governance implies that the dynamics of higher education governance are the results of the back-and-forth interaction between the two actors, universities and the state.

Another concern of the study is to investigate changes in higher education governance in Vietnam over a time span along with the economic reform. In order to examine the on-

[3] Research expenses constituted only 2% of total expenditures in public universities in 2005 (WB, 2008: p. 84).

going interplay between the governmental steering and university response, it is necessary to formulate the research issues in terms of their temporal aspects. Therefore, the above two research objectives are transformed into two, more exactly three, questions as follows:

1. Why and how does the renovation of higher education governance in Vietnam take place in universities and the system at large?
2. What are the outcomes of the governance renovation in terms of teaching quality?

To achieve the research goal, the study adopts a historical approach to track changes in government policies on higher education and in operations of universities in Vietnam from year 1987 to 2010. The governance of the system is mainly explored through document analysis, while also illustrating with interview data to describe the phenomena more clearly. Change at universities is explored through different sources of data, ranging from expert interviews to universities' self-assessment reports and websites. The back-and-forth interaction between the state and universities is discovered through looking at the dynamics of the role of these two actors in causing, performing, and rearranging higher education governance.

The study uses a governance perspective to orient the analyses of structures and processes of governance and the resource dependence theory (RDT) developed by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978/2003) to understand the behavior and outcome of universities. RDT provides basic hypotheses and mechanisms of the power relation between the regulator, e.g. the government, and the regulated, e.g. universities. A combination of these two theoretical perspectives has been rare in research on higher education governance because the governance perspective often discusses the phenomena at the system level and adopts the approaches of political science and public management. In contrast, RDT deals with organizations and uses organization study and strategic management approaches. This study is also to test if RDT can be a 'sub-theory' of the governance theory in higher education in the sense that it provides a framework for understanding the dimension of managerial self-governance in the multi-faceted concept of governance.

The empirical inquiry of the study is conducted only at universities; however, many findings about the responses of the universities, to a certain extent, represent the entire higher education sector in Vietnam. The findings of the study can contribute to the knowledge of both the fields of higher education and organization study.

Structure of the Dissertation

This doctoral dissertation presents theoretical and empirical work on changes in higher education governance. The ultimate goal is to describe and explain the nature and dynamics of university teaching governance and to predict future structures and processes of higher education governance in Vietnam. The dissertation comprises seven chapters, including this introductory one.

Chapter 2 establishes a theoretical framework orientating the analyses in the whole dissertation. The chapter begins with a review of terminology pulling together many elusive concepts, ranging from governance to teaching quality, in order to situate the topic of university teaching governance within the field of higher education research. Governance is viewed as a collective governing model of social systems, one of which is universities. Governance perspective serves as an analytical framework of governance reality, which refers to the public sector reform or the so-called New Public Management (NPM). RDT provides a theoretical outline for analyzing the active role of universities in formulating the structure and process of higher education governance. These two theories lay the grounds for a model of university response to the external environment consisting of governmental steering and socioeconomic demands. Interactions among universities, the state, and other social actors will determine the dynamics of higher education governance.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology, especially the design of empirical enquiry. Multiple methods, ranging from document analysis to multiple-case study, were used in order to explore reality of the higher education governance at both the national and organizational levels. Rationales for case selection are described. Primary data are mostly expert interviews and official documents. Secondary data consist of universities' reports and websites, and national statistics. Interview data were analyzed in MAXQDA 10, which is a computer program supporting qualitative data analysis, according to the procedures of qualitative content analysis proposed by Mayring (2000). At the end of the chapter, an operational model of university response to the environment is drawn.

Chapter 4 is an account of the higher education renovation in Vietnam, which is also the general environment of universities. The rise of the evaluative state with the instruments of quality assurance and accreditation is a salient pattern of higher education governance in Vietnam. The arrangements of the higher education governance are shaped by the national context, emerging socioeconomic forces, higher education policies, and university actions.

The chapter presents both the environmental impetuses and survival challenges for Vietnamese universities.

Chapter 5 presents the findings of the four case studies. The four universities are representative for four main study fields in higher education. They are the university of technology, university of science, university of economics, and university of teacher training. The structure of the case studies follows a quite similar format including the description of the universities, organizational environment, organizational actions, and outcome and survival of the universities.

Discussion of the empirical findings derived from the macro-societal landscape in Chapter 4 and the case studies in Chapter 5 is presented in Chapter 6. The case study findings are pulled together to present how much they are convergent and divergent with the RDT theses, other organization theories, and other empirical studies. The evidence shows that all the universities are responsive to the environments and performing the actions of defining their teaching quality, adjusting teaching provision, changing organizational structures, and managing legitimacy. However, differences in the organizational environments, organizational actions, and managerial capabilities lead to differences in the achievements of the universities. The findings show that Vietnamese universities are proactive in adapting to and altering the higher education landscape. Participation of academics in organizational management and organization-wide consensus between academics and administrators are typical for Vietnamese universities. The key resource contributors for Vietnamese higher education are the state, academics, and households/students, so the governance configuration is moving towards increasingly rational state regulation and strengthening academic self-governance and market competition.

Summarizing and concluding the dissertation, chapter 7 synthesizes the underlying causes, processes, and outcomes of higher education governance renovation in Vietnam. The market-like mechanisms and the evaluative state in higher education led to negative results in the early stage of the renovation, but have been gradually producing positive results recently. These outcomes imply that an effective oversight system that accommodates increased university autonomy and accountability mechanism is vital for the development of higher education in Vietnam.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework: New Environment and University Response

2.1 Terminology

Higher education research or research on higher education is a young and heterogeneous field that has gained its importance resulting from the expansion of higher education since the 1960s. In an early attempt to organize higher education research into a clear order, Teichler (1996) pointed out that two characteristics of knowledge in higher education are themes-focused and interdisciplinary. Nowadays, higher education study is popularly considered to be thematic, closely associated with social issues, and partly problem-solving. Influenced by these characteristics, one of the methodological approaches to higher education study is to analyze phenomena in a specific country and then compare the phenomena with the common international trends. Comparative analyses, which discuss concerned issues in general terms and then represent the issues in relation to different national settings, are seen as a way of enhancing theoretical and methodological quality of higher education research (Teichler, 1996). It is often seen in higher education study that technical terms on the one hand convey general meanings possible for comparative analyses, but on the other preserve their discretional aspects for representing real-life phenomena. Moreover, "definitions by themselves do not contain any empirical validity; they are just equations that relate a term to a collection of already defined terms" (Jansen, 2007: 66). As a result, the presentation of diverse on-going changes in higher education over the world pays a special attention to some phenomena and technical terms that may only have working definitions.

Departing from the above propositions, the concepts used in this study are not necessary precisely theoretical ones. The terminology links many elusive concepts in higher education with each other in order to establish a conceptual framework for empirical analyses. The meanings of the concepts are traced back to the contexts where the concepts have emerged. The multi-faceted concepts are then elaborated and tailored so as to be suitable to portray the reality under question. The theoretical framework serves as a guide for exploring the phenomena of higher education and higher education governance in Vietnam, and for comparing these phenomena with the global trends and patterns in other countries.

2.1.1 Governance

a. An Attempt to Define the Concept of Governance

Common understandings about the term governance are provided in language dictionaries. In these basic sources of word meanings, governance refers to an action or a method of governing. That means governance refers to steering and regulation. The term corporate governance emerged perhaps earliest at the same time with the advent of large joint-stock corporations in which economic activities are administered and managed by various stakeholders (Herrigel, 2007; Serrat, 2011). The heart of corporate governance is the involvement of a variety of actors in decision-making in which power relations are blurred and authority is laid on governing bodies instead of solely on a single actor.

The notion of governance, although without an exact terminology, began formulating in social sciences during the 1960s-1980s along with a rise in the number of literature about political institutions, democracy, economic transactions, organization studies, and so on. The attention to institutional arrangements and socially constructed meanings in different social study strands, the development of the economic and political science institutionalism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991), and the recognition of the influence of social rules, beliefs, and conventions on the behavior of organizations (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) lay the grounds for a new perspective on collective actors and actions.

Since the 1990s, governance has become a key concept in political science, particularly in the field of international politics. Global issues, such as democracy and human rights, environmental pollution, and international projects on infrastructure construction, with which a single state or nation cannot tackle, have fostered inter-governmental and trans-national cooperation. A variety of actors could have voice in negotiating and formulating international goals. The loss of the governmental sovereign in solving societal problems has required a new concept describing the structure and process of decision-making in inter-state systems. “Since the international system notoriously lacks hierarchy and government, the fuzzier word governance is used” instead of government (Finkelstein, 1995: p. 368). As a term representing a complex phenomenon in politics, governance has no less than six meanings: “as the minimal state; as corporate governance; as the new public management; as good governance; as a socio-cybernetic system, and as self-organizing networks” (Rhodes, 1997, 4th edition 2003: p. 47).

Public sector reforms in many member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which is labeled New Public Management (NPM) and will be further described in Section 2.2.1b, led to empowerment of private actors and reduced size of governments in the public sector (Hood, 1991; Pollit & Bourkert, 2004). In the wave of NPM, the term governance has been used to describe a collective governing model (Rhodes, 1997/2003; Minogue, Polidano & Hulme, 1998; Mayntz, 1998). Governance consists of two elements: a system of rules that shapes the framework for the operation of institutions, and the way by which an institution is run (Mayntz, 2004). In this working definition, the term implies that the behavior of actors is constrained by their action functions and interaction rules typically embedded in institutions not only in the form of formal charters but also societal values and norms.

In its broadest connotation in political science, governance refers to "the coordination and control of interdependent actions of societal actors (Benz, 2007: p. 3). This definition of governance is implicitly accepted among many scholars in different fields of social science. In this definition, the structure and process of coordinating actions are more focused, rather than the role of one dominant actor. With an emphasis on analytical function, the term governance becomes "fruitful for the analysis of complex patterns of collective action" (Benz, 2007: p. 4). Reality of governance can be described through specific configurations of different governing mechanisms operating in different areas of collective actions. Governing mechanisms include the hierarchy (formal authority), the community (based on shared values), the market (through the adjustment of supply, demand and price to obtain benefit and efficiency), and the network (via communications determined by resource and reputation).

It is also worth differentiating governance with good governance. The ideas of good governance come from political conceptions of appropriate public reforms supported by development aid agencies such as WB and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Good governance has the components of NPM and political connotations advocated by the donors (Rhodes, 1997/2003; Minogue, Polidano & Hulme, 1998). Both of these two components are arbitrarily adopted by different countries. Dissimilarities in NPM among countries are notable (Pollit & Bourkert, 2004; Christensen & Laegreid, 2007; 2011). Countries receiving development aids may be prudent to alien advices and use the term governance in a neutral sense relating to principles of scientific management.

b. Governance in Higher Education Research

It is also very consensual among academics in higher education that it is more important to come to and employ a commonly agreed concept than to search endlessly for an exact one (Kehm, 2010; Reed, Meek & Jones, 2002; Westerheijden, Stensaker & Rosa, 2007b). The meanings of the term governance in higher education vary in accordance with the levels of analysis (Reed et al., 2002). While system-level governance focuses on the distribution of authority between the state and HEIs, institutional governance emphasizes management in HEIs. Areas of investigation into governance of higher education largely reside in two dimensions: the power relation between HEIs and the state, and administration structures and management mechanism within institutions (Groof, Neave & Svec, 1998).

Empirical research on higher education governance over the last more than two decades has addressed two main themes. First, the relationship between the state and universities has shifted towards a less control of the state (Henkel & Little, 1999; Kogan & Hanney, 2000; Ferlie, Musseline & Andresani, 2008). The reduction in the sovereign authority of the states for governing higher education systems has exchanged for the involvement of various actors at different levels. Second, changes in the governmental attitudes towards universities' affairs have led to a new model of governance for universities (Braun & Merrien, 1999; Amaral, Jones & Karseth, 2002; Paradeise et al., 2009). The governance of higher education in Western Europe has shifted from the traditional governing model with high authority for the state and academic oligarchy towards a modernized governing model incorporating more or less the management styles of the private sector (Braun & Merrien, 1999; de Boer, Enders & Schimank, 2007).

Comparing different higher education systems, Clark (1983) identified three common forces of higher education governance that are the state, the academic oligarchy, and the market. Later on, he recognized organizational management as an additional force of university governance (Clark, 1998). Based on this groundwork, de Boer, Enders and Schimank (2007) proposed a heuristic tool, namely the governance equalizer, to describe changes in higher education governance. The governance equalizer includes five dimensions: state regulation, managerial self-governance, external guidance, market competition, and academic self-governance. These classifications of governance dimensions will be elaborated in Section 3.2.1 as used as a tool to explore the characteristics of higher education governance in Vietnam.

Governance and management are often used interchangeably when they refer to neutral models of making decisions and running social systems. However, management mainly refers to a rational way of getting things done and obtaining established goals (Cuthbert 1984, 2rd edition 1987; Gallagher, 2001); whereas, the heart of governance is the participation of various actors in decision-making (Rhodes, 1997/2003; Groof et al., 1998). Besides, a prominent part of empirical research on higher education governance investigates organizational/institutional life of HEIs (Sporn, 1999; Amaral, Jones & Karseth, 2002; Amaral, Meek & Larsen, 2003). Therefore, an attempt to make the term governance clearer is to distinguish it from interrelated concepts relating to managerial activities within organizations, including, management, administration, and leadership. Governance refers to the structure (i.e. the composition and representation of different actor groups in boards, senates, or committees) and process (i.e. procedures and complexity) of decision-making (Sporn, 1999). Management refers to the implementation of established decisions to obtain agreed goals through assigning tasks and allocating resources (Cuthbert, 1984; Sporn, 1999; Gallagher, 2001). Administration refers to the process of obtaining established goals by carrying out tasks in line with established policies and procedures (Gallagher, 2001; Meek, 2003). Management is broader than administration because it involves "leadership and substantial measure of discretion in decision making and policy implementation" (Meek, 2003: p. 12). Leadership is more associated with individual capacity to see opportunities and set strategic directions and to influence and motivate others to act towards organizational goals (Meek, 2003; Gallagher, 2001).

2.1.2 University Autonomy and Accountability

The concept of university autonomy has a history as long as the experience of universities and the struggles of universities for autonomy have never stopped (Berg, 1993). Universities in Western Europe have been considered relatively autonomous, and such university autonomy is relied on the individual freedom of academics and strong authority for chair holders. The debate on university autonomy today has triggered within the context of an emerging governing model of higher education. In the current discussion, university autonomy emphasizes the discretion of universities as organizations, with more authority for top leaders of universities.

Autonomy means independence or self-government. It refers to the freedom of an institution from any external intervention in running its affairs. However, there is no absolute autonomy. HEIs, regardless of public or private, must conform to national legislations. The degree of university autonomy is inversely proportional to the volume of legislations on HEIs released by a nation (Neave & van Vught 1994). University autonomy is context-dependent and shaped by administrative and economic interests (Neave, 1998b). Therefore, the meaning and magnitude of university autonomy change over time. Increased accountability corresponding with increased institutional autonomy has widespread become a crucial instrument of the governments for governing HEIs (Stensaker & Harvey, 2011). Accountability is a necessary condition for university autonomy, and these two concepts are in companion.

The concept of autonomy has a high degree of abstract. University autonomy in practice relates to diverse dimensions of institutional governance. To know what areas and the extent in each area a university has certain authority; on the one hand, the components of university autonomy need to be pointed out. However, on the other hand, a practical classification of university autonomy cannot cover all aspects of the concept because the reality of university autonomy is complex and changing. Consequently, different working typologies of university autonomy are formulated in relation to the context and purposes of empirical studies.

Anderson & Johnson (1998) analyzed university autonomy in 20 countries in four continents, using a classification of seven dimensions of university autonomy. This quite fine-grained classification of operational aspects of university autonomy provides helpful insights into the de factor university autonomy. The seven-area typology includes:

(1) Staffing, i.e. appointment, promotion and status of academics and senior administrative staff

(2) Students, i.e. entry admissions and number of students per discipline

(3) Curriculum and pedagogy, i.e. methods of teaching and learning evaluation, course content, and choices of textbooks

(4) Academic standards, i.e. standards for granting degrees, quality audits, and accreditation

(5) Research and publication, i.e. postgraduate teaching, choices of research topics, and freedom to publish

(6) Governance, i.e. the organization of governing bodies and advisory bodies, such as councils, academic boards, and student associations

(7) Administration and finance, i.e. funding of institutions from operating grants, capital and equipment grants, one-off projects, non-government funding, and accountability arrangements (p. 1).

Estermann and Nokkala (2009) investigated university autonomy in Europe by looking into university freedom in decision-making in four basic areas: organization, finance, staffing, and academic matters. The European University Association in Lisbon declaration 2007 established this four-dimension classification, and Estermann and Nokkala (2009) elaborated it. The latter classification seems to incorporate the categories of students, curriculum, and research into a grand grouping of academic matters. Academic issues are often interrelated, so it is sensible to group them under a heading. The categories of governance, and administration and finance in Anderson and Johnson's (1998) classification seem to be similar to the categories of organization and finance in Estermann and Nokkala 's (2009), respectively.

More institutional autonomy for universities must be a result of a reduction in authority for other actors. If the official documents state that universities are given more autonomy while other government regulations binding the operation and behavior of universities are maintained, such increased university autonomy is formalistic and empty in essence. University autonomy stated in legal documents can be unrealistic for universities to implement. This creates a gap between formal and real autonomy.

Autonomy and accountability are usually mentioned together. Again, accountability is an elusive and multi-meaning concept. Two main areas where universities are required to be accountable to stakeholders are money flows and service quality. Financial accountability is the most traditional form of accountability, requiring compliance to financial auditing. Receipts and expenses of HEIs are recorded in prescribed formats of budgeting headlines and line items. The claims of HEIs for conditional fiscal autonomy have led to simplification in financial accountability procedures. Public funding based on the line-item principle has been replaced with lump sum grants (Herbst, 2007; Neave & van Vught,

1994). In contrary to financial accountability, requirement for accountability of higher education quality has been expanded.

From a synthetic view on quality, accountability is defined as the requirement "to expressly address the concerns, requirements, or perspectives of others" (Harvey, 2004)[4]. This notion emphasizes the responsibility of institutions for conforming to external demands put upon them. In the higher education sector, Campbell and Rozsnyai (2002) described accountability as "the assurance of a unit to its stakeholders that it provides education of good quality" (p. 131). This notion of accountability linked with quality assurance is very common in higher education. Quality assurance procedures are a core instrument of accountability in most countries (Stensaker & Harvey, 2011), and accountability is one of the crucial purposes of quality assurance.

Accountability implies the issues of who answers to whom and for what (Daigle & Coucco, 2002). Central governments establish mechanisms and procedures of quality accountability in almost all higher education systems (Stensaker & Harvey, 2011). Emphasizing the aspect of doing accountability, Middlehurst (1997) referred accountability to "the task of rendering an account" of what have been done by institutions (p. 16). In this notion, accountability is to report the performance of institutions through a system of measurement and collection of evidence. The accuracy of the measurement of educational performance, costs of personnel and time in producing compliant reports, offensive or defensive views towards accountability, and so on are creating a great deal of technical challenges of accountability that have still unresolved.

The current debate about university autonomy - accountability emanates from the wave of NPM. Therefore, at the first glance, one might think that a primary purpose of accountability is to report the efficiency of HEIs. Returning to the meaning of accountability, accountability concerns the issue of answering to whom and for what. Governments who are primary funders of HEIs and triggered NPM often claim efficiency and transparency of the use of public money. However, the goal of better quality is always a top priority of any authentic HEIs. That long-term objective is not easy to be exchanged for any other goal. Moreover, students have been becoming a considerable source of higher education funding. What they want to know is the price and quality of the service. They

[4] http://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/glossary/, retrieved on 11 December 2010. The definition has been in the website since 2004.

might not care much about retention and graduate rates. As constituents of higher education are expanding, HEIs have to render their accounts to different stakeholders. Accountability to the state is transformed into public accountability. Stensaker, Rosa and Westerheijden (2007) also argued that "quality is not a secondary issue in the sector [of higher education],… quality is essentially a question about the effectiveness and efficiency of the sector as a whole" (p. 250). It is, therefore, confident to say that implementation of increased university autonomy and accountability, with the ultimate goal of improving the operation and products of HEIs, creates pressures on HEIs for improving quality, efficiency, effectiveness and transparency.

2.1.3 Quality, Quality Assurance, Accreditation, and Teaching Quality

The appraisal of the quality of academic work to identify excellence, creativity, and originality has deeply been rooted in the culture of academic community (Clark 1983; Becher & Kogan, 1992). Such evaluation done by academics, often in the form peer review, has been a means of facilitating knowledge advancement and pedagogic innovation. Academics' intrinsic concern for academic quality underpins the traditional view of quality as high class and distinctive. This notion of quality has existed in elite higher education and in systems where trust in academic practices is high. As higher education becomes not only for elites, quality of higher education is no longer seen as self-evident. Quality management in mass higher education systems has shifted to focus on providing explicit evidence of quality within a framework of external quality assurance.

There is no single definition of quality because quality means different things to different people. Politicians, academics, students, employers, and other stakeholders can have competing demands on higher education and formulate different expectations of service quality. However, quality is a core issue in higher education, so there are a huge number of literature on quality as indicated in the website of "Analytic Quality Glossary, Quality Research International" built up by Lee Harvey since 1994[5]. In a pioneering work exploring the nature of the concept of quality in higher education, Harvey and Green (1993) concluded that quality is a philosophical concept, reflecting the purpose of higher education and being practically constructed in a wide variety of ways for the evaluation purpose. These two authors analyzed different ways of thinking about quality and categorized them as quality as exception, perfection, fitness for purpose, value-for-money,

[5] http://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/glossary/quality.htm

and transformation[6]. They further elaborated the view of quality as exceptional through three slightly differing meanings, including distinction, excellence (i.e. exceeding very high standards), and passing minimum standards. This view of quality has been detailed in the later literature on quality.

Kristoffersen, Sursock & Westerheijden (1998) developed the conceptions of quality in the work of Harvey and Green (1993) into six categories, including quality as excellence, "zero errors", fitness for purpose, transformation, threshold, and enhancement (continuous improvement). These authors eliminated the view of quality as value-for-money and stated that their deliberate choice of specific views of quality was due to the choice of approaches to evaluating quality. Tracing back to the emergence of NPM, which sets out the practice of quality evaluation, the reforms in the United Kingdom (UK) arose partly from fiscal problems and concern for accountability. The conceptions of quality in Harvey and Green (1993) were mainly constructed in relation to the context of the UK, where, as these scholars specified, cost effectiveness caused the debate about quality. In contrast, in many continental Western European countries, the social benefit of higher education was at that time still highly valued, rather than the rate of return. These two of pieces of literature reflects very well variances in approaches to assessing quality even within the Western Europe. Kristoffersen, Sursock & Westerheijden (1998) noted, "all western European evaluation procedures of higher education are based on quality as enhancement rather than as standards" (p. 6). However, the concept of quality has political and functional underpinnings, so approaches to quality evaluation of higher education in less advanced countries may be dissimilar.

Campbell and Rozsnyai (2002) adopted both the works of Harvey and Green (1993) and Kristoffersen, Sursock & Westerheijden (1998) and listed seven specific concepts of quality: excellence, "zero errors", fitness for purpose, transformation, threshold, value for money, and enhancement. These two authors argued that some of these concepts still hold true because explicit quality assurance and accreditation procedures are increasingly

[6] These conceptions of quality are still largely valid and often cited. Therefore, a brief summary of them will be helpful for keeping track of the continuity of the conceptualizations of quality. Quality as exceptional regards quality as exceptionally high standards. Quality as perfection focuses on conformity to product specifications and relates to quality culture. Quality as fitness for purpose judges the quality of a product according to the extent to which it fits to its purpose defined as meeting either customer specifications or institutional missions. Quality as value for money equates quality to cost and serves the purpose of accountability. Quality as transformation focuses on "qualitative change" in terms of development in knowledge, abilities and skills of students and empowering them.

implemented in higher education systems and HEIs worldwide. They noted that the specific concepts of quality and models of quality management used in HEIs might result in mismatches between the requirements of the external quality assurance agency and institutional approaches to quality.

The renewed interest in the quality of higher education today is associated with the wave of external quality assurance. In the early stage, fulfilling diverse demands of customers was emphasized, so the most frequent approach to quality assurance at that time employed the concept of quality as fitness for purpose (Martin & Stella, 2007; Westerheijden et al., 2007). The view of quality as fitness for purpose encourages diversity in missions and objectives of HEIs where are absorbing an increasing and heterogeneous student body. Recently, Martin and Stella (2007) claimed that increase in international comparison of higher education quality has led to the view of quality as fulfillment of both standards and distinctive objectives and interests. It is also possible that the criticism of the definition of quality as fitness for purpose has led to sounder analyses and definitions of quality. "[T]hat is precisely the purpose of fitness-for/of-purpose approaches: to conceal the decline of essential quality and to legitimate that declines." (Harvey & Newton, 2007: p. 235).

The concept of quality assurance contains elements of ambiguity because of the vagueness of the concept of quality and of the variety of instruments of quality assurance. In the broadest meaning, quality assurance is understood as a systematic and continuous attention to maintain and improve the quality of higher education (Campbell & Rozsnyai, 2002). This all-encompassing definition creates possibilities of including various meanings and dimensions into the term. Intentions of quality assurance can be for accountability, improvement, validation, and information. Recent quality assurance is for the most part to fulfill demand for public accountability that requires information in order to guide decisions of funding (Westerheijden et al., 2007). Such practices of external examination are problematic in articulating the meaning of academic standards. Moreover, the forms and focuses of accountability may influence institutions to go into a direction that is not in favor of its genuine and long-term goals. The exercise of external evaluation as a task of quality management needs to go beyond accountability towards a stage of "continuous quality improvement or transformation" (Middlehurst, 1997: p.18).

The implementation of external quality assurance brings about accreditation. Basic methods of quality assurance, including accreditation, audit, assessment, and external

examination, have been well analyzed in literature (Harvey & Newton, 2007). Of which, accreditation is the most interest in practice because governments are eager to use it as a main instrument to achieve accountability and to realize their goal of steering higher education. However, the types, intentions, and implementation of accreditation schemes vary widely in different higher education systems, for example, in the United States and European countries (Schwarz & Westerheijden, 2004). Among the procedures of external quality assurance, accreditation is the step after institutional self-assessment and associated with external examination and report publication.

One of the primary missions of higher education is teaching. The ultimate result of teaching is student learning. Therefore, the quality of teaching is the success in facilitating students' ability and in producing progress in their learning. According to Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), there are various elements of the outcomes of college study for students in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and quality of life after college, of which elements related to learning outcomes, including knowledge acquisition, cognitive development, and thinking skills, is the central goal of teaching. Pascarella's (1985) general model for assessing the impact of colleges on student learning and intellectual development is among one of the most often used analytical frameworks for explaining students' leaning outcomes. The model incorporates five main sets of factors: institution's structural characteristics (enrollment, teacher-student ratio, selectivity, and the like), institution's environment, student interactions with faculty and peers, quality of student effort, and student traits. Universities can directly affect the three first sets of factors and indirectly influence the quality of student effort through providing an inspiring learning environment and enthusiastic and sympathetic teachers. Pascarella's (1985) model differentiates the learning outcomes attributable to college actions and those attributable to students' traits and self-produced efforts; therefore, the model can be relevant for assessing teaching quality. Briefly, assessing the quality of teaching provided by universities can be based on evidence such as teacher qualification, their behavior, teaching and learning environment, pedagogic approaches, curriculum, quality assurance, and other indirect factors.

NPM forerunners, for example England and Australia, have made a far progress in practice of accountability and quality assessment of higher education. They have widely used performance indicators (PIs) as means to render quality of education, and efficiency and effectiveness of institutions' activities. Key PIs of good teaching are selectivity, intake

quality, student-teacher ratio, unit cost per student, student progression rate, graduates' full-time employment, student and peer evaluation (Cave et al., 1997; DEST, 2005). Key PIs might be helpful for comparing the status quo of HEIs with one another but say little about what universities contribute to student learning. Therefore, a comprehensive assessment of teaching quality needs to be based on qualitative dimensions beside quantitative PIs.

In sum, governance, university autonomy, accountability, and quality evaluation are interrelated concepts and phenomena representing critical changes in the management of higher education over the last two decades. These dynamics in higher education are attributable to both socio-economic forces and a new philosophy of state management. The next section will discuss two theoretical perspectives on the structures and mechanisms coordinating activities in higher education.

2.2 Theoretical Perspectives

This section reviews two theories concerning governance and resource dependence. Other theories such as neo-institutional theory and network governance are also often used in literature on higher education but may be less relevant in terms of capacity to capture the dynamics of Vietnamese higher education governance. Governance perspective will provide a framework to understand intentions and practices of system-level reform. Meanwhile, resource dependence theory (RDT) will help to explain the behavior of universities in the social context consisting of government policies and socio-economic pressures.

2.2.1 Governance Perspective

The governance perspective is understood from two other public management approaches: government and New Public Management (NPM). The first section focuses the analytical aspects of governance in which governance is understood as transforming from a government-dominated form of governing to a collective one. The second section focuses on the practical aspects of governance in which a bundle of ideas and practices of management are implemented in the public sector reform or the so-called NPM.

a. From Government to Governance

In the sense of a system or method of governing a society, government refers to political directions and controls exercised by formal agents. Prior to the emergence of a collective model of governing, i.e. governance, in the 1980s, government had been the most prevalent formal force ruling society (Mayntz, 1998). In the conventional government model, management of the public sector is largely grounded on hierarchy, centralized commands, and a rigid regulative framework. The concept government means the state holds a dominant power in making decisions on public matters.

In contrast to government, governance believes in elements of social self-regulation and includes both public and private actors in the process of decision-making. In the governance perspective, decisions are the products of the interplay among various interdependent actors with formal and informal powers. A shift from government to governance mainly means a switch from a system of state-dominated decision-making to an empowerment of various actors. While government focuses on the role of one actor - the state, governance pays attention to a large variety of actors.

Under the umbrella idea of incorporating various actors in governing systems, direct government intervention into the public service sector has been reduced. The belief that management styles in the private sector can help the public sector to improve its efficiency has been strongly advocated. This idea of reforming the public sector is one of the core principles of NPM. Since the mid-1980s, a corporate governance model of the private sector has been applied in HEIs in England (Shattock, 2006) and a comprehensive strategy to apply elements of managerialism into universities has carried out in the Netherlands since 1985 (de Boer, Enders & Leisyte, 2008).

Governance is based on pluralism and multi-party democracy (Minogue et al., 1998). Therefore, analysis of governance is not comprehensive if there is no discussion about democracy. Democracy is subject to the institutional context of the concept and still debated in many countries for the aim of epistemology. In accordance with the global tendencies, no country dares to say that it does not support democracy. Democracy may be stated but is empty in essence. A study on higher education governance therefore needs to consider the institutional setting and the culture of the education sector as explanatory factors of the governing style.

b. New Public Management

Pressures in terms of public budget deficits and societal distrust of traditional public administration triggered a wave of public sector reforms in the 1980s (Minogue, 1998; Homburg, Pollitt & van Thiel, 2007). Prevailing slogans of these public sector reforms are efficiency and effectiveness, but behind these mottos, there is still requirement for better quality. In realizing the ultimate results of the reforms, intermediate objectives such as accountability and transparency are also strengthened (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004). Owing to similar driving factors, public sector reforms in most OECD countries share a set of quite similar management ideas and practices and are labeled NPM.

The word NPM was coined by Hood (1991) to describe two main doctrines, namely managerialism and new institutional economics, in administrative policies and implementations in the UK, Australia, New Zealand, and some other OECD countries between the late 1970 and the 1980s. Managerialism refers to the application of business-type management into the public sector and emphasizes more freedom for managers to manage, explicit standards and performance measures, output controls, use of private sector management techniques, and more efficient use of resources. The new institutional economics refers to introduction of incentive structures into the supply of public services, emphasizing disaggregation of bureaucratic organizations and greater competition through contracting out and public tendering. Hood´s original conceptions of NPM have received much consensus from key writers on NPM such as Dunleavy and Hood (1994), Ferlie et al. (1996), Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004), Christensen and Laegreid (2011), and furthermore Larbi (1999) claimed that later authors added the idea of orientation and responsiveness to customers to the concept.

NPM consists of heterogeneous doctrinal components; therefore, different advocates of NPM stress different doctrines or/and different components of a doctrine (Hood, 1991). Moreover, different ideas and practices of NPM implemented in different administrative and political systems produce a wide variety of impacts and outcomes. While Anglo-American countries and the Netherlands adopt radical NPM trajectories, other Western Europeans including Belgium, Germany and Italy adopts NPM rather late and partially (Pollitt, 2007). Ferlie et al. (2008) identified different levels of "signs and symptoms" of NPM in Western European higher education systems**.** France has recently adopted NPM ideas without using this label. Anglo-American countries, the Netherlands, and Norway are

considered as successful NPM reformers because they have developed market-based grounds and mechanisms, elaborated explicit measurement and audit and checking systems, implemented performance-based funding, developed governing bodies with lay members and more overt managerial roles of senior academics. In contrast, German NPM is less successful because many of the above measures are still absent.

Polidano, Hulme and Minogue (1998) pointed out that developing countries had implemented NPM to a certain extent, but many reasons caused it to fail right in the beginning of the attempts. The problems of public management in developing countries are ineffective and underdeveloped central management structures, and abuse of office; therefore, greater managerial discretion would lead to more difficulties for assigning operational responsibilities and create opportunities for corruption. The early development stage of public administration in developing countries contains risks of applying reform ideas imported from advanced countries. In many countries, setting up quasi-governmental organizations was to make it possible to set their own salary rates independent of the civil service; thereby these organizations could recruit and retain highly qualified staff. These authors concluded that because of being driven by normative rather than empirical arguments, "NPM is a case of inappropriate policy transfer on the basis of its record of implementation" in developing countries (ibid, p. 289).

Many elements of NPM also do not fit public sector reforms in quite advanced states in Asia such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and other prominent countries, including Malaysia, China and Vietnam, where the administrative systems are rooted in statist and bureaucratic traditions (Cheung, 2011). These countries continue a state-planned and state-led approach to build the nations. According to Marginson (2010), Confucian-influenced higher education systems still remain state control over study programs and senior personnel and do not emphasize university autonomy in decision-making. The author argued that NPM in higher education in Confucian-influenced countries is similar to that in the NPM pioneers with respect to two components that are the devolution of financial responsibilities to institutions, and the use of quality assurance and accountability mechanisms to promote performance measurement and indirect state supervision.

After more than two decades of the wave of public sector reforms, the label given to the phenomenon has a little changed. Latter literature on public sector reforms, such as Pollitt

and Bourkaerd (2004) and Christensen and Laegreid (2011), often uses the term NPM reforms instead of NPM alone. The lesser affirmative level of the label for public management reforms indicates that the reforms in after-coming countries are different from that in the NPM pioneers. Later reformers, especially those in East Asia, follow the NPM wave in the sense that they have imported the general idea of making use of market-like mechanisms. There may be another reason for calling worldwide public sector reforms NPM. The trajectories of public sector reforms vary from radical NPM, neo-Weberian governance, network governance to Confucian governance model (Pollitt & Bourkaerd, 2004; Ferlie et al., 2008; Marginson, 2010). Hence, whenever a public management reform does not have clear symptoms of the established NPM patterns and is a hybridization of the new and old, it is convenient to assign it a rhetorical label of NPM.

Ferlie et. al. (2008) pointed out the three most common practices of NPM in higher education as following: (1) increasing use of market-like mechanisms, (2) growth of explicit evaluation systems based on performance measurement and indicators, which is in the words of Neave (1988) "the rise of the evaluative state", and (3) empowerment of organizational management. According to Neave (1988), the rise of the evaluate state happened in many states in Western Europe in the mid-1980s, assigning the state a stronger regulatory position by means of a public evaluative regime performing posteriori evaluation of higher education. The evaluative state is considered as part of the practice of NPM in the sense that it implements NPM ideas by a package of evaluation instruments in order to encourage competition among HEIs and to improve quality and efficiency of higher education (Neave, 1998a; Bleiklie, 1998; Kogan & Hanney, 2000).

NPM as a bundle of reform notions helps to understand the phenomenon of public management reforms. In spite of this, its pragmatic recipe feature, which mixes political and normative assumptions with reforming techniques, limits the capacity to conceptualize the phenomenon. The perspective of governance holding a pluralist character is more theoretically open than NPM (Minogue et al., 1998). the governance perspective provides a more comprehensive and structured framework for exploring governance patterns through revealing the arrangement among the four different coordination mechanisms mentioned in Section 2.1.1a, among a variety of individual and collective actors, and revealing the importance weight of each actor in coordination mechanisms. Although NPM and

governance are different in analytical capacity, they both discuss public management and steering and are relevant to addressing the public management reform.

2.2.2 Resource Dependence Theory

While NPM is helpful for understanding intentions and expectations of higher education reforms directed by the government, the resource dependence theory (RDT) founded by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978, 2nd edition 2003) will be helpful for exploring responses of universities to the environment consisting of the government policies, societal needs, and global trends. In this study, RDT is expected to explain the actions of Vietnamese universities to cope with external demands and resource scarcity and to assess universities' outcomes in terms of fulfilling both the external requirements and resource acquisition.

RDT departs from the open systems theory sharing the idea that environments matter to organizations. "Environments shape, support, and infiltrate organizations" (Scott, 1982: p. 25). The term "open systems" reflects that organizations are not closed but open, interacted with, and influenced by environments. The open systems theory also emphasizes that organizations consist of independent but interrelated sub-systems, and that organizing and maintaining sub-systems is an important activity if organizations want to continue existing (Morgan, 2006; Scott, 1992).

The central thesis of RDT is that organizations are externally constrained because they acquire their needed resources, including money, labor, raw materials, information, social legitimacy, and so on, which are under the control of other social actors in the environments. In order to obtain resources for its survival, an organization must engage in exchanges and transactions with other organizations that possess those resources. To continue providing what the organization needs, the external organizations may exercise their control and expect the organization to act in compliance with their demands. Thus, the behavior of an organization is predictable by looking at the organization's environment.

However, RDT also assumes that although organizations are bounded by external constrains they can act strategically to manage their dependencies. Managerial actions are possible because organizational management has (1) responsive role, which refers to the perceptions of the social context and the choices of organizational adjustments to these social realities, and (2) discretionary role, which refers to actions to change the social

context through enacting favorable environmental conditions and setting up inter-organizational coordination. Davis and Powell (1992) claimed that "much organizational activity can be understood as tactics to manage external control attempts and the uncertainty created by interdependence" (p. 323). In the resource dependence perspective, an organization is viewed as capable of changing as well as responding to the environment. The analysis of the active role of organizational leadership is a striking feature distinguishing RDT from the early institutional theory, which also analyzes the relationship between organizations and environments.

The image of active organizations acting strategically to survive gives the issue of managing resource dependence to be the central analysis in RDT. According to the theory, organizations are often in the position of interdependencies. A focal organization can also affect other organizations because it possesses resources other organizations need. Organizations that are not self-maintained must interact with the environments consisting of other organizations, so interdependencies are natural for organizations. Interdependencies result in the uncertainty of the supply of sources; therefore, organizations attempt to manage the interdependencies between them and other organizations.

An organization manages its interdependence first by seeking and sustaining alternatives of transaction and second by pursuing power over whom the organization depends on. The theory makes use of the construct of power presented by Emerson (1962) that specifies dependence and power is mutually related. Dependence of an organization on another is determined by three factors: importance of the resource for the organization, discretion of the external actor over the resource location and use, and concentration of the resource control among the suppliers and purchasers (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978/2003). The resource dependence, in turn, measures the power of the external organization over the focal organization. Power in the view of RDT is socially determined because what is critical and scarce is defined by social reality. According to Davis and Cobb (2009), the most recurrent analyses in RDT are "the sources and consequences of power in inter-organizational relations: where power and dependence come from, and how those that run organizations use their power and manage their dependence" (p. 5). The emphasis on power instead of short-term economic profits is one of the features distinguishing the theory from other economic theories on efficiency.

RDT describes the structure of the environment of an organization through three dimensions: concentration of power among organizations, munificence of critical resources, and interconnectedness, i.e. the number and pattern of linkages among organizations. The three structural dimensions determine the relational characteristics, in terms of conflict and interdependence, among social actors. Conflict and interdependence, in turn, determine the uncertainty of the resource flows. These environmental dimensions are mutually related, causing competing demands on the focal organization. Organizations, in the situation of external constraints, have to assess the structure and requests in the environments and make decisions on responding to them. Apart from compliance with the requests, organizations try to avoid external influence attempts and secure the resource acquisition, so they will manipulate the structure of and relationships in the environments to aim their goals. The theory received strong criticisms of its theoretical formula of the "autonomy versus certainty dilemma" of organizational actions "Davis & Powell, 1992: p. 326). Any organizational action can achieve either autonomy or certainty, thus always being judged as successful. Davis and Powell (1992) argued that the weakness of RDT for accessing organizational actions is solved by Burt' (1983) organizational action formula of pursuing profitability via structural autonomy.

The continued survival of an organization depends partly on the judgment of social actors on its activities. RDT emphasizes the organizational effectiveness, which is the organization's "ability to create acceptable outcomes and actions" (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978/2003: p. 11). The two authors differentiated organizational effectiveness with organizational efficiency as following. "Effectiveness is an external evaluation of what the organization is doing, while efficiency is an internal evaluation of the amount of resources consumed in the process of doing this activity" (ibid: p. 37). With the concept of organizational effectiveness, RDT highlights that in many instances it is more important for organizations to gain the interest groups' acceptance of its existence than to improve the ratio of output to input, so the theory implies the very importance of social legitimacy for organizations. Organizations in the situation of resource interdependence have to screen the environments, choose strategies for responding to the competing demands of different interest groups in order to obtain an overall social recognition of its effectiveness. Without a careful attention to the complex environments, it is very easy for organizations to misread their situations.

RDT is often used in literature on higher education to understand organizational change in the context of budget cut and dependence of HEIs on private funding (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Sporn, 1999; Lepori, Usher & Montauti, 2013). Slaughter and Leslie (1997) pointed out that reduction in government expenditures on higher education was the main driver of "academic capitalism", which characterizes the involvement of HEIs and academics in market-like behaviors. These behaviors deal with not only knowledge transfer but also various activities ranging from selling institutions' products including patents and new enterprises to marketing their processes including teaching materials, curricula, software, and education provision and assessment, and so on (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

Other empirical research has shown that new sources of income induce new structures in HEIs to manage these resource dependencies (Sporn, 1999; Gumport & Sporn ,1999; Tobert, 1995). In addition, the redistribution of power within HEIs towards more authority for administrative offices are also a consequence of changes in the patterns of resource dependence because administrators are increasingly in charge of developing and implementing strategies that reduce the uncertainty of resource environments (Gumport & Sporn, 1999).

According to Pfeffer (2003), "it would be both informative and useful to examine both inter-organizational relations… and the relations between the regulated and regulators using basic concepts and hypotheses" outlined in the theory (p. xxv). While the field of management often uses the theory to predict inter-organizational linkages such as mergers, joint ventures, and board interlocks, this research project attempts to use the theory as an analytical guide rather than a ready workable model. This study uses the main concepts and processes outlined in RDT to describe the social context in which Vietnamese universities are operating, to explain universities' actions and outcomes and their interactions with the government, and to predict the patterns of the resource and power relationships between these two actors.

The structural characteristics of the resource environments in higher education in Vietnam are different from what are described in RDT. The concentration of the discretion over higher education funding resides on the state. The state (including MOET) can initiate demands on universities. The universities are mostly specialized instead of multidisciplinary, so conditions for competition among universities are in shortage. Interconnectedness and interdependence among the universities is low. Transactions

among organizations in the higher education sector are mainly between the government on one side and universities on the other side. These distinct contexts of Vietnam lead to a premise that the empirical application of RDT in this study is context-adaptive.

The trademark of RDT is the analyses of how organizations operate in a mature market regime and manage interdependencies by setting complex inter-organizational linkages. This research project does not employ the most widely used application of RDT, but its analytical perspective is based on RDT for three reasons. First, the study uses the most central thesis of RDT that organizational behavior can be explained by looking at the social context and the structure and patterns of exchanges in the resource environments. Second, empirical data in the study show that Vietnamese universities have made many actions, e.g. commercialization of teaching, diversifying educational programs, changing organizational structures, creating societal pressures on the government in order to enact favorable environments. Third, the research project uses the theoretical thesis of power-dependence relation, which is one of fundamental foundations of RDT, to explain the power relation between the Vietnamese government and HEIs.

The changing administrative structures and power distribution in universities are not the focus of this study. That is why the contingency theory analyzing the relation between organizational designs and environmental uncertainties is not used as a theoretical base in the study. “The resource dependence approach shares many features with the strategic contingency perspective, but has as its primary focus the organization itself - its behavior and its relations with other organizations - rather than its component units” (Scott 1992: p. 114).

2.3 Towards a Research Model

The rapid expansion of higher education systems over the world since the 1960s has changed the nature and organization of higher education. Many higher education systems have been experiencing reforms (Neave & van Vught, 1994; Vukasovi et al., 2012). The governments have a major impact on the dynamics of the systems; however, the level of the impact depends on the level of compliance of HEIs with the governmental steering. The state of affairs of higher education is, therefore, the result of the interaction between governmental steering and HEIs.

A majority of HEIs in many higher education systems is publicly funded; therefore, any discussion of higher education governance cannot avoid referring to NPM. NPM in the higher education sector puts pressures on HEIs and is one of the striking elements of the general environment confronting HEIs. The three most common practices of NPM in higher education pointed out by Ferlie et al. (2008) are: (1) implementation of market-like mechanisms by means of incentive systems, encouragement of private sector providers, development of higher education tuition fees; (2) increase in performance measurement and audit systems; and (3) empowered and entrepreneurial management.

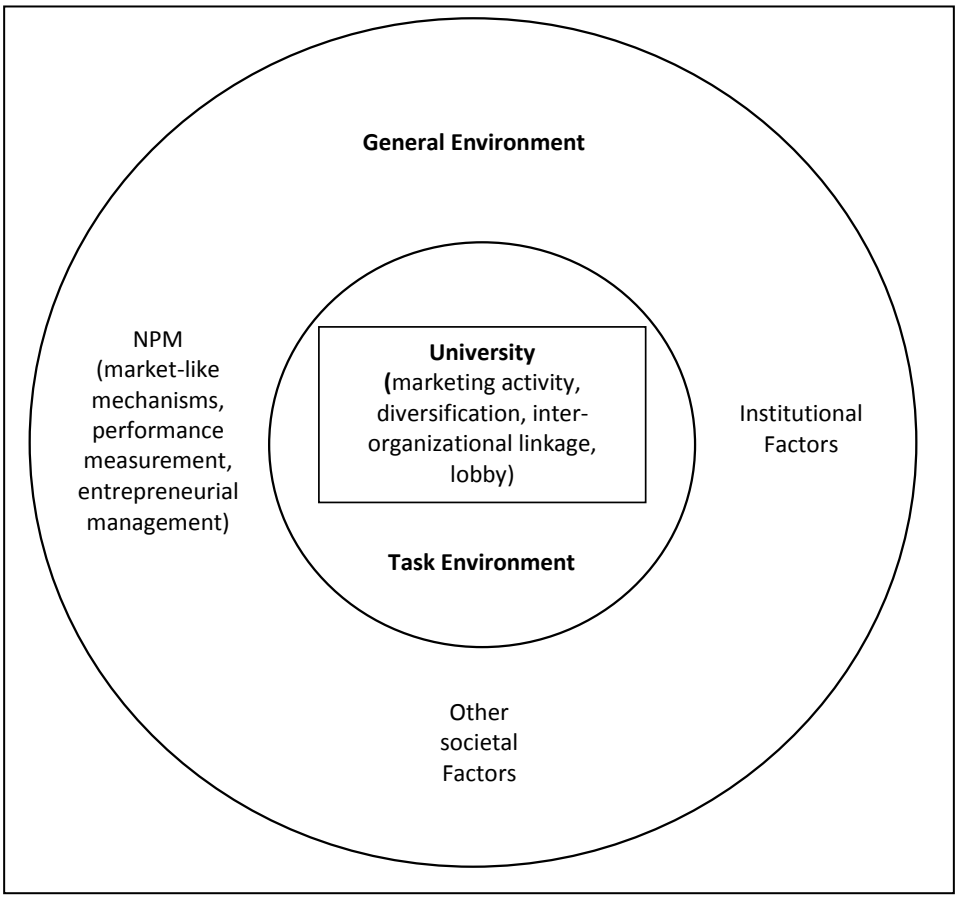
Another crucial element of the general environment of HEIs is the national setting. Public HEIs often obtain a majority of their resources from the state, so they are supposed to conform to institutional requirements, which can be more than legal requirements and may include cultural conventions and political demands. There are many other factors, such as demography, internationalization, economic growth, that have direct or indirect effects on universities' behavior. In the research model, these are named other societal factors. In sum, NPM, institutional factors, and other societal factors are creating the current general environment for universities.

Universities are different from pure business firms. Due to their roles of a cultural image and/or an instrument of nation building, universities may receive different kinds of subsidy from the governments in order to carry out social responsibility, or they can make effort and negotiate to gain other public funding on special activities and fields of service that fit particular national strategies.

Applying RDT, universities in the research model locates in the environments constituted by the three levels: general, organizational set, and enacted. The organizational set includes "the set of individuals and organizations with whom the focal organization directly interacts" (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978/2003: p. 63). The elements and events in the environment that are perceived, interpreted and reconstructed by an organization is the organization' enacted environment. "The enacted environment influences organizational actions, while events in the other levels of environment may affect outcomes" (ibid, p.63). In this sense, the organizational set in the environment exists objectively, while the enacted one is subjective and known to the organization according to its capability to give meaning to events in the environment. Such capability relates to the ability of the managers of organizations, and three main roles of organizational management can be symbolic,

responsive, and discretional or strategic. Organizational set is, largely, identical with the set of inputs or factors in task environment[7] in organization theory. The concept of task environment is better elaborated; therefore, in the research model, the organizational set is replaced with the task environment. The enacted environment of a university cannot be visualized in the research model and will be explored through empirical enquiry. The research model envisions core elements of the two levels of environment in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 Model of University Response to Resource Dependencies



In RDT, the focal organization is influenced by other organizations and has to manage external demands made on it. Two main types of organizational responses are to comply with and to avoid environmental pressures. In order to adapt to environmental requirements, a typical response by firms and organizations is practice of "marketing concept" or marketing activity and change in production, products, and delivery to fit the

[7] Dill (1958) focused on managerial activities in an organization and defines tasks as "things the organization sets itself to do" (p. 411). In this meaning, task environment is subjective. However, RDT maintains an external perspective on organizations, so the tasks of organizations can emanate from external demands instead of just being set by organizations.

needs of the environment. To avoid external demands arising from reliance on a single resource, the most effective strategy is to mitigate the resource criticality through diversifying resources, exchanges, and products. Other strategies for avoiding external demands are to absorb them through collaborative structures and negotiated interactions, and to seek wider social-political power and lobby for favorable laws.

In a mature competitive market, organizations can formulate inter- organizational linkages in the forms of collaborative types of ownership, personnel, and operation, in order to mitigate their resource dependence on other organizations. The more the competitive markets are developed, the merrier and more complex the inter-organizational linkages are. In higher education, joint ventures of study programs and institutions have emerged, but complex inter-organizational linkages are less often seen. Because the organizational environments are enacted, universities can change the environments. They can create a good image of them, obtain more trust, and then ask for special treatments from the government. Universities can also lobby the promulgation of regulations that favor their existence and operation. Strategic responses in order to change environments may take time to be realized. Actions to manage external demands and seek power require a high level of managerial capability and a long-term view of organizational development. Only a small number of universities can have such ability.

The three main factors of the general environment are unframed to address that these elements are intertwined and blurred. According to RDT, the boundary of an organization is defined the organization's discretion over the activity, so organizational boundary is not clearly demarcated. The university in the research model is framed in order to denote its geographical space rather than the precise organizational boundary. A model connected better with the empirical study will be developed in Section 3.2.3.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Operationalization

3.1 Multi-method Research Design

3.1.1 Methods and Levels of Analysis

In social sciences including higher education research, it is common that researchers justify the techniques of data collection and analysis they use in a research project depending on their research topics and stance. The only common agreement in choosing a methodological approach to rigorous research practices is to employ multiple methods so that the triangulation is possible.

The aim of this research project is to understand and explain the dynamics of Vietnamese higher education management, which are the result of the interaction between the government and HEIs, since it started higher education renovation. As a developing higher education system, Vietnam's national policies have critical effect on higher education. In order to explore the picture of the whole system, document analysis was mainly used. Documentary materials were national policies, statistics, and other literature on Vietnam's higher education. To understand the behavior and reactions of Vietnamese universities to new government policies and emerging socio-economic pressures, the study collected empirical data about universities. In this regard, universities are cases of analysis or case studies, so the case study approach was used.

The phenomenon of renovating higher education management in Vietnam is newly emerging and complex. There are few studies and lack of a systematic understanding of the issue. Therefore, standardized questions are not suitable, but rather context-situated and activity-embedded enquiries are more relevant. Expert interview is one of the best ways to gain useful information about latent, underlying, and unobvious issues by asking persons who have knowledge about the issues. According to Meuser and Nagel (2009), an expert is a person who possesses knowledge related to the person's professional position in the field of practice being studied. In this study, one type of experts is university staff possessing rich knowledge about the operation of their institutions. The main role of these persons is to provide information about their own universities. Another type of experts in the study is

those who have general knowledge about the system. These persons do not represent for any university and provide information about any HEIs they know.

In order to increase the soundness of empirical analyses, the study paid attention to data triangulation. Therefore, apart from two primary data sources including official documents and expert interviews, the study also collected documents about universities, including self-assessment reports, institutional strategies and plans, quality assurance documents, and university websites. In addition, data about the university contexts and interviewee profiles were also collected and were counted in data interpretation. Direct observations during the fieldwork were wrote down and included in the university records.

There is apparently a link between themes under study and methods and levels of analysis. In the field of higher education research, Tight (2003) specified seven analysis levels consisting of individual, course, department, institution, nation, system, and international. Research on higher education governance often differentiates three analysis levels: discipline/department, institution, and nation (Reed et. al., 2002). This study investigated the interaction between universities and the state, so the primary levels of analysis were institutional and national. However, the study still paid attention to issues related to individuals and departments because they constitute the upper level components.

3.1.2 Multiple-Case Study as a Primary Enquiry

Many classic and recent studies about HEIs use case studies for empirical investigation, such as the works of Burton Clark (1998), Barbara Sporn (1999), Victor Baldridge (1971), and a great number of book chapters in the Higher Education Dynamics series. Although the use of case study in education research is popular, what is meant by the term is not simple. Many books on methodology in social sciences do not include case study. Tight (2003, 2012) did not consider case study as a single research method. The definitions of case study are also different. It is defined as a strategy to enquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Yin, 2003), or a method used when the unit of analysis is a case (Stake, 1995; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In this study, universities are one of the three units of analysis. The two other ones are the national higher education system and the interplay between the state and universities. Therefore, by nature, case studies are an empirical enquiry of the study. According to Stake (1995), a case study is to understand a particular case to the maximum. A

phenomenon attached with a case and even a sample of few cases is less likely to be a strong representation of others. Therefore, case study research seems to be limited to generalizing. However, along the course of investigating the case, certain activities and problems will be so recurrent to be viewed as common patterns. It makes sense to draw certain generalizations, but such generalizations may be called "petite" generalizations rather than "grand" ones (Stake, 1995: p. 7).

Information about the university life contributes to an understanding of the higher education system at large. For this reason, the empirical research was designed with a concern for understanding about multiple cases. Multiple case studies allow not only to understand cases deeply in its complex context, but also to generalize common patterns and to predict future phenomena and tendencies. According to Yin's (2003) procedures of a multiple-case design, cases are chosen carefully according to the contexts relevant to the phenomena studied so that the initial propositions can be replicated in different research conditions. Such procedures require a conduct of from six to ten cases so as to predict both similar and contrasting results. Due to the limited resources and time within the framework of a doctoral study, this multiple-case research design could pursue only the literal/direct replication procedure with which universities possessing conditions for organizational change are chosen. The conduct of the theoretical replication procedure with which universities without conditions for organizational change are chosen was not made in this case study. Case study is not limited to a single method, so both qualitative and quantitative research methods and multiple sources of data were used along with each other in the empirical investigation.

3.1.3 Case Selection

In Vietnam, 'key' university is a brand given to universities that play an important role for national and regional development, provide crucial disciplines, and have capacity to undertake basic research[8]. Key universities receive more public funding for physical infrastructure and research activity. They often have a higher number and percentage of qualified academic staff than other HEIs and are the most prestigious. The academics in key universities are expected to carry out both teaching and research, so these universities have, to some extent, characteristics of academic institutions. Key universities gain greater

[8] According to Correspondent 1269/CP-KG dated 06 September 2004, 14 universities were chosen as key institutions.

trust and consequently are given greater autonomy. They are also more ambitious and might have higher motivation to make change. For the above reasons, it is more likely to see organizational change at key universities. Case studies in the empirical enquiry included only key universities.

Universities located in Hochiminh City were chosen because the researcher had a good relationship with the academic community in this location. She had better access to fieldwork in universities in this city. Vietnamese universities are diverse in terms of (1) supervising agencies (accountable to the Cabinet, or line ministries, or provinces), (2) organizational structure (national, regional, and specialized), (3) fields of study and disciplines (economics, technology, agriculture, medicine, and so on). Different universities can have different academic culture and confront different environments. Therefore, in the group of key universities, an institution may have a distinctive managerial style. To represent the diversity of disciplines and types of universities, a national university and two independent, specialized universities were included in the case sample. Within the national university, two specialized member universities were selected. Four universities under the empirical investigation are as follows.

1. University of Technology in a national university representative for the fields of engineering and applied sciences
2. University of Science in a national university representative for the fields of mathematics and natural sciences
3. University of Economics - Hochiminh City representative for the fields of economics and business administration
4. Hochiminh City University of Pedagogy representative for the fields of teacher training, humanities, and sciences

Becher and Kogan (1992) reviewed different categories of academic disciplines and adopted a four-cluster classification that comprises a matrix of two dimensions: hard and soft, and pure and applied. The first dimension is associated with the characteristics of knowledge production, which is demonstrated through the degree of methodological rigor and objectivity, reproducibility of results, quantifiable data, and cumulative nature. The second dimension is associated with the practicality of knowledge. The internal aspects of a discipline may feature it as more than one cluster of disciplines, but a rough categorization may help to characterize dominant features of a discipline.

With respect to this four-cluster typology of disciplines, the University of Technology is inclined to the hard applied cluster; the University of Science can be classified as the hard pure; the University of Economics is inclined to the soft pure; and the University of Pedagogy is typical of the soft applied. It is expected that differences in the characteristics of the disciplines will lead to differences in the operation, management, and performance of the universities. The analyses in Chapter 5 and 6 will test this assumption.

3.1.4 Expert Interview

From December 2010 to March 2011, the researcher was in Vietnam to do fieldwork. Two pilot interviews were made with a senior researcher and a middle-range teacher. These were open interviews with the aim of improving the soundness of interview questions and practice. The senior researcher provided an overview of important changes in Vietnam's higher education and shared her personal experiences of conducting fieldwork, for example, how patient she was in order to receive real appointments, and the importance of the researcher's knowledge, motivation, and commitment in order to gain interviewees' trust and sympathy. The middle-range teacher provided helpful information about the state-of-the-art practices of teaching and his opinions and positive outlooks on academic and administrative changes within his academic department and university.

In order to get acquaintance with important people at the universities in the interview sample, the researcher cooperated with the Institute for Education Research at Hochiminh City University of Pedagogy to organize a seminar, in which (vice-) rectors and managers of different universities participated. At the seminar, she gave a presentation about new trends of university governance. From the contacts received at the seminar, she asked the university managers to participate in interviews and to introduce other potential interviewees. In order to know new people, the researcher visited the universities, met potential interviewees face to face and invited these people to take part in interviews. This approach worked very effectively. The researcher had interviews with almost of the people in the intended interview sample. However, one intended interview with a head of office had not happened because the potential interviewee refused to take part in the interview in the last minutes. At that time, the researcher was going to come back to Germany, and she did not have enough time to find a substitute. Distribution of case studies and interviewees is described in Table 3.1.

Apart from experts who directly involve in carrying out managerial and academic tasks at their universities, the interview sample also includes two researchers who conducted research projects on quality management and university autonomy. These two people were not representative for any specific university; instead, they talked about the renovation of higher education as a whole and mentioned examples about a couple of universities.

Table 3.1 Distribution of Case Studies and Interviewees

Case	(Vice-) Rector	(Vice-) Dean	(Deputy-) Head of Office	Teacher/ Academic	Researcher/ Expert	Total
University of Technology - VNU	1	2	2	2	0	7
University of Science - VNU	1	1	0	1	0	3
University of Pedagogy	1	2	2	2	0	7
University of Economics	1	1	1	1	0	4
					2	2
Total	4	6	5	6	2	23

The interviews were semi-structured and included theme-based open-ended questions, which allow the interviewees to talk about their reasoning and unexplored matters. An email or a letter with an introduction of the research project, the structure of interview, and a list of intended questions was sent to the interviewees before the interviews took place. This act was to inform the interviewees about the researcher's concern for a set of phenomena and to gain the interviewees' trust in her theoretical knowledge. Three key themes for interviewing are below.

1. Changes in the institutional management; the areas and extent of real autonomy for the universities;
2. The teaching quality of the universities;
3. And informants' perception of the effects of changes in the higher education governance on teaching quality.

The interviewer assigned herself as a layperson in conversations with the interviewees. In this communication situation, interviewers have lower status than interviewees, primarily receive knowledge, and raise supplementary questions (Bogner & Menz, 2009). At the interviews, the interviewees could choose to follow the established sequence of intended questions listed in the letter sent to them, or started with any question in the suggested list. The interviewer interrupted when she wanted to redirect the conversations to the on-the-list themes. At some points of time, as the interviewer made confrontational questions,

conversations turned into a discussion between two specialists who are from different professional and disciplinary backgrounds. In doing so, the research project has many features of exploratory enquiry.

The interviews lasted between 45 minutes, and 2 and half an hour. Most of the interviews were more than 1 hour long. The interviewees were knowledgeable, and most of them had at least 5 years working for the universities or in the higher education sector. They were hospitable and cooperative in providing information they know. The interviews were often taken placed in the interviewees' office with an intimate space. Roughly, the interviews provided rich information and gave the interviewer a great deal of enjoyment and new understanding.

3.1.5 Qualitative Content Analysis

The data under analysis were most often in the form of words, namely qualitative data, but when quantitative data such as statistics were available, the researcher made use of these supplementary sources for triangulation. Meanings and statements in the secondary data were compared with each other so that the accuracy of information was carefully checked. In addition, part of secondary information was clarified by primary data from interviewing. The transcribing of the interviews tried to preserve thematic units and interviewees' opinions, used the terminologies and metaphors of the interviewees, and paid less attention to the language manner. During the course of interpreting interview data, the interviewees' personal information and organizational context were always taken into account for assessing the meaning and significance of the interviewees' statements.

The interpretation of interview transcripts followed the procedures of qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2000), which includes two central approaches: inductive development of categories and deductive application of categories, and was done in MAXQDA 10, which is a computer program supporting qualitative data analysis. In the first stage, the researcher applied the procedure of deductive application of categories. Based on the theoretical framework in Chapter 2, she formulated an initial list of categories whose definitions were derived from theory. In the course of working through all interview transcripts, as the researcher found the meaning of a text segment to fit the definition of a category in the prior list she linked this text segment with the established category. Massages of the text segments that did not fit the definitions of the prior categories were

treated in two ways. First, the researcher sought from the theoretical framework for additional deductive categories and tied the text segments with the newly created categories. Second, if there was no theory-based idea capturing the messages of the text segments, these segments were treated according to the procedure of inductive development of categories, being assigned a tentative category or an in-vivo code. The terms category and code were used interchangeably in this study, but strictly, they are a little different in the sense that a category can be a group of theory-linked ideas, while a code is only a name for descriptive ideas.

In the second stage, the researcher deliberately applied the procedure of inductive development of categories. The definitions of the inductive categories were drawn from not only the interview data but also other empirical data for confirming the meaning of the facts. The researcher reread the interview transcripts, reviewed the definitions of tentative codes, developed abstracter definitions of inductive codes, eliminated overlap among the codes, checked the consistency of the tentative coding, and checked the accuracy of the codes to make sure all meaningful messages receive relevant codes. This process helped to confirm the coding rules and the inductively formulated code system. The process of development, redefinition, and reduction of the tentative codes was stopped until the researcher felt a high degree of consistency in the assignment of inductively formulated codes. Along the course of checking the reliability of the inductively formulated categories, the researcher also checked and revised the deductively applied categories. After all, the carefully revised code system was used as the incorporate or final list of categories.

The code system was arranged almost into two and three levels. The first level had ten codes and did not change much during the course of coding. Many changes happened for the second and third levels. Some new second-level and third-level codes emerged, and the importance weight of several codes also changed. Main differences between the second level of the prior list and that of the incorporate list are shown in Table 3.2. Items highlighted with a grey color are the codes in which the importance and frequency of the facts changed the importance weight of the codes. When there was not much difference between the two lists, changes are not highlighted.

The code “organizational culture” appears in the incorporate list because this factor is very much different from other components of the university profile like age, size, and

academic capacity. It required a great deal of comparisons among and reasoning about the universities' statements, their actions and performances, and the interviewees' opinions in order to identify a dominant feature or culture of a university. The empirical evidence rejected the researcher's presumption that Vietnamese universities were highly isomorphic due to their status of a strictly controlled public service agency.

Table 3.2 Main Differences between the Prior and Incorporate Lists of Categories

	Prior List of Categories		**Incorporate List of Categories**
1	*University profile*	*1*	*University profile*
			Organizational culture
2	*Department's profile*	*2*	*Department's profile*
3	*Five dimensions of governance*	*3*	*Six dimensions of governance*
4	*University autonomy*	*4*	*University autonomy*
5	*MOET governance of higher education*	*5*	*MOET governance of higher education*
6	*Renovation of higher education*	*6*	*Renovation of higher education*
7	*Specific contexts of Vietnam*	*7*	*Specific contexts of Vietnam*
	Political Influence		
8	*Teaching quality*	*8*	*Teaching quality*
	Evidence of inputs, processes (curriculum), and outcomes		Evidence of inputs, processes, and outcomes
			Curriculum innovation
9	*University governance*	*9*	*University governance*
	Organizational structure		Organizational structure (peripheral units)
	Task environment		Organizational environment (task and enacted environment)
	Enacted environment		
	Organizational actions		Organizational actions • Commercialization of teaching • Management style
10	*Governance of national university*	*10*	*Governance of national university*
	Autonomy for member units; management mechanisms		Autonomy for member units
			Quality assurance regime

In the beginning, political influence was considered as a specific phenomenon in Vietnam. The researcher was not clear about how it would affect the operation of universities and the system at large. New understanding derived from empirical data taught the researcher that the political forces in Vietnam directly determine the direction of higher education, and that political guidance is one of the dominant governing mechanisms in the higher

education sector. This fact led to an inclusion of the sixth dimension of higher education governance in Vietnam.

Under the code of "university governance", in the beginning, the researcher thought that she should treat task environment and enacted environment separately because they have a clear territory. Task environment objectively exists as it is, whereas enacted environment is associated with university actions and dependent on the perception of the persons assessing it. However, during the course of learning from data, she recognized that the enacted environment is part of the task, and a clear specification of the task and the enacted is not always necessary. Enacted environment draws attention when a concern for managerial capability of a university is emphasized. Therefore, the incorporate category system regards an organizational environment as a united factor, rather than dividing it into two categories. The elements of the organizational environment to which the universities reported, reconstructed, and reacted were deemed the managerial capability of the universities.

The consistency of meanings and patterns emerged from both the secondary and primary data was carefully checked to ensure the internal validity of the analyses. In Chapter 5 and 6, the empirically grounded findings will be compared with each other and with findings of other research in order to check for the accuracy of generalized inferences or external validity. The data-grounded generalizations then will be further compared with the established constructs and theories to come to theoretical generalizations.

3.2 Operationalization

This section adapts the key concepts in the theoretical framework to make them ready to use for the empirical part of this study. The six dimensions of governance are defined in more detail in order to serve for describing the higher education governance in Vietnam. Because the theoretical framework analyzed thoroughly the common ideas and practices of NPM, of which university autonomy is the forefront component, this section gives only a brief account on it. Instead, the section focuses on identifying available evidence of teaching quality and building up an elaborative model of environments and actions of universities in the context of resource scarcity.

3.2.1 Dimensions of Governance

As mentioned in Section 2.1, governance is both a theoretical notion and an empirical pattern, whereas NPM more emphasizes the practice of the public management reform and embodies specific normative ideas and instruments. To serve an analytical purpose, the term governance is used to describe the renovation of higher education management in Vietnam. In addition, when analyses refer to governing actions rather than decision-making participation, the terms governance and management will be used interchangeably.

Table 3.3 Six Dimensions of Governance

Dimensions	**Indicators**
State regulation	Authority assigned to government agencies; the number and the extent of detailed regulations that prescribe universities' behaviors in certain circumstances
Managerial self-governance	Authority for top leaders over goal-setting, decision-making, and operation within in a university; the presence of a governing board
External guidance	The presence and voice of lay members in institutional policy-making and advice-giving
Market competition	Competition among universities for students, teachers, funding; marketing activities made by universities
Academic self-governance	The role of academics in managing the higher education system, including institutional decision-making, the role of peer review in regulatory process, the involvement of academics in central decision-making
Political guidance	Political authority and its influence on behavior and decision of universities and academics

The five-dimension governance equalizer developed by de Boer, Enders and Schimank (2007) from the "triangle of coordination" of Clark (1983) incorporates political influence in the dimension of state regulation. Such influence of politics on higher education is rather subtle and indirect through the votes of parties' members in policy-making. However, in the Communist model, society is governed by both party and government; and even, the party plays the role of overall leading of the nation. Party members are present in all governmental activity and supervision levels. Politicized values and norms have strong influence on the behavior and decision making of individuals and managers in universities. Therefore, the dimension of political guidance is added to the governance equalizer for

describing higher education governance in Vietnam. Six dimensions of higher education governance are described in Table 3.3.

3.2.2 Practices of NPM

Public management reform in Vietnam is supposed to follow the patterns in developing countries and Confucian-influenced education systems where the original NPM ideas have not much adopted, but three common NPM techniques pointed out by Ferlie et al. (2008) are likely to be present. Three symptoms for indentifying NPM in higher education are growing market-like mechanisms, strengthening explicit standards of evaluation, and increased university autonomy. These are important events in the environment of universities and included in Figure 3.2.

The practice of organizational management within universities is critically dependent on the essence of university autonomy, i.e. the areas and extent of activities within which universities can make final decisions. Practice of institutional autonomy at universities can be different from the prescriptions of it in legal documents, so the level of real autonomy needs exploring through facts and observable evidence. The seven-dimension typology of university autonomy pointed out by Anderson and Johnson (1998) is more effective for learning about specific areas where universities can have decisions. This typology helps to clarify the indicators of university autonomy in operation as presented in Table 4.2. However, the four-dimension classification of university autonomy used by Estermann and Nokkala (2009) is more generalized to describe the patterns of university autonomy.

3.2.3 Evidence of Teaching Quality

Teaching is not only an established course of actions but also an art. Although multiple factors contribute to the results of teaching, teachers are regarded as the most crucial determinant. The undeniable importance of teacher competence in teaching contributes to a belief that a sound judgment on teaching must be based on the peer review. In fact, peer evaluation of teaching delivery does not often happen because observing classroom performance of colleagues implies distrust of the ability of teachers. A more convenient way of evaluating teaching is peer review of course descriptions that have elements such as objectives, content, teaching methods, learning assessment, and course organization. Unfortunately, not many universities have carried out this practice. Because the commonly

supported tools for teaching evaluation are not often used, available evidence of teaching is often inadequate for knowing about the quality of teaching.

However, since students have to pay for their higher education, their claim for better teaching is increasingly putting pressure on universities. Among different criteria for assessing teaching, improvement in the knowledge level and high-level cognitive skills of students are often regarded as the essential results of teaching. In the situation of lack of convincing evidence of teaching delivery, evidence of teaching elements conductive to student learning progress such as learning environments provided by universities and interactions students with teachers and other students is a more practical way of assessing university teaching. Pascarella (1985) reviewed a great number of studies on college impact on students and concluded that factors such as teachers' qualification, their behavior, teaching and learning environment, pedagogical approaches, cognitive levels in curriculum, and quality assurance have the positive impact on student learning outcomes.

Data about university teaching in this study contain a quite great deal of evidence as suggested by Pascarella (1985). The information sources are informant opinions, university self-assessment reports, disclosed documents, websites, and on-site observations. Facts and arguments provided by the informants are more suitable for learning about the underlying meanings of teaching quality and the practice of quality assurance at the universities. Judgment on teaching quality in the universities based on inferences derived from integrated evidence rather than an immediate conclusion on a single source of data.

Self-assessment reports (SAR) of universities often document the status quo and progress of the universities in accordance with MOET ten accreditation standards for HEIs. The standards are as follows: mission and goals of HEI; organization and management; curriculum, training activities; managerial cadres, faculty and staff; students; research and technology development; international relations; library, learning equipment and other facilities; financial management. This is the most informative source about curriculum innovation, student support (tutorials, learning forums, academic groups and clubs, student contests of innovative ideas), staff development; quality assurance activities. The reports include universities' statistics about admission scores, selectivity, student-teacher ratio, teacher qualifications, teacher age and seniority, areas of learning spaces, number of books and teaching facilities, receipts and expenses, and so on.

MOET requires universities to release disclosed documents annually, but the level of conformance to this requirement is different among universities. These documents provide up-to-date data about the number of study programs, students, graduates, and teachers; teacher qualifications; tuition rates, annual receipts, and so on.

The websites often provide information about mission statements, some statistics, and university curricula consisting of objectives, contents, structure, and pedagogic approaches (teaching methods and learning assessment).

Teaching is very much determined by real conditions and practices in each country and locality. In Vietnam, types of undergraduate teaching are disserve, so the common terms used for describing them, as presented in Table 3.4, may need further clarification. The terms full-time and part-time refer to study routines. While the former occurs in the daytime, the later often takes place in the evening. The terms formal and informal refer to the recognition of degrees[9]. Formal-mode degrees are granted to students who are admitted to universities according to the national university entrance examination; whereas, access to the acquisition of informal-mode degrees is open. The terms regular-irregular students and traditional-untraditional students are used loosely in Vietnam. Preparing professions is the top mission of Vietnamese higher education, so the term training is preferred. However, the researcher uses teaching and training interchangeably.

Table 3.4 Types of Undergraduate Teaching

Name	**Level of Education**	**Type of Learners**	**Site for Teaching**
Full-time Formal Regular Traditional	University/Bachelor College/Associate Degree	Pre-service	On campus
Part-time Informal Irregular Untraditional	University College	- Pre-service - In-service - Second degree	On campus Off campus
Second-degree	University	In-service, formal mode	On campus
E-learning Distant education	University College	Pre-service, informal mode In-service, informal mode	Off campus

[9] Formal training is regulated by Decision 43/2007/QĐ-BGD&ĐT, while informal training is regulated by Decision 36/2007/QĐ-BGD&ĐT.

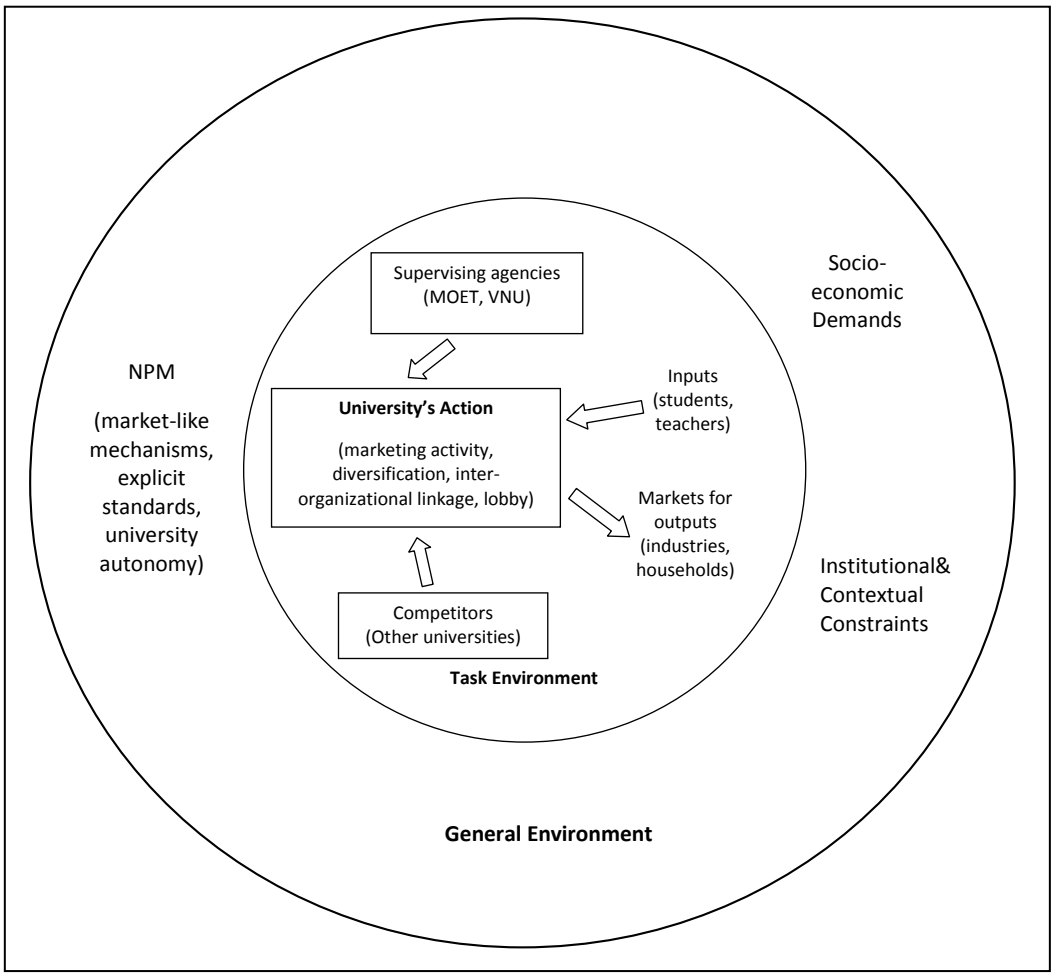
3.2.4 Universities in the Context of Resource Scarcity

This section will adapt the main ideas and theses about organization-environment relations suggested in RDT to the field of higher education. It also uses other ideas in the field of organization study to make the research model sketched in Section 2.3 more practical and relevant.

a. Organizational Environment

The three levels of the environment of a university are general, task, and enacted. Task environment "is typically narrowed in use to refer to sources of input, markets for outputs, competitors and regulators (Scott, 1992: p. 133-34). In the operational model in Figure 3.1, the task environment of a university consists of five groups of actors and elements: a university as the focal organization; supervising agencies including the ministry of higher education and other supervising bodies; inputs such as students and teachers; markets for outputs such as industries and households; and other universities as competitors.

Figure 3.1 University's Environment and Action in the Context of Resource Scarcity



The general environment is the large social context within which the task environment embedded. The operational model particularizes the three major practices of NPM to be market-like mechanisms, explicit standards and external evaluation, and increased university autonomy. Two other elements of the general environment are socio-economic demands, and institutional and contextual constraints. The socio-economic demands denote pressures from the markets on universities. The institutional and contextual constraints denote factors deeply rooted in society that are both subjectively and objectively exist. Elements framed in boxes are to denote the geographical boundary of the elements.

Universities may or may not recognize events in the environments surrounding them. Each university has a unique enacted environment, which can be known through its organizational structure, information system, and facts informed by the informants. The environments of the universities in the case studies mainly described the enacted environments, which just consist of elements and events presented in the universities' documents and by their staff. Sometimes, the researcher added happenings and circumstances in the other levels of environment, which are elements of the task environment and not mentioned by the universities. The coverage of the enacted environment against the task environment represents the managerial capability of the universities.

b. Organizational Survival

To survive, an organization has to maintain its usefulness judged by social actors, or that is to say, the organizational effectiveness. The organization needs to screen the environment and decides to which groups and the demands to attend and to what extent to respond. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978/2003) suggested a procedure for assessing the organizational effectiveness including five main steps: (1) identifying interest groups, (2) weighting importance of the groups, (3) identifying criteria of groups and ranking importance of criteria, (4) evaluating consequences of the action on criteria, and (5) evaluating the effectiveness of all actions of the organization.

In the view of Pfeffer and Salancik (1978/2003), "efficiency and effectiveness are independent standards for evaluating organizations" because these two authors believed that the external evaluation of organizations does not often concern for organizational efficiency (p. 35). However, efficiency in terms of cost effectiveness is very often an

external evaluation on a product because cost effectiveness relates to the product price. The wave of NPM in higher education triggers the use of efficiency/cost-effectiveness as a performance indicator. New funding systems often include efficiency/cost-effectiveness in external criteria for assessing the effectiveness of universities. For this reason, this study uses the term organizational survival to include both organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Organizational efficiency denotes efficiency concerned by a university itself, for example, student-teacher ratio, student per monetary unit. Organizational effectiveness denotes the fulfillment of various external criteria on all actions of a university. The survival of a university can be explained by the variables of resource acquisition, resource saving - i.e. efficiency, and political and social legitimacies.

The frequently recognized interest groups in higher education, as identified in Figure 3.1, are the state, teachers, students, industries, and households. The importance weight of each of the groups for a university depends on the level of dependence of the university on that group. Key resources for universities can be finance, students, teachers, geographical location, and libraries. Possible criteria for accessing higher education can be access, quality, efficiency, and relevance. Possible actions of universities are specified in Figure 3.1. Empirical assessment of the survival potential of the universities will be illustrated through the case studies in Chapter 5 and Section 6.3.

Chapter 4: Higher Education Renovation in Vietnam

4.1 Brief Introduction of the Country and its Higher Education System

Vietnam is now classified as a lower middle-income country because it had a per capita GNI in PPP terms equal to $ 2,805 in 2011[10]. The country is often compared with other Southeast Asian countries standing in the same income-level category, such as Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines, and Malaysia. Table 4.1 shows that the educational attainment in Vietnam is the lowest among these countries.

Table 4.1 Public Expenditure on Education and Years of Schooling in Selected Asian Countries, 2007-2008

Country	Public education expenditure as a % of GDP	Public education expenditure as a % of total government expenditure	Average years of schooling	Expected years of schooling
Indonesia (2007)	3.5	18.7	5.7	12.7
Thailand (2008)	4.7	25.7	6.6	13.5
Philippines (2007)	2.7	15.9	8.7	11.5
Malaysia (2007)	4.5	18.2	9.5	12.5
South Korea (2007)	4.2	14.8	11.6	16.8
Viet Nam (2008)	5.3	19.8	5.5	10.4
China (2007)	3.4	18.2	7.5	11.4

Source: UNPD (2011): p. 102

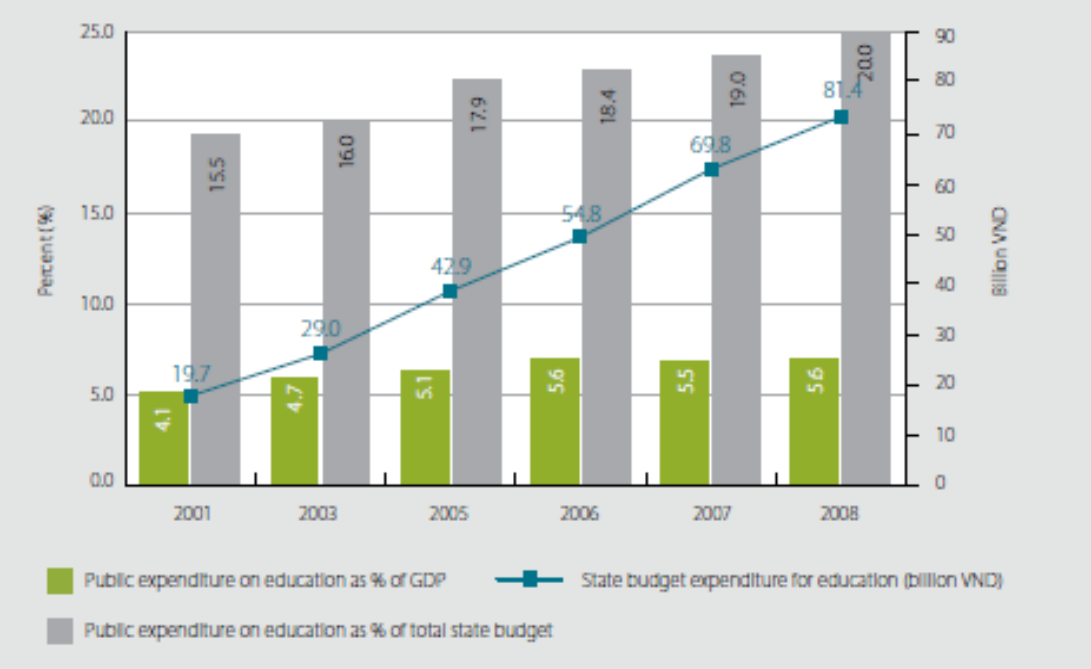
General education in Vietnam includes grades 1 to 12. Grades 1 to 5 are primary and compulsory education. Basic education includes primary and lower secondary education, lasting from grade 1 to 9. Holders of either an upper secondary education or a professional secondary diploma can take the national university entrance examinations (NUEE) to pursue higher education. MOET keeps close control of full-time university entrance by issuing the examination questions and minimum entrance marks for all universities.

Education is considered a crucial factor contributing to the development of the country and is high on the public expenditure priorities. The Education Law 2005 promises that the state increases public spending on education at a rate higher than the growth rate of total

[10] UNPD, http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/VNM.html, retrieved on 24 January 2013.

public spending (p. 33). Graph 4.1 shows that public expenditure on education increased both in absolute and relative terms during the period of 2001-2008. In 2008, the percentages of public budget spending by level of education were distributed as follows: 7.5% for pre-school education, 52% for basic education, 11% for upper secondary level, and 24% for vocational and higher education (UNDP, 2011: p.101).

Figure 4.1 Public Expenditure on Education, 2001-2008



Source: UNDP (2011): p. 101

HEIs in Vietnam include colleges and universities, with public and non-public ownership types. Colleges offer college-level education and other lower education levels. The Prime Minister decides d to establish universities providing educational levels from college to doctoral. Master and doctoral education is licensed by MOET. The administrative features of universities are divided into national, regional, independent and specialized, and provincial universities. The hierarchical stratification of universities consists of key institutions and others. In 2011, there were 113 public universities from a total of 163; the number of students enrolling in publicly funded universities was 1.2 million, accounting for 86.8% of total university students (MOET, 2011a). Thus, the university sector in Vietnam is mainly public.

In the academic year 1992-1993, the higher education gross enrollment rate, i.e. the ratio of higher education students to people of university age in Vietnam was just 2%; this rate was approximately 13% in the school year 2004-2005 (WB, 2008: p.1) and about 20% in the school year 2009-2010 (WB, 2012[11]). These figures indicate that Vietnam has transformed very quickly from an elite to a mass higher education system.

Although MOET is the primary governmental agency for all education and training, the responsibility for directing the higher education system falls to various other governmental agencies, including ministries of Finance; Planning and Investment; Interior; and Science, Technology and Environment. Since February 2010, after the promulgation of Directive 296/CT-TTg on "Renovating Higher Education Management for Period 2010 - 2012", many new regulations and amendments on the organization and management of HEIs have been issued. Two important documents of these are the Charter for Universities of 2010 and the Higher Education Act of 2012. The governance of higher education in Vietnam has been experiencing a period of rapidly changing legislation.

4.2 Changes in National Policies

4.2.1 Economic Reform and Changing State Management Ideology since 1986

Vietnam is a one-party led regime. One year after the country reunification, Vietnam began imposing the Soviet-style central planning model throughout the country in 1976. Both in the North and the South, the government strengthened state ownership, regulated prices of most goods and services, and imposed a closed-door policy on international relations. The period between 1976 and 1986 was characterized by poor economic performance and a high incidence of poverty.

In December 1986, the national congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) passed a policy package of economic reform. The economic reform accepted a regulated market economy and open door policy. The government has reduced subsidies to state-owned enterprises, designated them fully autonomous legal entities, and forced them to be financially independent.

The profound change in economic policies led to change in the state management ideology. The state no longer directs state-owned enterprises by ordinance and schemes and lets the

[11] http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.TER.ENRR, retrieved on 24 January 2013.

markets guide them. The economic reform was quite critical in abolishing transaction barriers and creating a legal framework mobilizing diverse resources contributing to economic growth. However, it seemed not to touch public service agencies. It is quite clear that the Vietnamese government gives economic activities and organizations a full level of autonomy; however, those with a social and political mission are tackled with prudence.

4.2.2 Higher Education Policies from 1987 to 2003

Market-driven factors have gradually penetrated the higher education sector. Tuition fees for higher education were, on a small scale, accepted in Vietnam in the mid-1980s (Chauncey, 1998; George, 2010). Higher education tuition fees were advocated at the national meeting of HEI rectors in 1987 (Le V.G., 2003). In 1988, a pilot project of a non-public HEI was carried out at Thang Long Learning Center, which was a people-founded institution not funded by the state and collected tuition fees. The features of ownership and funding of the Center characterized it as an essentially private institution. "The word people-founded was to avoid the word private which was not accepted by the society at that time" (Hoang X.S., 2008). The trials of tuition collection and a non-public HEI were cautious steps taken by the government to understand what the impact of privatization in higher education is and whether to accept it.

In January 1993, after years of testing, the Central Committee of CPV adopted a resolution on radical education renovation, specifying the responsibility of learners for paying tuition fees, stimulating non-public establishments, rearranging HEIs and research institutes, and expanding higher education (Resolution 04-NQ/HNTW). The resolution came into effect immediately. In 1993, a couple of important milestones in higher education were passed. Thang Long Learning Center was given the brand of university, becoming the first private university in Vietnam (Hayden & Dao, 2010), and public HEIs started collecting tuition fees within a regulated framework (Hayden & Lam, 2010). A model of the modern university was introduced by merging several existing universities and research institutes into a large-scale, multidisciplinary, and research-oriented institution, which was called a national university. Two national universities, one located in Hanoi and the other in Ho Chi Minh City, enjoy a higher level of autonomy than other HEIs. National universities are not required to consult with MOET about budgetary decisions and curriculum frameworks (Hayden & Lam, 2007) and are fully autonomous in structuring affiliated units and functional offices.

In 1998, the first tuition fee framework for public education institutions was issued, excluding the primary education level (Decision 70/1998/QĐ-TTg). Previously, HEIs needed MOET approval of the number of tuition-paying students and tuition rates. From 1998, tuition rates at public HEIs have been imposed systematically. The share of public funding in total revenues of public HEIs reduced from 100% in the early 1980s to approximately 70% currently (Chauncey, 1998; WB, 2008, interviews).

The Foreign Investment Law 1987 provides a legal framework for the presence of foreign investors, including the field of education. The first foreign-owned university campus was licensed to the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT University), Australia, in 2000. This branch campus gave its first provision in 2001. Decree 18/2001/NĐ-CP from 2001 stipulates the operation of foreign educational establishments in Vietnam.

4.2.3 Higher Education Policies from 2004 to 2009

Drastic higher education expansion since 1993 has raised concern about quality. However, at that time the documentation about the state of affairs of the higher education provision was not well established. MOET played an active and leading role in bringing education accreditation into use. The provisional regulation on accreditation of HEIs was issued in December 2004 (Decision 38/2004/QĐ-BGD&ĐT).

The most comprehensive policy on higher education renovation in Vietnam is the "Fundamental and Comprehensive Renovation of Higher Education for Period 2006-2020", which is often known as the Higher Education Reform Agenda (HERA) (Resolution 14/2005/NQ-CP). It was approved by the Cabinet in November 2005 and sets the targets of increasing the number of students and teachers, expanding private higher education to 40% of total higher education enrolments by 2020, and stimulating university autonomy.

Concerning the management of higher education, HERA proposes four issues: (1) transforming public HEIs into fully autonomous entities, (2) eliminating line-ministry control, (3) focusing on state management via designing and directing national strategies, and reinforcing accountability, and (4) developing a higher education act. Of these, the first issue was gradually clarified and implemented through the promulgation of Decree 43/2006 and its detailed regulation concerning legal autonomy in terms of operation, organizational structure, personnel, and financial management to all HEIs (Decree

43/2006/NĐ-CP, Circular 07/2009/TTLT-BGDDT-BNV). The measures for university autonomy in HERA have been considered unrealistic because "the infrastructure for exercise of institutional autonomy is poorly developed" (Hayden & Lam Q.T., 2010, p: 20). The second issue is consistent with and supportive to the first issue and can be interpreted as a replacement of line-ministries with state ownership representatives in the university governing body. While the necessity and function of a governing body within universities have not yet been clearly defined, the removal of line ministries has not been widely advocated. The third issue has been implemented step by step. An element of this is the regulation of Three Disclosures that requires HEIs to release statements on quality commitment, teaching and learning conditions, and financial income and expenditures (Circular 09/2009/TT-BGDĐT). The final issue, the Higher Education Act, was approved in June 2012. This act does not provide any new governing ideology and seems to be a codification of existing regulations on higher education.

A striking feature of the higher education policies in this period is that the policies were influenced by the voice of the West, especially WB. This agency partly funded 'the project of developing HERA"' (WB, 2008: p. 14). The master designer of HERA is Lam Q.T., who strongly supports market-like mechanisms in higher education. Highly advocated criteria for assessing higher education in this period were the match between higher education and the demand of the labor market. An interpretation of such a match is increasing the supply to meet the demand. Based on the thesis of response to social needs, public universities asked for more autonomy. However, the lack of a clear definition of the relationship between the state and HEIs has retained the term university autonomy being just rhetorical.

4.2.4 Higher Education Policies from 2010 onwards

From 2010 to 2012, improving the effectiveness of higher education management was considered as "a break-through element" in order to enhance higher education quality (Directive 296/2010/CT-TTg). MOET asked all HEIs to discuss Directive 296 in their academic departments and sub-units in order to identify the causes of and measures for the problem of quality. In September 2010, the new Charter for Universities was released, replacing the old one from 2003 and expanding the magnitude of legal university autonomy (Decision 58/2010/QĐ-TTg). Three months after that, the responsibility of ministerial and local authorities for managing education was more straightforwardly

defined in Decree 115/2010/NĐ-CP. It seems that MOET is attempting to clarify the responsibilities of the key actors for managing higher education and give HEIs more autonomy in decision-making. The current pattern of higher education policy seems to be that the government does not try to increase enrollments but pays attention to inspecting and auditing HEIs.

Continuing in this line, MOET issued a regulation on the opening and cancelation of undergraduate study programs in February 2011 (Circular 08/ 2011/TT-BGDĐT). Under this new regulation, HEIs that have sufficient academic capacity are allowed to establish program committees on deciding to open a new study program. Less trusted HEIs have to receive MOET permissions for establishing such program committees. Local governments are assigned authority to check the capacity of universities applying to open study programs. The involvement of local governments as an additional actor alongside HEIs and MOET in governing higher education is a very new practice. It facilitates the participation of social actors, encouraging learning about the process of higher education instead of looking at only its surface. The higher education management renovation from 2010 to 2012 eliminated bad practices and forced HEIs to conform to standards of provision[12]; however, a coherent mechanism for overseeing the system has not yet been specified.

4.3 Changes in the Governance of Higher Education

4.3.1 Shift in Governance Configurations

A shift from state control to state supervision of higher education has not been drastic but very prudent. Renovation is often experimental at first, and then codified into legal frameworks later on. The adoption of HEI income-generating activities has brought about partial independence of public HEIs from the state. The state grants a majority of public funding in the form of lump sums according to HEI student and teacher numbers. However, state regulation of higher education in Vietnam is still dominant. The state still makes important decisions including enrollment quotas, mass study program tuition fees (for public institutions), curriculum frameworks, degree program opening based on institution proposals, and expenditure norms (for public institutions).

[12] Vietnamese Education Newspaper on 17 March 2012, http://giaoduc.net.vn/Giao-duc-24h/Doi-moi-quan-ly-GDDH-buoc-dau-co-chuyen-bien-tich-cuc/128769.gd, retrieved on 22 September 2012.

The institutional autonomy has increased along with the promulgation of new regulations. Under the prescriptions of Decree 43/2006, HEIs are autonomous in realizing the intentions of their institutional development plans already approved by the line ministries. In the areas of personnel recruitment, arrangement of sub-units, and spending of self-generated income, rectors can make final decisions without consulting the line ministries. Universities are allowed to set tuition fees for high quality study programs (Decree 49/2010/NĐ-CP).

It is noteworthy that the essence of university autonomy in Vietnam is different from that in countries that have undergone change in higher education governance. Table 4.2 shows that Vietnamese HEIs can decide quite a number of categories of operation, but the centralist ideology ties them to plenty of other detailed prescriptions; therefore, the real autonomy of Vietnamese HEIs is much lower than that of universities in England, the Netherlands, and Germany. Furthermore, in domains where innovative ideas and practices are available, financial resources and incentives to realize autonomy are modest. For example, under Decree 43/2006, public HEIs are allowed to pay their staff salaries three times as high as the basic salary level. Nevertheless, according to the informants in this study, the universities were unable to pay at this salary level due to limited salary funds. Low payment further prevents public universities from exercising authority over personnel. In public HEIs, most teachers maintain a firm place at an institution and take up other jobs at different institutions at the same time. Finally, a number of constraints prevent Vietnamese HEIs from realizing legal autonomy, causing a big gap between formal and real autonomy.

Table 4.2 Level of University Autonomy

	Own building and equipment	Borrow fund	Spend budget	Set academic structure	Employ and dismiss faculty	Set salaries	Decide student enrollments	Decide level of tuition fees
England	●	◗	●	●	●	●	◗	◗
Netherlands	●	●	●	◗	●	●	●	◗
Germany*	◗	◗	●	◗	◗	◗	◗	◗
Vietnam	◗	●	◗	◗	●	◗	◗	◗

Source: Data for England and the Netherlands provided in OECD (2003: p. 63)
*: Data for Germany based on Estermann & Nokkala (2009)
●: have full autonomy;
◗: have some respects of autonomy

An area of autonomy that both the state and HEIs are interested in is revenue diversification. Unfortunately, the common practice of revenue generation in HEIs is to expand student enrollments very quickly while maintaining teacher numbers and infrastructure investments to increase slowly. Among the four universities included in this study, at the university of economics and the university of pedagogy the number of part-time students exceeded that of the full-time. At the remaining two universities, the study fields with high market demand also expanded student enrollments. The expansion of teaching without ensuring minimum provision standards means that Vietnamese HEIs have used autonomy to diversify financial resources in an unexpected way.

The adoption of tuition fees means that market forces come into the provision of higher education. The system is now in the early stage of mass higher education with a gross enrolment rate of 20% in 2009 (WB, 2012[13]). Because mass tuition fees at public HEIs are quite low, a majority of students want to study at these institutions. Public universities with longstanding histories located in big cities have maintained their leading status. They have not been pushed into the competition for students. Moreover, Vietnamese HEIs are organized in mono-disciplinary and specialized fields rather than multiple disciplines, thus limiting conditions for a competitive higher education market. Therefore, the higher education market is still supply-led, and the market power of public providers is dominant. However, competition between public and private and/or foreign-related institutions and among study programs is evident and increasing. Non-public institutions have more motivation and room for making initiatives. The case studies in Chapter 5 will provide more insights into market competition in higher education in Vietnam.

The presence of external guidance in governing a public HEI is modest. The establishment of a governing body consisting of external members above the rectors has not widely sympathized. Apart from complying with regulations issued by the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, MOET, and line ministries, do universities need to follow the leadership of an additional directing board. In addition, the rectors of universities have to consult the institutional party committee about institutional development plans, especially managerial posts. A governing body with the function of strategic planning seems unrealistic in the context of low market pressure and limited resources in Vietnam.

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[13] http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.TER.ENRR, retrieved on 24 January 2013.

New regulations in Vietnamese higher education have hardly changed academic authority and lack of teacher accountability (George, 2011). Training and scientific committees are an advisory body of rectors, but they do have a decisive voice on academic issues. HEI managers are often selected from among successful academics. They appreciate academic values and avoid conflicts with the academic community in their institutions. Academics play a primary role in managing teaching quality because teaching is supposed to be evaluated on the basis of peer evaluation and teacher course designs. Student evaluation of teaching has become compulsory since 2008 (Correspondence 1276/BGDDT-NG, 2008), but it is used as a companion indicator along with other tools for teaching evaluation. Although academic values are still appreciated, bad practices of quality management in HEIs and teacher moonlighting have caused societal mistrust of academic self-governance.

The political influence on higher education in Vietnam takes place through the direct control of the CPV agencies on many issues in higher education. In teaching, about 30-40% of the curriculum framework is made up of compulsory subjects, three of which are the Fundamental Principles of Marxism and Leninism, Ho Chi Minh Ideology, and Revolution Directions of CPV. With respect to promotion to managerial posts in universities, the rectors are required to consult the institutional party committee for decisions. Consequently, those wanting to become managers must be aware of adapting the behavior to the norms of CPV.

In sum, the governance configuration of higher education in Vietnam can be described as follows: a slight shift from state control to state supervision, a big gap between formal and real autonomy for HEIs, low market competition, low involvement of external stakeholders, a dilemma of academic self-governance, and political guidance.

4.3.2 The Rise of the Evaluative State

The idea of establishing a set of objective and measurable criteria of education quality was officially mentioned in the national strategic plan for education for the period of 2001-2010 (Decision 201/2001/QĐ-TTg: p. 17). Between 2002 and 2003, a dozen Vietnamese higher education experts and officials were sent to the Netherlands to learn about evaluation and accreditation (Westerheijden, Cremonini & Empel, 2010). At the same time, based on the United States experience, a group of Vietnamese researchers in Vietnam National University - Hanoi developed a set of quality standards for assessing elements of

the higher education process. In 2004, Directive 25/2004/QĐ-BGD&ĐT required all education management agencies and HEIs "to set up and improve organization and machinery and to implement activities of educational testing and accreditation". In the same year, a national agency responsible for monitoring the quality of the whole education system, namely the General Department for Testing and Accreditation (GDTA), stared operating. At the end of the year, a provisional regulation on accreditation of HEIs was issued. This provisional accreditation set is fundamentally based on the one developed by the researcher group at Vietnam National University - Hanoi. It contains ten standards: mission, organization and management, curriculum, training, staff, learners, research, international relations, library, and finance. Each standard comprises several criteria, with two levels of achievement, in which obtaining level 2 is better than level 1. On the basis of the level of achievement for each criterion, the external review team could assign a score of 1 or 2 to a standard and to an institution (Westerheijden et al., 2010).

The pilot project on accreditation at 20 universities in order to test the provisional standards of institutional quality completed in 2007. Most universities participating in the project were considered better second-rate institutions. The result of the trial was that 16 institutions achieved level 2, namely fulfilling 80-91% of the criteria; four institutions achieved level 1 (MOET, 2009). Regarding the "curriculum standard", no institution fulfilled all four criteria. These accreditation results demonstrate that the education process at most Vietnamese HEIs has been problematic. The experience of conducting the pilot project on accreditation provides a lesson that the introduction of an external quality assessment scheme should be carried out gradually through sample accreditations so that HEIs have enough time to prepare (Westerheijden et al., 2010).

The result of the pilot accreditation did not relate to decisions on public funding; therefore, the conducting of an accreditation process seemed to be aimed at investigating the state of affairs. Quality of HEIs in the provisional set of accreditation standards was defined as "fulfillment of goals set by institutions" (Decision 38/2004/QĐ-BGDĐT, p. 1). The existing institution accreditation set released in 2007 preserves the definition of quality of HEIs and ten quality standards, but modifies quality criteria and removes the levels of achievement (Decision 65/2007/QĐ-BGDĐT). It states explicitly that the purposes of the institutional accreditation are to develop tools for self-assessment and to provide information. One standard in the MOET institutional accreditation set requires HEIs to

collect feedback from employers on graduates and curricula. This means response to market demand is a standard practice in higher education provision in Vietnam.

Vietnamese HEIs are still familiarizing themselves with the new standards prescribed in the MOET accreditation set. They are learning how to demonstrate the quality at their institutions and to record explicit evidence of their performance. Therefore, MOET is at present regulating HEIs by a simpler set of quality indicators prescribed in the regulation of Three Disclosure 2009. The establishment of a central quality assurance agency and the conducting of quality audits, e.g. institutional accreditation and information disclosure, demonstrate the rise of the evaluative state in Vietnamese higher education. The new national quality management regime has fostered an awareness of elements and explicit evidence of higher education quality. Activities associated with preparing self-assessment reports, for obtaining either accreditation certifications or examiner advice, have promoted quality assurance in HEIs. The external quality assurance system has been putting HEIs under pressure to be accountable to various stakeholders and to develop internal quality assurance. These are probably the most commonly agreed upon positive outcomes of the renovation of higher education governance in Vietnam.

4.3.3 System-Level Renovation as an Element of the General Environment of HEIs

As mentioned in the research model in Section 2.3 and Section 3.2.4, NPM in higher education is an important component of the general environment confronting universities. For the case of Vietnam, the Party officially launched public administration reform (PAR) in January 1995 (Resolution 08-NQ/HNTW), two years after the program of education renovation in January 1993. This means that changes in higher education in Vietnam go ahead the reform of the management of the public service sector. In this circumstance, PAR seems not to enlighten the management of higher education, but rather only to improve administrative procedures to keep up with the renovations in economic and social sectors. The thirty for resources forces Vietnam to seek a new coordinating mechanism of society. However, the political stability remains the highest priority for the central authorities, and the political struggle over the control of state resources has hindered the success of PAR (Painter, 2003). The country needs to “move from a PAR discourse of the past decades to a modernization of the public sector approach (Acuna-Alfaro, 2009: p. 22). It is very interesting that while the term renovation is used for addressing change in education; the phrase “administration reform” is used to characterize the trajectory of

public management changes. That is because the term administration like management enables the tone of the reform discourse to be distant from the political ideology (Chauncey, 1998). Due to the lack of drive and direction of changes, future steps of PAR should be outlined against experiment with particular innovations (Minogue & Nguyen K.H. 2004). In the higher education sector, new practices since 2003 have demonstrated a couple of symptoms similar to the three common symptoms of NPM in higher education pointed out in Ferlie et al. (2008).

Market-like mechanisms in the higher education sector have gradually been developed. Driven by the economic reform, the idea of users paying for public service was accepted in the higher education sector quite quickly. According to Kruecken and Serrano-Velarde (2012), privatization in higher education in its comprehensive meaning includes the proliferation of private HEIs, increase of private contributions to public higher education, and upholding of the (neo-) liberal ideology. All of the three aspects of privatization in higher education are present in Vietnamese higher education and encouraged to be carried out under the term "socialization of higher education" in the official documents. The term privatization is not popular in Vietnam; instead, the process of replacing state ownership with non-state is called equitization.

Recently, a further attempt of the government to liberalize the teaching market is the release of the 2010 Tuition Framework. HEIs are free to develop a real price for teaching high quality programs. The behavior of actors in this market is completely coordinated by market signals. The competition for students and teachers between public HEIs on one side and private and foreign-owned HEIs on the other side, and between domestic study programs and internationally collaborative programs, have been more prominent.

Like the situation in other developing countries where higher education quality reduced when higher education expansion began (Salmi, 1992), Vietnam's higher education was said to be in crisis (Hoang T., 2008; Vallely & Wilkinson, 2008). WB (2008) documented the poor status quo of the academic infrastructure with respect to curricula, pedagogical methods, teaching staff numbers and qualification, learning and teaching conditions, and research capacity. Since 1998, regulations specifying the authority of MOET to regulate higher education have proliferated (George, 2011). In addition, the establishment of a nation-wide quality assurance system and increasing use of external evaluation tools mean that central authority is consolidated. The strengthened role of the Vietnamese government

in setting frameworks for quality management is justifiable in the circumstances of the ineffective and underdeveloped central management structure and deterioration of higher education in the country. The importance of the state in shaping legislation and steering higher education has continued in higher education governance reforms (Ferlie et al., 2008; Mok, 2007a). In the case of Vietnam, the state has carried out both reregulation and diversification of management tools.

On the one hand, organizational management in Vietnamese HEIs is limited because state regulation on the behavior of universities and academics are still plentiful. The societal distrust of academic self-governance also is a barrier to progress in increased university autonomy. A long lasting and key matter of higher education renovation in Vietnam has been the essence of university autonomy and the relationship between HEIs and MOET and line ministries (Hayden & Lam, 2007; George, 2011). While higher education governance reforms in Singapore, Taiwan, Japan, Malaysia and Thailand have given public universities the status of autonomous entities (Mok 2007a, 2007b), the lack of an appropriate accountability system has led to a more prudent approach to the issue of empowerment of HEIs in Vietnam. One of the factors contributing to the difficulty of developing a checking framework in Vietnam is vague legislative documents. The Vietnam-style consensus governance is less iron-handed than other authoritarian regimes and based on low clarity of responsibility of administrative agencies and interest groups (McCarthy, 2001). The conventional thinking and practice in Vietnam preserves the existence of ambiguous laws along with detailed regulations (Donge, White & Le, 1999; Hayden & Lam, 2007). The legislation structure in higher education will be further discussed in Section 4.4.2a.

On the other hand, Vietnamese universities are increasingly responsible for their actions. The requirements for operating under market-like mechanisms and fulfilling external evaluations force universities to be responsive to external demands. The attempts of the government to make university autonomy clearer and operational are noticeable. The efficient and effective acquisition of resources such as finances, teachers, students, and legitimacy becomes important for organizational survival and development. Good organizational management is becoming necessary for Vietnamese HEIs.

4.4 General Environment of HEIs

4.4.1 Socio-economic Demands on HEIs

a. Effectiveness in terms of Access Expansion

The national strategic plan for education for the period of 2001-2010 states that the demand for highly educated graduates in the growing economy is one of the reasons for increasing higher education enrollments (Decision 201/2001/QĐ-TTg). In this master plan, the ratio of higher education students to ten thousand people was projected to increase from 118 in 2000 to 200 in 2010. This targeted ratio was fulfilled with 167 in 2005 (MOET, 2011a). Based on data in 2010 which show the total student number of 2,162,106 (MOET, 2011a) and the population of 86,932,500 (WB, 2012), the researcher calculated that the ratio of higher education students to ten thousand people was 249 in this year. This number indicates that HEIs expanded student enrollments faster than as planned.

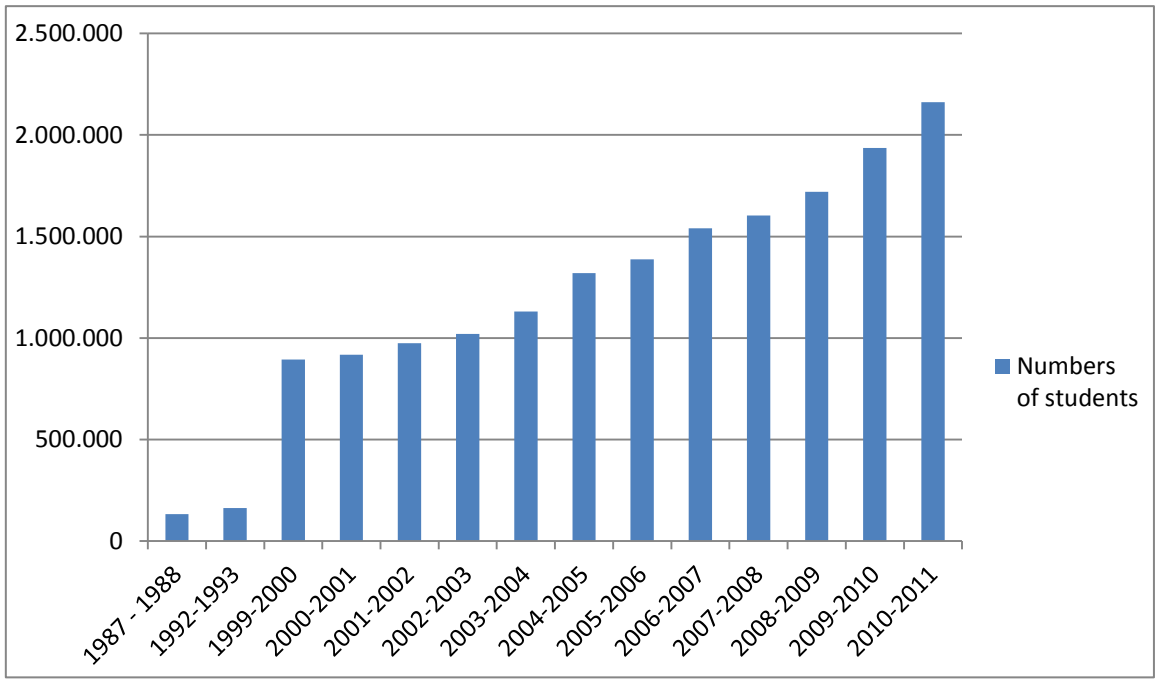
The numbers of higher education students over the last two decades are shown in Figure 4.2. In the first five years from 1987 to 1992, the number of students increased by 25%, but from 1992 to 1999, within 7 years, the number of students increased by five times. In a report of the Department of Higher Education of MOET, this agency admitted that from 1987 to 2010, the training capacity increased by three times while student numbers increased by 14.3 times (MOET, 2011b).

The state funding per student was reduced during 1987-2010. The Education Law 2005 promises to maintain the growth rate of public funding for education as equal to the economic growth rate. The number of students was 133,000 in 1987 and 2,162,106 in 2010, and consequently the annual growth rate of higher education students in this period was approximately 30%, whereas the average annual economic growth rate over the period 1989-2010 was approximately 7% (WB, 2012).

The Vietnamese state set high targets of higher education student numbers but did not sufficiently fund the expansion. So in what way did Vietnamese HEIs expand their student numbers? Because MOET strictly regulated full-time enrollments, HEIs increased full-time provision gradually. In parallel, HEIs arbitrarily increased part-time enrollments and collected student tuition because of lack of regulations on part-time provision. By 2011, MOET did not release statistics on the system development, so there was not enough data

to illustrate the serious violation of provision standards resulting from the pursuit of access expansion.

Figure 4.2 Number of Higher Education Students from 1987 to 2011



Sources: 1987-88: (MOET, 2011b); 1992-93: (WB, 2008); 1999-2011: (MOET, 2011a)

b. Efficiency in line with Relative Budget Cut

Before the Tuition Framework 2010, HEIs were required to spend at least 45% of tuition funds on physical infrastructure development. Due to insufficient formal salary, it was common that HEIs spent the rest of tuition funds on salaries. In addition, HEIs increased their income by admitting more students while maintaining high student-teacher ratios. Generally speaking, part-time training is a marginalized mission of HEIs, so it is highly likely that spending per part-time student was lower than that of full-time. Meanwhile, the number of students increased rapidly. That means the spending per student reduced radically along with the reduction in public funding per student. In other words, the number of students over a monetary unit was very high in this period. In doing so, both HEIs and the state achieved the goal of efficiency in relation to expanding access.

c. Accountability by means of Explicit Standards

Quality of an HEI in MOET's institutional accreditation is defined as "fulfillment of goals set by institutions" and is checked with ten standards (Decision 65/2007/QĐ-BGDĐT).

HEIs and teachers commonly accept the purposes of self-evaluation and information provision of MOET's institutional accreditation.

> [Quality assurance] is a bottom-up process at our department. If we did not aim at quality, we could not attract learners. If we did not have quality, we would not exist here [in the university]. …We follow prescriptions made by the university. That means we have quality plans, assessment plans, documentation. All of the procedures of accreditation of HEIs have been implemented at the department. (Academic 2)

Up to the end of 2009, 95% of HEIs carried out internal auditing in accordance with MOET's set of accreditation and 60% of HEIs established a quality assurance unit (Nguyen P. N., 2010: p.16).

Although conducting institutional audits is becoming more common, there are many challenges for the progress of this practice. Until 2012, Vietnam had only one accrediting agency, i.e. GDTA, under the leadership of MOET. Only 20 HEIs were accredited. Another obstacle in implementing accreditation is lack of finances for training personnel and big workload for preparing records for accreditation. Under the urgent pressure of monitoring education quality, MOET issued the Three Discloses (Circular 09/2009/TT-BGD&ĐT). This regulation requires education establishments to disclose three main documents: the statement of quality commitments, the current conditions of education provision, and annual revenues and receipts. This regulatory instrument includes fewer but critical indicators and is becoming an effective measure for preventing HEIs from under-resourcing teaching conditions and processes. Based on these disclosed documents, both MOET and societal actors such as students, parents, and employers, can judge the teaching quality of HEIs.

4.4.2 Key Contextual Constraints on HEIs

a. Core Central Guidelines

Regarding the general principles of authority division, state management, and higher education purposes, it is necessary to consult the Constitution of Vietnam. The leadership or state power is given to CPV in Article 4 of the current Constitution of Vietnam, namely Amended Constitution 2001, with the following statement: "the CPV … is the force assuming leadership of the State and society". In other words, CPV has the role of overall

leadership. Under these circumstances, the government is the structure through which Party agreed policy is implemented, and organized activities must be Party approved (McCarthy, 2001: p. 30).

CPV has its own bureaucracies in parallel with the governmental structure. The Party bodies exist above and inside the administrative structure, keeping watch on all organized activities and intervening when the Party feels threatened. Moreover, senior government officials almost without exception are Party members. In socially organized groups, Party members constitute a powerful interest group. Therefore, with such extensive networks, the Party is often unsurprised by any proposal to them (McCarthy, 2001). "The Communist Party did not have authoritarian control of all parts of society, but has rather maintained its rule through a system of checks and balances operating around the principle of consensus" (Donge, White & Le, 1999: p, 16). The consensus governance system in Vietnam, which allows "a sharing of responsibility and blame throughout the state sector," is a tool for CPV to "play much more sophisticated and more representative game to retain power" (McCarthy, 2001: p. 31).

The policy-making process in Vietnam is characterized by extensive consultation and consensus (Donge et al., 1999). A wide number of actors work on policy proposals, but their actions are constrained. The culture of consensus building and endless consultation indicates that there is more room for participation in the decision-making process (ibid, p. 23). Democracy seems to work to some extent.

Policies often use broad and general terms, containing very little substantive meaning. This is a conscious choice. CPV's resolutions and laws are vague, so that their implementation requires sub-level policy documents. The current major legislative documents on higher education, Amended Education Law 2009 and Higher Education Act 2012, contain many implicit, vague provisions. The consequences of the ambiguous legislative bases are opportunities for the Cabinet and MOET to determine how legislation should be interpreted and implemented in specific circumstances (Hayden & Lam, 2007).

With respect to the state management of education, Article 36 of the Constitution claims that "the State assumes the unified administration of the national education system in terms of objectives, curricula, subject matter, planning, teachers' criteria, examination regulations and diploma system." As the result of such a political-social system, Vietnamese higher

education is an instrument to serve nation building. The state management of the organization of teaching is given to MOET. MOET regulates the system by allocating enrollment quotas, designing the national curriculum frameworks, approving and withdrawing study programs, and prescribing procedures of learning assessment and procedures of management in HEIs

The most important legal framework for universities is the Charter for Universities 2010 (Decision 58/2010/QĐ-TTg), which consolidates university autonomy as prescribed in Decree 43/2006. The Higher Education Act 2012 has been valid from 1 January 2013, but is out of the timeframe under investigation of this study. The organizational structure of universities in the Charter for Universities 2010 has the following units:

1. A university council or governing council
2. A board of rectors
3. A scientific and academic committee and other advisory committees established by the rector
4. Academic departments and faculties, and research institutes
5. Functional offices
6. Peripheral units providing services of training and research to communities
7. A communist party committee
8. Other social organizations within the university such as the university labor union, communist youth association, and student association.

The university council is the highest decision-making body of a university that decides on the development plans and supervises the operation of the university. The rector is the highest executive and the legal representative of the university. The rector monitors all tasks of the university and makes sure they are conducted in accordance with central regulations. The line ministry of a university appoints the rector. The rector establishes the scientific and academic committees and other advisory bodies to help make decisions. Although these committees play a advisory role, their resolutions are powerful and often the final decisions on important affairs of universities. Helping the board of rectors in designing and implementing institutional plans are the functional/administrative offices. The operating units of a university are academic departments or faculties, and research institutes and centers.

Regarding teaching, the three most crucial ministerial documents are the Three Discloses (2009), MOET accreditation standards for HEIs (2007), and the regulation of credit-based training system (CTS) (2007). The Three Discloses requires HEIs to publish on websites three groupings of information about the status quo of teaching, including:

1. disclosure of statement on education quality and of actual evidence;
2. disclosure of conditions of teaching and learning, of which two main indicators are physical infrastructure, and academic, managerial and administrative staff;
3. disclosure of financial income and expenses.

b. Public Budget Cut

By the mid-1980s, the Vietnamese higher education system included only public HEIs, and the state funded all expenses of the institutions. Since 1993, the collection of tuition fees has been common. In the mid-2000s, the share of tuition fees in the total income of public HEIs was around 30% (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Tuition and Off-budget Revenues as a Percentage of Total Revenues, by Ownership

	Tuition, Fees and Others			Contractual R&D			Gifts		
Ownership	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**
Public	32%	32%	29%	1.58%	2.09%	1.32%	0.14%	0.10%	1.95%
Semi-public	89%	90%	89%	4.88%	4.60%	2.04%	0.00%	0.16%	1.00%
People-founded/Private	88%	94%	83%	2.41%	2.31%	2.50%	0.02%	0.01%	0.00%
Grand Total	**37%**	**37%**	**37%**	**1.69%**	**2.16%**	**1.46%**	**0.13%**	**0.09%**	**0.87%**

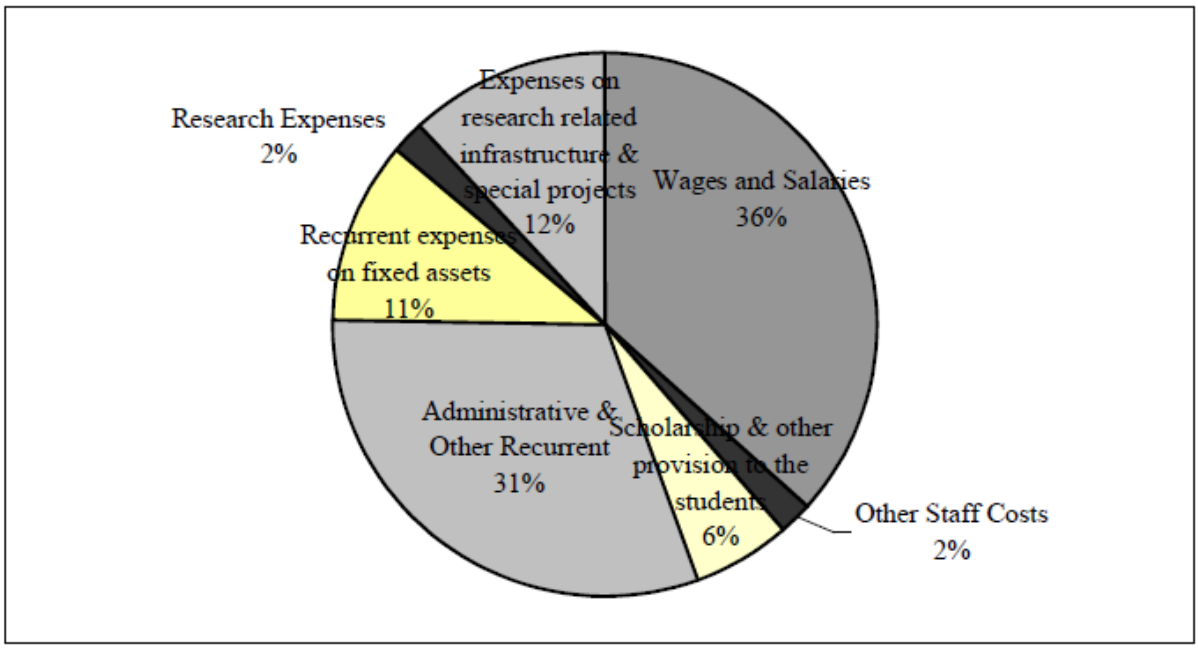
Source: WB 2008 (p.72), extracted from MOET HEI Survey 2005 on 187 institutions

The most frequently discussed issue on the autonomy of Vietnamese universities is financial autonomy, or precisely financial independence, which is the reduction of government funding for public HEIs by way of encouraging them to diversify income sources (Decree 10/2002/ND-CP). Section 4.4.1.a and 4.4.1.b highlighted that the demand for higher education in Vietnam was very high, and HEIs increased student enrollments to expand tuition funds.

In 2005, MOET chose five universities with robust tuition revenues to test the financial independence of HEIs. These universities provide teaching in economics, business-related fields, and foreign languages. The university of economics in the empirical investigation of this study was among the five financially independent universities. Figure 4.3 shows that

spending on regular/recurrent items of HEIs accounted for 78% in 2005. This is the sum of recurrent expenses on asset maintenance, administrative costs, and wages and salaries. The percentage indicates that when public funding for regular expenses in public HEIs is reduced, these institutions have to bear a heavy burden of revenue generation.

Figure 4.3 Uses of Funds in Public HEIs, 2005



Source: WB (2008: p. 84), extracted from MOET HEI Survey 2005 on 187 institutions

c. Insufficient Salary in the Public Sector

The formal pay in public institutions is very low and out of alignment with economic realities. Table 4.4 shows that the average salary in the education and training sector for those with higher education degrees is lower than in most other sectors. The salary level was 1,094,333 VND per month in 2004, higher only than the level in the agriculture sector. However, the salaries in Table 4.4 may be not the real income of people working for public institutions because they are likely to have income from many other activities that are not reported. The monthly salary of teachers in public institutions was lower than that in private ones, 1,094,333 VNDs compared with 1,424,416 VNDs, because pay per teaching hour at public institutions is lower.

The poor salary system in the public sector has led to bad practices of public officials, such as divided loyalty, halfhearted performance of official duties, absenteeism, inefficiency and

corruption. “What is needed is an effective legal framework, in a country that already has too many laws” (McCathy, 2001: p. 43).

Table 4.4 Average Monthly Salary by Economic Sector, 2004

Sector	Average Monthly Salary of Higher Education Graduates by Sector and Ownership (VND)	
	Public	Private
Education and Training (N=344)	1, 094,333	1, 424,416
Agriculture (N=61)	1, 064,583	3, 000,000
Mining (N=7)	3, 463,500	
Manufacturing (N=105)	1,241,916	1,381,250
Utilities (N=17)	1,500,250	
Construction (N=45)	1,709,500	2,203,583
Services (N=204)	1,647,833	1,316,083
Government (N=137)	1,224,166	
Health Services (N=37)	1,411,416	
Community Services (N=175)	1,064,166	200,000

Source: WB (2008, p. 33), extracted from Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey 2004

4.4.3 Room for Organizational Management

Despite the many official documents that have been issued along with the implementation of Directive 296/2010/CT-TTg on “Renovating Higher Education Management”, the researcher could investigate only the impact of the legislation from 2010 backwards. Regulations issued from January 2011 take more time before there are any observable effects on the system and were examined only to check for the continuity of the governance policy.

a. Impetus for Organizational Management

The application of market-like mechanisms creates market competition in the higher education sector. Driven by salaries, teachers will choose to work for HEIs that pay them better. Newly established HEIs have better remuneration policies to attract good teachers. Faculty mobility is becoming more common in Vietnam. A clear tendency is that teachers move from current HEIs to newly established ones and from public institutions to private and foreign-related ones.

Nowadays, students have a wider range of choices of institutions and study programs. Depending on academic ability and financial affordability, students may choose between mass and high quality study programs or between domestic and franchise. Therefore, HEIs

have to think about what market segments fit to them and what types of students and households they want to serve. The diversification of teaching providers makes higher education in Vietnam more heterogeneous. Learners require information to make decisions on choosing universities and colleges and study programs. The awareness of good higher education is improved. The government, learners, and other actors are putting more pressure on HEIs.

b. Real University Autonomy

The recognition of the right to university autonomy is obvious and high on the agenda. However, the essence of autonomy, which is autonomy in decision-making, for universities has not yet been clearly defined when line ministries still make most final decisions.

Regarding teaching activity, MOET is responsible for regulating the following: admissions (including NUEE, minimal entrance marks, and full-time enrollment quotas for each department in each HEI), curriculum design (including duration of training, structure of curricula, number of compulsory subjects), and academic standards (including diploma regulations, graduation standards, learning assessment, quality accountability, and accreditation). Universities can determine about 60-70% of curricula. This domain is where universities can make curriculum innovations. National universities can deviate from MOET's regulations of teaching. With respect to academic autonomy, most interviewees agreed that the level of autonomy is acceptable.

> Some university leaders said that they do not have autonomy. It is in fact that they are not able to make use of the autonomy. Some people think that the curriculum frameworks are rigid. That is wrong. The curriculum frameworks leave quite big room for professional subjects. It seems that HEIs fully decide on professional curricula. Some HEIs cannot develop curriculum and they blame on the MOET regulations… For our university, there is no complaint about autonomy in curriculum (Rector 1).

Staffing in the public sector is under the enforcement of two laws, on Cadres and Civil Servants (2008) and Public Employees (2010). University staff hired before July 2003 took civil service for granted. After this time, newly hired staff has the status of public employees. The Law on Public Employees 2010 defines public employees as Vietnamese citizens recruited according to task-based needs, working in public service agencies under job contracts paid from salary funds of the agencies (Law 58/2010/QH12). Public

employees tend to be disadvantageous with regard to job security, opportunities for training, and promotion compared with civil servants. Public employees after five years of working can be considered to receive civil service. More than 70% of staff of public universities has permanent positions (WB 2008: p. 59), i.e. civil servants or senior public employees. Universities agreed that they are enjoying high autonomy in recruiting employees. However, to have qualified personnel is not easy because many universities cannot pay teachers well.

Universities have a high level of autonomy in the following areas: diversifying revenue sources, spending self-generated revenues, determining student enrolments and asking for approval, and setting tuition for high-quality study programs. Academic autonomy is increasingly expanding. MOET's latest regulation on CTS gives rectors full autonomy in deciding study programs in their institutions (Circular 57/2012/TT-BGDĐT). However, to realize academic autonomy, HEIs and academics need incentives. For the short-term interest, many universities exchange education quality for income generation. This aspect warns against the risk of university autonomy.

Important factors contributing to a wider range and greater extent of autonomy in decision-making is the existence of an accountability system and trust in university self-governance. The renovation of higher education management from 2010 to 2012 eliminated bad practices of teaching provision and enhanced the awareness of teaching quality. Therefore, it is promising that a better oversight mechanism will be gradually developed.

Chapter 5: Case Studies

5.1 University of Technology

a. Description of the University

The university was established in 1957 under the name the National Center of Technique - Phu Tho, graduating technicians after two years of study and engineers after four years. It started providing doctoral education in 1981. With respect to student enrollment and the number and qualifications of academics, the university has been the biggest and most prestigious institution in the field of engineering and technology in Southern Vietnam. The current full name of the university is Ho Chi Minh University of Technology (UT). It is an affiliated unit within Vietnam National University - Ho Chi Minh City (NU). UT has two campuses, the main one inside the city and the other in the outskirts that is 28 kilometers from the main campus.

UT has eleven academic departments, providing 39 university-level study programs and a college-level program. It has more than ten high quality degree programs under the names of excellent engineers, talented engineers, and the advanced. Annually, about 150-200 high-performing candidates are admitted to these programs. Learning conditions in the high quality programs are better than in mass programs. These programs are slightly different in terms of the purposes and financial and/or technical aid given by the initial sponsors. In 2012, UT was teaching 2,268 master and 84 doctoral students[14], which are big numbers of graduate students in comparison with other Vietnamese universities.

UT specializes in the fields of engineering and hard-applied sciences, so the quality of work is judged on both external utilitarian criteria and academic peer norms. Within the context of rapid development of science and technology, external pressures for changes have increasingly challenged the discipline of engineering. UT's managers have been aware of the distinctive characteristics of their institution. According to the rector, the nature of the field of engineering drives the culture of innovation at UT.

[14] UT website, http://www.hcmut.edu.vn/en/welcome/view/menu-intro/introduction/training-system/training-model--scale, retrieved on 5 September 2012.

> Universities that connect with the production sector are more aware of the pressure and are driven by the innovation of production. UT contacts enterprises daily; therefore, we know the environment, so that we can catch up with them…. Engineers work in an environment full of innovation. That makes people in UT from managers to teachers are always being conscious of making innovation. (Rector 2)

The university's self-assessment report (SAR) 2009 has no statement about its culture. However, on the latest update of the website, UT stated that one of its four basic values is "the environment of creativity and innovation"[15]. Three interviewees mentioned that the characteristics of the field of engineering force practitioners to innovate. UT specializes in engineering, so the culture of the discipline coincides with the culture of the organization. The culture of innovation at UT is quite easily recognized and will be described in the section of organizational actions.

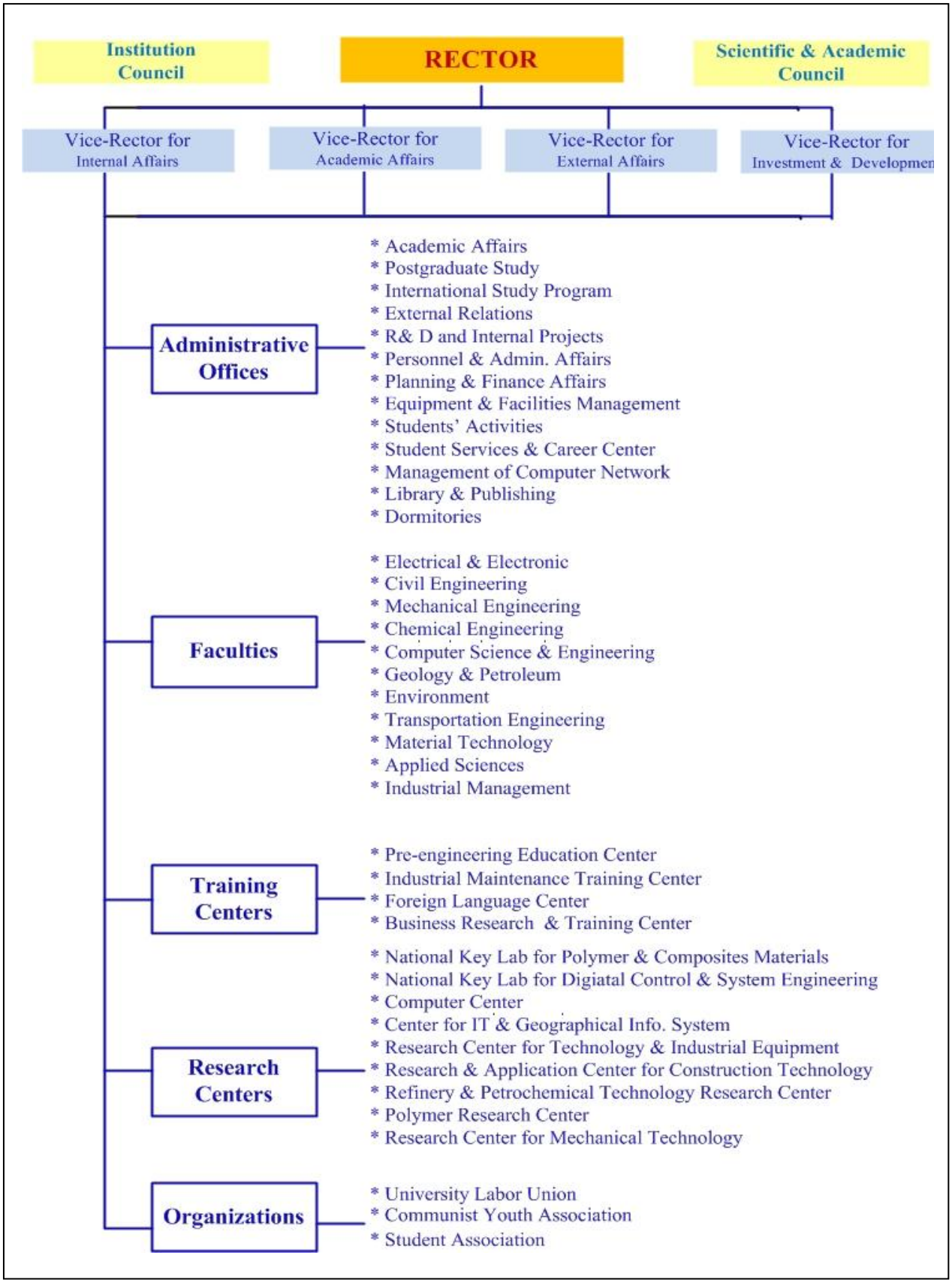
b. Organizational Environment

Information System and Organizational Structure

The home page of the university website is arranged in three main parts: a top horizontal bar that includes drop-down menus, a left-hand vertical bar, and the university's pictures in the center. The vertical bar includes such sections as, breaking news, visions and missions, disclosed documents, copyright ownership of the university name, the university logo, and departments and offices, which links to the home page of these sub-units. The name "Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology" was licensed in 1995. The act of highlighting its name on the home page can be an indicator of pride in its status. In Vietnam, a locality in university names specifies much about the social position of the universities. Public universities named after a big city's name often have long histories and enroll big student numbers.

[15] UT Website, http://www.hcmut.edu.vn/en/welcome/breakingnews/415, retrieved on 20 February 2013.

Figure 5.1 UT Organizational Chart



Source: UT website, http://www.hcmut.edu.vn/en/welcome/view/menu-intro/introduction/organization-structure/organization-chart, retrieved on 30 September 2012

A typical characteristic of UT's website is that it includes various layers of information, which provide rich data but sometimes overlap. The introduction menu provides a great deal of useful information about the university profile, chronological history, training system and degrees, achievements, international cooperation, and physical facilities and infrastructures, of which a lot of information is statistics. Information on the English version website is as full and updated as that of the Vietnamese version. This fact reflects that the university is highly concerned about introducing itself to international audiences.

The organizational chart of the university for the most part follows the guideline of the 2010 Charter for Universities. The board of rectors includes a rector and four vice-rectors. Although the university presents the institution council in its organizational chart, there is no document about the establishment of such a council. The overall leadership of the Communist Party is protected by the Constitution. In public institutions, this role is assigned to the Institutional Party Committee (IPC). UT does not mention IPC in the organizational chart. Thus, it is must be that UT implies the institution council as IPC instead of a common-sense university council. Because UT provides its organizational chart on the English-version website, the avoidance of releasing information about the university's politics is an understandable action. In the presence of IPC, the rector of a university is the highest managerial post, but the highest leadership is given to IPC because the rector has to consult IPC about important policies. The rector receives consultancy from advisory committees, of which the scientific and academic council is the most important.

The number of academic departments and administrative offices at UT is around ten for each one, which is the common number of sub-units at specialized universities. The number of peripheral units is 13, a moderate number. The university shows two groups of peripheral units: research and training centers. Research centers in engineering are equipped with expensive physical facilities that mainly funded by a public budget, so their primary function is to support academic departments to carry out research rather than selling research services. Training centers are fully financed by learner payments and mainly provide life-long learning courses and consultancy. The training and research centers at UT recruit the university staff and perform activities closely associated with academic matters, so they positively contribute to the university profile.

In Vietnam, revenues generated by training and scientific service units hardly go to the pockets of universities because these services are viewed as a way of helping academics to gain additional income. At UT, this source of revenue makes up only 1% of the university's total revenue (Table 5.1). There are other justifications for UT to accommodate peripheral units within its organization.

> The aim of these units [peripheries] is to help teachers to gain practical experience. If teachers earn money from the activity, they have to submit a proportion to the university but the contribution rate is modest (Rector 2).

> The income distribution is that the centers [peripheral units] keep 89% and submit 11% to the university (Head of Office 5).

The university has a Joint-stock Company and a Technology Business Incubator but they are not included in the organizational chart. These new types of affiliated units have existed for two years and are too new, so the university presents these two new units only on the Vietnamese version website. The way UT discloses information in its organizational chart, on the website, and in the SAR gives a very good impression. It appears that the academic mission is at the heart of the university.

Table 5.1 UT Income in 2009 and 2011

	2009		**2011**	
	VND, in trillions	(%)	VND, in trillions	(%)
Total income	306	100	357	100
Public budget	129	42	103	29
Tuition and fees	125	41	140	39
Service Sales	2	1	2	1
Miscellaneous sources: grants, loans	50	16	112	31

Source: UT disclosed documents in 2010-2011 and 2011-2012

The common funding pattern in public universities is that state funding makes up approximately 70% and tuition and fees make up approximately 30% (Table 4.3; interviews). UT had much lower shares of public funding in total income, around 30-40%, and slightly higher shares of tuition and fees, around 40% (Table 5.1). This uncommon pattern may be because the university had a large number of high quality study programs charging higher tuition rates and a big volume of miscellaneous sources, around 20-30%.

In addition, the shares of public funding reduced from 42% in 2009 to 29% in 2011. This pattern can be the result of Decree 43/2006/NĐ-CP with which the government forced HEIs to diversify financial sources. The share of tuition at UT in 2011 remained roughly the same as in 2009, 39 % and 41% respectively. This is because UT did not open any new high-quality programs after 2009.

Miscellaneous sources include very diverse funding origins. They are often irregular grants, endowments, and loans used for improving infrastructure, equipment, and facilities. The big numbers of miscellaneous sources at UT resulted from a bank loan for upgrading dormitories and official development aids, e.g. the projects of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). UT risked the bank debt because the university lent a free land spot to commercial companies and used the rent to pay the interest cost of the loan.

Owing to specializing in applied sciences, the university has opportunities to receive official development aids and project funding. UT has run a great number of projects in improving laboratories, facilities, and personnel funded by JICA and other universities and organizations from Japan, France, and the United States (U.S.). It also received funding in the form of machines and equipment from many companies, such as AVL (Austria), OMRON, Mitutoyo, Mitsubishi, Honda (Japan), and Schlumberger (Germany). In addition, companies also fund contests of innovative ideas among students.

> In the beginning, students approach companies and introduce the contests. When the companies realize opportunities of advertising, they will agree to fund the contests. Students' ability to organize the contests also makes good impression to sponsors. This helps to sustain the contests annually (Head of Office 4).

According to Table 5.2, the shares of tuition payment in university revenues during the period of 2004-2007 were around 14%-18%. In 2008, UT had a sudden rise in the share of tuition and fees, making up 35%. One of the reasons for this is that UT charged higher tuition for the advanced study program[16] and some other high quality programs, which became legitimate under Decree 43/2006/NĐ-CP. The university's total income in 2008 was lower than the numbers for 2006 and 2007 because the university perhaps had a smaller number of miscellaneous sources.

[16] The tuition of this program was $700 per year in year 2008. The level in 2012-2013 was VND 22,575,000 (about $1000) a semester.

Table 5.2 Percentage of Tuition Revenue from Full-time Students at UT, 2004 - 2008

Years	Total revenue (VND, in millions)	Tuition and fees (VND, in millions)	Proportion of tuition and fees to total revenue
2004	195,608	35,381	18%
2005	239,491	37,929	16%
2006	308,571	44,209	14%
2007	339,428	61,504	18%
2008	252,900	89,070	35%

Source: UT SAR in December 2009

UT graduates are in high demand from the most renowned companies and corporations in the southern regions of Vietnam (SAR). On UT's website, there are often announcements for job vacancies offered to university graduates. The university claims that it is a leading institution for training, scientific research and technology transfer in Vietnam (Website).

Students and Teachers

Statistics of the university are quite comprehensive and available on the website as well. However, several items are inconsistent. In some cases, the researcher had to formulate new numbers from existing ones in order to obtain more meaningful and comparable figures. Table 5.3 shows that the number of students in 2009 was 16,638 for full-time and 6,985 for part-time. The number of regular teachers, consisting of tenured and long-term contracted teachers, was 975. The number of visiting teachers was 262. Visiting teachers spend less time working for the universities giving them contract-based courses; therefore, universities often count two visiting teachers as one regular teacher. As calculated, the ratio of university students to teachers was 21[17], which is higher than the MOET standard ratio of 20 for the field of technology[18].

It is worth noting here that apart from university-level/bachelor students, UT also admits college-level, second-degree and graduate students, so the student-teacher ratio must be higher than 21. The student-teacher ratio set by MOET is ideal, and the ratio in UT can be considered acceptable.

[17] This ratio is higher than the ratio of 14.7 released by UT. Universities used a formula including various conversion coefficients prescribed in Correspondence 1325/BGDĐT, e.g. one professor was counted as three normal teachers; hence the ratios released in university documents were smaller than those calculated by the researcher.

[18] Correspondence 1325/BGDĐT, 09 February 2007

In addition, the qualification of regular teachers at UT has improved considerably during recent years. As shown in Table 5.3, the percentage of Philosophy of Doctor (Ph.D.) among academics increased from 27% in 2009 to 31% in 2012. An increase by 4% of academics with Ph.D.s is very impressive and can be attributed to the fact that UT has integrated into the international environment very early and quickly, so academics at UT have the opportunity and motivation to upgrade qualifications. A teacher who received a Ph.D. degree from a Korean university said that "those who graduated from the department and were kept as teachers in the department are really brilliant. The department has excellent teaching staff" (Academic 5).

Table 5.3 Number of University Students, Number and Qualification of Teachers at UT

	December 2009	**Year 2011-12**
1. University student	23,623	-
Full-time	16,638	-
Part-time	6,985	-
2. Regular teacher	975	1,026
Percentage of Master	41.7%	42 %
Percentage of Ph.D.	27%	31%
3. Visiting teacher	262	-
4. Student-teacher ratio*	21	-
5. Full professor	5	7
6. Associate professor	49	74

*Source: UT's SAR and disclosed documents; *: own calculation (line 4 = line 1 / (line 2+ line 3/2)*

Conventionally, the social status of the discipline of engineering in Vietnam has been better than average. There is a common saying among students: "The first is medicine; the second is pharmacy; so-so is engineering; pedagogy is ignorable, agriculture and forestry are not counted". Table 5.4 shows that UT always has average entrance marks above 20 on a scale of 1 to 30. It is worth noting that full-time university education candidates are required to take NUEE including three subjects. The highest mark in a subject is 10 and the lowest is zero. Hence, the average entrance marks reflect that UT has good students.

The university SAR provides statistics about the distribution of teachers according to age groups. This distribution sounds good except for the low percentage of teachers between 41 and50 years old. The university did not provide the average age of teachers, so the researcher calculated the mean age by assigning middle values in each age group to the

proxies of 27, 35, 45, 55, and 63. This rough calculation produced the mean age of teachers at UT to be 39, which is considered as a starting point of expertise maturity.

Table 5.4 Applicants and Enrollments for Full-time University Programs at UT, 2005-2009

School Year	Applicant	Enrollment	Entrance Mark (scale 1- 30)	Average Entrance Mark
2005-2006	16,338	3,676	18 – 27	24.3
2006-2007	10,735	3,440	16 – 23	22.0
2007-2008	11,013	3,336	18 – 23.5	22.6
2008-2009	9,605	3,146	16 – 21	21.2
2009 -2010	11,450	3,666	15 – 21.5	20.8

Source: UT SAR 2009 (p. 13)

Table 5.5 Distribution of Regular Teacher at UT by Age Group, 2009

Age	Under 30	30-40	41-50	51-60	Above 60	Total
Number of teachers	240	375	141	202	17	975
Percentage	25%	38%	14%	21%	2%	100%

Source: UT SAR (p. 11)

The percentage of junior teachers younger than 41 is the highest, accounting for 63% (25%+ 38%). Young academics can be an advantage in terms of adaptability and eagerness to change. The proportion of teachers between 41 and50 years old is the lowest. This situation in many Vietnamese universities may be the result of history. In the period between 1990 and 2000, Vietnam adapted to a market-based economy and expanded student enrolments but retained small teacher numbers. However, the situation at UT is not so serious. In the next ten years, the university may lack teachers aged 51-60, but a big proportion of teachers who are now aged 30-40 will fill in the gap of senior teachers.

NU and Regulations

UT is directly administered by NU, which is a federal university under the administration of the Office of Prime Minister. NUs were established in the mid-1990s in Vietnam in order to experiment with a model of the modern university with multiple disciplines and institutional autonomy. NU has an administrative status on an equal footing with MOET and other ministries. NU can license degree programs and deviate from the national curriculum frameworks prescribed by MOET. Member universities within NU have a lot of freedom in developing curricula and organizing teaching. However, MOET is more

experienced and professional in regulating academic aspects; therefore, member universities of NU often voluntarily use MOET's regulations on academic standards and organization of teaching.

NU enjoys the privilege of state funding. It has a substantial budget in order to initiate, implement, and reward enterprises within its organization. NU has a functional office of quality management established in 1999. The office gives advice to NU on goals, policies and procedures for managing the teaching quality at member universities. It supports quality assurance units at member universities. The quality management office in NU has been very effective in keeping track of the teaching provision at the member universities. There has been rarely bad practice in member universities in NU.

> My department supervises the internal quality assurance at member universities. We do it so rigorously that these universities complain that fulfilling NU's requirement is more difficult than MOET's. In my position, NU imposes more regulation. Concerning quality management, MOET lets it loose; but at NU, we are monitoring strictly (Expert 1).

In 2002, NU initiated talented study programs admitting only excellent students who passed the NUEE with marks above 17 or with contest prizes for excellent high school students. In these programs, students were exempted from tuition fees, enjoyed good learning conditions and were taught by leading professors and academics. Some economically disadvantaged students even received allowance. These talented students were often very successful in academic achievements. Many of them received scholarships from foreign universities and organizations to continue their graduate education. Unfortunately, after ten years of operation, talented study programs stopped because NU no longer funded these programs.

Regarding administrative matters, NU's geographical location is close to its member universities, so contact and correspondence between the regulator and administered members is quick and convenient. The time for getting NU approval is faster than the process at universities under the administration of MOET located in Hanoi. However, NU is an administrative body with its own machinery and bureaucratic features and there are still problems arising from the bureaucracy and management of NU.

Most interviewees at UT expressed that central regulations were too much. They advocated expanding areas of autonomy for universities and argued that Vietnamese higher education

is becoming bigger and diverse, so a one-size-fits-all policy is no longer suitable. A dean mentioned an avoidable weakness of centralized management.

> Centrally planned management requires an excellent mind to overview the crowd. Central management assigned to people who are not equipped with modern management science would be disastrous (Dean 3).

However, an academic argued that the sovereign power of either the state or HEIs is not a good solution, and there should be a third party in the governing system.

> The fulfillment of responsibility of a university has to be checked by third-party units. These are professional associations or civil organizations. These organizations stand in-between [the state and HEIs] in order to know whether the authority and responsibility given to the university are balanced (Academic 2).

Three interviewees pointed out that power concentration in the government was because Vietnam lacks the supervision of professional associations on the performance of universities. This argument is highly true. Before the national meeting of HEI rectors in 1987, the government carried out job placement for university graduates. At present, there are still no social organizations playing a role in conferring professional certificates in Vietnam, except bar associations. It is interesting that only interviewees at UT raised the idea of the necessity of professional associations in governing universities. The university of pedagogy is also a professional training institution, but it accepts the close control of MOET over academic standards of teacher training. The university of economics also provides applied economic disciplines, but the interviewees did not relate their work with professional associations. Whether the high pressure of professional practice and the use of the global standards at UT is a common pattern in the field of technology education in Vietnam needs further study at other universities of technology.

With increasing market competition and information disclosure, the societal supervision of Vietnamese universities will be feasible. At present, competing arguments about increased university autonomy exist because Vietnam still lacks an accountability mechanism.

Labor Market for Engineers

For its development, UT is confronting a big challenge arising from the social context of the country. The dominant mission of universities is to train professionals rather than to pursue academic enquiry. The growing market economy needs a greater number of labors

in the service and commerce sectors, such as accounting, banking, foreign trade, and corporate finance. Labor in these lines of business is paid well. Thus, leading universities that prepare business and management professionals receive a great number of applicants and often have a higher level of selectivity. Universities training professionals in engineering are losing their attractiveness. Student enrollments at UT, as shown in Table 5.6, have not increased like the pattern of the system in recent years.

Within the common pattern of expanding higher education, the shrunken student intakes of UT are worthy of concern. The reducing competitiveness of the field of engineering has brought about difficulty for UT both in maintaining its survival and output quality. The university managers viewed the trend seriously and anticipated a grey future for UT.

> The university is much worried about the trend towards increasing number of students in business-related fields rather than technology fields. Elite students will be less likely to choose universities of technology (Rector 2).

Table 5.6 University Enrollments at UT, 2005-2006 to 2009-2010

Types of Students	**2005-2006**	**2006-2007**	**2007-2008**	**2008-2009**	**2009-2110**
Full-time	3,676	3,340	3,336	3,146	3,666
Part-time	1,918	1,736	1,221	1,772	946
Total	5,594	5,076	4,557	4,918	4,612

Source: UT SAR (p. 13)

However, the university has been very successful in expanding the market segment of new study programs. Since the open policy on international relations was implemented along with economic reform, the pressure of international integration has confronted Vietnamese universities. UT converted the challenges of internationalization into opportunities very quickly.

> In the period between 1987 and 1990, our students went abroad to study. Foreign universities asked us about the training system in the university so that they can recognize our students' credits. From their questions, we started being aware of how foreign universities organized education. This was an opportunity for us to learn from foreign universities and to know what advantages foreign higher education had and what our weaknesses were (Rector 2).

UT provided undergraduate twinning programs in cooperation with Tasmania University in Australia in 1992 when this type of international cooperation was still very new in

Vietnam. International co-provision of teaching helped UT to overcome the insufficiency of qualified teachers and to earn money. The Office of International Study Programs coordinates twinning programs. This implies that UT does not count them as part of the academic mission of the university.

Another type of international collaboration in providing degree programs is adapted degree programs on the basis of academic exchange with foreign partners. The common features of this type of internationally cooperative degree program are as follows. In the beginning, when these programs receive either financial or technical support, they aim at learning from foreign partners and importing foreign models. However, when the development aid is terminated, these programs have to be self-maintained, and consequently students have to pay more for better learning conditions and highly qualified teachers. UT has two internationally cooperative degree programs, one of which is the advanced program charging high tuition fees, and the other is still in the period of receiving development aid.

The scale and scope of twinning programs at UT has continuously been increasing. At present, the university has nine programs of this type. Two other big projects on expanding joint study programs with Australian universities and European universities are being designed. UT highlighted the market segment of twinning degree programs in its development plan. This evidence further illustrates the characteristics of dynamics and adaptability of the university. Twinning programs, on the one hand, fulfill well the demand for degrees granted by foreign universities at a lower cost through spending about half of the study time in Vietnam. On the other hand, the graduates from these programs have opportunities to work in foreign countries.

Market Competition in Engineering Education Provision

Since Vietnam has pursued higher education expansion, many new universities and new departments within existing universities have been established, ranging from private universities, foreign universities, and joint-venture universities to joint study programs. The proliferation of identical study programs has led to an increasingly competitive environment in higher education. Five interviewees at UT acknowledged increasing competition and advocated market-like mechanisms in teaching provision.

> Universities in Vietnam started competing for students and teachers. Private, local, and international universities are trying to attract teachers from long-standing universities… Competition pressure is high. (Dean 3)

Interviewees at UT often mentioned the word competition and the awareness of competition among public universities. They noticed the competition even among well-established public universities.

> The first driver of change is competition with other universities, such as the University of Science, the University of Technical Education. Five years ago, some UT teachers considered the University of Technical Education as a second-rate university. Recently, this judgment was rejected (Academic 6).

This phenomenon at UT is unpopular because in Section 4.3.1 the researcher argued that competition among public universities is low, but rather among the established and newly established. The reasons for high competition in the environment of UT may be that (1) the field of engineering and technology education contains a higher level of market competition, and (2) UT has confronted a disadvantageous trend of profession preferences that force it to struggle to survive.

The concern about losing the position was prevalent at UT. Four interviewees mentioned the necessity of having a big campus and good physical facilities. The main campus of the university is in the inner city. UT expanded research laboratories and factories and caused anxieties about damages to the natural environment. The university was allotted another campus site in the suburbs. However, the suburb campus is still underdeveloped because the teachers were unwilling to settle down in the inconvenient area and hesitated to travel from the inner city to the suburbs to work. Thus, a remarkable challenge for the development of UT is its geographical location.

> UT now has a chance to receive a project funded by Schneider Company. But, we cannot find a suitable place to install the machines of the project. If we establish the project in the outskirt campus, no teacher would go there to work (Academic 5).

The recognition of external drivers reflects that UT has scanned the organizational environment. The reasons for doing so can be both the university's managerial capacity and noticeable pressures from the environment.

c. Organizational Actions

Mission Statements

When institutions fulfill domestic requirements, they will look beyond the national territory and want to conquer the world and regional standards. UT asserted its mission on the website as follows: "UT offers high quality human resources, nourishes talents, and contributes to the socio-economic development of the country"[19]. Its vision is more ambitious, becoming a research-oriented university in the country and achieving the same level with the most respected universities in Asia. The university mission and vision in SAR specified a deadline for goals, but the online version did not mention a specific year for finishing the goals. This means the university fulfills its goals when appropriate, and the public could not judge the performance of the university.

In the latest update of its website, the university stipulated its four basic values, including "the ability and enthusiasm of the managerial team, academics and students; the environment of creativity and innovation; excellent quality; and high social responsibilities". These values seem to focus on the ultimate goal of excellent quality of the university's products. The achievements of UT presented in the two previous sections show that university values and direction are aligned. The upcoming analysis will further demonstrate that university actions fit with its values and focus.

UT vision to become a research-oriented university on the same level with the most respected universities in Asia seems overoptimistic. The university will need a long time to accumulate the academic expertise and financial robustness that are necessary conditions for carrying out rigorous research.

Ideas of Teaching Quality

Feedback from students and employers on study programs are important criteria in accreditation standards of most accrediting agencies. MOET's accreditation standards also require Vietnamese HEIs to conduct surveys on student course experiences and graduate destination. Six out of seven interviewees at UT advocated assessing training quality based on external stakeholder judgments.

[19] UT website, (http://www.hcmut.edu.vn/en/welcome/breakingnews/415, retrieved on 25 September 2012

> An indicator of training quality is the grades of student graduation projects. I think this assessment is subjective. Objective assessment is from the labor market, from HEIs where university graduates apply for graduate study. Annually, UT collects feedbacks from enterprises… Based on these feedbacks, we reassess ourselves and adjust our curricula (Rector 2).

This argument is associated with the quality of products of the university, including courses, degree programs, and graduates. The modification of curricula at UT to fit into the needs of enterprises reflects the university's practice of the marketing concept.

> We need feedback from employers or the external assessment of outcomes... Employers highly evaluate the graduates' specialized knowledge, but the university needs to pay attention to provide students with soft skills… In the curricula, we incorporated a course on engineer work [which aims at teaching students skills such as teamwork, communication, problem-solving, meeting-organizing, presentation, and so on] (Head of Office 4).

Another facet of quality is the quality of an institution itself. MOET's institutional accreditation defines the quality of HEIs as "a fulfillment of goals set by institutions". This practice of managing quality is based on the assumption that the products of an institution will have quality when the institution fulfills standards ensuring a systematic practice of quality management. Two interviewees argued that evaluating quality based on the fulfillment of predetermined goals makes the concept of quality relative rather than absolute.

> The meaning of quality used in Vietnam is fairly relative. Goals are defined, and then we try to aim at these goals efficiently. That is the so-called quality. Quality, on the one hand, is relative. It is, on the other hand, so abstract for outsiders and implementers to understand (Dean 3).

A teacher was in favor of the definition of quality as "fitness for purpose". He differentiated absolute quality, which is judged upon specifications and fixed standards, with relative quality, which is compared with the desired outcomes or expectations.

> I like the definition quality as fitness for purpose. People might be surprised that a small [less-known] institution could obtain its goals while a bigger [well-known] institution could not achieve its goals. The small institution achieved its goals just because the goals were low… When we want to know what is the quality of an institution we have to refer to its goals (Academic 2).

The above opinions are about what quality is and not related to the cost of creating a quality product. How high a cost a university is willing to pay for a level of quality is also a tough question. A dean spoke openly about the paradox of pursuing both efficiency and quality at the same time.

> Under the regulation of formal training mode, improvement in quality results in loss in terms of finance … In Vietnam, the state fixes tuition at modest level and calls for improving quality. If universities enhanced quality as told by the state they would go to bankrupt (Dean 3).

Interviewees at UT gave up-to-date definitions and issues related to quality that have been present in Vietnam along with the movement of quality assurance. This fact indicates that quality has received attention and the awareness of quality has been high in the university. The evidence at UT supports trust in academic self-governance.

There is a little divergence among the interviewees in perceiving the environmental demands on teaching quality. A head of office did not accept the criticism of employers on curricula of the university. The primary mission of a university in engineering is to provide both scientific knowledge and professional skills. Therefore, he weighed the demand imposed by employers as less important than academic peer norms.

> Enterprises assess that UT graduates have good professional knowledge but lack practical skills. However, we do not give up our brand of university, so we wish to equip students with skills and knowledge for a researcher… It is not sensible to criticize that universities teach more theoretical knowledge than practical knowledge (Head of Office 5).

The argument of this head of office is grounded on the university goal of being research-oriented. When the university pursues this goal, it equips the students with competences that are not highly evaluated by employers in industries. The existence of conflicting goals in universities is normal. A dean solved the problem of conflicting demands on the curricula wisely. While his department left some parts of their curricula open for modifying, it kept the core curriculum untouched. The department absorbed several requests, reacted to some elements, and consciously ignored some others in the environment.

> We invite them [employers] to come to the department. They can raise ideas about optional courses. It is difficult to incorporate their opinions in core courses because

> these are fundamental. For examples, companies, such as, Intel, Renesas Electronics, Texas Instruments, gave ideas; we included them in optional courses easily. If students do not like these optional courses, they choose the others (Dean 6).

The response of the department in this case shows the managerial ability of the middle managers. The policy of reacting to external demands is clear and consistent. The practice of curriculum innovation in this department was considered as a good example and was duplicated to the whole university. This fact indicates the presence of adaptive and discretional management in UT.

Curriculum Innovation, Quality Assurance, and Learning Support

Since the academic year 1993-1994, the university has applied a credit-based training system (CTS). It is the first HEI in Vietnam to transfer from a school year training mode into a credit-based one. The attempt to develop CTS reflects a significant transformation in the educational approach. CTS is organized based on the assumption that students are independent and provided with opportunities to choose their study path. Providing diverse alternatives and courses to students means the burden of management on the university increases. In a state of limited finances, the initiative of UT is very admirable.

> One of our breakthrough decisions was the application of a credit-based training system in 1993. At that time, MOET did not accept the name "credit-based training system" but agreed to introduce an overarching renovation of training mode. The renovated system has advantage in terms of providing room for initiative of learners and teachers (Rector 2).

Because of the pioneering effort, curriculum innovation at UT proceeded by trial and error.

> Honestly, when we implemented CTS, in the beginning, people said that this university was spoiling the structure of social associations and unions within universities. Each individual has his/her own timetable, so there is no concurrent time for meeting all students and teachers. I solved the problem by including in the syllabi a class period called 'meeting'. This class period is not for teaching, so who want to take part in collective activities will use this hour for meeting. This practice has not been present in the U.S. It only exists in Vietnam (Rector 2).

The rector used the personal pronoun "I" in his answer. This act implies his important role in realizing the organizational goal and witnesses a presence of determined and committed leadership at UT. The information provided by the rector is one of the vivid examples of

institutional contexts of Vietnamese universities. The universities are also an avenue for centrally organized organizations to operate. They are required reserve a weekly meeting session for all students so that students can participate in activities organized by the Office of Student Affairs, the Communist Youth Union, and Student Association. Many other binding factors also discourage universities from doing new things. Therefore, a comprehensive modification of the organization of teaching and curricula at UT is a very courageous action.

It is also worth noting that before 1973 the U.S. supported Southern Vietnam. At that time, CTS copied from the U.S. system was implemented in several universities in the South. Many academics of UT already knew the advantages of CTS, so they could be sure about the potential gains of reintroducing this system. What is admirable about UT is that it broke the conventional thoughts and practices for a better model of training that places students in the center.

Since 2008, all undergraduate curricula at UT have been structured in accordance with the principle of a modern credit-based curriculum structure learned from the U.S. as well as from foreign universities in which UT academics pursue graduate education. All the curricula consist of four layers of courses, including fundamental, core, core-advanced, and optional. The institutional scientific committee determines fundamental or basic courses for all students in line with MOET's regulations. The departments determine core and core-advanced courses. Optional courses are designed according student needs. An optional course that does not attract 15 students is not allowed to open. If an optional course does not have enough students for two years, it is sorted out of the curriculum. The content of optional courses is adjusted to the feedback from employers and students. This curriculum structure allows students to change from a degree program to another within the university easily. Students can choose a set of core, core-advanced, and optional courses to gain a degree. The CTS at UT is the most advanced and complete among the four universities under study.

Apart from being the successful pioneer in implementing a rather complete CTS that provides students the flexibility of pursing degree programs, UT is also one of the first HEIs in Vietnam participating in and gaining MOET's accreditation. It started self-assessment in 2005 and carried out the second assessment in 2009. It also received accreditation certificates from AUN (Association of Southeast Asia Nation's University

Network) for the program of electronics - telecommunications in 2009 and from the association of French engineering universities for five programs since 2004. Six study programs are being reformed in accordance with the standards of ABET (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology in the U.S.).

The university has enhanced training quality through providing students with a convenient and interactive learning environment. It has been setting up a virtual learning environment. Instead of creating offices for teachers in order to hold teacher-student contact hours, the virtual system is an avenue for teachers and students to communicate with each other. In the condition of the small inner city campus and limited offices and buildings, the use of a virtual learning system can achieve both the goals of quality and efficiency.

> The use of forum to answer student's questions resulted in positive spillover effects that we did not expect at the start. An answer in the forum informs not only a student but also hundreds of them. Furthermore, students who know the answer can explain to their peers (Rector 2).

Enterprising ideas of students have been encouraged through many annual contests for research ideas and new products. Some contests attract students not only from UT but also from other HEIs in different cities and provinces.

> Annually, each department holds a contest in its field. These contests have created widespread echoes. Some big contests are the Green Environment, which has taken place eight times since 2003, the Science and Life, the Chemical Vortex, and so on (Head of Office 4).

Within the national trend of reduction in higher education quality in Vietnam, the good practice of quality assurance at UT is a bright point in the whole picture. This outcome may be partly due to the close supervision of NU on UT. However, UT's achievements in quality assurance are still the most outstanding among other member universities within NU.

Internationally Collaborative Degree Programs

Up to October 2012, UT had carried out nine twinning programs with partners from Australia, the U.S., and Japan[20]. This type of joint venture does not require tight

[20] UT website, http://oisp.hcmut.edu.vn/chuong-trinh-dao-tao-dai-hoc/ky-su-dien-dien-tu-nagaoka.html, retrieved on 26 September 2012.

collaboration between Vietnamese and foreign partners. Activity articulation does not often fall on expert exchange and technology transfer. Each party organizes its tasks in its institution. This kind of spontaneously inter-organizational linkage between UT and foreign partners has not greatly helped UT to learn the technology of foreign partners and to improve the academic and managerial ability of UT. The motivation to establish twinning programs is mostly to gain revenue. This kind of income generation has been acceptable because the university chose good foreign partners and the quality of the programs was guaranteed.

The second type of internationally collaborative degree program at UT is the Advanced Engineering Program. This program is a part of an ambitious project initiated by MOET in 2006 aiming at building "world-class study programs" at selected universities. UT received funding from MOET for importing a modern teaching methodology currently used at American partner universities to improve training quality in Vietnamese universities.

> The principle of such a program is that we adopt an academic system [curriculum, syllabi, and academic regulations] of a U.S. university. We copy the curriculum verbatim and teach our students in English. Teachers are both from UT and the foreign partner… In the framework of the project, we go to the U.S. to learn what they are doing. This international contact has modified our way of thinking (Dean 6).

From the opinion of the dean, it can be inferred that the MOET initiative has resulted in good outcomes. This advanced program includes scholar exchange that contributes significantly to the improved expertise of UT academics. One of the objectives of the MOET project is that the world-class study programs will create positive externality to the universities carrying out the programs. The curriculum innovation of the Advanced Engineering Program at UT can be viewed as very successful because it has been diffused across the university.

The third type of internationally cooperative study program at UT is the Vietnamese-French Training Programs of Excellent Engineers (PFIEV). Stemming from an agreement between the French and Vietnamese governments in 1997, several prestigious French universities of engineering helped four universities in Vietnam to develop degree programs that aim at providing high-class engineers with international communicative skills. Students have been selected from high-performing entrants. The five-year curricula have been adapted to those of the French universities. The degrees of these programs are

recognized by both Vietnamese and French higher education systems. The process of developing PFIEV curricula and the provision of teaching according to French academic standards has helped Vietnamese universities and academics to improve their academic expertise. In addition, due to financial aid for equipment and laboratories, PFIEV students enjoy better learning facilities but pay tuition in accordance with the national tuition framework.

Marketing Activities

UT has scanned the environment by collecting feedback from stakeholders. All academic departments at UT have surveyed employers, graduates, and students and considered adjusting optional courses to the demands of these stakeholders. However, these marketing activities are still primitive and cannot be considered real market research. The teaching provision is still largely constrained by the supply side with respect to the number and qualifications of teachers.

Study programs that were newly established and had a high demand for quantity are more likely to carry out marketing activities. These programs are forced to be competitive and have ample finances to carry out marking activities.

> For this department [in the field of industrial management], we have the specificity of new establishment… We are young, so we are dynamic and eager to innovate. Quite a great number of old-age chairs at the University of Economics were slow to respond to the changing environment. We have two good practices. First, we always listen to people. We collect feedbacks from students, graduates and employers. Second, we benchmark with overseas universities (Dean 3).

Attempts to advertise study programs of the university to potential students have increased. Annually, UT sends a delegation to selected provinces and high schools in order to introduce the university. Job fairs are held yearly to provide the students with the opportunity to meet employers. A head of office said that UT is considering participating in education fairs in order to improve the quality of the entrants.

The university has been searching for markets in other localities. It intended to set up a new campus in Da Lat, a province far from the city by more than 700 kilometers. “Setting up and developing a university-industry linkage in order to train highly qualified engineers

fulfilling the needs of industries" is one of the three strategic plans of the university[21]. It seems that via the university-industry linkage the university will determine the supply and product specification in relation to the needs raised by companies and employers.

Responsive and Strategic Management

The rectors, deans, and heads of offices talked enthusiastically about the application of new managerial ideas and techniques and the university's intention and plans, although the researcher often raised a general question about change in internal management. The informants' knowledge of management is rich and updated, indicating that they are eager to apply new models of university governance. The emphasis on efficiency is very high at UT.

> The new environment requires universities to view the management of university differently. You have to consider universities as enterprises. That means universities have to marketize, build good public relations, do branding, improve prestige, attract good students and teachers, ensure teacher income, and so on (Dean 3).

This dean said that universities have to balance quality and efficiency. Assuring quality in the context of efficiency requirements is a trade-off puzzle. UT provided its staff with an acceptable income level and retained qualified teachers. It has also provided students with an interactive learning environment via e-learning platforms. The establishment of the online learning system has not required a large amount of money but resulted in remarkable positive outcomes. Under the constraint of financial resources, teacher numbers, and offices, the response of UT to the environment can be viewed as successful.

UT has been searching for a new management mechanism of delegating financial management to departments. It would calculate a formula of standard operating costs for departments and allocate these costs to departments. The university would hand over all the state funding for training in accordance with enrolment quotas to departments. The departments would know the cost per student and find ways to use money efficiently. In parallel, the university would create a reward fund. Departments that have better performance would receive higher reward funding.

[21] UT website, http://www.hcmut.edu.vn/en/welcome/view/menu-intro/introduction/overview/message-from-the-rector, retrieved on 25 September 2012.

> It is time for departments to act like enterprises. If they run their business badly, they will not receive rewards, and the staff at those departments will not have high income (Rector 2).

The feasibility of this intention has not yet been proved. It is not easy to calculate what proportion of the revenue is kept for the university and what is handed over to departments. However, the rector asserted that the university would insistently pursue the plan of delegating authority and finance to departments because this plan is an important factor contributing to essential change in the university.

UT's efforts to scan the environment and to develop innovative ways and breakthrough strategies to react to the environment demonstrate that strategic management is present at the university. However, the market-based decisions are still low because the university has not done real market research. Responsive management is more prevalent at UT.

d. Outcomes and Survival of UT

UT has diverse sources of finance. The importance of state funding for UT is reducing. The share of public funding in total income of the university has been about 40% recently. The proportion of tuition fees to total income of UT has increased, accounting for 40% recently. The amount of loans and grants at UT is very large, showing the university initiative in investing in infrastructure. These pieces of evidence indicate that the university is successful in managing and generating finances. It had raised tuition income by providing diverse study programs and pricing teaching provision.

The university demonstrates a high ability to deal with competing demands. One of the most critical actions by UT is that it adopts a multi-dimensional definition of teaching quality and imposes different tuition levels for different educational programs. UT balances the goals of efficiency and quality, so it succeeds in both financial and educational aspects. The university regularly conducts surveys on students, graduates, and employers to fulfill the needs of stakeholders. It holds a long-term view on development strategies through implementing a student-centered educational approach, expanding internationally collaborative degree programs, consolidating teaching quality, and increasing marketing activities and entrepreneurial practices. The university has a consistent and professional way of adjusting curricula for accommodating the goal of skill relevance. This evidence illustrates the responsive and strategic management at UT. The

university staff maintains rigorous academic culture that safeguards academic thresholds for teaching provision.

The university confronts strong environmental pressures from the industries of engineering and technology in which the requirement of innovation and internationalization is very high. That is why the culture of innovation is easily recognized at UT. The two major disadvantages for UT are the declining attractiveness of engineering education and the geographical location, forcing the university to make changes and compete with other HEIs. Given its large achievements and ability to respond effectively to the environment, UT will continue to survive well. The social legitimacy of the university is very high.

5.2 University of Science

a. Description of the University

The precursor of the University of Science is the Division of Science in Indochina Science College in Saigon established in 1942. In 1956, the Division received the label university within the National University of Saigon. Since 1996, the University of Science has been an affiliated unit in Vietnam National University - Ho Chi Minh City. The current full name of the university is the University of Science - Ho Chi Minh City, hereafter called the University of Science (US).

US was considered the strongest institution of basic science in Vietnam in the 1960s. The university granted the first doctoral degree in chemistry in 1965. In 2008, the number of graduate students was 418 for master and 24 for Ph.D.. At present, US offers 16 undergraduate programs, 15 of which are bachelor programs and one is college-level awarding an associate degree. The university has five talented programs and an advanced program, enrolling about 140 excellent students annually.

The university specializes in natural sciences and mathematics, which fall into the category of hard pure sciences. Pure sciences receive less pressure from the demands of external stakeholders. This is one of the reasons that although US attempted to reform its curricula, most are still mainly subject-knowledge based. This issue will be discussed in more detail in the section on curriculum innovation.

The US main campus is located close to the center of the city. This first campus

accommodates a majority of administrative offices, main library, and some classrooms. The second campus is located in the outskirts, 12 kilometers from the central city. In comparison with universities that have a second campus in the suburbs, US has the most geographically advantageous land spot. This campus has been well-developed and accommodates a small part of administration and a majority of classrooms for freshmen and sophomores.

The university released a list of crucial personnel, most of whom have a Ph.D. qualification and many a professorate. The message of this action can be that the university is proud of the force of academics. The university SAR highlights that the managing cadres and qualified academics are its strength and that collectivism and consensus are the way of coordinating participation of all members in the university. The rector said that the university's long-lasting achievements are mostly attributable to the habit of self-regulation. Self-generated income of US is mostly reliant on the department of Information Technology (IT), which is training labor for information-based industries. US redistributes the revenue of department of IT to the whole university to maintain an acceptable salary level for all the university staff. These pieces of evidence indicate that the culture of US is consensus and academic self-governance.

b. Organizational Environment

Information System and Organizational Structure

The university home page in the Vietnamese language is arranged in three vertical parts, two columns on two sides, with the greetings and breaking news in the center. The left-side navigation column includes all linked menus, from which sub-websites provide almost all aspects of the university, ranging from the university profile, training system, admission, research activities, international cooperation, student affairs, library, and organizational composition. A noticeable feature of the news on the website is that it announces a great number of prizes given to outstanding students.

The online university profile presents details of the history, organizational and operational regulation, authority division, and people in senior academic and managerial posts. Information on the website is concise, clear, and seems to provide news and announcements rather than statistics. The English version of the website has a different display and contains less information compared with the Vietnamese. Under many

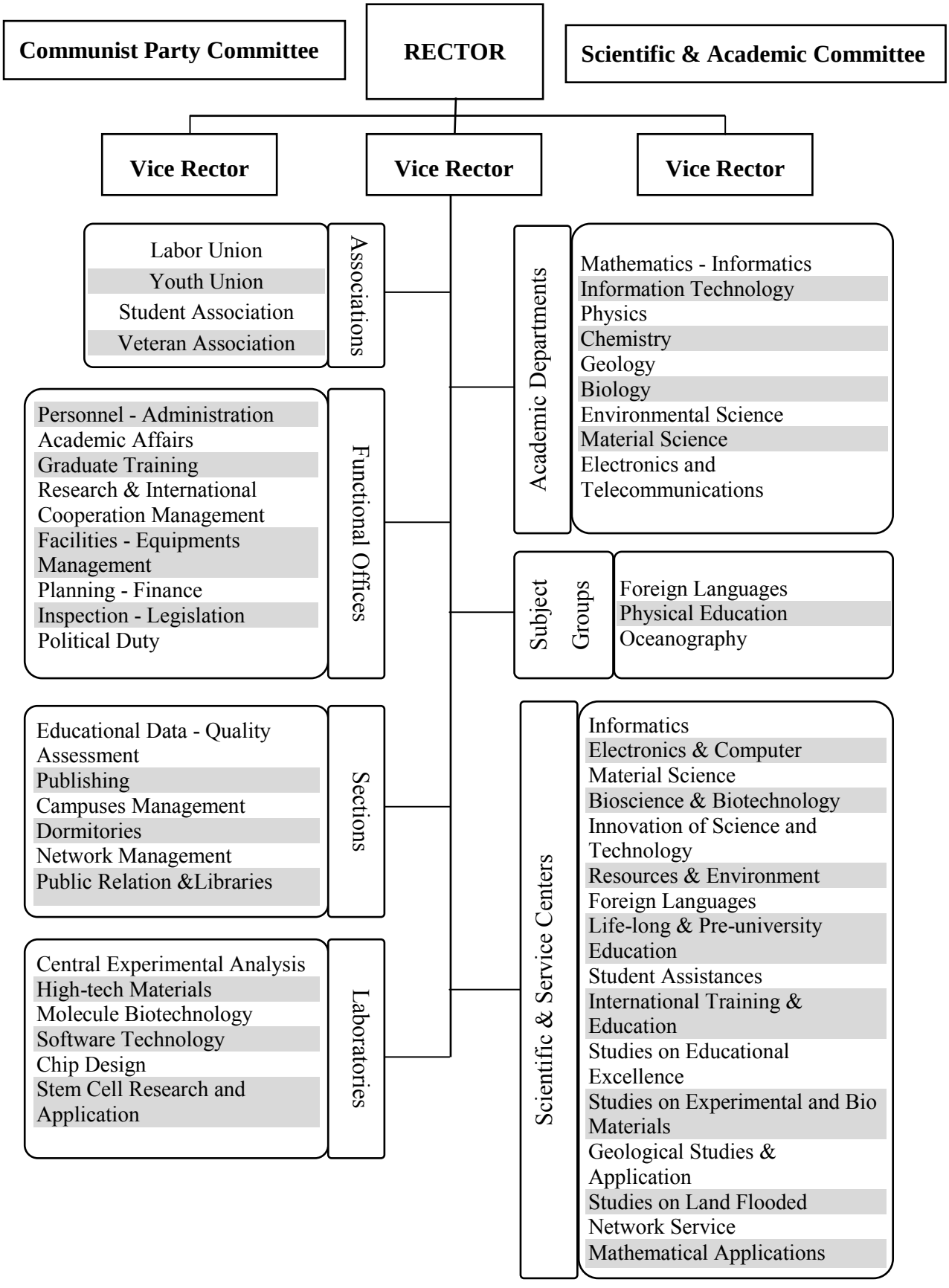
headings on the English version, there is no information. This fact indicates that the university is not interested to introduce itself to international audiences.

The US organizational chart (Figure 5.2) largely follows the Charter for Universities. The university specifies the overall leading role of the Institutional Communist Party Committee (IPC) both in its organizational chart in the 2008 SAR and in its organizational and operational regulation published online. US affirmation of IPC in the organizational chart reflects its straightforward and conservative view. Decision-making processes at Vietnamese public universities are often implicit, and only those who work at universities can understand, to a certain extent, how the processes take place. In the view of international audiences, a political party participating in the leadership of an academic institution is an odd pattern. However, the explicit declaration of the leadership position of IPC by US is less likely to draw attention because the information is available only in Vietnamese.

One of the reasons for the scant statistics about the university can be that the university has not paid attention to the issue of data management. In the university SAR, many required statistics were not provided. The rector confessed that US has not delivered the 2008 SAR widely because many provided figures were inconsistent. The disclosed documents for the year 2009 were available on the website in 2011 but removed later on. The Office of Academic Affairs released student numbers in accordance with study programs and training modes from 2005-2010 on the notice board on the main campus. This action may reflect that the university does not mean to hide information, but it spreads information only on campus to avoid dealing with external criticism.

Another reason for the low capacity to build up the information system at US is lack of resources. The rector said that the university is now on the peak of the current range of capacity. If it wants to spring to the level above the current range it must make a radical change. He gave an example. In order to set up an online learning management system the university has to buy an expensive computer server and train the staff to use the system. At present, the university cannot afford such a virtual learning system. The university has critical constraints bounded by limited budget and human resources.

Figure 5.2 US Organizational Chart



Source: Adapted from US's SAR 2008 and Website

> "The university's financial balance is quite tense. Therefore, in the shortest term the university needs funding. If a teacher deserves a pay of VND 10 million [about $500] per month the university can afford it. At present, the university is only able to pay VND 5 million to that person" (Rector 1).

The university has nine academic departments. The conventional disciplines are mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology. Newly established study programs are computer science, IT, biotechnology, electronics and telecommunications, environmental science, geology, material science, oceanography, and engineering physics. The university divides the administrative structure in two types: functional offices and sections. The structure of sections has no clear machinery and includes few personnel.

An interesting point in the US organizational structure is that in late 2008 it established a specialized section dealing with public relations. The university wished to advertise itself to the public and aimed to mobilize donations from companies and social organizations in order to support student activities, including learning clubs and recreational and sport activities. However, this section was merged into the library in 2012. There can be many reasons for the failure of public relations at US. The external audiences have very little information about US because the university limits information and is very reserved to outsiders. The researcher knew the rector of US from the seminar organized at her institute and asked him to introduce potential interviewees at US. The people she knew from the rector's introduction were kindly and cooperative. However, without the support of the rector, it was very difficult to have interviews at US. The only missed interview in this study happened at US. Another reason can be that the industrial and business sectors have low motivation to sponsor pure science.

Table 5.7 shows that the number of regular teachers at US was 618 in 2008. The number of visiting teachers was 77, making the total number of teachers 657[22]. Thus, the student-teacher ratio was 18.5, which is an acceptable value. From 2008 to 2010, the university did not increase the number of regular teachers but increased the number of students. The university recruited more visiting teachers to offset the increase in teaching workload. The university had 6 full professors and 31 associate professors in April 2012. The number of professors at US is much higher than in other universities. On average, there were 1.5 full and 23 associate professors in a Vietnamese university in 2005 (WB, 2008: p. 32).

[22] The commonly agreed conversion coefficient is two visiting teachers equivalent to one regular teacher.

Table 5.8 presents the patterns of finance at US. The annual growth rate of total income in US from 2003-2007 was approximately 20%, which is a very high level. While tuition income did not increase much (the third column of Table 5.8) and capacity to expand service income could not change quickly, it must be that the increase in total income derived from an increase in public funding.

Table 5.7 Number of Bachelor Students, Number and Qualification of Teachers at US

Indicator	**2008**	**September 2010**
Bachelor student	12,193	16,025
Full-time	10,273	13,515
Part-time	1,920	2,510
Regular teacher	618	619
Percentage of Ph.D.	112 - 18 %	-
Percentage of Master	239 - 37 %	-
Student-teacher ratio*	18.5	21
Full professor	2	6
Associate professor	39	36
Visiting teacher	77	267

*Source: US SAR 2008; 2010: on-site disclosed information; *: own calculation*

Table 5.8 Tuition Fees Income from Full-time Student at US

Year	**Total income (VND, millions)**	**Tuition and fees (VND, millions)**	**Proportion of tuition fees to total income**
2003	68,555	24,891	36,3%
2004	85,475	24,640	28,8%
2005	109,815	25,615	23,3%
2006	132,471	25,426	19,2%
2007	123,939	27,258	22,0%

Source: US SAR 2008

A closer look into income sources in 2009 in Table 5.9 helps to reveal more about the structure of finance at the university. The income in 2009 at 227,627 million VNDs was suddenly much higher than in 2007 at 123,939 million VNDs, an increase of 84% in two years. The university did not provide the amount of public funding but showed expenses funded by the state. Normally, public institutions try to use up state funding, so the 151,312 million VNDs can be equal to income from the public budget. The share of tuition fees reduced remarkably, 16.5% in 2009 compared with 22% in 2007. Because the student

numbers still increased (inferred from Table 5.10), the reduction in the share of tuition income in 2009 was probably due to the method of calculation or an increase in public funding.

In 2009, 66% of public funding was used for facilities and infrastructure. The detailed balance sheet shows that half of this amount was used for the construction of offices and buildings, and the rest was used for laboratories and equipment. In that year, NU funded 15 trillion VNDs for the laboratory of stem cell research at US. Due to the university's focus on research, the share of funding for research tasks is also high, at the level of 7%, which was much higher than the average of 2% in other universities (WB, 2008: p.84).

The university had a large amount of revenue from services. However, the calculation for US can be different from other universities. Service centers carry out services to the community and have the right to keep a majority of revenue for themselves. Other universities often consider the tiny amount submitted by service centers as the revenue of the universities. Thus, other universities have much lower percentages than US.

Table 5.9 Estimated Income and Expenses at US in 2009

Indicators	**VND, millions**	**Percentage (%)**
Total income (own calculation)	227,627	100
Public budget (adapted from expense)	151,312	66.5
Tuition and fees	37,500	16.5
Services to community	38,455	17.0
Miscellaneous sources	-	-
Expenses of public funding	151,312	100
Education and training task	41,412	27%
Research task	10,640	7%
Facilities – Infrastructure	99,260	66%

Source: US disclosed document of finance in 2009

Students and Teachers

As mentioned previously, statistics about the university are limited and slightly inconsistent. The English version website provides a few statistics for the numbers of students and teachers in 2008 but they are different from figures in the university SAR 2008. Because SAR is sent to and judged by supervising agencies, the information in this source is intended to be more accurate. Thus, statistics in the university SAR were chosen.

Table 5.10 shows that full-time university enrollments at US grew slowly from 2002-2012. The university recruited students who just obtained the minimum entry marks in NUEE. The highest entrance marks were just better than average. That means a majority of the students at US were average performing high school students. Talented programs at US require entrance examination marks of at least 17 or prizes from national or international Olympiads. These programs aim to produce scientists and do not charge for tuition. The talented students often achieve outstanding learning outcomes and pursue graduate education after university graduation.

Table 5.10 Application and Enrollment for Full-time Bachelor Programs at US

School Year	Application	Enrollment	Entrance Mark Ranges (scale 1- 30)
2002-2003	11,077	2,301	13-18*
2003-2004	10,660	2,299	
2004-2005	10,793	2,206	
2005-2006	7,960	2,509	
2006-2007	14,769	2,372	
2012-2013	14,000*	2,800*	14-18.5*

*Source: US SAR 2008, *: collected from the Internet*

In the period between 2003 and 2008, the increase in teacher numbers at US was approximately 7% (Table 5.11), in alignment with the growth of student numbers (Table 5.10; Table 5.12). Table 5.11 reveals that the percentage of teachers aged 36-45 was the lowest (about 10%), and younger than 36 was the highest (70%). In terms of experience, the distribution of teachers was more appropriate. Senior academics accounted for approximately 40%, of which 20% had 10-20 years of experience and 20% had more than 20 years. The improvement in the distribution of seniority can be because 10% of academics younger than 36 had more than ten years of experience. This fact is actually a negative indicator of academic ability because it means part of young faculty started working at young ages and may not have accumulated adequate knowledge and methodology through graduate education.

The university had a positive judgment on the qualification and commitment of its teachers. The 2008 SAR reported that most of the university faculty were capable; many faculty members received Master and Ph.D. degrees from prestigious universities in developed countries, and consequently the university faculty were better than other

universities (p. 80). It also claimed that it had a balanced proportion of junior and senior academics. In contrast, the researcher had some criticism of the university's judgments. US statistics for faculty did not highly support its statement on strong academic staff. The percentage of academics having graduate degrees was 55% in 2008 (Table 5.7), the lowest among the four universities under study. The average age of regular teachers was very young, 34 years old. The juniors and some early seniors were not highly educated. It can be true that in the next ten years when the oldest academics now older than 45 retire, the university would lack qualified academics to replace this group. The university needs to pay attention to enhancing the qualifications of young academics so that this force would be able to take over from senior academics.

Table 5.11 Number and Proportion of Teachers at US by Age and Experience, 2003 to 2010

	2003-04		**2004-05**		**2005-06**		**2006-07**		**2008**	**2010**
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Number of teachers	476	100	497	100	530	100	577	100	618	619*
Age:										
- Younger than 36	333	70	355	71	372	70	403	70		
- From 36-45	48	10	45	9	52	10	56	10		
- Older than 45	95	20	97	20	106	20	118	20		
Experience										
- Under 10 years	281	59	307	62	327	62	364	63		
- From 10-20 years	96	20	96	19	102	19	108	19		
- Over 20 years	99	21	94	19	101	19	105	18		

*Source:US SAR 2008 (p. 15, p. 81), *: disclosed document*

Although US judgment of its academic staff may be overoptimistic, the university's academic prestige is recognized. According to Hien (2010), international publications in the natural sciences and engineering are the highest among all the fields of science in Vietnam. US had a number of international publications on stem cell research. That is why NU funded the modern biology laboratory at US. The practice of academic self-governance at US is habitual and rigorous. Hard pure science has clear markers or indicators of quality and excellence (numbers of publications, quantifiable measurements of performance), so academic quality is more commonly agreed. In other words, qualifications of academics at US can be considered real. Therefore, it is sensible to agree with the university that authentic and committed academics are the most valuable resource at US.

In addition, the social climate of the university is solid and in harmony. The SAR reported that maintaining consensus among all personnel is a crucial strategy to develop the university. Such an organizational climate is ideal for academic creativity and innovation, but may be an obstacle to organizational actions because the process of gaining collective consensus on a decision may take a long time and discourage initiators. Thus, it may be that US has good achievements contributed by individual academics, teams of researchers, and departments, but organizational change across the whole university is less likely to happen.

NU and Regulations

Like the situation at UT, US is under the direct administration of NU. Universities within NU enjoy higher institutional autonomy than other universities.

> For this university, because of the status of a member in NU, it can refuse to follow the regulation of MOET. The university's curricula based on a credit-based system have not complied with the national curriculum frameworks since long time ago (Rector 1).

The university has gained trust from supervising agencies. In 1999, US was the first university allowed to organize the entry examination and admission of college graduates into a formal bachelor program in IT. In the context of preference for credentials in Vietnam, the admission of formal university students without relying on NUEE might create advantageous conditions for corruption. However, the university maintained its trust and was allowed to continue full autonomy in student admission. An administrator at NU who supervises quality assurance at US highly appreciated the self-regulation at US.

> I have just completed an on-site assessment at US. The rector told me that they wanted to expand college-level training. However, the teachers judged student learning strictly. Many students failed examinations. Therefore, the number of students in this study program [college program in IT] did not increase (Expert 1).

Labor Market for the Graduates

The science sector in Vietnam is so small that the demand for labor in this sector is very low. Traditional majors provided by US such as mathematics, chemistry, physics, and biology maintained their training scale unchanged during the 2000s. The university opened study programs in IT in 1995. Since then this field of training has grown very fast due to a

high demand for labor in information-based industries. IT study programs consist of seven types: full-time mass, advanced, elite, college-level, university-level completion, distance learning, and in-service training at localities. The large proportion of college training at US (Table 5.12) is a strange pattern among leading universities. That is because in the field of computer programming in Vietnam, college graduates can still have a decent job. IT is the only field of study attracting a large number of students to US, so the university makes use of this opportunity. The university reallocates the revenue from IT provision to the whole university in order to raise the staff pay.

The development of student numbers is presented in Table 5.12. Data collected in the field is presented in the last column. Detailed data of student numbers by department in the field data show that students enrolling in IT programs made up 47% of the total enrollment in 2010. While the number of both regular and visiting teachers at the department of IT was 165, the number of students was approximately 5,000. That means the student-teacher ratio at the department was higher than 30. This ratio is too high and violated the MOET standard of 20 for disciplines in technology. However, it is surprising that there is hardly any criticism about the IT graduates from US.

Table 5.12 Undergraduate Students at US, 2002-2003 to 2009-2010

Types of Students	**2002-03**	**2003-04**	**2004-05**	**2005-06**	**2006-07**	**2010-11**
University Level	12,166	11,487	12,407	12,096	12,193	13,110
Full-time	10,024	9,800	10,557	10,657	10,273	10,600
Part-time	2,142	1,687	1,850	1,421	1,920	2,510
College Level	4,625	3,979	3,601	3,240	2,620	2,915
Total	*16,791*	*15,466*	*16,008*	*15,336*	*14,813*	*16,025*

Source: US SAR 2008; 2010-11: on-campus disclosure in March 2011

There are several reasons for the market acceptability of IT graduates. The graduation standard of the college program in IT was strict and guaranteed (Expert 1). The entry examination marks of the full-time university programs were highest among all the departments. The curriculum of the mass university program in IT was certified by AUN in 2009. The use of online learning management systems, i.e. Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) has stimulated student learning. Except for the weakness in insufficient teachers, the teaching in the department of IT has ensured good entrants, sufficient learning conditions, and strict graduation standards. The demand for

information-processing labor and computer programmers is still high in Vietnam, so the market for IT training is still prosperous for US.

The results of the expansion of IT training at US seem to be distinctive. Quality assurance in the department of IT is trusted. The department is the goldmine for the university. That means the department is both effective and efficient. The provision of IT programs at US suggests that for study programs with a high demand for quantity, universities can gain a lot of revenue resulting from economies of scale. If universities spend cost savings on improving learning conditions, this will lead to an improvement in training quality. A high student-teacher ratio is the most common way for Vietnamese universities to generate revenue, but this practice can be acceptable if universities spend part of monetary gain on improving learning conditions for students.

US opened two franchise international degree programs in Information Science in Service and Management Science in 2008 and 2010 respectively. The first class of the program in Information Science in Service graduated in 2011, and student enrolment in this program has been increasing. With its good reputation in training IT, it is probable that if there is still market demand for IT labor, US will continue expanding provision of IT programs of different kinds.

Other HEIs and Competition

The entry to the supply of hard science education is limited because of lack of scientists and big investment in expensive physical facilities. Vietnamese private providers hardly offer study programs in hard sciences. The number of universities in the field of natural sciences can be counted on the one hand. In addition, hard pure sciences are not highly attractive to students. In 2005, only 4% of student enrollments in public universities were in natural sciences, in comparison with 27% in economics and business (WB, 2008: p. 16). The universities specializing in teaching hard pure sciences are predetermined to be losers in the competition with universities preparing occupations dealing with business and commerce. The above facts indicate that universities of science in Vietnam are operating in an environment lacking basic conditions for market competition.

Among all study programs provided by US, only IT majors are operating under conditions that can be described as market-like mechanisms. Many providers offer IT programs, but graduates of computer programming trained by US are preferred (Academic 3). The

university made use of economies of scale in providing IT courses and maintained the quality of provision. This means the university has been successful in the environment in which market competition is required. However, due to low market demand for conventional disciplines, the university had to struggle to recover costs of teaching, let alone generate income from practicing economies of scales. The effect of the labor market and the nature of an academic organization make US highly vulnerable to market-like mechanisms. The university needs different treatments from the state instead of the one-size-fits-all rhetoric of developing market in higher education.

c. Organizational Actions

Mission statements

The university stated that it carries out two basic missions, including teaching and research. The mission statement on the Vietnamese version website is "to produce elite products that fulfill domestic socio-economic needs and correspond with the global trends."[23] This mission highlights the aim of excellent quality of output. On the English version website, the strategies to achieve the goal are described as follows: "The university is providing students with academic, extracurricular and other resources; committing to diversity of student body and faculty and staff in order to help students achieve the highest scholarly levels… Our mission is to instruct you to explore your hidden abilities to achieve a deeper and higher knowledge in the course of study. Your own creativity, elegant characters and talents are well known through the time of study, research, and working together with us."[24]

US mission statements in English contain extraordinary contents. Leading universities in Vietnam often include the goal of excellent quality of product, and do not often speak of educational approaches. In the course of conducting fieldwork at US, the researcher gradually noticed that the student-centered teaching philosophy implemented at US was highly effective. The disadvantage in attracting good students forced US to admit average-performing students. Meanwhile, the position of a leading university forced it to produce excellent products. Therefore, supporting students to uphold their ability is the crucial way

[23] US website, http://www.hcmus.edu.vn/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1007&Itemid=576, retrieved on 2 November 2012.
[24] US website, http://www.hcmus.edu.vn/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=76&Itemid=464, retrieved on 2 November 2012.

to achieve the goal of high quality. With the statement highlighting the aim of student development and diversity, the university opened the way to admit 'mediocre' students. The evidence of the learning achievements and passion for learning of US students described in the upcoming sections indicates that the university has matched its educational goal, philosophy, and practice.

In the SAR, US specified its tradition and strength in basic sciences, including mathematics, physics, and chemistry; but it put priority on applied sciences, including IT, biotechnology, material sciences, and environmental sciences. This action of the university shows that the pressure of value for money is high. Furthermore, it implies that the university is trapped in a maze of conflicting goals.

The university set the vision to be a leading higher education institution with an equal position relative to prestigious universities in the world and in the Southeast Asian region by 2020. This long-term goal seems both realistic and unrealistic. One of the realistic aspects can be that pure science is identical all over the world. Hence, if US makes a great effort, there would be a possibility to realize its goal. Another realistic aspect is that several research fields including Vietnamese scientists are internationally recognized, such as mathematics and theoretical physics. The department of biology at US published a number of research results on stem cells in respected international journals. In addition, chances for international collaboration between US faculty and foreign colleagues are available. The last point is a crucial way for US to catch up with the world standards.

Unrealistic aspects are more numerous than the realistic. The development path of the university seems to be constrained by two decisive and long lasting barriers. First, the modest financial resources will hinder US from recruiting and maintaining good academics. A large proportion of junior faculty without a Ph.D. qualification are a critical weakness of the university. Second, US is still at the stage of struggling for ample finances and its dominant activity is teaching, while the global competition among universities is in research performance. Having an equal position in relation to universities in Southeast Asia seems to be sounder for US. If US is ranked in the same group with top universities in Malaysia and Thailand in the next two decades, it would already be a big success for Vietnam.

Ideas of Teaching Quality

According to the rector at US, the culture towards quality in the university is the decisive factor contributing to the quality of teaching provision. Quality is guaranteed by academics who are elite. US professors set academic standards and practices in the university, and disseminate them from generation to generation.

> The university's history started in 1942. During the last nearly 70 years, the university recruited many scientists. These scientists created a habit of quality. Later generations have followed predecessors and maintained the habit… Our habit of quality is a precious property (Rector 1).

This idea implies that the university is proud of its scholarly tradition and highly respects academic authority. The feature of an institution specializing in hard pure sciences gives US faculty the authority to judge the validity of subject knowledge and consequently the quality of teaching.

All three interviewees at US mentioned that underequipped learning conditions and insufficient teacher salaries constrain the quality of teaching. Expenses for each student from all sources, including state budget and households, totaled approximately 500 dollars a year, which is very modest in comparison with that in many other Southeast Asian countries (Rector 1, Pham P., 2010). The rector gave a metaphor.

> Taking an example of a high quality product like a Minhlong cup. The total production cost of the cup is 100%. In Vietnam, we cover 20% of the production cost and obtain a product that has 70-80% quality of a Minhlong cup. Therefore, what have applied in the U.S. and Germany may not applicable in circumstances in Vietnam (Rector 1).

A dean regarded certificates of accreditation as the hallmark of quality. NU provided funding to conduct study program accreditation in affiliated universities. US made use of these chances to gain financial support for curriculum innovation.

> Our university determined that we make improvement in quality and advertise our brand name by certified study programs. We completed the AUN accreditation in 2009. We have been applying the CDIO (Conceive - Design - Implement - Operate) educational framework. When we complete implementing CDIO we will introduce the ABET standards in the next 5 years (Dean 4).

The idea of explicit evidence of quality is strongly advocated in Vietnam. Reforming curricula by adapting to internationally recognized standards is the goal of MOET and of leading universities as well. Implementing international standards helped US to know where it stands and what needs improvement to catch up with foreign universities.

> The CDIO model requires the university to educate students on knowledge, skills, and attitudes. We have provided students with sufficient knowledge but insufficient skills. Actually, our teachers have been also not good at skills so the department is designing a plan of providing teachers with necessary skills (Dean 4).

The implementation of accreditation criteria proposed by certified agencies is an indirect implementation of taking into account the needs of external stakeholders in designing curricula at US. In the AUN accreditation standards, there are requirements for practices of adjusting curriculum to employer feedback.

> I notice there has been change in the mind of the people. In action, the process has taken place gradually. I talk about what have happened at our department only. Our latest effort is to revise study programs so that we have good ones in the sense they will produce good graduates (Academic 3).

At US, different disciplines retain different academic norms and culture, so the advocates of adjusting curricula to stakeholder feedback can meet with less approval in the departments of basic sciences. That is why the department of IT reformed curricula by implementing accreditation, while the departments of Environmental Science and Biology renewed methods of teaching and learning, and curriculum innovation in the other academic departments was slow.

Curriculum Innovation and Improved Student Learning

In the academic year 1994-1995, US started reforming curricula. Like UT, in the beginning, the university just wanted to implement a new training mode that provides students with various choices of optional courses and stimulates student independence. According to the rector, the CTS in US still had a number of weaknesses, e.g. insufficient teaching staff and classrooms, limited number of courses, and inflexible curricula. However, with its great efforts to change the educational approach, many positive results such as student independence, dynamics, and confidence have been observed.

> In CTS, a curriculum consists of two blocks of knowledge, one is taught in classrooms and the other is left for students to find out. Limited resources hinder the success of the credit-based system at this university. However, when you walk around the university, you will see the students studying in groups. Some are searching for information on the Internet. Some are presenting in front of their classmates, and then they will argue and discuss. Previously, these activities did not happen at this university (Rector 1).

The researcher visited US many times to conduct fieldwork. She observed many groups of students studying together in schoolyards and free classrooms on the main campus. The students had to speak softly in order to not disturb the groups next to them. They did not care much about the tiny space they could have and seemed to concentrate on activities in their groups. Such interaction among student peers will contribute to the reasoning skills and critical thinking of students (Pascarella, 1985).

In the academic year 1996-1997, US reviewed all of its curricula. This effort led to incremental innovation of curricula in the form of updating the subject matter knowledge and implementing new methods of teaching. However, comprehensive curriculum innovation has just taken place in several academic departments (US SAR: p. 65). There may be some reasons for this fact.

Firstly, a typical characteristic of US is that it specializes in hard pure sciences in which curricula are largely shaped by disciplinary contents. Secondly, the university does not have ample funds to stimulate and reward systematic comprehensive changes in curricula. The only comprehensive curriculum reform in IT has been funded by projects given by MOET and NU. Thirdly, disciplines at US are so divergent that the shared knowledge among the curricula is small. This feature makes it difficult to design a common block of curriculum for all study programs, hindering the collective use of teachers among study programs and academic departments. Fourthly, the faculty is paid modestly. The compensation system at US is unable to change faculty's behaviors and to motivate them to make change.

However, comprehensive curriculum innovation by project funding at US is very outstanding. In the framework of MOET's project on "developing advanced undergraduate programs" at some universities, the university has been granted funding for an advanced study program in Computer Science since the academic year 2006-2007. This advanced program "imports" academic materials and administration technology from Portland

University in the U.S. The teachers are professors from prestigious foreign universities and the teaching language is English. According to MOET's evaluation, the advanced program at US ranked highest among the ten advanced programs in the project. In 2004, the IT program with four specializations was reformed in accordance with the AUN standards. In December 2009, the AUN accreditation agency evaluated four study programs in Vietnam. The IT program at US received the certificate with the highest mark among the four programs.

With the financial support of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), US established the Center for Educational Excellence in 2007. At present, the center is trying out implementing models of community-based learning, which design and apply a pedagogical paradigm that uses theoretical knowledge to solve problems in real life in some courses at the departments of environmental science, and of biology. The key target of the project for developing new learning models is to gear the educational syllabus towards community-based learning and advanced teaching methods, such as teamwork, and problem solving. In the future, the center will duplicate the models and offer professional advice on curriculum innovation to the university managers.

Although the comprehensive curriculum innovation at US is less remarkable than that at UT, there has been evidence of improvement in student learning outcomes. The researcher observed the endeavors of students in learning groups under inconvenient conditions. An expert on quality management responsible for supervising quality assurance at US expressed her high respect of what US has accomplished.

> The university has culture of quality. It gathers teachers who have passion for science. They work passionately. Although the study fields provided by this university are not attractive because graduates' employment does not bring about high salary, the students at this university have passion for learning. They are meditative and slender. They look like genuine scientists. I respect them but also feel worried for them. The university seems to be an ivory tower. If the market drained its brain then the university would be at stake (Expert 1).

The curriculum innovation at US suggests that within the context of lack of resources for comprehensive curriculum innovation, academic self-governance plays a crucial role in incremental innovation. US teachers can deliver their passion for knowledge to their students. Such a high motivation to learn must be conductive to positive learning outcomes that are the aim of any curriculum innovation.

Internationally Collaborative Degree Programs

US has an advanced degree program in Computer Science in cooperation with Portland University in the U.S. The tuition fee of the program is $ 1,500 per year, which covers one-third of the training costs. MOET and US fund two-thirds of the cost that covers training facilities, staff pay, and staff development. A small library with updated reading material was established to serve the students. Foreign teachers are from different prestigious foreign universities. The students can transfer to Portland University to study specialist courses after completing four semesters at US. Excellent students chosen for the exchange program will be given a grant for travelling costs. The remarkable outcomes of the advanced program are a great number of scientific papers written by the students and graduate scholarships given to them to study in foreign countries. In 2011, the first class of the program that enrolled students in 2006 was completed with 31 graduates, 14 of whom continued to postgraduate education. The students in this class produced 10 scientific papers published in international journals and conference proceedings[25]. The program was successful in producing highly qualified graduates, but less successful in fulfilling the MOET expectation of spreading what have learned from the foreign partner throughout the university.

US opened a franchise program in Management Science in collaboration with Keuka University in the U.S. in 2010. The entire study period of 4 years takes place in Vietnam. Tuition fees were set in 2012 at VND 79,800,000 per year, equivalent to $3,800. The twinning program in Information Science in Service in cooperation with Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand was opened in 2008. The tuition fee of this program was set in 2012 at VND 63,000,000 (approximately $3,100) a year. Students in this program can spend the last two years of the total 4 years in New Zealand. The tuition fees of the two franchise programs are high. Collaboration in curriculum design and inter-organizational activities are low. However, the presence of foreign professors at US may create chances for Vietnamese teachers to learn from international colleagues.

The internationally collaborative degree programs at US had a remarkable level of academic exchange that facilitates improvement in the academic expertise of US faculty. However, the educational processes and management styles at US has not much changed.

[25] US website, http://www.hcmus.edu.vn/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4793&Itemid=242, retrieved on 6 June 2013.

This fact indicates that the university managers have not paid attention to managerial methods.

Responsive Management

Due to disadvantages in attracting good students, US paid attention to provide students with adequate learning conditions and environment. The SAR states that providing a good learning environment will lead to positive feedback from households, students, and society about the university and contribute to raising the university prestige. In order to have money for upgrading learning conditions, the university had to limit rewards to the teachers.

> The welfare fund in this university is lower in other universities. That is because the university uses the surplus to reinvest in facilities and infrastructure in order to ensure an acceptable level of teaching and learning conditions. The modern facilities help to uphold our students' dynamics and creativity. The students are familiar with working conditions in industries (Rector 1).

The policy of keeping the welfare fund low and of spending the excess on improving teaching and learning conditions is very admirable. In order to receive public funding for building offices and houses, Vietnamese universities have to contribute their own funds to the instruction projects. That means that US has to reduce its welfare fund and increase the investment fund. The modern 10-floor building in the suburb campus was finished and has been in use since 2009. The 11-floor building on the main campus was just finished in 2011. Among 27% of the public funding in 2009 in education and training tasks (Table 5.9), the university used some for learning support, e.g. scholarships and tuition exemptions. However, the amount of investment was modest. That is why the rector used the word "acceptable" in his opinion. This word implies a dilemma in the policy of revenue distribution. An increase in the salary fund is exchanged for a reduction in the investment fund. Managers of the university have to find ways to meet the needs of both students and teachers.

The rector added information about the improvement of learning outcomes at US. This information helps to clarify the meaning of the word "an acceptable level of teaching and learning conditions".

> From 5 years ago up to now, the level of students' initiative has remarkably increased. The witnesses are their confidence in posing questions to college managers and guests at meetings… Frankly, conditions have not changed much, revenue has not changed, staff has not changed, but we consider building up a suitable mechanism supporting students' learning (Rector 1).

The phrase "a suitable mechanism" used by the rector implies the way of supporting student learning under the constraint of money. A money-saving method is to provide students with an interactive learning environment, e.g. learning clubs and teams, and to stimulate their learning motivation. The rector said that US is famous for the activity of learning clubs. Many student teams won prizes in famous contests.

The university had to fulfill conflicting goals, including maintaining science education as a political and social mission and gaining efficiency under financial pressures. The university responded quite successfully to both pressures. On the one hand, it conformed to political and social requirements. It respected the leadership of CPC and received the state subsidy for some mandated teaching tasks. On the other hand, it expanded the teaching of IT. These actions indicate responsive management at US. The adoption of advanced managerial methods was hardly seen. Due to limited financial resources, the university did not carry out employer surveys, let alone market research. Therefore, strategic management was not present at the university.

d. Outcomes and Survival of US

US is primarily reliant on public funding. In 2009, the share of public budget in the total revenue was 66.5%, whereas the share of self-generated revenue was 33.5%. The income from teaching at US is constrained by both public funding and student pockets. The low attractiveness of hard science education determines the modest student number, which consequently leads to limited financial resources. Talented study programs funded by public budget helped to attract excellent students to US, but these programs were terminated due to lack of public finance. The university has not found a way to overcome its financial shortage. Research is strength of the university but the revenue from research is still low.

The managerial capability of US is not as good as that of UT. Some judgments and anticipation of US should be more realistic. US does not have a coherent long-term strategy and has not scanned the external environment. The projects of upgrading physical

facilities and developing an interactive learning environment indicate a wise strategy of the university. The management style of US is collaborative and conservative, but still responsive to the environment. The university is successful in balancing efficiency and quality in the provision of IT programs. Cost savings from the provision of IT are spent on improving learning conditions and redistributing across the university to increase income for all staff.

The culture of US is consensus, academic rigor and commitment. High authority for academics is the most prevalent and influential feature of US, contributing to incremental curriculum innovation and student learning outcomes. The university succeeds in educational goals and improves its legitimacy. However, the nature of an academic organization makes US vulnerable to market forces in higher education. Although US is effective in producing good quality products, the university staff is not rewarded equivalently. The market failure in the provision of science education in Vietnam calls for the state intervention in order to establish a state of equilibrium in the higher education sector as a whole.

5.3 University of Pedagogy

a. Description of the University

The full name of the university is Ho Chi Minh University of Pedagogy (UP). UP has its roots in the Saigon National Pedagogical University founded in 1957. From 1995 to1999, UP was an affiliated university within NU. After that time, it became an independent university under the direct administration of MOET. Institutions of pedagogy in Vietnam have the primary mission of preparing school teachers, so they are functionally similar to teacher training institutions or teacher education institutions in worldwide common terms. UP has been one of the two key universities of pedagogy in Vietnam since 2004.

Up to 2012, UP had 19 academic departments providing 32 university-level programs, of which 21 programs awarded Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) and 11 programs awarded Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) or Bachelor of Arts (B.A.). In 2006, the university was training 639 master and 38 doctoral students (SAR: p. 11); in the academic year 2011-2012, the scale of graduate education increased to 1,311 and 61 respectively (disclosed documents).

The rise and fall of UP is determined on the one hand by the educational traditions in Vietnamese culture and on the other hand by the political mission of the education sector. A common Vietnamese proverb is "to have your children well educated, you should love and respect their teachers". Such a moral respect for teachers is rooted in the Confucian legacy that emphasizes the role model of teachers as morally good and creates teaching professional norms preventing them from behaving badly. However, teachers in public schools have been paid according to the public sector salary system that is out of alignment with real living costs. The average salary of higher education graduates working in education and training is the second lowest among economic sectors (Table 4.4). That is why there is a common saying among students that "the first is medicine; the second …, pedagogy is ignorable,…", and the most common reasons for students going to UP are intrinsic values and family traditions (Rector 3; Pham T.L.P., 2008). Due to a great number of positive hidden dimensions of the teaching profession in Vietnam, the state stimulus to education has a considerable impact on teacher/student population, teacher labor market, and work environment of school teachers.

> The field of teacher training has experienced up-and-down periods. In the 1980s, institutions of pedagogy could not enroll enough students. Many school teachers quitted their jobs at that time. That was because the teacher salary was so low. In the period between the mid-1990s and mid-2010s, there was an opposite pattern… For the time being, the tendency is going down (Head of Office 3).

Like applied sciences, the field of teacher education has weak academic peer norms and emphasizes practical professional skills. In the case of Vietnam, institutions of pedagogy were modeled after the Soviet-style specialized training institutions. The major track of teacher training is pre-service regular training in institutions of pedagogy. The curricula at universities of pedagogy usually consist of (1) shared subjects for all students such as educational psychology, pedagogy, civic education, philosophy, and informatics; (2) subjects directly related to the discipline a student chooses to teach in future such as mathematics, physics, and so on; and (3) practical teaching apprenticeship at schools. Teaching students have to learn both disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge during four years of study. Consequently, the amount of disciplinary knowledge in curricula in universities of pedagogy is less than in universities of science. Teacher education in Vietnam has been criticized for creating less capable teachers with poor subject knowledge, pedagogical competence, and personal development skills (Nguyen T.H.,

2006). In a national meeting among representatives of institutions of pedagogy in 2006, the delegates identified the weaknesses, but they did not find a consensual way to restructure this type of institution and to renovate the conventional training mode[26].

A new mode of teacher training has been experimented with at the University of Education within Vietnam National University - Hanoi (NUH). This mode is called "3 plus 1" and designed for students who complete the first three years of a degree program at two universities of sciences under the administration of NUH, and continue learning pedagogical knowledge, skills and teaching practice at the University of Education in the final year. The University of Education focuses on teaching pedagogic and professional knowledge and skills, and leaves the training of subject knowledge to the other two universities of sciences. This mode is more effective in preparing deeper theoretical and professional knowledge and practical skills for potential teachers (Nguyen K.H., 2010).

UP uses a 4-year united training mode that assigns new students to teacher education right at the beginning of their study. The application of a "3 plus 1" mode requires comprehensive changes in the organization of teaching, which are not solely dependent on UP itself but also on the organization of the higher education system at large. That means UP is confronting a critical challenge for its survival as well as long-term development. A dean at UP was very pessimistic about the future of the university.

> In my opinion, Vietnam should not have universities of pedagogy. Current pedagogical universities should be merged into comprehensive universities. Teacher training then becomes a college or department in comprehensive universities. I think the model of a university responsible for only teacher training is unsuitable (Dean 5).

The university has two campuses both in the inner city. The total area of land owned by the university is small, providing each student with approximately 2.5 square meters of space. This ratio is higher than the standard of 2 square meters for existing universities[27] but lower than the standard of 6 square meters for newly established universities[28]. UP has a land plot in the suburbs that is not developed into a campus. The university teaches hard science subjects; therefore, it received state funding at the level of small projects B for

[26] Thanh Nien News, http://www.thanhnien.com.vn/news/pages/200652/176256.aspx, retrieved on 16 January 2013.
[27] Circular 57/2011/TT-BGDĐT, 02 December 2011, Regulation on Formulas for Enrolment Quotas
[28] Decision 2368/QD-BGDDT, 09 May 2007, Procedures of Establishing New Universities

laboratories and practical factories. UT and US received much higher public funding on this item at the level of national key projects.

b. Organizational Environment

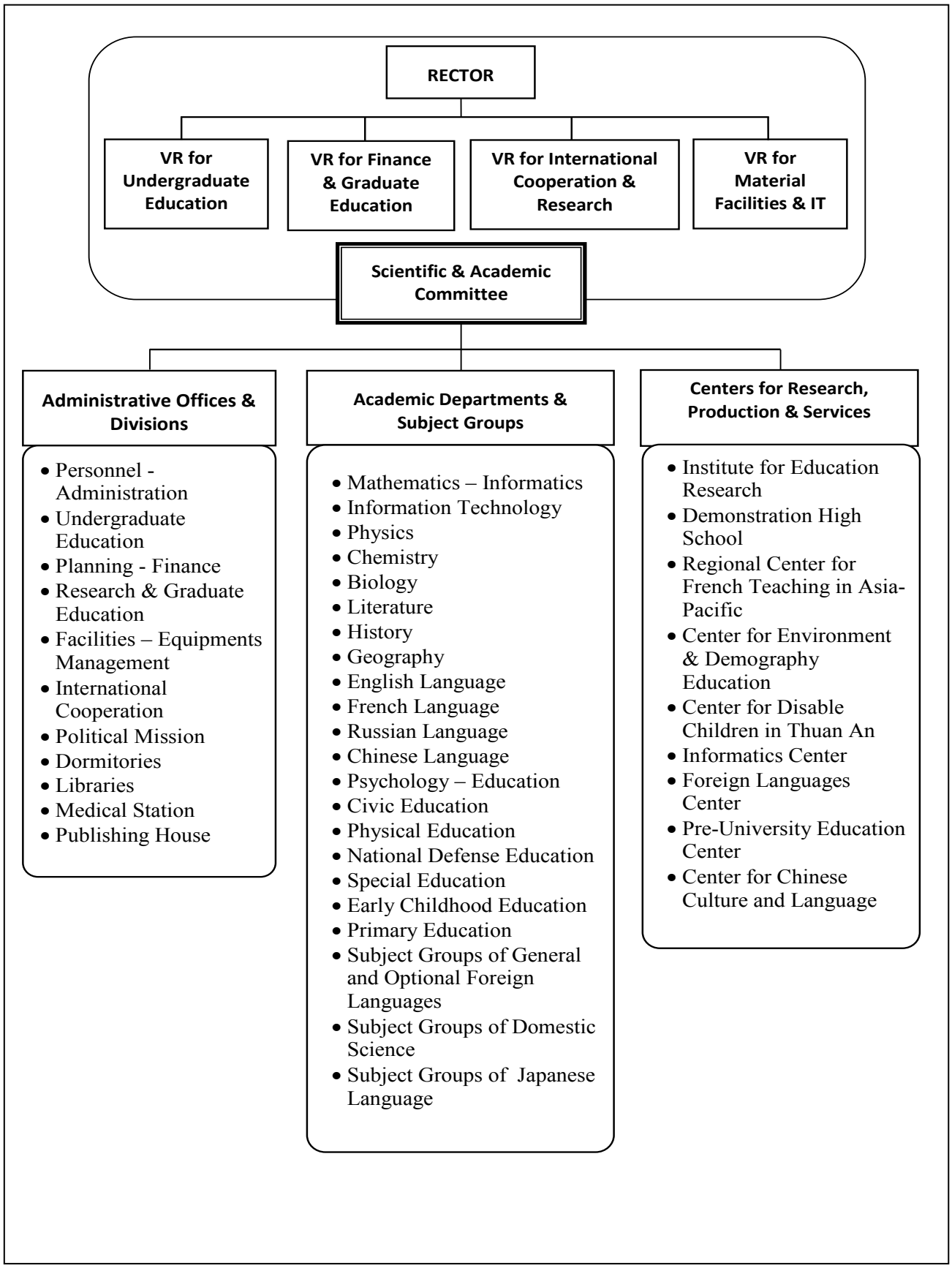
Information System and Organizational Structure

UP's website does not have an English version. A few sub-units of the university, for example, Institute for Education Research and Department of Chinese Language, have their own websites in both Vietnamese and a foreign language. The university home page is arranged in vertical navigation bars. Most important descriptions of the university are included in the left-side navigation column. Other columns display news and announcements arranged by issue. The main sections of the left-side column are the university profile and administrative and teaching units, which link to the web pages of sub-units, centers, a research institute, libraries, a demonstration high school, disclosed documents, curricula, and expected learning outcomes. The release of documents relating to resources, processes, and outcomes of teaching can be a signal of UP's effort to conform to MOET's regulation on Three Disclosures. The curricula and expected learning outcomes at UP adhere closely to MOET's curriculum frameworks of teacher education, and emphasize civic education partly including Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh thoughts.

It is strange that the university's online profile has no statement about mission, goal, and vision[29]. The profile includes three sections: composition, short history, and scientific and academic committee with a list of members. Information in the university profile is short, and not very extensive about achievements and academic capacity. The primary source of training indicators at UP is disclosed documents for the academic year 2011-2012. The indicators of training outcomes relate only to full-time students. The structure and availability of information in UP gives the impression that conventional practices are prevalent and achievements are limited.

[29] UP website, http://www.hcmup.edu.vn/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=28&Itemid=43&lang=vi&site=0, retrieved on 01 December 2012.

Figure 5.3 UP Organizational Chart



Source: UP's SAR 2006 and Website

UP's organizational chart shows only an operational task system and ignores social organizations. The scientific and academic committee is specified to be a bridge between the board of rectors and subunits. The interpretation of the position of this committee in UP is interesting and might signal that the leadership at UP is less top-down. Because members of the scientific and academic committee are often heads of important subunits, they put forward the ability and wishes of departments and academics, helping the rector to anticipate the cooperation of departmental and individual members and the feasibility of a new policy.

The academic department structure at UP is large with 19 departments. The number of service centers is four but their activities are intensive. The Foreign Languages Center was established in 1992, with a dozen of branches across the city, contributing substantial finances to the welfare fund of the university. This center maintains its development because the citizens trust the service and certificates of foreign languages it provides. The Informatics Center was founded in 1985 and started producing remarkable revenue from short courses of informatics in the late 1990s. Pre-university courses to prepare for NUEE are also a main income source for the university.

Since 1998, in order to attract good students to institutions of pedagogy, the government has exempted full-time teaching students from tuition. In addition to teacher education, the university also offered full-time degree programs in sciences in which students had to pay tuition. Table 5.13 shows that the percentages of tuition fee income at UP were extremely low from 2001-2005.

Table 5.13 Percentage of Tuition Fees Income from Full-time Students at UP

Years	Total income (VND, in millions)	Tuition and fees (VND, in millions)	Proportions of tuition and fees to total income (%)
2001	30,783	1,118	3.6
2002	33,597	1,178	3.5
2003	35,865	1,340	3.7
2004	57,087	2,340	4.1
2005	58,084	2,991	5.1

Source: UP SAR 2006

The university funding sources are presented in Table 5.14. Because it is one of the 14 key institutions, UP is given a higher level of public funding for enhancing teaching and

research capacity. The total income of the university was 166,304 million VNDs in 2010, which is almost twice the value of 58,084 million VNDs in 2005. The amount of public funding in 2010 was 102,615 million VNDs, which can be viewed as acceptable in the context of Vietnam.

> Regarding revenues, incomings are not as difficult as it was in the past. Public funding for teacher training institutions is quite acceptable. I had a chance to attend a conference about finance and financial management. Delegates at the conference said that such amount of public funding was fine (Head of Office 3).

Table 5.14 UP Income in 2010

	VND, millions	**Percentage (%)**
Total income	166,304	100
Public budget	102,615	62
Tuition and fees	54,136	33
Research sales and technology transfer	28	0
Miscellaneous sources: service sales, grants	9,525	6

Source: UP disclosed documents

Notably, the share of tuition and fees in the university's total income was 33 % in 2010, which is much higher than the numbers in Table 5.13 and quite similar to the level at non-teacher education universities. This is because the university expanded the enrolment of non-teacher and part-time students who have to pay tuition and fees.

The university has a moderate number of miscellaneous sources accounting for 6% of the total income. This may be because UP did not count service sales as a single item and probably included this item under miscellaneous sources. From 2008 to 2012, the university participated in Higher Education Project 2, which aimed at improving the quality of training and research in universities, so the university received a significant investment grant.

Students and Teachers

Table 5.15 shows that UP admitted more part-time students than full-time in 2006, 10,162 compared with 8,737. The student-teacher ratio in 2006 was 34, which is a little higher than the acceptable ratio of 30 for the teaching of social sciences, and much higher than the acceptable level of 25 for the teaching of natural sciences.

The university did not provide the total number of undergraduate students in its disclosed documents in 2012. In order to observe the pattern of student enrollments, the researcher collected the university's enrollment quotas, which are the numbers of full-time/formal students the university is allowed to admit. The enrollment quotas from 2007 to 2012 were collected from various sources relating to NUEE. NUEE is a very important annual event in Vietnam, so entry marks and enrollment quotas of universities are widely published. Table 5.18 shows that the formal student enrollment quotas increased by 10% over the last seven years, 3,800 in 2012 compared with 2,350 in 2007. The tendency of high part-time student numbers from 2001-2005 (Table 5.17) has no signal of decline. Therefore, from 2006 onwards, the growth of part-time student enrollments must be higher than that of full-time enrollments. That means the total university-level students in 2012 must be more than 10% higher than the number in 2006. However, the number of teachers increased by only 1%, from 504 to 526, in the same period.

Table 5.15 Number of University Students, Number and Qualification of Teachers at UP

	September 2006	**March 2012**
University student	18,899	-
Full-time	8,737	-
Part-time	10,162	-
Regular teacher	504	526
Percentage of Ph.D.	25.4%	18.4%
Percentage of Master	37.3%	49.2%
Visiting teacher	98	-
Full professor	1	0
Associate professor	21	21
Student-teacher ratio	34	-

*Sources: UP SAR 2006, disclosed documents 2011-2012, *: own calculation*

From 2006 to 2012, the percentage of Master degrees among teachers went up from 37.3% to 49.2%, but the percentage of Ph.D.s declined from 25.4% to 18.4%. In addition, the number of full professors was reduced. The number of associate professors remained unchanged. These statistics indicate that UP's academic capability has been in a state of alarm.

Table 5.16 shows that the proportion of teachers younger than 46 to those older than 46 is balanced. The university claimed that the distribution of teachers by age group was

appropriate (SAR: p. 64). Faculty members older than 46 had been largely educated in the systems supported by the former Communist block and formerly used Russian as a foreign language. They would work in universities for about 15 years and were reluctant to update their knowledge and methodology.

> Teachers who are older than 50 years old are mostly unable to use English to read and consult modern scientific journals. Their knowledge is for sure more out-of-date than that of teachers who can use English (Rector 3).

The rector's opinion implies that the university prefers teachers who are under 50 years old. The average age of regular teachers at UP was 42, so in the view of the university, teacher seniority is a good indicator in the sense that academics are on average experienced and can adapt to the new environment. In fact, the percentage of teachers between 46 and 55 was the biggest, accounting for 47.22%, and consequently the percentage of those older than 50 must be high. That is why the rector believed that UP could not enter a new phase until the next decade.

Table 5.16 Distribution of Teacher at UP by Age Group, 2006

Age	**Under 35**	**36-45**	**46-55**	**56-60**	**Over 60**	**Total**
Number of persons	148	100	238	14	4	504
Percentage	29.37	19.84	47.22	2.78	0.8	100

Source: UP SAR (p. 64)

The quality of student intakes at UP varies over a wide range. In 2011 and 2012, B.A. programs and B.Ed. in social sciences required entry marks between 13 and 17, which is an average level according to the scale of 30. B.Sc. programs required marks around 15 and 16. B.Ed. programs in mathematics, chemistry, and physics required higher entry marks, between 17 and 20, which is a good level. In the heyday of universities of pedagogy from 1999 to mid-2000s, entry marks for B.Ed. in natural sciences and mathematics were between 20 and 24[30], which are very good and excellent grades. These numbers mean the quality of student intakes at UP has been reducing recently. The trend is even more downward.

[30] Sai Gon Giai Phong Newspaper, http://www.sggp.org.vn/giaoduc/2010/4/224013/, retrieved on 11 January 2013.

> Since two years ago, the university's entrance exam marks, in some fields of study, have been in a tendency of reduction. In upcoming years, the university will face difficulty with enhancing quality (Rector 3).

In 2012, very few students at top high schools in Ho Chi Minh City submitted applications to universities of pedagogy and no one among 400 grade-12 students at a high school in Hanoi applied to this field of study[31].

MOET and Regulations

The university is under the direct management of MOET. This means MOET allocates public money to UP, supervises its actions and ratifies its policies. In Vietnam, laws and national policies often use vague language and leave many spaces for supervising agencies to release sub-documents to regulate subordinates. The gap in the regulatory system creates conditions for the abuse of power. MOET can command HEIs to obey detailed prescriptions in particular circumstances. The interviewees at UP provided many insights into MOET's arbitrary imposition. "In undergraduate training, exam paper sheets are still delivered by MOET", said Dean 1. The legal documents specify that the rectors of universities have the right to award degrees. In practice, this means that the rectors decide how many students will graduate and inform MOET of the number of degree testimonials needed; after receiving the MOET approval, the rectors sign decisions on awarding degrees (Head of Office 3).

> MOET is keeping the right to print degree testimonials. I do not dare to discuss this issue further. Annually, the university has to buy testimonials from MOET. Now, you can understand the matter (Rector 3).

The state management of the public sector, including the higher education system, is so subtle and complicated that even a senior academic (Dean 1) did not recognize (or pretended not to recognize) the basis of the policy formulation.

> I have a perception that MOET does not have expertise in management, so it has not designed a sound education system … At the macro level, the government acknowledges problems in the system and has strategies, but the practice and implementation is ineffective. There is corruption in the process of acquiring public funding; big projects have been delivered to universities in the North (Dean 1).

[31] Inspection Magazine, http://www.thanhtravietnam.vn/vi-VN/News/thongtintonghop/giaoduc/2012/04/23788.aspx, retrieved on 19 January 2013.

In the view of the dean, the government seems to be CPV and the National Assembly. The dean did not criticize the top state bodies, but expressed dissatisfaction with the executive bodies, such as MOET. Actually, MOET is a body of the government. The dean was motivated to criticize MOET because this agency directly interfered in the running of the university. The dean's opinion about the governing mechanism in the higher education system is just one of the plentiful examples of the unclear responsibilities of governmental bodies in Vietnam.

There is a consistent pattern in the responses of the informants at UT, US and UP. The persons responsible for top management in universities, including rectors and heads of offices, rarely criticized MOET. These persons are holding managerial posts, so they conform to managerial norms and interests. A number of deans gave gentle criticisms of the centralized management. Critical opinions like those given by the dean at UP did not frequently happen. The evidence given by the rector and dean at UP together with the government policy on access expansion without corresponding public funding described in Section 4.4.1 are indications of state mismanagement. There were several essays describing the status of Vietnamese higher education as a crisis and blaming the crisis on state management (Hoang T., 2008; Vallely & Wilkinson, 2008).

Like the opinions of interviewees at UT and US, interviewees at UP advocated the line of granting more autonomy to universities. Meanwhile, they mentioned the risks of increased university autonomy and requested an effective oversight system before giving universities more autonomy in decision-making.

Labor Market for School Teachers

Table 5.17 shows that UP expanded both full-time and part-time training in the period between 2001 and 2005. The scale of full-time training did not increase much, 8,683 in 2005 compared with 8,209 in 2001, while part-time training went up faster at a rate of 9.4% per year, 10,162 compared with 6,904. There were less part-time students than the full-time in 2001, but the situation reversed in 2002. From 2002 onwards, the number of part-time students surpassed that of full-time.

UP's SAR provided statistics up to the year 2005, so the researcher had to collect information in order to explore the recent status of training and the pattern of student enrollment. Table 5.18 shows that full-time enrollment quotas increased by 10% per year

from 2007-2012. Following the trend of the previous period, the part-time enrollments would increase much faster than the full-time. There are a number of reasons for concern about the training expansion at UP because several failures of the labor market for school teachers have been observed.

Table 5.17 Undergraduate Students at UP, 2001-2005

Types of Students	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Full-time	8,209	8,554	8,818	8,980	8,683
Part-time	6,904	8,788	9,592	10,497	10,162
Total	15,113	17,342	18,410	19,477	18,845

Source: UP SAR (p. 11)

First, the excess of teachers in urban areas and lack of teachers in rural and disadvantaged areas has existed for decades in Vietnam (Nguyen T.B., 2012). Teaching students at UP often come from provinces and are expected to go back home and fill in the teacher force in the provinces. However, many UP graduates do not want to go back to their home provinces. Demand for high school teachers in big cities is saturated.

Table 5.18 Enrollment Quotas of University Students at UP, 2007-2012

Years	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Enrolment quota	2,350	2,700	3,000	3,000	3,500	3,800

Sources: Collected from websites about NUEE

Second, the working conditions of school teachers have been discouraging. The preliminary findings of a state-level research project on teacher education show that teachers were discouraged due to poor remuneration and that a remarkable proportion of teachers (40%) would not have chosen to study teacher education (Nguyen T.B., 2012). The teaching profession is one of the lowest paid jobs in Vietnam; hence, the exempted tuition is no longer a sufficient benefit to stimulate good students, especially those live in big cities, to go to universities of pedagogy.

Third, corruption in the education sector, especially recruitment of school teachers, is widespread. The Newspaper of Vietnamese Education reported that teacher candidates had to give bribes for jobs at public schools[32]. A manager responsible for training matters at UP

[32] Newspaper of Vietnamese Education, http://giaoduc.net.vn/Giao-duc-24h/Tuyen-sinh/Vi-sao-ngay-cang-it-thi-sinh-chon-nganh-su-pham/151126.gd, retrieved on 19 January 2013.

reported to the newspaper that in order to attract good students to institutions of pedagogy "employment policy needs to be changed. Teacher recruitment needs to be fair. Teachers need pay at a level sufficiently covering decent living conditions."

The labor market for school teachers is distorted. Therefore, although UP succeeded in persuading MOET to expand enrollment quotas, the increase may not continue. Interviewees at UP specified the poor managerial capability of MOET; hence, if the university thought only about the short-term benefits and campaigned MOET to accept its mediocre practices, the university's development would be unsustainable.

However, there are two bright points in the job market for school teachers. Along with the improvement in living standards and increasing demand for better general education, the demand for university-level teachers in kinder-gardens, primary and lower secondary schools is increasing. Teachers at pre-education schools in Vietnam only need professional certificates. The required qualifications for the primary and lower secondary education levels are college-level degrees. Previously, UP trained teachers for only high schools. The university began offering full-time university-level programs in primary education in 1995 and in early childhood education in 1999. Enrollments in these study programs are the highest among other programs at UP. In addition, UP continues to open new study programs; two new programs opened after 2006 were computer science and defense /security education.

The prospect of in-service training is promising to UP. Enrollments in university-level part-time education, which consists of an in-service form, increased rapidly (Table 5.17). In the last 5 years, the university has opened a large number of in-service degree courses in early childhood, primary, and physical education to serve existing school teachers. With its leading position in teacher education, current teachers in the south of Vietnam are most likely to choose life-long learning provided by UP in order to learn up-to-date pedagogical knowledge and methods. In-service learners have jobs, so their outlook on the teaching profession is often positive.

Other HEIs and Competition

The field of teacher training in Vietnam is unique in that the full-time mode is fully subsidized by the state, so UP is not under the pressure of market competition in full-time teacher education. MOET and other ministries will define the required number of school

teachers and then order UP to produce such a number of prospective teachers. In line with the policy of higher education expansion, universities of pedagogy increased in number, and many colleges of pedagogy in provinces were given the label of university. In addition, some comprehensive universities also opened a department of education within their structure. This phenomenon led to a greater number of pedagogical graduates and an excess of school teachers in big cities. It might happen that MOET would restrain teacher education enrollments in the near future. That means the magnitude of full-time teacher training at UP might be uncertain.

The political position of UP in the higher education system might be secured, but the social recognition of its production is weakening. Processes at the University of Education in Hanoi have proved a better mode of pre-service teacher training. The attractiveness of the teaching career is reducing. The quality of UP's entrants is reducing. UP is losing in the competition for the best students with universities outside the field of pedagogy and tends to be defeated in competition with universities providing the "3 plus 1" teacher education mode.

The leading position in the field of pedagogy contributes to the large scale of continuing education at UP. The university did not release statistics and information about part-time training, so it is difficult to judge the status of teaching in this mode. With its modest academic capacity (Table 5.15) and overexpansion of part-time training as argued by a head of office in the next section on "Expanding the Scale and Scope of Teaching", it is possible that the university provided lower quality in this training mode. Therefore, if UP did not improve part-time training to a better level, it might not maintain the existing position in the competitive market of continuing teacher education.

c. Organizational Actions

Mission Statements

UP does not show mission statements on the website. The university claimed that it is "one of the leading universities in Vietnam, a prestigious address of producing high quality products of training and research serving the entire education sector and especially Southern provinces" (SAR: p.13). UP's mission is less challenging than UT's and US's because it only aims at domestic recognition. The university did not state its vision and admitted that it faced difficulty in designing a long-term strategy and in defining mid-term

goals. It acknowledged that the management of the university in the new era was challenging; the university staff did not contribute valuable ideas to formulate mission and goals (SAR: p.18). This fact indicates that managerial capability and leadership at UP are limited.

Given its current academic staff, the continued opening of mass study programs and expansion of part-time training will lead to negligence of high quality teaching and a high student-teacher ratio. In addition, the decreasing attraction of the teaching profession has been undermining the quality of student intake. These two factors are countering the goal of high quality training at UP.

With respect to the research mission, UP SAR identified an advantage in education science. However, this strength was not highlighted by putting it in the mission statement. The features of a professional training institution makes UP disadvantaged in conducting discipline-based research; therefore, without an emphasis on the strength of the research area, the university may get lost in determining what to do to achieve the research mission. At present, the university does not have any full professors who can undertake demanding and large-scale research projects.

Ideas of Teaching Quality

Informants at UP often deemed the teaching quality as conforming to MOET's standards of teaching and learning. Both deans in the interview sample at UP said that examinations organized were strict. These exams include NUEE and student learning tests. Strictly assuring learning standards is less often observed at Vietnamese universities since the universities have expanded provision and enrolled less capable students. Leading universities may maintain conventional standards of learning despite non-compliance in some academic departments. The two deans were directing two long-standing departments, which are no longer interested in expanding undergraduate programs but rather giving more focus to graduate training. Another teacher also shared the same opinion. The opinions of informants at UP indicate that it is becoming difficult for Vietnamese universities to obtain the conventional academic standards of elite higher education. In the context of insufficient teacher salary while demand for university credentials is very high, the logical action of universities is to acquire additional revenue by increasing class size. These facts indicates that academic self-governance in the view of the UP interviewees is

mostly to maintain the fixed standards rather than to follow the intrinsic motivation of excellent quality.

While interviewees at UT and US talked about the relationship between quality and efficiency in teaching provision, no one at UP raised the issue of efficiency. It is possible that the state funds all costs of full-time teacher education, so the pricing of teaching does not make sense for UP. Because MOET strictly regulates public funding for full-time teacher education, the teacher pay in this training mode is set low and inadequate for teaching cost. Part-time training has not been regulated and is a marginalized activity at universities, so there is a big difference in quality in full-time and part-time modes. A head of office did not trust internal quality assurance and supported external judgment of teaching outcomes.

> Assessment done by universities is just to fulfill procedural matters. The products of a training process need to be judged by society. At annual meetings among the university and the directors of Education Departments in provinces, the directors often appreciate graduates from this university (Head of Office 1).

Like the interviewees at UT, evaluating teaching outcomes based on employer feedback and explicit outcomes were commonly agreed among interviewees at UP. Four out of seven interviewees spoke of the judgments of the directors of Education Departments in provinces on UP graduates. Because the university has not carried out employer surveys, it did not have feedback from school heads who know better the ability of graduates.

A dean at UP used a very conventional notion of quality of education. He gave a very short definition of quality and did not try to prove the presence of these aspects in UP.

> Training quality is determined by the quality of incoming students, quality of academic staff, and quality of curriculum (Dean 5).

He went on to mention several weaknesses of the current mode of pre-service teacher training and of the education sector at large, and blamed these weaknesses for institutional factors and macro management.

All the interviewees hold the perspective that assuring the quality of each element in the organization of training will lead to quality. They frequently regarded staff development and curriculum innovation as the determinants of teaching quality. The interviewees

argued that the quality of full-time teaching was guaranteed. They attributed the low commitment of teachers to low teacher salaries.

It seems that people in Vietnam are trying to find direct and objective measures of teaching quality. Leading universities all say that they have good academic staff and make efforts to ensure teaching quality. However, the media and observational literature strongly criticized teaching quality at universities. A head of office at UP indicated that Vietnam lacks thorough research on the status quo of higher education.

> If I had to assess the quality, I would need information about indicators of quality. Now, for me, to judge the training quality, the only source of information is employer feedback. Localities in which our graduates are working claim that the university graduates are good. How good graduates are is still unclear. To answer your question of how to judge teaching quality at this university, we need to have research on the quality 5 years ago and compare the current state with the past. Unfortunately, we do not have such information (Head of Office 3).

Expanding Scale and Scope of Teaching

A distinctive pattern of teaching provision expansion at UP is proliferation of new degree programs, or the expansion of teaching scope. As the organizational chart shows, in 2012 UP had 19 academic departments and 32 bachelor programs. It opened five new teacher education programs in early childhood, physical, special, computer science, and education management in the late 1990s and eleven new programs in sciences in the 2000s. The program in early childhood education was relatively attractive and had entry marks of around 17. The remaining teacher education programs, despite being newly established, had entry marks around 15. These facts demonstrate that the expansion of teaching scope at UP has not been in line with the goal of excellent quality.

Another noticeable feature is a rapid expansion of teaching scale, especially part-time training. As analyzed in the environment of student intake in Section b, part-time training increased gradually in the beginning and surpassed full-time training in 2002. The interviewees confessed that the expansion of part-time training was not planned but a reaction to the new environment in order to survive.

> An increase in training scale to an unacceptable level is a violation. Informal training scale should not exceed formal one. This limit is to ensure the quality. The enrolment at a department in this university reached 1000 students. [The number of

> teachers at this department was 20 in 2008.] The university accepts the business because it is an income-generating source (Head of Office 3).

The expansion of part-time training, of which a majority are school leavers who did not pass NUEE, is a common phenomenon in Vietnam. This led to a reduction in the social trust in the quality of this training mode. In November 2011, Nam Dinh province announced that in recruiting new civil servants they did not accept applications with only educational degrees acquired from part-time training. Up to October 2012, there were other six provinces following the act of Nam Dinh.[33] The phenomenon triggered a hot debate and put MOET under pressure to review its policy on part-time training.

Quality Assurance and Curriculum Innovation

UP's 2006 SAR reports that after MOET released the national curriculum frameworks in 2001, UP renewed the specialized curricula by consulting the curricula of prestigious foreign universities and other Vietnamese universities (p. 30). Incremental curriculum innovation at UP was for the most part initiated by committed academics. Several long-standing academic departments and their faculty members tailored curricula and upgraded subject matter knowledge.

> We often tailor the curriculum to meet social demands and include new knowledge. We have consulted the curricula of Hanoi National University of Education, University of Science [in NU in Hochiminh City], University of Science [in Hanoi], and those of universities in foreign countries such as the former Soviet Union, the Czech Republic, the U.S., and Germany (Dean 5).

UP has not designed a shared curriculum for all degree programs. The university has the same difficulty with respect to provision of diverse disciplines like US. It admitted that some academic departments did not pay attention to curriculum renewal, and did not identify tasks and personnel carrying out the activity (SAR: p. 34).

The modest effort and achievement of UP in reforming curricula can be attributable to several factors. The nature of a professional training institution limits the function of knowledge enquiry. Undergraduate curricula at UP require a lower amount of academic learning. UP is allowed to offer doctoral education in only pedagogical specialties. Owing

[33] http://www.baomoi.com/Ve-vu-tuyen-cong-chuc-khong-nhan-bang-tai-chuc-Bo-Noi-vu-se-co-y-kien-voi-cac-dia-phuong/108/9470225.epi, retrieved on 15 January 2013.

to the feature of less focus on disciplinary knowledge, innovation in subject knowledge is less likely to happen at UP.

Second, the teaching profession is not attractive to ambitious high school students. UP's entrants are often average. UP graduates often work at general education schools that constitute a major part of the education sector. That means the education sector recruits merely an average workforce. In such a context, the education sector is considered as one of the least advanced industries in Vietnam. Therefore, UP has not received high pressure of the teaching professional practices, so it has not been forced to innovate like other universities, for example UT.

Third, apart from teaching other income-generating activities for UP are very limited. The university has hardly any income from research, consultancy, and technology transfer (Table 5.14). Additional income from research projects going to UP faculty is also low. Meanwhile, the demand for university credentials in pedagogy is high, creating less pressure of making changes at UP.

Due to the policy of tuition exemption for full-time teaching students, MOET keeps strict track of the number of students. The number of full-time teaching students was closely controlled. Learning conditions of this training mode were more likely to be guaranteed. Full-time training is the traditional activity of the university, so conventional standards are likely to be followed and maintained. However, UP did not fulfill minimum conditions for part-time teaching, producing low-quality graduates in this training mode.

In the situation of insufficient financial resources for improving teaching conditions, a wise path is to stimulate student motivation to learn. However, UP was not highly concerned about providing students with an interactive online learning system. There were very few learning clubs for students at UP. A typical contest in the field of teacher training is of teaching professional competence. A few departments at UP organized these contests. In spite of this, the university SAR did not report them. It might be the case that these contests did not produce a considerable positive effect on student ability and achievements, so the university did not pay attention to it.

Symbolic and Responsive Management

UP did not have any practices that could be considered an initiative with which other universities view as a good example and want to follow. The implementation of MOET's requirements at UP lagged behind other leading universities. The university started transference to CTS in the academic year 2010-2011, but many objectives were foreseen to be out of reach.

> The number of learning tutors is insufficient. One tutor is responsible for 60 students. Therefore, the CTS is formalistic and not substantive. There are also insufficient lecturers for expanding the availability of optional courses, and consequently optional courses are limited. Classrooms become insufficient when the class size reduces (Dean 1).

Conducting student evaluation on courses has been recommended in the MOET institutional accreditation since 2007. While the other three universities in this study have already conducted this survey throughout the institutions, the student survey has been implemented irregularly in several departments at UP.

> We have not carried out student evaluation on courses in the whole university because we have not developed a computer-based information system… Some departments have collected student feedback but via paper-based surveys rather than online ones (Rector 3).

The inertia in applying new practices and making changes was blamed on the lack of financial resources. In order to be granted project funding for housing construction, a university is required to contribute its own money as part of the investment in the project. UP did not have enough money to contribute, so it missed the project on improving buildings and offices.

> Because the university self-generated income is limited, it does not have many options of using money. The university even did not have 10 billion VNDs [approximately $500,000] to co-invest in a project of housing building. Most of self-generated income is spent on teacher pay in order to maintain it at an acceptable level (Head of Office 1).

The choice of spending money on raising income for staff instead of investing in teaching and learning conditions is pragmatic. However, this action of Vietnamese universities is common and reasonable. Informants at UP and US wished to have better salaries. In

addition, maintaining a good income level for employees will result in staff support of managers and consolidate the managers' position in the current service term and even the continuation in the next term. However, several senior academics at UP, US, and UT were against the aggressive pursuit of income goal.

The rector at UP mentioned the general context constraining the feasibility of innovation in universities and of reforming the whole higher education system. He told a story about a teacher leaving UP due to low pay and insufficient working facilities in the university.

> There was a teacher graduated from a university in New York coming back to work at our university. We did not have a good laboratory supporting him doing experiments. He had to teach English at language centers in the evening. He moved to the International University in NU where paid him better and provided him with a modern laboratory (Rector 3).

The acceptance of conventional management practice at UP was very high. The managers recognized the problems, especially staffing, but did not tackle them. It seems that the existence, operation, and development of the university are mostly determined by the context. In other words, organizational management at UP is symbolic.

> The department of Russian language admits about 15 students a year but it maintains more than 30 teachers. The ratio of administrators to staff is now 300/800, whereas the development plan specified this ratio as 300/1400 (Head of Office 1).

The university responded to the needs of university staff for income and the market demand for teacher education degrees by expanding teaching provision. This action demonstrated responsive management at UP and helped UP to survive in the short-term. However, provision expansion at UP did not produce efficiency. Although the student-teacher ratio at UP was relatively high, which is assumed to be cost saving, the teacher pay was unsatisfactory. In addition, the consequence of the provision of low quality part-time training created social distrust in this type of degree, weakening social recognition for universities providing this type of training. It is highly likely that the pursuit of income generation from teaching without a guarantee of quality would not last long.

UP has not examined the external environment surrounding it. The interviewees rarely mentioned the pressure of competition. There are several prospects for its development such as in-service teacher education and education research, but the university has not yet

designed a plan to foster these activities at a higher level. This fact indicates the absence of strategic management at UP.

d. Outcomes and Survival of UP

UP primarily depends on state funding, which constituted 61% of its total financial resources in 2010. One of the distinctive features of UP is that tuition income from full-time teacher training are subsidized by the state. It is highly likely that this factor contributes to low attention to the efficiency of teaching provision and to the needs of students at UP. While the resource environment of the university has been stable, the social environment surrounding it contains many potential crises. Three main unfavorable factors in the environment are ineffective teacher training mode, discouraging labor market for school teachers, and decreasing entrant quality. The only favorable element in the environment is the high demand for in-service teacher education.

Due to its established position, academic self-governance at UP has been maintained in long-standing departments. The quality of full-time training is guaranteed, but there is rarely excellent quality. For its short-term survival, the university has deviated from its development plan and expanded part-time training to an unacceptable level, but the efficiency of this action has been low. A common behavior at UP is blaming the limited achievements of the university on the external context. The university has been stuck in an out-of-date model of teacher education, which hinders the university from becoming a real academic institution. Management at UP has been committed to the past. The dominant management style is symbolic. The responsive management is present but not successful with respect to the goals of excellent quality, efficiency and long-term outcomes. Therefore, the survival prospect of UP is threatened.

5.4 University of Economics

a. Description of the University

The University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City (UE) is the youngest university among the four universities under study. It was established in 1976 by incorporating several faculties of economics and law from different universities in Southern Vietnam. From 1996 to October 2000, UE was a member university in NU. Since November 2000, it has been an independent university under the direct administration of MOET. At present, the university

specializes in economics and management science, accommodating twelve academic departments and enrolling 50,000 students[34]. It offers 23 bachelor programs and no college-level education. In 2007, the university was training 2,926 master and 186 doctoral students. These numbers in 2012 were 4,310 and 318 respectively, which is extremely high.

UE has six campuses scattered at different places in the very inner city and a land spot in district 8 that has not been developed into a campus. The lack of campus area at UE is even worse than at UP. Therefore, the university has to rent outside sites for classrooms. The rented sites are even bigger than the site owned by the university.

Social sciences do not require high-cost physical resources, but require multimedia rooms for simulating practical work and job experience. The university is highly concerned about investment in audiovisual aids, computer rooms, and simulation software to support teaching and learning. It installed multimedia projectors in most classrooms on campuses so that teachers can transmit information intensively and illustrate lectures with lively examples and case studies (UE SAR: p. 139). Funded by an education development project of the Netherlands, UE has one of the best collections of economics books in English.

Because Vietnam has adopted a market economy for only more than two decades, modern economics and management science is new for the country. The expertise of these sciences is limited. However, the expanding market economy needs a highly educated workforce dealing with trading and service activity, thus resulting in high demand for courses on business and management. UE's selectivity for full-time degree programs in banking, accounting, corporate finance, and foreign trade is very high. The demand for part-time training in these degree programs is also very high. The intensity of teaching provision positively correlates with university revenue and teacher income. UE is among the richest universities in Vietnam. In 2008, the average income level for teachers at UE was 14 million VNDs, while in other universities it was about 4 million VNDs (Hoa Sen University, 2011).[35]

On the website, UE published a mission of providing highly qualified academic programs and organizational culture represented by core values and codes of behavior and conduct. It

[34] UE website, http://www.ueh.edu.vn/Category/gioi-thieu/luoc-su-ueh, retrieved on 23 January 2013.
[35] Website of Hoa Sen University, http://tintuc.hoasen.edu.vn/vi/184/danh-cho-bao-chi/giang-vien-truong-nao-thu-nhap-cao-nhat, retrieved on 2 November 2012.

identified four core values: “understand the needs of students and the society, transfer results of scientific research to organizations and corporations; develop a force of highly professional, dynamic, responsible and virtuous staff; stimulate technological application in working, teaching, and learning; and pride and develop UE’s traditional values”. These statements do not indicate the common practices of the teachers and students, but rather the university’s expectations. The university has not specified if the needs of students and society are for the quantity or quality of service. The student-teacher ratio and teaching practices at UE, which will be explored in Section b, demonstrate the university’s low effort to realize the goal of quality. In addition, UE stated that “the mission of the university is suitable to the situation of becoming more and more financially independent” (SAR: p.46). Although the university did not explicitly speak of the relationship between financial resources and goals and actions, this statement implies that value for money is a guiding principle at UE. Because there are contradictions among the university’s statements, practices, and hidden components of education provision, a commonly agreed culture at UE is contestable. However, university actions and the interviewee opinions demonstrate that the most salient feature of UE is the commercialization of teaching.

b. Organizational Environment

Information System and Organizational Structure

The Vietnamese home page of the university website is colorful and eye-catching. Navigating icons are to present news and announcements arranged according to issues and audiences. Important features of the university are mainly presented under the column menu of introduction, which is comprised of six sections: brief history, mission-vision, UE culture, organizational composition, training system, and campuses. Under the section on mission-vision, in addition to necessary statements about goals, the university stated its core values.

Another navigating column is to present what the university judges to be important. This column includes degree verification, libraries, statistics, disclosed documents, and a link to a commercial bank. Up to 2012, disclosed documents were available for academic years 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012 and the section of statistics was empty. In January 2013, the previous disclosed documents were removed; instead, disclosed documents for 2012-2013 were uploaded. The section on statistics requires a password for access. These

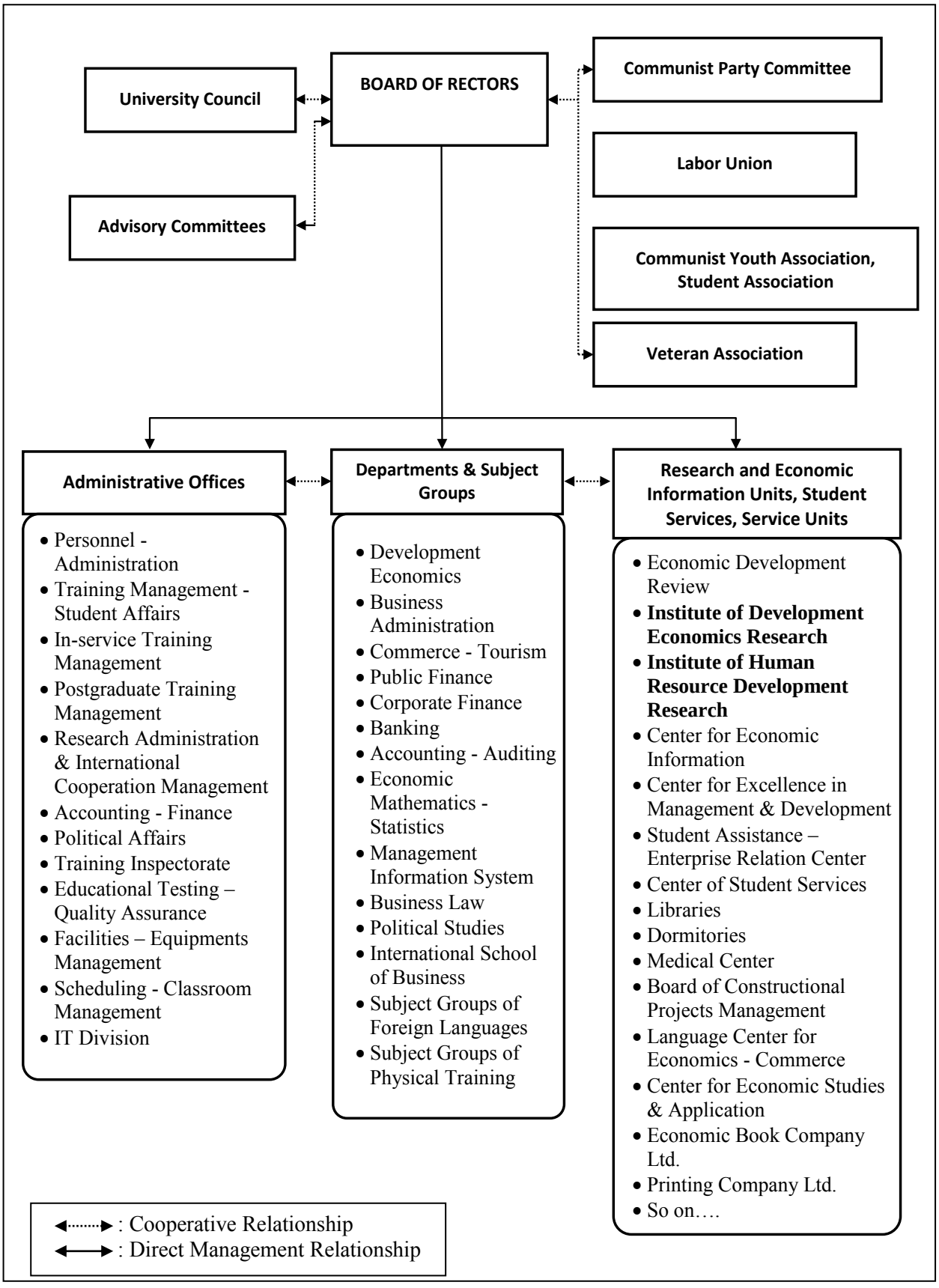
changes in the information structure at UE are a strong indication of the deliberation of the university in information exposure.

The English version home page has fewer words than the Vietnamese and includes the university's mission, core values, common goals, and specific targets. Descriptions of the areas of activity in the English and Vietnamese versions are quite similar. The salient impression of the university's online information is rhetorical and lacking facts about student achievements.

UE presents the university council in its organizational chart. This body with 21 members was active between 2006 and 2011 (SAR: p. 52-53). However, the range of activity of the university council was narrow. It gave resolutions on institutional development plans and operational regulations before the rector submitted them to MOET. It approved the internal guidelines of expenditure, investment, and facility purchases. As indicated in the organizational chart, the university council has a cooperative relationship with the board of rectors rather than a leadership and decision-making role. The Institutional Party Committee (IPC) has an overall leadership role as prescribed in the Constitution, but UE specifies it to be a cooperative role. The interpretation of UE can be understandable. In normal situations, the intervention of IPC is subtle and implicit, and does not show compulsiveness. The board of rectors at UE includes a rector and four vice-rectors.

Despite accommodating 50,000 students, the number of administrative and academic units at UE is moderate, around a dozen units for each type. The number of administrative staff was modest, with 350 administrators out of 1,000 staff (Disclosed document 2011). It is interesting that UE has a specialized division responsible for coordinating the use of classrooms. Normally, the Office of Academic Affairs assigns classrooms, but at UE the task of allocating space has become so intensive and important that the university needs a clear-cut division in charge of this task.

Figure 5.4 UE Organizational Chart



Source: Adapted from UE's SAR 2007 and website

The number of peripheral units is plentiful. UE classifies three types of peripheral units: research and economic information centers, services to students, and companies and service units. Research institutes and economic scientific information centers are mainly to search for and carry out contracts on research and technology transfer funded by third parties. The personnel of research institutes and scientific centers are mostly university staff. This type of peripheral unit is a way of connecting the university with society and connecting university faculty with reality, as well as helping faculty to gain additional income (SAR: p. 125). The primary function of these units is closely associated with academic missions and positively contributes to the university profile.

The second type of peripheral unit is to provide students with internship places, job promotion, and other services such as library, housing, parking, cafeteria, and photocopy. It is interesting that in UE's 2007 SAR, libraries, dormitories, and the medical center belonged to the structure of administrative offices, but on the university website, they are now classified as service units. These activities can produce some revenue to self-maintain, so UE's classification is sensible. UE does not receive public funding for its operating costs, so the university may charge higher fees for these services. However, the main purpose of these service centers is to create a convenient learning environment for students.

The third type of periphery refers to those with the primary function of earning money. UE has various training and consulting centers offering foreign languages in economics and business specializations, accounting skills and software, business laws, and related services. These service centers are initiated by academics and administered by departments, and submit a proportion of revenue to the university. Their main purpose is to take advantage of the trademark of the university and departments to generate income. UE has three professional for-profit units, namely companies. Economic Book Company Limited was established in 2006 to sell cultural publications, magazines, books, and office stationery. Printing Company Limited was established in 2005 to print and design printing products. A joint-stock company has been newly established and involves diverse lines of business.

It seems that UE conforms to MOET's regulation of Three Discloses rigorously. It released the required documents every year since the validity of Three Discloses in 2010.These disclosed documents are very helpful for learning about the status quo of the university.

The university's regular release of crucial figures on training in its disclosed documents mitigates its lack of statistics. However, a closer look into the items in these disclosed documents reveals that the statistics on student numbers and income sources were not always available. The university disclosed enrollments for 2010 and 2011, but only the total of full-time students for 2012. Data on income sources were available for 2009 and 2011. The disclosure of asymmetric information makes it difficult to infer the real state of the university from numeric data. The partial conformation to Three Discloses is common among Vietnamese universities. It is a wise tactic to avoid the displeasure and punishment of MOET. Within the context of MOET's low capacity to oversee the system, this kind of behavior still helps universities to hide their violation of conditions of teaching provision.

Public Budget Cut

After the promulgation of Decree 43/2006, UE was chosen to be one of the five universities withdrawn from public funding for regular expenditure. The state only funds the maintenance and supplement of facilities, so the university has to generate revenue to pay its staff.

> The state asked UE to be financially independent in 2006. That meant the state stopped funding regular expense. The state asks the university to self-generate income but does not let it be independent in doing it [i.e. setting tuition] (Rector 4).

From 2007 onwards, the share of tuition income increased radically. From 2002 - 2006, the percentages of tuition fee income were about 30% (Table 5.19), but in 2009 and 2011, these percentages were 74.1% and 78% respectively (Table 5.20). In two years, tuition fee income increased by 41%, from 195 in 2009 to 275 billion VNDs in 2011. UE has the largest tuition income among the four universities in this study.

Table 5.19 Percentage of Tuition Fees Income from Full-time Students at UE, 2002-2006

Years	Total income (million VNDs)	Tuition and fees (million VNDs)	Percentage
2002	91,992	35,690	39%
2003	102,147	29,173	29%
2004	113,601	29,642	26%
2005	132,782	35,851	27%
2006	138,149	39,019	28%

Source: UE SAR in September 2007

Table 5.20 UE Income in 2009 and 2011

	2009		2011	
	VND, millions	**%**	**VND, millions**	**%**
Total income	263,000	100	352,497	100
State budget	13,000	5.0	7,877	2.2
Tuition and fees	195,000	74.1	275,000	78.0
Research sales and technology transfer	-	-	1,620	0.5
Other sources	68,000	20.9	68,000	19.3

Source: UE disclosed documents in 2010 and 2012

Table 5.21 Items and Rates of Tuition and Fees for the Academic Year 2011-12 at UE

Mode of training	**VND, thousands**
I. Tuition of bachelor training	
Full-time bachelor training Mass program, per academic year Mass program, per credit (an average student can finish 40 credit point a year => VND 4,800,000 a year) High quality program, per academic year	 3,550 120 25,000
Bachelor second degree training Per academic year Per credit	 5,325 180
Part-time bachelor training	5,325
II. Fees for bachelor training	
1. Dormitory	Governmental regulations
2. NUEE	Governmental regulations
3. Documents for NUEE	UE's prescription
4. Preparatory courses for NUEE	UE's prescription
5. Reassessing the final examination papers of courses and programs	UE's prescription
6. Student identification card and academic archive	UE's prescription
7. Taking examinations again	UE's prescription
8. Documents for the graduation exams	UE's prescription
9. Certificates of physical education	UE's prescription
10. Certification of degrees	UE's prescription
11. Procedures of moving to another class or university	UE's prescription
12. Taking a course again	UE's prescription
13. Doing a graduation project again	UE's prescription

Source: UE disclosed documents in 2011

The university actively campaigned for adjusting the national tuition framework towards full cost recovery (SAR: p. 45). The SAR reports that in order to raise revenue UE strengthened and expanded activities in research and community services, and established new units doing business activities, while also expanding international cooperation in order

to expand training (ibid: p. 45). These statements indicate that the government policy on forcing the university to be more financially independent led it to explicitly pursue commercialization of its services and products.

The government fixed the tuition of full-time mass bachelor programs in the academic year 2011-2012 at the level of VND 3,550,000 (Table 5.21). UE charged part-time tuition at a level of VND 5,325,000, more than a half full-time. In addition, the university imposed 13 fees on undergraduate students, covering almost all costs of administration and services. Of course, other universities also collect fees, but the number of items is fewer and the rates are lower. Income from learner payment at UE is dominant, so the transparency of finance is highly essential. That is why UE had to release the list of tuition rates and fees in its disclosed documents.

The university provided statistics about finance in the disclosed documents in 2011, but did not provide the total number of students and the number of students by training mode, thus limiting information about the structure of tuition payment at UE. The heading "other sources" in the accounting balance sheets can include various items depending on discretional treatments by different universities. Therefore, the details of UE's income are still mysterious.

Students and Teachers

Table 5.22 shows that in comparison with the large student number, the number of regular teachers was thin despite an increase from 479 in 2007 to 601 in 2012. UE hired 213 visiting teachers in 2007. Thus, the student-teacher ratio was 68, more than twice the standard ratio of 25 for teaching of social sciences prescribed by MOET[36]. That means UE seriously violated the conditions of teaching and learning.

It is quite clear that UE wanted to recruit as many students as possible. UE full-time enrollments always surpassed enrollment quotas. In 2004-2005, the excess was 30%. The number of part-time students was higher than that of full-time in 2007, 20,707 compared with 18,948 (Table 2.22). It is easy to understand this action of the university. It is forced to generate revenue, and the easiest way to generate income is to expand training and collect tuition fees. The question to UE is that what level of revenue is high enough?

[36] Correspondence 1325/BGDĐT, 09 February 2007

Table 5.22 Number of Bachelor Students, Number and Qualifications of Teachers at UE

	2007	2010	2012
Bachelor student	39,655	-	45,500*
Full-time	18,948	-	31,598
Part-time	20,707	-	**13,902***
Regular teacher	479	538	601
Percentage of Master	39.7%	47.6 %	53.4%
Percentage of Ph.D.	29.6%	23,0%	24%
Full professors	5	7	7
Associate professor	29	36	43
Visiting teacher	213	147	-
Student-teacher ratio*	68*	-	-

*Source: UE SAR 2007, disclosed documents 2010 and 2012, *: own calculation*

Table 5.23 Applicants and Enrollments for Full-time Programs at UE, 2004-2011

School Year	Applicant	Enrollment quota	Enrollment	Minimum entrance mark	Average entrance mark
2004-2005	45,333	4,300	5,586	16.5	18.3
2005-2006	49,811	4,700	5,323	19.5	21.0
2006-2007	43,379	5,000	5,427	17.5	19.1
2007-2008	54,406	5,000	-	21.5	-
2008-2009	29,780	5,500	-	18.5	-
2009-2010	35,000	4,800	4,976*	19.5	-
2010-2011	24,604	4,000	4,626*	19.0	-
2011-2012	29,996	4,000	-	19.0	-

*Source: UE SAR 2007; *: disclosed documents 2010, 2011; 2007-2012: the Internet*[37]

Regarding student population, Table 5.23 shows that the minimum entrance marks for UE were quite high; hence, average entrance marks must also be high. This means the university has good students. Looking at the enrollments in the top study programs at UE, two clear tendencies can be seen: enrollments in accounting - auditing, banking, corporate finance, and international business, were large and stable, and the entrance marks of these study programs remained high over the years.

[37] Information about NUEE, *http://www.thongtintuyensinh.vn/Truong-Dai-hoc-Kinh-te-TPHCM_C51_D812.htm, retrieved on 12 November 2012.*

Teacher qualifications in UE have not improved in recent years. In the period between 2007 and 2010, the percentage of master degrees rose slightly, but that of Ph.D. holders decreased. On the website, the university stated that "UE's teaching staff have all been trained at high reputation institutions all over the world"[38]. The university is proud of its history and academic staff that give it a leading position in the field of economics and business administration in the South of Vietnam (SAR: p. 88). However, the meaning of "high reputation institutions" is very vague. As analyzed in the case study of UP, older faculty members were equipped with the out-of-date knowledge and methodology of the former Communist systems and are reluctant to upgrade qualifications. In addition, there is a considerable gap between the perceived status of a university in the system and its academic capability, and between the academic ability of Vietnamese universities and the internationally recognized levels. A teacher in economics gave more insights into the status quo of academic qualification.

> Economics has been taught in Vietnam for more than 20 years. In the early stage, teachers in economics were not equipped with systematic knowledge. We used to be taught by ourselves. Therefore, the field of economics now lacks qualified academic staff (Academic 6).

Critical judgments on academic capability at UE make sense. UE faculty has a good income level, but they have not upgraded their knowledge and skills. Economics is more regarded as a pure science, so knowledge is common regardless of the social contexts and political regimes. A dean gave straightforward opinions about corruption in the community of economists and in other academic communities as well.

> Having a professorship or not has nothing to do with difference in capability. Professor A [a personal name] is an example. I do not respect her. Professor B [a personal name] plagiarized a book of foreign authors… Awarding professorships in Vietnam is based on works done by copying, on book translation even without a comprehensive understanding of the books... on the 'front and back doors'. They have professorships but their scholarship is not equivalent (Dean 2).

This dean is in his mid forties and completed his master and doctoral degrees at overseas universities. He extremely criticized the older generation of faculty at UE. Thus, the academic self-governance of EU needs to be questioned.

[38] UE website, http://www.e.ueh.edu.vn/Category/introduction/history, retrieved on 06 January 2013.

> The size and the growth rate of the group of bad teachers are much greater than those of good teachers. In addition, some good teachers turn into bad teachers. Newly recruited teachers should not follow the previous generation. They should access international journals and learn up-to-date knowledge. If they wanted to be like the previous generation, they would become corrupted (Dean 2).

The dean's argument is completely true. The average age of academics at UE in 2007 was 45 (SAR: p. 18), which means there were more seniors than juniors. The dean distrusted the seniors, so academic staff is a disadvantage for the university. A dean at UT also mentioned the inertia resulting from ageing department chairs at UE. Information about faculty at UE given by the interviewees portrays an image opposite to the university statements. Because expert opinions are believed to be more reliable than official documents, the researcher concluded that the academic qualifications and ranks of UE faculty, to some extent, do not represent scholarly expertise.

MOET and Regulations

Under the enforcement of Decree 43/2006 on institutional autonomy for public service agencies, MOET asked UE to be critically independent in finances.

> We had to accept MOET's decision… MOET did not grant any favored treatment to the financially independent institutions, but it promised to reconsider in the course of implementation. As I saw since we carried out financial independence 5-6 years ago, no change has been made (Head of Office 2).

As prescribed in Decree 43/2006, institutions have been allowed to spend self-generated revenue without asking for approval. In terms of academic matters, UE is required to ask MOET for approval of important decisions on opening new study programs and student enrollments. The curricula must conform to the MOET curriculum frameworks. Like the common situation in Vietnam, the interviewees at UE claimed that fixed component accounting for 30-40% of curricula is suitable.

> MOET has the curriculum frameworks that prescribe compulsory parts of curricula and compulsory subjects. The university has autonomy in optional parts that are quite wide… I think autonomy in academic matters is high (Rector 4).

However, a dean criticized political influence in the content of curricula.

> Subjects on Marxism-Leninism are compulsory. In Vietnam, propaganda and education are not separated. Universities are not independent from MOET, and MOET is not independent from the Central Reasoning Committee (Dean 2).

The domain in which UE wanted more freedom is autonomy in decision-making, especially those can lead to chances for increasing revenue such as setting tuition. Like interviewees at the other universities, UE's rector and two academics also claimed that the state overseeing the system is necessary in Vietnam.

Labor Market for Business Graduates

UE has enjoyed a great advantage in the socioeconomic context since Vietnam implemented a market economy. Jobs in banking, finance, investment funds, foreign trade, insurance, real estate, and the like are widely available and offer high pay. Although the number of HEIs and study programs preparing professionals for these sectors has increased rapidly, the attractiveness of UE has not decreased. Table 5.24 shows that undergraduate enrollments grew regularly in the period from 2002 to 2010. Meanwhile, the entrance marks to UE remained high (Table 5.23).

Table 5.24 University Enrollments at UE, 2002-2003 to 2011-2012

	2002-03	**2003-04**	**2004-05**	**2005-06**	**2006-07**	**2011-12**
Full-time students	4,151	4,222	5,210	4,976	5,006	10,476
Part-time students	3,924	4,174	4,574	5,052	5,258	6,494
Total	8,075	8,396	9,784	10,028	10,264	16,970

Source: UE SAR, numbers in year 2011-2012 extracted from disclosed documents 2011

Apart from traditional students who attend university for the first degree in full-time training mode, UE has many other types of undergraduates. Table 5.25 illustrates that traditional students were less than non-traditional students, 4,626 compared with 12,344. That reflects that the labor market for UE graduates is very big and diverse.

Since the academic year 2011-2012, UE has offered two high quality programs in Corporate Finance and Banking. These high-quality programs are taught by UE faculty, providing good teaching conditions and consisting of a number of English-taught courses. The study program charges a tuition rate of VND 25,000,000, which is five times as high as the tuition rate of mass study programs.

Table 5.25 University Enrollment at UE by Training Mode in 2010

Full-time mode		**Part-time mode**				**Total**
Formal		**Formal**	**Informal**	**Informal**	**Informal**	
First degree	Transfer from college to university level	Second degree	First degree	Second degree	Transfer from college to university level	
4,626	2,571	3,099	4,075	325	2,094	16,970

Source: UE disclosed documents 2011

It is worth noting an emerging pattern in enrollment at UE. The discipline of economics is becoming more attractive to students because the awareness and the intellectual level of the citizens are increasing.

> Enterprises and state management agencies have been interested in both macro and microeconomics because they need knowledge about economic phenomena and events… Some students in our department have very high entrance scores. They choose economics because they really like it. Previously, the economics program recruited the worse students in the department. At present, the economics program attracts the best students (Academic 6).

This is very good news because it reflects a positive change in the social environment. Since Vietnam transitioned from an egalitarian society to a market economy, short-term economic values have been appreciated, while long-term and cultural values have been neglected. School leavers compete severely for a seat in universities to open the gate to well-paid jobs, rather than to pursue knowledge and their own interests. Therefore, the increasing appreciation of economics, a pure science, may signal that social disorders are gradually being identified. The balance among academic disciplines and better arrangement in higher education are therefore promising.

Market Competition in Business Education Provision

Private providers often offer study programs requiring low investment in physical resources, such as foreign languages, law, business and management-related majors. However, UE has not been confronted with high pressure of competition.

> We are under a little pressure. Previously, we were the only provider of the field of economics. At present, many other universities also offer the same programs, for example, the Economics School at NU, Open University, and private universities. I think Hoa Sen University is one of our strong competitors. Its tuition rate is higher

> so the university can improve teaching. We do not have such advantage. Our university is aware of competition with other institutions (Academic 6).

Although private universities are allowed to set tuition rates, this autonomy is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, higher tuition income helps private universities offer high pay to qualified teachers and provide better learning conditions to students. On the other hand, higher tuition rates discourage good students from choosing private universities. Private universities often have lower entry marks than public universities, and consequently are considered as producing low quality. Moreover, the historical and social status of long-standing public universities gives them advantages in competing with newly established universities. The academic legacy at long-standing universities helps them to attract leading and advanced qualified academics. Newly established universities need time to accumulate qualified personnel.

The academic claimed that Hoa Sen University was successful because it had the advantage of tuition-setting autonomy. In fact, the success of Hoa Sen University is largely attributed to another factor. This private university focused on preparing students with practical skills and on maintaining close contact with industries, so the graduates from Hoa Sen University often had good jobs. The example of Hoa Sen University indicates that the market competition between public and private universities in Vietnam is increasing.

In the case of UE, its top position in the market of domestic study programs in business and management has hardly been shaky in the short-term. The rector of UE was concerned about maintaining the gap rather than catching up with the global standards.

> The strongest pressure is to compete with ourselves. We are not satisfied with our training outcomes. Given limited resources, we still want to improve the quality of graduates. The problem is our physical infrastructure is poor, and we need more investment. That is why the university needs freedom in setting tuition (Rector 4).

The amount of financial income at UE was very large in comparison with other Vietnamese universities, but the rector still complained that it had limited resources. Behind this statement, he implied that the university wanted to have freedom in setting tuition. UE has a very good teacher pay, so freedom in setting tuition can be justified only if the university spends cost savings on improving teaching and learning conditions and reducing the student-teacher ratio of 68. Under the current condition of teaching load, teachers do not have time to read student essays, let alone maintain teacher-student contact.

c. Organizational Actions

Mission Statements

On the English version website, UE positioned itself as "a HEI where students can find highly qualified academic programs in economics and business administration"[39]. On the Vietnamese version home page, it released two long pages of mission - vision and university culture. These statements use rhetorical and vague language and lack substantive contents. However, UE's mission statements are helpful for outsiders because it demonstrates what the university recognizes as important.

As analyzed in the section on description of the university, UE stated its positive culture and the goal of excellent quality, but its teaching practices did not go in the same direction with the verbal statements. The positive UE rhetoric without convincing proof gave the impression that the university was very confident and even above its audience. With such an attitude, it is probable that UE would not make efforts to carry out change unless under high pressure.

Although the university set the vision to 2020 to "become one of the most reliable and prestigious centers for education, research and consultancy in the science of economics and business administration in Asia", this statement sounds optimistic and infeasible. A dean and an academic at UE argued that the ability of the main body of academics is low, but the university portrayed itself as a successful university that can compete with other universities in Asia. Top universities of Vietnam in the fields of natural sciences and engineering often receive better recognition from international colleagues than those in social sciences. UT and US have a number of research teams cooperating with prestigious foreign universities and aim at achieving the same level with prestigious foreign universities in Asia. UE may think that it belongs to the group of top universities, and consequently imitates other top universities.

Ideas of Teaching Quality

Limited finances are one of the most frequently mentioned constraints on teaching quality in Vietnam. Like at UT, interviewees at UE frequently highlighted the relationship

[39] UE website, http://www3.ueh.edu.vn/?PageId=9a416a84-eae2-4537-a39e-9cd47f99c35c, retrieved on 04 November 2012.

between cost recovery and teaching quality. The rector said, “It is impossible that high-quality training is provided by low investment”. Now it becomes clearer why the university mentioned the status of financial independence in mission statements in SAR. The university will recover all of production costs of teaching. In other words, value for money will direct university actions.

It is also interesting that the rector solely relied on external criteria to judge teaching quality. He confidently rated the teaching quality of his university to be at a medium level according to the global standards.

> In comparison to the average level of the country, our quality is good. However, compared with worldwide requirements our quality is moderate. Indicators are the graduate employment rate is high, the labor market accepts our graduates, and enterprises prefer our students for apprenticeship. The voice of our faculty is respected in public discourses (Rector 4).

However, his point is not really convincing. He specified the indicators of teaching performance, but these indicators are not an accurate performance measurement for universities in economics in Vietnam. In the context of a young market economy, a large number of economic phenomena and mechanisms are new to many Vietnamese people. The expertise of the field is concentrated in universities of economics. That is why society has to consult academics at UE. The ability of students at UE is very good. How much the university contributes to the improvement of student competences is unclear. The researcher confronted the rector with the question of whether the good outcomes of the university were mainly the efforts of students, and he gave evidence of university support to student learning.

> The training process at this university helps to consolidate student ability and to eliminate false products… The Student Association and the Youth Union organize learning clubs for students… The clubs participants exchange knowledge and ideas. This activity demonstrates the eagerness for searching knowledge and conducting research among students. Students also carry out research projects. In the university forums, they exchange knowledge and experiences to each other (Rector 4).

From the researcher’s point of view, what UE offered the students is not a remarkable effort. No university would hinder students from organizing their learning activities. Bright students can initiate and realize helpful activities by themselves. An academic at UE provided a more convincing idea of teaching quality.

> Employers prefer our graduates, but I do not claim that we are providing high quality teaching. UE recruits excellent students; hence, that it produces good graduates is logical (Academic 6).

The academic and dean at UE frequently mentioned teachers as an important input of teaching. They argued that the behavior of teachers at UE would not lead to good teaching and their ability was limited.

> If you trust in the assessment of the labor market, you will make a mistake. Enterprises demand for practical skills instead of thinking skills. In my opinion, teachers who have classes all 7 days a week will never further their professional qualification… Therefore, I suppose that the quality of our teaching is not high. The knowledge of teachers is very limited. Some teachers have never read any international journals (Academic 6).

The information provided by informants at UE indicates that the university has not contributed much to the achievements of students. It has not guaranteed essential quality even in full-time training. While the academics hold the view of teaching quality as an improvement in student thinking skills, the rector largely viewed teaching quality as fulfilling external claims on teaching and as good management of the training process.

Commercialization of Teaching and For-profit Behaviors

UE enrolled a huge number of students and a diverse student body, provided different educational programs at different tuition fee levels, and expanded the range of activities to generate income. These facts indicate that the university directly pursued the commercialization of teaching.

> The university is proactive in applied research funded by localities, in opening continuing education courses for people who already have university degrees. We try to sustain salary level, but it is difficult to increase revenues when MOET is very strict to enrollment quota (Rector 4).

The income of UE staff was very high in relation to the average level for all economic sectors (Table 4.4). In addition, the position as a teacher in universities is highly respected in Vietnam. Therefore, being a teacher at UE is a very good job. It is easy for UE to recruit high-performing people, but the university did not want to increase teacher numbers.

> Departments want more teachers, but teacher numbers are determined on salary fund. The university balances these numbers (Rector 4).

The student-teacher ratio at UE was extremely high, but the university still maintained the ratio. The aim of revenue is evident in UE. The department of IT at US also had a relatively high student-teacher ratio of more than 30, but this department spent the surplus on developing an online learning system. Therefore, the pursuit of efficiency of UE was too much.

> A teacher supervises hundreds of undergraduate graduation theses. The teacher does not have enough time for reading the theses, let alone guides students. Training quality has been undermined. Big class size, for instance, 150 students, makes it impossible to apply such teaching methods as dialogue and interaction (Dean 2).

The commercialization of teaching at UE suggests the need for a tighter control over HEIs and degree programs in which learners have a high demand for degrees. These study fields have demand in excess of supply, so suppliers might exchange quality for quantity to gain profit. Thus, state intervention to protect uninformed customers of higher education in Vietnam is necessary.

Quality Assurance and Learning Support

The university established a quality assurance unit in 2006. It conducted a self-assessment in 2007. The university participated in MOET's institutional accreditation and achieved level 2. MOET accreditation evaluates the fulfillment of the university goals rather than achievements in relation to academic benchmarks. That is why in spite of the obvious violation of the standard student-teacher ratio, UE still fulfilled most of the MOET standards of quality management.

UE started reforming full-time undergraduate curricula in the academic year 2009-2010. Although the university called the renewed training mode CTS, the biggest change was the provision of a number of optional courses to students. The university made efforts to establish a shared block of economics knowledge across all the curricula. It has not established a shared curriculum among closely related study programs, e.g. core and core advanced parts of the curricula. The study programs have still been arranged in a rigid format, limiting credit transfer and options of pursuing an individually-preferred study path.

> Economic thinking is continuously changing. We organized many seminars and conferences to figure out a fundament of knowledge in the curricula, to produce economics glossaries. The university is encouraging course groups to write textbooks on fundamental subjects (Rector 4).

The university provided students a program taught in English for several years; however, due to its status of financial independence, the efficiency of teaching provision has been prioritized over quality.

> We organized an English taught program for 50 students in the major of Foreign Trade. Teaching and learning conditions in this program was quite favored. The problem was that the university had to subsidize this program because the tuition for these 50 students was equal to for mass students. Therefore, for new English taught courses, the university imposes a higher tuition level (Head of Office 2).

Students at UE are highly capable; therefore, an inspiring learning environment will help facilitate students' innovative ideas. Like UT, UE supported students in organizing academic contests. Regularly organized contests are, for example, Dynamic, Potential Entrepreneurs, Chance and Challenge Accounting, Marketing World, and Virtual Stock Deal. These contests also attracted students from other universities. Big corporations gave financial and expert support to these contests. These activities have helped students to be dynamic and familiar with the reality of economic activities. Two interviewees at UT said that UE students are more dynamic than UT.

The university conducted various surveys with students, graduates, and employers, and used them for evaluating teaching and curricula. Since 2010, the university has used the AUN accreditation set to self-assess several study programs. The quality assurance unit has also been learning about the quality assessment models of the European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA) and the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). However, up to the end of 2012, the university did not have any study programs accredited by international accrediting agencies.

Franchise Programs

At present, UE has only one bachelor franchise program in Business Administration with degrees awarded by Curtin University in Australia. This program was opened in 2005. Students can spend the whole study period of 3 years in Vietnam, or 1 year in Vietnam and 2 final years at Curtin University.

UE opened an undergraduate twinning program in International Business in cooperation with Victoria University of Wellington New Zealand in 2002, but Victoria University wanted to change the cooperation type and converted into the status of a branch campus in 2004. Victoria University currently offers a bachelor program in Commerce and Administration as well as English language courses at the campus of the department of economics. The bachelor program consists of 1.5 years in Vietnam and 1.5 years in New Zealand. The campus of Victoria University is an independent legal entity. In this type of international cooperation, UE gains benefits in terms of revenue from lending the site and the participation of the university teachers.

The small magnitude of undergraduate franchise programs at UE may be explained by two factors. First, in twinning degree programs, students spend about half of the study period at foreign universities, so the total revenue is less than cases in which students spend the whole study period at UE. Serving the currently large student population is intensive work for the university. That can be a reason why the twinning program in International Business in cooperation with Victoria University was terminated. Second, the university prefers providing international joint programs at master and doctoral levels. UE has five joint master programs and a joint doctoral program with Western Sydney University in Australia.

Responsive and Symbolic Management

The cut of public funding for operating costs is the most critical pressure on UE. The university has adjusted education programs and student intakes to develop a diversified financial base. When the former tuition framework was in use, the university enrolled a large number of part-time students. Since the new tuition framework is valid from 2010, UE has developed high-quality programs charging a tuition rate five times as high as the rate for mass programs. The income from non-public sources at UE has been very high and increasing. The university has also developed new peripheral structures, for example, spin-off companies to exploit and manage new sources of income.

Under pressure of keeping track of a big student population together with the requirement of internal quality assurance, the university has developed a systematic and transparent regime of quality management.

> The quality assurance system helps administration runs smoothly. The stages of training, such as entrance exams, student admission, learning assessment, exam result announcement, are arranged in a right order and run systematically… The system does not annoy students and teachers. Clear and transparent procedures guide students and teachers what they have to do. When there is a jam, we know where it is and find the way to overcome it (Rector 4).

However, UE has hardly had any initiatives. CTS, quality assurance regime, and surveys of student satisfaction, graduate destination, and employer feedback have been implemented at the university because of enforcement from MOET. The university managers have been passive and followed the conventional practice of management. That is why an academic at UE criticized the ability of the university managers. This teacher argued that centralized and bureaucratic management exists in the public sector as a whole, so the status of symbolic management is quite common at Vietnamese universities.

> We have been in a system of concentrated power for a long time, so intermediary authorities have been used to a passive role. It is a habit that a rector only receives mandates from higher authorities and forwards them the subordinates. He has no say on the mandates. A rector who is in the habit of forwarding information from one place to another is unable to make decisions… A rector attending meetings every day will not have time for thinking (Academic 6).

UE enjoys a very favorable condition in the general environment arising from a high demand for business and management labor to serve the expanding market economy. The university is not under fierce pressure to develop breakthrough ideas and practices to respond to environmental forces. The outcomes at UE have been mainly determined by spontaneous responses rather than by well-established strategies. Although the university has carried out surveys on graduates and employers to scan the environment, it uses these surveys to learn about the status quo of teaching or just conformity rather than for developing organizational changes. Strategic planning is not evident at UE. Therefore, the organizational management at UE is responsive and symbolic.

d. Outcomes and Survival of UE

The most crucial event in the resource environment for UE is the state funding cut. The university has been fully responsible for its operating costs since 2011. In that year, the percentage of public funding for regular expenses was 2.2%, while the percentage of tuition fee income was 78%. The reason for the big reduction in public funding for UE is

that the university has plentiful opportunities for generating income. Demand for business and management labor serving the expanding market economy in Vietnam is very high, thus causing a huge number of students with good ability to enroll at UE. In addition, the income from continuing education courses, consultancy, and research contracts at UE is also higher than other universities, further contributing to the university's financial robustness.

The university keeps in mind the feature of a self-financed institution, thus inducing it to prioritize value for money over quality in teaching provision. This guiding principle leads to the commercialization of teaching, pursuit of the short-term target of income generation, and disregard of the long-term goal of quality enhancement. The provision expansion at UE undermined the quality of full-time training. The university violated the MOET standard of student-teacher ratio, maintaining this ratio approximately twice as high as the prescribed level. Academic self-governance at UE is distrusted. The critical constraint on the sustainable development of UE is the deviation from academic peer norms.

The outcome at UE is mainly determined by spontaneous responses rather than by well-established strategies. The organizational management is responsive and symbolic. The strategic planning is not evident. In the context of increasing market competition in the provision of business education, the social position of universities is likely to change. For the time being, UE survives well in terms of financial aspect, but its modest academic achievements threaten its legitimacy.

Chapter 6: Discussion of the Empirical Findings

This chapter will pull together important findings in Chapter 4 and 5 in order to diagnose the landscape of higher education governance in Vietnam. The chapter aims to produce generalizations on the actions of Vietnamese universities in managing their resource dependencies and in interacting with other social actors. The findings in Chapter 5 will be compared across the cases to reveal similarities and differences. After that, the common patterns will be interpreted in reference to the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2 and compared with other empirical literature. The first section describes the six common responses of the universities. The second section analyzes the different responses of the universities and the extent to which a similar activity can differ in breadth and depth. The third section describes the structural and relational characteristics of the university environments. It analyzes the interactions among the three key interest groups: the state, HEIs/academic professionals, and students who formulate causes, mechanisms, and outcomes of changes in Vietnamese higher education. The section diagnoses social legitimacy and survival prospect of the universities, tendencies of the social power of the actors, and an emerging configuration of higher education governance in Vietnam. The last section of the chapter characterizes Vietnamese universities as proactive organizations and identifies the extent to which Vietnamese universities are convergent and divergent with other models about the organization and governance of universities.

6.1 Common Responses of the Universities

6.1.1 Rhetorical and Unrealistic Mission Statements

The disclosure of mission statements of Vietnamese universities has been triggered by the MOET accreditation. The universities are not yet well equipped with the knowledge and skills of strategic management, thus causing the legitimating purpose of the mission statements to be prevailing. This result supports the theoretical thesis of Kruecken and Meier (2006) about the loose coupling of university mission statements as a very formal structure of organizations with day-to-day activities. Despite their diverse environmental reality, the universities have prioritized their intent to satisfy the needs of crucial external stakeholders in their mission statements. These stakeholders are the state,

communities/regions, and students. A study by Morphew and Harley (2006) on the mission statements of 300 universities in the U.S., which are believed to have advanced managerial capability, also concluded that U.S. public universities have vague, rhetorical, and similar mission statements that do not demonstrate the university focus and direction, but rather indicate their key external constituents.

The four universities in this study are the top universities in their specialized fields, so they have all set an ambitious aim of high-quality teaching. However, the behavior and actions of the universities and teachers have not always matched with this goal. Teaching in full-time modes has probably been guaranteed because of the conformity of the universities to standards prescribed by MOET. In contrast, part-time teaching modes have violated many of the prescribed standards on inputs and processes of teaching. Therefore, teaching quality at these leading universities encompasses a wide range of quality levels. Excellent quality constitutes only a small proportion, happening in study programs named elite, advanced, and high quality. The universities have often set a vision of becoming a real academic institution and having the same level as leading universities in Asia by 2020. This vision seems unrealistic because the competition among universities for a position in international rankings is mostly in terms of research performance. The primary activity of Vietnamese universities is teaching, so this game, for the time being and in the near future, is unsuitable for them.

6.1.2 Quality as Efficiency, Threshold, and Enhancement

Quality of teaching is the supreme objective of the recent renovation of higher education governance in Vietnam. It is used as a key criterion for assessing the outcomes of the higher education governance renovation in this study. The word quality in higher education in Vietnam is often used as a noun rather than an adjective referring to the traditional notion of quality as distinctive, exceptional, and good, as pointed out in Harvey and Green (1993). In other words, quality of higher education in Vietnam contains different levels, ranging from poor to high quality. According to Vu T.P.A. (2009), Vietnam's higher education has experienced three approaches to quality including quality control, quality as sufficient resources, and quality as fulfilling quality assurance standards. All of these operational definitions of quality imply that there are absolute standards against which the provision of higher education is checked and is required to exceed the quality threshold. The three above conceptions of quality are still used at the universities. The interviewees

frequently specified and highly agreed that quality is present when the components that constitute it are present. They also claimed that judgments on quality should be based on explicit evidence and standards.

What Constitute Teaching Quality?

In the situation of very modest financial sources, all the universities have concern for a trade-off between quality and efficiency. Although only some of the interviewees explicitly spoke of the relation between efficiency and quality, the universities practices, e.g. high teacher-student ratios, pricing of teaching, demonstrate the goal of efficiency. The universities have consciously considered: (1) what amount of resources invested in teaching is optimal, and (2) what tools of cost recovery are suitable. UT and US have spent a little money on enhancing the teaching infrastructure and imposing different tuition levels. UE clearly pursue to recover teaching costs by expanding student numbers while remaining low teacher numbers. UE and the department of information technology at US have high economies of scale, and they are seemingly satisfied with their achievements in cost effectiveness.

The number of students entering Vietnamese HEIs has been increasing, so resources for teaching need to be increased in parallel. The interviewees very often mentioned sufficient and good input, including teachers and students, among quality indicators. Some interviewees, many of whom were at UP, mentioned the MOET regulations on conditions for teaching and learning, such as teacher-student ratios, teacher qualification, learning and library space. Their concern for input standards of teaching suggests that they have agreed on a necessity of fulfilling minimum standards.

The interviewees often mentioned process indicators of teaching quality, including curriculum and quality management. There is a high consensus among the interviewees that the quality assurance system in their universities has helped them identify and record explicit evidence of quality. They claimed that quality assurance activities and explicit standards of quality do not directly lead to teaching quality; however, a better understanding of what constitutes teaching quality leads to good practices of quality assurance and enhancement. The following is an illustration of these arguments. Student evaluation of courses has taken place at UT for more than 15 years. It has been included in MOET's institutional accreditation since 2004. This practice of quality assurance has

resulted in adjustments in curriculum and teaching methods to fit the needs of students. Teachers responsible for optional courses have to make efforts to draw student attention to the courses. When an optional course is not attractive to a certain number of students, e.g. above 15, it is not eligible to open. When an optional course does not open during a certain period, e.g. two semesters, the academic department will eliminate it from the study program and replace it with another optional course. That means the student-centered teaching approach along with quality management can force teachers to improve their performance.

The components of teaching quality specified by the interviewees in this study are convergent with the set of variables that influence student learning and intellectual development in Pascarella's (1985) model. However, the interviewees rarely provided evidence of these components, or they avoided rating the teaching at their institutions based on sensible standards. Their ideas on teaching quality imply that to evaluate teaching at a university, it is necessary to explore how highly the university emphasizes the goal efficiency, and to compare the components of teaching quality with the floor standards set by either MOET or other accrediting agencies. In other words, implicit and arbitrary teaching practices in Vietnamese universities have caused distrust of academic self-governance, leading to requirements for rendering explicit evidence of the teaching status quo.

Proof of Teaching Quality

A majority of the interviewees in managerial posts have used employer opinions and education accreditation certificates to demonstrate teaching quality at their institutions. About half of the academics criticized the use of employer opinions to judge the quality of teaching. These academics were at the ages of 40-50, very knowledgeable, holding doctoral degrees, and having cross-national experiences. They keep the view that universities are to teach thinking skills in which employers are not often interested.

For the time being, in Vietnam external judgments on teaching hold more weight than teacher judgments based on academic peer standards. Recent criticism of the quality of higher education is very fierce, but the arguments appear to refer to relevance rather than quality. WB (2008) is the most often cited work in studies on Vietnamese higher education, but it sometimes uses relevance to represent quality. In a doctoral research

project, Nguyen K.D. (2002) conducted a survey of students, academics and deans about their perceptions of higher education quality with respect to five options: (1) meeting customer expectations, (2) excellence, (3) value for money, (4) fitness for purpose, and (5) meeting the requirements of society. The result of this research was that the percentages of "strong agreement" according to a 5-point Likert scale measured on the option "meeting the requirements of society" were above 75% for all three types of respondents. The percentages of "agreement" on the options "value for money", "fitness for purpose" were also dominant. The study also incorporated 60 interviews with policy-makers, (vice) rectors, (vice) deans, (deputy) heads of functional offices, and academics, but it strongly accepted the definition of quality as meeting the requirements of society.

In essence, employer feedback on university graduates is about skill relevance rather than the cognitive ability of employees. Therefore, among the outcome indicators used by the informants to demonstrate teaching quality, just education accreditation certificates, especially program accreditation, is a convincing indicator of teaching quality. For this reason, final judgments on the levels of teaching quality at the universities in this study are mainly based on program accreditation results and other input and process indicators, including resources invested in teaching, teacher qualifications, teacher efforts and commitment, teaching and learning environment, pedagogical approaches, curricula, and activities of quality assurance and enhancement.

Underlying Meanings of the Term Teaching Quality in Vietnam

The organization of teaching at Vietnamese HEIs has to follow regulations issued by MOET. The interviewees said that the traditional tools used in Vietnamese universities for assessing teaching quality were teacher self-evaluation and peer evaluation within course groups; however, this assessment has not often been carried out. Learning standards are controlled through three main kinds of examinations: entry, after courses during the study period, and graduation. Plentiful regulations on teaching organization and learning standards indicate that quality control has permanently existed in higher education in Vietnam. Since 2004, MOET has been using the definition of quality as fitness for purpose in its accreditation standards for HEIs. The research results in Nguyen K.D. (2002) suggest that relative conceptualizations of quality have proliferated and dominated in the beginning and middle of the-2000s. The changing focus of the conceptions of quality caused an overemphasis on relevance to different stakeholders, while neglecting essential quality.

In this study, fieldwork was conducted from December 2010 to March 2011. The research revealed that universities have been aware of a necessity of assuring sufficient conditions for teaching and learning. This fact indicates that the meaning of quality as an achievement of floor standards has returned to a top concern. During the course of implementing the MOET 2010-2012 action plan on higher education management renovation to enhance quality, many regulations on standards and procedures for activities like establishing and organizing HEIs, study programs, and student admission were released. This fact indicates that on the side of the regulatory agencies the notion of quality as a threshold is now prevalent.

Owing to the pressure of financial independence, Vietnamese universities are forced to generate income and pursue efficiency. Financial goals may induce universities to violate minimum standards for assuring a quality threshold. That is why from 2010 onwards the government put the regulation of teaching on top priority. As pointed out by Polidano, Hulme and Minogue (1998), the problem of public management in developing countries is an under-developed central management structure. Therefore, to correct for the poor oversight of higher education during the period of rapid expansion, Vietnam has been upholding the central management structure with new regulations and management tools.

Teachers and universities are the decisive actors who create the enhancement of teaching quality. The higher education sector above the quality threshold needs incentives for continuous quality improvement. Vietnamese universities are allowed to set tuition fees for high-quality study programs from the academic year 2010-2011, so the blame for the low quality of higher education on low teacher pay is no longer convincing. Excellent teaching will be rewarded from tuition fee sources. This new practice has been experimented with at several leading universities, so the incidence of negative market consequences would be small.

In sum, the concept of teaching quality in Vietnam includes a wide range of levels of quality. Advancement in teaching in Vietnam is, at present, stimulated by economic incentives and education accreditation in accordance with internationally recognized standards, so it is probable that the quality threshold will continuously be upheld. For the time being, the commonly agreed concept of teaching quality in Vietnam refers to threshold, value-for-money, and enhancement, of which the notion of threshold is dominant.

6.1.3 Expanding Teaching Provision

All four universities have expanded the scale and scope of teaching. The expansion of teaching scale has been carried out through increasing the number of both full-time and part-time students. The expansion of teaching scope has also been carried out through opening new study programs and establishing new academic departments in the universities. Teaching expansion at the universities has mainly been driven by income from tuition. There is multiple and obvious evidence of commercialized teaching at the universities, thus causing a reduction in the quality of mass programs and part-time training modes. This argument has been justified in many parts in Chapter 5 about the state of affairs in the universities. The four universities in this study are leading institutions of higher education. Therefore, the findings convincingly indicate that Vietnam's university teaching quality has decreased during the period of rapid expansion of higher education.

6.1.4 Stimulating Student Learning Motivations

The amount of money invested in teaching infrastructure and university staff has not changed significantly, while the number of students has increased remarkably. In order to facilitate student learning, UT, US and UE have paid special attention to motivate them. However, the levels of effort and success in contributing to student learning are very different. The breadth and depth of implementing CTS, restructuring curricula, and building up an interactive learning environment and online learning management system are also different among the universities. UE has less attempted to establish an interactive education environment between students and teachers than UT and US. Activities to inspire student learning efforts are present in some academic departments at UP, but the university and the interviewees did not highlight them.

The government policies and project funding have created comprehensive changes in pedagogy at the universities, but the success of such externally stimulated changes has been attributed to the involvement of university staff and importantly been determined by organizational management and leadership. Comprehensive innovation in all curricula at UT and in the curriculum of IT at US was initiated by a MOET project. Incremental changes have primarily been attributable to the culture of academic departments and the universities, and then such changes were diffused throughout the whole universities if committed leadership was present. The findings of curriculum innovation in this study are chiefly similar to van Vught's (1989) findings about curriculum innovation in Germany,

the Netherlands, and France. In these countries, more comprehensive curriculum innovation was often created by government incentive steering, but such governmental steering was successful only when academics and HEIs were the primary handlers of knowledge.

6.1.5 Changing Organizational Structure

The universities have developed new types of sub-units, especially those that function to generate and manage finance. New academic departments and new study programs have been established in all four universities. Fully self-financed units providing continuing education courses have also proliferated at all the universities. Professional business units such as spin-off companies have emerged at UT and UE. At UE, the status of the student services center transformed from an administrative office into a service delivery unit. This is due to the fact that the essence of services to students has shifted from inclusive to charged service.

A specialized unit in charge of internationally collaborative degree programs was established at three universities (UT, US, UE) where there has been a considerable number of these types of educational programs. Internationally collaborative programs that are associated with scholar exchange and educational technology transfer contribute to improvement in academic capability, so they are administered by an administrative office at UT. Franchise programs in which a majority of teachers are from other universities and primarily to generate income are administered by a service unit at US. Undergraduate English-taught programs and twinning programs at UE have mainly instructed by university teachers, so they are classified as an academic unit.

The effect of resource dependence on the organizational designs of the universities in this study is strong and easily noticeable. The findings of this study perhaps reflect that the dimension of financial uncertainty in the environments is probably more important for Vietnamese universities than that for universities in other Western systems, as indicated in the studies of Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), Sporn (1999), and Gumport and Sporn (1999). Possible reasons for this phenomenon in Vietnam can be the development stage of the country and the utilitarian purposes of universities. The similar rationales for adjusting administrative structures in all four universities suggest a high relevance of RDT for understanding and explaining organizational change at Vietnamese universities.

6.1.6 Managing Legitimacy

The awareness of the special position of a key university in the system is high at all four universities. All four universities have used diverse tactics and strategies to improve their social legitimacy. As a requirement of accrediting agencies belonging to MOET or other international associations, the universities have released mission statements and conducted stakeholder surveys. They have attempted to show their conformity to the MOET regulation of Three Disclosures.

NU has carried out quality management strictly; therefore, universities under the administration of NU have not expanded part-time teaching very extensively. The entry standards for member universities in NU have not always been high, but there have been very few complaints about the graduates. UT has relatively high entry standards. US has admitted entrants with both a floor qualification for mass programs and high qualification for advanced and elite study programs. The diversification of education products has helped UT and US earn money from some types of products and earn reputation from other types, thus contributing to success in fulfilling both educational and financial aims. The societal judgment on quality of a university is mainly based on the name of the university, so this policy is a very wise approach to enhancing the university's social legitimacy and survival. UT and US have created a good reputation by showing the achievements of students in highly selective study programs and the number of internationally accredited study programs. In addition, these two universities have consolidated and guaranteed teaching quality by implementing the standards of program accreditation proposed by international certifying agencies. The partial compliance and avoidance of the universities to the environments in order to pursue social power, which creates future benefit, also support RDT's thesis of organizations attempting to manage interdependencies among interest groups in the environments.

6.2 Different Responses of the Universities

The six action areas described in the previous section indicate that homogeneity among the universities' behavior is very high. However, the universities have had slightly different responses. UT has implemented marketing and entrepreneurial activities. It has scanned the external environment and changed its curricula and administration. US has paid high attention to motivating student learning efforts. There is evidence of the contribution of US

to student cognitive and skill development. UP blames its inertia on the context and paid little attention to stimulating the learning motivation of students. UE has excessively pursued the commercialization of teaching.

Regarding the provision expansion, there are noticeable differences in the breadth and depth of the universities' actions. The consideration of a balance between efficiency and quality of teaching in all the universities, as described in Section 6.1.2, implies that the universities have been highly interested in revenue generation or, in more subtle words, cost recovery. The larger the scales of teaching, the bigger the self-generated revenue. Table 6.1 shows the capacity of teaching provision at the universities.

Table 6.1 Teaching Capacity of the Universities

	UT-2009	***US-2008***	***UE-2007***	***UP-2006***
1. Number of bachelor students	23,623	12,193	39,655	18,899
Full-time	16,638	10,273	18,948	8,737
Part-time	6,985	1,920	20,707	10,162
2. Number of master students	2,268	418	2,926	639
3. Number of doctoral students	84	24	186	38
4. Student-teacher ratio*	21	18.5	68	34
5. Number of academic departments	11	9	11	19
6. Number of bachelor programs (majors)	39	15	27	32
7. Land area (square meters)	410,230	358,600	28,500	48,000
Area of classrooms	23,826	9,572	10,411	7,474
Area of library	2,446	2,100	1,315	2,023
Area of laboratories	16,344	16,800	-	1,964
Area of practical factories	6,722	4,000	-	487

*Sources: University SARs; *: own calculation; figures in row 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 are the latest data released in the disclosed documents*

UT and UE have a large number of students at all levels of education, while US and UP have fewer. UT and US focus on full-time teaching, which often guarantees the prescribed conditions of teaching and produces acceptable graduates. UT and US have more physical facilities in terms of campus space, classrooms, libraries, and laboratories than UE and UP. The two latter universities have part-time enrollments in excess of full-time. UE pursues efficiency to the extreme by keeping the student-teacher ratio at a very high level of 68.

While academic capacity determines how well a university survives in the short-term, the continued survival of a university depends very much on its academic capability. Table 6.2 presents the qualifications and ranks of teachers and staff development of the universities. The teacher qualification at UT has improved because the percentage of faculty with a Philosophy of Doctor (Ph.D.) degree increased from 27% to 31%. In contrast, the percentages of Ph.D. academics at UE and UP were reduced over recent years. The percentages of teachers with Master degrees at UE and UP increased from 40% to 53% and from 37% to 49% respectively, while this percentage at UT unchanged.

Table 6.2 Qualification and Rank of Teachers

	UT		**US**		**UP**		**UE**	
Year	2009	2012	2008	2012	2006	2011	2007	2012
Regular teacher	975	1026	618	-	504	526	479	601
% of Ph.D.	27%	31%	18 %	-	25%	18%	30%	24%
% of Master	42%	42%	37 %	-	37%	49%	40%	53%
Full professor	5	7	2	6	1	0	5	7
Associate professor	49	74	39	36	21	21	29	36

Sources: University SARs, disclosed documents, and websites

In combination with the professor numbers, it can be said that UP has lower academic capability than the other three universities. In 2011, UP had no full professors, and the number of associate professors was the smallest. US did not release up-to-date information about the percentage of teachers with advanced degrees, but the number of professors was satisfactory in relation to its moderate number of teachers. The informant arguments and multiple dimensions of achievements of the four universities, as reported in Chapter 5, show that academic standards at UT and US are more rigorous. A rigorous academic culture will assure that staff credentials more truly represent academic ability, so it is highly likely that UT and US have better academic capability than UE and UP.

In addition, information provided by the interviewees and university documents show that many teachers with Master degrees left Vietnamese universities to pursue full-time Ph.D. education at overseas universities. They are expected to come back to their universities after graduation. Consequently, a slow increase in the percentages of Master teachers is not entirely negative. Universities with a decreasing number of academics with Master degrees are more likely to have an increase in Ph.D. faculty in the future. Therefore, it is

highly likely that the number and qualification of Vietnamese academics will increase quickly in the five and ten years to come.

The scales of teaching provision affect university financial robustness. Table 6.3 shows that UT and UE had the biggest income while US and UP had lower numbers. The analyses in Chapter 5 show that UE and UT have provided their staff with satisfactory income levels. Although the self-generated revenue of US was more than that of UP, 76 (37.5+38.5) compared with 54, the number of teachers at US was also higher than that of UP, 618 compared with 526. Therefore, it is probable that staff salaries at these two universities were not much different. While both universities have been operating under the same situation of lack of finances and the interviewees wished for better pay, US spent part of its self-generated revenue on building new houses and offices and establishing an online learning management system, while UP did not.

Table 6.3 Income of the Universities

	UT-2011	**US-2009**	**UP-2010**	**UE-2011**
Total income (VND, billions - %)	357 - 100%	227 - 100%	166 - 100%	352.5 - 100%
Public budget	103 - 29%	151 - 66.5%	102 - 61%	7.9 - 2.2%
Tuition and fees	140 - 39%	37.5 - 16.5%	54 - 33%	275 - 78%
Service sales	2 - 1%	38.5 - 17.0%	-	1.6 - 0.5 %
Miscellaneous sources: grants, loans, other revenues	112 - 31%	-	10 - 6%	168 - 19.3%

Sources: Universities' latest disclosed documents

Before 1987, the state provided 100% of funding for universities. After 2009, the proportions of the public budget to the total income of universities were less than 66.5%. The average percentage of public funding to the universities calculated from Table 6.3 is 40%; that is much smaller than the average percentage of 70% in public HEIs in 2005 (Table 4.3). Because leading universities receive more public funding, the trend of reducing the percentage of public funding is probably true for other HEIs. These figures indicate that university financial dependence on the state has critically decreased over the last 20 years. In parallel, the contribution of private funding to the universities has increased.

According to RDT, the ways organizations relate themselves to the environment determine their behavior and choices. In order to carry out the activities concerning mission

statements, information disclosure, diversified study programs, and teaching expansion, the universities must identify environmental demands. They must select which stakeholders to attend and which stakeholder demands to fulfill and avoid. Based on the actions of the universities, an estimation of the important stakeholders or actors in the enacted environments of the universities is presented in Table 6.4. The importance rankings of the actors for each university are researcher-assigned.

Table 6.4 Key Actors in the Environments of the Universities and Importance Rankings

	The State	**University staff**	**Students**	**Employers**
UT	1	2	3	4
US	1	2	3	-
UP	1	2	-	-
UE	2	1	3	-

The presence of employers in the environment of UT explains why the university has adjusted its curricula with respect to optional courses preparing professional skills. Despite the public budget constituting 29% of total UT funding in 2011, the importance of the state for the university is still the highest because the state primarily funds costly laboratories and other physical infrastructure. The funding for physical infrastructure is not regular, so the amount can be different among the years. The public budget constituted 2.2% of total UE funding in 2011. Although this university shows conformity to the government regulations, i.e. the Three Disclosures, the actual provision of teaching at UE demonstrates a greater degree of compliance to the wishes of the university staff. The actions of UP may indicate that students hardly influence university decisions.

6.3 Interactions among the Interest Groups, University Survival, and an Emerging Governance Configuration

Because government policies decisively shape the general environment of universities in Vietnam, there can be three patterns of the structure and relation in the general environment in accordance with the three landmarks of national polices. In 1993, the Central Communist Party of Vietnam started higher education renovation, giving rise to the interrelated issues of access, efficiency and relevance. Quality of education was mentioned but less attentive. Market-like mechanisms in higher education in Vietnam have operated through the participation of private providers with the motivation of tuition fees.

The financial dependencies of the universities on the state have reduced. In addition, the government has experimented with university autonomy and the research mission of universities is modeled after modern universities in the Western world. The Party decision in 1993 manifested the importance of three main interest groups in Vietnamese higher education including the state, HEIs and academic professionals, and society. The criteria used by these actors to assess higher education are estimated in Table 6.5.

Table 6.5 Key Interest Groups and their Criteria for Assessing Higher Education

Interest groups by descending order of importance	**Criteria of higher education assessment**
The state	Access (A), Efficiency (E, student per monetary unit), Quality (Q), Skill Relevance (R)
HEIs and academic professionals	Efficiency (E), Quality (Q), Skill Relevance (R)
Society: households, students, employers	Access (A), Cost (C), Skill Relevance (R), Quality (Q)

The state is still the dominant actor in Vietnamese higher education, but the degree of importance of HEIs and society has been increasing. Historically, the academic profession in Vietnam is young and has a lesser degree of autonomy than in the Western world. As described in Section 4.4.3, Vietnamese academics are not under a single law, but are regarded as general civil servants and public employees. Much of the work of academic professionals is defined by policies in universities. Academics can have a voice in university decisions, but only the university as a whole and its representatives, i.e. (vice) rectors, make decisions. Therefore, academic professionals as individuals have a low influence in higher education.

The order of importance of a criterion for the three interest groups can change over time, thus causing judgments on higher education to be different given the same set of criteria. University actions and the impacts of the actions on the criteria of the groups are described in Table 6.6. An action's intensity is judged on its breath and the depth. A choice by the universities to carry out an action is a product of the university perceptions of the interest groups, as described in Table 6.4, and the impacts of the action on the group criteria as described in Table 6.6. University survival prospect is determined by their effectiveness and efficiency, as presented in Table 6.7. Table 6.4, 6.5, 6.6 and 6.7 are empirical illustrations of the RDT thesis of interdependencies among organizations in the social environment. The relations and interactions among the state, universities, and society

visualized in these tables are still very simple compared with those among highly interconnected organizations in RDT.

The first landmark is from 1987 to 2003. Both the state and society wanted to expand access to higher education. Motivated by efficiency emanating from economies of scale, HEIs increased the number of students more than planned (Section 4.4.1a). The outcome of higher education in this period was a reduction in teaching quality and skill relevance, but no convincing documentation was available at that time. Although the universities did not provide data in this period, the national statistics in Figure 4.2 highlight this phenomenon.

The second landmark in Vietnamese higher education is the introduction of institutional accreditation in 2004. Overemphasis on the relative notions of quality such as quality as fitness for purpose and/or meeting the requirements of society caused negligence of essential quality in terms of student learning. The teaching expansion regardless of sufficient conditions for teaching continued. The data in Chapter 5 indicate that all four universities expanded teaching provision. Only UT and US paid attention to developing high-quality programs. The practice of program accreditation at UT and US contributed to an improvement in teaching quality, while institutional accreditation at UT, UP and UE led to an improvement in quality management, which indirectly helped improve teaching quality. The data and practices in the universities indicate that teaching quality in part-time and mass programs continued the patterns of the previous period.

The third landmark is from 2010 to the present. The government released a directive on quality enhancement in 2010, which in essence is a change in state criteria for assessing higher education. The state appeared to remove the access criterion, instead focusing on high-quality programs and accreditation. Many new regulations were released from 2010-2012 and will continuously be developed. In March 2013, MOET reported that the renovation of education management has "led to the enforcement and effectiveness of government regulations, reduced the number of breach cases, mitigated the societal distrust, contributed to quality improvement…" (Report 343/BC-BGDĐT: p. 8). These positive results refer to the elimination of cases violating minimum standards and termination of a reduction in quality rather than enhancement of student learning.

Table 6.6 Intensity of Main Actions of the Universities

Actions	**Impact on the criteria on higher education/teaching**												**Intensity of actions**
	Actors	**1987 to 2003**				**2004-2009**				**2010 up to now**			
Rapid expansion of teaching	State	A↑	E↑	R↓	Q↓	A↑	E↑	R↓	Q↓	Q↓	R↓			
	Society	A↑	C↑	R↓	Q↓	A↑	C↑	R↓	Q↓	A↑	C↑	R↓	Q↓	
	UT	No data				E↑	A↑	Q↓	R↓	Low attention				Low
	US					E↑	A↑	Q↓	R↓					Low
	UP					E↑	A↑	Q↓	R↓					High
	UE					E↑	A↑	Q↓	R↓					Very high
High quality programs	State	Not emerged				E↓	Q↑	R↑			Q↑	R↑		
	Society					C↑	Q↑	R↑		C↑	Q↑	R↑		
	UT	E↑	Q↑	R↑		E↑	Q↑	R↑		E↑	Q↑	R↑		High
	US					E↑	Q↑	R↑		E↑	Q↑	R↑		Rather high
	UP					No program				No program				Zero
	UE									E↑	Q↑	R↑		Low
Accreditation	State	Not emerged				Q↑	R↑	E↓		Q↑	R↑	E↓		
	Society					Q↑	R↑			Q↑	R↑			
	UT	Not emerged				Q↑	R↑			High attention Lack of funding				High
	US					Q↑	R↑							High
	UP					Q↑	R↑							Low
	UE					E↓	R↑	Q↑						Low

During the course of higher education renovation, the understanding of higher education itself as well as new functions for HEIs and the values of the interest groups have shifted. Durable criteria for assessing higher education have emerged. Table 6.7 presents university outcomes in terms of effectiveness, efficiency and survival prospect, which are judged on socially constructed usefulness and the magnitude of the actions. As described in Table 6.6, from 2010 onwards the dominant criteria for Vietnamese higher education in a descending order of importance are quality, efficiency, and skill relevance. Consequently, the actions of accreditation and high study programs are ranked important, as shown in the first column of Table 6.7. The effectiveness of the universities is determined by the intensity of accreditation and high study programs, while the efficiency of the universities is determined the intensity of teaching expansion. The survival prospect of the universities is inclined to their effectiveness. The above construction of university survival prospect implies that the survival outcome is determined by societal recognition or social legitimacy. The political survival of the universities can be different. The current and predicted outcomes of each university are described below.

Table 6.7 Survival Prospect of the Universities

Importance of the actions in reference to interdependence among the interest groups	**Magnitude of the actions**			
	UT	**US**	**UP**	**UE**
Expansion of teaching (low importance)	Low	Low	High	Very high
High quality programs (importance)	High	Rather high	Zero	Low
Accreditation (high importance)	High	High	Low	Low
Organizational effectiveness (total usefulness of the actions)	High	Rather high	Low	Low
Organizational efficiency (teacher pay)	High	Low	Low	Very high
Organizational survival prospect	*High*	*Rather high*	*Low*	*Average*

UT is highly appreciated according to both effective and efficient criteria. The survival prospect for UT can be high. In this study, UT is the most successful university, while UP is the least successful. Both the effectiveness and efficiency of UP are low. The modest usefulness of UP's study programs resulting from the out-of-date teacher training mode as described in Chapter 5 threatens its survival in the long-term. The effectiveness of US is rather high. It survives but continues facing many financial difficulties. UE is the most successful in terms of efficiency. The critical criterion for the existence of a leading university is academic quality; therefore, if UE does not reduce the student-teacher ratio

and improve the academic culture, its survival will be undermined. The survival prospect is high for UT, rather high for US, average for UE, and low for UP.

The key feature of higher education development in Vietnam since the renovation has been resource-constrained, especially in terms of finances and qualified academics. University dependence on private sources is increasing. They have to respond to the needs of academic professionals and students. Consequently, "value for money" in teaching provision has become socially accepted. In the circumstance of insufficient salary for academics caused by the rigid and ineffective salary system in the public sector, the pursuit of efficiency is understandable. The government has accepted tuition as a means of cost recovery and teaching quality enhancement. Cost per student at public universities in Vietnam is still low in comparison with other East Asian countries (WB, 2008; Pham P., 2010), so the tool of tuition fees needs to be strengthened to stimulate improvement in the sector above the quality threshold (Pham T.L.P, 2012). The continuous quality enhancement will be realistic and then help to raise the quality of the whole system.

The key resource contributors for Vietnamese higher education are the state, academics, and households/students. Following the logic of resource dependence - power relation, higher education can be governed by the above three actors by means of state regulation, academic self-governance, and market competition. Vietnamese academic self-governance has moved in harmony with university autonomy and contributed to organizational management. While the real redistribution of authority from the states to universities mainly fell on revenue generation and spending as in the case of China (Neave & van Vught, 2004) and less focused on executive autonomy in the Confucian-influenced countries (Marginson, 2010), the phenomenon in Vietnam demonstrates increased university autonomy in decision-making. Vietnamese universities now can decide a greater number of issues, which previously fell on MOET decisions, such as setting tuition fees for high-quality educational programs, determining student enrollments, and fully staffing. However, political guidance in higher education arrangements will exist as long as the state still provides the dominant funding for higher education. The political influence in the behavior of HEIs and university staff in Vietnam is outside the scope of this study.

6.4 Vietnamese Universities as Proactive Organizations

The convergent responses of the universities presented in Section 6.1 elicit at the first glance the image of Vietnamese universities as responsive organizations. The types of the university responses include both adaptive/compliant and discretional/avoidant reactions to the environmental requirements and can be explained in light of multiple theories of organizations. In an attempt to develop a theory of organizational adaption in higher education, Sporn (1999) reviewed a great number of models of adaptive universities. Some are empirical studies such as entrepreneurial universities (Clark, 1998), academic capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997), administration restructuring (Gumport & Sporn, 1999), and responsive universities (Tierney, 1998, cited in Sporn, 1999). Responsive universities are defined as "organizations which are facing resource constraints especially concerning public funding and increasing demands as expectations from different stakeholders" (Sporn, 1999: p. 279, quoted Tierney, 1998). The metaphor of responsive universities emphasizes the adaptive actions of universities perhaps because of the author's view on universities in developed western countries, which assume that universities are specific organizations accommodating academic professionals with high individual autonomy. The universities in this study have not only adapted to but also altered the Vietnamese higher education environment. They initiated both academic and organizational changes: CTS initiated by UT; educational programs accreditation implemented at UT and US; high-quality educational programs charging higher tuition fees at UT, US, and UE; and balance between educational and financial goals in the provision of teaching of IT at US, which were codified into the system-level practices. These examples indicate that under the pressure of resource acquisition, the leading universities are proactive organizations shaping higher education in Vietnam. The rationale for actions at the leading universities is representative for other universities, so it is highly likely that many Vietnamese universities are proactive.

The image of Vietnamese universities as proactive academic organizations may be very different from that of conventional universities in advanced higher education systems, where universities have been viewed as specific organizations transforming into formal organizations (Kruecken & Meier, 2006). In Vietnam, universities were largely established by the government and are largely bureaucratic organizations. Since Vietnam adopted an open policy of international relations, Western ideas and rationales have also influenced

the practices and values of higher education in the country. Academic characteristics of Vietnamese universities have been gradually constructed. Consequently, an emerging phenomenon is that the universities have transformed from bureaucracies into specific organizations. Such transformation is more likely to be more quickly in upcoming years when there will be a greater number of academics trained with a Western view. At present, Vietnamese academic professionals are more concerned about value for money, but academic peer norms will prevail over financial objectives after teacher salaries and academic quality are in equilibrium. As long as academic peer norms are rooted, there would be another wave of university transformation.

The function as bureaucratic public service agencies makes organizational management in Vietnamese universities dissimilar to this concept in RDT, which refers to leadership and the role of administrators. The organizational management in Vietnamese universities is also different from the managerial self-governance in the five-dimension governance equalizer proposed by de Boer, Enders and Schimank (2007). In Western countries, the voice of academics in decisions on most aspects of universities was traditionally very strong (Clark, 1983; Becher & Kogan, 1992), and NPM in higher education in these countries has shifted the authority for academics to people in managerial posts and to governing bodies. Vietnamese universities are managed according to the central regulations and the resolutions of institutional committees, which consist of a majority of academics and a few administrative managers. Conventionally, managerial tasks are not challenging and very often just obeying predetermined central and institutional regulations. The university managers and even the heads of administrative units are selected from among successful academics. Therefore, the organizational management in Vietnamese universities is a consensus between academics and administrators in designing institutional regulations and strategies and shared governance among top managers, academics and administrators. The voice of academics in university management becomes more and important because academics have a much greater more opportunity to study abroad and bring new ideas and practices to the home universities. Managerial elites including rectors, deans, and heads of administrative offices, contribute significantly to strategic management and a coherence of institutional development.

RDT shows high relevance for understanding the organizational designs and social legitimacies of Vietnamese universities in dealing with the uncertainty of financial

resources and the social environment. The theory also gives insights into the pursuit of partial autonomy in parallel with resource acquisition at the universities. The social power of Vietnamese universities is determined by both success in fulfilling educational and financial requirements, like the cases of UT and US. Although some universities have political legitimacy, their social recognition can be lower than their political position, like the case of UP. Improving social legitimacy will become more important for Vietnamese HEIs as market-like mechanisms in higher education become more mature.

RDT also argues that the social context of organizations can force organizations to act in predictable ways in order to sustain critical resources. However, the theory focuses on social forces shaping the availability and concentration of resources, rather than on widespread societal rules, expectations, norms, and values that are the heart of the neo-institutional perspective. The public agency status of most Vietnamese universities and currently underdeveloped market mechanisms retains a conservative viewpoint on university governance. Many practices of Vietnamese universities such as university websites, information disclosure, and rhetorical mission statements, are aligned with Meyer and Rowan's (1977) theoretical argument of the decoupling of organizational formal structures from day-to-day activities. The convergent responses of the universities as described in Section 6.1 suggest that organizational isomorphism may be popular in Vietnam; it is possible that all three isomorphic mechanisms, including coercive, cognitive and mimetic, as pointed out by DiMaggio and Powell (1983), are present. In addition, informal practices in the universities are remarkable. The above examples suggest that organizational institutionalism or neo-institutionalism that focuses on the interplay between institutional rules and organizational designs and practices (Greenwood et al., 2008) will be an additional fruitful perspective for understanding the behavior and outcome of Vietnamese universities.

Chapter 7: Summary and Conclusion

The general topic of the doctoral dissertation is the governance of higher education. The empirical study was conducted to explore the interaction between the Vietnamese state and universities in arranging higher education. The details of both theoretical and empirical work are represented from Chapter 2 to 6 of the dissertation. This conclusion chapter will synthesize the theoretical and methodological frameworks and main empirical findings, and identify theoretical and policy implications, as well as recommendations for future research.

7.1 Summary

Theoretical and Methodological Approaches

As a term representing the reality of politics, Rhodes (1997/2003) argued that governance has no less than six meanings. In the sense of a method of coordinating social systems, governance refers to a collective governing mode, replacing the state-dominated model (Rhodes, 1997/2003; Mayntz, 1998). Governance in terms of its technical aspect refers to management. That is the reason governance is often used interchangeably with management.

Governance in higher education refers to two key issues: the relationship between the state and HEIs and the internal governance of HEIs. A majority of literature on higher education governance investigates either the changing relationships between the states and HEIs (Henkel & Little, 1999; Kogan & Hanney, 2000) or university governance as affected by changing contexts (Braun & Merrien, 1999; Amaral, Jones & Karseth, 2002; Paradeise et al., 2009). In addition, another part of literature investigates university governance as an element of the organizational characteristics of universities (Sporn, 1999; Clark, 1998). The later branch of higher education governance focuses on the organizational transformations of HEIs in response to environments, rarely considering the impact of university response on system-level governance. The lack of a blending of macro and micro theories for studying higher education governance provokes the researcher's interest in exploring the back-and-forth interaction between the state and universities.

The four forces governing higher education including the state, academic oligarchy, market, and organizational management, as identified by Clark (1983, 1998), are often used for comparing different higher education systems (Section 2.1.1b). De Boer, Enders and Schimank (2007) expanded the analytical capacity of the term governance by taking into account the force of external guidance. These authors proposed a heuristic tool for describing higher education governance configurations in terms of five dimensions: state regulation, managerial self-governance, external guidance, market competition, and academic self-governance. The governance of higher education also depends on the administrative and political regime of a country; therefore, in the above classifications of governance structure, political influence is included in state regulation. Political forces in the Communist model can directly affect governance directions. For this reason, this study separated political influence from state regulation for describing the reality of higher education governance in Vietnam, adding the dimension of political guidance to the governance structure classifications (Section 3.2.1). For understanding the internal governance of HEIs, the study differentiated the term governance from management, administration, and leadership (Section 2.1.1b). University governance, according to Sporn (1999), refers to the structure (i.e. the composition and representation of different actor groups in boards, senates, or committees) and process (i.e. procedures and complexity) of decision-making in universities.

Many higher education systems are largely in the public sector; therefore, any discussion of higher education reform and governance cannot avoid referring to the so-called New Public Management (NPM). NPM in the higher education sector puts pressure on HEIs and is one of the striking elements of the general environment confronting HEIs. The three most common practices of NPM in higher education pointed out by Ferlie, Musselin, & Andresani (2008) are: (1) implementation of market-like mechanisms by means of incentive systems, encouragement of private sector providers, and development of higher education tuition fees; (2) increase in performance measurement and audit systems; and (3) empowered and entrepreneurial management. NPM triggers many emerging phenomena in higher education such as university autonomy, public accountability, external evaluation of quality, and accreditation (Sections 2.1.2; 2.1.3 & 2.2.1b).

The rise of the evaluative state pointed out by Neave (1988) is considered part of NPM because it implements NPM ideas through a package of evaluation instruments in order to

encourage competition among HEIs and to improve the quality and efficiency of higher education (Neave, 1998a; Bleiklie, 1998; Kogan & Hanney, 2000). Neave (1988) argued that the state has gained a stronger regulatory position by means of a public evaluative regime performing posteriori evaluation of higher education.

Vietnam is striving for the efficiency of public service provision through applying market-like mechanisms, which is a common practice of NPM. However, differently from the global model, the country retains a regulated market economy and centralized state management framework. The country has been experiencing a public administration reform (PAR), but PAR is not an umbrella reform based on which higher education renovation is launched (Section 4.3.3). Experimenting with new practices on a small scale and proceeding by trial and error are common ways to make change in Vietnamese higher education. One of the main goals of higher education renovation in Vietnam is to expand the system by mobilizing resources in society. The importance of resources in higher education expansion in Vietnam induces the use of RDT in this study to understand the behavior and performance of universities. The social context of the universities is considered as consisting of socio-economic factors, governance practices, and contextual constraints.

In the resource dependence perspective, the survival and growth of a university depends on its ability to perceive and react selectively to competing demands in order to sustain the resource flow. That is the reason the study employed a multiple-case study approach to conduct an empirical investigation of the structures, procedures, and practices in Vietnamese universities (Section 3.1.2). The analyses of national governance drew on official documents, common practices in the universities derived from the case studies, and secondary literature. The study tracked changes in higher education governance between 1987 and 2010. Phenomena in the period after 2010 were examined mainly for assessing the continuity and discontinuity of governance policy and practice.

Teaching is one of the primary missions of higher education. The wave of NPM in higher education gives rise to accountability and use of explicit standards for assessing teaching (Sections 2.1.3 & 3.2.3). The ultimate result of teaching is student intellectual and skill development. The study adopted Pascarella's (1985) model for assessing teaching quality because the model differentiates learning outcomes attributable to college actions and those attributable to student traits and self-produced efforts. Briefly, judgments on teaching

quality provided by HEIs can be based on evidence such as teacher qualification and behavior, teaching and learning environment, pedagogical approach, curriculum, quality assurance, and other indirect factors.

Information about the status quo of teaching in Vietnamese universities in this study was mainly collected from the case studies (Section 3.2.3 & Chapter 5). Four specialized universities representing four main study fields in higher education were chosen. They are the university of technology, university of science, university of economics, and university of teacher training. Sources of information were informant opinions, university self-assessment reports, disclosed documents, websites, and direct observations. The empirical findings of the study are presented in Chapter 4 and 5. The section below is a synthesis of the main findings in sequence of the research questions mentioned in Chapter 1.

Empirical Findings

Changes in higher education governance in Vietnam are considered the result of the interaction between the state and HEIs. Insights into this interaction need an understanding of the importance of these actors in formulating cause, process and outcome of higher education governance. The facts about the state-university interaction processes are also the answers to the research questions.

Why does higher education governance in Vietnam take place?

Following the practice of market mechanisms in the economic sector, Vietnamese HEIs started experimenting with increasing supply to meet demand and levying tuition fees on additional students in the mid-1980s (Section 4.2.1 & 4.2.2). In 1987, the size of Vietnamese higher education was very small with a higher education gross enrollment rate of less than 2%. The demand for higher education was very high, resulting from the demand of the expanding economy and the high valuation of education in a Confucian-influenced society. The Party's document in 1993 did not speak of change in the governing ideologies of higher education, but its acceptance of change in the system structure and funding base inevitably led to change in the management. As long as private actors participate in determining and managing higher education provision, the governing structure and mechanism have to change. Therefore, this policy can be deemed the most crucial landmark of higher education governance in Vietnam.

The highly centralized governing system has shown weaknesses in overseeing the expanding system and diverse types of organization and ownership of HEIs. The open-door policy contributes to the importation of overseas ideas and practices. The resolution for renovating higher education 2005 (HERA), which was partly influenced by the voice of the West, continued the line of expanding higher education and relying on private providers (Section 4.2.3). HERA proposed to increase institutional autonomy and eliminate line ministry control of public HEIs but did not identify how to balance between state supervision and institutional autonomy. By 2010, the gap between legal and real autonomy for HEIs was very large. The master designer of HERA, Lam Q.T., recognized that "there will need to be a very significant level of capacity building, together with a change in how key actors view institutional self-management, in order for these reforms to be successful" (Hayden & Lam Q.T., 2010, p: 20).

In the course of expanding access to higher education, higher education enrollments increased too quickly, while the number of teachers and public funding grew at a much lower rate (Section 4.4.1a & 4.4.1b). Late in 2009, MOET admitted that one reason for the deterioration of higher education quality was the negligent supervision of assuring minimum standards for teaching and learning. The renovation of higher education management in order to enhance quality was outlined in 2010 (Section 4.2.3). In essence, this policy is not a renovation of management but a correction of state mismanagement in the previous period.

Many new regulations from 2010-2012 were released to define the responsibilities of actors, supervising mechanisms, and economic incentives for HEIs. For now, the focus of higher education in Vietnam is on quality improvement. MOET performs quality management through three approaches: to keep a close watch on the sector around the quality threshold, to eliminate the sector below the threshold, and to encourage quality improvement by means of economic incentives in the sector above the threshold. The reregulation appears to produce positive outcomes derived from a reduction in bad practices. However, supervising a system consisting of approximately 400 HEIs (MOET, 2011a) is a burden on MOET, which is also distrusted due to abuse of office.

Higher education governance in Vietnam needs further renovating to build up an effective oversight system, which incorporates societal supervision on HEIs and MOET, and increased university autonomy. The development of such an oversight system may be long

because Vietnam needs time to establish trust between MOET and HEIs, and to strengthen information disclosure and policy transparency.

How does the governance renovation proceed?

On the one hand, the Vietnamese government often initiates large-scale changes in higher education. On the other hand, big changes in the system are often the diffusion of small-scale experiments and trials in HEIs. Owing to market forces, HEIs are forced to react to socio-economic demands and take initiative while bounded by multiple central regulations. The government intent of encouraging market mechanisms along with maintaining centralized policy-making is self-contradictory. In this context, Vietnamese HEIs have to fight for an influence on the ideology of higher education. The interactions between the state and HEIs are described and partly visualized via four matrices in Section 6.2 and 6.3.

The Party resolution 1993 laid the groundwork for the participation of societal actors but did not establish new management ideas and tools. From 1993 to 2003, the focus of higher education in Vietnam was access, efficiency, and relevance. Public accountability was disregarded because belief in the reporting mechanism of state management was still high. There were worries about the qualities/characteristics of higher education in the new context. The notion of teaching quality as fulfilling the requirements of society was commonly accepted (Nguyen K.D., 2002).

From 2004 to 2009, the rise of the evaluative state by tools of external quality assurance and accreditation increased the understanding of a good quality management system and explicit evidence of performance. However, overemphasis on the relative notions of quality such as quality as fitness for purpose and/or as meeting the requirements of society, caused negligence of teaching quality in terms of student learning outcomes.

Although the higher education renovation in Vietnam appears to be always top-down, the principle of resource dependence-power relation works out in Vietnam. In recent years, more than 30% of the income of public HEIs has been derived from tuition fees. Insufficient teacher salary and public funding reduction force universities to pursue income generation. Consequently, “value for money” or efficiency has been widely accepted in universities. Public HEIs were successful in fighting for authority to set tuition fees of high-quality educational programs in 2010. Despite the dominant voice of the state, academic professionals and other social actors have had an increasing influence on policy

formulation since 2004. While the demand for higher education is still higher than the supply, students often pursue access and do not care much about quality. The public discourse about Vietnamese higher education is mainly between MOET and academic professionals. Constrained by the poor salary system, academic professionals have prioritized material needs over professional advancement. Academic quality has been of secondary importance in the academic profession. Continuing the pattern of the previous period, the dominant criteria for assessing higher education from 2004 to 2009 were access, efficiency, relevance, and quality.

From 2010 to 2012, the government issued many new regulations or modifications of existing regulations. In the case of Vietnam, reregulation has been carried out. Teaching quality was a top priority for MOET in this period. Although efficiency was still of top importance for academics, they increasingly acted for better quality. The top assessment criteria for higher education in this period were quality, efficiency, relevance, access.

There are now some positive signs for Vietnamese higher education. There will be more academics equipped with the Western ideology that highly values academic norms and freedom. It is likely that academic advancement will become the top concern of academics in the future. In the meantime, the purpose of universities will be clearly defined, and equilibrium between income motivation and academic peer norms will be established. The higher education system in Vietnam is being better arranged. Some leading universities are accumulating the basic characteristics of academic organizations. Good universities are consolidating social trust in self-governance. The trend that has been emerging since 2010 will be consolidated. Therefore, it is highly likely that the focus of higher education in Vietnam from now onwards will be quality, efficiency, relevance, and access.

In the course of renovating the management of higher education in Vietnam, the issue of university autonomy is always high on the agenda. The government has extended the areas in which universities can fully decide. Because of internal affairs being mostly governed by academics rather than administrators, the increase in university autonomy leads to an increase in academic self-governance. The organizational management in Vietnamese universities is characterized as shared governance among academics, top managers, and administrators.

The key resource contributors for Vietnamese higher education are the state, academics, and households/students. Therefore applying RDT, an equilibrium status in the higher education governance must be a combination between state regulation, academic self-governance, and market competition. The current arrangement of higher education governance in Vietnam is as follows: gradual shift from state control to state supervision, a dilemma of academic self-governance, increasing market competition, a gap between formal and real autonomy for HEIs, very low involvement of external stakeholders, and political guidance. However, academic self-governance is gaining trust resulting from the growth in the number of qualified academics, so Vietnam is in the process of approaching the equilibrium status.

What are the outcomes of the higher education governance renovation in terms of teaching quality?

Teaching quality in Vietnam consists of a wide range. High-quality teaching exists in elite and high-quality study programs. Unfortunately, the number of such programs is modest. The quality of mass study programs decreased in HEIs that expanded teaching provision rapidly. Part-time teaching produced very low quality because of violating the minimum standards of teaching and learning. The four universities in the case study sample are leading universities in Vietnam, so bad teaching is less often seen there. The national statistics in the period between 1987 and 2010 show that public funding per student was radically reduced (Section 4.4.1a). Tuition contribution to HEIs was mainly spent on teacher salary rather than learning infrastructure. As a result of per student spending reduction, teaching quality declined. However, the quality reduction tends to be mitigated by recent reregulation. Change in teaching quality in Vietnam has three patterns in accordance with the lines of higher education in three time spans.

In the first stage of higher education renovation from 1987 to 2003, the Vietnamese government focused on increasing access and efficiency by introducing market-like mechanisms. HEIs increased the number of students too quickly, undermining the established quality. In the second stage from 2004 to 2009, the concern about higher education focused on relevance and good management practice. The adoption of the concept of quality as fitness for purpose, or meeting the requirements of society led to confusion between relevance and quality. Although MOET developed new tools for quality management, including external quality assurance and accreditation, it failed to achieve the

goal of quality maintenance. In the third stage from 2010 onwards, the government has been implementing stricter supervision of HEIs and reregulation. The reregulation has helped to terminate the decrease of quality and recover the quality threshold. Quality has been the top priority of government policies. The pursuit of quality enhancement will more emphasized due to the strengthening of academic peer norms. The tuition framework 2010 has stimulated the development of high-quality study programs. The improvement in teaching quality in the sector above the threshold will be realistic and in turn help to raise the quality of the whole system.

7.2 Implications

Theoretical Contributions

Higher education governance is arranged through the interaction between the government and HEIs. That is why a blending of macro and micro theories of management in order to address and explain the diverse and complex reality of higher education governance is necessary. Complementary views of the governance/NPM perspective and RDT helped to grasp connections among causes, processes, and outcomes of higher education governance in Vietnam over the last two decades. The usefulness of these two theories for orientating the research design, investigation and interpretation of the phenomena in Vietnam suggests that a combination of macro and micro theories on the one hand provides an integrated understanding of governance reality at both two levels, and on the other hand, creates new knowledge about the interaction between these two levels. In addition, the strong influence of economic forces and Confucian culture on the behavior of the actors governing higher education in Vietnam suggests that other disciplines, such as economics and cultural anthropology, would be meaningful theoretical and methodological approaches to researching higher education governance.

RDT shows high relevance for understanding the responses of Vietnamese universities to the environments that are changing very quickly due to socio-economic factors and governmental steering (Section 6.1 and 6.2). These research findings suggest that responsive and proactive actions are more likely to happen in universities emphasizing resource acquisition. Applying RDT to examine the operation of universities in other national settings, where the pragmatic goal of universities is high or where public funding

for universities is reducing, would be informative for the field of organization study and provide new understanding of organizational change in universities.

A small, theory-driven aim of this study stated in Chapter 1 is to test whether RDT could be a 'sub-theory' of the governance perspective in higher education. According to RDT, managers act to increase autonomy and profitability for organizations. Acting for more university autonomy still holds true, but universities do not often pursue profit. The spirit of universities is faculty who prioritize academic peer norms instead of economic benefits. In universities, institutional forces emanating from academic communities and values have an influence on the attitudes and decisions of managers. Therefore, in order to explore the dimension of managerial self-governance in universities, the use of both RDT and neo-institutional theory would be more fruitful.

Conventional universities are considered as a specific type of organization. However, universities have recently transformed into a more formal type with clearer goals and increasingly standardized technology caused by accountability and external evaluation. The case of Vietnam shows that the role of academics is becoming more importance, and distinctive characteristics of academic organizations, for example, research mission, are being established. In other words, Vietnamese universities are becoming less bureaucratic and more academic and special. The distinctive trajectory of organizational transformation in Vietnamese universities results from attempts to develop common features of a modern Western university. The case of Vietnam suggests that because phenomena in higher education are heterogonous and changing, thorough representation of the phenomena needs to go beyond addressing the appearances and status and to discover the rationale and logic of actions. That is to say, there is a need for using, elaborating, and tailoring existing theories to support empirical research on higher education.

The so-called NPM, of which the most common practice is market-like mechanisms, is increasingly implemented in higher education for the purpose of accountability and efficiency, so it is becoming more important for university management and leadership to cope with competing demands. As RDT suggests, the organization's ability to perceive and interact with the environment requires a high degree of skill and managerial intelligence. Therefore, many issues surrounding university managerial staff would be worth addressing. What are the characteristics of managerial labor in universities in the context of an increase in managerial tasks for dealing with resource acquisition, public accountability,

and external evaluation of quality? Do university managerial tasks require professional knowledge and skills of management? Are management qualifications in universities similar or dissimilar to ordinary management qualifications?

Policy Implications

The Party resolution 1993 has changed the structure of Vietnamese higher education radically. The types of organization, ownership and functions of HEIs have become diversified. The size of the system expanded more than ten times over the last 25 years. The scope of study programs has also expanded. However, follow-up guidelines have mostly been concerned with management tools, hardly adjusting the purpose of higher education and providing conditions for realizing university autonomy. Without a new philosophy of higher education suitable for a system that is transitioning from elite to mass enrollments and incorporating a research function, no new governing idea could be detected and established (Section 4.2.3). For example, in order to create room for HEIs to act, HERA proposed to remove line-ministry control but faced the obstacle that Vietnamese HEIs do not have a real governing body that could replace line ministries with raising the requests of industries on universities. From another perspective, a counter question on the role of the line ministry and other external stakeholders could be that in what areas and to what extent the opinions of these actors are sensible to higher education.

The stagnation in developing a coherent and consistent regulatory framework for higher education can be also attributable to the problems of institutional design and public administration. The research mission of a modern university has been adopted, so Article 36 of the Amended Constitution 2001 (as mentioned in Section 4.4.2a), which refers to teaching only and claims state control of the education purpose and curricula, is no longer relevant for higher education. Many higher education functions in Vietnam need to be redefined and clarified. Universities have full autonomy in professional components of curricula but low incentive to use it. Although universities are assigned the function of knowledge production, the general education component of curricula is still controlled for the purpose of political propagation. Areas of institutional autonomy and the extent of each area, e.g. seven operational domains suggested by Anderson and Johnson (1998), need to be clearly arranged between MOET and HEIs. Without explicit legislation, detailed regulations issued by the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, and ministers will continue binding the operation of HEIs. Vietnamese HEIs are transforming into academic organizations in

which production technology and management have distinctive characteristics, so the voice of academics in policy formulation through public discourse need to be strengthened.

The development of an effective oversight system that accommodates increased university autonomy and an accountability mechanism would take a long time. In the first the stage of seeking such a system, MOET should strengthen new management tools in higher education including accreditation, incentive and market-based instruments, and information-based decisions. In addition, to speed up the development of an accountability mechanism in higher education, it is necessary to strengthen policy transparency and information disclosure.

The trend of reducing public funding for higher education is more likely to harm science education as in the case of US in this study. Slaughter & Leslie (1997) pointed out that budget cuts in the U.S. contributed to academic capitalism that stimulates the involvement of universities and academics in market-like behaviors and might undermine the fundamental characteristics of academic labor. Thus, the Vietnamese government should thoroughly design the scheme of budget cuts and support universities in the fields of basic science, which is highly vulnerable to market forces.

7.3 Recommendations for Future Research

The study adopted the overarching prepositions derived from the governance perspective and RDT, which showed their usefulness for discovering common patterns in Vietnamese higher education governance and for comparing them with the global phenomena. However, affected by such an approach, the analyses focused on some key issues and phenomena and gave less emphasis on others. Some of the unexplored issues include: a formula for a suitable tuition rate, scholarships and loans for students in the presence of market-like mechanisms, professional life of academics in the context of changing institutional and socio-economic environments, and characteristics of managerial labor in universities in the new context. These would be interesting topics for further study.

A multiple-case study approach was employed in conducting empirical research. As a direct consequence of this methodology, the study faced limitations that could provide starting points for future research endeavors. The study included four leading universities in Vietnam in the case study sample, but it generalized the pattern of university actions and

the university-state relationships to the whole higher education sector. Therefore, the predictions of the study should be further tested by increasing the number of cases investigated in a follow-up study or will be gradually tested through time.

Two universities in the case study sample are under the administration of NU, which has professional centers supporting and consulting its member universities in carrying out their tasks, for example Center for Educational Testing and Quality Assessment, Center for Human Resource Development. NU has a budget for implementing new ideas and practices, for example, internationally recognized accreditation standards and elite study programs. These affiliated universities are more successful in educational goals and organizational management, while the two independent universities excessively pursue short-term income generation and are less capable of strategic management. Insights into the attribution of NU administration to the operation and achievements of member universities would be complementary for the findings of this study.

Due to limited time and resources, the research could not translate the case study reports into Vietnamese so that the Vietnamese informants could give feedback on the accuracy of data interpretations and high-inference findings. However, the triangulations of methods, and sources and types of data were carefully carried out. The findings of a case were compared with those in the other cases. The cross-case findings were compared with the findings of other studies and established prepositions and theories as well. Deviant phenomena such as the high market competition in the environment of UT and the large size of college education at US are addressed and explained. The above-mentioned attempts to match patterns produced a general confirmation of the conclusions and the internal validity of the study.

Changes in the governance of a higher education system mostly result from change in higher education policies, innovation in universities, and the alignment between these two forces. Therefore, the dynamics of higher education governance are the result of the back-and-forth interplay between governmental steering as an influential element in the general environment of universities and university actions. By means of an empirical investigation of the case of Vietnam, this study demonstrates that a blending of the public management and organization study approaches to higher education governance helps to produce meaningful findings. The renovation of higher education governance in Vietnam is producing positive outcomes in terms of both teaching quality and structural arrangement.

National policies are slow to address new practices in HEIs, so the modernization of Vietnamese higher education will take a very long time if there is no reform in the educational philosophy and legislative system.

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Appendix I: Examples of Interview Protocols

A. Interview Protocol for University Leaders

Part one: The interviewer briefly introduces herself and the doctoral research project

Part two: Interview questions

I. Changes in university governance and university autonomy

1. Would you be so kind to give me an overview of changes in the management of your university over the last 5-10 years?

2. Has your university received more autonomy? Which areas and to what extent are they?
   - Admission of students, tuition fee setting
   - Teacher recruitment and dismissal, salary setting, and teacher assessment
   - Program opening, curriculum design
   - International relations
   - Finance

3. Does your university need more autonomy? Why and in which areas are they?

II. The link between university autonomy and teaching quality enhancement

4. What has the university done to assure the quality of teaching and learning? Are they the university's initiatives?

   - Policies and procedures for quality assurance and control
   - Mechanisms for periodic review of curricula and monitoring of learning standards
   - Teaching and learning support: continuing education for faculty, introduction of new education approaches and pedagogical tools, development of certain abilities for students, mentoring and career advice for students
   - Rewards for "good" teachers and institutional funds for teaching innovation

5. What are the aims of the new quality assurance system in your institution?

   Which one is the most important among these aspects: fulfillment of requirement from the government, accountability, continuous quality improvement?

6. How did the university use the increased autonomy to consolidate teaching and learning?

III. Interviewees perceptions of the impacts of greater university autonomy on quality management and teaching quality

7. What would be the possible impacts of more university autonomy on the teaching quality in your university?

8. What are the roles of the university staff in teaching quality enhancement?

What are the authority division and professional norms of the actors including, the board of rectors, university council, administrative offices, scientific committee, deans, faculty boards, and each individual academic.

B. Interview Protocol for Deans and Academics

Part one: The interviewer briefly introduces herself and the doctoral research project

Part two: Interview questions

I. Changes in university governance and university autonomy

1. Would you be so kind to give me an overview of changes in the management of your university over the last 5-10 years?

2. Has your university received more autonomy? Which areas and to what extent are they?

3. Does your university need more autonomy? Why and in which areas are they?

II. The link between university autonomy and teaching quality enhancement

4. What has the department done to assure the quality of teaching and learning? Are they the department initiatives?

5. Do academic departments need more autonomy resulting from national deregulation and institutional deregulation? Why and in which areas are they?

6. What are the aims of the new quality assurance system in your department?

Which one is the most important among these aspects: fulfillment of requirement, accountability, and continuous quality improvement?

III. Interviewees' perceptions of the impacts of greater university autonomy on quality management and teaching quality

7. What would be the possible impacts of more university autonomy on the teaching quality in your university?

8. What are the roles of the university staff in teaching quality enhancement?

What are the authority division and professional norms of the actors including, the board of rectors, university councils, administrative offices, deans, faculty boards, and each individual academic.

Appendix II: Data on Vietnamese HEIs, Students, and Teachers

	1999-'00	2000-'01	'01-'02	'02-'03	'03-'04	'04-'05	'05-'06	'06-'07	'07-'08	'08-'09	'09-'10	2010-'11
Trường - Institution	**153**	**178**	**191**	**202**	**214**	**230**	**255**	**322**	346	369	376	386
Cao đẳng - College	**84**	**104**	**114**	**121**	**127**	**137**	**151**	**183**	**206**	**223**	**227**	**223**
Công lập - Public	79	99	108	115	119	130	142	166	182	194	197	193
Ngoài công lập - Non Public	5	5	6	6	8	7	9	17	24	29	30	30
Đại học - University	**69**	**74**	**77**	**81**	**87**	**93**	**104**	**139**	**140**	**146**	**149**	**163**
Công lập - Public	52	57	60	64	68	71	79	109	100	101	103	113
Ngoài công lập - Non-public	17	17	17	17	19	22	25	30	40	45	46	50

Giảng viên – Total Teaching Staff	**30309**	**32205**	**35938**	**38608**	**39985**	**47646**	**48579**	**53518**	**56120**	**61190**	**70558**	**74573**

Total Students	**893754**	**918228**	**974119**	**1020667**	**1131030**	**1319754**	**1387107**	**1540201**	**1603484**	**1719499**	**1935739**	**2162106**
Sinh viên Đại học - University Students	**719842**	**731505**	**763256**	**805123**	**898767**	**1046291**	**1087813**	**1173147**	**1180547**	**1242778**	**1358861**	**1435887**
Công lập - Public	624423	642041	680663	713955	787113	933352	949511	1015977	1037115	1091426	1185253	1246356
Ngoài công lập – Non-public	95419	89464	82593	91168	111654	112939	138302	157170	143432	151352	173608	189531
Sinh viên Cao đẳng - College Students	**173912**	**186723**	**210863**	**215544**	**232263**	**273463**	**299294**	**367054**	**422937**	**476721**	**576878**	**726219**
Công lập/Public	161793	171922	192466	194856	206795	248642	277176	330753	377531	409884	471113	581829
Ngoài công lập – Non-public	12119	14801	18397	20688	25468	24821	22118	36301	45406	66837	105765	144390

Source: MOET (2011a). Statistics on Education from 1999 to 2011. http://www.moet.gov.vn/?page=11.6&view=3544, retrieved on 7 November 2011

Appendix III: Main Socio-economic Indicators of Vietnam

Indicator Name	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
GNI per capita, PPP (current international $)	610	610	670	740	800	890
Population, total	64774000	66016700	67242400	68450100	69644500	70824500
GDP (current US$)	6293304847	6471740486	9613369554	9866990096	13180954014	16286434094
GDP growth (annual %)	7,4	5,1	6,0	8,6	8,1	8,8
Life expectancy at birth, total (years)	64,5	65,5	66,4	67,3	68,1	68,8

Indicator Name	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
GNI per capita, PPP (current international $)	990	1080	1170	1230	1300	1400
Population, total	71995500	73156700	74306900	75456300	76596700	77630900
GDP (current US$)	20736163915	24657470332	26843701137	27209601996	28683658005	31172517272
GDP growth (annual %)	9,5	9,3	8,2	5,8	4,8	6,8
Life expectancy at birth, total (years)	69,4	70,0	70,5	71,0	71,5	71,9

Indicator Name	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
GNI per capita, PPP (current international $)	1510	1620	1750	1920	2120	2330
Population, total	78621000	79538700	80468400	81437700	82393500	83313000
GDP (current US$)	32685199371	35058216051	39552513118	45427854693	52917296789	60913515795
GDP growth (annual %)	6,9	7,1	7,3	7,8	8,4	8,2
Life expectancy at birth, total (years)	72,4	72,8	73,1	73,4	73,7	73,9

Indicator Name	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
GNI per capita, PPP (current international $)	2560	2740	2850	3050	3250
Population, total	84221100	85122300	86025000	86932500	87840000
GDP (current US$)	71015592863	91094051435	97180304813	106426845157	123600141396
GDP growth (annual %)	8,5	6,3	5,3	6,8	5,9
Life expectancy at birth, total (years)	74,2	74,4	74,6	74,8	75,1

Source: WB (2012), World Databank. http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#, retrieved on 16 December 2012