

# A Number of Achievements in Higher Education of Vietnam over 30 Years of Renovation (1986-2016)

Nguyen Thuy Quynh<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Institute of History, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences.

Email: nguyenthuyquynh289@gmail.com

Received on 18 February 2019.      Revised on 28 February 2019.      Accepted on 8 April 2019.

**Abstract:** In the cause of comprehensive renovation of Vietnam from 1986 until now, the Party and State have implemented many guidelines, policies and measures to renovate and develop the higher education. The higher education has been gradually integrating into and moving towards the world's conventional education model. Despite some remaining constraints and challenges, the process of renovation of tertiary education system has gained important achievements and made great contributions to the socio-economic development. This paper initially studies some attainments of the higher education system in Vietnam such as the renovation of higher education model, scale-up of education, mobilisation of investments of social strata for education, diversification of training forms and enhancement of international cooperation, thereby affirming meaningful contributions of the higher education system over 30 years since the renovation process of the country (1986-2016).

**Keywords:** Vietnam, higher education, renovation, achievements.

**Subject classification:** History

## 1. Introduction

From 1986 to 2016, the higher education of Vietnam has been gradually renovated and developed. After the conference of universities in 1987, numerous guidelines, policies and measures on education renovation were implemented. The guideline on education and training renovation is one of the crucial contents in congresses and conferences. It was

clearly presented in thematic conferences on education such as the 2<sup>nd</sup> plenum of the Party Central Committee, the 7<sup>th</sup> tenure in 1993 and the 4<sup>th</sup> plenum of the Party Central Committee, the 8<sup>th</sup> tenure in 1996. Notably, it is the first time in the history of Vietnamese education that the Law on Higher Education was issued in 2012 upon the promulgation of the Law on Education in 1998 and 2005. In addition, the Government

has also issued some decrees, circulars, directives and strategies on education and training development. The system of promulgated legal normative documents has created the legal framework for quite a comprehensive renovation in all spheres of the tertiary education of Vietnam.

Over the past 30 years, the higher education has shown strong transformations and renovations in various fields such as education system structure renovation; investment source diversification; facility development enhancement; renovations in curriculum contents, teaching methods, training procedures, student recruitment modalities, examination organisation and certificate system; international cooperation expansion and so on. Besides remaining issues and limitations that need to be addressed due to subjective and objective reasons, the tertiary education has accomplished important attainments, contributing to the development of education in particular and all other aspects of the country in general. The higher education has been drastically scaled up and yielded some crucial results in the development and implementation of some renovation policies and measures.

At present, historical contexts of the country and world pose to the higher education in particular and education in general many need-to-be-tackled challenges to continue to bridge gaps with the modern education and ongoing knowledge-based economic development. Therefore, it is very necessary to review the 30-year journey of tertiary education renovation, including the assessment of achieved results to continue promoting attainments and overcome

remaining issues in the new renovation phase to serve practical needs of the country. Based on fundamental contents in tertiary education renovation, this research analyses some achievements of the higher education in education model renovation, education scale-up, mobilisation of investments of social strata for education and expansion of international cooperation in education.

## **2. Renovation of higher education model**

From 1986 until now, the tertiary education of Vietnam has undergone strong renovations. After the Conference of University Presidents in Nha Trang in 1987, the higher education system started its renovation process with the following measures:

- Higher education transformed from the single training method which is based on the plan of giving priorities over the needs for staffing of the State and national economy to other diverse training modes in order to meet the needs for staffing of not only the State, but also economic sectors and people's strata. The training has to go hand in glove with the demand of the labour pool.

- Higher education does not just rely on the state budget but also other resources outside the state budget such as tuition fees, training contracts, contributions of economic and social organisations, self-management fees of universities, international support and so forth.

- The centralised, bureaucratic and subsidised administrative management mechanisms in higher education would be reduced. Tertiary education does not just

follow the centralised plan, but it also needs to match the trends and requirements of society, as while enhancing the autonomy of universities in student recruitment, training, cooperation and research.

- Tertiary education would not attach to the distribution of graduates which followed the subsidised administrative mechanism. Graduates manage to find jobs by themselves in economic sectors. Job arrangement after graduation depends on the needs of employers through the regulation of the labour market.

In the implementation of renovations, the elite education sector has applied concrete policies, programmes and objectives and showed fundamental changes in all spheres, especially with regard to training models. From 1993 until now, the State has issued many legal documents regulating the framework structure of education and training forms of the national education system in general and the higher education of Vietnam in particular, which were defined in a detailed and systematic manner and made responsive to international practices with the corresponding system of degrees and certificates<sup>2</sup>. Specifically, the framework structure of the higher education system included undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate training levels with the following specifications:

- College: The duration is two to three years, which depends on the training majors, for candidates with high school or technical high school diplomas and 1.5 to 2 years for candidates with technical high school diplomas of the same training majors.

- University: The duration is four to six years, which depends on the training

majors, for candidates with high school or technical high school diplomas, 2,5 to 4 years for candidates with technical high school diplomas of the same majors and one to two years for candidates with college degrees of the same training majors.

Training forms at college and university levels comprise regular and non-regular ones with part-time, articulation, in-service and second degree programmes as well as public and non-public schools.

- Graduate training: The master training is conducted in two academic years for candidates with university degrees. The duration of doctoral training<sup>3</sup> is four continuous full-time years for university degree holders and three continuous full-time years for candidates with master degrees. Training forms include full-time or part-time formal programmes in accordance with regulations of each university. In special cases, the duration of doctoral level can be extended in accordance with regulations of the Ministry of Education and Training.

Over the past years, the system of issued legal normative documents on education has developed a legal environment in the renovation of education management mechanism. This is the first time that Vietnam has generated the Law on Higher Education with strict regulations for this sector. Accordingly, “the education management model in the recent time has been cognitively shaped as a transformation from the management which is conducted mainly through administrative orders into the law-based one... Basically, the legal framework for regulating all educational activities has been shaped and strengthened

step by step. Standards for the management have been continuously developed, finalised and is taking effect” [17, p.275]. A big success in this period is the system structure finalisation of the tertiary education in Vietnam for the first time in the history with the successful development of master and doctoral training levels within the country in addition to undergraduate education. With diverse and plentiful training majors in all fields, the graduate training of Vietnam has achieved certain successes. From the fact that Vietnam, previously, had to send students to foreign countries for graduate training, the country can now provide training at master and doctoral levels by itself in combination with overseas training to improve the human resource quality.

If the higher education of Vietnam was influenced by and developed towards the models of France (from 1945 to 1954), the US (from 1954 to 1975 in the South) and socialist countries, especially USSR (from 1954 to the end of 1980s in the 20<sup>th</sup> century) before the renovation process, it has integrated into and transformed towards the common model of the world’s higher education since then until now. Vietnam has renovated its higher education towards models of Western developing countries, among which the most outstanding one is the US with a close connection to three basic functions, including training, scientific research and facilitation to the socio-economic development. Education has been transformed from a part of the social welfare subsidised by the State with the complete reliance on a centralised,

bureaucratic and subsidised model into the general cause of the State and society based on a decentralised, democratic and modernised model. Gaining ground on that, the higher education is gradually exposing and adapting to requirements of the market mechanism at different levels and recognised as a commercial service area. Accordingly, “the role of education in society has been changed from “a product of the egalitarianism” to “a normal investment area” [1, p.89]. On the other hand, the development of a learning society model is paid special interest to mobilise resources for development, as while meeting requirements of the multi-sectoral market economy development and needs for developing human resources, especially high-quality one with creativity and lifelong learning ability.

In short, over 30 years after the renovation process, the higher education has step by step renovated its model to align with requirements of the country and current trends. Accordingly, the model developed by Vietnam has many similarities and dissimilarities with the common pattern of the world. The identification of directions and renovations for the development model is considered a success of the Vietnamese higher education in the context of global changes because the problem is not only clarifying how many years the education has been lagged behind but also marking out the orientation to overcome such backwardness. This plays an important role in the renovation process of education and is the fundamental condition for the renovation and development of the Vietnamese higher education.

### 3. Development of training scale

Over 30 years after the renovation process, the higher education has achieved great attainments in the expansion and development of training scale. The network of universities and colleges has been developed and satisfied better the learning demand of society. Colleges and universities are located in big residential areas, regions and provinces. Besides big provinces and centrally-run cities such as Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Red River Delta and southeastern region, the State has prioritised the additional establishment of universities and colleges in difficult regions such as northwestern region, Central Highlands and Mekong Delta (Table 1).

For the number of universities and colleges, if there were only 96 universities and colleges throughout the country in 1986, this figure increased to 110 universities with two national universities, three regional universities, many other specialised, open and people-funded universities and 43 colleges [10] in 1997. In 2006, the number of universities and colleges were 299 with 253 public ones and 46 non-public ones [9], [10], [11]. In 2014, the whole country had 436 universities and colleges (219 universities and 217 colleges), which was 4.5 times higher than in 1986 and included 347 public ones and 89 non-public ones. The number of universities increased to 235 with 170 public ones and 65 non-public ones in 2016 [17]. Despite many hardships, the facilities and equipment of universities and colleges have been

gradually standardized and modernised. The system of lecture halls, libraries, internet networks, e-libraries, multi-media teaching instruments and learning resources is very diverse and plentiful, which will facilitate the study and research of students and lecturers.

With regard to the number of teachers and students in universities and colleges, there were 19,200 teachers and 91,200 students in long-term programmes in 1986. These figures increased to 23,500 and 236,300 respectively in 1996. In 2006, 20 years after the renovation process, the number of teachers doubled (53,400) with 24,325 teachers of graduate level, 28,460 teachers of undergraduate level and 579 teachers of other levels. Meanwhile, the number of students in the same year increased by 16 times to 1,666,200 with 230,000 students successfully getting their bachelor degrees [9], [10], [11]. By 2015, the number of teachers in universities and colleges had been 93,500, including 76,100 teachers of public universities and colleges (81.4%) and 17,400 teachers of non-public ones. The number of students in universities and colleges of the same year was 2,118,500 with 353,600 students successfully getting their bachelor degrees; (see more in Table 2). In the academic year of 2015-2016, 443 universities and colleges (248 universities and 195 colleges) recruited additionally 554,953 candidates, reaching 85.74% of their own targets. Specifically, universities successfully enrolled 415,870 newbies (97.6%) and colleges successfully enrolled 139,083 newbies (63.21%), which were higher than such figures of the whole 2014 [17].

Table 1: Higher Education Distributed by Regions

	2001 (*)				2006				2016			
	Teacher s	Student s	Public teachers	Public students	Teacher s	Students	Public teachers	Public students	Teacher s	Students	Public teachers	Public students
Whole Country	31.419	873.039	..	..	53.364	1.666.239	45.631	1.456.666	72.346	1.759.449	57.198	1.515.474
Red River Delta	15.005	424.311	..	..	21.584	688.761	19.709	651.567	30.448	731.215	26.344	665.847
Northern Midland and Mountainous Region	2.438	37.789	..	..	4.025	83.468	4.025	83.468	3.672	80.047	3.536	79.435
North Central and South Central Coast	4.957	129.29	..	..	7.928	293.123	7.257	279.747	10.544	250.537	8.531	216.561
Central Highlands	812	23.850	..	..	1.236	40.22	1.046	38.349	1.059	31.169	874	28.808
South East	6.189	200.447	..	..	14.601	467.7	9.88	316.665	20.017	509.532	13.315	390.245
Mekong River Delta	2.018	57.352	..	..	3.99	92.967	3.714	86.870	6.606	156.949	4.598	134.578

Source: <https://www.gso.gov.vn/default.aspx?tabid=722>.

Table 2: The Scale of Higher Education from 1986 to 2016

Year	Schools	Teachers	Total students
1986	96	19,200	91,200
1996	96	23,500	509,300
2006	299	53,400	1,666,200
2016	235	72.8	1,767,900
2017 (preliminary)	235	75	1,695,900

Source: General Statistics Office (2002), *Statistics of 2001*, Statistics Publishing House, Hanoi; General Statistics Office (2007), *Statistics of 2006*, Statistics Publishing House, Hanoi; General Statistics Office (2006), *Vietnam in 20 Years of Renovation and Development (1986 – 2005)*, Statistical Publishing House, Hanoi and data at website: <https://www.gso.gov.vn/default.aspx?tabid=722>.

For the graduate training, after the fall of socialist states, Vietnam had to mainly provide graduate training within the country and move towards formulating a training system which was fairly complete in terms of discipline structure. In 1991, Vietnam started to launch the master training programmes in the national education system. There were 13,851 students studying in these programmes from 1991 to 1996. In 1993, in accordance with Decree No.90/CP by the Prime Minister, the graduate training level included master and doctoral programmes. The number of associate doctors and doctors were about 8,000 from both home and overseas training programmes. This is a contingent of intellectuals with important contributions to the development in all spheres of the country. The number of graduate students increased by three times from 34,982 in 2005 to 119,388 in 2016. Among 119,388 graduate students in 2016, there were 13,587 PhD students, 105,801 master students and 8,025 students with medical specialised training. The number of students

successfully getting their graduate degrees reached 35,918 (1,234 doctors and 34,684 masters) [17] (Table 3).

Together with the scale development, the equality implementation in higher education has also yielded numerous results. The equality in education is manifested in many aspects and beneficiaries. Universities and colleges are established in big residential areas, regions and provinces, including regions with many difficulties such as Northwestern region, Central Highlands and Mekong Delta. This helps to satisfy the people's study needs and improve the people's intellect in these regions. The equality is also reflected through learning opportunities for men and women with a relative gender balance in the number of students. For beneficiaries of incentive policies, the tertiary education offers them bonus points and tuition fee reduction. For students from ethnic minorities, the State has an incentive policy of offering them bonus points in the national entrance examination, enrolling without sitting for the national entrance examination, reducing

their tuition fees and so forth to train officials for mountainous and remote areas. For poor students, the credit programme offering them incentive loans has been implemented since March, 1998 and yielded crucial results. On 29 July, 2007, the Government issued Decision No.157/2007/QĐ-TTg on offering incentive loans to students with the interest rate of 0.5% per month. By 2012, there had been nearly 2.5 million students offered incentive loans, increasing by 50 times in comparison to 2003 with the total balance of up to more than VND 35.8 billion [15, p.437]. Following that, Resolution No.29-NQ/TW dated 4 November, 2013 of the 8<sup>th</sup> plenum of the Party Central Committee, the 11<sup>th</sup> tenure on fundamental and comprehensive

innovation in education, serving industrialisation and modernisation in a socialist-oriented market economy during international integration put forward some important solutions, which emphasised: “If the discipline is likely to be invested by social strata, the government support shall only be provided for beneficiaries of incentive policies, ethnic minorities, and the gifted. Ensure the equality of opportunity to be supported by the State of learners in public schools and non-public schools”<sup>4</sup>. With this guideline, the equality in rights to support of learners in public schools and non-public schools has been ensured to protect the rights and interests of students in these two kinds of schools.

Table 3: The Scale of Graduate Training in The Period of 2005-2016

Year	2005	2016
Number of graduate students - Total	34,982	119,388
Number of graduate students - PhD students	3.43	13,587
Number of graduate students - Masters	31,552	105,801
Number of graduate degree holders - Total	5.78	35,918
Number of graduate degree holders - PhD students	359	1,234
Number of graduate degree holders - Masters	5,421	34,684
Number of students with medical specialised training - Total	4,957	8,025

Source: <https://www.gso.gov.vn/default.aspx?tabid=722>.

In short, since the renovation process up until now, the higher education has strongly developed with regard to the number of schools, classes, teachers and students at bachelor, master and doctor levels as well as in many training forms and disciplines. The social equity in education has been

initially ensured. With the continuous expansion of scale and gradual improvement of quality, tertiary education has provided the human resources, especially high-quality one to the development in political, economic, cultural and social affairs of the country.



#### **4. Mobilisation of investments of social strata for education and diversification of training forms**

The transformation to an open education model - a learning society model with the system of lifelong learning, continuous training and interconnection among academic levels and majors as well as the formulation and development of a learning system for all with flexible study and practice forms have made contributions to satisfying the needs for regular study of and creating different opportunities for all learners, and ensuring the social equity in education. Due to the mobilisation of investments of social strata for education, the funding and facilities for higher education have been improved and enhanced in all aspects.

In addition to the state budget, there are non-state funding sources such as tuition fees; revenues from scientific research, production and services from the self-management of schools; donations from organisations, individuals and international support. With the self-management of and self-responsibility for financial issues, many schools have successfully mobilised resources in the training process. In 2006, the total tuition fees of non-public universities and colleges reached VND 993 billion. In accordance with Report of Oversight Results No.329 dated May 2010 by the Standing Committee of the National Assembly, the total charter capital for establishing these schools was VND 1,555 billion [6, p.211].

The education in general and higher education in particular are also successful in the mobilisation of socio-political organisations such as Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Associations

(VUSTA), Vietnam Lawyers Association, Vietnam Student Association, Vietnam Association for Promoting Education, Veteran Teacher Association of Vietnam, Association of Vietnam Non-Public Universities and Colleges and so on to actively engage in the compilation and development of legal normative documents related to education and training<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand, many big movements and advocacies have been launched to mobilise the participation of society as a whole in the development of education.

The implementation of the guideline of mobilising investments of social strata for education goes hand in hand with the diversification of training forms. In addition to public universities and colleges, there are non-public (semi-public, people-funded and private) ones with full-time, part-time, in-service, articulation, second degree and distance training programmes, which not only match the circumstances of different learners, but also create many learning opportunities for them. In implementing the guideline of mobilising investments of social strata for education, besides public colleges and universities, there are non-public (semi-public, people-funded and private) ones. In 1988, the first non-public university in Vietnam was established under the name of Thang Long Private University Centre, followed by Phuong Dong University, Dong Do University, Duy Tan University, Van Lang University and so forth. If there were only five people-funded universities in Vietnam founded in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Da Nang city in 1994, 80 non-public universities and colleges were established in many provinces and cities all over the country 10 years later and accounted for 19% of the total number of schools.

By the academic year of 1999-2000, there had been four semi-public universities and colleges, including the Ho Chi Minh City Semi-public Open University, Ho Chi Minh City Semi-public Marketing College, Business Administration Semi-public College and Hoa Sen Semi-public College [13, p.5]. The establishment of these four schools was based on the transformation from public operation mechanism into non-public one. By the end of 2005, Vietnam had had 22 non-public universities (with three semi-public universities), 12 non-public colleges (with three semi-public colleges, three people-funded colleges and six private colleges). Notably, on 24 October, 2014, the Government issued Resolution No.77/NQ-CP on piloting renovations in the operation mechanism of public universities in the period of 2014-2017. Accordingly, Duy Tan University has been transformed into a private university in accordance with new regulations by the Prime Minister's Decision. Four other universities have completed documents to conduct necessary procedures for such transformation and 15 people-funded universities are on the way to develop the projects for transforming into private ones in accordance with regulations. By 2015, there had been 88 non-public universities and colleges among 445 schools (19.7%) all over the country. The number of non-public students has increased quite rapidly by 271,400 [17], taking into consideration that some people-funded universities has transformed into private ones. Disciplines have been expanded from main majors such as economics, business administration, foreign languages and some others which required little training on experiment equipment to technical and technological professions. In addition to schools invested with domestic capitals, the State has even allowed the foundation of

schools invested with foreign capitals<sup>6</sup>. The rate of non-public students have went up in quite a fast manner.

The system of ever-increasing universities, including non-public ones has made contributions to the expansion of education scale, created more learning opportunities for learners and attracted hundred thousands of students every year, as while reducing the pressure for the public education sector. With the development of learning society model, the implementation of social equity has been initially improved. Tuition fee waiving, scholarship granting and other supportive policies such as incentive loans, bonus points for entrance examination, means of travel and so on have facilitated the academic pathway of students who are from poor families, families of difficult circumstances, ethnic minorities and beneficiaries of incentive policies.

In general, the renovation process of education in recent years has shown that the State got initial success in mobilising investments of social strata for education with sensible policies to engage social resources in the development. The mobilisation of investments of social strata for education, promoted with the participation of people, socio-economic organisations within and without the country, has made contributions to the cause of higher education renovation and development.

## **5. Expansion and enhancement of international cooperation**

The implementation of independent, autonomous, multi-lateral and diversified external guidelines in international relations and international cooperation activities on higher education has gained many

achievements, making crucial contributions to the development of the sector and country. If Vietnam only had cooperation relationships in education with socialist states before 1986, the country has expanded its cooperation in this field to many other countries and territories and become a member of numerous regional and international education organisations since then.

Many official aid projects have been signed with loans and non-refundable aids of different scales and levels. Based on the funding sources and beneficiaries, some projects have been directly negotiated and implemented between partners and provinces. Foreign investments in Vietnam mainly focus on the higher education due to a high demand of the domestic market. International partners such as Asian Development Bank (ADB), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM), Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and so forth pay great attention to education policies, in which there are plans to build internationally-recognised universities and train human resources based on the needs of market. Up to 2006, the total number of official aid projects for education and training have been 114 [17, p.277], [7, pp.143-144]. According to the Ministry of Education and Training, from 1998 to 2006, there were nine projects implemented by ODA with the total funding of USD 825 million and six projects proceeded by non-refundable aids with the total funding of USD 25 million. The disbursement rate of projects in 2007 reached more than 74% [18]. In 2008, the Ministry of Education and Training continued to exhort international sponsors to invest in nine big projects in the

period of 2008-2010 with the total funding of up to one billion USD. On average, the ODA capital accounts for 5.5% to 6% out of the total funding for the education and training sector. By 2012, there had been about 114 cooperation programmes and projects with the total funding of more than 900 million USD. Big programmes and projects for tertiary education have been signed such as the project on higher education (WB), the project on technical and vocational training (ADB, NDF and AFD as co-sponsors), the higher education policy development programme and scholarships of Australia, Japan, the U.S and so on for Vietnamese undergraduates and graduates. In 2014, there were another 25 foreign investment projects just for higher education with the total funding of USD 77.5 million [19]. According to statistics of the Foreign Investment Agency, by 20 May, 2015, there had been 213 FDI projects in education throughout the country with the total registered funding of USD 822 million [8].

In addition, many international cooperation models with foreign partners have been efficiently implemented. New universities have been developed such as the Vietnam-Germany University, Vietnam-Russia University of Technology, British University in Vietnam, Vietnam-Japan University, American University in Vietnam and others. Together with the renovation in student recruitment and standardisation of training curricula, the Ministry of Education and Training has also focused on directing leading schools to pilot the training programmes based on advanced programmes and course books of some countries in accordance with the stewardship of the Prime Minister from 2004. Many universities have trained their students with international

advanced programmes, some of which are directly taught in English by professors from prestigious universities in the world. The cooperation models have made important contributions to promote the integration of the Vietnamese higher education into advanced ones in the world.

Many universities have even launched partnership programmes with foreign establishments. By 2012, 163 partnership training programmes with foreign establishments at 58 training facilities had been approved all over the country. These programmes focus on economic, financial and banking sectors with training levels ranging up to that of the master's degree. Some universities and colleges invested with foreign capitals have been established and put into operation in Vietnam. Vietnam-Germany University and University of Science and Technology of Hanoi (or Vietnam-France University) were founded as the results of international cooperation models with special organisation and operation mechanisms to attract foreign financial support.

In the assignment of students to study in foreign countries, many scholarship projects and programmes funded by the state budget have yielded positive results<sup>7</sup>. In addition, by effective policies, Vietnamese students studying in foreign countries are continuously increasing. The reception of foreign students enrolled in Vietnamese training facilities is proceeded by Agreements, scholarships, bilateral cooperations and self-funding with countries having the capacity of thousands of foreign students such as Laos, Cambodia, the Republic of Korea, the Democratic Republic of Korea, China, Mongolia, Russia, France, Poland, etc. Foreign students are granted

scholarships by the State of Vietnam in accordance with Agreements signed between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and their countries. Particularly, the trend of studying abroad of Vietnamese students is ever-increasing at the tertiary education level [5, p.53]. The number of students sent abroad for training in 1986 was 4,188 people, including 273 PhD students and 725 undergraduates [10, p.299]. By 2013, the Ministry of Education and Training had managed and granted scholarships to nearly 6,000 Vietnamese people to study in nearly 40 countries in the world, nearly 4,000 foreigners studying in Vietnam and more than 100 experts teaching in African and Asian countries [2, p.106]. According to statistics of the Department of Training with Foreign Countries under the Ministry of Education and Training, by 2016, more than 10,000 foreign students, most of whom come from Laos and Cambodia, were studying in Vietnam and nearly 110,000 Vietnamese citizens, increasing by 5% in comparison to 2013 [3], were studying in foreign countries (mainly the US, Australia and Japan). Together with scholarships from the government, it is estimated that about 20,000 students are studying abroad by their own budgets and this figure increases every year. The number of students studying in the US and Western European countries is ever-rising. By 2020, the Ministry of Education and Training will plan to send about 2,500 lecturers for training in the US, 1,000 in the U.K, 700 in France and 1,000 in Germany and other countries [14], [4, p.69].

In short, international cooperation activities in education have ensured the requirements of bilateral and multilateral

cooperation in a better manner, contributing to the development of education and improvement of the position and role of Vietnam in the region and world. These cooperation models have made crucial contributions to the integration of the Vietnamese higher education into advanced ones in the world. Not only public schools, but also people-funded ones have initially and actively expanded their international cooperation relationships. Through the implementation of projects, agreements and others, the Vietnamese education has acquired experience in education from countries in the world, as while enhancing resources for the domestic education with assisting projects and foreign investments. This has contributed to the accomplishment of important objectives of the sector such as improving the capacity to formulate education development policies and strategies, strengthening the facilities for schools, developing and renovating the teaching contents and frameworks and fostering the professional knowledge for teachers as well as research and management staff.

## 6. Conclusion

Over 30 years (1986-2016), the Vietnamese education has increasingly renovated to find the right direction in line with the current trend and new context of the country. In the renovation process, in spite of many difficulties, weaknesses and limitations, the higher education has gained some important achievements, contributing to the development of the education in particular and the country in general such as the renovation of higher

education models, expansion of training scale, mobilisation of investments of social strata for education, diversification of training forms and enhancement of international cooperation and integration. Gained achievements have affirmed the crucial role and meaningful contributions of the higher education sector in the structure of the national education system, improvement of the people's intellect, training of human resources, especially high-quality one and promotion of talents for the country. At the same time, attainments in higher education have also made important contributions to the cause of socio-economic development of the country over 30 years of renovation. At present, education in general and higher education in particular are facing major challenges in the trends of globalisation and international integration. Therefore, attained achievements are important foundations and precious lessons for the cause of renovating and developing higher education in the years to come.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The paper was published in Vietnamese in: *Nghiên cứu Đông Nam Á*, số 9, 2018. Translated by Vu Xuan Nuoc.

<sup>2</sup> These documents include: Decree No.90/CP dated 24 November, 1993 by the Government regulating the framework structure of the national education system and the system of degrees and certificates on education and training of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the Law on Education of 1998, the Law on Education of 2005, the Law on Education (revised) of 2009 and especially the Law on Higher Education of 2012 and the Law on Higher Education (amended and supplemented) of 2014.

<sup>3</sup> The training with two levels (Candidate, or Associate Doctor, and Doctor) was replaced by the

training with one level (Doctor) in 1993. In 2000, at the discretion of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Education and Training issued the decision on unifying the academic titles of “Doctor” and “Associate Doctor”.

<sup>4</sup> Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW dated 4 November, 2013 of the 8<sup>th</sup> plenum of the Party Central Committee, the 11<sup>th</sup> tenure on fundamental and comprehensive innovation in education, serving industrialisation and modernisation in a socialist-oriented market economy during international integration.

<sup>5</sup> The contributions to the development of important legal documents such as the Law on Education, the Law on Higher Education, the Law on Teachers, the Draft Education Development Strategy in the periods of 2001-2010 and 2011-2020, regulations on organisation, management and charter of universities and policies on tuition fee, student recruitment target and entrance examination and so on.

<sup>6</sup> Schools with foreign investments mainly focus on the higher education sector due to the high demand of people and appropriate levels of investment. In 2007, there were nearly 70 facilities for foreign language training and professional knowledge development partly invested by foreign capitals and two universities of 100% foreign investments (RMIT University (Australia) and Dresden Training Centre (Germany) in Hanoi University of Science and Technology). By 2010, five universities of 100% foreign investments had been established in Vietnam.

<sup>7</sup> Outstanding projects include Project 322/356 on training scientific and technical officials in foreign countries with the state budget, Project 165 on training leaders and managers in foreign countries with the state budget, Project 911 on training lecturers of doctoral level for universities and colleges in the period of 2010-2020, the Project “Training Officials in Foreign Countries with the State Budget in the Period of 2013-2020” (Project 599), Training programme for legal experts of the Ministry of Justice and so on.

## References

- [1] Alexandre Dormeier Freire (2010), “Hai mươi năm đổi mới ngành giáo dục: giữa những thành công và bất ổn”, *Kỷ yếu Hội thảo quốc tế Việt Nam học lần thứ ba: Việt Nam: Hội nhập và phát triển*, t.6, Nxb Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội. [Alexandre Dormeier Freire (2010), “20 Years of Renovation in Education: Between Success and Instability”, *Proceedings of 3<sup>rd</sup> International Workshop on Vietnamese Studies: Vietnam: Integration and Development*, Vol. 6, Vietnam National University Press].
- [2] Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo (2013), *Giáo dục Việt Nam đầu thế kỷ XXI*, Nxb Giáo dục Việt Nam, Hà Nội. [Ministry of Education and Training (2013), *Vietnamese Education in 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Vietnam Education Publishing House, Hanoi].
- [3] Phạm Đức Chính, Nguyễn Tiến Dũng (2014), *Giáo dục đại học Việt Nam góc nhìn từ lý thuyết kinh tế - tài chính hiện đại*, Nxb Chính trị Quốc gia - Sự thật, Hà Nội. [Pham Duc Chinh, Nguyen Tien Dung (2014), *Vietnamese Higher Education from Perspective of Modern Economic and Financial Theories*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi].
- [4] Nguyễn Hồng Chí (2013), “Dòng chảy của du học sinh Việt Nam”, *Kỷ yếu Hội thảo quốc tế lần thứ tư - Việt Nam trên đường hội nhập và phát triển bền vững*, Nxb Khoa học xã hội, Hà Nội. [Nguyen Hong Chi (2013), “Flows of Vietnamese Students Abroad”, *Proceedings of 4<sup>th</sup> International Workshop - Vietnam on Path of Integration and Sustainable Development*, Social Sciences Publishing House, Hanoi].
- [5] Vũ Ngọc Hải, Đặng Bá Lãm, Trần Khánh Đức (đồng chủ biên) (2007), *Giáo dục Việt Nam đổi mới và phát triển hiện đại hóa*, Nxb Giáo dục, Hà Nội. [Vu Ngoc Hai, Dang Ba Lam, Tran Khanh Duc (co-chief authors) (2007), *Vietnamese*

- Education - Renovation, Development and Modernisation*, Vietnam Education Publishing House, Hanoi].
- [6] Nguyễn Quang Kính (2005), *Giáo dục Việt Nam 1945-2005*, Nxb Giáo dục, Hà Nội. [Nguyen Quang Kinh (2005), *Vietnamese Education in 1945-2005*, Vietnam Education Publishing House, Hanoi].
- [7] Nguyễn Minh Phương (2012), *Đẩy mạnh xã hội hóa giáo dục, y tế ở Việt Nam*, Nxb Chính trị Quốc gia - Sự thật, Hà Nội. [Nguyen Minh Phuong (2012), *Boosting Investments of Social Strata in Education and Health in Vietnam*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi].
- [8] Tổng cục Thống kê (1988), *Niên giám thống kê năm 1986*, Nxb Thống kê, Hà Nội. [General Statistics Office (1988), *Statistical Yearbook of 1986*, Statistical Publishing House, Hanoi].
- [9] Tổng cục Thống kê (2002), *Số liệu thống kê năm 2001*, Nxb Thống kê, Hà Nội [General Statistics Office (2002), *Statistics of 2001*, Statistical Publishing House, Hanoi].
- [10] Tổng cục Thống kê (2006), *Việt Nam 20 năm đổi mới và phát triển 1986-2005*, Nxb Thống kê, Hà Nội. [General Statistics Office (2006), *Vietnam - 20 Years of Renovation and Development (1986-2005)*, Statistical Publishing House, Hanoi].
- [11] Tổng cục Thống kê (2007), *Số liệu thống kê năm 2006*, Nxb Thống kê, Hà Nội [General Statistics Office (2007), *Statistics of 2006*, Statistical Publishing House, Hanoi].
- [12] Trung tâm Lưu trữ Quốc gia III, *Phòng Văn phòng Chính phủ, Hồ sơ số 2622*, Hà Nội. [National Archives Centre No. 3, *Folder on the Office of the Government, Dossier No. 2622*, Hanoi].
- [13] Hien Tran (2009), *Transformation of Higher Education in Vietnam after Doimoi: A Story of "Dualism"*, St. John's University, New York.
- [14] Hải Hà, *90% học sinh Việt Nam du học tự túc*, [http://thanhtra.com.vn/xa-hoi/giao-duc/90-hoc-sinh-viet-nam-du-hoc-tu-tuc\\_t114c8n84311](http://thanhtra.com.vn/xa-hoi/giao-duc/90-hoc-sinh-viet-nam-du-hoc-tu-tuc_t114c8n84311), truy cập ngày 8 tháng 5 năm 2016. [Hai Ha, *90% of Vietnamese Students Study Abroad by Their Own Budgets*, [http://thanhtra.com.vn/xa-hoi/giao-duc/90-hoc-sinh-viet-nam-du-hoc-tu-tuc\\_t114c8n84311](http://thanhtra.com.vn/xa-hoi/giao-duc/90-hoc-sinh-viet-nam-du-hoc-tu-tuc_t114c8n84311), retrieved on 8 May, 2016].
- [15] Phương Ly, *Thúc đẩy đầu tư trực tiếp nước ngoài vào lĩnh vực giáo dục - đào tạo*, <http://www.ncseif.gov.vn/sites/vie/Pages/thucdaydaututructiep-nd-17038.html>, truy cập ngày 8 tháng 5 năm 2016. [Phuong Ly, *Promoting Foreign Direct Investments in Education and Training*, <http://www.ncseif.gov.vn/sites/vie/Pages/thucdaydaututructiep-nd-17038.html>, retrieved on 8 May 2016].
- [16] Xuân Trung, *Bộ Giáo dục xác định 3 nhiệm vụ trọng tâm năm học 2015-2016*, <http://giaoduc.net.vn/Giao-duc-24h/Bo-Giao-duc-xac-dinh-3-nhiem-vu-trong-tam-nam-hoc-20152016-post162731.gd>, truy cập ngày 15 tháng 6 năm 2016 [Xuan Trung, *Ministry of Education and Training Set out Three Leading Tasks in Academic Year of 2015-2016*, <http://giaoduc.net.vn/Giao-duc-24h/Bo-Giao-duc-xac-dinh-3-nhiem-vu-trong-tam-nam-hoc-20152016-post162731.gd>, retrieved on 15 June 2016].
- [17] <https://www.gso.gov.vn/default.aspx?tabid=722>, retrieved on 15 June, 2016
- [18] <http://oda.mpi.gov.vn/portal/index.jsp?sid=3&nid=40&y=2008&m=2&d=21>, retrieved on 8 May 2016
- [19] <https://www.gso.gov.vn/default.aspx?tabid=716>, retrieved on 15 June 2016