USE OF THESESES

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GOVERNMENT POLICY AND CHANGES TO
HIGHER EDUCATION IN VIETNAM, 1986-1998:
EDUCATION IN TRANSITION FOR
DEVELOPMENT?

Elizabeth St.George

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at The Australian National University.
Submitted March 2003
This thesis is my own original work except where duly referenced as appropriate. None of the work presented herein has been submitted for any other award. Total number of words (not including table of contents, footnotes, bibliography and appendices): 99,900

Elizabeth St. George

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Abstract

In the late 1980s the Vietnamese higher education sector was facing a crisis in terms of financing, relevance to the wider community, and its future direction. Not only did the government have insufficient finance to maintain the current system, the system itself no longer appeared to meet the needs of the country, and its employment needs in particular. In light of the difficulties facing higher education at this time, this thesis examines the changes to Vietnamese higher education and higher education policy between 1986 and 1998, and argues that the Vietnamese government began to place a new emphasis on the education sector as a means to achieving government development goals.

In light of this new emphasis the government showed a definite trend towards the decentralisation of responsibilities away from the central government, in matters of finance, administration and curriculum, and in favour of the universities themselves. Universities themselves were also keen to take up new opportunities offered by the new openness in the country and initiated a number of their own innovations, with differing degrees of acceptance by the government.

In summary, this thesis attempts to do three things. First, it seeks to document the changes that have taken place in higher education in Vietnam between 1986 and 1998, focussing particularly on the changes to government policy. Second, it seeks to examine those changes in the light of international thinking about the relationship between higher education and development, and particularly the state-centric and neo-liberal models of higher education. Finally, it evaluates the relevance of the state-society dichotomy for understanding the changes that have taken place in higher education and particularly higher education policy, and concludes that an alternative approach to the subject may yield a more comprehensive analytical framework within which to understand higher education and development in Vietnam.
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPV</td>
<td>Communist Party of Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRV</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECLAC</td>
<td>Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNP</td>
<td>Gross National Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEI</td>
<td>Higher Education Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCMC</td>
<td>Ho Chi Minh City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPAE</td>
<td>High Performing Asian Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRD</td>
<td>Human Resource Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GATT</td>
<td>General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GATS</td>
<td>General Agreement on Trade in Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDA</td>
<td>International Development Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOET</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOF</td>
<td>Ministry of Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOSTE</td>
<td>Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ODA</td>
<td>Official Development Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRV</td>
<td>Socialist Republic of Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QIG</td>
<td>Quality Investment Grant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WB</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
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Vietnamese Language Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>Chính phủ (Government)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DH</td>
<td>Đại học (university)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHKTQD</td>
<td>Đại học Kinh tế Quốc dân (National Economics University - also the name of the journal of the university)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DH và GDCN</td>
<td>Đại học và Giáo dục Chuyên nghiệp (Universities and Professional education - Journal title)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDDT</td>
<td>Giáo dục Đào tạo (Education and Training)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDBT</td>
<td>Hội đồng Bộ trưởng (Council of Ministers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HN</td>
<td>Hà Nội (Hanoi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QĐ</td>
<td>Quyết định (Decision)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TpHCM</td>
<td>Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh (Ho Chi Minh City)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTg</td>
<td>Trung Ương (Central Party Committee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TT</td>
<td>Thông tư (Notice)</td>
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Chapter One - Thesis Statement and Overview

'Educators, policy-makers, government officials and other organisational personnel have made and continue to make decisions which assume a specific relationship between education and national development objectives' (Fagerlind and Saha 1983: v).

In Vietnam, as in many other countries, education has long been considered vital to the health and strength of a nation. In 1986 the Vietnamese government launched the policy of *dổi mới*, or 'renovation', at the Sixth National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV). This policy marked the official introduction of a multi-sector economy in Vietnam and, for some, it also marked the beginning of fundamental changes to Vietnamese higher education. In fact, however, the most significant changes to higher education did not become apparent until several years later, when a spate of new policies were introduced, experiments were tried and a reconceptualisation of the role of education took place at the highest levels.

According to the Socio-Economic Development Plan of the Communist Party of Vietnam at its Sixth National Congress in 1986, the goals of education under *dổi mới*, were

- to form and develop comprehensively the socialist personality of the younger generation, train a skilled workforce with a homogeneous set of trades and occupations suited to the demands for social division of labour (Communist Party of Vietnam 1987: 106).

These goals were clearly in line with the political and administrative situation of Vietnam as a country under socialist central planning. These goals were closely linked to the classical Marxist-Leninist doctrine at the origins of the
system, and in line with many countries in the Soviet bloc, where education was
to inculcate dedication to socialist values, and to create a workforce with the skills
necessary for the needs of the economy. Education was considered subordinate to
the economy, which was the motive force for all fundamental changes in society,
although the CPV did not lose sight of some important ethical and cultural
improvements brought about through education. Essentially, however, education
was considered part of a dependent superstructure, not a productive force in its
own right.

Despite long-standing arguments that more value should be placed on
education, primarily by educators, I will show in Chapter 3 that it was not until
the early 1990s that educators were given a theoretical foundation on which to
build their claims for greater commitment to education, as the country opened up
to theories of human capital and Human Resource Development (HRD). Within
Vietnam, these views gradually found wider acceptance and became enshrined in
important national documents, such as the new constitution promulgated in 1992.
The constitution highlights education and training as the first national priority
(Article 35), while science and industry play the central role in the development of
society and the economy (Article 37). In contrast with the 1986 statement by the
CPV, in 1998 Phạm Minh Hạc, former Minister of Education, and one of the
leading figures in educational policy-making for a number of decades, was able to
outline the changes that have taken place in thinking about education at the
highest levels since the official start of đổi mới.

Since 1991 education along with science and technology has
been considered as a primordial State policy... Investment
in education is investment in development... especially as
from 1991 and since the fourth Plenum of the Party Central
Committee (1993) the view has become clearer and
education is regarded as part of the socio-economic
infrastructure (Phạm Minh Hạc 1998a: 29).
Since the early 1990s education, and higher education in particular, has increasingly been considered as a productive force for the development of the country in its own right. Education has seen an important increase in state funding, and ongoing commitment to finding the appropriate model to link its potential to the wider economy. The discourse surrounding education has been changing almost imperceptibly, from education as a form of social welfare, to education as a sector which may require investment in advance of economic need. The importance of building socialist principles in students continues to be an important theme of official rhetoric concerning education, but it has been joined by other terms such as 'human resource development' (*phát triển nhân lực*), and 'human capital' (*vốn con ngụời*), which place education in a central position in discussions of national development.

This thesis contributes to existing academic literature in three ways. First, it documents the changes that have taken place in Vietnamese higher education between 1986 and 1998. Existing literature on the subject tends to be either policy prescriptive (produced by the Vietnamese government), or deal with only a limited sub-division of this topic. Second, it places the changes to higher education policy in the context of international debates concerning the role of higher education in national development, and the appropriate division of responsibility between higher education institutions (HEIs) and the 'state', and shows that Vietnamese government policy reveals an ambiguous tendency towards the decentralisation of responsibility in favour of HEIs. Finally, it addresses the current state of theorising about Vietnamese politics and argues that the emphasis on a state-society relations framework is an insufficient basis from which to explain the outcomes in Vietnamese higher education during this period. Instead it argues that a more multi-dimensional approach is necessary and moves the focus of analysis away from this dual model, towards a more multi-dimensional one.

This introductory chapter elaborates the dissertation's scope, definition of terms, methodology and its place in other literature relating to higher education in
Vietnam. The following chapter gives a historical overview of a number of different theoretical perspectives on education and development that have been particularly influential for education policy makers in Vietnam. It establishes a dualistic model of international trends in higher education against which to compare developments in Vietnam.

Chapter Three examines the historical background of higher education in Vietnam, that lays the foundation for the changes that have been undertaken in the first period of _đổi mới_. Chapter Four gives an overview of Vietnamese government policy between 1986 and 1998 in relation to international thinking and developments. Subsequent chapters focus on specific areas of higher education (administration, finance and curriculum), in order to analyse in more depth what this shift in educational ideology has meant at the practical level.

Through these chapters it becomes apparent that Vietnamese educators have been strongly influenced by international models of higher education, which they have often referred to in order to legitimise their own models for education and development. Inevitably this thesis is policy and government focussed. With no existing scholarship detailing the 'big picture' of changes to higher education during this period, it was necessary to first establish this overview, which was most easily achieved through an analysis of existing government documents on the topic.

**Scope of the Thesis and Definition of Terms**

**Time frame**

This thesis concentrates on the changes that occurred in higher education in Vietnam between the years 1986 and 1998. To some extent this temporal delimitation is arbitrary. I could have chosen the year 1976 as a starting point, when the higher education systems of north and south Vietnam were officially joined together, or 1992 when the government adopted education as a priority sector for development. Although 1986 was not a year in which tangible changes could be seen in the higher education sector, it did mark an almost indefinable
change to the way in which higher education was approached and discussed. In line with CPV prioritisation, educators with whom I spoke, with few exceptions, referred to 1986 as the year from which they considered changes to have begun, whether or not they could identify a particular event in the education sector. By the same token, policies that were adopted in subsequent years, or educators wishing to support their own particular model of development, use the 1986 Congress as their benchmark. It serves as a term of reference for Vietnamese seeking to justify subsequent change. The year 1986 was a benchmark, not because of innovative changes to higher education in Vietnam, but because it shapes the frame of reference for those involved in higher education change in subsequent years.

The year 1998 is perhaps an even more unusual choice. In 1996 the Ministry of Education produced several books evaluating the results of ten years of đổi mới in education. In the wake of these publications it may seem logical to choose a similar period over which to discuss higher education. To end the story at 1996, however, would be to miss the dénouement of many of the policies initiated earlier in the đổi mới period. Within two years of the evaluation, some of the most significant and rapid changes were apparently slowing down or being stopped altogether. In 1998 the government refused to grant any more licences to private universities, it abandoned some of the pillars of the newly introduced 'two-phase' university curriculum, and introduced the first education law in socialist Vietnam. More so than 1996, 1998 marks a year in which many of the changes in higher education appeared to have run their course. The period 1986-1998 therefore, marks a cycle in changes to higher education.

Having chosen to focus on this period, I acknowledge, however, that it is difficult to place events that have so recently occurred in their proper perspective. 'What appears as a success or failure at one point in time, might and often can, be considered as the reverse a few years later' (Cerych and Sabatier 1992: 1012). This is particularly true of government policy decisions.
Higher education

The title of this thesis specifically refers to changes in higher education. Papers about education and development often stress the importance of primary and secondary education as the most important forms of education for the development of poor countries such as Vietnam (Tilak 1994; World Bank 1995). More recently, however, higher education has received increasing interest because of its role in developing science and technology, and in the 'knowledge economy'.

'Higher education' often refers to any formal education undertaken after secondary school at vocational and technical schools, colleges, research institutions, or universities (Sinclair 1994: 733). In my thesis I have chosen to narrow the discussion to include only universities (trường đại học - literally 'school of higher study'). I do pay some attention to the development of community colleges (trường cộng đồng), post-secondary colleges (trường cao đẳng) and occasionally refer to research institutions, where these are closely linked to the government's overall university strategy, but otherwise the focus is specifically on universities.

There are several reasons for this focus. First, of the three principal divisions in Vietnamese higher education (technical and vocational schools, universities, and research institutes), universities have the highest profiles and enrol the greatest numbers of students. Consequently they also receive a great deal of attention, from the public and government alike. This means, secondly, that of all the education sectors in Vietnam, higher education is the one which is both the most visible and the most accessible for a researcher. Newspapers and educational journals, for example, address issues concerning universities and university education constantly, which makes the subject an attractive one for an overseas researcher.

Policy, government and the state

A large part of this thesis is concerned with the higher education policy of the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and how it has developed and changed over time.
'Policy' refers to a 'plan of action adopted or pursued by an individual, government, party, business etc' (Sinclair 1994: 1203). Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky clarify that policy can be used to signify a 'statement of intention, [...] a broad statement of goals and objectives'. Or, at the other end of the scale policy is sometimes used 'as if it were equivalent to actual behaviour: Our policy is to hire minorities, meaning that we actually do hire them. Policy in this sense signifies the goal and its achievement' (Pressman and Wildavsky 1979: xx). In fact, they argue, this second, broader, version of 'policy' can be divided into four discrete parts: 'deriving goals or objectives, working out a theory of how to achieve them, embodying that theory in governmental action, and executing it as intended' (Pressman and Wildavsky 1979: Footnote, p.xxii). In their discussion of what constitutes policy, however, Pressman and Wildavsky refer only to the first two of these activities, policy as the action of setting goals and the means of achieving them. In practice these two can rarely be separated. Inevitably statements of government goals for the future tend to include some sort of statement about how they are to be achieved. For example, the report of the Eighth CPV National Congress in 1996 asserts that education is 'aimed at raising the people's intellectual standard, training human resources and grooming talent' and goes on to insist that it is necessary to 'broaden the scope, improve the quality and promote the efficiency of education' (Communist Party of Vietnam 1996a: 64). The latter three are simultaneously a set of goals in themselves, and the plan of action to achieve the first set of goals. The objectives for the CPV Sixth National Congress quoted earlier also refer simultaneously to national goals, those of developing the 'socialist personality' and a 'skilled workforce', and the means to achieve them, through education and training. Gareth Porter suggests that in fact CPV policy does not go far enough towards defining the specific means of attaining its goals, clearly emphasising the inseparability of the goals and their means of attainment (Porter 1993: 111). A brief examination of Vietnam's national development plans shows that this is often the case.
By contrast with the dictionary definition, and in line with Pressman and Wildavsky, I consider the actions undertaken by the government in pursuit of these goals to be separate from policy *per se*. The actions involved in pursuing a policy are more accurately described by Pressman and Wildavsky as 'implementation' which is the set of 'links in the causal chain so as to obtain the desired results'\(^1\) (Pressman and Wildavsky 1979: xxi). While the successes and failures encountered while trying to achieve a policy objective will feed back into and modify the original objective, it is nonetheless valuable to separate actions from the statement of intent. Pressman and Wildavsky argue that in order to analyse a process of implementation, there must be a set of established goals against which to measure the process. On significant issues at least, at some time a government will produce a document stating its intentions, often in the form of a national development plan (as in Vietnam), which can be analysed in isolation from the government's actions to implement it.

'Government' refers to the 'executive policy-making body of a political unit' (Collins English Dictionary 1994: 668). In other words the 'government' of Vietnam refers to those bodies that formulate the goals for the future of Vietnam and the plans to support the achievement of those goals. In Vietnam these bodies are the Communist Party of Vietnam and the different ministries and committees (the bureaucracy) with their branches through to the village level. At the provincial level and below, party and bureaucratic organisations also decide on the policy within their respective jurisdictions, and constitute the local government. In this thesis, however, the focus is on universities which are under the jurisdiction of the national government, and therefore 'government' will be used almost exclusively to refer to the central government. Where lower levels of government are referred to, this will be specified.

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\(^1\) Pressman and Wildavsky also introduce the term 'program' which refers to a plan of action once the initial conditions for its implementation (such as legislative changes, funding commitments...) have already been made, but before actions have been undertaken outside of the government sphere to ensure its implementation.
In defining 'government' as the combination of party and bureaucratic organisations, I am aware that this goes against the trend in Vietnamese studies, where there appears to be a preference to discuss the actions and policies of the Vietnamese 'state'.

An appropriate definition for the state has been the subject of ongoing debate. Raymond Duvall and Roger Benjamin outline five conceptions of the state as it has appeared in different streams of thought. The first use of the term is to describe the state as an actor, used synonymously with the term 'government'. Secondly it has been perceived as an 'organising principle', or as the amalgamation of structures. The third conception is drawn largely from Marxist literature of the state which sees it as a 'set of social relations that constitute effective political power in society... The state is the ruling class.' (Italics in original (Benjamin and Duvall 1995: 24). Finally the state can be defined as the institutionalisation of the legal order (fourth conception), or as the dominant normative order in society, where the norms and customs of the society create a form of 'tacit' rule (fifth conception) (Benjamin and Duvall 1995: 22-27). The authors then go on to point out that the different conceptions are useful for analysing different phenomena. For example, the state as a structure is a useful definition if the concern is to analyse how the interests of different groups are promoted or side-lined at the national level (Benjamin and Duvall 1995: 29).

I prefer to consider the government as the collection of individuals who are able to act, the executive, while the state refers to the set of norms and legal decisions that are often used by the government in support of its actions, as well as the judicial and legal apparatus that decides upon and enforces the legal framework. To the extent that the government also becomes involved in the legal drafting and enforcement process, then it also part of the state.

In the case of Vietnam there is also a significant amount of debate concerning the role of the Communist Party, the government and the state among

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2 The discussion of the definition of the state has a large literature behind it, for some of the more recent attempts at definition see (Migdal 1988; Evans 1985; Krasner 1984).
scholars. I have been reminded on a number of occasions by scholars in the field that the Party and bureaucracy have separate roles, and separate existences which need to be taken into account. Prominent thinkers within Vietnam have also emphasised the need to separate the party from the bureaucracy. In 1982 Political Bureau member Le Duc Tho asserted 'It is necessary to overcome resolutely and definitely the long-existing confusion of functions between party and state organs' (Thayer 1993: 8).

The reality in Vietnam has invariably been that the two are intertwined.

Managers of the ministries, offices, or enterprises were supposed to have full authority over policy implementation, but they had to submit their proposals for the tasks and policies of their branches or enterprises for the year to the party group or work committee. The party group often had difficulty avoiding either the error of "enveloping leadership" that would interfere with the actual implementation of the policy or the equally serious error of "superficial leadership" that failed to provide sufficient guidance (Porter 1993: 86).

In principle, the CPV is supposed to define the broad, overarching directions for the future of the country, and the bureaucracy is supposed to establish the plans for their implementation. In reality, however, members of the CPV also work for the bureaucracy and are heavily involved in the elaboration of the implementation plans. While agreeing that in the past the party and the bureaucracy could not be separated in reality, Dang Phong and Melanie Beresford have recently pointed out that under đổi mới there has been some separation of bureaucratic and party activities, and they provide an excellent overview of the changing relationship between the two (Phong and Beresford 1998: 47). I would argue, however, that this has not yet been sufficient in the area of higher
education policy for it to be central to an analysis of policy changes. My concern is essentially with the policy product of the two bodies and its successes or failures in implementation, and readers interested in the internal discussion processes between party and bureaucracy are invited to read Phong and Beresford’s book (Phong and Beresford 1998).

Combining the CPV and the bureaucracy under the term ‘government’ is not to imply that the two should not have a separate existence and a separate role. It is merely acknowledging that, at the present time, their roles and activities are largely indistinguishable for the study of higher education policy. I also frequently use the term ‘official’ interchangeably with the word ‘government’.

Given the unusual way in which I am defining government, I feel it necessary to signal another common usage of the word ‘government’, in order to avoid confusion. In Vietnam, the term ‘Government’ (chính phủ - usually written with a capital ‘G’ in English), now refers to what was previously called the ‘Council of Ministers’ (Hội đồng Bộ trưởng), a committee consisting of the ministers and the Prime Minister.

To summarise then, this thesis seeks to examine the changes to higher education in Vietnam in general, but also to examine specifically the changes to ‘government policy’ towards higher education, namely the national plans for development and the plans for their implementation, put forward by the CPV, ministries and related organisations, and, briefly, to put forward a tentative structure for analysing and understanding these policies.

**Change or reform?**

There have been a large number of publications over the last ten years or so detailing different ‘reforms’ being undertaken in Vietnam. These articles and books have in common a focus on a broad sectoral issues such as public administration reform, economic reform or political reform (Kimura 1989; Thayer 1992; Do Huu Nghiem 1994; Ho Ngoc Phuong 1995; Vasavakul 1996a; Vasavakul 1996b). They all refer to a process of planned change which is undertaken by a particular individual or group (often the government) in order to achieve an
improved outcome for the sector under discussion. They have a common focus on 'reform', being 'to improve existing practice, institutions, law by alteration or correction of abuses' (Sinclair 1994: 1303).

In many ways the present thesis addresses the same issues as these studies, but in a different sector, that of higher education. I have chosen not to label the subject of study that of 'reform', however, as I consider the term to have a number of positive connotations which I wish to avoid. By definition, 'legal reform', 'public administration reform' or, in this case 'higher education reform' all imply that a more-or-less planned change is occurring, where a particular individual or group acts on the current environment in order to create one that is better. After the reform is undertaken, the particular subject of reform will be improved in a way similar to that suggested by the words 'progress' or 'modernisation'. In the case of Vietnamese higher education, I have chosen to use the term 'change' rather than 'reform' to avoid pre-empting any sense that the changes have occurred in a positive or planned direction, or that there has been a particular individual or group responsible for the 'changing'. In fact I would argue that the majority of changes taking place have been planned only in a very limited sense.

The final terms that deserve specific discussion and elaboration are those of 'development' and its relationship with education. Given their central importance to this thesis, they will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

**Methodology and Constraints**

The present thesis was completed intermittently between 1995 and 2003. During that time I undertook a number of separate visits to Vietnam, ranging in length from six weeks to ten months (and other shorter visits), in order to collect relevant documents, learn Vietnamese and conduct wide-ranging interviews.

In general, substantive written material relating to higher education in Vietnam is sparse, and largely written in Vietnamese. Whilst much of my initial time was spent learning the language, both in Australia and in Vietnam, my interpretation of education events in Vietnam is necessarily coloured by my
understanding of events as they are reported in another language. I am aware that as an outsider seeking to understand a foreign culture, there is a possibility that I may have misinterpreted what was written or said. Where statements or writings are particularly crucial to my understanding of events, I have taken care, wherever possible, to check them with a native Vietnamese speaker. There are some words and concepts that I have found difficult to translate from one culture to another. Consequently, at some points I have also taken the liberty of discussing individual terms in greater detail, where their usage differs significantly from that of their English translation. To readers unfamiliar with official Vietnamese styles of writing, some quotations taken from English language publications printed in Vietnam may appear a little stilted or confusing. Where possible I have attempted to trace the original Vietnamese source in order to give both the Vietnamese and English versions, however, on occasion, the publication or paper was only available in English and I have left the original as is.

While my lack of familiarity with Vietnam and Vietnamese at the outset of my study may be seen as a disadvantage, in fact I found this made me more questioning and critical of the assumptions behind statements that people made than I would have been in my own culture. I was also very mindful of the use of words and their meanings in written material. As anyone who has studied Vietnamese history will note, one of the most interesting challenges with official publications is to get below the surface of the standard terminology that is used over and over, in order to understand its meaning and how that meaning has changed over time. Russell Heng, for example, shows how the word 'struggle' (đấu tranh) has been used to justify a number of actions by the Vietnamese media, both in favour of, and sometimes in almost direct opposition to, the Vietnamese party-state (Heng 1999). Specific terminology is also used in education, by different groups and individuals, with a variety of different meanings. In many cases, the way in which the specific terms are understood by different groups gives an important insight into the agendas of different people and groups which they couch in similar wording to each other, with practical implications that are highly
divergent. It also means, however, that I have had to spend some space at some points explaining why the same words used by different people actually have different meanings.

Pinning down the paradigms that underpin Vietnamese research and teaching is well beyond the scope of this study. There is one area, however, that I wish to highlight as an example of the problems faced doing research in a cross-cultural setting. In Vietnamese social science studies during the late twentieth century, a large amount of writing has been devoted to supporting the basic theoretical assumption that the Vietnamese society is moving towards socialism, and to show the ways in which this is happening. The questions asked by this kind of study are not 'Why did this phenomenon occur?' and as in my case 'Why did changes occur in higher education?' but 'How do the writings of Marx/Lenin/Ho Chi Minh help to explain this outcome?' or 'Where is Vietnam now situated on the path to socialism?'. Not until I understood the differences in our approaches, did I begin to understand what types of information were likely to be available and how to infer the information I was seeking from what was available. That is not to say that all research and teaching in Vietnam begins from the premise of socialist progress, but it is certainly the dominant feature in writings concerning education, and is undoubtedly one explanation for the lack of information for the types of questions I was asking. This standpoint was less obvious in interviews, where the interviewees were far less constrained to spend their time referring to particular CPV statements, but it was still evident in the puzzlement I often met during interviews if I tried to pin down the exact dates of particular meetings or curriculum changes. Invariably people wished to point out the grand theoretical picture, and could not understand why I was interested in insignificant details.

In seeking to understand the process of change in Vietnamese higher education, I have relied on both primary materials and secondary writings. The principal secondary materials used will be addressed in the literature review later in this chapter. Of the primary sources consulted, there were three main types:
Vietnamese government publications, interviews with people involved in the education sector, and Vietnamese newspapers.

**Government publications**

Vietnamese government publications refer in particular to individual articles written in education journals and books published by the Ministry of Education and Training (under its different names), from which I gained most of my basic data concerning the chronology of events and statistics. Research in Vietnam presents a serious challenge even for researchers fluent in Vietnamese. Regardless of discipline and subject of study, there is a great scarcity of substantive information and quality statistics which are often taken for granted in developed countries. While statistics were, and still are, an essential part of central planning, they are usually both too general and too limited in scope to be of use in analysing trends. This is for three main reasons. First, the statistics gathered at lower levels were used by the central government to allocate the budget for the following year. Therefore it was in the best interest of those supplying the statistics to show the results that would give them the greatest funding. Secondly, the collection of statistics is a very time-consuming and costly process, and Vietnam remains one of the poorer countries in the world, without the finance, the technical capacity, and often the knowledge, to collect statistics on a wide range of topics. Finally, while the collection of statistics has often been considered important by the socialist government, they have been most commonly used to consider changes in the socio-economic conditions of a country, and from there, to plan where the country is, or should, be heading in the future. As outlined above, for many of Vietnam's leaders, such issues have been clear without the support of statistics. Vietnam is a country on the path to socialism, and this was a fundamental truth that statistics could only confirm, leading to less emphasis on statistics than might be supposed from a country under central planning.

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3 Interview with Department of Finance, MOET, April 1997.
Wherever possible I have tried to cross-reference statistics from different sources, but in many cases this has yielded results so contradictory as to be almost useless. The most common difficulty is that global higher education statistics do not specify what they include in their figures. The figure for the total number of students in higher education might include post-secondary technical colleges, or may not include private school students, but this is rarely stated explicitly. Micro level statistics at the university level or below were particularly difficult to obtain. While universities are required to report the students enrolled formally in accordance with government regulations, 'in-service', part-time or distance education students are registered and calculated separately, and often remain 'invisible' in standard statistics, even though they might constitute up to 50% of total students taught at the university. No doubt statistics will soon be far more widely available. SEAMEOREtrac, based in Ho Chi Minh City, is making the collection of statistics for all levels of education one of its priorities, as part of its general support to education in Vietnam. The World Bank is also undertaking the collection of statistics as part of its higher education project. Once these studies have been completed it will no doubt be possible to draw more accurate conclusions about the status of higher education with statistical support than were possible at the time of writing.

The other characteristic of official publications is that they tend to be policy focused and prescriptive. A typical journal article or publication will give a list of the problems facing higher education and the possible means to fix them (see Anonymous 1989; Nguyễn Dăng Cúc 1996; Lê Việt Khuyên ca1998) or on the way in which education has or has not developed in accordance with party policy (Nguyễn Dăng Cúc 1996). Consequently, while official publications are quite often useful for their statement of events or policy, they tend to be very dry, factual, stilted and give only limited depth of insight into the processes at work.

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4 Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Organisation - Regional Training Centre
Vietnamese Newspapers

I am very grateful to Stephen Denney and Vern Weitzel for their excellent work keeping together the Vietnam Abstracts electronic information group, which provides coverage of all the major articles around the world concerning Vietnam. Both of these sources were very useful for obtaining basic details of relevant events at the central government level, such as the dates and times of National Assembly or Party Plenum discussions and decisions concerning education.

Education is one of the most widely discussed topics in Vietnam, and this is often reflected in the newspapers, which tend to devote numerous articles to educational issues whenever a special event occurs, such as during examination or enrolment periods each year, let alone when there is a significant change in policy or the structure of higher education. I have relied on newspaper articles in particular in my discussion of the end of the 'two-phase' higher education system during 1998 (see Chapter Seven). This event affected every past, present and future university student who had, or would be enrolled under the two-phase system, and consequently it was the subject of significant media coverage. Vietnamese newspapers, particularly the Communist Party daily Nhan Dan, also print the full text of many party decisions, as well as regulations and laws, such as the Law on Education, published following National Assembly approval in December 1998.

While newspapers certainly provided a greater variety of opinions on important developments than official media publications, they were in general still limited to discussions of technical issues. In the case of the two-phase system, for example, discussions centred on problems involved in maintaining or abandoning the system, rather than on a fundamental re-thinking of educational objectives and whether the system was appropriate in achieving those objectives. As discussed by Russell Heng in his thesis on the media in Vietnam, the type of information which can be printed in the media is more or less strictly regulated by the Vietnamese Communist Party. This means that there can be no overt criticism of party policy and the place of the VCP in deciding that policy.
Interviews

Interviews, both formal and informal offered by far the greatest insight into the functioning of the Vietnamese higher education system. Interviews provided the substance to make sense of the dry, formal government reports and newspaper articles. Consequently, I had two general aims in mind while conducting interviews. The first was to supplement my factual information regarding specific events or issues, such as students numbers, introduction of different courses, and so on. The second purpose was to gain an understanding of how the interviewee viewed the changes that had taken place and whether they were in favour or against them. I conducted two principal series of interviews, during 1997 in Hanoi and Đà Nẵng, and during 1998 in Ho Chi Minh City, with brief stays in Đà Lạt, Đà Nẵng and Hanoi. These were supplemented by further interviews in April 2000, in Hanoi, to update my information.

I.E. Seidman offers two principal methods of determining potential interviewees in social science research in order to ensure a representative cross-section of opinions: random sampling, and purposeful sampling. Random sampling involves defining the total pool of potential interviewees for the questions being studied, and then randomly selecting a sufficient number of names for them to be representative of the whole group. Purposeful sampling involves defining a similar group, but then deliberately choosing individuals within certain pre-determined categories (defined by such criteria as age, sex, ethnic background, urban, rural etc) (Seidman 1991: Preface). They first of all presuppose having lists of names of possible interviewees and their contact details. Secondly they assume that these individuals are likely to be available for an interview. The second method also assumes that these lists are accurate, or that they at least give a close approximation of the characteristics of individuals in

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5 Seidman (p.8) rejects the term 'interviewee' in favour of 'participant' on the grounds that it casts the respondent in a passive role, one who is answering questions, rather than giving answers. While the interviewee was at times leading me in different directions, this was usually in response to questions that I had asked, and consequently I feel comfortable that 'interviewee' is the appropriate term to describe the relationship in this situation.
terms of their sex, age, ethnic background etc. None of these things can be taken for granted in Vietnam.

Initially I chose interviewees based on the key issues I was interested in, and their ability to answer questions on those issues. So, for example, on the issue of private universities I began by visiting the rectors of private universities, or on general educational policy I visited senior officials in the Higher Education Department of the Ministry Of Education and Training. These interviews were conducted on a formal basis, with the assistance of my host organisation in Vietnam, the Centre for Vietnamese and Intercultural Studies, under the Hanoi National University. As I became more involved in the study, however, I found that a far more successful technique for choosing interviewees was that of selective 'snowballing'. This involved interviewing people who had been suggested by others as likely to provide useful information. In general, these people were far more relaxed about talking because we had a connection through a mutual friend, but it also meant that the interviews perhaps did not cover as an objective cross-section of opinions as I would have liked. I tried to overcome this by seeking introductions to as broad a range of people involved in the higher education sector as possible. My principal sources were government officials in the higher education sector and senior university lecturers (heads of department or higher), who had the broadest knowledge of the macro educational situation, but they also included regular teachers, students, and parents. As I was based in Hanoi and the majority of universities are also based in Hanoi, this study undoubtedly carries that bias, although I have tried to balance the situation through an extended series of interviews in Đà Nẵng and Ho Chi Minh City.

In terms of interviewing techniques, at the outset my interviews certainly tended towards the more formal end of the spectrum. Judith Bell (1987) presents a variety of interviewing techniques, ranging from a very formal, structured form of interviewing, to a completely informal structure, in which the content is decided principally by the interviewee with only minimal prompting by the interviewer. She suggests that the most appropriate type interview will depend
principally on the type of information sought, the first being more appropriate for quantifying or aggregating data for direct comparisons, the second better suited to gaining more personalised, in-depth information. Initially I presented my questions in advance to the interviewee, and with the help of an assistant from the Centre for Vietnamese and Intercultural Studies and a tape recorder I made my way through the list of questions. Following the interview, either I, or a Vietnamese native speaker, would transcribe the tape to ensure that I had all the details correct. Contrary to expectations I did not feel that the interviewees were inhibited by the use of a tape recorder. In fact some felt it made it easier to speak to a foreigner naturally, knowing that I could go back through the tape later to confirm anything I had not understood. Over the space of approximately 60 interviews, however, the format of the interviews changed somewhat. As my Vietnamese improved I was better able to pick up on individual comments and ask for further clarification, leaving the strict format of the prepared questions. At the same time, as I became more familiar with the pattern of responses, I began to rely more on my own notes until I was able to dispense with the tape recorder altogether, at the same time saving the large amount of time it took to transcribe the interviews. A one hour interview inevitably required a minimum of four hours to transcribe accurately. While these developments made for more free-flowing interviews, covering a wider range of topics, inevitably it means that I have foregone the luxury of being able to use direct quotations, for fear of not being strictly accurate. Thus quotations from interviews are only possible where the interviewee is from the first group of tape-recorded interviews, and their exact words are available. The responses of all other interviewees are referred to only in general terms.

While I had done some initial reading on the broad nature of higher education and some specific innovations begun during doi mới before leaving for Vietnam, interviews were my first real entry to the situation 'on the ground'. From the interviews I gained a sense of a blurred division between those who wished to maintain the status quo, and those who both advocated, and were active in
pursuing, change. This distinction has remained blurred, due to the difficulty in pinning down 'change' or 'status quo' positions in different individuals on different issues. I was unable to pin down clear positions on the basis of educational position, or geographical location, except perhaps for the issue of the two-phase system, which will be discussed later. In essence I was unable to pursue my initial line of enquiry, but this perhaps stimulated a more fruitful and interesting investigation: If there were a number of different positions and approaches to the future of higher education, were the people involved really working towards the same goals, and, in fact, did they have an idea of what those goals were?

This is not a line of enquiry that I pursued during the interviews, but one that has increasingly come to the fore as I have been writing up this thesis. While everyone I spoke to agreed that the Vietnamese higher education system was in difficulties, and that it needed to be improved in order to better meet the needs of the Vietnamese economy and the development of the nation, there was little consensus on what this actually meant.

Consequently, the question mark in the title is a very important one, it not only reflects the question surrounding the proposed nature of development, it also questions whether development was really the goal of many of key actors involved in higher education.

As for any topic, the researcher brings to their field of study their own particular paradigms and concerns. Given the scarcity of detailed information concerning higher education in Vietnam, and the speed with which that lack is being remedied, this thesis can only be considered as a very preliminary study of the sector. I can only hope that the details provided in this thesis can be used by future researchers for more in-depth analysis of higher education under đổi mới than was possible at the time of writing.
Review of literature concerning higher education in Vietnam under đổi mới

Literature concerning higher education in Vietnam between 1986 and 1998 can be divided into three broad groups. The first group focuses on policy decisions in the field and their impact or lack of impact on higher education. It is mostly the product of education specialists living in Vietnam seeking to influence policy decisions. Secondly, there has recently been a number of narrowly focussed graduate studies analysing a particular policy within the higher education sector. The final group refers to literature, mostly written by authors outside Vietnam, whose main focus is broader social change and who include education within their analysis.

Policy focused literature
Prior to 1991, literature concerning higher education in Vietnam belonged almost entirely to the first group. The foundation of this literature is the numerous decrees and circulars produced by the CPV and the MOET (and its previous incarnations) in the process of governing higher education. These are used as a basis for the numerous articles written by education specialists in the prominent education journals such as Đại học và Giáo dục Chuyên nghiệp (Universities and Professional Education), produced by the National Research Institute for Higher and Vocational Education under the MOET, Thông tin Khoa học Giáo dục (Education Science News) which focuses on recent educational events, such as policy statements and brief articles on primary and secondary education, and Nghiên cứu Giáo dục (Education Research), which focuses on theoretical discussions of general education.

These articles concern such issues as publicising government higher education policy (see for example Đỗ Văn Chung 1989; Lâm Quang Thiệp 1989;
Phạm Đức Thành 1991), speeches given by prominent leaders (Võ Nguyên Giáp 1987), and technical discussions of problems and solutions concerning pedagogical issues, such as entrance examinations (Dỗ Văn Chương 1988; Dỗ Văn Chương 1989) and teaching methods (for example Võ Nguyên Giáp 1985; Đào Dung Thành 1989; Lương Xuân Quý 1991; Nguyễn Khánh 1991; Vũ Đình Bách, Ngô Đình Giao et al. 1991).

From 1991 onwards, the literature becomes far more varied. While journal articles and ministerial decisions continue to be published, these have been supplemented by an increasing range of literature giving a broader and more in-depth view of the higher education situation in Vietnam, although the majority continues to be policy based and prescriptive.

The Vietnamese government, under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Training in particular, has published a number of significant books concerning education and higher education. In 1995 the MOET published the massive history of education and training, 50 năm phát triển sự nghiệp giáo dục và đào tạo [50 years of development of education and training], which highlights the Communist Party's education policy over that period and a gives brief outline of the measures taken to implement it (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a). While it is extremely useful for the historical outline it gives of successive VCP goals concerning education, and the policies adopted for their implementation, it tends to read as a succession of policy decisions, and gives little insight into what was happening 'on the ground'. This is complemented by several other books seeking to give an overview of the contemporary Vietnamese education system, including higher education, but still focusing on education in relation to policy decisions. (Phạm Minh Hạc 1991; Ministry of Education and Training 1995; Phạm Minh Hạc 1998a; Phạm Minh Hạc 1998b).

In the early 1990s an increasing number of international organisations concerned with education made their appearance in Vietnam. The book edited by David Sloper and Le Thac Can, *Higher Education in Vietnam: Change and Response*, remains to my knowledge the only book attempting to cover a variety of
different areas relating to higher education in Vietnam (such as administration, finance, staffing and so on). It arose indirectly from an education sector review undertaken by the MOET and UNESCO, and funded by the UNDP, in 1991-92. While it differs from the literature discussed previously in terms of its scope, the majority of the contributors are still ministry officials and their focus is on seeking policy solutions to problems facing higher education (Sloper and Le Thac Can 1995). The education sector review was closely followed by a more in depth study of the financing of education by the World Bank, undertaken with a similar purpose (World Bank 1996). Occasional papers have also been produced by consultants on specific aspects of higher education, once again to provide advice on possible areas for future attention, such as the legal framework governing education (Minh Vu 1994), and the status of legal education within higher education institutions (Sidel 1992).

Within this section, final mention needs to be made of the ten-year review of the education sector undertaken by the MOET in 1996, in preparation for the Eighth National CPV Congress. This resulted in the publication of several books which attempted to evaluate the developments in education to date in preparation for the Seventh National CPV Congress (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1996; Ban Chấp Hành Trung Ương Đảng Cộng Sản Việt Nam 1996; Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1997).

**Sectoral studies**

The second area of literature consists of the dissertations of graduate Vietnamese students undertaken overseas. With the collapse of the Eastern bloc, and the more general opening of Vietnam to the outside world, increasing numbers of students have been travelling to Western countries to study for higher degrees, and among them an increasing number of students are specialised in education. While these studies vary in the degree to which they consider education within broader social and economic contexts, they share a common focus on a narrow policy issue within the higher education sector, such as private universities (Pham Thanh Nghi 1997), community colleges (Tran Thi To Nga 1998), or the policy of open admissions to universities (Thao Xuan Tran 1998).
Broader social framework literature

The final area of literature is very sparse. It concerns those authors who attempt to go beyond policy decisions in order to understand the process of change in Vietnam. Both David Marr and Alexander Woodside focus on changes to intellectual life in Vietnam, a part of which is higher education (Marr 1993; Woodside 1999). To a greater or lesser extent both the official writing on Vietnam and the student dissertations also occasionally attempt to introduce a broader conceptual framework to issues surrounding higher education (Sloper and Le Thac Can 1995: 22-25; Tran Thi To Nga 1998: 51) but they remain essentially policy focused.

Theoretical literature on Vietnamese politics under doi moi

According to Ben Kerkvliet, literature in the field of Vietnamese politics has tended to focus on the relationship between the 'state' and 'society' to explain political outcomes. He divides this literature into three main distinct groups, depending on whether the author emphasises the strength of the state, the ability of society to influence the state, or the ability of the state to co-opt social forces under the umbrella of the state (Kerkvliet 2001a: 179). The literature looks at whether the Vietnamese state is a closed institution based on the Stalinist model, in which commands are relayed from the upper level of the CPV to lower levels, or whether there is some room for manoeuvre outside the state, which eventually has the ability to influence government policy.

In the case of Vietnam, the focus on civil society and the state is often invoked in an attempt to predict whether or not there are likely to be organisations able to challenge the dominance of the centralised state, perhaps creating a more pluralist society and eventually some more 'liberal' inspired form of democracy.

According to Kerkvliet, the first group of authors concentrates on the 'strength' of the state. Carlyle Thayer argues that up until the mid-1980s Vietnam's political system is best described as one of 'mono-organisational socialism' in which the communist party directed all operations of the state, in a similar way to
what was taking place in other socialist countries (Thayer 1995: 44ff). Gareth
Porter also argues that the Vietnamese polity is best described by the term
'democratic centralism'. Decisions are made by the central leadership and meant
to be carried out by lower levels, although he does recognise that in practice this
did not always take place (Porter 1993: 102). This view of the Vietnamese state was
perhaps encouraged by the closed doors which Vietnam presented to the outside
world during the 1970s and 80s. The limited access which was granted to foreign
observers encouraged them to seek an understanding of the Vietnamese state by
reference to socialist bureaucracies in other parts of the world with similar
institutional structures and in particular that of Stalinist Russia. The literature put
forward by the Communist Party itself also supported the centralised, 'closed
door' perspective of the Vietnamese state. This literature even now tends to focus
on the all-encompassing nature of the Vietnamese state, and the role of the
Communist Party in particular. Members of the National Administration
Institution for example describe both the state and society as emanating from a
central core, represented by the Party. David Marr cites a history of the
Communist Party, written by Dao Duy Tung, in which 'the entire narrative focuses
on Party congresses and plenums, as if all of Vietnam's political and economic life
was a consequence of decisions taken at those meetings' (Marr 1994: 6).

A view of the Vietnamese state as one in which the Party plays both the
central and the determining role in Vietnamese political life means for both Porter
and Thayer that the changes which have taken place under doi moi are essentially
policy driven. The decision to introduce economic reform has allowed a certain
opening up of the system, in which different groups are now able to operate to a
greater extent without reference to the state, representing an incipient pluralism
and the creation of a 'civil society' (Thayer 1991a: 8).7 In fact these authors are
continuing to seek parallels with developments in Eastern Europe (and even Latin
America) where authoritarian regimes were toppled by organisations which had

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7 This was the topic of a conference held on November 10-11, 1994 at the Australian National
University, Canberra entitled: Vietnam Update 1994: Doi moi, the state and civil society.
established a basis for support from outside the state. The development of such organisations has often been used to predict or explain the rise of democracy, and the case of Vietnam is no different (Carnoy 1984: Chapter 1).

The attempt to differentiate between 'state' and 'civil society' takes one step further the dichotomy which these authors establish between state and non-state. Civil society groups are often portrayed as being separate from, but also in opposition to the Vietnamese state, the interests of one being in conflict with the interests of the other. For example, in reference to labour unions, Porter asserts that they 'have never had the function of defending the interests of the workers against management; rather they have been responsible for collaborating with the state in the management of state enterprises' (Porter 1993: 88). The statement assumes that there is a natural contradiction between upholding the interests of workers and those of state management, even though he then finds that the two are often supportive of each other.

By contrast a number of authors have argued that individuals and groups have actually been able to influence state policies. Adam Fforde and Stefan De Vylder and Kerkvliet all point to ways in which actions at the grassroots level have been able to influence high level party decisions, perhaps even providing the impetus for đổi mâu itself (Fforde 1993: 309; Kerkvliet 1995: 80).

Further nuances can be found among these authors. Thus, Melanie Beresford emphasises that the state is not an indivisible whole, and that policy disagreements exist even within the highest levels of the Party (Beresford 1988: 116). Others have noted that actions taken by state officials at the local level are often in conflict with directives from higher up, or that directives from different ministries or other central government organisations are in contradiction with each other, thus nuancing the state-society dichotomy by showing that the state is not monolithic (Kerkvliet 1995; Fforde 1998).

Corporatism is the third way in which Kerkvliet classifies existing literature on state-society relations in Vietnam. This approach argues that while independent interests might arise outside the formal state structure, these are
then likely to be incorporated under the umbrella of the state. In 1986 Vietnamese veterans formed a pressure group called the Club of Former Resistance Fighters which gradually became political, criticising restrictions on individual freedoms and condemning corruption. It was eventually disallowed by the government and its members were encouraged to join the alternative Vietnam Veterans association created in 1989, as a government sponsored organisation under the Vietnam Fatherland Front and the CPV (Thayer 1992: 124; Porter 1993: 68). The concerns of the veterans were brought into the state apparatus rather than being allowed to form a centre of opposition outside of it. Yeonsik Jeong argues that this has also been the case with issues relating to women or religious groups (Jeong 1997) and John Gillespie also assumes a process of corporatism in his analysis of land-use rights in Ho Chi Minh City (Gillespie 1997).

In essence, the consequences of these positions for an analysis of higher education are that, if, as suggested by Thayer, the Vietnamese state were monois organisational, formulating policy from within, then the roots of change in higher education must be sought within the state. If on the other hand, the state were 'weak' and acting in response to pressures from below, as suggested by Fforde and de Vyld (1995), then the source of change needs to be sought within the universities and in the actions of students, teachers and parents. Corporatism would suggest that new private universities were being co-opted by the state.

A first issue to be resolved for the current analysis, however, is the place of HEIs within a state-society framework. This position is a particularly ambiguous one. Under the state central planning system universities were state institutions which formed students to take their place in the state bureaucracy. Under <i>dổi mới</i> a number of private institutions have been opened, with more or less strict MOET supervision, and universities all now provide graduates for the private sector, but the majority still receive a major part of their financing from the central government budget. Universities clearly sit on an ambiguous and ill-defined boundary between state and society, which potentially creates a number of
difficulties for establishing whether society has a greater influence over the state or vice versa, in changes to higher education.

In fact, however, this thesis argues that irrespective of the extent to which universities are part of the state or society, the dualistic framework is already insufficient for explaining the changes that have taken place in the Vietnamese higher education sector under đổi mới. Two areas stand out as having a fundamental effect on the sector, and which are nonetheless not encapsulated in the state-society dichotomy, namely those of international influences and the broad historical, social, cultural and political framework, or 'traditions' that create the background against which higher education decisions are taken.

With these considerations in mind, Chapter Two presents international developments in thinking about the nature of education and its importance to development. This is an important theme that is then taken up and applied to higher educational policy and theory in Vietnam, in Chapter Four. Chapter Three establishes historical patterns of educational policy and changes to higher education in Vietnam that clearly continue to influence the difficulties and developments in the administration, financing and curriculum of higher education, as presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

Based on the analysis of a number of different changes to higher education in the period 1986-1998, and the difficulty of encapsulating these in a state-society framework, this thesis concludes by narrowing the focus of the analysis away from higher education as a whole, to emphasise changes to higher education policy in particular, and proposes that the process of developing higher education policy in Vietnam follows a fairly distinct pattern that may offer new ways of understanding the important factors that go to shape policy in Vietnam.

In summary, this thesis attempts to do three things. First, it seeks to document the changes that have taken place in higher education in Vietnam between 1986 and 1998, focussing particularly on the changes to government policy. Second, it seeks to examine those changes in the light of international thinking about the relationship between higher education and development, and
particularly the state-centric and neo-liberal models of higher education as defined in Chapter Two. Finally, it evaluates the relevance of the state-society dichotomy for understanding the changes that have taken place in higher education and particularly higher education policy, and concludes that an alternative approach to the subject may yield a more comprehensive analytical framework within which to understand higher education and development in Vietnam.

Note on diacritics: Vietnamese uses a number of diacritics in order to transcribe tones and sounds into roman script, unfortunately many sources in the English language do not use the diacritics and it was not always possible to be consistent in their use. I have used the following rules. Vietnamese personal names are written with full diacritics wherever possible, as are place names. The exceptions are Hanoi (Hà Nội) and Ho Chi Minh City (Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh) which are widely known outside of Vietnam. University names given in English do not use diacritics, although their equivalents are given in Vietnamese the first time used. A full list of universities referred to in English and Vietnamese can be found in Appendix 5.
Chapter Two - Education for Development

Every development program is founded on the conception that political leaders, planners, and influential pressure groups hold about 1) a desirable society, 2) the manner in which societies are organised and function, 3) relevant characteristics of human nature, and 4) how individuals and societies can be changed (Thomas 1992b:7).

This chapter lays the groundwork for the second aim of this thesis, namely to show the ways in which Vietnamese educators have been influenced by international thinking on education, and its relationship to theories of development or earlier theories of change. It provides a roughly historical overview of different schools of thought on the issue, but it makes no claim to being comprehensive. Rather, it highlights those schools of thought which I consider to have been particularly influential on the thinking of Vietnamese educators, from Marxist writers through to recent literature focusing on the 'knowledge economy'. It is intended to be read in conjunction with the following chapter on the history of higher education in Vietnam, which, combined, provide a background to understanding Chapter Four, the overview of changes to Vietnamese higher education policy in Vietnam.

This chapter shows that theories about how societies change, and in particular 'progress', have had a significant impact on how education is perceived, and the role that is attributed to education. The chapter goes on to examine the nature of 'development' as a concept and how it has tended to focus on economic growth. As the emphasis on economic growth as the focus of development has been emphasised, education has increasingly been considered in terms of how it can contribute to growth. This position has been made easier as a consequence of means to calculate rates of return to education, as well as statistics which attempt
to quantify knowledge. The last section shows how conceptions about how societies change, as outlined by Murray Thomas quoted above, have been influential in two distinctive practical programs to bring about change in higher education to meet the demands of the global economy: the 'Asian model' and the 'neo-liberal strategy'. It is against these two models that the policies and strategies for higher education adopted by the Vietnamese government will be considered in later chapters.

In this chapter I devote a lot of space to examining the ways in which the need for development has been used as a benchmark against which education is considered. Very often the need for education to contribute to development (particularly economic growth) is assumed without any qualification. While I also examine the status of education in the context of development, I attempt to make this explicit to show that education has many other roles independent of concerns about development. While the majority of this chapter refers to 'education' as a whole, the arguments presented are equally valid for higher education. Where the reference is specifically to 'higher education' this is stated explicitly.

The Role of Education and Higher Education Institutions

Education takes place whenever knowledge is imparted from one person or group of people to another. It may take place in any context, in the family, the workplace, or more generally in an individual's interaction with the outside world. It is broader than 'training', for example, which focuses on obtaining specific skills, particularly for an occupation or sporting contest. 'Education' involves in part the act of acquiring knowledge, but usually refers to such an acquisition in a systematic and planned way, undertaken in formal educational institutions. These institutions attempt to provide an appropriate environment for the systematic acquisition of knowledge in some combination of the following areas: practical skills, factual knowledge, ideology, social skills and methods for knowledge acquisition. 'Practical skills' refers to those skills needed to undertake a particular activity, how to fix an engine, paint a room or weed a rice paddy. 'Factual
knowledge' is closely related, but involves knowledge which may not be of immediate physical application such as the study of history, language study or mathematical calculus. 'Ideology' is often hidden in the choice of 'facts' taught in schools, but it can also be an overt and deliberate form of education. In the United States some of the ideological principles in education include liberty, equality and good citizenship (Paris 1995: Chapter 1). In Vietnam they include Marxist-Leninist theory, Ho Chi Minh thought, and nationalism. Closely related are 'social skills' which may not be part of the official curriculum of the institution but which nonetheless form the students who attend. They include such things as how to behave in a particular environment, how to speak clearly and the correct attitude to assume in different situations. Finally, teaching 'methods of knowledge acquisition' is a long-standing role that has gained increased recognition. As the volume of knowledge available to be learnt has grown exponentially it has become impossible for students to acquire all available knowledge, even in one specialist area. Consequently it has become more important for students to acquire the skills to seek out the information which is of most relevance to their own needs.

In their role of educational institutions imparting knowledge, universities have even more specific roles to play. Manuel Castells claims that there are four general distinct roles which represent a roughly historical progression of university development, which are closely linked to the type of knowledge they impart. Each subsequent role has not entirely superseded the previous, leading to a very complex process of interaction between universities and society at large. The first of these is the role of the university as an ideological apparatus. This was particularly prevalent in the European system where universities were closely linked to the organised church or other religious orders, but it is a role still prevalent in the 'ideologically-free' environment of today. As such, he argues that

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universities propound their own ideology, generally a conservative one, with relative concessions made to the 'plurality of ideological manifestations'. The exception to this overall 'conservatism' occurs in cases where the 'rule of society relies on coercion rather than on consensus [in this case] universities become centers of challenge to the political system.' (Castells 1993: 70-71), although many other conditions must apply for them to do so with any degree of success.

For Castells, the second role of universities is as a mechanism of 'selection of dominant elites, including the socialization of these elites, the formation of networks for their cohesion, and the establishment of distinctions between these elites and the rest of the society.' (Castells 1996: 71). He argues that in England this has been a hallmark of the Oxbridge system, in France, the Grandes Ecoles have played the same role, as have the universities of Moscow in Russia and Louvain in Belgium. In each case, graduates were channeled into the civil service. This argument is also relevant for Vietnam, where education at all levels has been geared to the needs of the bureaucracy since it origins, while a large part of the social hierarchy was based on the level of education.

Third in this rough chronology of the historical role of the university, came the establishment of the university as a centre of research, or 'generator of new knowledge.' Political institutions and private enterprise began to take this role seriously largely as a result of the success of U.S. scientific universities in contributing to economic growth ('the Silicon Valley syndrome') (Castells 1993: 72). Millett argues that the recognition of the value of university research occurred as early as the Second World War, however, owing to the technological innovations which were fundamental to the success of the U.S. in winning the war (Millett 1984: 12). In Vietnam this recognition resulted in the founding of a significant number of research institutions, numbering 300 in 1991, based on the Soviet model (MOET (WB) 1992: 35).

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9 While Castells argument can be contested on the grounds that universities are rarely homogenous institutions, with different different disciplines providing different ideological perspectives, this does not necessarily undermine his overall argument of conservatism.
The fourth function of the university according to Castells is the training of professionals. Where previously graduates were principally recruited into the civil service, industrialisation required large numbers of trained professionals in a wide variety of areas and led to the expansion of specific types of universities such as agricultural, engineering or medical universities, which are closely linked to the demands of the relevant areas of the economy in each of these areas. (Castells 1996: 72).

Although Castells considers the university to fulfil other functions in particular countries and during particular periods, these four roles of generation and transmission of ideology, selection and formation of dominant elites, production and application of knowledge, and training of the skilled labour force, are considered to represent the overarching function of universities at particular historical epochs. Against this general background Castells concludes that 'The ideological and political origins of most developing country universities cannot be ignored, but should not be permitted to suffocate the universities' evolution toward their central role in modernization and development.' (Castells 1993: 76).

While modernisation and development have been constant catch-cries of government policy in Vietnam, particularly since đổi mới, Vietnamese educators have only recently been given the tools with which to support their claims.

Antecedents to Education for Development - The notion of progress and some Marxist views of education

Development itself only really became a catchphrase following the Second World War (Vervoorn 1998: 91). However, the notion of change towards an improved future which it incorporates has been around for centuries. The term 'development' itself comes from the term 'envelop' used in the fourteenth century for something which was closed over. It then became 'disvelop', to unfold, particularly of plants and opening buds, and finally 'develop' in the seventeenth century. The seventeenth century in Europe had a need for many new terms to express the new ideas and the scientific knowledge that was gradually replacing
the mediaeval laments for the lost glory of Ancient times (Pollard 1968: 8). With growing scientific advances and the 'unfolding' of knowledge about the universe, Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle presented the idea that was to become one of the hallmarks of the Enlightenment; that civilisation had made progress in the past, and would make progress into the future (Fagerlind and Saha 1983: 9). People no longer needed to contemplate the decline of humanity, but could begin shaping that future to their own purposes.

Enlightenment thinkers painted a picture of progress, the antecedent of development, as that of a future where increasing knowledge and science would enable people to shape their environment and perfect itself through the continued application of reason. For Voltaire, progress referred to the multi-faceted development of the human being, in the arts, science and especially through rational thinking, all of which would bring about happiness, which S. Pollard describes as consisting in 'comfort and grace, the elegance and culture, of the best bourgeois existence' (Pollard 1968: 42). In order to shape the environment and create well-rounded human beings, knowledge needed to be expanded and diffused. Education, therefore, was an essential part of the notion of progress, and in the latter years of the Enlightenment, was emphasised by Jean-Jacques Rousseau as a means of both avoiding the corruption of civilisation, and for individuals to carry out their responsibilities as citizens (Fagerlind and Saha 1983: 10). Progress referred above all to intellectual and moral progress, although material comforts were not forgotten.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries 'progress' as an idea developed in conjunction with capitalism and science. As science showed ways to change existing structures through an understanding of elemental forces, people were quick to seize on the opportunities presented by this understanding, particularly for their own benefit. The notion of progress widened to include not only moral progress but increased wealth, improvements to the socio-economic order as well as scientific achievements. 'Progress' became formalised and systematised through what has become known as evolutionary theory, which argues that each
successive formation is built upon the previous one, in order to create a successively higher stage of order. While Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of the Species* (1859) is generally credited as constituting the foundation of evolutionary theory, in fact its application to social organisations and the unfolding of history is evident much earlier. Adam Smith's *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776) offers an evolutionary history from a socio-economic perspective.

Within the evolutionary tradition, of most importance to this study perhaps is the work of Hegel, and, building on his work, that of Karl Marx and his followers, who laid the foundations upon which the Communist Party of Vietnam has built their education policy. Hegel was particularly interested in the grand movements of history and, through his study of the past, he postulated that history advanced through a process of dialectics in which society moved from thesis to antithesis and back again to a higher and richer synthesis.

Where Hegel believed that the motive force of history was the transformation of ideas, and that the pattern of history was the successive accumulation of new ideas from one epoch to the next, for Marx and Engels the evolution of history was based on real conflicts, and in particular on the characteristics of the prevailing means of production (McLelland 1996: 554ff). According to Marx, history proceeds through historical epochs of slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism and communism as the contradictions inherent in each mode of production reach their logical conclusion and are transformed to create a new epoch, in a process of dialectical materialism. According to *Das Kapital*, for capitalism this logical end would be reached when capitalism's motive forces, competition and the search to produce more for less, would mean reduced profit margins and increasingly depressed wages for labour. Capitalism would eventually be overthrown by a proletarian revolution as workers become aware of their working conditions and their ability to change them (McLelland 1996: 556, 563).
Marxism could not only read the past, but also the future. Much of Marxism's attraction at the time was its claim to 'scientific' truth and Friedrich Engels' contributions to Marx's writings following the latter's death put their writings on a par with Darwinism or any other natural science based claim to explaining the world (McLelland 1996: 574). Vietnamese Communist Party theorists have continually referred to the scientific nature of Marxism to give validity to a wide range of policies, including innovations in education. The important legacy of these earlier theorists is evident in the writing of many contemporary Vietnamese thinkers, including the idea that development is a fairly linear path on which states move, from poor to developed, through a series of progressive stages. These stages are distinguished by the mode of production predominating in each one - agriculture, industry, and most recently, the knowledge economy.

While Marx and Engels wrote extensively about the role of production, the role of education in the Marxist view of history is far from clear. If the progress of history is based on changing modes and relations of production, in other words on economic factors, then this places other factors for change, such as politics, religion, and education, in a subordinate position. Education is a part of the Marxist 'superstructure', dependent for its nature on the economy, and therefore not credited as an important source of change or development. The non-transformative nature of education was a common view of schooling during the industrial revolution in England when 'the purpose and consequences of schooling were seen in individual and elitist rather than in societal terms.' (Fagerlind and Saha 1983: 38). Speaking from a Marxist perspective Mao Zedong asserted 'Thus, a given economy first determines a given politics, and after this determines a given education. Education is thus derivative of and secondary to politics' (Quoted in Burris 1990: 116). Education itself would not help society to progress.

Not only is education secondary to economics and determined by politics, but it can also be reactionary. In the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, in his only,
very brief, discussion of education's role, Marx argues that education organised by the state or religion would only serve to socialise the working class, and would by implication, serve to maintain the bourgeois, capitalist order. In order for education to be of use for the proletariat, it would have to be one combined with labour because 'an early combination of productive labour with education is one of the most potent means for the transformation of present-day society.' (Marx 1947: 44). He clearly recognised the way that education was used to support the established order.10

This raises some important contradictions for Marxism and education. If the transition from capitalism to socialism occurs in part because the proletariat reaches a higher stage of awareness of their situation, then one important way of achieving that higher awareness is through some form of education. Furthermore, leaders who have led socialist revolutions in their own countries have invariably been themselves the products of intellectual backgrounds, if not highly educated in their own right.11 This has created ambiguities in the policy of many communist parties in power. On the one hand early Marxism credits formal education with

10 Neo-Marxist writers in the twentieth century spent more time on the importance of education in hindering or bringing about revolutionary change. Among them Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser considered education to be an important tool of the bourgeoisie, significantly responsible for maintaining the working class in their subordinate position. Other writers include:


These do not, however, seem to have made a large impact on Vietnamese thinkers, as I did not find any reference to either in my overview of education journals in Vietnam since 1986.

11 One obvious exception is Pol Pot, the son of a farmer, who did not graduate from any formal, post-primary level education, although he did undertake some engineering studies in France.
little transformative power. Education and the educated elite are the product of
the existing structure which supporters of a proletarian (or perhaps worker-
peasant) revolution are trying to displace. On the other hand socialist leaders
generally recognise the value of some form of education both for bringing about
the socialist revolution, and for managing the socialist economy once it is in place.
For socialist leaders faced with practical problems of running a country, the place
of education is by no means clear.

Lenin was certainly aware of the ambiguities inherent in the role of
education, and the way in which he resolved the contradictions became a blue-
print for other countries, including Vietnam, to follow. 'Socialist education' has
 gained identifiable characteristics in socialist countries around the world. Like
Marx, Lenin did not place much faith in education bringing about a socialist
revolution, but he saw it as important in shaping people to accept socialist ideals.
He also emphasised the need for education to impart vocational skills to support
the industrialisation of the country. Education, therefore, was intended to be an
ideological tool first, to create the appropriate political mentality, while other
functions were secondary. 'Organised political action replaced education as the
would help to create socialist individuals who would in turn help to bring about
the socialist revolution. Lenin did concede the importance of the bourgeoisie and
their intellectual knowledge for the needs of the revolution, and feared the results
of a narrowly based vocational education, but this did not prevent him from
agreeing with his Minister for Education, Shul'gin, and his followers, that a work-
place centred education system should be favoured ahead of an elitist formal
education system (Lilge [1968]1977: 560, 566). Stalin stepped up the emphasis on
increasing technical knowledge, which became the basis of the Soviet Union's
fame for excellence in physical sciences, engineering and medical science. In the
second and third five year plans (1933-42), he introduced the concept of the New
Soviet Man, which later became the 'socialist man' in Vietnam. Educational policy highlighted the principles of collectivism, conscientious discipline, socially useful work, and moral upbringing, all of which have remained as fundamental parts of contemporary Soviet education policy (Raby 1992: 46).

In China the socialist regime under Mao Zedong had to confront the same contradictions of reconciling the need for high level skills with socialist ideology. Perhaps the clearest attempt to create a systematic solution to the problem was in the 'red' and 'expert' debate, terms originally attributed to Liu Shao-ch'i in 1958 (Chang and Thomas 1992: 131). 'Red' referred to the commitment of intellectuals to the ideology of the Communist Party and Mao Zedong thought. The latter also advocated that students spend a significant amount of time in factories or the fields, for practical, hands-on experience. 'Red' education also referred to the policy of social equality in education through educational expansion and equal access to education for all. By contrast 'expert' referred to qualitative, rather than quantitative aspects of education. Experts were needed with a very high level of specialised technical knowledge in order to support industrialisation and the national development plans of the party. The 'expert' emphasis was on narrow specialist knowledge rather than on a high level of generalist knowledge.

Structurally the 'red' and 'expert' education system was expected to create broadly based lower levels of education accessible to all, and high quality professional education for a small minority. The desire to create an education system that was both 'red' and 'expert' had inherent difficulties similar to those faced in the Soviet Union because 'the development of skill and expertise in technical terms tend[s] to reinforce inherited traditional hierarchies that are bureaucratic, exclusive, and decidedly undemocratic.' (Epstein 1993: 131). By definition training for highly specialised skills introduces a level of differentiation among students that contradicts the goal of equality in education. The need for 'experts' often

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contradicted the goals of a 'red' broadly based education, those of 'distributive justice, social welfare and political inclusiveness' (Epstein 1993: 131), a contradiction which has also created ongoing problems for Vietnamese Communist Party thinkers.

Both Lenin and Mao believed in historical progress, based on fundamental economic laws propounded by Marx and Engels. They sought to push their countries along that path by overturning the existing social order, and this included the existing education system. Education was to assist in achieving a socialist future by contributing to the perceived ideological and practical needs of socialism. This was a position also taken up by Hồ Chí Minh and educational thinkers such as Phạm Văn Đồng, who insisted that education was important to build a socialist industrial nation and by-pass the capitalist stage of development (Phạm Văn Đồng 1979; Hồ Chí Minh 1985), although in practice these high ideals were often translated into very practical programs of action.13

Before moving to examine more explicitly the human capital, and other theories that have brought education into the mainstream of development strategies, I would like to address two further theories of social transformation that have been important in educational thinking, although for contemporary Vietnam, perhaps without the fundamental impact on policy that the evolutionary and Marxist theories have had.14

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13 On different occasions Phạm Văn Đồng exhorted students to study a foreign language and read foreign books (Phạm Văn Đồng 1979: 193), study agriculture to plant trees for fruit and wood (Phạm Văn Đồng 1979c: 52), or to study sport and hygiene to develop healthy bodies (Phạm Văn Đồng 1979b: 13,19).

14 The following section is drawn principally from Ingemar Fagerlind and Lawrence J. Saha’s book Education and National Development: A comparative perspective. This work was also important in shaping many of my ideas in this chapter on the historical relationship between education and theories of change and development.
Modernisation theory offers an explanatory framework for historical change also based on the premise of the progression of societies from less to more modern and it is closely associated with the changes brought about by industrialisation. Therefore modernisation theorists examine the differences that go to make up 'modern' society, the conditions that gave rise to the new forms of social order, and, eventually, how the conditions can be engineered for developing societies. Modernisation theory is another branch of evolutionary theory, in that it postulates that there is a logical progression from less to more modern. Modern societies are ones that have introduced the large-scale mechanisation of manufacturing over agriculture or petty trade. They also display features such as high levels of urbanisation, technological advancement and population growth. More importantly perhaps for education, modernisation theory can be the theory of emerging modern ideas and attitudes. In the late 1950s, this aspect became popular as evident with the publication of David McClelland's book *The Achieving Society* (1961). This book argues that through a process of socialisation, individuals can acquire an 'achievement motive' that makes them open to economic and technological advancement (McClelland 1961). This idea was further developed by Alex Inkeles who postulated that there is a direct causal chain between 'modernising institutions, modernising values, modern behaviour, modern society and economic development' with the first leading eventually to the last (Fagerlind and Saha 1983: 16). The role of education in modernising society is to create the individuals with the appropriate outlook for a modern society, people who are open to change and who might actively seek it out. Whatever the difficulties with such a deterministic view of causation, it is clear that for these modernisation theorists, education can have a very important role to play in the modernisation process.

Dependency theory builds on Marxism, and Lenin's theory of imperialism, by arguing that Marxism's division of an individual society into classes can be extended to refer to the relationship between different societies, or between the city and the country. It divides the world into 'core' and 'periphery' countries, and
argues that the 'core' countries are able to take advantage of the weaknesses in the 'periphery' in order to advantage their own economies. This was often the situation under colonialism, when the colonial power would ship back raw materials, including slaves, from their colonies in order to benefit their own economies. Dependency theory also argues that the 'dependency' of the periphery is not restricted to an economic dependency, but also, and perhaps especially, exists in attitudes and beliefs that have been imported from outside the society, particularly by the leadership of periphery countries. These leaders tend to adopt policies or practices whose benefit is to themselves or an outside power (multinational corporations, colonial powers etc) rather to their own people (Fagerlind and Saha 1983: 22-23).

In this situation the role of education is less obvious, but was best described by the Brazilian educationist Paulo Freire as 'conscientizacao', loosely translated as 'raising consciousness'. According to Freire, the biggest problem for developing countries was that the majority of the population did not have access to education, nor were they aware that increased knowledge of their environment might be of use to them in leaving the poverty and squalor to which they were accustomed. It was a need which the formal education system in his native Brazil was not meeting. In order to overcome this situation, he encouraged teachers to work at the grass-roots level in order to raise the awareness of the poorest people in society of their situation and so that they could develop ways to improve it, and hopefully, eventually transform society from the ground up. It involved breaking the dependency mentality and aimed to produce home-grown solutions to immediate problems (Freire 1975).

Introducing nationalist elements to schooling, such as singing the national anthem, flag raising ceremonies or emphasis on studying national history are methods that have been adopted by many governments to instill confidence and pride in their own nation, and break a dependency mentality at a national level.

While this paper highlights four principal theories of change, that is not to imply that there are not many more, and many variations of these particular
theories. While all these theories understand history as a movement towards a better future, this is not the only way in which the future has been conceptualised. As pointed out earlier, mediaevalists considered human beings to be in a state of steady decline since the heights of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Chinese historians viewed history as a cyclical process of the rise, decline and fall of imperial dynasties. This is merely to highlight that history does not necessarily follow a path of continual improvement, and to emphasise that there is not necessarily only one recognisable process that societies will or must follow, even from a long-term historical perspective. This is an important point for countries such as Vietnam, which is looking to the example of the 'most advanced' nations to decide the direction it should be moving in the future.

The Nature of Development

Moving increasingly into the twentieth century, the nineteenth century catch-cry of 'progress' no longer held the same positive connotations. This was in part due to some of the violent excesses of colonialism committed in the name of progress, and the advent of two world wars initiated by the world's most 'advanced' nations. Yet the suggestion that societies moved along a single line from backward to advanced, from traditional to modern, did not lose its potency. In non-socialist countries, the role of education propounded by governments and leaders has not usually been so overtly political, but it has nonetheless been called upon to contribute to the future of those countries. The 'age of progress' was supplanted by the 'age of development' with 'less developed' countries seeking to join the ranks of the 'more developed'.

In line with Jamshid Gharajedaghi and Russell Ackhoff, I use 'development' in the sense of a process in which 'people increase their abilities and desires to satisfy their own needs and legitimate desires and those of others', where a 'legitimate desire' is one which 'does not reduce the likelihood of fulfillment of the needs and (legitimate) desires of others' (Gharajedaghi and Ackoff 1986: 18). If this is the most wide-ranging definition of development, it is not the most common. In
practice the complexity implied in the need to fulfil human needs and desires is often simplified to refer to increasing the wealth of individuals and nations, to economic 'modernisation' and 'development'.

In 1949 President Truman outlined his vision for the future in a speech which is sometimes considered to have introduced the 'age of development'.

We must embark on a bold new program for making scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas...The old imperialism - exploitation for foreign profit - has no place in our plans...greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. And the key to greater production is a wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge (Quoted in Vervoorn 1998: 91).

While he rejected the evils of imperialism, he nonetheless embraced some of its central tenets, in particular that of introducing the practices of 'more advanced' nations into 'underdeveloped areas'. Aat Vervoorn emphasises that Truman's speech was largely anti-communist inspired, yet like the socialist leaders he opposed, his vision was based on developing the economic aspects of society. He believed that eliminating poverty was a pre-requisite for achievements in any other field of human endeavour and that higher economic growth for developing countries would mean the elimination of poverty. In subsequent years, development has often been used interchangeably with economic growth, measured by such indicators as Gross National Product (GNP) per capita. In 1990 the World Bank divided countries into groups according to their per capita income into 'low-income', 'lower-middle-income', 'upper-middle-income' and 'high-income' countries, clearly emphasising the importance of wealth in differentiating between countries (Gillis 1992: 7-10).
During the 1950s and well into the 1980s, 'development studies' was almost exclusively an economics based discipline which concentrated on discussing the best strategies for economic growth, whether advocating higher levels of savings, import substitution-, export-, foreign investment-, agricultural- or industrial-led growth to name some of the principal strategies. In 1971 Robert McNamara, president of the World Bank recognised the insufficiency of growth models of development but he also recognised their continuing prominence.

Development has far too long been expressed in terms of growth of output. There is now emerging an awareness that the availability of work, the distribution of income, and the quality of life are equally important measures of development (Quoted in Huq 1975: 46).

For a number of years, however, it has been obvious that economic strategies alone are insufficient to raise economic growth, and indeed the value of economic growth alone as an indicator of development has long since been largely abandoned by all but the most hard-line economists.

Even as the World Bank produced its characterisation of countries by level of per capita income, the UN Development Program produced its first Human Development Report in 1990 which sought to go beyond simple economic measures of development by including indicators of literacy, life expectancy, mortality and primary health care in its classification of countries. Not only has economic growth been questioned as a measure of development, it has also been questioned as a goal. The increasing degradation of finite natural resources in the drive for economic growth has focused attention on the necessity for sustainable development to ensure the availability of natural resources for future generations. Economic growth has not brought about the all-round improvements in the quality of human life and purely economic strategies are unlikely to achieve growth where insufficient attention is paid to social, cultural and political factors.
The benefits of increasing production touted by President Truman have also not been equally distributed.

The failure of purely economics based policies to achieve growth has increased attention on the work of other social scientists, who have long argued that development includes social, cultural and political development. Marx and Engels may have been the first to propound changes to economic relations as the source of historical transformation, yet they also noted that each successive historical epoch was accompanied by fundamental changes to social and political structures. The question that history has subsequently raised is whether economic growth and transformation can really take place without the concurrent support, growth and transformation of all the other sectors of society.

Development, then, refers to, and requires, more than simply economic growth, but, ironically, it is because of increasing realisation of its contribution to economic growth that education has become an important plank of government strategies for national development, particularly in Vietnam.

**Human Capital Theory and Human Resource Development**

Economists such as Adam Smith had noted the importance of the 'human factor' in production as early as the eighteenth century, but studies explicitly defining and quantifying the contribution of human qualities to production did not begin until the mid-twentieth century. In the aftermath of the Second World War, economists sought to explain how European countries were able to recover so quickly from the war when their physical infrastructure had been completely destroyed. Part of the answer was thought to lie in the attributes of the people still available to re-build the countries.

In the late 1950s and the early 1960s, Theodore Schultz and the 'Chicago school' of economists introduced the notion of 'human capital' which attempts to quantify the contribution of human qualities to production. According to human capital theory, it is possible to quantify the investment in human beings in the same way that had been previously done with machines or other forms of physical
capital. By examining the total national income of the United States over a number of years, Schultz found that it had expanded well in excess of the increase in resources that had been invested (such as land, man-hours, etc). While some of this expansion could be attributed to factors such as increased rates of return to scale, and the quality of inputs, his conclusion was that a large part of this increase was due to investments in human capital, which had resulted in qualitative improvements to investment (Schultz [1961] 1977: 316), a 'negative' proof that has nonetheless received significant attention.

By this reasoning, human capital theory posits that expenditure on human beings is a form of productive investment, rather than a form of consumption as it had been traditionally valued in economic terms. Consequently, it is possible, and even necessary, for societies to invest in human beings, particularly by means of education, to ensure higher levels of production (Karabel and Halsey 1977: 12; Woodhall 1987b: 1).15 While notions of strategic investment to increase productivity could be considered a particularly capitalist characteristic, it was also recognised in the former socialist bloc. In the former USSR, S.G. Strumilin found that literate workers who had received one year of on-the-job training were twice as productive as illiterate workers, while workers with extra years of schooling moved up the grades and salary scale in their job much faster than those with less education (Huq 1975: 76-77).

Further research has attempted to quantify the value of education as an investment in human capital. Among the most well-known of these is the work of George Psacharopoulos, who used the life earnings of individuals, compared to their level of education, to estimate the rate of return for different levels of

15 Schultz is the first to recognise that comparing human capital with other forms of capital such as machinery and so on, could be accused of undervaluing human beings. He argues, however, that his analysis in fact puts human beings at the centre of economic analysis, which is their rightful place. Schultz, T. W. ([1961] 1977). 'Investment in Human Capital.' in Power and Ideology in Education. J. Karabel and A. H. Halsey (eds). Oxford University Press, New York: 313-324.
education. In a study of 44 countries between 1958 and 1978, he found that while primary education offered the highest rates of return, all rates were above 10%, the rate usually used by the World Bank to consider an investment as viable (Woodhall 1987a: 22).

Rates of return to different levels of education have been calculated by different researchers for almost all countries in the world, and have invariably confirmed the value of education as an investment. This is particularly true of developing countries, where there is a scarcity of educated personnel and therefore the salaries used to calculate the rates of return are proportionately higher. In one study of Brazilian education and economic growth between 1970 and 1980, Lawrence Lau et al. found that the most important contribution to the economic growth of that period was technical progress (40%) followed by improvements to human capital (24%), and only in third and fourth places the more traditional productive investments of physical capital (19%), and labour (17%) (Lau, Jamison et al. 1993: 58). Technical progress itself must be attributed in part to innovations which were possible due to higher levels of education. The concept of 'rates of return' to education is one of the fundamental concepts underlying the neo-liberal strategy for investment in education discussed below.

Economists further divide rates of return into 'private' and 'social' rates of return, depending on whether the benefits of education accrue primarily to the individual or to the society at large. Studies invariably find that private rates of return across all levels of education are higher than social rates of return, while all rates of return to primary education, and to education in developing countries, are the highest, making investment in education seemingly one of the most reliable investments for development (Woodhall 1987a: 22; Gillis 1992: 232 (referring to studies by Psacharapoulos); Tilak 1994: 84-88). Studies on the rates of return to education have had a great impact in emphasising the economic benefits of education and join such other less precise tools of planning, such as manpower forecasting or parent/child demand predictions.
Despite recognition of its value, criticisms leveled at human capital arguments remain. Methodologically, the extent to which wages can be taken as a measurement of increased productivity is questionable. In order to be valid, the wages must reflect the marginal productivity of labour, as reflected through a competitive labour market. In fact, however, the level of wages often reflects other factors such as higher wage policies for specially targeted employment areas, the pressure of interest groups to establish minimum wages for different occupations or to maintain their own wage level (Gillis 1992: 235-239; Tilak 1994: 92).

The second problem concerns the extent to which it is education itself which raises productivity, and the extent to which education merely serves as a screening device for employers to find employees with suitable social qualities (Woodhall 1987a: 21). Radical critics argue that those who get their diplomas at the end of the education process are usually those who started off from a privileged background, and are likely to have had higher salary and wage levels with or without education. According to this argument, education serves the dual role of legitimising those already in a privileged situation, and of socialising students to the norms of the ruling class. Its economic role is secondary.16

While there is a high level of correlation between countries with high incomes and high levels of investment in education, the extent to which education has contributed to development, as opposed to development contributing to the demand for education, is not clear. Even if wages are considered a valid means of valuing the contribution of education to the economy, it is very difficult to disassociate the contribution of formal schooling from other types of education

16 'An educational system which puts into practice an implicit pedagogic action, requiring initial familiarity with the dominant culture, and which proceeds by imperceptible familiarisation, offers information and training which can be received and acquired only by subjects endowed with the system of predispositions that is the condition for success of the transmission and of the inculcation of the culture.' Bourdieu, P. ([1973] 1977), 'Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction,' in Power and Ideology in Education. J. Karabel and A. H. Halsey (eds). Oxford University Press, New York: 487-511.
and other forms of socialisation. The contribution of education to economic
development may continue to be an intuitive truth rather than a demonstrable
one.

These caveats notwithstanding

The notion of a school system as part of a national 'investment in
human capital' has been called 'something of a revolution in economic
thought,' allowing the economics of education to take a steadily
enlarging place in the field of economics generally and placing the
planning of education squarely and legitimately into development
planning. This revolution in thought, if such it is, is relatively recent, a
matter of the late fifties and the sixties (L. Peattie quoted in Thomas

If human capital is the economic term used to refer to the contribution
that human qualities make to production, 'human resource development' refers to
the planned process to increase the available quantity and quality of human
capital to meet the perceived needs of development. In theory human resource
development could refer equally well to improving health and nutrition, which
also have significant benefits in improving productivity. In practice, however,
'human resource development' is used almost interchangeably with the term
'education', with the difference that its proponents wish to emphasise the
economic value of the educational strategies they are proposing. It is also the term
of choice for those proponents of continuing education over the lifetime of an
individual.

Prior to the 1960s there was wide acceptance that education was a hallmark
of a developed, or 'civilised' country. It was also considered important for
nationalistic, humanitarian, cultural or social reasons. There was certainly an
awareness of the value of educated employees, as well as innovative ideas, to a
company but no attempt had been made to quantify them or to gather relevant
statistics about their place in the economy. To some extent non-economic roles are still important in discussions concerning primary and secondary education, but for higher education they have been almost entirely subsumed under economic arguments of productivity. While rates of return based on salary levels give an imperfect measure of the value of an individual's education to the economy, they do not measure the very important ideological and social roles that education also plays. Nevertheless market value and market competition have gained increasing weight in the considerations of educational planners, to the point where introducing market principles into higher education is almost considered a goal in itself.

**Strategies for the Future**

**The 'knowledge-based economy' (KBE)**

The most important economic development of our lifetime has been the rise of a new system for creating wealth, based no longer on muscle but on mind (Toffler 1990: 9).

At the close of the twentieth century there appear to be two principal issues facing higher education institutions: those of knowledge-based economics and globalisation. Alvin Toffler was writing in 1990, when the knowledge economy was only a concept and before statistics had been developed to quantify the contribution of knowledge to an economy. The effects of globalisation could no longer be ignored. Toffler noted the now well-recognised international trend in employment from blue-collar low-skill jobs, to white-collar highly-skilled employment, and the importance of widely diffused and ever expanding knowledge that fuels current economic growth. In Vietnam, his writing has become widely interpreted as showing an insight into a new stage of global production, replacing the now frequently discredited stage of socialist industrialisation (see Chapter Four). While Asian countries are seeking to 'catch
up' to their more developed counterparts in the West, the 'most developed nations', the members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)(which now includes the Asian members of Japan and Korea), are themselves seeking to develop new economic strategies for the future. In particular they are seeking to understand more about knowledge-based economies and the strategies that are best suited to this increasingly important form of production.

The OECD defines a country with a knowledge-based economy as one where 'the production, diffusion and use of technology and information are key to economic activity and sustainable growth.' (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 1999: 7). Investment in knowledge refers to investment in areas that generate knowledge, such as research and development, software, education and basic science. It also refers to 'innovation' and the machinery, equipment and infrastructure to support it. While the relationship between increasing levels of knowledge and economic growth is not yet clear, what is clear, is that most industrialised countries have been investing heavily in new knowledge, its creation, dissemination and adaptation to production, on a par with their investment in machinery and equipment (8%), particularly since the mid-1990s (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 1999: 9, 13, 21).

Like Alvin Toffler, governments have recognised the shift from factory based production to hi-tech and knowledge intensive industries and are now looking at ways in which to encourage organisations to move to those areas. In the words of a report from the newly created Branch for Knowledge-Based Economies,

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17 According to OECD statistics Denmark and Finland showed the highest investment in knowledge among OECD countries between 1985 and 1995, yet they showed only middle to low annual growth rates between 1989 and 1998 compared to other OECD countries (OECD 1999: 5, 9). Other measurements of development are not given for comparison.
part of the Australian government's Department of Industry, Science and Resources

... new growth theories and other new analytical frameworks have attempted to incorporate knowledge into economic production functions. From a policy point of view, since knowledge differs from other economic goods because of its 'public good' characteristics, its growing importance raises new challenges for public policy (Department of Industry Science and Resources (Australian Government) 2000).

The implications are particularly important for higher education institutions, which perform around 20% of all research and development activities for the OECD as a whole (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 1999: 31). The OECD report produced in 1999 was undertaken on the request of its member governments who felt they had insufficient data from which to plan for a knowledge-based economy, or the attitude to adopt for the HEIs of the future.

If the issue of creating a knowledge-based economy is one important international consideration that needs to be taken into account by government and HEI education policy, the second closely related consideration is that of globalisation. HEIs are being pushed or pulled into forming greater linkages with the outside world.

It is now unrealistic for individual countries to expect to take their place among the most developed nations of the world without becoming part of the global economy. The most obvious examples of global production are the multinational corporations that choose to take advantage of cheap labour in developing countries to move their factories there, while maintaining their corporate headquarters in a developed country where highly qualified innovators
and managers can be found (not to mention a frequently more comfortable standard of living).

The contribution that education can make to economic growth means that education has become an important subject of discussion in international economic fora. The Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), classify education as a service and seek to ensure the gradual reduction of restrictions on educational services such as technology transfer, consultancy, distance education and so on. The eventual aim is to create an international marketplace in education (Kelsey 1998: 55-56). In short HEIs cannot ignore that 'changing trade patterns influence the productive possibilities of the economy and thereby the demand for education, the uses put to education, and the demands made on education for tailoring the workforce to those demands' (Riddell 1996: 1363).

The discussion of appropriate levels of schooling for development takes on an added dimension in a global context. Given that developing countries are now placed squarely in a global economy, it is important to consider their position in that economy, and what the role of education should be to support it. According to the theories of linear progress outlined above, Western Europe became 'modern' through a process of industrialisation, in which successively higher levels of education expanded as the need arose. The standard development argument has been that education should progress in line with economic development, by expanding primary education, then secondary education, depending on the stage of development of the economy. This is despite the increasing questions that developed countries are asking about the relevance of strictly divided primary and secondary education, let alone the need for high quality higher education and research needed to remain competitive in a global economy.

...to focus on early education as the World Bank does may not be the best way of enhancing the international industrial competitiveness of a developing economy. To
compete in the world industrial economy, it is essential to have higher educational institutions, scientists, technologists and engineers. Universal primary and secondary education is a worthy goal in its own right, but alone it does not provide the wherewithal to compete in the international market. It is undoubtedly far more expensive on a per capita basis to provide higher education than to provide primary or secondary schooling. The former is also necessarily elitist but this is a price that may have to be paid for international competitiveness (Quoted by Riddell 1996: 1362).

In a knowledge-based global economy the emphasis must be not only on the structure of educational institutions, but also on their content. Abby Riddell argues that the most important skill that future education can supply is flexibility. Fordist style industry was characterised by narrowly specialised tasks on the factory floor and the fragmentation of skills and knowledge. It relied on strict adherence to time schedules and respect of authority. Industries of the future will rely primarily on individuals who are able to adapt to rapidly changing situations, who are creative, independent and who have broadly based skills that can be used as a basis for specific job skills training. Consequently education should provide individuals with the flexibility to adapt to changing situations. The 'post-Fordist' education should emphasise not so much new knowledge as new behaviour, including problem solving and participatory decision-making. The curriculum should include multidisciplinary studies and a variety of approaches to teaching taught by a variety of alternative 'teachers' (Riddell 1996: 1359-1361). This is particularly important in a global economy, she argues, because the effect of globalisation 'has been to create patterns of employment, expectations, and demands for skills and products which cannot be met solely within national boundaries, not solely through national policies' (Riddell 1996: 1358). Vietnam has long sent labourers (in particular) abroad to friendly socialist countries (less so
since the collapse of the Soviet Union), and low-paid migrant labourers have long travelled extensively in search of work, but a new trend has become apparent, namely the international recruitment of highly qualified, highly skilled employees.

The Asian model

During the economic recession of the 1970s, high levels of unemployment and educated unemployed called into question the value of investment in education. Increasing costs of education due to the enrolment expansion at all levels placed a heavy burden on shrinking government budgets (Fagerlind and Saha 1983: 50-53). Despite these considerations, public investment in education in Asia between 1965 and 1990 grew faster than in any other region in the world, both as a percentage of total expenditure and on a per capita basis (Tilak 1994: 59). This expansion occurred just as human capital arguments were beginning to make an impact on economic planners but also highlights some of the other important reasons for expanding education. In many countries, such as Indonesia and Malaysia, education was seen as a means of uniting different ethnic and linguistic groups within countries with diverse populations, as well as a means of countering perceived colonial hegemony in a post-colonial world (Nguyễn Thé Anh 1996: 524). A substantial education system was a hallmark of a modern society and offered newly established government a highly visible way of meeting demands for social equality (Huq 1975: 56).

The idea of an 'Asian model' of education as separate in its own right stemmed from a series of educational conferences sponsored by UNESCO, often referred to as the 'Karachi Plan'. The first conference was held in Karachi in 1959/60 and was followed by two more, in Tokyo (1962) and Bangkok (1965). These conferences aimed to take a more regional look at educational needs, in particular the likely demand for education by individuals, and the demand for educated people by organisations within the region. The initial plan signed in Karachi focused on primary education and advocated that it be made compulsory. It also suggested that the countries within the region should establish an
education plan within the overall framework of national development plans and reserve finance specifically for education. At the follow-up Tokyo meeting, higher levels of education were also considered and the decision was taken to elaborate overall strategies for educational development, on the basis of the concept of 'balanced development'. 'Balanced development' of education referred to the need to balance educational expansion with economic and population expansion, and with national development plans and available finance. At the Bangkok conference enrolment targets were set at 90%, 33% and 5% in primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment respectively, to be introduced by the year 1980. Japan was held up as the inspiration for other countries to follow (Watson 1980: 57-59; Tilak 1994: 49).

Based on the 'Asian model', many countries in the region massively expanded their primary and secondary education, not to mention teacher training. The ambitious goals of the Karachi Plan were not universally achieved within Asian countries, but the results were nonetheless impressive. Between 1960 and 1990 primary education in Asia expanded faster than any other region in the world (5%) and equaled Africa for the overall growth in school enrolment (5.5%), although not on a per capita basis (Tilak 1994: 40-42). On the negative side, Mohammed Shamsul Huq argued in 1975 that while there had been a massive increase in educational enrolment in the South and Southeast Asian regions, this was due principally to the demand for schooling rather than 'balanced' planning. Education is associated with high social status, economic advantages, and is supported by traditional values in many countries in the region. Consequently the opening up of education in the 1960s led to demand for increasingly higher levels of education, which developing countries in the region could ill afford by the 1970s (Huq 1975: 107, 134).

If the 'Asian model' was originally put forward as a distinctive educational model in the 1960s, it has become of increasing interest over recent years because of the economic performance of Asian, and particularly East Asian economies. Japan was the first Asian country to reach a technological parity with Western nations, not to mention sustained economic growth. As such it led the
way for Asian countries in the post-Second World War era who feared Western
dominance and sought to develop a distinctively Asian education system (Baker
and Holsinger 1996: 161). Japan's educational policies, particularly following the
Second World War, focused on high quality universal education and rapid
expansion in higher education to 'catch up' with the West (Baker and Holsinger
1996: 161). Huq, based on Schultz's methodology, undertook a study of returns to
schooling for Japan between 1930 and 1955. He found that education contributed
around 25% of the total increases in national income during that period. He does
stress, however, that 'the far-reaching educational measures taken in the early
Meiji era were not directly linked to the economic growth but laid the foundation
on which the country's economic system was built.' (Huq 1975: 79).

One hallmark of the 'Asian model' is the example of the High Performing Asian
Economies (HPAEs), and in particular South Korea and Taiwan. Within this model
'principles concern is with the role of human resource development, in
particular with investment in different levels and types of education as a generator
of growth.' (Singh 1991: 386). These countries first sought to achieve universal
primary education, and then went on to expand high quality secondary education
in line with the increasing industrialisation of their economies. Now, the focus
appears to be on tertiary level education, which will support the knowledge-based,
hi-tech economy and help to increase their production of internationally
competitive goods and services (Tilak 1994: 55). Education has been used as a tool
by these countries to short-circuit the process of industrialisation, unlike Western
countries where the universalisation of primary education was not achieved until
well after industrialisation, in the 1960s (Fagerlind and Saha 1983: 236).

One hallmark of the 'Asian model' is the use of deliberate government
strategies and funding to steer education in a direction considered desirable for
development. Such strategies are particularly evident in higher education. Jasbir
Sarjit Singh (1992) examines the development of higher education in Malaysia,
Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan, and notes several significant trends common
to all these countries since 1970. The first is that they have all been pursuing
structural adjustment policies to move their economies away from a significant agriculture sector and towards the manufacturing and service sectors. At the same time they have been steadily increasing the proportion of students enrolled in higher education in comparison with other levels of schooling. Finally the governments of the countries have been using deliberate systems of regulations and incentives to expand the higher education sector and to produce graduates in perceived areas of need: science, technology, and more recently, engineering and scientific research linked to development, and to the needs of local industries. In short 'the higher education systems have been developed in tandem with their industrialisation policies demonstrating many of the characteristics of planned economies, with fixed growth targets and manpower forecasting aligned to intended growth patterns.' (Singh 1991: 398).

But the 'Asian model' may go beyond the issue of balancing development with appropriate years of education. Nguyễn Thế Anh argues that an Asian model of education should also consider the Confucian heritage characteristic of Japan and the 'Four Dragons', which is characterised by 'government leadership, competitive education, elitist meritocracy, social interaction, a disciplined workforce, principles of equality and self-reliance, and self-cultivation.' (Nguyễn Thế Anh 1996: 527-8). The implication is that educational institutions should be concentrating on cultivating these values to achieve higher levels of development, an argument reminiscent of Weber's explanation for industrialisation based on the 'Protestant ethic' in England.

To return to Murray Thomas' issues for understanding government development plans, in general the Asian model shows the conception of a desirable society to be the achievement of the level of growth and industrialisation shown by Western countries and Japan (although perhaps not the social values). Through education, they seek to bring about this change through a planned process of significant government intervention and focused government funding.
The existence of an 'Asian model' of education has a great attraction for countries that wish to emulate the success of the HPAEs, but despite the similarities among the education for growth strategies analysed by Singh,

...the four 'HPAEs' in Southeast Asia, and Vietnam, the largest of the ASEAN transitional economies, have all followed different education policies over the decades of rapid growth since the 1960s. These reflect in part their different colonial legacies, and in part the different attitudes of their governments to the role of education in the growth process. Although both the Taiwanese and South Korean experiences have been influential in Southeast Asia, as in other parts of the world, there is little evidence that the educational development in Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore has followed either the Taiwanese or the South Korean path...Certainly neither Thailand nor Singapore educated 'ahead of demand' in the way that South Korea and Taiwan did (Booth 2000:14-15).

In other words, while 'the Asian model' as a concept continues to be attractive in Southeast Asia, and Vietnam in particular, there is no single 'Asian model' suitable for any country wishing to achieve high levels of economic growth. This model has been further undermined by the ongoing economic decline of Japan, which has called into question many of its development characteristics. Vietnamese educators have become less enthusiastic about adopting the Japanese model of education.¹⁸

¹⁸ Interview with official in the MOET, Hanoi, July 1998.
The neo-liberal model

The Asian model outlined above concentrates on strategic government investment and policies to direct higher education institutions towards expansion, and higher levels of science, technology, and eventually research capacity. The neo-liberal model, by contrast, concentrates on reducing the role of government in higher education and creating a market for individual institutions to compete against each other. In a concisely worded statement, a joint ECLAC-UNESCO document on shifting education and knowledge patterns for production, summarises the concerns of neo-liberal education strategists.

The educational function of the future cannot be carried out through a routine, hierarchical structure, with teachers who think like civil servants and a society which is indifferent to the education system's financial needs. Autonomy, administrative responsibility, experimentation and close links with the community should be the features of all places where the education process is carried out (Quoted in Riddell 1996: 1361).

While such comments could be invoked equally for any level of education, the neo-liberal model for education is most frequently advocated for higher education institutions. In order to meet the criticisms and ideals presented in the ECLAC-UNESCO report, the neo-liberal model calls for higher levels of

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19 The term 'neo-liberal' is taken from Christopher Colclough (1996), who uses it to refer exclusively to financial policies of education. The basic characteristics I ascribe to this model have also been called 'neo-Fordist' (Brown and Lauder 1996), 'new order' (Riddell 1996), or less accurately, 'marketisation' (Qiping and White 1994), and 'privatisation' (Kelsey 1998) by those who highlight the economic aspects of the model.

competition among educational institutions, less government intervention, increased non-government sources of funding (particularly for higher education), decentralisation of management away from the state and in favour of individual institutions, and the introduction of performance indicators to analyse the production of institutions. It aims to produce more cost-effective, flexible institutions that are better able to supply the needs of the economy. For this reason, in developing countries the neo-liberal strategy also calls for most emphasis to be placed on the expansion of primary and secondary education, as the areas most appropriate to the stage of economic development of these countries.

The World Bank encourages governments to adopt four specific higher education strategies to meet the aims outlined in the UNESCO document:

- encouraging greater differentiation of institutions, including private institutions;
- introducing incentives for public institutions to diversify funding sources, student cost-sharing and linking finance to performance;
- redefining the role of government;
- policies prioritising equity and quality objectives (such as scholarships for poor or excellent students (World Bank 1994: 4).

By introducing competition among higher education institutions, the model aims to increase the efficiency of education, to achieve higher rates of return on education investment. Neo-liberal critics have argued that as long as

21 A practical example of the neo-liberal model is the recent changes to higher education in Australia. In 1988 the Australian government introduced a form of student loan scheme, the Higher Education Contribution Scheme, whereby students are charged a percentage of the cost of their full course, which they begin to pay back through the taxation system once their incomes have reached a certain threshold. The production and productivity of the university is assessed through annual reports in which academics report the number of articles or books they have published and are awarded points based on the scope of the work or the international recognition granted the publishing journal. Points are also awarded for other activities such as teaching or organisation of conferences. Funding
the government provides such a high level of subsidies to HEIs they will not respond to the real needs of the market and individuals and governments will continue making inappropriate and inefficient educational decisions (Gillis 1992: 238).

If the neo-liberal model emphasises introducing a market in education, this requires devolving considerable administrative responsibility to institutions so that they can have more control over their product. The state moves from a 'state control' relationship to higher education institutions, characteristic of the Asian model above, to a 'state supervisory' model most obviously characteristic of the United Kingdom and the United States (Neave and Van Vught 1994c: 309).

The problems of introducing market competition for HEIs are discussed in more depth in the chapters on administration and financial policy further on. Here it is worth noting briefly that market mechanisms have been argued to have a strong potential to favour disproportionately the middle class. 'Cultural and material capital are distributed unequally between classes and ethnic groups', while this type of education might appear to offer efficiency and flexibility, in fact it schools 'the majority of children for a neo-Fordist economy which requires a low level of talent and skill' (Brown and Lauder 1996: 6).

For the neo-liberal model, HEIs for the future are based on high levels of competition for students and resources and substantial administrative independence. There is an underlying belief that market competition is the most efficient way to allocate resources, and that HEIs will find the most appropriate solutions to their own situations if they are allowed the autonomy to do so.

The following table brings together the different strands of thinking and practice on higher education. It highlights the differences between the 'state-centric' model, which is closely based on the 'Asian' model outlined above, and

for the universities is then awarded on a combination of historical factors (what they have been awarded in the past) but increasingly on the ability of universities to bid competitively for non-government funding.
also closely resembles the central planning model of socialist countries such as Vietnam. The neo-liberal model is largely based on the writing of theorists from the World Bank, as well as the practical examples of the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. The differences in administration are largely extrapolated from Guy Neave and Frans Van Vught’s analysis of higher education in ten different countries (Neave and Van Vught 1994a).

I am very wary of presenting a simple dual model as a device for analysing such a complex system as higher education. Nonetheless, I have found this division to be a useful starting point from which to begin an analysis of the changes to higher education in Vietnam.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Issues</th>
<th>State-centric Model</th>
<th>Neo-liberal Model</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundational principles of model</td>
<td>- Assumes direction of change is knowable and can be state driven; or that societal change is not relevant to education.&lt;br&gt;- State direction is most efficient means of achieving desired outcome</td>
<td>- Assumes direction of change is unknowable, and best anticipated through a variety of educational structures&lt;br&gt;- Free market competition will produce the most efficient use of educational resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>- Principally state funding or state directed funding&lt;br&gt;- Funding allocated according to state development priorities or based on traditional relationship</td>
<td>- Competitive bidding among universities for finance&lt;br&gt;- Use of performance output indicators to allocate finance&lt;br&gt;- Large number of private institutions&lt;br&gt;- Significant proportion of non-state finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>- State with important or deciding role in areas such as: appointing teachers&lt;br&gt;deciding curriculum&lt;br&gt;awarding degrees&lt;br&gt;enrolment&lt;br&gt;- Existence of 'peak' universities that offer guidance to others</td>
<td>- High level of decentralisation of responsibilities to individual universities or even teachers.&lt;br&gt;- Use of performance indicators as a management tool&lt;br&gt;- Creation of extra-state bodies to exercise supervision of particular issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum and Teaching</td>
<td>- State with high level of influence on curriculum&lt;br&gt;- Curriculum changed with difficulty, requiring higher levels of approval&lt;br&gt;- State (or peak university) control of entrance examinations&lt;br&gt;- Emphasis on quantity of knowledge and memorisation&lt;br&gt;- Curriculum emphasises respect of authority and status quo</td>
<td>- Interactive teaching and problem solving&lt;br&gt;- Emphasises competition in class&lt;br&gt;- Use of credit system/ student choice in the curriculum&lt;br&gt;- Curriculum decided at lower levels of higher education structure, perhaps even by teacher</td>
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Conclusion

The brief historical overview of education and development presented in this chapter shows a long-standing and complex relationship in the thinking and practice of education and development. Prior to the twentieth century, education was considered to provide moral or cultural qualities. In the late nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries it was argued by Marxists to be an instrument of the ruling class to maintain its own power, and thus often hindering the path to socialism. Since the mid-twentieth century, however, the quantification of 'human capital' and the introduction of the notion of 'human resource development', and increasing interest in knowledge-based economies, have given a more overtly economic dimension to considerations about education, and its role in national development.

This chapter has not attempted to show the full range of thinking on education and development issues, but, as will become apparent in the following pages, it highlights those areas of international thinking that have most clearly influenced Vietnamese education policy-makers. These include nineteenth and early twentieth centuries ideas of progress, leading into later theories of modernisation and dependency. They also include Marxist-Leninist world views, and particularly the 'red vs expert' debate epitomised by the Cultural Revolution in China. In the second half of the twentieth century, development and education issues have been increasingly linked, through popular reflections such as those of Alvin Toffler, the introduction of new economic measurements including rates of return to schooling and attempts to measure the contribution of knowledge and technology to economic growth in 'knowledge-based economies'. Finally this chapter discussed the outlines of two important models that have been used to guide the direction of higher education so that it better contributes to the development of the economy, namely the state-centred Asian model, and what I described as the neo-liberal model, which emphasises greater competition and decentralisation among higher education institutions. The impact of these strands
of thinking on Vietnamese higher education will be discussed more fully in the
Chapter Four.
Chapter 3 - Change and Continuity in the History of Vietnamese Higher Education

The talented are the constituent elements of the nation; if they rise, the nation will advance and be strong, if they fall, the nation will decline and be weak.

Stele erected in 15th century commemorating names of successful doctoral candidates (Doan Viet Hoat 1971: 5).

Scholars have long held a prominent position in Vietnam, whether as Buddhist monks in monasteries, as mandarins in the imperial court, or as revolutionaries in colonial and post-colonial Vietnam. Their place has largely been conditioned and supported by a long-standing system of formal education, closely supervised by the regime in power. The structure and curriculum of higher education institutions, moreover, has been consistently shaped by the needs and orientation of particular regimes and their political orientations.

This chapter gives a very rapid overview of the origins of higher education in Vietnam prior to 1986. In such a brief summary it is difficult to do justice to the complexity of such a long period of history. Consequently this chapter focuses on the relationship between each regime’s education policy and how it influenced the structure of the educational administration and the content of the curriculum. It shows that, historically, Vietnamese higher education has been highly centralised and closely watched by the government of the day. It also shows how changes in higher education closely accompanied changes in the ruling regimes in the country, and supported changes in the dominant ideology. It focuses particularly on education in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam from the 1950s onwards, which provided the framework for education in a reunified Vietnam after 1975.
This chapter establishes the important characteristics of Vietnamese higher education prior to đổi mới as a background for discussing the changes that have taken place under đổi mới in later chapters. The current attempt to change the higher education system in Vietnam, while in some ways a substantial break with the past, is nonetheless constrained by the historical circumstances which have shaped education over many centuries.

**The Origins of Higher Education in Vietnam**

'Education, more than birth or wealth, is always the factor determining social status in an ideal Confucian society.' (Buu Duong 1958: 1).

While lower levels of formal education in what is now Vietnamese territory may have existed since the beginning of Chinese rule in the third century B.C., those wishing to attend higher levels of education had to travel to the heartland of China in order to sit for the Confucian examinations at that time. Early education in Vietnam was organised and run by Buddhist monasteries, which taught Buddhism alongside Confucianism and Chinese characters (Nguyen Trong Hoang 1971: 129-130).

Not until Vietnamese independence from Chinese rule was an indigenous, formal education system established. It was centred around the Temple of Literature (Văn Miếu) founded by King Lý Thánh Tôn in 1070, and was initially intended only for the education of princes. It was followed by the construction of the National College (Quốc Tự Giám) in 1076 by King Lý Nhân Tông. From there formal education slowly expanded beyond the royal court.

The ostensible function of this early education system was to supply candidates to serve the emperor as mandarins in the Vietnamese administration. Such mandarins were expected to display virtue and intellect above all other traits.

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22 Vietnam at this time corresponded approximately to the area covered by the protectorate of Tonkin in the early twentieth century.
in particular through a thorough knowledge of the Confucian classics. Confucianism increasingly dominated the schooling system. Based on the teaching of Confucius and Mencius, education emphasised harmony in the natural order in association with harmony in the moral order and the importance of ethics in the practice of politics (Little and Reed 1989: 4). Students were initially introduced to a selection of works written by Chinese and Vietnamese authors to help them learn Chinese characters and the principles of Confucian ethics (Duong Duc Nhu 1978: 54). They were then expected to memorise Chinese characters and vast tracts of the Confucian classics in minute detail and to write poetry according to very strict classical rules based on the 'Five Classics' and the 'Four Books': the Analects of Confucius and Mencius, the Great Learning and the Doctrine of the Mean (Buu Duong 1958: 32; Woodside 1971: 14). Girls were taught at home and stopped studying once they had learnt the 'four virtues', which emphasised proper behaviour inside and outside the home. Education remained the domain of excellence for upholding the Confucian tradition, which emphasised ethical and moral values over practical and scientific knowledge.

Education was nominally free, however students were expected to bring gifts to their teacher, and to dress impeccably in traditional Chinese-style clothing, although this may not always have happened in practice. These seemingly small requirements, together with the labour lost while the child was not working, would have been a significant drain on the resources of poor families. Consequently the importance of education was perhaps less its role in selecting a small number of able students to serve in the mandarinate, and more in its institutionalisation of Confucian values, with their emphasis on upholding the social order.

Throughout Vietnamese history teachers had integrated the village with the nation. The teachers provided the village

23 The five classics were: the Book of Poetry, the Book of Records, the Book of Rites, the Book of Changes and the Annals of Spring and Autumn (Duong Duc Nhu 1978: 55).
ties to the Vietnamese government. They versed the youth in Confucian moral codes, prepared the brightest children for state service, and helped implement government policy at the local level (Kelly 1978: 96).

A Confucian classical education had the further role of unifying members of a bureaucracy chosen from widely disparate areas.

The acquisition of a common body of knowledge bound the agents of the state together since, from one end to the other of a very long and culturally highly diverse country, they shared the same values and the same corpus of Confucian references (Papin 2000).

In the first centuries following independence, members of the bureaucracy were probably chosen through a process of formal or informal nomination (Doan Viet Hoat 1971: 2). By the end of the 15th century, however, regular examinations were held based on the Chinese model, and success in these examinations became the be-all and end-all of a student's life. For men, examinations were held at several levels: provincial, regional, 'general' (held in the capital) and 'court' (held at the Palace), the latter examinations often set by the emperor. Success at one level was usually required before the student could sit the examination for the next level, and examinations were held every three years.

The name of the award offered for each of these different levels has been carried through to the present day and offers an interesting insight into how education has been re-fashioned over the years. Despite the common award names in different eras, however, it is difficult to establish equivalency between pre-colonial diploma holders and those of the present. In particular, in pre-colonial Vietnam there was no requirement that candidates complete a certain number of years or courses before being admitted to a particular examination. It is
interesting to note, however, how the same terminology has been re-used by successive generations to offer a semblance of continuity in the face of substantive changes to the content of the awards.

The administration of the pre-colonial education system was simultaneously decentralised and centralised. For the majority, education at lower levels was privately organised and privately funded. Teachers at the village level were not paid by the state, relying on gifts from students' parents or communal land for their survival. Renowned teachers might have large numbers of students under them, while a teacher of lower status might only have one or two pupils. The most successful teachers were those whose students were successful at the centrally organised examinations. Consequently while the central government did not put forward a fully fledged program of instruction for teachers to follow, it was nonetheless able to condition what was taught in the classroom by setting the examinations that students expected their teachers to help them pass. From the fourteenth century a public education system developed and was administered by the Ministry of Rites (also in charge of the organisation of examinations). Public schools sometimes existed alongside the private schools at the provincial, district and sub-district levels, although elementary education was left in the hands of village teachers and the local community. Teachers of these schools received a certain amount of remuneration from the imperial court and acted as conduits for the dissemination of changes in central policy. In particular they communicated changes in examination content, which would require teachers to change their curriculum (Buu Duong 1958: 29; Doan Viet Hoat 1971: 9; Duong Duc Nhu 1978: 49). Privately taught classes continued to prepare students for applied examinations with practical skills not imparted by the classical Confucian education (Nguyen Trong Hoang 1971: 139).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Award</th>
<th>Pre-colonial</th>
<th>Colonial</th>
<th>Republic of Vietnam</th>
<th>Democratic Republic of Vietnam and SRV (to 1991)</th>
<th>Present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Từ tài</strong></td>
<td>Award offered to students with promise, but who failed to achieve the standard required of the cử nhân.</td>
<td>Name often given to the final secondary school certificate offered during the French colonial regime (also called Baccalauréat II) and for the same level under the Republic of Vietnam.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Sometimes used by educators to refer to the certificate offered after the first two years of university (or at the end of 'college' - trung cao dâng), although not official terminology.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cử nhân</strong></td>
<td>Award offered for success at the regional examinations.</td>
<td>First undergraduate award offered by a university.</td>
<td>First undergraduate degree, of varying length depending on the area of specialisation. Called ký sự in technical/professional subjects.</td>
<td>Awarded following at least four years of tertiary study after secondary school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thạc sĩ</strong></td>
<td>Not awarded.</td>
<td>Not awarded.</td>
<td>Not awarded.</td>
<td>Vietnamese term for a new award, introduced to correspond to Western-style 'Masters' degree.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phó Tiến sĩ</strong></td>
<td><em>(Phó bằng)</em> Not an actual award but a level of recognition offered to those who did not quite reach the level required for the tiến sĩ.</td>
<td>Not awarded.</td>
<td>Not awarded.</td>
<td>Vietnamese name given to the Soviet 'Candidate of Science', sometimes translated as 'Masters' in English before the introduction of the thạc sĩ. Discontinued as an award in 1996.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tiến sĩ</strong></td>
<td>Award offered following success in the examinations held in the capital (with higher titles for the most successful). Candidates would then sit examinations at the palace to determine their level of appointment to the mandarinate.</td>
<td>Awarded to Vietnamese graduates by the University of Paris from the 1930s.</td>
<td>Not awarded in Vietnamese institutions.</td>
<td>Not awarded in Vietnam until after 1976, and only in some disciplines. Vietnamese term for the Soviet 'Doctor of Science'. Refers to Western-style PhD, requiring fewer years of study than the Soviet Doctor of Science which was discontinued in 1996.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Until the arrival of the French, Quốc tự Giám remained the only institution of higher education in Vietnam. It was under the direct control of the royal administration. It was run by a committee of educational mandarins with a doctor in charge of management, a director of studies and a ritual mandarin in charge of the Temple of Literature (Nguyen Trong Hoang 1971: 134).

From the 11th century to their official end in the first decades of the twentieth century, the Confucian examinations were not an entirely static institution. In 1253, for instance, a military school was founded in order to train candidates for military examinations (Buu Duong 1958: 61). In 1404, the king added arithmetic to the national examinations, although the practice was not perpetuated. At various times clerical examinations were held to recruit secretaries to the court, or occasionally an extraordinary examination would be held, for example, to appoint medical practitioners or persons with other specialised skills (Buu Duong 1958: 50). The examinations at the highest levels were sometimes adjusted to give them a more practical bent, such as when, in 1865, King Tự Đức asked candidates to explain why Vietnam was suffering from floods and food shortages, which he suggested might be caused by the corruption of officials or mistakes made by his administration (Doan Viet Hoat 1971: 20).

The basis of the examination system remained the study of Confucian ethical values and the importance of maintaining social order. The question posed by Tự Đức indicated that he believed the catastrophes occurring in Vietnam were because of lapses in virtue on the part of his administration or himself. Consequently he expected scholars versed in the Confucian classics to have an insight into how this had happened. Confucian education was supposed to create administrators who were able to maintain the harmony and balance in the world, which would safeguard Vietnam internally and from external threat. The emphasis
of Confucian education was to maintain the *status quo* rather than promote
innovation and change.

The Confucian examinations inherited from China provided a self-
reinforcing system in which scholars and mandarins (themselves scholars working
in the administration) were legitimised in their positions of respect and power
because of their ability to pass stringent examinations which were nominally open
to all. The education system was respected because it allowed access to these
prominent positions in society. At the same time the curriculum reinforced the
existing social and political structure through its emphasis on tradition and
authority.

**Higher Education in Colonial Vietnam 1862-1945**

The arrival of the French marked the beginning of the overthrow of the
Confucian mandarins as the administrators of the governing regime. Previous
ethical and moral teaching had not prepared the Vietnamese for the scientific
advances which enabled France to first conquer Vietnam militarily, and then
maintain control administratively. At the same time the colonial regime was not
able to impose an education system to suit its own needs and those of the French
colons (French citizens living in Vietnam). At different stages it was forced to bow
to pressure from both the French *métropole* (or homeland), and the existing
Vietnamese literati. Higher education in particular followed the vagaries of
political disputes.

In 1862 King Tự Đức ceded three Vietnamese provinces to the French, and
then in 1867 ceded a further three provinces (including what later became Ho Chi
Minh City), to form the French colony of Cochinchina. Annam and Tonkin, the
central and northern areas of present-day Vietnam, became French protectorates
in 1884. In terms of administration, Cochinchina was governed by a process of
'direct administration', while Annam and Tonkin were governed through the
existing mandarinate.
One of the priority needs of the French was for interpreters and clerks for the administration. This need was met to some extent by missionary schools, but as the administration expanded, they soon became insufficient.

While the French were aware of the need to train local people for their new administration, they were wary of putting skills and knowledge in the hands of their colonial subjects. In Cochinchina, Confucian education was rapidly replaced by a more limited French education system. This was the effective result of a resolution, passed in 1874, that decreed new educational institutions, with the exception of Catholic schools usually run by French missionaries, would first need the permission of French officials to operate. Existing private village schools would be inspected and were expected to teach quốc ngữ alongside Chinese characters (Marr 1971: 78; Duong Duc Nhu 1978: 106). Quốc ngữ refers to the romanised script of the Vietnamese language developed by early Jesuit missionaries to Vietnam, which is now used throughout Vietnam. Instead of the Vietnamised Chinese characters (nôm) that had been used previously, quốc ngữ uses diacritic marks to transcribe the vowel sounds and tones of the language, making it far easier to learn. For the French, the use of quốc ngữ simplified its control over the introduction of subversive materials brought in from China (Kelly 1978: 100). In Cochinchina, increasing numbers of French schools were established at the expense of the existing Confucian schools, as Vietnamese teachers refused to teach the new curriculum or moved north (Doan Viet Hoat 1971: 35; Duong Duc Nhu 1978: 37, 76).

In Annam and Tonkin, the policy of governor-generals was most frequently to both reinforce Confucian schools in the north and centre, and at the same time to increase the number of French and Franco-Vietnamese schools. Consequently, in Annam and Tonkin in particular, three types of schools co-existed: traditional Confucian schools, French and Franco-Vietnamese schools.

Confucian education existed alongside the rapidly growing French education system, but lost its raison d'être when the general examinations were officially abolished by the French after a period of steady decline, in 1915 in
French schools were established to cater mainly to the children of the French colons and students followed the same curriculum as that taught in France, while Franco-Vietnamese schools were first introduced in 1906, the same year that the Ministry of Education was established in Huế. Based on a study of the colonial government's debates concerning the introduction of Franco-Vietnamese schools, Gail Kelly argues that the principal motivating force of the regime for introducing these schools was a concern to deflect Vietnamese demands for better quality education, and to keep them out of the élite French schools (Kelly 1978: 99-102).

At the preparatory and elementary levels these schools were funded by the villages in which they were located. They differed from the Confucian schools on which they were founded in that teachers were expected to teach French, mathematics, quốc ngữ, some geography, hygiene and science, on top of the existing instruction in Vietnamese and Chinese characters and literature (Duong Duc Nhu 1978: 79). As they were built upon existing institutions, and continued to be financed by the village level as in the past, they were inexpensive for the colonial power to run. Very few students reached the final years of primary education, however. Tonkin recorded only 3,904 students in public primary education in 1915, and Annam showed 3,102 students enrolled in 1919. Many of these schools had to be closed eventually due to neglect. Teachers were not only unwilling to assist the French in their teaching programme, but were also not qualified to teach French and the French curriculum and they lacked appropriate teaching materials to do so. The standard of the schools tended to be low (Duong Duc Nhu 1978: 146-148). Another possibility for wealthy Vietnamese was to send their children to study in France, but the majority had to rely on the sub-standard and scarce education available in-country.

The discussion to this point has focussed on primary and secondary school education because higher education in colonial Vietnam was not established until much later. The first Western-style university, the University of Indochina, was opened in 1907, but was promptly closed again in September 1908, after less than
a year of operation. The university’s establishment and prompt closure highlight
the extent to which higher education was dependent on the political situation in
the country.

The university was opened at a time of increasing demands by Vietnamese
scholars for higher levels of quality education. Vietnamese scholar-gentry were at
the forefront of organised resistance to French rule in Vietnam (Marr 1971). After a
long but abortive attempt to reinstate the king in the 1880s and 1890s, a new
generation of scholars at the end of the nineteenth century realised the need to
master the modern knowledge that underpinned the strength of the French in
Vietnam. One such attempt was the movement to send students to undertake
higher study in the east, headed by Phan Bội Châu. After travel to China and then
Japan, Phan Bội Châu organised for over a hundred students to study in Japan,
starting in 1905 (Duong Duc Nhu 1978: 180).

A second educational movement to offer a modern alternative to the
French style of education was associated with the name of Phan Chu Trinh. The
Dòng Kinh 'Free' school was given permission to open in Hanoi in 1907. It was
closely modeled on the 'free schools' opened by Chinese reformists that taught
everything from liberal ideology to arms manufacture (Kelly 1978: 102). The school
offered classes from primary through to high school level in subjects such as
mathematics, geometry, hygiene, natural sciences and physical education as well
as French, Chinese and quóc ngữ.

The year 1907, therefore was a year of increasing intellectual ferment, in
which Vietnamese intellectuals made substantive inroads into developing a
modern education system. Despite anxiety on the part of French colons who
feared that their jobs would be threatened by university educated Vietnamese, the
governor-general of the colony Paul Beau (Governor-General 1902-1908), argued
that the creation of a university would help induce a greater feeling of respect
among the Vietnamese for their French rulers. If the French did not provide higher
education, he argued, then the Vietnamese would seek it elsewhere, quite possibly
returning with subversive ideas and actions from overseas (Buttinger 1967: 47-48).
This fear was made all the more acute with the growing strength of nearby Japan. Finally, the colonial government at this time also faced a shortage of qualified personnel. The Council for the Improvement of Indigenous Education at their second meeting in 1907 stated that 'The University of Indochina was set up with no other purpose than to train able and educated people to become civil servants who had been most urgently needed for the administration of the union and to assist the colonials in the gigantic effort of organizing and developing Indochina.' (Quoted by Duong Duc Nhu 1978: 177).

For all these reasons, then, the University of Indochina was established in 1907, on the basis of several existing technical schools. Despite the fears of the French colons, in effect the new university was little more than a glorified technical school which did not even require a secondary qualification for entry (Duong Duc Nhu 1978: 185; Doan Viet Hoat 1971: 64).

In 1908, the climate of openness changed substantially. The French soon became aware of the movement to send students to Japan and took moves to prevent the students' departure. They undertook negotiations with Japan and eventually concluded a treaty of cooperation with the Japanese, at the same time requesting that the Vietnamese students be returned to their homeland. The Japanese invited the students to leave the country in 1908 (Marr 1971: 147).

At the same time the Đông Kinh 'Free' School was developing into a centre for airing increasingly nationalistic sentiments and criticism of the Confucian education and traditions. It was closed by the French authorities in January 1908 (Marr 1971: 169).

Following the closure of the Đông Kinh 'Free' School in 1908, reformist scholars who had been gathered around the school moved out into the countryside preaching change and modernisation. Their dispersion into the heart of Vietnam came at a time when peasants were suffering heavily from high taxes and continuing bad harvests. The teaching of these scholars helped to coalesce the grievances of the peasantry against the French (Marr 1971: 185). In 1908 the discontent escalated as large numbers of peasants presented their grievances to
authorities in central Vietnam, only to be met with violence. While not necessarily the instigators of the tax demonstrations, the French blamed the scholar-gentry for the uprisings, and many of them, including Phan Chu Trinh, were imprisoned on Conlon Island for a number of years (Marr 1971: 193).

The tax demonstrations of 1908 and the blame attached to the scholar-gentry fuelled arguments that educated Vietnamese would undermine the authority of the French regime. Towards the end of 1908 Paul Beau, one of the university's greatest proponents, left the colony and was replaced by the less sympathetic Governor-General Klobukowski, who moved quickly to close down the university. This marked a new period of stagnation in education in Vietnam, as those arguing against instruction for the 'natives' held the upper hand. Wealthy students wishing to obtain a higher education, and who were able to get permission from the colonial regime, traveled to France.

The repression that took place in 1908 reached the French métropole alongside reports of the misery in which Vietnamese were living. With the outcry that followed, the French government in Paris nominated a new governor-general, Albert Sarraut, to Vietnam, with the understanding that the best interests of France were served by building up the strength of local institutions, including educational institutions (Doan Viet Hoat 1971: 67-70). Despite this favourable shift in policy on the part of the métropole, in the light of on-going political unrest in the country and the advent of the First World War, the University of Indochina was not re-opened until 1918.

The University of 1918 was founded on existing higher technical schools and the creation of several new ones.²⁴ The standard, however, was no higher than

²⁴ Schools initially included under the umbrella of the university were the: School of Medicine and Pharmacy, School of Veterinary Science, School of Public Works, School of Agriculture and Forestry, School of Commerce (in Saigon), School of Applied Sciences and School of Fishery and Navigation, to which the School of Fine Arts and Architecture was added in 1924. Although these schools were mentioned in the arrêté establishing the university, it is not clear whether they all in fact came into existence or at what stage they began teaching and how many of them were previously existing upper secondary technical colleges.
that of its constituent technical schools. It was closely watched by the colonial
government, which strictly regulated entry (Duong Duc Nhu 1978: 82; Doan Viet
Hoat 1971: 79).

No serious attempts were made to improve the quality of higher education
until around 1930. This was again in the wake of high intellectual ferment in the
country. In 1925 French officials sentenced Phan Bội Châu to death for subversive
activities, provoking mass demonstrations in his favour across the country, and his
penalty was commuted to life imprisonment. In the following year, 1926, Phan
Chu Trinh died, causing people across the nation to go into mourning, and
thousands attended his funeral. The strong tide of public sentiment extended to
criticism of the inadequate education system (Marr 1981: 330). Many
demonstrations occurred in technical schools, secondary schools as well as the
university, with students demanding better quality education and boycotting
classes (Doan Viet Hoat 1971: 142). The unrest, both among students and
nationalist groups, was at its peak and the French retaliated as they had done in
1908, with violence and massive arrests. Once again, however, the French were
forced to recognise that they did not have a monopoly on education and bowed to
some of the demands. 'A prime reason for the French government's upgrading the
University of Indochina in the 1930s was its conclusion that too many young
Vietnamese students had already travelled to the métropole and learned the wrong
things' (Marr 1981: 40).

That the quality of higher education at the university was increasing was
evident on several fronts. In 1933 degrees from the School of Medicine were
recognised as equivalent to those available in Paris, which already examined the
graduation theses (Doan Viet Hoat 1971: 83). In 1931 graduates from the School of
Law were able to enter the bar for the first time and the doctorate degree was
awarded (Duong Duc Nhu 1978: 195). These faculties of the University of Hanoi
(as it was renamed in 1924) had become branches of the University of Paris, which
oversaw the degrees and courses. Only wealthy students could attend the
university and the vast majority of the teachers were French, recruited in France (Duong Duc Nhu 1978: 210; Trinh Van Thao, 1995: 137). The French university system, like many institutions that had been re-organised during the Napoleonic era, was highly centralised, with all financial and administrative decisions concerning universities made by the state (Durand-Prinborgne 1992: 217). This also suited the colonial regime with its ongoing concern to maintain a close watch over Vietnamese intellectuals.

Higher education in the colonial period was strongly influenced by political considerations. In principle the colonial government was wary of allowing the Vietnamese an education which might undermine the regime's authority, but opened up at various times under more liberal governors (such as Paul Beau and Albert Sarraut), or changes of regime and politics in metropolitan France. At the same time, ongoing pressure from Vietnamese intellectuals such as Phan Bội Châu and Phan Chu Trinh forced it to make some concessions, such as opening the University of Indochina and then upgrading it decades later. Throughout this period higher education continued to be dominated by France, in terms of its curriculum, structure, and centralised administration.

In summary

Political and administrative motives dominated the first stage of development of the University. The University was opened both to appease the rising demands of the native intellectuals for more and higher education and to supply personnel for various administrative services of the French... The subjects taught at the university, particularly following the re-organisation in the early 1930s was principally a theoretical and administrative one, designed to train Vietnamese for administrative positions rather than the development of the Indochinese economy. The higher the level of education, the closer it was tied to the French
system. Under these circumstances, the development of local higher education was difficult and slow (Doan Viet Hoat 1971: 85).

In the lead-up to the Second World War and with the looming threat of the Japanese, the French sought to shore up support for their administration by increasing their spending on the education sector, and then founding a School of Sciences when the Japanese were already at the door, which acceded to long-term demands of Vietnamese intellectuals for higher education in modern science. In the final analysis, however, it did little to bolster support for the regime.

**Intermezzo 1945-1954**

Education went through a tumultuous period in the late 1940s and early 1950s, directly related to the war that wracked the country. In 1940 the Japanese invaded Vietnam, but allowed the French to maintain control over important areas of government including basic finance, the judiciary, education and public security. In March 1945, however, facing continued losses in the Pacific, the Japanese overthrew the weak system of French administration. As a direct consequence Emperor Bảo Đại asked Trân Trọng Kim, an elderly intellectual, to form a government, in order to prevent direct administration of the country by the Japanese (Woodside c1976: 227).

Despite its limited powers and short-lived existence (three months), the Kim government implemented a number of educational reforms which were adopted by subsequent governments, under the leadership of the Minister of Education, Hoàng Xuân Hãn (Nguyễn Thượng 1994: 185). From the previous primary and lower secondary schools the Minister created one unified general secondary school of four years and a senior secondary level of three years, mirroring the French general education structure. He affirmed Vietnamese as the teaching language in schools and **quốc ngữ** as the national script, rather than French. This was a significant introduction in a country where French, Chinese
and Vietnamese were all possible languages of instruction. This break with the past did create some problems in subjects that had previously only been taught in French, however. Modern scientific terms as yet had no Vietnamese equivalent, which prompted Hoàng Xuân Hãn to write a 'dictionary' of scientific words in Vietnamese for the fields of mathematics, physics and chemistry, based on words of French origin. Others developed similar books introducing new words in the fields of medicine, agriculture and natural sciences (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 191). Owing to the short-lived nature of the government, these reforms really only took hold in the area around Huế, but were taken up again several years later by a subsequent regime (Vasavakul 1994: 24-32).

In the aftermath of the Japanese capitulation in August 1945, Hồ Chí Minh declared independence for Vietnam, and the establishment of the DRV on September 2, 1945. British troops arrived in Cochinchina shortly afterwards, while north of the 16th parallel Chinese Nationalist forces took over disarmament operations. Following negotiations with the Chinese, these were later replaced by French troops.

Students of the University of Indochina were involved in the uprisings preceding the declaration of independence. The DRV renamed the university and sought to restore courses quickly and have all classes operating again by the beginning of the 1946 term. French professors were replaced with Vietnamese ones and some work went into preparing new, Vietnamese curricula. Vietnamese was to become the official language of instruction at the university from 1950 (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 191-192). These objectives were never achieved, however, as the French refused to recognise Vietnamese independence and the entire country became embroiled in a war. DRV adherents were forced to move out of the cities in December 1946.

In the north of the country, the Vietminh controlled the countryside in the so-called 'free zone' (vùng tự do), while the French maintained their presence in other areas, which included Hanoi and the other cities, as well as the majority of the southern countryside. The political split in the country caused a further split in
the educational system of the country, with developments in the French
controlled areas reflecting continued wrangling between Vietnamese nationalists
and the French, while developments in the 'liberated zone' reflected the
strengthening ideology of the Communist Party and the guerrilla war in which it
was engaged.

Between 1945 and 1949 education remained at a virtual standstill in the
French controlled zone. It was not until the so-called Elysée Agreement was signed
in December 1949 that schools officially began operation again. The Elysée
Agreement transferred most of the civil service and educational establishments in
the French zone to the State of Vietnam authorities under the emperor Bảo Đại,
including all teaching and administrative staff, and the Department of Public
Instruction. Minority schools and Franco-Vietnamese schools were kept under
French administration, however, and only transferred in 1954. The new education
structure adopted a twelve-year program based on the one developed by Hoàng
Xuân Hãn in 1945. Vietnamese was to be the principal language of instruction
under the new government at the primary level (Vasavakul 1994: 50).

Universities were a subject of special negotiation between the French and
Vietnamese governments. They took longer to re-open and it was not until 1950
that cultural conventions were signed giving the Vietnamese the right to open
universities in the French zone. To some extent the delay reflected the desire of
the French government to protect the large number of French citizens associated
with the university, but the French were also no doubt concerned to ensure the
lights of French civilisation were transmitted to Vietnam's future intellectuals and
leaders.

The Faculty of Letters, intended to be the basis for a national university,
was opened in Hanoi in 1950, using the staff and facilities of the previous
University of Hanoi. When the statutes for the new university were finally signed
in 1953, they reflected the ongoing desire of France to play a considerable role in
education. Under the agreements, the rector was to be appointed by the French
government from among faculty members in France, with the agreement of the
Vietnamese government, for a period of three years. The vice-rector was to be a Vietnamese chosen in the same way, while one French person and one Vietnamese were to be elected to the positions of dean and vice-dean of individual faculties. Members of the university council were to be French and Vietnamese in equal numbers and any new faculties would require the approval of both French and Vietnamese governments. Courses were expected to follow closely those available in France (Doan Viet Hoat 1971: 168-9). Essentially, while the reforms during this period went some way to introducing a more Vietnamese program of instruction in the French zone, this was mostly limited to the lower levels of education, and virtually non-existent at the level of higher education. France continued to play the deciding role in university teaching and administration, which remained highly centralised and supervised by the state. By July 1954, 600 students had graduated from the university (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 199).

Meanwhile in the 'liberated' region where Ho Chi Minh had his stronghold, education was largely conditioned by the war and the immediate needs of the Liberation Army. Of the faculties that had constituted the University of Hanoi in 1945, the majority of the staff of the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy and a large number of those in the School of Public Works (Trường Cao đẳng Công chính) had moved out into the countryside with the Liberation Army. There they were forced to re-build their classes and find equipment to continue teaching. They subsequently moved location several more times as the war threatened to overtake the classes (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 194). Of other post-secondary schools, the Faculty of Letters (Trường Đại học Văn khoa) was closed and the School of Science (Trường Cao đẳng Khoa học) was scaled down. Two new schools were opened to meet the needs of the resistance effort: a School of Foreign Languages (Trường Cao đẳng Ngoại ngữ) to teach Chinese and English, and a Faculty of Law (Trường Đại học Pháp lý) which was closed a year later. The School of Art (Trường Cao đẳng Mỹ thuật) was also closed, only to be re-opened in 1949 when graduates from the art school were called upon to make sketches of soldiers and others serving in the war. All the students trained at these schools were expected to
contribute to the war effort and while at school, students were expected to spend half their time in practical activities to support the war (Nguyễn Đức 1989: 29). Particular priority was given to the schools of Medicine and Pharmacy, and Public Works (engineering) which produced much needed technicians for the war effort (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995: 194; Doan Viet Hoat 1971: 174). In terms of general education, efforts were concentrated on the eradication of illiteracy, rather than elaborating a comprehensive new direction for education. Learning to read and write was seen as a tool to help overthrow the yoke of French colonialism, a way out of a colonial culture which 'kept the people stupid' (Hồ Chí Minh quoted by Woodside 1983: 404).

In 1949, however, the situation changed. The communist party in China gained victory over the Kuomintang and in early 1950 the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) was given recognition by both the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union. Later in the same year French posts on the border with China surrendered to the Liberation Army, giving the DRV a more secure base from which to work, and an interzone study area was created in the border region, from which university preparatory schools were opened in 1952 (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 196).

The political re-alignment had two principal impacts on education. Firstly it resulted in a complete restructuring of the school system. After studying the Soviet and Chinese educational systems, Vietnamese leaders decided to create a nine-year general education system (rather than the previous twelve-year system), in line with that in the Soviet Union. The shortened schooling time had the advantage of students spending less years in school during war-time, liberating both people and buildings for the war effort. Any students who wished to undertake studies at a higher level could attend university preparatory classes that were also established in the sciences (1952) and pedagogy (1953). These classes then prepared students to undertake study abroad, in Eastern Europe, China or the Soviet Union. The first group of 21 students was sent to the Soviet Union in 1951 (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 197-198). In 1953, 49 students were sent to
the Soviet Union, 149 to China, 4 to Poland, and one to Bulgaria. The Soviet Union and China continued to attract the majority of students, until 1965 when the numbers previously sent to China appear to have ceased, to be replaced by students travelling to Eastern Europe (Hoa Phuong Tran 1998: 222).

The second major change that occurred around 1950 was the introduction of a new educational ideology in which politics became a large component. The study of politics was introduced on the grounds that 'education is a social production, and in a class society, it always takes on a class character and serves a certain political regime.' (statement by the later Minister of Education, quoted by Doan Viet Hoat 1971: 176). In other words, education is always political and politics should be taught openly rather than remaining inherent in the program. The study of Marxism-Leninism was made explicit in the socialist schools. Furthermore any attempt to overthrow the French required not only military strength, but ideological understanding in order to make the Vietnamese proactive in their future rather than passive objects.

Between 1945 and 1954 education in Vietnam in each zone was influenced by the practical conditions of war, and the strategic alliances made by the leaders in each zone. In terms of organisational structure, higher education was heavily disrupted, but eventually took on the characteristics of the respective allies of the two zones. The leaders in the French allied zone adopted the French pattern of general education while the French maintained a controlling interest in the University of Hanoi. In the 'free zone' the leadership turned to the Soviet Union and began sending students to the Soviet Union for higher levels of study.

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25 Politics was first taught in regular classes in 1948 but it was only in 1951 that it became an official part of the programme Nguyễn Đức (1989). 'Bước đầu tiên của nền giáo dục Việt Nam'. ĐH và GĐCN (3): 28-30.
Republic of Vietnam 1955-1975 (South Vietnam)

In 1954, talks in Geneva effectively resulted in the division of the country in half at the 17th parallel. France and then the United States maintained a strong presence in the education system of the southern half of the country over the next two decades, and this was reflected to some extent in the education policy adopted by the government in the Republic of Vietnam. Overall though, the government appeared plagued by a lack of direction, particularly with regards to higher education, and this was not helped by the escalating conflict with the north.

In 1958 a conference was held by the southern regime in order to decide the future direction of education. The result was the formulation of three guiding principles: education would be humanistic, nationalistic and international, synthesising the best of East and West. It would be a modern education, fostering individuality within a Confucian framework of loyalty to family and nation, in which students were both 'created' and allowed perfect freedom for the development of their personality (Doan Viet Hoat 1971: 226-227). Despite these theoretical ideals, however, the programs taught at all levels continued to follow those taught in France, albeit usually in translation, and with local additions in fields such as history (Nguyen Huu Phuoc 1975: 29-30).

In higher education, despite the Elysee Agreement, it was not until 1955 that the French transferred the southern university to the Vietnamese government. It was renamed the National University of Vietnam and then changed its name again to the University of Saigon in 1957, when a second university in Huế was established. The university was boosted by Vietnamese professors who traveled south after the division of the country, in particular a large proportion of the staff who had remained at the University of Hanoi between 1946 and 1954. The Vietnamese universities created in the Republic of Vietnam are listed in Table 3.2.
Table 3.2 - Universities Created under the Republic of Vietnam (1954-1975)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Year Founded</th>
<th>Course of Studies</th>
<th>Enrolment (1971-1972)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Saigon</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Faculties of Law, Letters, Science, Pharmacy, Medicine, Dentistry, Architecture, Pedagogy.</td>
<td>63,798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Hue</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Faculties of Medicine, Law, Letters, Pedagogy.</td>
<td>5,949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Da Lat</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Faculties of Education, Letters, Science, Government and Business, Graduate School of Business.</td>
<td>4,182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Agricultural Institute</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Divisions of Agriculture, Animal Science, Forestry, Fishery, Agricultural Engineering.</td>
<td>741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Institute of Administration</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Undergraduate and graduate programs.</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Van Hanh</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Faculties of Education, Letters, Social Science, Buddhist Studies, Language Centre.</td>
<td>3,375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Minh Duc</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Faculties of Medicine, Philosophy, Applied Science, Agriculture, Economics and Business.</td>
<td>1,569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Hoa Hao</td>
<td>Hoa Hao Religious institution</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Schools of Letters, Pedagogy, International Relations and Management, Commerce and Banking, Commerce and Business.</td>
<td>2,004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Cao Dai</td>
<td>Cao Dai religious institution</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Faculties of Education, Agriculture, Cao Dai Theology, Language Centre.</td>
<td>505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Delta Community College</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Faculties of Basic Education and Professional Education (Pedagogy, Electricity and Electronics, Fishery)</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regina Pacis College</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Faculties of Business Education, Home Economics</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Cuu Long</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Schools of Economics, Management and Mass Communication; Centres of Language and Vietnamese Studies.</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tri Hanh Institute</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Faculties of Commerce, Business Management, Economics</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thu Duc Polytechnic University</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Colleges of Agriculture, Engineering, Education, Economics and Commerce, Arts and Science. Graduate school.</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vietnamese was first taught at secondary school in 1951 in the French zone, and introduced at the tertiary level in 1952, when a Vietnamese literature class was opened at the Faculty of Letters. Despite nationalistic principles asserted in 1958, however, the Republic of Vietnam regime was slow to take a stand on the issue of teaching the national language. It was not until 1961 that the government made a simple recommendation that Vietnamese be used as an optional language of instruction. In 1965 it became mandatory for classes taught by Vietnamese teachers to be taught in Vietnamese, but this was not stringently enforced (Doan Viet Hoat 1971: 224-225). In 1969/70 one of the important complaints during student demonstrations was that Vietnamese was still not enforced as a language of instruction.

The University of Saigon became the focus of higher education in the south, with by far the largest number of students. In the 1974/5 academic year, it boasted 68.2% of all students in higher education, when the majority of the remaining 17 institutions were new and had less than 500 students each (Bổn giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 231). The University of Saigon was an 'open' university that enrolled any students who had passed the upper secondary certificate, in a dramatic contrast with previous, strictly limited enrolment practices. It was also an 'academic' university, concentrating on areas such as the arts, basic sciences and professional disciplines such as medicine and architecture, rather than technical or applied training.

Significantly, this period also saw the introduction of private higher education. The first private university, the University of Da Lat, was opened under the auspices of the Catholic church in 1958. This was followed by Van Hanh Buddhist University in 1964, Minh Duc University in 1970, and the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai universities catering to the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai religious groups, opened in 1970 and 1971 respectively. The introduction of these universities was not so much as a result of deliberate government policy, however, as of outside initiatives that the government tolerated.
One clear educational concern of the southern regime was to maintain control of higher education administration. Despite a constitution that guaranteed university autonomy (Doan Viet Hoat 1971: 245), and a loosening of controls over enrolment, university curriculum and degree certificates needed approval from the Ministry of Education in order to become official, and university professors were appointed by the government. The rectors of public universities were appointed by the Minister of Education, and nominated by the President for parliamentary approval (Nguyen Huu Phuoc 1975: 55).

Despite the ideological split in the country, in the early years universities in the south maintained a facade of political neutrality. In 1963, however, against a background of Buddhist demonstrations against the government, the facade was broken when the government organised a political training course for university staff, particularly aimed at getting support for the strategic hamlet program. It ended with staff pledges of support and commitments to change the curriculum in favour of the program. In the wake of this commitment, students sent open letters to staff expressing their disillusionment and disappointment with the actions of their professors, calling on them to maintain a moral stand. In August a large student demonstration was organised, only to be crushed before it began with the arrest of 1,300 students who were detained by police (Doan Viet Hoat 1971: 241-243). Student demonstrations continued, however, calling for an end to the war which was having a serious effect on the operation of universities. Hoat estimates that during the Tet offensive of 1968 approximately 90% of all buildings and facilities of the University of Hue were destroyed (Doan Viet Hoat 1971: 243).

The southern regime’s principal relationship with higher education institutions was in a close supervisory role. There was little comprehensive educational planning, and innovations, such as the introduction of private universities, occurred on an ad hoc basis rather than as part of an overall plan. There was an ongoing shortage of graduates with technical qualifications suited to the needs of a developing country. In the early 1970s, of 8,000 students enrolled at the University of Can Tho, 6,000 were reportedly enrolled in the literature and law
departments. Upon graduation, the students would often move to Saigon to take up administrative positions (The Hung 1984: 70). The trend towards generalist education was exacerbated because professional schools required students to sit an entrance examination before being admitted, while the more academically oriented courses only required students to hold the final secondary certificate (Baccalauréat II) (Doan Viet Hoat 1971: 237). Students studying at a university were for some years also granted exemption from military service.

In 1970 the Ministry of Education proposed to meet the country’s need for trained technicians through the opening of a polytechnic school at the higher education level. The school was finally given the same status as the universities in 1973, when a single institution was created incorporating the technical and agricultural schools (Trường Đại học Bách Khoa) (Nguyen Huu Phuoc 1975: 60, 149). Students complained that while technical schools offered jobs, these schools were considered less prestigious and students from the general education schools held useless diplomas and a misplaced sense of superiority (Huỳnh Phan 1971: 7). Polytechnics continued to be considered second class institutions.

Formal educational planning on the part of the southern regime appears to have gained its greatest inspiration from the United States. The United States displayed considerable interest in educational developments from 1954 and became more directly involved in concerted educational planning from the 1960s. They provided an important source of funding for education through the overall aid programme to the south. Many students were also sent to the United States in order to study for higher degrees in education and a number of study tours were organised to study the US education system (Nguyen Huu Phuoc 1975: 140). The government recognised the need for technical education of a more applied nature and one of the results was the introduction of comprehensive high schools,

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26 Some of the theses written by these students while studying in the United States are used here. See in particular works by Tran Kim No, Nguyen Huu Phuoc, Duong Duc Nhu and Doan Viet Hoat.
which were created in order to link education more closely to the needs of the local population and provide practical skills.

By 1968 there were 14 general high schools which had been converted into comprehensive secondary schools (Nguyen Huu Phuoc 1974: 48). At the tertiary level, however, professors tended to oppose the introduction of technical education because of fears that technical education without facilities might become little more than low quality theoretical training. The vast majority of students continued to be enrolled in generalist subjects.

Aside from comprehensive schools, a second United States influence was the introduction of community colleges. Community colleges were a further attempt to make higher education more relevant to local needs, and also to fill a gap in education in the countryside without increasing the budget of the centre. Undoubtedly the spread of communist influence in the southern countryside contributed to a concern to meet the needs of the rural population more adequately. Community education at the primary level was introduced as early as 1954 at the tertiary level, however, a presidential decree first established the system of community colleges in 1971.

Community colleges were designed to offer the first two years of general studies in higher education with the possibility of transfer to professional higher education institutions for subsequent years. They also offered vocational education to meet the needs of the local community. Owing to the end of the war, these schools never played an important role in the south, however, and were closed or transformed into specialised universities on reunification. They were, however, fairly innovative in their approach allowing a certain amount of decentralisation of responsibility. The school board comprised both local community members and local government officials, who then elected a rector (who had to be approved by the government as for other universities), rather than having a rector proposed by higher authorities. These short-lived colleges provided a precedent for an integrated system of community colleges, which was one of the
most comprehensive innovations in later higher education policy under **đổi mới**
(see Chapter Five).

Government policy on higher education in southern Vietnam between 1954 and 1975 was largely inspired by French and then United States models. Despite a lack of formal planning until the early 1970s, it remained tightly centralised with continued government control over key university functions and university finance. Some decentralisation did happen, with the introduction of private universities and community colleges, although they did not survive to constitute a significant feature of the southern higher education system. In general, however, higher education continued to be overshadowed by the needs of the war, and was quickly dismantled by the northern Vietnamese upon their arrival in 1975.

**The Democratic Republic of Vietnam and Reunification of the Country 1954-1986**

After reunification of the country in 1975 the model of higher education introduced in the 'liberated zone' after 1947, and then formalised in northern Vietnam from 1954, was introduced into the south. This model was above all based on that of the Soviet Union and was formulated to meet the program of socialist industrialisation.

The principles of a socialist education adopted in the 1950s were first outlined as principles of Vietnamese culture by the Indochinese Communist Party (Nguyễn Khánh Toàn 1965: 9). According to these principles, culture, and therefore education, should aim to be 'national, scientific and popular' (*dân tộc hoá, khoa học hoá, đại chúng hoá*). While these principles were still referred to in 1954, their content had undergone a transformation. Whereas in 1943 education based on these principles meant 'opposition to enslavement and colonialism,... mass cultural deprivation... and out-of-date cultural elements' (Trương Chinh in Vasavakul 1994: 366), in 1947 they meant taking part in the war of resistance against the French, and from the mid-1950s onwards they meant support for a socialist nation. These principles were mainly evoked with regard to lower levels of
education, but they also provide insights into the government's overall education priorities. Each of the principles was used at different times by the government with regard to a series of different issues.

'National' education referred first of all to the plan to create a unified general education system across the north of the country. Following the Geneva Accords, the French moved out of the cities they had occupied in the north of the country, and the troops from the free zone moved back into Hanoi, together with the students and teachers who had been living in the countryside. As a consequence two differing education systems were brought together under the one regime. The 'French zone' had continued to operate a twelve-year system of education based on the French model, while the 'DRV zone' had adopted a nine year schooling program. Between 1954 and 1956 the two systems continued to live alongside each other, but were reunited in 1956 in a single ten-year program. This was a compromise between the nine year system, which did not prepare students sufficiently for further education, and the government's need to release students early for the war effort (Doan Viet Hoat 1971: 186). At the same time private education was abolished, leaving education entirely in state hands (Nguyen Van Huyen 1971: 9).

'National' education also referred to the introduction of the Vietnamese language as the language of teaching in all schools. This had been achieved in principle in the 'liberated zone' under the Vietminh, but was gradually expanded to the whole of the north from 1954.

'National' was also sometimes used as a catch-cry for particular campaigns, such as the hygiene and patriotism campaign (vệ sinh yêu nước) referred to in Phạm Văn Đồng's 1956 speech (Phạm Văn Đồng 1979b: 17). As the war with the United States was prolonged, a 'national' education became one that supported war efforts against outside aggression.

'Scientific' education was part of the government's larger economic program of modernisation and industrialisation. Leaders emphasised that workers needed a better knowledge of science and technology in order to improve
production (Lê Duẩn 1972: 27). The scientific goal principally referred to the government’s desire to increase the quantity and quality of technical education. In 1960 the Vietnam Worker’s Party called for the formation of 125,000 qualified technicians within five years, a massive increase from the 4,731 technicians who graduated from intermediate and full technical schools in 1959 (Doan Viet Hoat 1971: 203). In 1965 and 1966 government decisions called for improvements to facilities of higher education institutions through the modernisation of equipment for experiments and scientific research (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 213, 216).

'Scientific' was also used synonymously with 'modern'. This hearkened back to the French colonial times when the French had deliberately restricted Vietnamese access to modern scientific developments in order to ensure their own continued dominance (Kelly 1978). It also closely referred to the ideas of progress and modernisation outlined in Chapter Two that were thoroughly assimilated in Vietnam. Vietnamese leaders were (and still are) aware that Vietnam lags behind in many areas of world science, a fact that caused the Prime Minister, Phạm Văn Đồng, to exhort teachers to stop teaching lessons that were twenty or thirty years old, or copying lessons from socialist countries that were already lacking (Phạm Văn Đồng 1979d: 112-114).

'Popular' education in North Vietnam was one that was egalitarian and universal and supported by a socialist ideology. The most obvious example of this direction was the system of guerrilla schools established in 'free zones' after 1946 in a drive against illiteracy. Everyone who could read or write was enlisted to teach those who could not. After 1954, the literacy campaign was extended to the whole of North Vietnam above the 17th parallel, reaching its peak around 1958. As the increasing numbers of people were taught to read and write, there emerged a greater need for 'complementary' primary and secondary schools which could absorb the large numbers of literate adults, and increasing numbers of graduates from the newly reformed ten year general education programme.

'Popular' education also referred to any education that linked schooling to the productive work of the country, in particular the part-work, part-study
education that was introduced at all levels. For higher education 'part-work, part-study' meant that students were expected to spend a large portion of their study time in factories or in other production locations. For the Polytechnic University (ĐH Bách khoa) for example, over a five year course students would spend a total of four weeks in field trips and 30 to 32 weeks in factories each year. In technical training colleges, classroom instruction was reduced and students were expected to continue theoretical studies while working in factories. In schools of applied sciences and research, students were expected to spend six months on theoretical studies, three months on practical work and half of their summer vacation in labour work (Đoàn Việt Hoạt 1971: 196, 204). 'Part-work, part-study' education aimed to bring intellectuals closer to the workers and production work, breaking the traditional dislike of intellectuals for manual labour, while factory schools were intended to 'intellectualise' workers and peasants. It was the Vietnamese solution, closely based on the Soviet Union and Chinese models, to resolve the contradiction between the need for qualified staff to run the country and the concern not to create an intellectual élite removed from the people, the 'red' and 'expert' debate by Chinese leaders in the previous chapter.

Mass organisations were similarly introduced into HEIs in order to link them more closely to the wider society and 'to prevent schools from becoming self-contained enclaves' (Woodside 1983: 417). In universities mass organisations included the Vietnamese Education Workers' Union, the Vietnam Women's Association, the Association of Pupils' Parents and the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth League. Socialist worker cells (tổ lao động xã hội chủ nghĩa) were created within the universities in the early 1960s, and these were used to assist in the transmission of communist party ideology and party campaigns within the universities (Woodside 1983: 417; Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995: 211).

The DRV leadership frequently invoked 'national, scientific and popular' principles in support of a particular campaign, but the terms give little practical insight into the government's overall educational strategy. They provided the framework for the rhetoric of political campaigns rather than representing a
coherent educational strategy. The overall position of the government with regard
to education is better understood through the more general theoretical discussion
that took place concerning education, and the practical measures that were
adopted for the education system.

In a letter to the Conference on General Education in 1956, Hồ Chí Minh
argued that

Education must supply cadres for the economic sector.
When the economy progresses, education develops. If the
economy stagnates, education will lag behind. If education
does not develop, the economic sector will not have enough
cadres. These two fields are closely interconnected (Quoted

Particularly during this period, education is presented as existing in a
dialectical relationship with the economy, but always subordinate to the needs of
the economy. The raison d'etre of the education system is to supply qualified
workers for the economy. If it cannot produce sufficient workers, then economic
development will suffer, and if economic development suffers, this will, in turn,
have a negative impact on the education sector. In a later theoretical statement
the Minister for Education (also minister in 1956) asserted

We are living in a society in full growth; education must
follow a right path in accordance with economic and social
development and at an adequate tempo. Otherwise there is
a permanent risk of contradiction and tension. (Nguyen Van

Dialectical materialism, as understood by the DRV leaders, provided the
underlying theoretical framework from which to develop educational policy, but of
itself did not provide the strategies needed for day to day administration. The
Minister for Education inadvertently highlighted the situation when he further stated

... we are lucky to have a clearly-defined general policy in education based on Marxism-Leninism, our educators must, on this basis, find out concrete means to meet the [current] needs (Nguyen Van Huyen 1971: 14).

In other words, the theoretical basis of educational policy, Marxism-Leninism, has been established, but not the practical measures to implement it. The DRV government chose to resolve the practical questions of educational planning by adopting the model established by the Soviet Union.

The links between the DRV and the Soviet Union were close for a number of reasons. The Soviet Union was both a mentor and a supporter for the fledgling republic and Hồ Chí Minh spent many foundational years in the Soviet Union. Lenin's *Imperialism: The highest stage of capitalism*, combined with the work of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, provided a theoretical worldview that appeared to explain the Vietnamese situation with relation to French colonialism. The Soviet Union, alongside the People's Republic of China, was the first country to recognise the northern regime and provided ongoing support during the war against France, and then the United States. China was an important source of inspiration, but the Soviet Union was the acknowledged leader (in the 1940s and 1950s) of the socialist world. On an evolutionary path, the Soviet Union was the most advanced nation, the one forging a path for less developed nations to follow. Firm in the belief that all countries would move towards socialism, and with the support of the Soviet Union itself, the Vietnamese leaders chose to follow the Soviet model of industrialisation (with modifications), and the Soviet education system, which provided the 'concrete means' to achieve socialist goals.

Soviet higher education was characterised by a large number of specialist universities, which supplied graduates to meet the labour requirements of individual ministries and other public institutions. In general, universities were
developed under the auspices of a particular ministry, which maintained a close eye on the university's curriculum and employed its graduates on completion of their studies.

Vietnam adopted a similar system, through a number of stages. In 1954/5 the existing universities, teacher training institutions and university preparatory institutions were amalgamated to form three universities (see Appendix 2). Administratively, a Department of Higher Education was created within the Ministry of Education, with responsibility for the construction and administration of all professional and higher education institutions.

Initially these institutions maintained the French curriculum, with the added introduction of political theory as a subject. The ministry prepared a unified curriculum for all the universities, specifying the content, the number of hours it would be taught and the theoretical and international perspectives to be included in the curriculum (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 200). In preparation for the opening of teaching for the 1955/6 academic year, 'the ministry provided close guidance for each school regarding both ideology and organisation' 27 (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 201). In 1960 the regime introduced its first five-year plan, to begin in 1961, and all staff in the higher education sector were sent to a re-education course (đổi chính huấn) in order to study the implications of the plan for education (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 206). These measures were no doubt motivated by concerns about the on-going implications of the 'Nhân văn Giải phạm' affair discussed below.

In 1956, the government created two more universities and began to reorganise all higher education institutions, in conjunction with specialists from the Soviet Union, to bring the structure more in line with the Soviet model (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 202-3). From these five initial universities, five further universities were separated off from their parent institutions over the next five years, and a further 27 institutions of higher learning were created between 1960

27 'Bộ chỉ đạo chất chế các trường ca và tự tiện và tổ chức.'
and 1970 (Tổng cục Thống kê 1981: 350). These were highly specialised universities generally focussed on a single branch of knowledge. Many of the new institutions were teacher training institutions, established to meet the goals of rapidly expanding general education, but another obvious trend was the increase in specialised engineering universities created on the basis of the initial Polytechnic University. This was in line with the government’s emphasis on scientific training, linked to a program of industrialisation. Notably, during this period, while mathematical and physical sciences subjects attracted the most qualified students,

While teacher training institutions, and other generalist universities (such as the General University and the School of Economics and Finance) were placed under the Ministry of Education, more specialised universities were administered by their respective ministries. Thus the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry was responsible for the University of Agriculture and Forestry, but when the two ministries were divided, the university was similarly divided into the University of Agriculture and the University of Forestry. Between 1958 and 1959 the regime introduced a socialist administration for universities (nha trường xã hội chủ nghĩa) to ensure that administrators were aware of the principles of a socialist education. This was undertaken through a process of re-education within the party, study sessions for teaching staff and students, and encouraging participation in social and production activities (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 205).

The system was simultaneously highly centralised and diffuse. The central ministry responsible for an HEI directly oversaw its administration and curriculum, while finance was allocated from the budget for that particular ministry, rather than being allocated directly to the university. At the same time, ministries operated largely independently of each other, which meant that there were no uniform standards of supervision or measures to ensure similar standards for graduates across universities. This situation was exacerbated during the war, when the universities were dispersed to the countryside, and lines of communication were periodically cut.
Thaveeporn Vasavakul argues that general education in the DRV was organised along 'nation-based', 'state-based' and 'class-based' lines, and this is also true of higher education. 'Nation-based' principles have already been discussed above with regard to the government's slogan of creating a 'national' education. 'State-based' principles were evident in the administrative structure of education, which had its origins in many different factors facing the government at the time.

...the DRV educators' predilection for a bureaucratised, centralised, and unified school system ... was precipitated by the need for the DRV state to consolidate its position in the inter-state system and vis à vis the society at home: its need to establish connections with its socialist counterparts and its need to combat the regionalism and localism prevailing during and after the War (Vasavakul 1994: 343-344).

'Class-based' principles were part of the overall program of applying 'Marxism-Leninism' to higher education. In terms of enrolment there was a heavy bias in favour of students from a working class or peasant background. Students were required to submit their 'curriculum vitae' (ủy lých) listing both their own past places of residence, activities and affiliations (especially political), as well as those of all members of their extended family, as part of their application for admittance. This procedure was also used to reward those who had taken part in the resistance against France or the United States. By contrast, those designated as landlords or those who had collaborated with these foreign powers, and their extended relatives, were not admitted to higher education.28

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28 E-mail communication with former MOET official, April 2002.
As mentioned above, in order to increase the number of workers undertaking schooling, factories were encouraged to open schools, and existing schools began to develop in-service programs - including evening classes and distance education programs - catering to those in full-time employment. Graduates from both the factory schools and the in-service programs were given special consideration in university entrance examinations. As a result, in 1956/7 workers and peasants constituted around 23.39% of the tertiary student population, while in 1960 the figure had reached 40.71% (Doan Viet Hoat 1971: 197-198). From 1964/5 applicants for higher education needed to show labour work experience of at least two years, and a recommendation from a local factory or production unit. The numbers of students attending in-service courses similarly increased dramatically from around one fifth of the total student population in 1961 to just under two-thirds in 1964 (Doan Viet Hoat 1971: 206). Students who wished to study beyond the first degree, however, were sent overseas to socialist-bloc countries, and the first postgraduate training in-country was only commenced in 1975 after the reunification of the country.

The DRV leadership gradually evolved a clear direction for the administration and curriculum of the higher education system, based on the Soviet Union model, but they faced several constraints in the process. The government had considerable financial worries with the economy on a war-time footing. 'Part-study, part-work' schools, and the emphasis on student participation in factories or rice-fields while studying, was as much a practical solution to economic problems as a solution to theoretical debates concerning education. Financial worries also hampered the desire of the Vietnamese to develop world class modern science linked to practical industrial improvements. Despite continued government emphasis on improving 'scientific' education linked to industry, theoretical mathematics and physics rather than applied subjects which might be of more relevance to the country for example, continued to attract the best scholars, because there was insufficient finance available to continually
update scientific equipment, and it was cheaper to adopt practices already
developed elsewhere (Koblitz 1990: 20).

Surprisingly, there appears to have been very little resistance to the
administrative reorganisation of the higher education system after 1954. This was
undoubtedly because organisation was already seriously disrupted during the on­
going war, but also because of its small scale and wide-spread recognition of the
need to change the system inherited from the French. A more important challenge
to the establishment of the government’s socialist higher education system came
from an ideological direction, from academics and students who were concerned
that academic enquiry, quality and freedom of expression were being stifled. The
independence of the university, and cultural endeavours in particular, became a
hot subject of contention between intellectuals and Communist party cadres.

In early 1956, Nikita Khruschev gave a speech denouncing the repressive
excesses of Stalinism. A few months later Lu Dingyi announced the Hundred
Flowers campaign in China, while Polish and Hungarian intellectuals became
more vocal in criticism of their respective regimes (Heng 1999: 86-89). At the same
time, in Vietnam, the Communist Party was coming under heavy criticism for its
land reform campaign, begun in 1954 and designed to redistribute agricultural
land. The process did not go as smoothly as planned, and, spurred on by the
events in Europe and China and the local ferment, local intellectuals took
advantage of the more lenient attitude of the DRV leadership to publish a number
of journals with thinly veiled criticisms of aspects of communist party rule. The
conflict became known as the ‘Nhân văn Giai phẩm’ affair, for the two principal
journals involved in the incidents (‘Nhân văn’ - Humanities and ‘Giai phẩm’ - Fine
Arts). In the journal ‘Đất mỏ’ university students also complained about the
decline in quality of the universities.

The fact that we are students means that studying is our
main task. Surprisingly, when the university evaluates
students’ performance, they consider studying as the least
important factor and emphasize ideological, ethical, and practical work instead. In so doing, only students who are members of Party cadres and secretaries of the Party chapters receive high marks (Vasavakul 1994: 313-314).

The more serious criticism was reserved for self-serving administrators and political cadres who used their position within the communist party to stifle criticism and intellectual freedom (Đạt mới 1956). Hồ Chí Minh criticised the intellectuals for making a distinction between intellectual and labouring classes, and for perpetuating the myth that intellectuals were superior to workers (Vasavakul 1994: 315). Intellectuals such as Đào Duy Anh countered by arguing that intellectuals had been completely supportive of the revolution. He argued that Vietnamese intellectuals have learned two truths: first, only when the Party leads will the resistance win; second, only when specialization is guided by politics can it bear fruit for the masses. However, we have to clarify that the supremacy of politics over specialization does not imply a permanent submission of specialists to political commissars...

At present there is no reason not to consider us as part of the labouring masses, i.e. we are mental labourers who wholeheartedly serve the people (Quoted by Vasavakul 1994: 311-312).

Inside Vietnam, the so-called 'Nhân văn Giai phẩm' affair is perhaps the most well-known of the attempts by intellectuals to have scientific enquiry (in the broadest sense of the word) given recognition beyond the confines of an ideological straight-jacket, but attempts continued over subsequent years through

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29 My thanks to Phạm Thu Thùy for access to her summaries and translations of this journal.
the lobbying of people such as Lê Văn Thiềm, Tạ Quang Bửu and Phan Đình Diệu, all of them mathematicians of high renown (Boudarel and Nguyen Van Ky 1997: 164-165).

At the end of 1956, the Soviet Union military entered Hungary to shore up the country’s communist party. In the following year both the Soviet Union and China began to curb their own intellectual dissenters (Heng 1999: 101-103). The international climate, together with growing peasant unrest in the countryside, prompted the communist party to take a harder line against critical domestic intellectuals and to strengthen the ‘submission of specialists to political commissars’. In 1964 there was still an overt split between political and specialist staff at the universities (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 212).  

Reunification of the country began on April 30, 1975 with the entry of National Liberation Front and PLAF troops into Saigon. In the immediate aftermath of reunification, the northern government appointed academic staff, as well as members of the northern Ministry of Education to travel to the south and assist in the take-over of teaching and administration in schools and universities.

The government of the new Socialist Republic of Vietnam pushed forward its plans to industrialise and modernise the country (công nghiệp hoá, hiện đại hoá đất nước), and focussed on ways of ensuring that education would meet these objectives. In December 1976 the fourth National Congress of the Communist Party asserted the need to consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat and the three revolutions, in the fields of relations of production, science and technology, and ideology and culture, with the middle one being most important (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 212).  

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30 'Trong công tác lãnh đạo ở các trường, có nơi có lực lượng cách mạng trực tiếp giữ lãnh đạo chính trị và lãnh đạo chuyên môn, gây mất đoàn kết nội bộ có khi kéo dài’ [Among the leadership work of each school, there are places and times where there is still division between the leaders in politics and subject specialists, which sometimes leads to a drawn out lack of internal unity.] (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 212)
One of the first priorities of the Communist Party was to introduce a literacy campaign throughout the newly liberated south, as it had done during the early years of the DRV. This was undertaken between 1975 and 1978, when the government estimated that around 94% of the 1.4 million people of working age previously illiterate in the South became literate. Adult education classes and in-service courses were also established along the same lines as their predecessors in the north. (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 234).

Private universities and community colleges were closed and then reopened along the pattern already established in the north of the country, namely into small narrowly specialised, public universities. Two of the three community colleges were changed into university preparatory schools for disadvantaged students (children of patriotic war victims, children of families involved in the revolutionary effort and children of minorities). The new specialist universities were placed under the control of individual central government ministries. For instance the University of Medicine in Huế and the University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Ho Chi Minh City, were both placed under the Ministry of Health (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 232). By contrast, the existing 'comprehensive' universities (trường tổng hợp), the universities of Saigon, Huế, Đà Lạt and Cần Thơ, retained their different faculties under the one umbrella, as did the polytechnic universities of Đà Nẵng and Ho Chi Minh City. These more generalist universities were placed under the direction of the Ministry of Higher and Technical Secondary Education according to the same pattern of the generalist universities in Hanoi. The structure of the university system was brought into line with that of the north.

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31 Renamed University of Ho Chi Minh City in 1976.
Curriculum and ideological content of programs were also reformed along lines previously existing in the north, in particular with the introduction of Marxist-Leninist studies.

In order to achieve this transformation Saigon academics were sent to re-education camps for five months from December 1975 to April 1976, to receive training in the ideology of the new regime. For some, particularly in scientific fields, they were then allowed to continue in their previous occupations and positions. For academics in social sciences and humanities subjects however, they were often asked to completely re-write the curriculum of their course and many were never trusted in positions of authority and neither were their students. Many in this situation fled the country in 1978 as refugees, leaving Vietnam without the much needed well-educated personnel to re-build the country (Marr 1988: 16). In some cases, such as at the University of Can Tho in the Mekong delta, a truce developed between political administrators and academic staff, despite the suspicion of the former concerning the loyalty of the university staff. In this case staff and students of the university introduced and distributed a plague resistant strain of rice to farmers in 1977, when the rice crop was almost lost to brown hoppers, and 'Following these events, teachers and students at Can Tho University no longer were strangers to the peasants and the responsible cadres of all the delta provinces.' (The Hung 1984: 68). Because of the agricultural focus of the university, it also tended to have closer links to the peasants than other universities, and thus retained an added degree of credibility for the CPV. At other universities, those who remained behind often found themselves distrusted, and denied opportunities for advancement within the universities.

The southern higher education system was rapidly transformed to reflect that in the north. By contrast, the transformation of primary and secondary education was very slow. The government only developed a blue-print for a new system in 1979, which consisted in a reunified twelve-year program like that existing in the south (albeit with a revised curriculum), and clearly highlighted the insufficiencies of the ten-year program that had been adopted in the DRV. The
reform was gradually introduced on a year by year basis beginning in 1981/2 and was finally completed in 1992/3, however

The architects of the 1979 educational reform in Vietnam did concede that the Vietnamese school system was capable of astonishing inertia, or of resistance to demands from outside. Structures of government, forms of agriculture, provincial names and boundaries, and even currency, were changed in the reunified Vietnam between 1975 and 1981; but in the same years, the north and the south still serenely preserved their separate educational worlds (Woodside 1983: 417).

Other innovations following reunification included the introduction of postgraduate awards, with eight universities able to offer postgraduate courses in 1976, and forty-two universities and research institutes offering them by the end of 1980. These were more often in scientific areas where academics felt there were sufficient numbers of experts of sufficient quality to ensure the standard of graduate students. The highest level of course offered was the phó tiến sĩ (literally 'associate doctorate', see Table 3.1) which corresponded with the Candidate of Science offered in the Soviet Union. The introduction of postgraduate education is still marked by the central place given to the role of the government at this highest level of education.

According to the decision of the Party Central Committee (QĐ 224/TTg, 24/5/1976) establishing postgraduate education in Vietnam, it was looked after by a specialist government committee, with the assistance of the Ministry of Higher Education (as it was at the time). Any institutions providing postgraduate training (which were largely research institutes rather than teaching universities) had to report their activities to this committee, and doctoral candidates had to defend their thesis in front of an examination committee appointed by the Prime
Minister. Topics of research were also closely coordinated with the relevant ministry responsible for that area of research and the government committee on education. Candidates were expected to be strong supporters of the Communist Party and its policies and 'put into practice the path and policies of the party and government, maintain a truthful attitude and help socialism' (QĐ 224/TTg, 24/5/1976).

The period between the mid-1950s and the early 1960s laid the foundation for the DRV and the subsequent, reunified, Socialist Republic of Vietnam education system. Education policy was based on the principles of socialist centralism as embodied in the model of the Soviet Union, and specialists from the Soviet Union assisted in its elaboration. It was an education system that was centralised under state control, in terms of administration, finance, and important areas of curriculum such as the study of politics. Entry to higher education was based on class principles, and was oriented to serve the needs of a socialist economy, through part-study part-work programs and practical experience in factories and cooperatives over the course of a degree. The party agenda was closely integrated into university life, through the existence of party cells and mass organisations that ensured that universities were aware of the latest party campaign or ideological perspective. Despite these pervasive links, however, the socialist program of education was shaped and constrained by outside factors such as the international situation, the war-time conditions and the real financial constraints that were a part of this. Nor did the intelligentsia unequivocally accept the authority of party ideology and its proponents. By 1986 the Vietnamese higher education system was closely geared to the Soviet model of socialist industrialisation, and graduates were guaranteed jobs in government ministries and state owned enterprises.

Conclusion

From its origins in the eleventh century through to 1986, higher education underwent wide-ranging and fundamental changes. It moved from an emphasis
on Confucian values and Chinese classics, through to 'scientific and modern' education, linked to practical experience. The content, structure and aims of higher education changed fundamentally over this period, but many aspects remained very similar. Significant respect was accorded to teachers, whether as teachers of the Confucian classics, or as leaders in the struggle against colonialism. Even under socialism, despite certain ambiguities, teachers had the role of shaping people with high socialist ideals and actions, and students were not expected to question what they were taught.

The principal influences that dictated changes to education remained similar. The most obvious, highlighted by this chapter, is the way the structure, organisation and operation of higher education closely followed the orientation of the regime in power, from the private universities in the south under United States influence, to the factory schools under the socialist regime in the north. Education policy changed with successive political crises and changes to the political regime in power. Other similarities included the important impact of influences from outside Vietnam, from China prior to the nineteenth century, followed by the influence of French, United States and Soviet education systems, which were either copied directly or adjusted to suit the particular circumstances of Vietnam. Vietnam's position in the wider world, and the conflicts which were played out on its territory during the twentieth century, also had a strong influence on both the curriculum taught in schools (for example the 'national' principles taught in the north and the south of the country), and the capacity of the regime to build a sound education system (witness the dispersed war-time schools in the north of the country). Finally, while finance and its distribution were heavily influenced by the political orientations of the regime in power, its availability or lack thereof also strongly affected all aspects of education, from materials and equipment in schools to the availability of school buildings, school uniforms, the ability of students to travel overseas, and the payment of teachers. The lack of money became one of the principal defining features of education in the late 1980s.
In terms of the state-centric and neo-liberal models outlined in the
previous chapter, historically the Vietnamese higher education system clearly falls
into the category of the 'state-centric' model. Centuries of state ideology
underpinned centralised educational authority in the mid-1980s: Confucian
support for order and hierarchy, followed by the concentration of power in the
hands of the Governor General under French colonial rule, and then Leninist
democratic centralism. While private education existed in pre-colonial and
colonial Vietnam, this was largely at lower levels of education. Higher education
remained closely controlled by the state, even to the point of personal supervision
by the king of the highest level graduates, although teachers were allowed
significant autonomy on a day-to-day basis. The model of higher education
adopted in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and still in existence in the
Socialist Republic of Vietnam on the eve of doi moi, was even more firmly state­
centred than in earlier eras, even if that state control was diffused between
different central ministries. The education model focused on assisting to achieve a
socialist process of evolution by inculcating socialist values and teaching Marxist­
Leninist theory. Administration and finance were under the control of central state
ministries, and no private institutions were allowed. Higher education was
intended to provide people with the practical knowledge to fill positions within
state organisations, and the socialist values and ideals to support the further
evolution of a socialist economy. While content of teaching changed during the
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from the Confucian classics to
introducing more practical content, teaching methods still relied on the rote
learning of specific tracts of information.

By the 1980s, the socialist economy was in serious difficulties. State salaries
plummeted as inflation rose quickly and both teachers and students began to
withdraw from the education system as it sank deeper into crisis. At the same
time, the crisis offered up new opportunities and ideas that different actors in the
education sector were gradually able to mobilise.
Chapter Four - 

*Đội mới* - Renovation and Higher Education Policy

The previous chapter showed how the overall structure and aims of the higher education sector closely followed the orientation of the regime in power. This chapter shows how under *đội mới* such changes have also occurred, although this time under the auspices of a single ongoing regime.

This chapter and the following chapters show how changes to higher education under *đội mới* were not solely the natural outcome of changes to the economy as argued by many Vietnamese educators, nor were they solely the outcome of compromises between policy-makers and teachers or university administrators. This chapter highlights the changes to higher education policy at the central level, and argues that the direction of these changes was significantly influenced by newly acquired access to international thinking about the role of higher education and its relationship to development (as outlined in Chapter 2). This gave a new legitimacy to long-standing calls for improvements to higher education. At the same time this chapter shows that these new ideas found a particularly fertile ground for their dissemination because of the economic crisis facing the country.

By 1979 Vietnam was suffering from an economic crisis. Bad harvests, combined with peasant resistance to collectivisation in the Mekong Delta, a deteriorating relationship with China and falling levels of Chinese aid hit education with particular severity (Fforde and De Vylder 1995: 129). The government lost its ability to increase public sector wages to keep up with high levels of inflation. Students began pulling out of higher education in large numbers. Although the numbers of new enrolments each year remained steady, the numbers graduating dropped significantly as students withdrew before graduating (Tran Chi Dao, Lam Quang Thiep et al. 1995a: 79). Expenditure on
teacher salaries fell in real terms as inflation eroded its value. Buildings and equipment were also hard hit. In 1997 the Ministry of Education and Training estimated that 38% of equipment could be dated from before 1960 and only 8.9% dated from after 1981 (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1997: 30).

In light of the economic crisis, the government decided to officially permit private exchanges to take place, while at the same time asserting the central role of the state in the planning and allocation of resources. The success of this policy was marked. Despite continued hard-line political opposition, the political report of the Sixth National Party Congress (1986) of the Communist Party of Vietnam gave official recognition to the importance of a multi-sector economy. At the same time it continued to insist that this was a step in the transition to a socialist economy (Communist Party of Vietnam 1987: 64). The Sixth National Party Congress heralded the official beginning of đổi mới and a new era for the Vietnamese economy. In terms of education, however, it offered little that was new.

This chapter focuses on higher education policy in Vietnam between 1986 and 1998, as elaborated in successive five-year CPV congresses and slightly more detailed education policy statements by the Ministry of Education and Training. While there were many debates that took place in the elaboration of these documents, it is not the intention of this chapter to detail all those debates. Instead it provides an overview of the trends in education policy, which will be used as a basis for analysing their implementation in the subsequent three chapters. Based on an analysis of these documents, this chapter argues that despite the fact many Vietnamese educators date 1986 as the beginning of change in higher education policy, in fact this change did not occur until quite a few years later, in a direction strongly influenced by new conceptions brought from abroad, and following wide debate among both national and education-specific policy makers. While education had long been considered important in the creation of socialist people with specific job skills, the importance attached to education was not uniform and it was not until at least five years into đổi mới that education
gradually became more integrated into overall strategies for the development of the country, and into more mainstream economic thinking.

While the commitment to education was increasing at the highest policy levels, practical measures were already being experimented with to overcome the crisis. Pilot experiments into the privatisation of higher education, the introduction of fees and the broadening of the curriculum were introduced on a trial basis in the late 1980s and early 1990s. They were gradually supported by the establishment of an appropriate legal framework, and expanded rapidly. By 1998, however, many of these rapidly adopted measures to overcome immediate difficulties had run their course and the MOET was rapidly re-thinking many of the innovations introduced over the previous decade.

**Principles of a Socialist Education**

The five-yearly national communist party congresses, so characteristic of centrally planned socialist countries, are an important indication of trends in overall government policy. They are expected to set the parameters in which government decisions and planning will be undertaken for the following five years. They are also meant to represent a very broad consensus, particularly as worked out by the highest level leaders of the country, about the direction in which the country should be moving. An analysis of party congress documents shows that the consensus concerning education changed very little between 1976 and 1986. The 1976 Fourth Party Congress formalised the role of education that had already been established under the Democratic Republic of Vietnam regime, and there was not much change in either the educational principles or the rhetoric at the Fifth Party Congress in March 1982 or the Sixth in 1986. There was a shift in favour of education evident in the Seventh Party Congress (1991), but it was not until several years later that this resulted in a new approach to education, evident in the documents of the Eighth Party Congress (1996), which was confirmed and strengthened in 2001.
In the 1976-1986 national congress documents, educational issues are referred to under three principal headings: giáo dục (education), đào tạo (training), and khoa học (science), the latter closely linked to kỹ thuật (technology). Taken together an analysis of these terms and how they are used gives an important handle on how the government of Vietnam as a whole considered the role of education within the country and how this changed over time. Within the five-year plans put forward by the Communist Party of Vietnam, each of these forms of 'education' has a more or less distinct role to play in the development of the country.

Giáo dục is a general form of education that consists of types of knowledge applicable to many branches of study and many situations in life. The role of 'education' is first and foremost that of creating 'socialist people' (Communist Party of Vietnam 1977: 55). The 'creation of socialist people' is a statement taken from one of Ho Chi Minh's oft-quoted speeches to students studying in Moscow in 1959. 'In order to build socialism, or communism, it is first of all necessary to build socialist or communist people' (Ho Chi Minh 1985: 1). According to this view, education serves the role of creating individuals with the desirable social qualities to achieve and participate in a socialist nation. Socialist qualities include 'collective mastery, labour zeal, socialist patriotism and proletarian internationalism' (Communist Party of Vietnam 1977: 56-7). Socialist people are industrious, patriotic, zealous, dedicated and responsible in their family lives. The role of education is to help foster these qualities, but it does not have a monopoly on them, it is assisted by activities in ideological, cultural, administrative and economic spheres, and in particular the practices of criticism and self-criticism.

52 'Muôn xây dựng chủ nghĩa xã hội, chủ nghĩa công sản, phải xây dựng con người xã hội chủ nghĩa, con người công sản chủ nghĩa.' In quoting his statement subsequently, many educators remove the phrase relating to communism, presumably reflecting a wish to strengthen the reference to the current phase of development.
training and fostering the contingents of socialist intellectuals, scientific workers, technicians, professionals, and managers in keeping with the planning for the economic and cultural development of the country, in order to endow them with political qualities and professional ability and to enable them to solve scientific, technical, economic management, and State management questions arising from the realities of our country (Communist Party of Vietnam 1977: 102).

Giáo dục is an overtly political activity which has the task of creating people with socialist qualities, more progressive people who have the ability to understand Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh thought. This understanding will, of itself, provide a better life for Vietnamese people.

The belief that socialist teaching will lead to development is borne out by an article written by Nguyễn Thị Bình (former Minister of Education), and published in an education research journal. The article considers an ethnic Mường group living in the mountainous regions of Vietnam. In 1945 these people were very poor and superstitious, but the teachers in the village studied socialist thought and the leaders are now graduates of senior secondary school. Owing to their education they were able to raise their cultural level and bring socialism to the villages, this in turn enabled young people to become productive forces, capable of adapting to new forms of technology and the socialist division of labour (Nguyễn Thị Bình 1987). As a result they have contributed significantly to the development of the community and national defence, and they have lost their 'bad customs' because of their understanding of socialism. It is important to note that it is not education per se which has enabled the village to lose its
superstitions, but socialism. Education has merely enabled students to gain a better understanding of socialism, an understanding which has, in turn, improved their lives.

Đào tạo (training) is often linked with education (giáo dục - đào tạo), but refers more specifically to the skills taught which are of direct use to production (Vũ Văn Tạo 1988: 2). The Chinese origins of the word means to manufacture things, which highlights the practical sense in which it is used. Training occurs according to the needs of production and is dependent on the needs of production for its existence. Training, of itself (as with education), is not intrinsically valuable, but exists as a form of investment or input into production, in the same way that a sewing machine is an investment in the production of garments. Training occurs in order to supply people with the appropriate skills to fill a particular job, in order to create skilled labour. The Fourth Party Congress documents clearly present 'labour' as an undifferentiated, fixed and knowable quantity, the nature of which is not changed by a process of training. There is little allowance made for a changing socio-economic environment or diversification of skills for application in a wide variety of jobs. Training specifically teaches skills for particular jobs, it does not prepare people themselves to act on their environment and change the context in which they are working.

The Fourth Party Congress (1976) documents assert that in order to undertake socialist industrialisation, it is necessary to

reorganise and redivide labour on a national scale, in each branch as well as in each place and production unit. In the immediate future we must reorganise labour in agriculture in order to ensure enough manpower for the development of agriculture, while switching a great part of the agricultural work force to other branches and from densely-populated regions to thinly-populated ones (Communist Party of Vietnam 1977: 84).
It assumes that people are passive and can simply be moved from one location or from one type of job to another, in the same way that it might be possible to move a tractor from one field to another. It recalls the Taylorist model of factory production and division of labour, in which the full intellectual capacities of the majority of individuals are not taken into consideration but only their physical capacity to do mundane tasks. In a socialist planned economy in which the available jobs and necessary skills were decided upon in advance, this was less of a constraint than it became in the transition to a market economy where previously unplanned and unknown skills were called for.  

To balance this official view of training, it is worth pointing out that the view of labour as passive and unchanging is not the only one among Vietnamese thinkers on education. Nguyễn Ky for example, argues that 'people are not simply a passive product of society'. 'New' socialist people are active, they are subjects rather than objects and can undertake their own study in relation to their work because they can be educated in labour production. Education for labour production is a form of investment in production and education is and should be closely linked to production and its needs. Consequently, he argues, education should receive higher levels of funding (Nguyễn Ky 1988: 5). While the author clearly establishes a link between economic development and education, he nonetheless confirms that production comes first and that education is dependent on the form of production, as in classical Marxist theory outlined in Chapter Two.

In the 1982 and 1986 National Party Congresses, the issue of training is discussed in less detail, but the same assumptions behind that discussion hold

33 This view of education is not unique to Vietnam. R. Marshall and W. Tucker explain the failure of the U.S. education system to meet the needs of U.S. businesses in the 1990s. They argue that U.S. education has long aimed simply to provide the vast majority of school graduates with minimal literacy skills, suitable only for non-thinking, interchangeable factory jobs. In order to increase productivity, the U.S. must now teach factory workers to think as well (Marshall and Tucker 1992: Part II).
true. 'Labour' is a quantifiable variable and training will produce a measurable result in terms of an individual's ability to perform certain productive functions in the economy. Training does not change the nature of the labour force, it serves the function of perpetuating or reproducing necessary skills, particularly for industry.

Finally 'khoa học' or science, as it is generally translated, is not so much discussed in terms of 'science' as it is generally used in contemporary English, but relates far more closely to much older concepts of the term 'science' in English, as synonymous with 'knowledge', and particularly with 'any body of knowledge organised in a systematic manner.' (Sinclair 1994: 1386). Khoa học is often linked to the term kỹ thuật, or technology, because of their mutual importance in the drive to build a strong advanced industrial nation. Khoa học has strong overtones of the progress and evolutionary theories of the enlightenment and nineteenth century thinkers outlined in Chapter Two, where scientific developments are considered to go hand in hand with modernisation.

In policy statements, the term khoa học is used virtually synonymously with research and, as with 'training', research is expected to contribute directly to production. Natural science must be oriented towards helping agricultural production, fishing and industry (Communist Party of Vietnam 1977: 89-90). Khoa học in non-productive studies such as archaeology, linguistics or history is also encouraged for nationalist goals such as creating a stronger sense of nation, establishing and reinforcing a stronger sense of Vietnamese identity (Communist Party of Vietnam 1977: 91). Social science is expected to 'take an active part in the Party's theoretical work... Social sciences must become an effective means for the renewal of conceptual and thinking methods, the forging of socialist consciousness and socialist mentality' (Communist Party of Vietnam 1987: 90).

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34 In fact in many cases 'khoa học' is more accurately translated as 'research' than 'science'.

Khoa học in scientific areas is expected to help in productive activities, either through directly improving techniques of production, or, in social science areas, through helping to establish the 'correct' socialist Party line and creating socialist people. This will itself both speed up the transition to socialism and help improve production. It is also given a pivotal role to play in the basic party policy of the 'three revolutions', in the relations of production, in science and technology, and in ideology and culture, which were an integral part of the CPV's programs for national development in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam during the 1960s (Communist Party of Vietnam 1977: 91).

'Ky thuật' (technology), is more closely translated as 'technical' or 'techniques' in English. It refers to the application of science to practical problems, particularly in production. At the Seventh Party Congress (1991), which will be discussed in more detail further on, kỹ thuật is replaced by the term 'công nghệ' (khoa học công nghệ), also translated into English by Vietnamese writers as 'technology' (See Communist Party of Vietnam 1996a: 61). Whereas kỹ thuật refers specifically to technical applications, công nghệ has a broader meaning. 'Công nghệ' as a term appears to have been introduced as a translation for the French term 'arts et métiers', referring to the overall conceptual understanding of an item ('art'), combined with the study of the means to apply that item for practical use, particularly in industry. The introduction of the term 'công nghệ' instead of kỹ thuật implies a broader consideration of the way in which science interacts with the outside world, and is representative of a general trend in thinking about education and science that was emerging around 1991.

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36 In Vietnamese, the term 'công nghệ' is of Chinese origin, 'công' meaning 'together', and 'nghệ' meaning 'ability'. It is closely related to 'công nghiệp' (industry), and as a term better translates the English meaning of technology. As an aside, the English term 'technology' comes from the Greek 'tekhnē' meaning 'art or craft', hence 'technology' is originally the scientific study of the arts and their application. J.M. Sinclair (1994). Collins English Dictionary. HarperCollins Publishers, Glasgow, p.1583.
While the Vietnamese government constantly reiterates that the express purpose of scientific research is to serve the needs of production, this was only rarely achieved. Research institutes and productive enterprises obeyed instructions from higher levels and were only able to conduct relations with each other through the medium of that higher authority. As in countries of eastern and central Europe under communist control, 'the separation of scientific research from advanced scientific training was a major obstacle to their ability to contribute to the economy' (World Bank 1994: 22). Research, like production, was expected to take place in accordance with centrally decided planning principles.

Overall then, education's principal role, up to and including the Sixth National Party Congress, was to supply the needs of the economic sector, whether through inculcating socialist values, through practical training, or advanced research. The documents also belie consideration of education as a form of social welfare (phúc lợi xã hội), a view that was never fully integrated into the socialist model of development. Education is mentioned at the end of the political or economic reports, as an afterthought rather than as a centrepiece of the Government's socio-economic development plans. In 1987 the then Minister for General Education complained that 'Today the incorrect opinion that education is purely social welfare and that it should be separated from economics is still far too common' (Nguyễn Thị Bình 1987: 7). Education was placed in a subordinate position, dependent on the economy, supplying the needs of production as well as moral and cultural qualities. 'The resolution of the Sixth Party Congress clearly defined socio-economic aims and emphasised the central position of the economic and social structure. This structure decides the education and training structure' (Võ Nguyên Giáp 1987: 3). The portrayal of education in the national party congress documents is clearly underpinned by a 'traditional' Marxist understanding of evolution. The nature and role of education is subordinate to the

37 In 1986 that heading referred to 'Issues concerning society and the life of the people' (Các vấn đề xã hội và đời sống nhân dân)
The Early Years 1987-1990

In asking Vietnamese educators, from 1997 onwards, to define when they thought changes to higher education had begun to take place, the vast majority chose 1986 as the turning point, the year when đổi mới was officially adopted and private transactions were given political approval. In fact, however, while there was a lot of discussion about the role of education and higher education in the new economic period, education was still considered in the same terms that had been used in 1976.

If the introduction of đổi mới in 1986 appeared to bring little new insight into the role of education, it did bring new opportunities for the impoverished higher education sector. In the year immediately following the Sixth National Party Congress and the official introduction of đổi mới, educators from around the country met in different fora to discuss the implications of the non-state sector for higher education. The result of these discussions was a new policy to orient HEIs within a multi-sector economy. Higher education institutions were now instructed to:

1) train manpower for non-state sector jobs
2) obtain income from outside the state sector
3) develop their own institutional plans and learning programs to meet the needs of society as well as the state
4) be responsible for finding their own work. (Trần Hồng Quân 1991: 3; Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 236; Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1997: 177).

In other words HEIs are expected to adapt to the existence of a non-state economic sector, by adopting courses to prepare graduates for alternative places
of work and by seeking non-state funding to supplement their income. It also implied greater responsibilities for universities in finance, administration and curriculum.

In August 1987 in Nha Trang, these considerations were further elaborated at a meeting of the rectors from a number of universities, which was also attended by representatives from the Ministry of Higher and Technical Education and high ranking members of the CPV (including General Võ Nguyên Giáp). They met to establish a plan of action for higher education, in time for the beginning of the academic year in September. The conference established three programs of action which were to be implemented between 1987 and 1990. They highlight what educators perceived to be the main deficiencies in education at the time, and advocated the need to:

1) Reform the structure, aims and methods of education; expand numbers, stabilise and improve the quality of education to meet the needs of the economy and society.

2) Increase the level of scientific research and link research and teaching more closely to the needs of production. The school administrations should be more zealous in applying technology to practice. They should also seek out private investment to help improve the living standard of teachers and students.

3) Reform administration and increase the standards of teaching and administrative personnel, and democratise administrative practices (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995: 237).

The practical measures introduced in the following three years reflect the financial crisis that was hitting all sectors of society, but having a particularly deleterious effect on education. These goals show a concern to address the immediate financial and administrative problems within higher education, with relatively little attention paid to content, long-term, comprehensive planning. The concern was to address immediate problems, without yet having an overall new strategy.
The first program elaborated at the Nha Trang conference attempted to address issues internal to individual HEIs. The need to increase student numbers is emphasised because numbers had been at a standstill during the 1980s, despite an increasing population. The need to reform the content of education was also recognised, primarily to take into account the new economic situation. The call to improve the quality of higher education was a very old concern, however, and had been familiar ever since the University of Hanoi began full operation in the 1920s.

The second program focuses on 'khoa hoc' and reiterates the oft-repeated theme of linking research and teaching more closely to the practical needs of the economy. It adds to previous, similar statements because it introduces the direct income generating role that research is now expected to have.

The final program concerns the administration of higher education. As outlined in the previous chapter, the legacy of the Soviet education and administrative model adopted by the Vietnamese government was a highly dispersed system of higher education institutions. Individual ministries would decide on individual requirements in order for students to graduate from their university, and there was a high level of overlapping bureaucracy. Consequently the final program highlights an ongoing concern common to the broad spectrum of public institutions, the need to make administrative structures and personnel more flexible, and more in tune with the needs of society. In order to cope with the changing economic situation, individuals were needed who were able to initiate and manage change instead of the status quo. The administrative structure of both universities and central government ministries needed to be more flexible and more streamlined to meet the demands of the market.38

Following the rectors' conference, methods for implementing the three programs of action were discussed within individual HEIs. At the National Economics University (NEU), for example, the communist party cell of the

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38 See Vasavakul (1996a, 1996b) for an analysis of the process of decentralisation and recentralisation of the Vietnamese bureaucracy.
university met to discuss the three programs in September 1987, immediately prior to the beginning of the new academic year. Such individual party cells discuss the nature of national party policies and their implications for their specific jurisdictions and then advised the university administrators on future directions for the university, in accordance with national party policy. While such meetings marked the beginning of the infiltration of the national policy of đổi mới into universities, in practice the implications of the policies were not widely felt until several years later. Education policy announced at the rectors’ conference in 1987 focussed on the implications on higher education of broader national policies announced at the Sixth Party Congress, such as administrative and financial changes, but it did not yet examine whether education might have a fundamentally different role to play in the new situation.

Between 1987 and 1990 the government permitted a number of new revenue raising initiatives to flourish. ‘Open enrolment’ fee-paying students began to be admitted to higher education, and the first experiments in private higher education institutions took place.39 The government set parameters for universities and research institutions to seek research and production contracts with individuals or companies in order to raise their income. Institutions were also permitted to accept financial aid for the purchase of equipment from outside the country, without first seeking the permission of higher authorities (Decision 134-HDBT, 31/8/1987). Such measures were followed by the more general introduction of tuition fees, to be offset by a certain number of scholarships in 1988/9 (instead of universal scholarships as previously) (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 237-238).

In administration, the government put in place policies to decentralise responsibilities to lower levels of the education hierarchy, while at the same time reinforcing and streamlining the reach of the central government (See Chapter Five). Between 1987 and 1990 the various ministerial level bodies responsible for

39 See Chapter Five for further details concerning their establishment as well as the introduction of fees and private universities.
different levels of education were gradually amalgamated into a single Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), which was given responsibility for overarching issues relating to education. University staff were given permission to elect their own rector in August 1987, in an effort to make higher level officials more responsible to their subordinates (Minh Vu 1994: 12). Management of the budget for graduate education was transferred to the MOET in February 1990. At this time the government also introduced the first cross-institutional regulations for student admission, and attempted to bring about the regularisation of levels, qualifications and titles for teachers through a series of decisions in early 1990.40

As discussed above, the Sixth Party Congress did not mark a change in the underlying conception of education, nor a change in the function of education in the broader socio-economic context. In a survey of the period 'Nearly half of the Vietnamese intellectuals surveyed by the Hanoi Sociological Institute in 1990 complained that state economic agencies did not see the practical value of brain power.' (Woodside 1999: 29). Đổi mới did, however, open the doors for higher education to seek alternative sources of funding, and find means to overcome the immediate financial crisis. It also introduced a need for new skills in areas such as market economics and management (see Chapter Seven). Practical measures adopted during this time further highlighted the desire to bring a dispersed higher education system under more centralised control through greater standardisation of regulations across different HEIs. The principal concerns during this period, as borne out by political statements and concrete developments, was the regularisation of the higher education sector under the MOET and the resolution of the financial crisis affecting the education sector. It was not until later that a reconceptualisation of the role of education began to show practical implications.

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40 For a complete list of the decisions listed in this chapter, please refer to Appendix I.
The Seventh Party Congress and its Implications

Phạm Minh Hạc, Vice-Minister for Education at the time, and one of the Communist Party's leading thinkers on education, asserts that 1991 was the turning point in policy thinking about education. He argues that at the 1987 education conferences, educators simply considered the means of solving the educational crisis in terms of a series of dialectical imbalances between education and the economy. In particular, they looked at the means of increasing the number of graduates from different levels of schooling (primary, secondary and tertiary) in order to meet the needs of the labour market. In other areas they also considered the need to balance all-round education with practical training suitable for jobs, and how to achieve quality education with a very limited budget. By 1991 the debates surrounding what to do with education had coalesced around the idea of education as a driving force for socio-economic development (Phạm Minh Hạc 1998a: 28-29).

Phạm Minh Hạc's assertion is borne out by journal articles from the Communist Party of Vietnam's leading theoretical journal Tạp chí cộng sản (Journal of Communism) which show evidence of the debate that was taking place about the role of education in development. Between 1987 and 1991 a number of articles appeared each year focussing on the relationship between education and the economy. On the one hand are those who argue that not enough attention was being paid to education (Đức Minh 1988; Đức Minh 1989; Võ Nguyên Giáp 1989; Trần Văn Bình 1991), and on the other are those who argue that increasing investment and encouraging higher levels in education will only lead to higher levels of educated unemployed (Hà Quang Đuft 1987; Hoàng Xuân Tuyết 1987; Bùi Hiền 1988; Chu Thái Thành 1989). Both arguments draw heavily on a Marxist theoretical framework to support their arguments. Đức Minh, for example, argues that education is important for the reproduction of society and the reproduction of knowledge is necessary for production and economic development. Investing in education will ensure that students have suitable qualities and skills when they join the workforce, alongside higher intelligence and a happier life. He is
particularly critical of local authorities, many of whom, he argues, tend to concentrate first on overtly productive activities, and only give whatever is left over to education (Đức Minh 1988: 33-34). In an article the following year, departing from the Marxist framework, he introduces an argument in favour of education that was to become more widespread in later years, that investment in education was a basic need of the economy, and would bring large returns to the economy (Đức Minh 1989: 44).

By contrast, Bùi Hiền argues that far too much emphasis has been placed on education. In particular he decries the practice of providing higher levels of education as demanded by society (turning education into a type of welfare), which leaves graduates uninterested in the low-skill jobs for which the country most urgently needs labour. Instead, he argues, individuals should be educated according to the requirements of production, which is a more rational method than the current 'social welfare' method (Bùi Hiền 1988). Hoàng Xuân Tùy similarly argues that education has already surpassed the level of development of the economy, as shown by a high number of unemployed graduates. He argues that graduates should be sent overseas to work, so that they will earn money to send back to Vietnam (Hoàng Xuân Tùy 1987). The implication is that the education these people have received has little benefit for the country beyond the income they can earn, in this case from overseas.

The first argument is essentially that investment should be made in education ahead of the needs of production, while the latter, in line with classical Marxist thinking, argues that production will automatically pull education along with it, education is subordinate and dependent on the economy and when investment is made in education ahead of the economy, it results in dislocations.

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41 Hoàng Xuân Tùy’s article appeared in one of the Ministry of Education and Training’s journals Đại học và Giáo dục Chuyên nghiệp. His comments are all the more remarkable coming from someone within the sector and highlight a division of opinion even within the sector.
as evidenced by large numbers of educated unemployed. This was the prevailing perspective among non-educators on education well into the 1990s.

In his evaluation of education policy, Phạm Minh Hạc argues wider support for education as a form of investment came in 1991 and that since then the state has been developing a new approach to education.

Since 1991 education along with science and technology has been considered as a primordial State policy... it is necessary to do away with the opinion regarding investment for education merely as a kind of welfare fund to which one may allocate at will any amount of money. Investment in education is investment in development, being the fundamental investment in the socio-economic strategy. Subsequently, especially as from 1991 and since the fourth Plenum of the Party Central Committee (1993) the view has become clearer and education is regarded as part of the socio-economic infrastructure (Phạm Minh Hạc 1998a: 29).

The Minister of Education and Training of the time also asserts that 1991 is the turning point for education, a point when education is no longer following the needs of the economy, but should also lead the economy. Education has a long lag time and therefore it must anticipate needs (Trần Hồng Quân 1992). Despite their assertions, there is only little substantive evidence to support this view in contemporary national policy documents. In the Seventh Party Congress in 1991 education is listed as a form of social welfare, as in previous years, alongside health and culture (Đặng Công Sản Việt Nam 1991: 34ff). There is continued emphasis on the need for social sciences to support the true line of Marxism-Leninism, particularly necessary following the fall of communist parties in Eastern Europe in 1989 (Đặng Công Sản Việt Nam 1991: 80). There are also several sections that deal with the importance of the sciences in building a modern
socialist economy (Dang Cong San Viet Nam 1991: 81, 121). Yet there is some
evidence that education was no longer an afterthought, or principally valued for
its ability to contribute qualified labour to production. As an indication, the 1991
congress introduces several new terms, reflective of an overall reconceptualisation
of education.

As discussed above, the term 'cong nghiep' (technology) was introduced to
replace 'ky thuat' in the 1991 documents. In addition, while the notion of 'the
human factor' in development (nhan t'o con nguoi) was not a new one, it was the
first time it was introduced into the National Party Congress documents in
relation to education. The term implies that human beings are a 'factor' that
needs to be taken into account in production, in the same way that machines had
been in the past. From the Marxist perspective from which Vietnamese leaders
were approaching the issue, there was only a small conceptual step from
considering a machine as an input for production, to considering a human being
as a 'factor' in production, but the implications of this shift are large, particularly
for education. As outlined in Chapter Two, such an argument was the basis of
human capital theory, first elaborated in the 1950s, and the basis for bringing the
education sector into the mainstream of economic thought.

Changing terminology may appear a narrow basis on which to argue that
there was a change in policy. However, in official Vietnamese documents similar
rhetoric is often repeated over many years, and much thought goes into how
individual policies should be formulated. Consequently individual terms are an
important indicator of changing priorities and changing viewpoints.

42 See for example Tran Dinh Hoan (1987). 'Về vai trò nhân t'o con người trong sự nghiệp xây dựng

43 'Dây mảnh hơn nữa sự nghiệp giáo dục, đào tạo khoa học và công nghệ, có đó là quốc sách hàng
đầu để phát huy nhân t'o con người, dùng líc trực tiếp cửa sự phát triển.' (Dang Cong San Viet Nam
New terminology notwithstanding, the biggest difference in the 1991 documents compared to previous years is the place given to a discussion of the role of education and intellectuals. The report on the future of socialist development in Vietnam, presented by the General Secretary, Nguyễn Văn Linh, re-analyses the role of intellectuals in society. It insists that there exists an alliance between intellectuals (trí thức), peasants and workers⁴⁴ (Dáng Công Sản Việt Nam 1991: 113). It goes on to state that some comrades do not yet accept the role of intellectuals in socialist development but that they should change their attitude. Without intellectuals, the workers and peasants would not be able to raise their intellectual level, and would not, therefore, be able to build socialism in the country. The reason so much importance is placed on this ideological perspective becomes evident in the following sentence, as the author goes on to insist that society is currently undergoing a modern scientific and technological revolution (cách mạng khoa học và công nghệ hiện đại) and intellectuals have an increasingly important role to play in the new era (Dáng Công Sản Việt Nam 1991: 114). He is using very familiar Marxist terminology in order to reinterpret a changing social environment.

The General Secretary goes on to insist, however, that the rising status of intellectuals should not be at the expense of that of workers and peasants. In any case such a distinction has become largely irrelevant as intellectuals are now the children of workers and peasants, and have been trained under a socialist regime. He attempts to resolve the ‘red’ and ‘expert’ debate highlighted in Chapters Two and Three by arguing that intellectuals no longer have the élite status they did before. All three classes (workers, peasants and intellectuals) should work together to build a strong nation (Dáng Công Sản Việt Nam 1991: 114). These statements are attempting to drive away any ideological ambiguities which might still exist concerning the place of intellectuals in a socialist society. Such statements, whether intended for this purpose or not, also paved the way for a policy favouring areas of intellectual development, such as higher education, teaching

⁴⁴ 'liên minh giai cấp công nhân với giai cấp nông dân và tăng lớp trí thức'.
and research, and a policy that increasingly viewed intellectuals as a fundamental resource for the development of the country.

Perhaps an important source of inspiration for the increased emphasis on education was provided by a far-reaching international aid project. The UNDP/UNESCO education project under the auspices of the MOET began in 1991, and was entitled the 'Education Sector Review and Human Resources Analysis'. One of the results of this project was a 'dredging of the waterways to accommodate a new flow of ideas about how to break any upstream logjam' (Le Thac Can and Sloper 1995: 7). The upstream logjam here refers to the set pattern of ideas that existed about education, particularly among senior level administrators who had responsibility for adopting new policy. The project consisted of an extensive number of research studies to determine the situation across the education sector in Vietnam, highlight the problems encountered and outline possible solutions. A very large number and range of educators was involved in the entire process, from high-ranking MOET officials from different areas of the Ministry, Communist Party officials and educational researchers, through to teachers in a range of different teaching and planning occupations. Foreign specialists acted as coordinators, trainers and consultants in the process, but essentially it was undertaken by Vietnamese actors, equipped with new analytical tools (Le Thac Can and Sloper 1995: 9).

Another outside source of ideas that was of particular interest to Vietnamese thinkers was the publication in 1990 of Alvin Toffler's book *Powershift*. The thesis of this book was that knowledge was the new source of economic power and development. This had obvious implications for the importance of education. 'The most important economic development of our lifetime has been the rise of a new system for creating wealth, based no longer on muscle but on mind.' (Toffler 1990: 9). His book was translated into Vietnamese and large tracts were reproduced in succeeding issues of the leading economics journal *Nghiên cứu Kinh tế* in 1991 and 1992. The extracts chosen referred in particular to the important role of intellectuals in the new economy. Several years later a writer for
Tạp chí Cộng sản took up the book again, stressing the importance of Toffler’s analysis for understanding the post-capitalist stage of global socio-economic production (knowledge production). Despite the fact he goes on to argue that Toffler’s political analysis of post-capitalism is insufficient, Toffler is held up as an important thinker on the future (Trần Xuân Trường 1995). The attraction of Toffler’s book in Vietnam, suggests it resonated deeply with many aspects of Vietnamese society. It offered a view of history very familiar to Vietnamese theorists, one of history progressing in stages towards a logically deduced and predictable future. In addition, the future was one which relied on the capacity of intellectuals, a group which, while still strongly respected, had nonetheless been marginalised from economic planning and decision-making in previous decades.

The Constitution, promulgated in 1992, also marks a fundamental change to the importance placed on education. According to Article 35, ‘Education and training is the priority national policy’, while Article 37 states ‘Science and industry have the key role in the country’s economic and social development’.

Both introduce a fundamentally new emphasis on education compared to the 1980 constitution. The previous constitution made little reference to education other than to assert its existence under the unified administration of education by the state (Article 41), and to assert a system of free education and scholarships for all students (Article 60). Theoretically the statements in the new constitution imply that education will no longer be considered as part of the ‘superstructure’, but as a productive investment in its own right. The new constitution was also important

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45 Despite the otherwise balanced and reasoned argument presented in the article, the author spends the first several pages extolling the virtues of Toffler as one of the greatest thinkers to come out of the United States.

46 Điều 35: ‘Giáo dục và đào tạo là việc trách nhiệm hàng đầu.’ Điều 37: ‘Khoa học và công nghệ giữ vai trò then chốt trong sự nghiệp phát triển kinh tế - xã hội của đất nước.’
because it allowed for the existence of non-state funded education (Article 36) (Quốc hội Nước Cộng hòa Xã hội chủ nghĩa Việt Nam 1995).  

Despite positive statements and an obvious reassessment of the importance of education and the increasing introduction of new ideas in 1991 and 1992, no comprehensive planning appears to have resulted for several years. Following the Seventh Party Congress, the national rectors’ conference in 1992 met to evaluate higher education policy to date and to plan for the subsequent three years. The policy put forward at this meeting re-emphasised the three programs elaborated in 1987, introducing only slight changes, giving more emphasis to the training of teaching staff, and adding a program to train talented people to ‘act as a spearhead for the development of the country’, presumably through the use of special training for talented people (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1997: 13).

In practical terms, the period immediately following the Seventh Party Congress also did show one significant development, the decision to allow socialist Vietnam’s first private university, Thang Long University, to operate on an official basis, reflecting financial necessity more than pedagogical planning. In other areas a Masters level of postgraduate education was introduced, clearly demonstrating the government’s desire to integrate its educational system more closely into that of the region and the West. Other decisions continued the focus on standardising administrative authority for higher education. Over-arching authority for the reorganisation process was given to the MOET while local authorities maintained responsibility for (principally) local teacher-training schools (Decision 255/CT, 31/8/92).

While Phạm Minh Hạc and Trần Hồng Quân both emphasise 1991 as a turning point for education, in reality the year appears as a turning point only in policy debates about education, which placed more importance on, and

47 ‘Nhà nước thống nhất quản lý hệ thống giáo dục quốc dân... Nhà nước ưu tiên đầu tư cho giáo dục, khuyến khích các nguồn đầu tư khác.’
pronounced greater commitment to, education as a factor in socio-economic development. As yet there were few important practical results within the education sector itself.

**Turning point - Fourth Plenum of the Seventh National Congress**

In the meantime the government was undertaking a thorough political and economic re-evaluation of education and training, of which the UNDP/UNESCO project was an integral part. The results were presented at the Fourth Plenum of the Communist Party Central Committee (7th Congress), held from the 10th to the 14th of January 1993. The plenum was called in order to consider the 'human factor' in development, under the slogan 'make the people prosperous, the country strong and society civilised' (Thayer 1995: 41). The plenum was a landmark for education if only because it was the first time that a plenum had been devoted solely to the education sector and that it had put out a specific resolution, 'On the continued renovation of education and training' (Phạm Minh Hạc 1998a: 35). This offered general principles for the development of the education sector, under four headings:

1) Education is a priority policy and investment in education is investment in production
2) Develop education to raise the intellectual standard of the people, train manpower and foster talent
3) Link education closely to the developmental needs of the country and actual progress and ensure continuing education for everyone
4) Diversify forms of training, ensure the payment of fees and principles of equality (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 402; Phạm Minh Hạc 1998a: 35).

The year 1993 represented the culmination of both a 'professional and political reassessment of education and training' (Le Thac Can and Sloper 1995: 11). The re-evaluation was particularly important because of the financial crisis facing education but the political reassessment was no less important. The
Seventh Party Congress, subsequent meetings and the Fourth Plenum in particular, show a shift in the conceptualisation of education to one where it is an active, rather than a passive factor in the development of the country. It is an area of investment that will produce returns for the country instead of being a form of social welfare, separate from development. The Vietnamese government clearly began to adopt human capital arguments, and to conceptualise education as a productive investment in its own right. It is from around 1991 that articles in education journals begin to make references to issues of 'human resource development' (phát triển nhân lực) and other related concepts which show an understanding of education as a form of productive investment in itself (Vũ Văn Tảo 1992).

The idea of linking education and labour to achieve a productive economy also slowly made its way into the country’s most important economic research journal Nghien cứu Kinh tế from 1993. Until that time scattered articles concerning labour focused almost exclusively on improving the distribution of labour, and later the need to improve salaries in a labour market (Bùi Văn Nhơn 1987). As the country gradually introduced a labour market, and increased its understanding of what a labour market involved into the 1990s, the journal began to raise questions about the quality and value of labour (Vũ Minh Vienglish 1993), although issues linking education, the quality of labour and production only became a regular feature of the journal from 1997.46

The socialist government had long insisted on the need for education to produce qualified labour, with appropriate technical skills or the appropriate socialist outlook to fill particular positions, and keep the economy running. At the

46 In 1997 the journal published four articles on issues concerning education and the quality of the labour force, compared to an average of 1 per year for the ten preceding years. In 1998, there was again no article on the issue, but in 1999 there were 3 articles, 2000 with four articles, 2001 the journal published a related article almost every month from June, not to mention the articles on other topics which began to refer to labour issues incidentally, showing that labour issues were becoming part of mainstream economic thinking.
same time it recognised that education was important in building appropriate moral and ethical, or socialist and nationalist qualities, that helped ensure the harmony and unity of the nation. A human resource development argument, however, goes one step further. It says that not only education provides technical skills, but the intangible qualities that it provides also help to further the economic development of the country. Education enhances the overall quality of the individual, and this will have much wider ramifications for socio-economic development than the provision of simple job skills. It argues that investment in education should come first because it will push forward the economy, instead of education being dependent on changes in production, as in the argument put forward by Đúc Minh above. Investment in education is a form of productive investment that will result in measurable gains in such economic indicators as GDP.

Under the Soviet model of centralised state planning, with education for specialised job requirements, it made sense to link education closely to the workplace, with factories providing workplace education and individual organisations sending their employees for further education, as the need arose. According to the human capital argument, and therefore strategies of human resource development, it is not the specific skills that increase the value of an individual, but a broad range of characteristics. Human resource development demands new ‘blueprints for learning’, for different skills such as flexibility, creativity, initiative and communication skills, not to mention a broader knowledge base to support these skills (Riddell 1996: 1361).

Aside from reconceptualising the role of education in Vietnam, the government also showed a greater practical commitment to education at this time. This was most evident in the increasing percentage of the national budget allocated to education (see Appendix 3). Statistics concerning the government budget vary widely depending on their source, and even when quoted from similar sources, but three general periods can still be discerned in government budget allocation. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the proportion of the national budget
allocated to education was higher in the early 1980s, but began to decline as
the country entered into economic crisis. From 1986 until 1989 the amount
allocated to education was around 5.5% to 7% of the national budget (depending
on the source quoted). From 1989 to 1993 the allocation was between 8% and 9%,
while from 1994 onwards the allocation showed a steady increase to possibly as
high as 12% (see Appendix 3).

Enrolments fell off at the end of the 1980s, due to the uncertainty surrounding
the future of the country following the fall of the Eastern bloc and consequently
the value of a long-term investment in education, and the economic crisis in
Vietnam. After this period of stagnation, student numbers began to increase from
1991/2 with at least half the increase coming from students enrolled in alternative
forms of study, such as fee-paying, part-time or short-term courses. Numbers
began to increase exponentially from 1993/4 (See Appendix 4). Government
regulations assisted in the process as universities were allowed to enrol students in
excess of government planned figures from 1987 (Marr 1988; Mai Van Tinh 1997:
5).

The year 1993 also represents a turning point in practical measures to
change higher education. After experimenting with fee-paying students at places
such as Thăng Long University and Ho Chi Minh City Open University, the
government brought in general regulations governing the establishment of non-
government HEIs (which included 'people-founded' and 'semi-public'
institutions). This was followed by rapid approval for the foundation of a number
of individual non-government HEIs over the next several years, until the process
was halted in 1998 due to the lack of ability to control the quality of the new
institutions (see Chapter Six). These regulations marked a commitment on the

49 The Vietnamese government prefers not to use the term 'private' (tư thục), when referring to
institutions that receive fee-paying students, instead referring to them as 'people-founded' (đản lập),
or 'semi-public' (bản công) depending on their method of foundation. The distinction will be
discussed further in the following chapter on the administrative situation of HEIs in Vietnam.
part of the government to non-government funding for universities and regulations for a new curriculum followed shortly thereafter.

Public universities and the degree structure were also reorganised across the board, in accordance with the very important decree 90/CP, 24/11/1993. A number of existing public universities were amalgamated into national universities (in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi) and regional universities (in Đà Nẵng, Huế and Thái Nguyên). These universities were required to establish a separate school of foundational studies (*DH dai cutăng*), under the auspices of the national or regional institution, which would teach the first two years of university studies. Other universities were expected to establish a new faculty to oversee the first two years of study. This innovation, however, was abandoned in 1998 for a number of reasons outlined in Chapter Seven.

Another form of institutional reorganisation, intended to create greater linkages across universities and provide greater equality of access for rural students, was the introduction of community colleges. While the first one was not officially given permission to operate until 1997, the major planning and discussions for this type of institution took place in 1992 and 1993. Such colleges were intended to provide the first two years of university foundational studies, after which students would be able to transfer to larger universities based in the cities, to complete their studies. The results of these trials have been mixed (see Chapter Five).

Finally, in terms of curriculum and degree structure, the decree 90/CP also introduced the standardisation of all levels of degrees, and in particular postgraduate degrees. The 'Candidate of Science' degree (*phô tiến sĩ*) was not officially abolished until 1996 but by 1993 already the Masters level degree and PhD were integrated into the formal structure of awards. The year 1993 marked the 'turning point' in the practical outcomes of the wide-ranging discussions that had taken place in previous years.
A Re-newed Commitment to Education

The following years reinforce the direction and confirm the policies outlined in the Fourth Plenum in 1993, in particular the importance of education as a development and an investment strategy. Many of the isolated experiments that had been taking place, in alternative sources of financing, strategies for the decentralisation of administrative control or the revitalisation of curriculum, were drawn upon in order to develop a more comprehensive and detailed education policy framework than was evident in the early 1990s. The increasing certainty about the appropriate direction for education is particularly evident in a second communist party plenum on education in 1996, which elaborated on the resolutions of the Eighth National Party Congress earlier in the year, and the Law on Education that was finally promulgated in 1998.

The Eighth Party Congress in 1996 reconfirms the trends that were brought to the fore in 1993. It reiterates the existence of three social classes, workers, peasants and intellectuals, each with their specific role to play in the development of the country, and reconfirms the expanded role for education and intellectuals, already advocated at the Fourth Plenum of the Seventh Party congress. It continues to insist on the need for education in patriotism and Marxism-Leninism (Communist Party of Vietnam 1996a: 66, 80-81). Overall, education issues have more space devoted to them in the 1996 congress documents than for any previous congress, including that of 1976.

To continue with an analysis of changing terminology, in 1991 the Seventh Congress referred to the 'human factor' in development (nhan từ con người). In 1996 the government appears to have gone one step further along the road of human capital arguments, and adopted terminology already in evidence in education journals. It replaces the concept of the 'human factor' in development

50 'Tăng cường giáo dục công dân, giáo dục lòng yêu nước, chủ nghĩa Mác-Lênin và tư tưởng Hồ Chí Minh...' (Dang Cong San Viet Nam 1996: 109).
by that of the contribution of 'human resources' (nguồn nhân lực) to development. It advocates the need for education and training over the next five years to develop human resources to meet the needs of industrialisation and modernisation (Dàng Công Sản Việt Nam 1996: 107).\footnote{Phương hướng chung của lĩnh vực giáo dục, đào tạo trong 5 năm tới là phát triển nguồn nhân lực đáp ứng yêu cầu công nghiệp hóa, hiện đại hóa ...}

In 1996 science and technology are called on to fill a series of complex roles, in particular 'to promote an in-depth and creative search in academic study while holding aloft social responsibility of scientific and technological workers toward the country.' (Communist Party of Vietnam 1996a: 63). This includes developing the role of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh thought as the guiding force in all policies and plans. It involves undertaking research and applying advanced technology, while ensuring due consideration is given to the ecological, economic and social impact of these developments. Academics are expected to 'establish a market for scientific and technological activities. To oversee imported technology. To urge enterprises, particularly sizeable state enterprises, to renovate their technology and attract research and development manpower.' (Communist Party of Vietnam 1996b: 106).\footnote{Tạo lập thị trường cho các hoạt động khoa học và công nghiệp. Kiểm soát các công nghệ nhập. Thực đẩy các doanh nghiệp, nhất là các doanh nghiệp lớn của Nhà nước đối với công nghệ, thu hút lực lượng nghiên cứu - triển khai về các doanh nghiệp.}

In other words they must be pro-active in both expanding the use of science and technology, and in ensuring its application, rather than simply supplying the scientific basis for decisions made by the leadership as previously (see Dàng Công Sản Việt Nam, 1991: 79; Communist Party of Vietnam, 1977: 88).\footnote{Hoạt động khoa học và công nghiệp phải bảo đảm cơ sở khoa học cho các quyết định quan trọng của các cơ quan lãnh đạo, quản lý, là công cụ chủ yếu để nâng cao năng suất, chất lượng và hiệu quả của mọi hoạt động kinh tế - xã hội...} Nor is the role of intellectuals any longer simply to develop methods of improving agricultural or industrial production (Communist Party of

\footnotetext[51]{Phương hướng chung của lĩnh vực giáo dục, đào tạo trong 5 năm tới là phát triển nguồn nhân lực đáp ứng yêu cầu công nghiệp hóa, hiện đại hóa ...}

\footnotetext[52]{Tạo lập thị trường cho các hoạt động khoa học và công nghiệp. Kiểm soát các công nghệ nhập. Thực đẩy các doanh nghiệp, nhất là các doanh nghiệp lớn của Nhà nước đối với công nghệ, thu hút lực lượng nghiên cứu - triển khai về các doanh nghiệp.}

\footnotetext[53]{Hoạt động khoa học và công nghiệp phải bảo đảm cơ sở khoa học cho các quyết định quan trọng của các cơ quan lãnh đạo, quản lý, là công cụ chủ yếu để nâng cao năng suất, chất lượng và hiệu quả của mọi hoạt động kinh tế - xã hội...}
Vietnam 1977: 89), but has been expanded to take into consideration a wide
range of integrated phenomena across a broad spectrum of society. The Congress
both confirms the importance of intellectuals and gives them an active role to play
in the development of the country.

As in previous congresses, education and training is still intended to 'raise
the people’s intellectual level, ensuring the necessary knowledge for every person
to join in the social and economic life to keep abreast of the process of national
renewal and development.' (Communist Party of Vietnam 1996a: 159). The
congress focuses on the means to achieve an expansion in the quantity and
quality of education, using methods that had already proved successful in the
years since the previous, 1991, Congress. While the previous congress had merely
mentioned the need to find more non-state sources of funding for education
(Đảng Cộng Sản Việt Nam 1991: 121), the 1996 congress gives specific top level
clearance to expanding non-public institutions. More generally it asserts the
importance of the 'socialisation of education and training' (xã hội hóa giáo dục và
dào tạo), a euphemism for increased private investment in education. 55 Both
phenomena (non-public institutions and private investment) had been taking
place in the education sector before they were officially sanctioned at the
congress, but the congress did serve to regularise and formalise the role of the
market in education.

54 'Nâng cao một bước dân trí, bảo đảm những tri thức cần thiết để mọi người gia nhập cuộc sống xã
hội và kinh tế theo kịp tiến trình đổi mới và phát triển đất nước.' (Đảng Cộng Sản Việt Nam 1996: 198).

55 'Xã hội hóa' can also be translated as 'societisation' which perhaps better reflects the intended
idea of society contributing funding to education (or other public projects) - a variation on
privatisation. I have chosen to maintain the translation of 'socialisation', however, as it better
conveys the links to the closely related 'socialism' (xã hội chủ nghĩa), that the Vietnamese
government has been at pains to insist is still relevant to its current program of incipient
privatisation.
In addition to emphasising the need to increase the different sources of funding for education, the congress also calls for continued reorganisation of public institutions, including the development of 'local universities and colleges to meet the popular desire for knowledge', already evident in the creation of regional and national universities (Communist Party of Vietnam 1996a: 162). At several points the documents stress the need to increase educational and scientific links with the outside world particularly through postgraduate overseas training. It is necessary 'to motivate the people to self-finance their overseas studies' and to 'quickly increase the number of people having overseas graduate and postgraduate education.' (Communist Party of Vietnam 1996a: 66, 162). As mentioned in Chapter Three, while large numbers of students had studied overseas in the past, under central planning these had been to other socialist countries, sponsored by state-run and approved programs. Allowing individuals the possibility to decide on their own study directions, if they have sufficient finance, involves a significant decentralisation of responsibility, although the move was probably prompted principally by immediate financial need, rather than a well-thought-out program of postgraduate training.

The Eighth Party Congress, therefore, shows a formalisation of trends that had been occurring in education in the period since the previous congress, while reasserting many of the principles that have been a focus of education in Vietnam under a socialist government. It re-affirms the need to teach patriotism, Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh thought. At the same time it reinforces the place of non-public educational institutions, and the reorganisation of public institutions. It calls for greater links with the outside world and envisages a broad role for those with high levels of education and research capacity, in all aspects of society. It gives greater initiative to scholars and researchers, particularly with regard to finding their own sources of funding and technological applications for their own areas of specialisation. The Eighth Congress integrates the concept of human resource development into the overall planning for socio-economic development.
In August 1996 educators met to evaluate the impact of ten years of đổi mới on education. According to their final report, the results were mixed. On the positive side the report highlights a massive increase in the number of students studying in higher education, in particular a large increase in the number of postgraduate students (particularly Masters students) (p.21). It states that universities have become more flexible in their teaching, with the introduction of semester units and a credit system at some universities (pp. 179, 223). Administrative responsibility has been decentralised to some extent, with universities being given responsibility for enrolment (from 1988/9), for increased planning, for the conduct of their own international relations and for the election of their own rector (p.16).

On the negative side, however, the report considers that the biggest problem has been the poor implementation of programs, and the lack of communication between different levels of management (p.34, 89). Despite continued policy emphasis on the need to link production with educational institutions, this was no more successful than it had been under socialist central planning (p.17). The huge and rapid increase in student numbers was not met by an increase in teaching staff and facilities, leading to a noticeable decline in quality (p.193), a situation which was particularly acute at the regional level (p.183).

This report was used as one of the foundation documents for the Resolution of the Second Plenum of the Eighth Party Congress in December 1996, which examines in greater detail practical measures to achieve the formal strategies outlined at the Eighth Party Congress. It reaffirms education as the top priority to achieve the country's economic growth, reinforcing human resource development arguments introduced in previous years (Communist Party of Vietnam 1996b: 6, 8). It also committed increased funding for education, from 11%

54 The findings of the evaluation are set out in Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo (1997). Tóm kết và đánh giá mười năm đổi mới giáo dục và đào tạo (1986-1996) [Summary and evaluation of ten years of renovation in education and training]. Hà Nội, Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo.
of the national budget in 1997, to 15% in 2000 (Nhân Dân, 5/1/1997: 3), a commitment that was reinforced in 2001 with promises that the budget would rise further to at least 18% in 2005, and 20% in 2010 (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2001: Article 5.5).

Based on the MOET's evaluation report, the Plenum outlines the achievements and weaknesses of the Vietnamese education sector. Among the former it highlights the large expansion in student numbers, and greater diversity of courses. The list of weaknesses is longer and includes the low ethical standards of students and teachers (a euphemism for cheating in examinations and corruption), low levels of efficiency, equity and quality, with inappropriate numbers of students being trained to inappropriate levels for the needs of the economy (Communist Party of Vietnam 1996b: 3-4). Further problems have occurred because of insufficient party guidance, the over-centralisation of management and because of lax government control (Communist Party of Vietnam 1996b: 5-6).

Specific measures to overcome these problems include the universalisation of primary education, and the further expansion of secondary and higher education, in an effort to achieve higher levels of education across the board (Communist Party of Vietnam 1996b: 10-11). Teachers will receive preferential salary rates (equal to the highest bracket public service rates) and student teachers will be exempt from all fees (p.14). The government will use overseas development aid (ODA) in order to build up the education infrastructure (p.13). The importance of non-government sources of funding (private contributions, increased government budget, lotteries or bank loans) is again emphasised as a means of meeting education goals (p.13). Schools of the secondary level and above are expected to introduce 'production and service centres' to link schooling more closely to the outside world (p.12). This was a concept with a long tradition in the history of the socialist government but one with ongoing problems. In order to overcome 'dishonest conduct' and improve 'effectiveness and efficiency' (p.8), the resolution reaffirms the need to streamline the bureaucracy and introduces plans
for a 'National Education Council' (p.18). The Council was finally established in Vietnam in 1997.

In fact the wording of the Seventh Party Congress belies a real crisis that was looming. As the innovations of the early 1990s began to take hold in the universities, the long-term problems of rapid experimentation and implementation, without the full support of all the stakeholders involved in the process, were becoming apparent. Teachers complained that they had not been consulted about curriculum changes, other ministries blamed the MOET for creating an unworkable framework for degree equivalencies and parents and businesses alike complained that degrees were becoming devalued as the huge expansion in student numbers and lack of teachers meant that graduate quality had plummeted. The creation of the National Education Council was an attempt to give a comprehensive strategic direction to education at the highest levels of policy-making at a time when a large number of experiments were drawing to a close.

Final mention needs to be made of the country's first Law on Education, which was passed by the National Assembly in December 1998. This marked the culmination of many years and many drafts of the law, which themselves highlighted the wariness of the government in committing itself to many of the innovations that had been adopted during the preceding years. As discussed in Chapter 5, the final law allowed much greater scope for the government to later reverse its decisions concerning the funding and even the structure of higher education.

**Conclusion**

The introduction of đổi mới in 1986 did not see an important shift in education policy. It did, however, offer the opportunity for HEIs to begin to seek alternative sources of funding and it is an appropriate period from which to date increasing receptiveness to outside ideas and non-socialist bloc inspiration. These were basic building blocks for subsequent changes. As highlighted in the previous
chapter, education had long been held in high regard in Vietnam, but it sat uneasily with many aspects of the dominant Marxist paradigm. In particular, in times of crisis, the proportion of the budget dedicated to education was reduced because this paradigm asserted that education was a non-productive sector, and that education would ultimately improve only once productive factors were taken care of.

While there was scattered knowledge about the positive effects of higher levels of education in productive areas such as factories, and a recognition of serious problems where there was a lack of necessary skills (see Chapter Seven), it was not until the introduction of ideas such as theories of human capital and human resource development, as well as ideas from writers such as Alvin Toffler, into Vietnam, that the Vietnamese educators were given the tools with which to justify to economic planners and high level policy-makers that education should be brought into mainstream economic thinking. Lack of state finance, and the concern (or lack thereof) to achieve principles such as equality and flexibility helped to further shape the practical measures introduced to change the direction of higher education institutions in Vietnam.

The period between 1986 and 1998, therefore, can be roughly divided into three main periods for the development of higher education policy in Vietnam. The first period, from 1986 to around 1991, reflects first and foremost the effects of the economic crisis and the urgent need to find funding for the higher education sector. This need led to pilot experiments in fee-paying and the opening of private universities. At the same time there were ongoing debates among education specialists, and then among policy-makers and economists about the appropriate role of education in the economy. These coalesced between around 1991 and 1993 into commitment at the highest levels of government for greater investment in education as a stimulus for economic growth, following wide acceptance of international thinking about the importance of education for growth.

The third period, until 1998, can be distinguished as a period in which the government displayed strengthened commitment to moving forward with
initiatives that had previously only been allowed to move forward on a trial basis. These included the development of a legal framework regularising fee-paying and private universities, and a re-assessment of the ways in which the curriculum could be adjusted to better suit the needs of the economy. At the same time, while commitment to education was strongly emphasised in statements such as 'Education is the primordial policy of the state', as will become apparent in the following pages, a clear direction for education among all the relevant actors was far from evident. By 1998 this lack of a united direction was seriously undermining some of the key elements of the MOET's higher education strategy, and the implementation of policies 'on the ground', as discussed in the following chapters.

In terms of state-society relations, the development of education policy in the period under question shows a number of important influences which fit less or more easily with this paradigm. As outlined above, in the initial period of đói mới, innovations in policy were a direct reaction to the economic needs of the universities and their teachers. In a state-society framework, in this situation the most obvious place to look for pressure for policy changes would be in student or teacher demands for an improvement in their conditions. In fact there is very little evidence of such overt criticism taking place. Instead the introduction of fees in universities, for example, appears to have taken place in close co-ordination between university and government staff, with universities providing the initiative and the experimental facilities to achieve their own interests, for a policy which the government as a whole had already committed itself to at the Sixth Party Congress (see Chapter 6 for more details). None of the three models of state-society relations (state dominant, society dominant or corporatism) appears to account for this close relationship for mutual benefit.

For the second period, it is also difficult to apply a state-society framework. As I have highlighted, the increased across-the-government commitment to education was underpinned by the introduction of ideas from abroad, which were

57 Some isolated evidence of individual protests by students against their living conditions and subjects of study during this period are given in Chapter 7.
taken on board by senior government officials as a logical way of understanding the important role of education in Vietnam's development. Yet international influence is by definition outside the dichotomy of state-society relations.

In the final period, experimentation with different policy implementation options, the interaction and opposition between a 'society' and 'state' is more evident as a factor. Teachers and students became very vocal in their criticism of the quality and structure of HEIs as the reforms took hold, leading to changes in government policy (see Chapter 7). The practical implementation of government policies will be analysed in more detail in the following chapters.

This chapter highlights above all the important influence that developments in international thinking concerning the relationship between education and economic growth had on Vietnamese educators, and later on high level policy-makers and economists who were formulating national development plans. This analysis fits uneasily with a state-society dichotomy as international thinking cannot easily be classified as either 'state' or 'society' but appears to lie outside of either.
Chapter Five -

Reallocation of Administrative Decision-Making Power

The appropriate administration of higher education for any country will reflect a workable division of responsibilities between government, universities, teachers, students and the wider community. For Vietnam under central planning, all important decisions regarding higher education, including funding, promotions, curriculum, enrolment etc, were made by central government ministries, in conjunction with the Communist Party of Vietnam, and very little control was left in the hands of the individual institutions. With the advent of đổi mới a number of responsibilities have been formally devolved to universities, through a series of decrees and regulations, culminating in the Education Law of 1998. This law formalised a variety of different mechanisms for the governance of universities, and diversified the nature of the relationship between universities and the government.

Based on the overall policies outlined in the previous chapter, this chapter extracts administration policies related to higher education for closer examination. It examines the trend in administration policy between 1986 and 1998, beginning with the changes to the Ministry of Education and Training (and its antecedents) as part of the government's overall plans for streamlining public administration. Then follows an analysis of various different individual activities to implement these policies such as the election of university rectors, new regulations on student admission and increased communication between higher and lower levels of education administrators. It goes on to look at perhaps the biggest reorganisation of the relationship between universities and government in the creation of national, regional, and private universities, and community colleges. Finally it examines the Education Law adopted in 1998, which represents the culmination of many of the trials and errors of foregoing experiments.
As with changes to the national policy towards education discussed in the previous chapter, changes to higher education administration policy and its implementation also show evidence of considerable influence from outside Vietnam. It also shows a number of different ways in which different actors within the higher education sector are able to influence change or resist it. While universities or individuals are sometimes able to initiate actions that are later taken up as government policy, they might also find themselves heavily chastised for their actions.

Principles for Renovating Higher Education Administration under Đổi mới

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Sixth Party Congress did not directly outline a new role or direction for the education sector, except insofar as it was called upon to meet the needs of the newly sanctioned non-government sector. In terms of public administration more generally, however, the Political Report for the Sixth Party Congress called for a streamlining of bureaucratic procedures, an end to the tendency towards overlapping organisations, and to a situation in which no-one assumed responsibility for the outcomes of decision-making (Communist Party of Vietnam 1987: 142). It further stated that 'Lower levels must obey higher levels, and higher levels must be responsible for their own decisions' (p.78), which implied that lower levels had, in the past, been disregarding their superiors. The overlapping jurisdictions of different bodies created a need for the redefinition of the roles and responsibilities of all management levels and greater clarity in the division of tasks (p.143). This policy had implications for those involved in education, as it did for every other sector. According to one scholar:

Politics during the period of transition from central planning was characterised by high local autonomy devolving on middle-level cadres, the expansion of horizontal connections,
and the bypassing of existing rules and regulations imposed by the central government... This was manifested in the inability of the central government to regulate relationships among government agencies, between government agencies and businesses, and between government agencies and society (Vasavakul 1996b: 46-47).

Consequently, the central organs of the state, and of the CPV in particular, undertook to re-establish disintegrating vertical administrative hierarchies through a program of administrative streamlining. The strengthening of state institutions was historically viewed as an important means of achieving growth and development, and had the added attraction that such a program would also further the interests of party, army and technocratic cadres who had a common interest in strengthening the state (Vasavakul 1997a: 338).

A second aspect of the reform process was the introduction of a system of laws to regulate society, which had been previously ordered through decrees dominated by communist party influence. The increasing number of transactions taking place outside the framework of the state, however, forced the Vietnamese government to recognise the 'need for government by law which would create a healthy business environment and good markets' (Fforde and Porter 1994: 2). The introduction of 'State Rule by Law' (nha mute phap quyen) - the official slogan under which these changes were made - would further help to curb arbitrary decision-making and corruption by government officials (Fforde and Porter 1994: 1). In education, it might help to regulate newly emerging private institutions.

New laws on public administration were introduced, in an attempt to reduce the size, and streamline the responsibilities, of the government. 'The 1989 law on local government reduced the number of provincial administrative offices from 40-50 to between 17 and 22 per province. At the district level, the number of offices fell from 20-25 to 10-15' and similarly for commune, quarter and district town levels (Vasavakul 1996b: 55). Staff working in Ho Chi Minh City's District 1
were reduced from 800 in 1982 to 215 in 1994, with a 50% reduction occurring between 1988 and 1989 (Ho Ngoc Phuong 1995: 36). Within the central government, 12 ministries were dissolved at the end of 1989, 43.7% of offices at the department level were closed and 50,000 workers were laid off (Turley 1993: 329). In 1993 the National Assembly then passed a draft law defining which level of government was entitled to issue which types of documents, in order to reduce the number of procedures involved in dealing with the government, and consequent opportunities for corruption (Vasavakul 1997a: 342).

The education sector in general, and higher education in particular, was not immune to this process. Central government decision-making for higher education was a complex affair involving a large number of separate bodies that needed to be consulted before a decision could be made. The process of reform sought to simplify this situation by streamlining the decision-making process, and regularising it by making it subject to the independent strictures of the law.

**Government Higher Education Decision-making Authorities under Đổi mới**

According to the 1992 constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the National Assembly is the highest organ of state power. It consists of representatives who are elected every five years and who are responsible for discussing and approving national laws. In line with this position, it has the final say in matters relating to education, particularly the budget and major education programs. It is assisted by a standing committee on education, called the Commission for Culture, Education, Youth and Children's Affairs, whose role is specifically to advise the National Assembly on matters relating to education. At the provincial, district and commune levels, other representatives are elected to their respective People’s Councils (Hội đồng Nhân dân) to fill a similar function.

Despite the official position of the National Assembly at the pinnacle of the Vietnamese state structure (as shown in Chart 6.1), the majority of work
concerning education is undertaken by the Communist Party of Vietnam and relevant government ministries.

The Communist Party is the real policy-making body of the Vietnamese state. In theory the role of the CPV is to advise on policy, the government transforms this advice into practical implementation strategies for approval by the National Assembly, which the government ministries then implement. In practice the party and the bureaucracy are frequently interwoven to such an extent that policy-making and implementation functions are inseparable. Senior members of the bureaucracy are invariably also party members, if not members of the Politburo or Central Committee. Frequently, although the party may not be numerically strong, key positions at all levels will be filled by party members so that its presence is nonetheless pervasive. It is rare for high-ranking members of the bureaucracy not to belong to the party, and all-important decisions are vetted by party members. This creates a parallel structure of decision-making between the ministries and the party, and creates overlapping hierarchies of decision-making.

The CPV is headed by the General Secretary and the Politburo, consisting of the most senior Communist Party members. They are supported by the Central Committee, which usually meets twice a year in order to discuss important policy directions. The CPV also has branches at provincial, district and commune levels (Uy ban Nhân dân), working alongside the People's Councils. In terms of education, the CPV has its own advisory committee on science and education, which formulates policy advice for the party (Tran Thi To Nga 1998: 25). In order to ensure the correct understanding and implementation of Communist Party policy, the CPV also has cells within all government ministries and most universities58 (Communist Party of Vietnam 1996b).

Closely linked to the CPV are the mass organisations, which, for education, include the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth League and the teachers' union.

58 The recently founded non-government universities do not appear to have established party cells.
These organisations publicise the latest government decrees and decisions and to some extent bring the views of their constituency to the notice of higher level decision-makers. The national centres for science, and social science and humanities also have an important role in acting as spearhead institutions for their respective areas of scholarship.

Finally the third branch of this triumvirate consists of the ministries, which are responsible for the implementation of CPV policy. Under đổi mới, this branch has been subject to a significant reorganisation of responsibilities. Prior to, and at the beginning of đổi mới, responsibility for different aspects of higher education was divided between a large number of different ministries. As highlighted in Chapter Three, many universities were regarded as part of the ministries for which they would provide graduates. Thus the University of Construction (ĐH Xây dựng) was a part of the Ministry of Construction, or the University of Finance (ĐH Tài chính) was part of the Ministry of Finance. The universities under the Ministry of Higher Education (and its various incarnations) consisted of teacher training universities and more generalist universities (such as the General Universities of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, the Polytechnic University (Hanoi) or the National Economics University) whose graduates might be allocated to a number of different ministries. Therefore the budget for central-level HEIs was allocated as part of the budget for the overseeing ministry, after consultation with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry for Planning and Investment (previously State Planning Commission). For those institutions at the provincial level, the level at which most teacher training and post-secondary colleges are administered, the picture was more complex. Educational matters were administered through the provincial education office (sở giáo dục) under the guidance of the central Ministry of Higher Education, while financial allocations were made through the Ministry of Finance’s local office. Personnel matters, for senior level teachers and above, were under the jurisdiction of the Government Committee for Planning (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1996: 18).
The third program of the rectors' conference held in Nha Trang in 1987 (see previous chapter), emphasised the need to address the problems created by overlapping organisations through a reform of education administration.

In 1986, responsibility for education was split between five different central government bodies: the Committee for the Protection of Mothers and Children (responsible for crèches), the General Department for Vocational Training, the Ministry of Education (responsible for education from pre-school through to secondary school), the Ministry for Higher and Secondary Technical Education, and the State Science Commission, responsible for most postgraduate education and research institutions. There were also additional organisations responsible for educational publishing and research, connected to each of the separate education ministries. From 1987, however, most of these multifarious bodies were rapidly amalgamated and their responsibilities streamlined.

In the first stage, in 1987, the four agencies responsible for different levels of education were amalgamated into two, the Ministry of Education (Bộ Giáo dục), and the Ministry of Higher, Technical and Vocational Education (Bộ đại học, trung học chuyên nghiệp và dạy nghề). In 1990 these were again amalgamated to form the single Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) (Regulation 244-NQ/HĐNND, 31/3/1990) (Tran Chi Dao, Lam Quang Thiep et al. 1995a: 75). Several years later, in 1994, the number of educational organisations was further reduced as the two educational research institutes, as well as the education

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59 Ủy ban bảo vệ bà mẹ trẻ em

60 Tổng cục dạy nghề

61 Bộ giáo dục

62 Bộ đại học và trung học chuyên nghiệp

63 Ủy ban Khoa học Nhà nước
publishing house and publication houses for ministry bulletins were also incorporated under the MOET, giving it the basic form which it has today (in accordance with decision ND 29/CP, 30/3/1994; Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 386-7). However, postgraduate education remained divided between two separate organisations, the Ministry of Science, Industry and the Environment (MSIE) (formerly the State Science Commission) and the MOET, depending on whether the institution in question is a research institute (answering to the MSIE) or a university (answering to the MOET).

As the MOET was created, it was also allocated the education responsibilities that had previously belonged to other organisations. Decision 50/CT (22/2/1990) signed by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers transferred management for the budget of graduate education to the MOET, and this was followed by Decision 287/CT (4/8/92), which transferred the budget for all other levels of education to the MOET as well, even that previously under local authorities. Further regulations specified how this budget should be managed and decided, in coordination with the Ministry of Finance and the State Planning Commission (Minh Vũ 1994: 20). Streamlining the budget management under the MOET aimed at 'ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of public financing for education, including higher education, and avoiding the practice of using educational budgets for other purposes.' (Minh Vũ 1994: 21).

Academic administration for all HEIs (excluding CPV schools or schools related to national security) is now also under the jurisdiction of the MOET. The MOET is responsible for the broad structure of curriculum (number of credits required for graduation, breakdown of knowledge areas, establishment of new majors...), national admissions regulations, and the granting of degrees (Mai Văn Tinh 1997: 4). In short it is officially responsible for all cross-disciplinary education matters for the nation (see decisions 196/HĐBT, 11/12/1989; and 418/HĐBT, 7/12/1990). Despite this transfer of responsibilities, in 1996, of 110 HEIs, 33 were officially under the authority of provincial governments (all of them colleges or in-service training centres), and 24 were under other ministries, leaving the MOET
with direct responsibility for only 40 universities (World Bank 1996: 12). For the universities still under the responsibility of a different ministry, that ministry allocates their budget and stipulates salaries, scholarships and the promotion of senior staff, while the institution itself manages junior staff (Mai Van Tinh 1997: 4).

Prior to đổi mới, the universities under different line ministries also offered their own awards, which did not necessarily correspond to the national level awards recognised by the MOET, but were recognised by that ministry for work within that ministry's portfolio. These have also been maintained under đổi mới but are gradually being undermined by student preferences. For example, where before the University of Health (Đại học Y tế) under the Ministry of Health awarded its own certificates for professionals in the health field, it has gradually been forced to give in to the standardisation of awards in the Vietnamese higher education system. The awards offered by the Ministry of Health were only recognised for work within the Ministry. Particularly at higher levels, however, doctors have increasingly preferred to undertake qualifications recognised by the MOET in order to further their career in other areas, and consequently Masters and PhD level awards at the University of Health have begun to be undertaken in accordance with MOET regulations since the mid-1990s (Hoàng Minh 2000).

While large areas of responsibility have been brought under the new MOET, this does not necessarily mean that the full process of decision-making has been streamlined. The division of responsibility between the three branches of National Assembly, Communist Party of Vietnam and the government ministries has changed little under đổi mới. At the same time, many of the old overlapping jurisdictions within the institutions comprising the MOET remain.

In effect, all three principal central state bodies responsible for education (CPV, National Assembly and the MOET) must all approve new proposals before they can be implemented. Although the MOET usually 'raises and drafts' policy on education, it must then seek approval from the CPV Committee for Science and Education, and the National Assembly Committee for Culture, Education and Youth, leading to long delays in implementation (Pham Thanh Nghi 1997: 85).
Chart 5.1: Organisation of Education Planning and Management in Vietnamese Higher Education, early 1990s
In China, education suffered from similar problems of overlapping hierarchies and decision-making. In particular, with the numerous different ministries involved in education, all with the same level of authority, the Ministry of Education had only limited success in pushing through reforms. Consequently, in 1985 national leaders chose to introduced a body of higher status, the National Education Commission, that would have authority over, and could coordinate and issue instructions across, the network of ministries involved in higher education, in the hope of creating a more unified system. It introduced a supra-ministerial education council, which was 'a structure that permit[ed] the top educational authorities to issue instructions to other ministries concerning the institutions of higher education in their "system"' (Lieberthal and Oksenberg c1988: 144).

Vietnam chose a similar solution to overcome a similar set of problems. The need for such a council was already outlined in the recommendations of the Education and Human Resources Sector Analysis in 1992 (UNDP/UNESCO 1992: 47), but no formal plans for its creation were evident before 1996. Given the number of universities under the control of different authorities, the MOET was unable to make or enforce many decisions concerning education on its own. By the same token, as will become apparent in the following pages, the MOET was facing many difficulties in the implementation of its proposed policies to improve higher education, among them the lack of an overall strategic direction with endorsement from across the government, under which to justify their individual policy decisions. For these reasons, in 1997 the National Commission on Education (Hội đồng Quốc gia Giáo dục) was created (Nhân Dân 13/5/1997: 10). The Commission has subsequently become an important organisation, comprising those ministers with schools under their jurisdiction or those with responsibility for some aspect of the education sector (such as the Minister of Finance). 64 This committee acts as an advisory committee directly to the Prime Minister. For a long time this commission had limited success in reconciling the views of the

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64 Interview with Lâm Quang Thiệp, advisor to the Minister for Education, Hanoi, April 2000.
different players, and in formulating an acceptable education strategy for the future, but at least the initial blockages appear to have been resolved following the Ninth Party Congress in 2001 with the adoption of a strategic plan for education in December 2001 (No. 201/2001/QD-TTG, 28/12/2001).

While the National Education Commission went some way to reconciling the conflicting views and responsibilities across the different ministries and the CPV, within the MOET itself, many overlapping processes of decision-making also exist. For example, while the Department for Higher Education (Vụ đại học, previously part of the Ministry for Higher and Technical Education), nominally has responsibility for approving all courses of study for higher education institutions, teacher training universities and colleges have their courses vetted by the Department for Teachers (Vụ giáo viên), which previously belonged to the Ministry of (General) Education. To further complicate matters, some subjects, such as philosophy and Marxism-Leninism must also seek approval from the Department of Political Affairs (Vụ chính trị).

Since their amalgamation into the MOET in 1994, the research institutes are now also supposed to undertake research across the whole education sector instead of for the separate levels of education as previously. The Institute for Educational Science (Viện khoa học giáo dục) is officially responsible for practical educational matters such as teaching, teaching materials and course outlines, while the National Institute for Educational Development (Viện nghiên cứu phát triển giáo dục) is responsible for more overall education strategy. In fact, however, the former tends to concentrate on primary and secondary education, and the latter on tertiary education, reflecting their ministerial affiliations prior to 1990. They have each maintained their previous staff with their previous expertise. Six years after the amalgamation and reallocation of responsibilities, an education journal (run by the MOET) published an article concerning the selection criteria

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65 Literally translated 'Institute for Research into Education Development', the National Institute for Education Development is the translation used by the institute itself.
for future staff for the Institute for Educational Science. It insists that all new
recruits should have at least five years teaching experience, specifically in
secondary schools, undermining the stated purpose of the amalgamation to serve
the whole of the education sector (Nguyễn Dàng Cúc 1996).

Nor have the amalgamations been widely accepted by ministry officials.
Continued talk by ministry officials, in 1996, that the MOET should be re-divided
according to its previous structure, prompted the prime minister to give a speech
affirming that the single combined Ministry of Education and Training would
remain. Ongoing disputes about restructuring the ministry had been seriously
affecting its work.66 The habits, affiliations and networks which existed prior to đổi
mới have remained, calling into question the extent to which the amalgamation
has actually succeeded in streamlining procedures.

Other areas of overlapping jurisdiction are not so obviously related to the
MOET’s previous constituent bodies. From a brief survey of individual department
brochures supplied by the MOET, and discussions with ministry officials, some of
these key areas that still exist include the approval of curriculum (under the
responsibility of the Department of Higher Education, Department for Continuing
Education, Department for Teachers), the appointment of senior personnel in
universities (Department for Teachers, Department for Organisation and
Personnel, Government Committee on Organisation), the selection of students to
study overseas (Minister of Education, Department of Postgraduate Education,
Department for International Affairs, Department for Political Activities)67 and the

66 Interview with MOET official, Hanoi, April 1997.

67 Vụ công tác Chính trị. In official government publications the title of this department is often
translated as the 'Department for Educational Affairs', or the 'Department for Student Affairs',
presumably to eliminate the reference to politics which may be viewed with concern by some
English-language readers.
award of honorary or senior teaching titles (Department for Organisation and Personnel, Department for Political Activities).

Despite the difficulties outlined above, the process of amalgamation did have some notable successes. Each of the previous four institutions had their own Department of Organisation and Personnel, and their own Department of Planning and Finance. Each of these areas of responsibility has now been amalgamated into a single Department of Organisation and Personnel, and a single Department of Planning and Finance, servicing the whole of the MOET. These were departments whose responsibilities most clearly overlapped and could be combined in a single move. Further streamlining of the ministry would have required a more complex analysis of the individual activities undertaken in each department to ensure they did not overlap.

The streamlining of responsibilities under the MOET was intended to be a process of recentralisation which would allow it to formulate and implement a nation-wide education policy more effectively. Streamlining would clarify the agencies responsible for elaborating instructions on particular issues, and reduce the possibility for contradictory decisions. In practice, however, this ability to achieve this result was undermined by the network of personal relationships connecting the MOET to universities and the willingness of universities themselves to bypass MOET regulations.
Chart 5.2: Structure of the Ministry of Education and Training, early 1990s

Bureaus (Văn phòng):
- Education Administration
- Information
- General Administration
- Archives
- Emulation Movement
- Administration Finance
- Legislation

Dividing Responsibilities between Government and Universities

If administrative reorganisation at the central level is characterised by a streamlining and centralisation of responsibilities, then the relationship between the central ministries and the universities has been characterised by an ambiguous process of decentralisation. As outlined above, the Sixth Party Congress in 1986 did not specify a new policy direction for education, except insofar as it should take into account the introduction of the multi-sector economy. Consequently it was left up to the decision-makers in the education sector itself to suggest how this was to be managed. In terms of university administration, the Nha Trang conference, then, specified the need to link research and training more to production, increase links to the private sector, reform administration, increase the standards of administration and democratise administrative practices (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 237).

Linking training with labour production (gắn đào tạo với lao động sản xuất) has been a long-standing aim, and an important element of central planning. It demands closer links between universities and factories or other productive enterprises. Despite individual instances in which universities have established links with (mostly state) enterprises to enhance their income (see the following chapter for more examples), this program has been one with ongoing difficulties, which have not been eased with the introduction of a private sector.

Some of the reasons for these difficulties are based on the historical characteristics of decision-making in Vietnam. At the University of Da Nang, for example, I asked staff in the training department (which is responsible for course logistics in universities) what they had done in relation to the government’s slogan

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of linking education more closely to production. They answered that they were still waiting for directions from the central government on how to do this. They were unwilling to take the initiative in seeking out contacts outside the university, despite their own complaints that students were finding it hard to get jobs upon graduation. Discussion with parents of graduate students also highlighted that many local businesses were unwilling to employ local university graduates because they found the graduates simply did not have the skills required for their businesses.

Despite this apparently well-known phenomenon, the members of the university's training department did not make contact directly with enterprises working in the area to resolve the situation. Their reason for not embarking on this solution showed clearly how the university was locked into a vertical hierarchy and relied on specific directions from above, rather than general policy statements (such as 'link training more closely to production') before acting. The university continued to act on vertical linkages through the relevant ministries, rather than seeking horizontal linkages with the business community. Larger and more prestigious universities appear to have had greater links with productive enterprises (see following chapter), although it is not clear whether these links were established independently, or whether they were established through the vertical ministerial hierarchies which were more accessible to the larger universities in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Rural universities such as the University of Da Nang were not as close to higher levels of decision-making authority.

Such offices were constrained in showing initiative by their previous experience in central planning and lack of understanding or willingness to take the next step. In fact, under đổi mới, HEIs in general have been given more

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69 Meeting with university officials, University of Da Nang, Đà Nẵng, June 1997.

70 Interviews, Đà Nẵng, June 1997.
responsibility as part of the administrative reform process, but without any specific directions or training in how to fulfill their new tasks, and perhaps more importantly, no obvious incentives to undertake these activities on behalf of the university.

As with many of the all-encompassing slogans used to encourage change, the practical make-up of democratisation (độc chính hóa) appears little understood. In interviews with senior university administrators and teachers in 1997 and 1998 I asked them to describe how democratisation had taken place in their university. Some of the issues they raised included the expansion of student numbers, the introduction of non-public HEIs, the loosening of age and other requirements governing student admission to universities, or greater communication between teachers and students. These opinions contrast with a summary of an official workshop on democratisation in education following the Sixth Party Congress in late 1986. This workshop expressed the aims of democratisation as: guaranteeing students the power to study (especially those of six to fourteen years of age); standardising education policy and laws; eliminating illiteracy; developing the mastery (quyền làm chủ) of students through teaching; building a relationship between students and teachers based on respect for teachers and care for students; and increasing the independence of school administrators and the school rector (Nghiên cứu Giáo dục 1989: 1). Only the last of these implies a decentralisation of authority to lower levels. Yet another interpretation was that of the president of the Education Union, who argued that 'democratisation' was not linked to a process of decentralisation at all. Instead it involved a 'recentralisation' and strengthening of the role of existing institutions within the universities (such as mass organisations and the teacher's union) in order to ensure that their voice was heard in decision-making (Hoàng Mạnh Phú 1989).

This increasing voice in decision-making is perhaps best exemplified by the introduction of annual meetings, essentially between the MOET and university educators under tài mới. Ostensibly these meetings have been to discuss existing problems, and often they have been heated. This was particularly the case for the
rectors’ conference in 1998, as reflected in interviews reported in the media with educators attending the conference. At the same time, however, these annual meetings have tended to serve as a platform for the MOET to announce changes in government policy as much as to request input in formulating future government strategy. This was the case in 1987 (in Nha Trang) when it announced the beginning of the open admission system, and for its abandonment again in 1989 (see Chapter 5). In 1993 the annual meeting was used to announce the regulations for the opening of private universities, and in 1998, the Minister announced an end to the controversial foundation studies schools (see Chapter 7).

At the same time though, these meetings have been increasingly vigorous under đổi mới, allowing both universities and to some extent the teachers and students within them to have a greater say in the types of policy which are discussed and implemented (Tran Thi To Nga 1998: 37).

Both Tran Thi To Nga and Pham Thanh Nghi note that the media have had an increasingly important role to play in the discussions concerning the future of education, as was evident in the rectors’ conference of 1998. This has opened up a forum for debate that also enables a wider variety of opinions to reach policy-

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71 The articles are too numerous to mention. See for example: B. Hàng, B. Hà, et al. (1998). 'Phải có một hội thảo khoa học đánh giá khách quan' [There must be a scientific workshop to evaluate objectively]. Lao Động, 30/4/1998: 11.


72 Also highlighted in interviews with senior MOET officials, Hanoi, July 1998.
makers (Pham Thanh Nghi 1997: 86; Tran Thi To Nga 1998: 32,35), although it has also had the parallel effect of increasing the channels for ministry officials to publicise their decisions. The official report on the 1998 conference consisted principally of reports from individual departments within the MOET on achievements and weaknesses in their sector, but gave almost no mention of the discussion about the end to the two-phase higher education program, which was apparently the most heated topic of debate at the conference (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1998).73

Another area in which a genuine decentralisation is evident is that of enrolment. Since the 1987/88 academic year, universities have become increasingly involved in the enrolment of students, which was previously organised entirely by the Ministry of Higher Education. Examinations began to take place in the universities themselves from the late 1980s instead of in a wide variety of state centres (Đỗ Văn Chung 1988), and universities could set their own examinations in accordance with the ministry’s ‘Regulations on admission to HE full-time, long term programs’ (2/6/1989) (Minh Vu 1994).

Once official permission for universities to set their own entrance examinations had been given, many still used the optional examination booklet produced by the MOET for several years, however, because they had little or no experience in writing their own examination questions. It was only in 1997 when the MOET ceased producing the examination booklet that they were forced to write their own. At the same time some newer or smaller HEIs have still been refused permission to set their own entrance examinations on the grounds that they have insufficient expertise to do so. They continue to rely on the examinations set and marked by the larger universities, such as Hanoi National University. Given the limited experience of staff at such newly founded

73 See numerous references in Chapter seven concerning the end of the two-phase higher education system.
institutions, not all senior members are unhappy with the situation. The MOET effectively makes a clear distinction between the more established, larger institutions, and the burgeoning number of new, smaller, apparently less reliable ones.

Finally, in this same period, universities were given permission and even encouraged to seek funding from overseas. Previously any international contacts, from hosting visitors through to signing projects, were expected to pass through the international relations department of the MOET, though in practice many informal contacts existed. This changed officially with the introduction of Decision 134-HDBT, introduced on the 31/8/1987. This decision gave universities permission to seek funding from all overseas sources, particularly to assist with expenditure on equipment, and eventually led to the MOET adopting an official policy encouraging universities to seek increased international contacts and cooperation directly (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1997: 16).

The activity which has perhaps been most commonly attributed to the slogan dân chủ hóa in the press, with regards to HEIs, is that of increasing the independence of school administrators and rectors, and in particular the introduction of elections for university rectors by the staff and students of the university. In a country where a university rector was previously appointed by the relevant government minister, the introduction of such a procedure marks a remarkable step towards decentralisation. This procedure was formally approved by the Ministry of Higher and Technical Education in 1987 (QD1564 GD-DT, 18/12/1987) and was first trialled at the University of Hanoi in 1988.

At the University of Hanoi, a list of fifty-one candidates was initially drawn up and presented to voters, including twelve from outside the school. Following several rounds of selection the choice was eventually reduced to two. They both had to present a speech on their plans for the university for the next three years (the specified term of office) so that university representatives could vote for the

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74 Interview with senior English teacher at Duy Tan University, Đà Nẵng, June 1997.
appropriate candidate. A total of 856 voters representing 1,500 teachers and 3,000 students were then invited to take part in a secret ballot, and Nguyễn An was eventually elected to the position with a total of 525 votes (Bùi Nguyễn 1988).

An important aspect of the event was the presence of senior members of central government bodies to oversee the process of election, including the Minister of Higher and Technical Education, members of the Hanoi City CPV Department on Education and Science (Khoa giáo thành ủy), representatives of the central party committee and representatives of other universities in Hanoi. It was a very carefully watched process, indicating the cloud of discussion under which it was undertaken (Bùi Nguyễn 1988).

Despite Bùi Nguyễn's assertion that this trial was a resounding success, central authorities continued to be very wary of the process. The first election of a rector in the south of the country, at the Ho Chi Minh City University of Economics, in the middle of the same year was not reported in the press at all until well after the event, presumably because of worry concerning the results. In the event, the person elected, Công Tiền was a member of the Communist Party who had graduated from the National Economics University in Hanoi in agricultural economics, and who had travelled to the Soviet Union for two years of practical training (Phúc Tiền 1988a). In a country that prizes academic titles so highly, it is surprising that the first rector elected in the south did not have any sort of post-graduate degree, even if he did have significant experience in managing government projects, indicating a political rather than an academic choice. The choice of candidates may have possibly been limited by the fact that the majority of post-graduates are concentrated in the north of the country.

The process continued to have high level, close government supervision. In September 1989, the University of Medicine elected a rector for the first time, an event which was attended by the Minister for Health, the Ministry of Higher Education and representatives of the central party committee (P.V. 1989). Admittedly this was the first time a university under a ministry other than the Ministry of Higher Education had conducted the election of its rector, but it still
highlights how closely concerned with the process were members of the central government.

In 1992, the Hanoi Foreign Languages University *(DH Ngoại Ngữ Hà Nội)* claimed to be the first university to elect a rector for the second time. Four candidates presented themselves, and because no individual reached 50% of the votes (a total of 205 votes were cast), a second round was held between the two leading candidates, and the winner was declared with 134 votes. Even several years into the experiment, this event was still attended by many central party committee members, and at the end of the election process the head of the Department for Organisation and Personnel of the MOET read the official appointment of the candidate by the MOET.

From these scattered reports it is difficult to assess the impact that the presence of these senior officials might have had on the elections, but in at least one case that presence was decisive. At the National Economics University, elections were held in 1994 for the position of rector. The staff vote, however, was overturned by a second meeting of key university Communist Party members. Some staff said that the man whom the CPV chose was less likely to cause friction and had closer contacts with the Communist Party. Others asserted that he was simply the better man for the job.75

The 1996 evaluation of education published by the MOET says that 'democratisation in the practice of electing the rector' took place in 26 universities up to and including 199076 (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1997: 16). Tellingly, it does not give any statistics for later years. Despite the publicity which surrounded both the policy of electing rectors, and the elections themselves when they took place, by 1991 elections of university rectors were gradually being faded out. The reason for

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75 Interviews with NEU staff, Hanoi, April 1997.

76 'Tên đến năm 1990, dân chủ hóa việc chọn hiệu trưởng đã thực hiện trong 26 trường đại học và cao đẳng.'
the abandonment of what was touted a key policy at the time is not clear. In 2002, the Director of the Department of Higher Education (MOET) said that they had conducted a survey of staff concerning the issue in the 1990s, and the overall view was negative, therefore they had decided to abandon the process.  

Effectively the evaluation of senior education administrators, researchers and social scientists conducted by the MOET in 1996 found that the election of rectors both as a policy and in its implementation was one of the programs with the least support from senior educators and party members, under đổi mới. This is not necessarily a sufficient explanation, however, as the same evaluation found the creation of national universities in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City to be an even more unpopular program (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1997: 83-4), but national universities have nonetheless continued to be a cornerstone of Vietnamese higher education policy.

Many other countries (including Australia) do not engage in a process of inclusive democratic elections from below for their university rectors, but what remains important in Vietnam is that this policy was widely supported and publicised at its outset, to the point that it was highlighted as a key government policy at the Seventh Party Congress (Dảng Cộng sản Việt Nam 1991: 32, 82). In 1996, however, all mention of democratising university administration (đan chủ hóa nhà trường) was dropped from the Eighth Party Congress. It was a fundamental departure from existing practices of appointing the rector from above, and was obviously of great concern to high level government officials even several years into its introduction. Unlike the complaints about the two-phase system (discussed in Chapter 7) or private universities (discussed in Chapter 6), the abandonment of elections for rectors was not discussed in the media, and

77 Interview with Lê Việt Khuyên, Director, Higher Education Department, MOET, Hanoi, March 2002.
ceased in the early 1990s by direct decision from the Minister for Education and Training. 78

Re-organisation of the University Network

The current organisation of higher education results in institutions that are too small and numerous, and too academically and/or geographically dispersed to make the most efficient use of resources. Most of the critical problems facing higher education derive from the existence of 103 separate higher education institutions and some 300 state research institutions and their lack of integration at the system level (Tran Chi Dao 1995b: 79).

The need to change the existing system of universities was recognised as early as the Sixth National Party Congress, which asserted the need to re-arrange the 'network of universities and colleges' (Communist Party of Vietnam 1987: 106). It was not until 1991, however, that the MOET and local authorities were officially instructed to investigate the issue (255/CT, 31/8/1991). The investigation resulted in policy decision 324/CT (September 1992) which insisted on the need to link research and teaching institutions more closely to each other, and, following the Fourth Plenum of the Seventh Party Congress in November 1993, it resulted in the ministerial-level decision to completely reorganise the system of higher education institutions (ND 90/CP 24/11/1993), (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1996: 5).

The policy to link research institutions with their high social prestige and bastion of respected professors to universities does not appear to have resulted in any concrete plans of action. Far more has been done to link existing universities to each other. Decision 90/CP provided the framework for a new system of higher

78 ibid.
education, which aimed at addressing the problems of flexibility, financing, scale and the lack of standardisation in degrees from institutions under different ministries. It introduced a variety of institutions in Vietnam, including public (công lập), semi-public (bán công), people-founded (đàn lập) and private (tự thực) institutions. It also asserts the existence of schools for people with special abilities, aptitudes and disabilities, and the introduction of a variety of education programs: long term, short term, concentrated and non-concentrated, training, re-training, regular, non-regular, private, distance, and so on. This contrasts significantly with the former limited range of programs which were offered, namely chỉ thô quy (regular), undertaken by most students at universities, and tài chức (in-service) courses, principally for state employees to upgrade their qualifications. The decree also confirmed the existence of Masters and PhD degrees as the only two postgraduate awards to be offered by universities, officially abandoning the 'Candidate of Science' (phó tiến sĩ) degree previously offered.

An examination of the way in which these universities were re-organised into national and regional universities, various non-government universities, and community colleges (not mentioned explicitly in Decision 90/CP), reveals a dislocation between the official policy of decentralising more responsibilities to the university level and a certain amount of unwillingness and suspicion on the part of the MOET towards delegating many responsibilities to the universities. Despite this unwillingness, it also shows that universities are often able to by-pass or ignore MOET decisions when it suits them.

**National and regional universities**

In order to overcome the problems created by a large number of small, specialised HEIs, the most significant experiment trialled by the government was the introduction of national and regional universities, on the basis of smaller, existing mono-disciplinary HEIs. These institutions were intended to be large multi-disciplinary institutions of high quality. With larger numbers of students, the institutions would be better able to offer a wider variety of subjects, teachers could broaden their specialisations, and costly resources could be used to serve a larger
student population. As the leading institutions in the country, the national universities would attract priority government funding, and would be better placed to attract outside funding for priority areas. Adopting a system of multi-disciplinary universities would further bring Vietnam more into line with the majority of countries in the region and in the world (Trần Chí Đạo 1998). Student administration would also be more efficient because there would be one location responsible for a larger number of students, instead of a large number of different offices being responsible for a small number of students (Mai Lan 1998b).

In the mid-1990s the Vietnamese government established two national universities in the two largest Vietnamese cities. The Hanoi National University (ĐH Quốc gia Hà Nội),79 was established in 1994 on the basis of three existing universities, the University of Foreign Languages (ĐH Ngoại ngữ), the Foreign Languages Teacher Training University (ĐH Sư phạm Ngoại ngữ) and the Hanoi (General) University (ĐH Tổng hợp Hà Nội) (Decision 87/CP). The Ho Chi Minh City National University (ĐH Quốc gia TpHCM) was officially created in 1995 (Decision 16/CP), on the basis of nine existing institutions, including the Ho Chi Minh City (General) University (ĐH Tổng hợp TpHCM), and other, mono-disciplinary institutions in Ho Chi Minh City.

These two universities were delegated special authority on key issues to encourage flexibility and initiative. They were given special reporting arrangements with the MOET (Ministry of Education and Training 1999a: 14), as well as greater powers to develop their own courses, undertake their own research and manage their own finances independently (Vietnam National University (Hanoi) 1997). They also had leeway to open new experimental classes without seeking permission from the MOET first, a process that was expected from other universities.80 In practice, however, the MOET continued to take a close interest in

79 Also sometimes translated as Vietnam National University - Hanoi (VNU), although the Vietnamese terminology remains the same.

80 Interview with senior MOET official, Hanoi, June 1988.
the university courses, and expected all new courses to be forwarded to the MOET for final approval. Senior educators complained that the result of the national universities was not so much greater flexibility, as the creation of an extra layer of administration, which further complicated procedures and led to further delays in the introduction of new courses (Trần Chí Đạo 1998; Võ Hồng Quynthia 1998b). In Ho Chi Minh City, these complications led to extensive discussion about the relevance of the amalgamation, which was strengthened by the rapid expansion of student numbers in each of the faculties, and resulted in a Ho Chi Minh City National University of some 160,000 students. While increasing the size of universities was one of the major reasons for the creation of national universities, the expansion has been far beyond expectations and perhaps beyond the ability a single administration to manage effectively.

More recently, the government decided to allow universities to abandon the much disputed foundational studies faculty (*Đại học cơ sở*), one of the major innovations for national and regional universities (see Chapter Seven). Without a real delegation of powers to the administration of the national university, and without a common foundation teaching program, they argue, is there a role for a national university? (Mai Lan 1998a; Võ Hồng Quynthia 1998a; Mai Lan 1998b).

In Hanoi, the two smaller institutions involved in the merger to form the national university, the Foreign Languages Teacher Training University and the Foreign Languages University, faced problems of a different type as they refused to acknowledge the leadership of the national university administration. They complained that the former Hanoi (General) University (*Đại học Tổng hợp Hà Nội*) did not take their specialised needs into account. At the same time the larger institution complained of the lack of quality of the smaller ones (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1996: 9). The smaller institutions’ refusal to acknowledge the amalgamation continued even where it was in their material interest to accept the situation. A representative of a bilateral donor explained they had offered some
money to Vietnamese universities for them to establish English language studies programs. Subsequently each of the three component institutions from the Hanoi National University had submitted separate requests for funding. The donor was keen to support these requests, however it asked that the three proposals be submitted together as part of a combined university strategy proposal, they could not accept proposals from what were now effectively sub-university level institutions. Even with the incentive of significant funding for cooperation, the constituent institutions still refused to combine their proposals, and their requests were subsequently refused.81

Nor did the creation of the HNU achieve the hoped-for efficiency gains. Despite offering similar courses, none of the three institutions attempted to coordinate their training efforts. For example, English language courses taught at the former Foreign Languages Teacher Training University, at the Foreign Languages University, and at the former Hanoi (General) University, while often teaching almost identical material, maintained their separate courses within the structure of the former institutions and only had informal links with each other. Senior management within the universities was unwilling to accept the loss of autonomy that complying with the government decision would imply. As a consequence, the university did not achieve the hoped-for increase in resource efficiency or broadening of curriculum, instead the smaller institutions began an ongoing wrangle to once again separate from the parent institution.82 When I returned to Hanoi in April 2000, the teacher training university had been successful in its bid for independence, once again becoming an entirely separate institution six years after the amalgamation.83

81 Interview with official from the Australian Embassy, Hanoi, February 1997.

82 Interviews with officials from the MOET and foreign aid organisations, Hanoi, April-June 1997.

Teacher training institutions, often the smallest and most dispersed institutions in the country, have insisted on the special role that their institutions play in guiding and in ensuring the moral qualities of future teachers of the country, and consequently of their students. It is at these institutions, their proponents argue, that teachers are given a sound basis in Marxist-Leninist theory, and the moral and ethical character of future teachers is formed. Given the importance of this field, they argue, such institutions should be maintained separately, and given special attention by the government (Nguyễn Đình Chính 1996a; Thu Phượng 1998). Arguments such as these have also prompted the government to consider establishing a national network of teacher training institutions (Mai Lan 1998b). They have an easy appeal to conservatives who worry about the rapidly changing nature of Vietnamese universities and Vietnamese youth, as well as for those who wish to underscore teaching as an important and prestigious profession with its own demands. In 2001, the assertions of the special status of teacher training institutions caused the Hanoi Teacher Training University and the Ho Chi Minh City Teacher Training Institution to be declared 'peak institutions' as part of the government's 'Education Development Strategy for 2001 - 2010', effectively undermining the previous emphasis on multi-disciplinary universities (Chính phủ 2001: Article 5.4).

Various specialist universities were also earmarked for amalgamation but similarly avoided the threat. The National Economics University was rumoured to have been threatened with amalgamation with the University of Accounting (ĐHQG Kế toán), and the University of Finance (ĐHQG Tài chính) in the first half of the 1990s. Rather than submitting to this amalgamation, it rapidly increased the number of students it was teaching. From an average yearly intake of 300-350 full-time regular students between 1986 and 1990, the enrolment jumped to around 2,500 students for the year 1996/7 (Ministry of Education and Training 1996: 10; Nhân Dân 18/6/1998, p.8). By 1999 the university was enrolling 6,335 new
students, for a total enrolment of 29,933 officially registered students. Consequently in the first ten years of đổi mới the number being enrolled each year had increased more than seven times, and doubled again in the following three years. With the rapid increase in size, it could claim there was no longer any need for amalgamation as it was already achieving considerable efficiency gains. The other two universities have also increased their numbers, but did not escape amalgamation, so that in 1999 they formed the combined University of Accounting and Finance (ĐH Kế toán Tài chính) with a total official enrolment of 17,330 students. Universities were able to use a variety of arguments and methods to strengthen their position in the face of demands of which the university itself did not approve.

Regional multi-disciplinary institutions have faced similar questions. Three such institutions were created on the basis of existing institutions in Huế, Đà Nẵng and Thái Nguyên. The university in Đà Lạt is gradually achieving regional status as well through the introduction of a wider variety of courses, rather than through the incorporation of existing institutions. All these institutions were founded along similar lines, with one overarching administrative body, the constituent teaching faculties (principally based on the former amalgamated universities), and a new 'foundational studies' institution (ĐH Đại cương) established in order to teach the common foundation course that was introduced

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84 Internal statistics provided by the MOET, 1999-2000.

85 ibid.

86 These subordinate institutions have most often maintained the name of 'university' (đại học) despite their changed status, leading to some confusion. For example, the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, (ĐH Xã hội và Nhân Văn) is a member faculty of the Hanoi National University. Documents issued in the name of the faculty will often give the name of the subordinate institution without mentioning its affiliation with the parent institution.
for university students in 1988 (see the example of the University of Da Nang, Chart 5.3).

These universities were not granted any special privileges with regards to the MOET but provided more opportunities for students to study a wider variety of subjects at a single institution.

Chart 5.3: University of Da Nang, 1997

By contrast with the national institutions, the regional University of Da Nang appears to have undergone a relatively successful amalgamation. This university was established in 1994, on the basis of five previously existing schools. It appears to have successfully unified key management areas of the university, such as enrolment, international relations and foundational studies, without the crippling power struggles of the HNU. One of the senior administrators attributed this to the fact that the rector of the new university was the former head of the most prestigious and largest of the constituent universities, the Da Nang
Engineering University (ĐH Kỹ thuật Đà Nẵng), and consequently he was able to wield a certain amount of power and authority.87

Overall, the introduction of regional and national universities was a policy decision made by the central government level to address some urgent problems facing the higher education sector. It was undermined not only by elements within the MOET who were wary of delegating genuine authority to the institutions themselves, such as delegating authority for new courses to national universities, but also by the fear of existing universities that their authority would be challenged in the process of amalgamation. Nevertheless the example of the University of Da Nang shows that such reticence could be overcome in cases where an individual had sufficient standing.

Community Colleges (Trường cộng đồng)

While national universities were an attempt to broaden the focus of HEIs to meet higher educational needs at the national level, community colleges attempted to achieve similar objectives at the local level. Prior to đổi mới, provinces and districts benefited from sub-bachelor degree level colleges (trường đại học cao đẳng) offering post-secondary studies of two to three years, leading to an associate diploma (bằng tốt nghiệp cao đẳng). The subjects offered were usually in areas such as teacher-training, or areas of local relevance such as forestry or fisheries. Inspired by the systems in the United States and Canada, several senior staff from within the MOET suggested transforming these existing institutions into North American-style community colleges as a means of increasing the number of trained technicians at the post-secondary level (Tran Thi To Nga 1998: 73). The concept was not entirely new in Vietnam. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the government of South Vietnam had established several community colleges in 1973. Although they did not operate for long, they

87 Interview with senior administrator, University of Da Nang, Đà Nẵng, June 1997.
nonetheless gave people in the south some experience with this style of institution.

Community colleges aimed to link education more closely to the needs of local communities and the jobs available within that community. It was also hoped they would enhance equity of access to higher education by providing the first year and a half of foundational studies in regional locations, where costs of living were not so high. They would then act as a stepping stone for rural students to access larger, more comprehensive universities in the cities during their final years of study. As community colleges would be provincial level institutions, financed in large part by the provincial budget (and the remainder through student fees), the central government saw them as a possible means of reducing the central education budget (Tran Thi To Nga 1998: 75, 81).

In order to establish the community college system, representatives from the MOET met with existing college leaders and other education specialists in January 1992, at a time when the most significant tertiary level reorganisations were being discussed. Following this initial meeting, they again met in August 1993, to discuss the issue in collaboration with the World Bank project for higher education. These meetings were supplemented by seminars and visits to Vietnam by education specialists, sponsored in particular by the United States and Canada, in order to get an overseas perspective on how the issue has been addressed (Tran Thi To Nga 1998: 75-78). After many years of deliberation the formal decision giving the right of establishment to community colleges was signed by the Prime Minister on the 24 of July 1997.

A number of the existing colleges from different provinces expressed interest in becoming community colleges, in the hope that this would lead to more students and greater funding. In Thanh Hóa province for example, MOET officials met with provincial level officials who were keen to have a multi-disciplinary institution in the province, which would give them greater prestige and hopefully be of great benefit to the community. In the event, however, significant problems arose in attempts to amalgamate some of the existing
institutions, similar to those experienced by the national universities. After a series of feasibility studies, Hong Duc College was founded in 1997 on the basis of three existing colleges, those of Economics, Teacher Training and Medicine. The directors of the three institutions were sent to Canada and the United States in order to better understand the functions of a community college, and the Director of the Provincial Department of Education and Training, was appointed as the rector of the new institution (Tran Thi To Nga 1998: 82-83). A year later, however, the regulations governing the internal operation of the college had not yet been issued because none of the three colleges had amalgamated in any real sense and Hong Duc College as such had not yet begun operation (Tran Thi To Nga 1998: 82-84). In the period since the initial feasibility studies, the Economics College had begun attracting large numbers of students independently through courses such as business economics and secretarial courses, and consequently had no financial incentive to join. The teacher training college had little incentive to join the other institutions because of special funding privileges under central planning. These did not disappear with đổi mới, and the college feared it would lose out through the amalgamation. Finally, medical colleges were also subject to privileged treatment from provincial and health authorities. Consequently in Thanh Hóa, the medical college also had little incentive to join the others. At the same time the purpose of the community college was for them to be largely locally funded, which meant the MOET had little financial leverage with which to ensure that the amalgamation took place. While the different colleges were able to avoid amalgamation, they were not able to act entirely independently. The introduction of any new courses still had to be vetted by the MOET, which also created significant problems in their objective of meeting local needs (Tran Thi To Nga 1998: 80, 84).

In Phú Yên district the attempt to create another community college highlighted a different problem. In this case some of the local rural communities were unable to finance such an institution because of the low resource base from which they were operating. With a GDP per capita of US$162 (in 1991), the local
community could not realistically afford to maintain a quality institution without central government funding. In effect this would undermine the stated aim for community colleges to have financial self-sufficiency, and possibly affect their ability to meet local needs. On the other hand, if the central authorities allowed rural higher education institutions of low quality to persist, this would erode the quality of graduates from the region, and the ability of such graduates to attend full universities in the larger cities (Tran Thi To Nga 1998: 115-116). In both cases the issue of finance was decisive. In the first, the existing institutions had sufficient financial capital independent of the MOET to ignore the wishes of the latter. In the second, the lack of financial capital both from the MOET and the district hindered the planned changes from taking place.

By 1999, multi-disciplinary community colleges based on the amalgamation of existing institutions, according to the Canadian or U.S. model had been abandoned, although the concept itself had not. Instead it was replaced by a more fluid concept in which the 'first concern is the community and [the community college's] relationship with the community.' On this basis, the Government of the Netherlands signed a USD$7 million project to finance the introduction of a new program of study for six existing college level institutions in rural areas. Unlike the process of amalgamation suggested on the basis of the US and Canadian models, the new more European-based model focused on analysing industry needs in the local area. It then proposed to establish a single technical course in mechanical engineering or food processing, so that graduates would develop the skills to work in the local industry (Royal Netherlands Embassy and Ministry of Education and Training (Hanoi) 1999: 5). It is as yet too early to tell how successful this project will be.

Despite a widely recognised need for high quality multi-disciplinary universities to meet the needs of both rural and urban students, the government’s policy of establishing community colleges and national or regional universities has

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88 In the provinces of Bà Rịa-Vũng Tàu, Đồng Tháp, Hà Tây, Hải Phòng, Quảng Ngãi and Tiền Giang.
faced many difficulties. These have come from power struggles in which individual institutions are unwilling to accept the authority of a higher supervisory body, and because of the difficult circumstances in which these institutions find themselves. At the same time, the increased delegation of responsibilities to universities, such as the election of rectors and the delegation of increased powers to national universities for them to experiment with their own curriculum, has received continued close government supervision. The government was also willing to trial a number of options adapted from overseas, with varying degrees of success. Increasingly the fear has been that public institutions are facing an important challenge from non-government institutions.

Non-government institutions

The introduction of non-government institutions in Vietnam started slowly, but quickly gained momentum after an initial period of hesitation. It was undertaken in parallel with the introduction of fees, as discussed in the following chapter. In principle non-government institutions are so labelled because they receive little or no government funding. In theory this should allow them greater latitude in meeting student demands because they are not dependent on government funding. In practice, however, Vietnamese non-government HEIs have known varying degrees of independence and interference in their affairs from central government, often depending on their location, affiliations or even the timing of their foundation.

The first non-government institution to be opened, on a trial basis, was the People Founded University Centre of Thang Long (Trung Tâm ĐH Dân lập Thăng Long). This later became the People Founded University of Thang Long (ĐH Dân lập Thăng Long), or more simply, Thang Long University. Thang Long University was undertaken as a project in 1988 by a prestigious group of mathematics and computing lecturers from a variety of different universities in Hanoi, many with overseas postgraduate degrees from either the Soviet Union or France, and who
were able to raise funds through their outside contacts, particularly in France.\footnote{Some of the founding member included Hoàng Xuân Sinh, Hoàng Tuyền, Phan Đình Diệu, Bùi Trọng Lưu...}

These academics were aware that higher education was desperately underfunded and were concerned that this was having a detrimental effect on the quality of education (Hoàng Xuân Sinh and Bùi Trọng Lưu 1992). They also wished to establish high quality higher education in Vietnam without some of the rigidities imposed by the central authorities. These included the requirement for students to have appropriate political affiliations before they could be enrolled, or the inflexibility associated with a top-down, centrally decided curriculum (H.B. 1990; Koblitz 1990: 32).

Despite concerns about the implications of such an experiment for the future direction of the country, the centre was given permission to open on an experimental basis by the Ministry of Higher and Technical Education in 1988. It constituted the first experiment into private higher education at a time when the government was looking for alternative strategies for higher education, but the University of Thang Long was a closely supervised pilot experiment in alternative administration and finance.

As the first non-government higher education institution in the country, it was eagerly watched both within Vietnam and abroad for its success or otherwise. Countries in Eastern Europe were fervently seeking alternative models of higher education to overcome similar problems with underfunded higher education institutions. Western countries were, as always, keen to pick up on any signs of privatisation in a socialist country, while in Vietnam itself, there was considerable suspicion surrounding the suspected 'commercialisation' of education (H.B. 1990).

One of the measures of the ambiguous environment in which the university was opened is the name chosen for the university. The first rector of the university, Hoàng Xuân Sinh, explained that the term 'đàn lắp' (people-founded) was chosen rather than the more accurate 'trường tư' (private school), because of...
fears that people would think the principal aim of the school was to earn money (H.B. 1990). This term 'people-founded' has been adopted by all subsequent HEIs with private funding, with none using the term 'private' (ttü thucc).

The university had a very slow beginning. Following nine months of intensive English and Russian classes, the first class of around 50 students began studying mathematics and computing in September 1989 (Koblitz 1990: 31). For several years the university continued to have only one faculty, of mathematics and computer sciences, with around 50 students in each year. The choice of initial faculty was prompted by the fact that the founding teachers were all mathematics teachers, and also because experimental sciences would require costly equipment to set up. At the same time, humanities and social sciences continued to be subjects closely monitored by the government 'We needed to overcome the suspicions of some cadres at that time, it was not easy for them to accept a 'people-founded' university with social sciences, or even economics, law... (H.B. 1990).

The MOET kept a close eye on the university, which for several years was only permitted to issue certificates for individual subjects, rather than a degree. It faced long delays necessitated by the need to obtain approval from the highest levels of government for its operation. Nguyễn Văn Linh, General Secretary of the Communist Party at the time, provided 'concrete guidance' to the university in its founding years (Pham Thanh Nghi 1997: 99, 119). Following an evaluation mission by the MOET in 1990, however, the Centre became a fully-fledged university, with

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90 'ttù' (individual), as opposed to 'công' (public) has connotations of individual selfishness. A further reason for not adopting the term 'ttù' is because it has been associated in the past with religiously founded institutions (H.B. 1990).

91 'Lúc xin phép mở, chúng tôi cần phải tránh sự nghi kỵ của một số cán bộ học đạo, chín đường đã chấp nhận việc cho phép mở đại học 'đầu lớp ra đời với ngành khoa học xã hội, kể cả kinh tế, luật...’
permission to offer full bachelor's degrees for students, and its first students graduated in 1993.\footnote{Interview with senior staff member, Thang Long University, Hanoi, April 1997.}

The growth of the university continued to be slow. In the beginning the Centre had only 50 or 60 students in each year of study, which meant that by 1992 it had less than 300 students studying four year degree programs. The initial hindrance for the university was undoubtedly suspicion on the part of central authorities, but by 1990 Hoàng Xuân Sính argued that the principal difficulties were financial (H.B. 1990). They were not able to charge students high levels of fees, and overseas aid, which had enabled the foundation of the university, was gradually being withdrawn. The university was forced to raise its fees from US$90 per year in 1992 to US$180 per year in 1996 (Pham Thanh Nghi 1997: 112).

In 1992 the university was able to add a faculty of business administration, and in 1994 it also added faculties of law and English. In 1997 the university had around 1,100 students with approximately 200 students in each year. It planned to enroll 500 students in the following year, and gradually increase enrolments until there were 5,000 students at the university in 2005.\footnote{ibid.} By 1999/2000 it was well on the way on the way to meeting its targets with a total student enrolment of 1,894 students.\footnote{Internal MOET statistics, 1999-2000.}

The university faced many difficulties, not least of which was the suspicion of the central government leadership about the merits of allowing a self-funding institution to operate. Nevertheless, it was able to use funding from abroad and the prestige of its qualified teachers to set up its operations. The success of its operation paved the way for first a trickle, and then a flood of new non-government institutions to operate.
The second non-government higher education institution was opened soon after Thang Long University was officially permitted to offer degree programs. Ho Chi Minh City Semi-Public Open University (ĐH Мо Bản công TpHCM) was established under the initiative of Dr Cao Van Phuong, former vice-rector of Can Tho University, on June 15, 1990 (FBIS-SEA 1993). In contrast to 'people-founded' universities, these 'semi-public' institutions benefited from a certain amount of government assistance. It was established on the basis of a vocational college in HCM City and was given the use of the premises on which it was located.

In general, 'semi-public' universities are founded on the basis of existing public institutions encountering financial difficulties, which are then permitted to make use of the government facilities in order to enroll fee-paying students. In some situations they may also be offered government subsidies (Pham Thanh Nghi 1997: 92).

Compared to Thang Long University, the university faced very little opposition to its establishment (Pham Thanh Nghi 1997: 90). Ho Chi Minh City is well-known for greater acceptance of local initiative and business than Hanoi, and non-state financial capital provided from within the country may not be viewed with the same suspicion. In its first year of operation, the university had 3,000 students in 3 areas: foreign languages, business management and computing, and by 1993 the school was enrolling 12,000 students in both these disciplines and in the new subject areas of Southeast Asian studies, law, industry and agriculture, women's studies, biology and journalism (FBIS-SEA 1993). Like many of the other non-government institutions, it employed very few permanent staff (50), and relied on 400 contract staff from elsewhere to teach the increasing numbers of students (FBIS-SEA 1993; Lan Hoa 1994). It was also assisted by the fact that its

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95 Lan Hoa (1994) asserts that in 1993/4 there were 30,000 students at the university. It is not clear whether this discrepancy is because Lan Hoa includes in-service students in the numbers while the FBIS-SEA report does not, or whether there was in fact a huge increase in students in that year. In either case the numbers show a very rapid increase in the numbers attending the institution.
foundation rested on an already existing public institution, and that it was
founded with a mandate to achieve one of the government's firmest stated
principles, that of achieving equality of higher education for rural students. The
university could (initially) enrol secondary school graduates without an entrance
examination, and was expected to deliver training for rural students who could not
attend regular higher studies in the city.

In 1993 the government abolished 'open' enrolment for public institutions
because of concern about the quality of entrants and graduates (see Chapter Six),
however, and in 1995 similar concerns caused the government to intervene and
move 6,000 of the university's local students to other institutions, on the grounds
that the university was supposed to be providing courses to students unable to
attend lectures (Pham Thanh Nghi 1997: 98). Despite the majority of funding
coming from student fees, central government still reserved the right to intervene
in order to achieve national objectives. The university now has regular lessons on
the radio, and provides cassettes and video tapes to large numbers of students
following the courses from remote areas (Lan Hoa 1994). It has had great success
in providing job-related training for students. By May, 70% of 1998 graduates had
found work with state or foreign companies in Ho Chi Minh City (Tuổi trẻ,

Between 1993, when the framework for non-government HEIs was
established, and 1998, when the government suspended approval of any new
requests, 15 people-founded universities and 3 semi-public universities had been
opened (compared to 118 existing public HEIs) (Ministry of Education and
Training 1999: Vol. II). While numbers of students increased rapidly during the
1990s across the board, nowhere was this more so than in people-founded
universities. Between 1995/6 and 1998/9, students enrolled in people-founded
universities increased by 361% (from 19,180 to 69,228), while in public institutions
they increased by a comparatively modest 72% (from 334,078 to 575,446). By the 1999 intake, the rapid increase in students in people-founded institutions had settled with a total student population of 72,070, or a 4% increase, while public institutions had increased their enrolments by 8% (to 624,423 students). The other expansion worthy of note, is that of the 2-3 year tertiary level colleges where enrolments increased by 81% over the same period, from 86,699 students in 1995/6 to 157,710 in 1998/9. Here too the rapid expansion fell away with a 7% increase in 1999/2000 (173,912 students), most of which expansion was in the introduction of new people-founded colleges (12,119 students, from 3,527 in 1998/9). Colleges were clearly beginning to find a niche in higher education previously reserved for universities (see Chart 5.4). Part of the explanation for this slow-down lies with the decision of the government to prevent more private universities from opening. It may also reflect the fact that the student market for university education was gradually being met, particularly as by this time it was becoming very apparent that university education gave no guarantee of a job at the end (see Chapter Eight).

Later non-government institutions found their path significantly smoothed by those who had gone before. In contrast to the careful monitoring of Thang Long University, later institutions were largely able to circumvent the regulations. According to a senior lecturer at one of the public universities in Ho Chi Minh City, in 1998, before the moratorium on non-government institutions, his friends had been approved to open their own 'people-founded' institution. Their proposal was to enroll 1,000 students in their first year of operation and then begin gradual

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96 The figures for the first and latter period may show a small discrepancy, as the 1995/6 students are calculated as 'core' students, while for 1998/9 and 1999/2000 the figures used are for total student numbers, irrespective of intensity of study. See Chart 6.2.

97 Figures for 1999/2000 are taken from the MOET Department of Information and Statistics. Earlier statistics are taken from the MOET/World Bank Higher Education Project, thus there may be some discrepancies between the two.
expansion. They were able to obtain the necessary signatures from land-owners and government officials in order to fulfil the application requirements stipulated by MOET regulations. In fact they only had one or two small, rented classrooms, and no equipment, with which to teach their proposed intake of 1,000 students. They were able to use their connections to obtain the necessary signatures for the MOET, which felt it unnecessary, or was unable, to verify the information that was sent.

Concerns about institutions such as this one fuelled the debate about the quality of non-government institutions and fee-paying in general, as discussed more fully in the following chapter. Concerns also closely related to the fact that government institutions have tended to far exceed the enrolment quota of students allowed by the MOET. In 1998, the People-founded University of Dong Do (ĐH Dân Lập Đờng Đờ) in Hanoi, for example, had exceeded its student quota by 91.8% (4,042 students) and the People-Founded University of Industrial Engineering, Ho Chi Minh City (ĐH Dân lập Kỹ thuật công nghiệp TPHCM), had exceeded it by 25.4% (1,191 students), as had many others. The exceptions were those that had not met their quota, such as Thang Long University, which was under by 58.8%, but these were rare (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo (Ban Dân lập) 1998). Such examples of overcrowding and apparently mindless expansion were frequently cited in the press during 1998, during a revision of the higher education sector, with particular blame attached to the institutions for their irresponsible actions in not guaranteeing the quality of their graduates. Blame was also leveled at the MOET, however, in particular for not inspecting the quality of the institutions. 'The conclusions of the missions [to supervise the non-public HEIs] usually depend on their personal relations or the mission's sympathy for the supervised institution' (Pham Thanh Nghi 1997: 123). In other words, university

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98 Interview, University of Technology, Ho Chi Minh City, May 1998.
Chart 5.4: Distribution of core* students enrolled in HEIs 1995/6-1999/2000


* A core student refers to a student studying a normal full-time course. Part-time students are calculated as a percentage of full-time students. For 1998/9 the figures refer to total students regardless of their hours of study.
staff were able to operate on a personal level to achieve a better outcome for their institution.

The regulations formulated by the MOET governing the founding and structure of non-public institutions (QD 240-TTg, 24/5/1993) guarantee them greater autonomy than public institutions, but still ensure that the MOET has a fundamental role to play in their activities. According to this decision, finance for the non-public institutions is specified as coming from initial investors, income from activities such as fees, research and labour contracts, aid organisations, borrowings and government assistance, but no specifications are made as to how the income is to be spent (although it must be in accordance with national laws). In theory this should allow such institutions a great deal of freedom in financial matters, but in practice the MOET sets a ceiling on the level of fees that non-public institutions may charge, similar to that of public institutions. Effectively this means that non-public institutions are at a disadvantage because they do not receive the additional government assistance and therefore enrol larger numbers of students in each class (see below). Semi-public institutions tend to receive assistance in kind rather than financial assistance. The original rector of Thang Long University, Hoàng Xuân Sfnh, argued that non-government universities were virtually forced into the kind of expansion outlined above because the fees they were allowed to charge were only slightly higher than those of the government institutions. At the same time they did not have a government allowance to support them and they had enormous problems trying to rent land from the government because they needed to fork out money at all levels. Public universities, on the other hand already had facilities provided for them (Hoàng Xuân Sfnh 1998). This forced private institutions to enrol more students in a class and affected their quality.

Overall then, non-public institutions have begun to receive greater tolerance as part of the Vietnamese higher education scene, despite the much reported deficiencies of those institutions that have been allowed to operate and their on-going attempts to side-step MOET regulations. Non-public institutions
were given formal policy recognition at the Second Plenum of the Eighth Party Congress in 1996 (Communist Party of Vietnam 1996b: 13). This recognition showed how individual institutions such as Thang Long University and Ho Chi Minh Open University, together with large public support for the expansion of higher education places, fed back into policy-making decisions at the highest levels. Ironically, however, two years later, because of the criticisms levelled at these same institutions, the MOET suspended the approval of any new non-public institutions until it could investigate matters more thoroughly. The ambiguity with which these institutions were viewed is particularly evident in the Law on Education passed in December 1998.

**The 1998 Education Law**

The 1998 Education Law marks the culmination of a long process of negotiation and practical experimentation into alternative forms of education, and discussions about how education should be regulated. Since 1986, the system of legislation and sub-legal documents governing education in Vietnam has shown an increasing trend towards formalisation in the responsibilities of the different actors involved in education, and a decentralisation of higher education responsibilities in favour of HEIs.

Prior to the Education Law in 1998, education was managed by an *ad hoc* system of decrees and decisions produced by different authorities concerning their (overlapping) jurisdictions, and also by unwritten practices that were developed over time. The responsibilities of HEIs and their relationship to the state were decided by the individual regulations established on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with the general regulations governing the founding of HEIs in Vietnam in 1963 (171/CP, 20/11/1963). These individual regulations were decided

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99 'Sub-legal documents' refers to the collection of decisions, resolutions and circulars issued by the government (Minh Vu, 1994. 'Legislative Framework for Higher Education in Vietnam', Princeton University, Unpublished.)
on application to the Government by the MOET (or other ministry or provincial government office) and the State Planning Committee, with the submission of documents stipulating the institution’s 'mission statement, planned teaching program, curriculum, method of teaching, enrolment and structure' (Minh Vu 1994: 11). Admission practices were decided on by the ministries responsible for individual HEIs in conjunction with the State Planning Committee and the Ministry of Finance (Minh Vu 1994: 16).

Regulations concerning other issues, everything from the level of financing to the responsibilities of teachers were dealt with by the particular department (vụ) with responsibility for that area. The department examined a problem and issued a decision to deal with it, frequently with little consultation with any other department that might be concerned with the issue. The decrees were signed by the minister or vice-minister, who was supposed to act as a filter to ensure that the decrees did not overlap or contradict each other. In fact, however, a number of contradictory decrees continued to be promulgated, allowing the universities often to do much as they pleased.100 In 1995 Tran Chi Dao complained

There is a deficiency of current legal statutes that are relevant and appropriate to management of the changing situation in Vietnam’s higher education institutions. This lack tends to make some institutions excessively dependent on the MOET while others exercise newly found initiative. Both patterns can affect the quality of education (Tran Chi Dao, Lam Quang Thiep et al. 1995a: 89).

Case-by-case decision-making simultaneously gave institutions the leeway to interpret the decisions according to their interests, and created a climate of uncertainty in which institutions were unwilling to act. As there was no formal

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100 Interview with MOET official, Hanoi, July 1998.
delineation of decision-making responsibilities between institutions and the central government, the latter could theoretically intervene in any area it deemed important. Nithinart Sinthudeacha found a similar situation among small business managers facing difficulties in the process of transition to a market economy. Many considered the reform to be a positive step, but were uncertain how to deal with it.

Every one of the managers interviewed realised that the rules of the game had been altered. However, rather than taking steps to position themselves and their enterprises to better deal with, or take advantage of, the changed set of rules, many were waiting to be told - by the ministry, by the local government, by other central authorities, by anybody - what to do next (Sinthudeacha 1996: 87).

The first attempt to bring order to the very diffuse system of regulations appears to have taken place in 1985 with the introduction of the 'Provisional regulation on the responsibilities, organisation structure and operation of HE institutions' (17/7/1985). This regulation defined the general duties and responsibilities of institutions, including regular reports to the MOET and the overseeing ministry, the organisation structure and duties of different bodies within the institutions, and the rights and responsibilities of students, teachers and the rector (Minh Vu 1994: 11). In 1989 the first cross-institutional regulations concerning student admission to HEIs were promulgated, making universities responsible for their own admissions procedures, under government supervision (Minh Vu 1994: 16). The government continued to recognise the need for a comprehensive system of legislation, however, in which the roles and responsibilities of the different decision-makers in the education sector were clearly spelt out.
The situation was finally addressed in a comprehensive manner through the introduction of an education law. This law underwent twenty-three drafts before the twenty-fourth draft was finally passed into law by the National Assembly, after extensive discussion, on 1 December 1998 (Trần Thị Tâm Đàm 1999). The process of drafting the Education Law began in October 1995 when the government passed a resolution for work to begin, within the broad framework of building a nation-wide system of law (Trần Thị Tâm Đàm 1999). The law was drafted under the auspices of a special party cell within National Assembly which formally began operation in January 1996 (Anonymous 1997). It was given responsibility for guiding the law through a process of consultation with a wide range of groups such as the MOET, government and communist party agencies concerned with education within the country, and other education specialists. The twenty-third draft, for example, was presented to 60 of 90 members of the National Assembly, those holding postgraduate degrees, in order for them to examine specifically the legal aspects of the draft (Anonymous 1998). During the process of drafting and re-drafting, regular reports on the law were also presented to the National Assembly (Phạm Minh Hạc 1998a: 48).

The extended process of drafting the law was undertaken to ensure a very wide canvassing of input and opinion among those with an interest in education. The process brought to the fore particular areas of contention among the interested parties. While I was unable to obtain a copy of all the previous drafts, a comparison between the sixteenth draft (December 1996) and the law that was finally adopted in 1998 highlights two particular areas of contention: the role of the law in settling organisational as opposed to ideological issues, and the degree of definition to be brought to the roles and responsibilities of different actors in the education sector. Between 1996 and the end of 1998, it shows a concern to

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101 Other sources say that the drafting of the law began well before these dates, in 1994, but this seems unlikely (AFP News Bulletin, 5/12/1998, "Vietnam Passes First Education Law").
increase the decentralisation of higher education responsibility in favour of HEIs, paralleled by an increased affirmation of the importance of ideology.

The introduction to the 1996 draft and the 1998 law sets the contrast between the two. In the 1996 draft, the stated purpose of the law is to define the relationship between different organisations responsible for education in Vietnam, and their role in achieving a modern education system. It also serves to 'legitimate viewpoints and directions of education renovation adopted by the Party and State' (Introduction to the Education Law, 1996). It concentrates on the organisation of education, against the background of current policies, although it allows for the possibility that these 'viewpoints and directions' may change. By mid-1997, however, the draft law had begun to emphasise the role of the law as being to structure the policies and work of the communist party and the state in education (Giáo dục và thời đại, 1/5/1997: 1, 3), and this was carried through into the law that was finally passed.

The introduction to the 1998 law is principally a Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) policy statement, in which the importance of organisation and administration receive only a passing mention. It stresses that the law is aimed at improving education in the country so that it will be of positive benefit to development, and it is virtually a direct copy of statements regarding education made at the Eighth Communist Party National Congress, held in 1996. The education law aims to 'develop education, raise the effectiveness of the state in administering education, raise the people's intellectual standard, train human resources and groom talent to achieve the industrialisation and modernisation of the country, to meet the needs of building and protecting the nation, with the aim of creating a rich, strong, equitable and civilised society' (Introduction to the Education Law, 1998). 'Industrialisation and modernisation' in particular are the hallmark slogans of the Eighth Party Congress.

Interestingly an article that appeared in the Communist Party daily Nhân Dân, when the National Assembly considered the 23rd draft of the law, complained that the law had been given to sectoral specialists (i.e. educators from
the MOET) rather than legal experts and that therefore it lacked legal standards and was not in line with standardisation across the country (Anonymous 1998). This suggests that the standardisation should comply with broad national policies rather than sectoral objectives which were the focus of previous drafts.

Remarkably, no specific mention of Marxism-Leninism is made in the 1996 draft of the law at all. It is difficult to draw conclusions from this omission, however. Perhaps the most that can be said is that some process of re-evaluation of the role of these ideologies in Vietnamese education was taking place, as it is unlikely such references were ever to be omitted altogether.

In the final law, however, Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh thought are specified as the guiding forces in education. Article 3 of the law, concerning the foundational principles of education in Vietnam states 'Vietnamese education is socialist education with popular (nhân dân), nationalist (dân tộc), scientific and modern characteristics, on the foundation of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh thought'. One of the aims of 'general education' is for students to acquire the attributes of a socialist Vietnamese person (Article 23). In tertiary education the importance placed on Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh thought is much greater. In both undergraduate and postgraduate education, according to the law, the content of teaching must ensure that students have an excellent knowledge of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh thought, alongside the knowledge acquired in their basic and specialist studies (Article 36 par.1.a. and Article 37 par. 2.a). In practice, in the first year and a half of foundational studies, all students must study a course of 'philosophy', dominated by elements of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh thought. None of these specifications are included in the 1996 draft of the law.

The second significant area of difference between the 1996 draft and the 1998 law is that the latter shows a reduced role for the state and increased responsibilities for the institutions. Article 105 (1996) specifies that the state organises special schools for disabled students from creche through to the final year of compulsory education, while Article 58 of the 1998 law states that 'The
state founds, and encourages other organisations and individuals to found schools and classes for disabled people' (my emphasis). Organisations other than the state are given an opening to take a more active role in educational activities.

In another example, the 1996 draft specifies that the state encourages links between educational institutions, social organisations, businesses and the society at large (Article 95), although schools play the leading role in links between society and education (Article 108). By contrast the final, 1998, law specifies that individual educational institutions are to establish their own regulations of operation, covering, among other things, the relationship between the school, families and society (Article 48, par.2). In other words, the final law is far more encouraging of educational institutions being pro-active in seeking their own relationships with the wider community, something that would have been unthinkable under central planning (despite the slogans of 'education to meet the needs of society').

Another area that shows a reduced role for the highest levels of the state is that of postgraduate education. In 1976 the Party Central Committee established postgraduate education in the country for the first time (QD 224/TTg, 24/5/1976). At this time, matters concerning postgraduate education were to be looked after by a specialist government committee, with the assistance of the Ministry of Higher Education (as it was at the time). Any institutions providing postgraduate training, which were largely research institutes rather than teaching universities, had to report their activities to this committee, and doctoral candidates had to defend their thesis in front of an examination committee appointed by the Prime Minister. Topics of research were also closely coordinated with the relevant ministry responsible for that area of research and the government committee on education. Candidates were expected to be strong supporters of the Communist Party and its policies, and to 'put into practice the path and policies of the party and government, maintain a truthful attitude and help socialism' (QD 224/TTg, 24/5/1976).
Since the early 1990s universities have been taking a far more active role in postgraduate education, especially at the Masters level, but this has continued to receive a very high level of interest from the central government. For PhDs, no committee is guaranteed formal oversight of their provision any longer (although in practice it continues to exist), nor are candidates given preferential treatment based on their involvement with the party (although many doctoral candidates continue to be members of the Communist Party). One of the areas of hottest contention during the final National Assembly debates on the Law was what level of authority (minister or HEI rector) should be responsible for awarding postgraduate degrees (Nhân Dân Internet Edition, 10/11/1998). The solution adopted was to maintain the status quo with regards to PhD degrees (Article 39) - the minister continues to award them, but to delegate responsibility for Masters degrees to the rector of the university. In the 1996 draft, the rector first had to seek approval from the Minister of Education (Article 157), but this stipulation was dropped from the final law (see Article 39, par.3), very likely because of the increasingly large number of students who are graduating with Masters degrees in Vietnam, which would have heavily increased the workload of the minister or his/her deputy (see Charts 7.2, 7.3). Despite the introduction of the law, other regulations govern the requirements and procedures for the award of postgraduate degrees in more detail (Minh Vu 1994: 28; QD 647/GD-DT, 14/12/1996).

The most important area to show signs of decentralisation, however, is that of financial management. While the Education Law does create a legal footing for non-government sources of education funding, it still leaves many issues the subject of subordinate decrees or regulations.

Universities have been officially allowed to charge fees for students since 1989 (according to decision QD HDBT-63, 10/6/1989) and the law encourages continued funding from a variety of sources. Article 91 forbids the collection of taxes on contributions to education, whether by businesses or individuals, in order

to encourage private investment in education. Despite this acknowledgement of the importance of private contributions to education, no specific recognition or mention is made of non-government (people-founded, semi-public...) universities. This is in direct contrast to the 1996 draft (Article 90), which clearly specifies the means for their establishment and outlines the responsibilities of such schools. Instead, the final law leaves the founding of all educational institutions up to individual government decisions, such as those that have been used to govern the country in the past (Articles 46 & 47). Similarly, specific mention of 'irregular study' has also been omitted from the final law. In both cases there were questions concerning whether non-government schools and non-regular modes of study should really be considered part of the national unified system of education (Cao Cuong 1998). On the one hand this shows the reluctance of central government figures to consider privately funded education as a permanent part of the Vietnamese education scene (as opposed to a temporary measure to resolve current financial difficulties), on the other hand it reflects the serious concern about the quality of graduates from such institutions, following the rapid increase in student numbers outlined above.

The greater vagueness of the final law in effect leaves many areas open for continued ad hoc government intervention in areas of concern. Russell Heng points out that in the case of the Press Law passed by the National Assembly in 1990, because of the 'insipid and imprecise language' of the law, it lends itself to 'considerable discretionary interpretation', which has more frequently operated against journalists than in their favour (Heng 1998: 6). In the same way, the final Education Law offers many discretionary loopholes for government intervention. There are many matters which have been left out of the final law. The 1996 draft contains almost double the number of articles that were finally approved in the 1998 law, 207 as opposed to 110. While some of those omitted were simply made redundant by a reorganisation of the law, many contained detailed instructions about the role and responsibilities of individuals and organisations involved in education (from students through to the government), which have been replaced
by more general statements typified by the issue of non-government institutions outlined above.

An example of this discretionary power is the stipulations for overseas travel for study purposes. According to the 1998 law, "The state encourages and creates the opportunities for ... Vietnamese to travel overseas to study, teach or do research" (Article 95, par.2). In theory this should mean that there would be few impediments for Vietnamese wishing to travel overseas for study-related purposes. In practice, however, I found during interviews conducted earlier in 1998 that lecturers and researchers in the south of Vietnam felt that it was extremely difficult for them to travel abroad, more so than foreigners. A decision from the Minister of Education only five years earlier would clearly support this view because it affirms that only those Vietnamese who do not have any links to the former southern Vietnamese regime will be allowed to travel (QĐ 1295/TCCB, 18/6/1993). While it is to be hoped that the new Education Law would supersede this decision, in practice the law is sufficiently imprecise that such a regulation could remain in force.

The Education Law leaves many areas subject to the further specifications in sub-legislative texts. It shows wariness about being too clear on many issues such as the introduction of non-government institutions, while others still clearly face opposition at top echelons of government. It shows some decentralisation and a process of political compromise which perhaps also found it easier to leave out crucial issues rather than risk further delays before the Law was adopted.

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103 Some of the links which would preclude overseas study under this regulation are: any political complications with regards to self or family, manifestations contrary to Party or relations with elements fighting the system; having a member of immediate family who has been sent to re-education and the individual has not fully grasped its teachings; the individual speaks or works in a way which shows clearly that they are in contradiction to the ways of the Party; the individual has relationships with elements who are currently under investigation.
Conclusion

This chapter draws together a number of threads that were hinted at in earlier chapters. It shows how the administration policies for higher education have displayed a tendency towards the streamlining and centralisation of overall responsibility for education decision-making matters under the MOET, and the decentralisation of decision-making on certain issues such as funding, student enrolment and international relations, among others, to universities, albeit with some hesitation on the part of the MOET. This clearly shows a tendency towards a more 'neo-liberal' model of higher education as put forward in Chapter 2.

In terms of the second analytical framework being used to assess the changes to higher education, 'state-society relations' the importance of the state directives to the changing nature of higher education administration in Vietnam is undeniable. The state has often created the impetus and the formal structures, such as legislation and 'sub-legislation' to ensure that its policies are carried out. At the same time, some developments in the sector would seem to deny that importance. Legislation over the past ten years shows a tendency towards the greater decentralisation of education management, with more responsibility being taken by universities and lower levels of government, although the MOET maintains a firm presence in many areas of potential conflict such as the introduction of new courses or overseas students. While the changing laws have undoubtedly had an impact on the way in which higher education in Vietnam is managed, the capacity of the state to direct that change is often weak. In the case of 'open admission' students, and again for the introduction of private universities, the number of new institutions to introduce these new practices clearly outweighed the ability of the MOET to investigate their activities. Within the MOET itself, while the legislation to amalgamate the different educational ministries clearly had an impact on the physical composition of the ministry, it had far less of an impact on the personal relations and activities taking place within the institution.
While the state sets the framework in which many of the changes are taking place, many of the changes themselves have their origins in situations completely outsidied the frame of reference of the state. The Economics College in Thanh Hoa province, for example, was able to ignore the directive of the government to amalgamate with the other two neighbouring colleges because it had changed its courses to ones which were in high demand from students in the local community and consequently felt it could ignore the decision of state bodies. Policies such as the development of open universities and community colleges were significantly affected by the ability of those involved to travel overseas, or for foreign experts to travel to Vietnam, and by the availability of foreign funding.

Finally, the process of administrative change in higher education, has been accompanied by significant changes in technology that have only been hinted at in this chapter: computers, access to the internet, telephones, fax machines have given administrators across the board greater possibilities to adopt new administrative procedures, which in turn have the potential to affect learning on the ground, and policies at the highest levels.

As the reform has taken place, it has equally been accompanied by a growing body of administrative knowledge and experience in Vietnam, held by administrators at all levels of the hierarchy instead of just at the very top, and it is this growth in the pool of Vietnamese experience which is likely to be the biggest source of rapid change in the future.

The year 1998 was an important year in clarifying the division of responsibility between universities and the government, with the adoption of the Education Law, but the appropriate level of decentralisation of responsibilities from the government to universities is likely to remain an important point of contention in the immediate future, as universities become better able to explore their own directions with new, non-government, sources of funding.
Chapter Six - Funding and Financial Issues

From 1986 onwards, the most substantial policy statement with regards to higher education finance has been the decision to allow universities to seek funding from outside the state sector. While this overarching policy has not changed, the way in which to put this into action has changed substantially, through a process of trial and error, frequently not initiated by the government, but adopted as government policy in retrospect.

The previous chapter highlighted some of the important changes that have been made to the administration of higher education under doi moi and some of the policies which have involved decentralisation of authority in favour of universities. This chapter focuses on the decentralisation, planned or unplanned, of university finance, the ways in which the government, universities and individuals involved in the higher education sector have used different resources to overcome the financial crisis of the 1980s and to further their own aims.

As with the previous chapter, this chapter begins with the framework for changes under doi moi; beginning with changes to the funding process within the central government, which occurred as part of the government's broader effort to streamline public administration. It then analyses the reasons for the introduction of non-state sources of funding for higher education in the late 1980s, in particular fees, the marketisation of university products, and the increasing variety and quantity of official development assistance. Finally, it takes a brief look at some of the least documented, but nonetheless important sources of outside funding, in the form of under the table contributions, and concludes that, as in areas of administration, there have been a wide variety of factors influencing the financing of higher education and financial policy-making.
Formal Budget Process

Prior to đổi mới, education was funded entirely from the state budget. For higher education, the State Planning Committee (SPC) would decide how many students should be enrolled in order to fill projected state sector vacancies at the time of their graduation. The Ministry of Finance (MOF) would then allocate money in accordance with the number of students and the perceived priority of the area of study (engineering, teaching...). This funding covered everything from capital equipment, to teacher salaries, and scholarships for students (allocated as a percentage of their prospective employment wage). The MOF would allocate the money through its central, provincial and district level offices, with most HEIs under the auspices of the central office. At the same time the Ministry of Higher Education would decide where the students would be trained (for universities under its jurisdiction), based on the specialisations of the different universities and their available resources, and then allocate an enrolment quota for each university. Other ministries would perform the same function for universities under their jurisdiction. The university would then participate in national enrolment examinations to determine who would be admitted. They had little or no say in issues of financial planning and management (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 1995: 36; Hoa Phuong Tran 1998: 126-7; Thao Xuan Tran 1998: 30).

The central allocation of students resulted in a number of problems, in particular frequent surpluses of graduates and funding in some areas, and insufficient of both in other areas. As in other areas of the government, central government management of the higher education sector funding showed a high degree of overlap, and a lack of coordination. The process of allocating students required a high level of accurate long-term planning and proved too inflexible for the state sector, let alone a market economy when it was introduced.

As outlined in the previous chapter, from the early 1990s the government attempted to address these problems through a series of decisions to streamline the
funding and allocation process. This included placing the MOET in charge of the
distribution of the education budget, bringing it more closely into the overall
decision-making process concerning the allocation of funding (Decision 287/HDBT,
and the MOF in 1994 (35/TT-LB, 21/4/1994), universities were also given more say in
the budget allocation process. They are instructed to develop their own draft budget
for submission to the MOET for approval (or to other ministries or local authorities if
under another authority). The MOET, in coordination with the MOF and the State
Planning Commission (SPC, renamed the Ministry of Planning and Investment in
1996), then examines and approves the draft budgets. Actual supervision and control
of the budget was established through a variety of different individual decisions
(Minh Vu 1994: 20). Chart 6.1 shows how this process works schematically.

**Funding allocation**

Countries around the world have used various methods to allocate funding to
higher education. In Australia, for example, the emphasis has been increasingly on
quantitative output-based results, whereby universities are expected to bid for
government funding, based on the number of students they graduate or the number
of publications their academics produce. Chile has opted for an alternative method of
funding, based on qualitative output. This is measured by looking at the institutions
at which the top students decide to study each year and then allocating a graded
amount of funding to the university chosen by each student, according to where each
student was placed in overall entrance rankings (World Bank 1994: 53). Another
common form of funding allocation is a 'negotiated budget' in which universities
'negotiate' with the government concerning the amount of funding they should be
allocated. The result is often based on historical norms or 'tradition' rather than a
clearly thought out funding policy (World Bank 1994: 51).
In Vietnam, funding is based on an 'input' method of budgeting, according to a 1996 World Bank Education Sector Analysis Report, produced in 1996. Despite an end to the guaranteed allocation of jobs for students, funding for higher education continues to be calculated on the number of 'quota' (full-time or in-service) students which the government has allocated to universities in line with the national labour planning strategy. A funding norm is calculated for each area of study, based on the cost of delivering that program and funding is then allocated according to a combination of enrollment numbers and the cost of individual subjects. It differentiates between institutions 'on the basis of the numbers of students enrolled in different fields of study and levels of education, and the weights reflect the differential costs faced by different institutions -- for example for engineering students compared with arts students' (World Bank 1996: 50).
This formal allocation procedure notwithstanding, the World Bank study found that in the case of Vietnam, there was no clear basis for calculating the funding norm. Whereas in other countries the norm is established based on the expected costs related to the particular discipline, in Vietnam, the study found that arts and sport, among the least costly courses of study, often had the highest levels of funding. In fact, the report concludes, 'The basis for the setting of the allocation norms is unclear. It would appear that the allocation of norms is driven more by the availability of budgetary resources than by the actual or even historical distribution of costs' (World Bank 1996: 48).

In practice the funding allocation process is far from smooth. A senior official in the Department of Planning and Finance, MOET, explained in more detail how the current budget decision-making process takes place. Higher education institutions prepare a budget in about September of each year, detailing the expected expenditure of the school under the headings of office equipment, buildings and infrastructure, salaries and so on. They then submit the proposed budget to the office responsible for that particular school. For provincial level teacher training colleges, the relevant body would be the provincial education office; for the University of Medicine and Pharmacy (Đại học Y Dược) the relevant authority would be the Ministry of Health (Bộ Y tế). Each of these reports is then collated, adjusted and passed to the next higher level of authority. The MOET then meets with the Ministry of Finance (MOF) in order to discuss the education budget in line with overall planning priorities, which usually meant, he said, that the overall budget for the MOET was below half of what was actually asked for. The MOET and MOF also meet with the Ministry of Planning and Investment to determine funding priorities and which level of government should be responsible for paying for particular areas of education. Each year, or every few years, one area of education is singled out for special funds to help develop that

104 Interview conducted in Hanoi, April 1997.
sector. From 1992 to 1995 that sector was teacher training, and from 1995 to 1998 the
sector was vocational education.\textsuperscript{105} The budget is then passed to the State Planning
Commission (or the Ministry of Planning and Investment as it was renamed in 1996)
and finally presented to the National Assembly for approval (Pham Quang Sang and
Sloper 1995: 166).

In general, the budget decided in this way provided enough for on-going costs
but nothing for improvements or development (Pham Quang Sang and Sloper 1995:
172), and regional areas have been particularly underfunded (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo

While the division of expenditure is intended to reflect the priorities of the
government policy and the needs of different disciplines, in practice the allocation of
funding depends just as much, if not more, on personal connections with those
involved in the budget allocation. A senior official in the MOET gave the hypothetical
example of a primary school principal who was from the same village as a minister or
vice-minister of education. He might call the minister in order to argue that his
school needed funding for plumbing or for a new roof and the minister would then
ring the finance department in the ministry to ask for the funding to be allocated in
line with the wishes of the principal. The department would be forced to rearrange
the budget according to the new ministerial priorities in the form of a 'negotiated
budget'. At the end of his anecdote the official shrugged his shoulders in resignation
and asked rhetorically, 'Isn't that the same everywhere in the world?'. Not only was
the problem very prevalent, but he considered that very little could be done about it.
This anecdote not only helps to explain the discrepancies found in the 'input based'
budget process highlighted by the World Bank, but also shows the way in which a

\textsuperscript{105} Interview with Tran Van Thanh, Department of Finance, Ministry of Education and Training, Hanoi,
April 1997.
small rural school could potentially manipulate resources, in the form of personal connections, to improve its own situation.

Another anecdote from secondary education suggests that often funding may not even reach the school intended. In one case, upper secondary students were asked to contribute an extra VND 50,000 (around US$5) at the beginning of SY 1995/6 to buy equipment, and for repairs to the school. By the end of the school year the money had disappeared, without any of the improvements being made (Linh Nam 1997).

Recently more efforts have been made to track funding allocations more closely. The 1996 World Bank Education Financing Sector Study was the first comprehensive report to investigate the full range of financial contributions to education in Vietnam. Previously individual ministries had maintained their own separate budgets for the educational institutions under their jurisdiction, and institutions which had income from outside the budget treated it completely separately and often did not report it to the MOET or the relevant line ministry. Provinces also maintain their own records of higher education expenditure, which might only reach the central ministry in a summarised form. As a consequence, there existed no macro level statistics relating to the educational sector in Vietnam. In fact

The officially approved budget for higher education institutions, which is based on national plans and approved expenditure is usually different from the actual operating budget in a college or university. The former is inadequate, often by 30 to 50 per cent, and does not reflect social and economic reality; the latter is more realistic and generally relates to local financial conditions of income and expenditure (Pham Quang Sang and Sloper 1995: 167).
At the central level, changes to the budget allocation process under *đổi mới* show a concern to streamline existing procedures and to reallocate responsibility for funding to within the higher education sector itself, to both the MOET and individual universities. Despite this reorganisation, however, funding continues to be allocated according to criteria outside of official government planning. The lack of accurate and complete budgeting, and the practice of keeping multiple accounts to serve different purposes (reports for higher levels, internal accounts...) means that universities have had far greater leeway to make their own financial decisions than might be suggested by the formal top-down budget process described above. This situation may be remedied in the future with ongoing efforts to gather more accurate statistics on higher education funding.

Whatever the proposed or actual method of funding, government allocation can only take place where there is funding available to allocate. The economic crisis of the late 1980s hampered the government's overall ability to fund the higher education sector and this was an important reason for the introduction of non-state funding in the late 1980s.

**The Introduction of Student Fees**

In the 1980s China underwent a similar transition from state central planning to market economy. At that time the government clearly decided that higher education students should bear the brunt of their educational costs. The deputy chairman of the State Education Commission, argued that 'higher education does not fall into the category of compulsory education and, in principle, all university students should pay their way', a sentiment which was later echoed in an official government report on the matter (Qiping and White 1994: 221).

The Vietnamese government has not been so categorical about the need for students to pay for their own higher education, but the need for a greater financial contribution by individuals has been clearly recognised, under the policy of
'socialisation' (xã hội hoá). As explained in Chapter Four, the Vietnamese version of 'socialisation' in fact resembles the English term 'privatisation' more closely than it does greater community ownership. It refers to the need for 'society', meaning private individuals and families in the first instance, but also private companies or organisations, to contribute more actively to the financial costs of education. According to the Communist Party daily newspaper, 'socialisation' can include the opening of semi-public and 'people-founded' education institutions and even the construction of multi-storey school buildings (Nhân Dân Internet Edition 10/11/98). At a broader level, as with 'privatisation', this process of 'socialisation' refers in essence to a 'privateward shift along the multiple continua of the public-private balance in higher education' (Jones 1992: 1445). It involves, firstly, a movement towards greater financial contribution by people outside the state to areas that were previously financed by the public budget. It may also involve a shift in control over the 'privatised' institution, away from the state (Jones 1992: 1445). Some of the arguments used to justify a 'privateward shift' include the inherent value of 'free markets', increased efficiency, increased output, or increased diversity. D. Jones argues that while such arguments may be taken into consideration by governments, the principal reason that governments consider privatisation as an option is as the result of an economic downturn or a lack of finance (Jones 1992: 1446). This was precisely the situation that faced the Vietnamese government in the late 1980s.

The first attempt to relieve the financial pressure on universities, was the introduction of tuition fees at the University of Ho Chi Minh City (ĐH Tổng hợp TpHCM) in 1986. This decision was taken following a ten-year review of higher education.


This university has now been divided into the schools of Social Science and Science under the National University of Ho Chi Minh City (ĐH Quốc gia TpHCM).
education in the country since reunification, and it was inspired by the successes that had been taking place in agriculture with the introduction of market-based production contracts.\textsuperscript{108}

Professor Nguyễn Văn Lịch, who is professor of history and former head of the Centre for Vietnamese and Southeast Asian Studies, was a member of the 1985 review committee. He asserted that the number of academic staff in the mid-1980s actually outweighed the number of students. Lecturers were underemployed and paid an insufficient income to meet their living expenses. He and the other members of the committee therefore suggested to the government that they be allowed to accept fee-paying students into the university. This would give teachers an extra source of income and allow their training to be more fully utilised. It would also 'take students out of the bars and cafes', and create a temporary solution to the problem of youth unemployment, a significant concern at the time.\textsuperscript{109} In other words, discussions at the university level concerning the introduction of fees and alternative sources of funding pre-dated the official recognition of the market sector at the Sixth Party Congress in 1986, and the call to open universities to outside funding in 1987.

The decision to introduce fees was adopted on a trial basis at the university in 1986, although the experiment was not officially acknowledged until July 1987 (Đại học và Giáo dục Chuyên nghiệp 1988: 16,19), after such activities had received political sanction. In its initial form students were enrolled in two different streams, A

\textsuperscript{108} Interview with Đặng Bá Lắm, Director, National Institute for Education Development, Hanoi, March 1997; and with Nguyễn Văn Lịch, senior lecturer, Ho Chi Minh City National University, Ho Chi Minh City, May 1998.

\textsuperscript{109} Interview conducted in Ho Chi Minh City, May 1998.
'A' stream students were admitted in accordance with predicted state labour requirements under the government plan, in the same way as previously, and selected through a national entrance examination. 'B' stream students were not required to pass an entrance examination but only to have passed their final secondary school examinations and paid the required fee to study. Classes were not compulsory and students could undertake part-time study, where before full-time study had been the only available option. They were, however, required to find their own jobs, and the university decided on total numbers to be admitted (Thao Xuan Tran 1998: 40).

At the 1987 rector's conference in Nha Trang, the Minister for Higher Education announced that the experiment had been a success. It had succeeded in increasing the numbers attending higher education, and it had served to improve the intellectual level of the nation (Thao Xuan Tran 1998: 41). As a consequence the Ministry of Higher Education announced the decision to widen the program to all universities, upon application to the Ministry for approval. Although in principle any HEI was permitted to establish this system of enrolment, the Ministry first needed to examine whether 'society' had a need for the expansion, whether the school had sufficient teachers and materials, and whether there would be a negative impact on the regular courses (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1991: 25). By the beginning of 1988 seven other universities had applied to the ministry for permission to start an 'open' mode of learning (Đại học và Giáo dục Chuyên nghiệp 1988), and by the beginning of the 1988/9 academic year there were 30 universities accepting fee-paying students (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 238).

Interview with Nguyễn Văn Lịch, Ho Chi Minh City, May 1998.

These later became later known as 'regular' and 'non-regular' ('chính quy' and 'không chính quy'; 'phi chính quy') streams.

Thao Xuan Tran argues that one of the reasons the introduction of fees for higher education was accepted so readily was that there was a pent-up demand for higher education. In the south, students who had been barred from the regular university admission, because of their family links to the former southern regime, were eager to take up the new positions. Other students included those who were too old for regular admission, students who had failed the admissions examination or regular students wishing to do a second degree (Thao Xuan Tran 1998: 41, 44, 97).

Beyond the entrance requirements outlined above, almost all other aspects regarding the tuition of 'open' students were left in the hands of the university. This included the number of hours of study, student entrance examinations (if any), and the standard of teaching they were offered. Students graduating from the open stream had to have this marked on their degrees. Despite the regulations governing the introduction of open enrolment, many universities did not first request permission from the Ministry, did not ensure that students had passed their secondary studies or, most commonly, enrolled students beyond their capacity to ensure that the quality of graduates was being maintained (Thao Xuan Tran 1998: 51, 54). Complaints quickly arose that these students were of very low quality and they were undermining the value of the degree for those in the regular system, perhaps with some justification. 'Open' students at Hanoi (General) University (ĐH Tổng hợp Hà Nội), for example, only had to take two-thirds of the curriculum of regular students, and might be admitted with an entrance examination score of 5 or less, even though regular students had to obtain over 20 (Thao Xuan Tran 1998: 81, 84).

The government attempted to address the problem as early as 1988 by introducing a third enrolment stream for those students who had narrowly failed the entrance examination. They would not receive a scholarship for study, nor would they be guaranteed a job, but they could sit examinations at the end of the second year, alongside the regular students. If they were successful the second time, they would be allocated a scholarship and were transferred into the regular course of study (Thao
Xuan Tran 1998: 52). The government hoped that this would encourage students to work harder for their degree, as regular students faced the threat of having their scholarships taken by the 'open' students, and that it would raise the quality of the 'open' students admitted.

This new category of students does not appear to have had any effect on the criticisms levelled at the system, however. A review of the 'open' enrolment policy conducted by the MOET in 1993 found that 65.3% of faculty members interviewed considered that students enrolled under the open admission plan were of lower quality. It further found that the increase in student numbers had caused universities to increase their own staff numbers, without ensuring the qualifications of new staff. While the new system had enabled existing staff to take on extra responsibilities and earn extra income, this lessened the amount of time they were spending on regular students, implying a further reduction in quality (Thao Xuan Tran 1998: 47-49). The implication was that the introduction of fee-paying students was undermining the quality of students and graduates, and the elite nature of universities. Students graduating in the open stream had this marked on their degrees, as a mark of the lower status of the award.

Despite no recent familiarity with fee-paying education, there appears to have been little hesitancy on the part of HEIs to enrol fee-paying students. The system clearly showed the large pent-up demand for higher education in Vietnam. The number of students officially enrolled in this way grew from 4,489 in 1988/9, the first official year of the system, to 28,731 in 1992/3, when the second class of these students was graduating and the final intake of students had been enrolled (see Appendix 1). In fact the speed with which HEIs did introduce fees across the country is indicative of their eagerness to increase their funding as rapidly as possible, as well as the eagerness of Vietnamese students to take up the opportunity for tertiary study. The fact that the initial suggestion and trials to introduce fees were made in the south of Vietnam is of further significance, in that it was the south that had had the longest
exposure to French and United States schooling systems, including the payment of fees. Southern Vietnamese were also more likely to have access to funding from relatives outside the country with which to pay for their university education.

The state provision of education was enshrined in the 1980 constitution (Article 41), as was the principle of free education and scholarships for students (Article 60). It was not until the constitution of 1992 that this article was amended, after the fees had already been introduced on a wide scale. The new constitution in fact encourages non-state investment in education (Article 36), and research (Article 37), and institutes a state policy of 'fees and scholarships' (Article 59) (Quốc hội nước Cộng hòa xã hội chủ nghĩa Việt Nam 1995). Ironcally, even as the constitution was being changed to allow fees, reflecting the government's recognition that it could not afford to be the sole national provider of education, the ministry announced an end to the system of open admissions (Decision 30/DH, 12/2/1992), which came into force in the 1993/4 academic year. This reflected the increasing criticism of the quality of graduates under this system.

In a process reminiscent of the adoption of other Vietnamese government policies, the decision to introduce fees was made following the introduction of a single project, which was then assessed, favourably, and introduced on a wide scale. The implementation of the program on a wider scale, however, met with problems, in this case ensuring the quality of graduates, and the policy had to be adjusted several times, before it was fundamentally altered.

**Non-regular system**

In 1993 and 1994 open enrolment was replaced by various decisions allowing universities to enrol 'non-regular' students in a variety of guises, such as part-time (Decision 5717, 17/9/1993), 'in-service' (Decision 2241/GD-DT, 8/8/1994), short-courses, for second degrees and so on. Only two universities were still allowed to admit 'open' students, students admitted on the basis of their secondary certificate
alone, the Ho Chi Minh City Open University (DH M□ TpHCM) and the Hanoi Semi­Public Open University (DH M□ Bán công Hà Nội), both of which were supposed to provide distance education for remote students. Limiting open enrolment to two universities would presumably overcome the problem of other universities offering lower quality degrees.

With the end of the 'open' enrolment system in HEIs, public universities began to charge the same fees for both regular and non-regular students (those not enrolled according to government plan) at a level decided on by the MOET (of around VND 100,000 per month in 1996/7). State funding was still only provided according to the number of students enrolled under the yearly state plans, and largely ignored the rapid increases in 'in-service' (hẹ tài chức) entrants that replaced the 'open' mode students (Department of Higher Education (MOET) 1993: 6). The MOET continued to set enrolment norms, and to pay the universities according to those norms but students were no longer differentiated according to whether they were enrolled as part of the state plan or not. Students could still be offered fee waivers (or 'scholarships') if they came from families in difficulties or 'priority' families. As with 'open' students, all universities intending to adopt complementary forms of education were obliged to notify the MOET of their intention, and their means for accommodating the students (in terms of facilities, teachers, equipment...).

The end of generalised open enrolment was intended to end problems of quality in higher education, while still enabling universities to benefit from the extra income tuition fees could bring. While overall university income benefited significantly from the introduction of tuition fees (see Table 5.1), in fact public HEIs as a group continued to depend heavily on state funding in the early years after fees were introduced. Despite the overall increase in university funding and the end to

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112 'Priority' students were war orphans or the children of parents injured in the war, and students from remote areas (see also Chapter 7).
generalised open enrolment the problem of lower quality degrees and unqualified students remained. In 1998, 50% of the 4,118 students at the in-service centre in Can Tho were those who had failed the university entrance examination in the past (Dân Vũ 1998).

Table 6.1 - University Income (in billions of đồng at fixed prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Current Revenue</th>
<th>Of which (%)</th>
<th>Grants</th>
<th>Student Charges</th>
<th>Production and Contracts</th>
<th>Aid, Gifts</th>
<th>Other Revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>492.9</td>
<td>(434.7)</td>
<td></td>
<td>23.17</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>648.2</td>
<td>(551.6)</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.72</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>803.4</td>
<td>(661.4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.87</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>1,634</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23.80</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>18.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>1,908</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31.74</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>2,199</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>36.48</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>2,633</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>39.46</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>3,011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>39.56</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


113 For 1999 and 2000, 'Other revenue' is further broken down into the following categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other revenue</th>
<th>1999 (%)</th>
<th>2000 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State loans for target projects</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State infrastructure investment</td>
<td>7.54</td>
<td>6.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loans to all projects</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other state funding</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and service contracts</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other revenue</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This shows that while state grant funding appears to fall in 1999 and 2000, in fact much of this funding has been transferred to funding for specific loans or projects (other revenue). Consequently state funding for higher education remains fairly steady on its 1998 levels.

114 The current revenue figures in brackets for 1993-1995 refer to HEI revenue excluding money received for scholarships and targeted or capital programs. The percentages for these three years are given with reference to the figures in brackets, rather than the ones in bold, which are highlighted for ease of comparison with subsequent years.
Universities used a variety of methods to increase their number of fee-paying students while bypassing MOET regulations or local government permission. The Hanoi Foreign Languages University (ĐH Ngoại ngữ Hà Nội) appears to have been one the most innovative of these. According to Đào Hòa, it conducted distance education courses by establishing distance education centres at a number of already existing universities (ĐH Tây Nguyên, ĐH Bách khoa Hà Nội...), and sending teachers to the centres as guest lecturers, apparently without first gaining permission to open from the MOET. After the MOET discovered the practice at Tay Nguyen University, it ordered that the centre be incorporated into the university’s own distance education centre. Tay Nguyen University also passed an internal resolution on the transfer of the centre’s administration, but in 1998 the transfer still had not taken place. In total, Hanoi Foreign Languages University was teaching 535 classes with 20,361 students, but of these, 269 classes had not been given permission to operate (Đào Hòa 1998).

Đào Hòa also exposes other areas where universities took advantage of their new ability to enrol fee-paying students to offer certificates of dubious quality. In some instances universities opened distance education classes in more remote areas for students who did not yet have a secondary certificate. At the end of the first year of university studies, the students were admitted to further studies in a more central location, and awarded their secondary certificate retrospectively. Non-government universities established in the mid-1990s also caused problems. A MOET inspection of 'in-service' student files in the newly opened business administration course at Phuong Dong University in Hanoi found that 31 of the 41 files inspected were not in accordance with regulations. Numerous other instances of falsified documents or inadmissible documents have also been uncovered (certification of secondary school signed by a local committee leader or company boss and so on) (Đào Hòa 1998). The 1998 review of the system conducted by the Department of Distance Education
(MOET), found that these problems were most acute in economics, arts and foreign language subjects (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo (Vụ Giáo dục Tứ xa) 1998).

**Aggravation of disparity?**

While original MOET projections put forward in 1993 suggested that student numbers would rise by 1.5% between 1995 and 2000, in fact by 1998 they had already increased by 1.8%, in a highly disproportionate fashion. 38.25% of the growth was in economics, 32.99% in the social sciences, with hardly any growth in the vital areas of health, teacher training or agriculture (Sài Gòn Giải Phóng, 27/2/99, p.2). The introduction of fees has been widening the gap between those universities that are able to attract students and those that are less popular, however vital these universities might be to the immediate needs of Vietnamese development. Those universities providing courses in less popular fields have been unable to take advantage of the sources of funding in the same way.

Most of the agricultural students attending the Hanoi Agricultural University (Đại học Nông nghiệp Hà Nội) come from the countryside or the immediate environs of the university, which is located about 20 kilometres outside of Hanoi. Its programs are little in demand as students prefer to take courses that are perceived to offer them brighter prospects for future employment in the city. Those students who do enrol at the university frequently belong to the category of ‘priority students’ (sinh viên ưu tiên) established by the government, who are eligible for a fee waiver. Consequently the university has difficulty charging fees for regular students, let alone attempting to enrol students beyond the government quota, to bring in extra income. It is forced to rely on government funding for its 'regular plan' students and is consequently being left behind other universities in terms of its facilities. Student dormitories often have no electricity and there is very limited equipment available for the experiments vital to subjects such as veterinary science or aquaculture.\(^\text{115}\) Teacher interviews with staff and students at HAU, Hanoi, April 1997.

\(^{115}\) Interviews with staff and students at HAU, Hanoi, April 1997.
training colleges, which comprise around half of all HEIs, are in a similar position. Until recently, they were not allowed to charge fees for regular students and they also had difficulty attracting fee-paying students, given the disfavour with which a teaching career is now viewed. Fees were introduced from the 1998/9 academic year, to supplement existing university income, but this has in turn created problems for these institutions, many of which are in rural areas (Nguyễn Quốc Anh 1999).

Not only is the gap between universities widening, the introduction of fees also runs the risk of discriminating against students from poor families within the same university. Virtually everyone concerned with education with whom I spoke, from parents through to central government officials, and particularly students, were concerned that poorer families, and rural families in particular, were being prevented from enrolling their children in higher education. This was not only because of the introduction of fees, but also because of the higher cost of living in cities, where most HEIs are located. Average fees in 1998 were around US$100 per year,\(^\text{116}\) which represents around three months’ wages for a senior university lecturer.\(^\text{117}\) This does not include associated costs relating to books, extra study classes, or other informal expenses.

For students in the countryside, the costs of living in the city are particularly onerous (450-500,000 dông, around US$35 per month), for tuition and living expenses, compared to annual rural incomes of around US$200-250 per year (Nguyễn Quốc Anh 1999). According to the World Bank, '... in 1992/93... 80% of Vietnamese would have needed to spend more on higher education for one year than it cost them to live for one year' (World Bank 1996: 57). The rapid expansion in student numbers

\(^{116}\) Interview with Nguyễn Kim Truy, Director, Hanoi Open University, Hanoi, April 1997; and with Nguyen Huu Duc, Director, University of Dalat, June 1998.

\(^{117}\) USD$100 per year, or VND110,000 per month, ten months of study per year.
over the last decade has not been met by an expansion in cheap student dormitories particularly sought after by rural students. They can currently accommodate between 5% and 15% of enrolled students, depending on the university (Nguyễn Quốc Anh 1999). One newspaper related how a student returning to her parents in the countryside was given several ducks to take back to the city so that she could earn money for her studies by selling the eggs. The author estimated that she would have needed around 600 duck eggs a month to pay for her studies. The anecdote highlights not only the high costs of higher education compared to rural incomes, but also how much beyond the expectations of rural families they can be (Phùng CôngSIDE 1999).

Despite the level of concern, measures introduced to address the problem are yet to make an impact. The government has passed numerous decrees regarding scholarships for students but the scholarships are invariably encouragement scholarships for students with high grades, or for students coming from social priority areas such as the mountains, and the children of war invalids. They do not target specifically students from low-income families (World Bank 1996: 58). Recently a student loan scheme was introduced whereby students are able to borrow money from a state owned bank at low interest rates and repay it within ten years (World Bank 1996: 59). These were first trialled in 1994 and were extended to 20 universities in 1995 upon the introduction of appropriate regulations (QĐ 1343/NHCT). There has been considerable suspicion of them on the part of students, who do not appear keen to borrow money when employment prospects remain uncertain. In 1998 the government expanded the loan scheme to include students with only average marks,

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118 Between 1989 and 1990 alone the MOET issued 12 separate decrees concerning scholarships for students (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1991: 68-105). For specific decrees see for example Công Báo, 31/10/1986 or Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1991: 68-105 for MOET decisions relating to scholarships taken between 1987 and 1990, in particular QĐ số 63/HDBT (10/6/1989), p.68 which outlined the principles governing the issue of scholarships and fees. Later regulations include QĐ 302/TTg in 1993 regarding the children of war veterans.
instead of only extending it to those with good marks because only a much smaller number than expected had decided to take up the loan scheme (P.V. 1998).

The introduction of fees marked a step in a 'privatward' direction in terms of both finance and control. Not only did it mean that non-state sources of funding were available to universities, the income that universities gained from the extra students could also be spent by the university itself, according to its own priorities. At the same time, while Ministry directives specified that the Ministry was to be approached before tuition fees or distance programs were introduced, in fact universities found ways of circumventing the regulations in the search for extra finance. Thus, while regulations showed highly centralised control of higher education in the hands of the MOET, in practice the difficulties in ensuring that the regulations were enforced meant that universities had significant freedom in their implementation. Even where irregularities were discovered, the MOET had difficulties imposing punishment because of an understanding that universities were simply finding ways of supplementing the insufficient funding provided by the MOET in order to overcome their difficult financial situation. The MOET also lacked policies and legislation to ensure that universities were held accountable.119 'MOET was extremely concerned about [irregularities]; yet it could do very little to control the situation because institutions were responding to the immediate demand from the market and these programs were bringing revenues to the institutions.' (Thao Xuan Tran 1998: 54). With greater control over their own finances, the universities, and individuals founding universities, were better able to make independent decisions about their institutions, and bypass MOET regulations. At the same time existing institutions could claim a type of moral legitimacy in actions to expand their financing, even by slightly dubious means, because of the well-recognised need to improve teacher salaries and university facilities.

119 Interview with senior MOET official, Hanoi, June 1998.
The Marketisation of Higher Education

Although student fees remain the largest source of non-government revenue for HEIs (see Chart 5.1), universities also benefit from a number of other sources of income, again, depending on their situation and the perceived value of their product on the market. Despite the injunction against the 'commercialisation of educational activities' in the 1998 Education Law (Article 17), all schools are encouraged to seek alternative sources of income through consultancies, production and business activities, educational services, and activities both within and outside the country (Article 88) - the effective marketisation of university products.

As yet such projects are only undertaken on a small scale and only represent a small part of total revenue. They show, however, very similar tendencies to those undertaken in China, earlier, and on a larger scale. In China, universities are able to hire out facilities such as lecture halls or scientific laboratories to earn extra money and they have also been encouraged to hire out their intellectual resources. Yin Qiping and Gordon White find Chinese universities have been able to earn extra income in three ways: through projects from local enterprises, sales from their own subsidiary enterprises and the sale of technology to businesses (Qiping and White 1994: 225-228).

In terms of the first, a number of universities have been given projects by local enterprises. Zhejiang University in China, for example, was entrusted with 780 projects in 1988, 1000 in 1990 and 1400 in 1991. Concerning the second, Chinese (and Vietnamese) higher education institutions have a history of running their own enterprises as part of a socialist education that links education institutions with productive labour. These enterprises have taken on the task of turning innovations into marketable commodities, often sold to high-tech enterprises (Qiping and White 1994: 226-228). Finally, in term of technology transfer, 'In 1990, Chinese higher education institutions were involved in 4840 items of technology transfer directly to enterprises and sold 336 patents.' (Qiping & White 1994: 225). This technology
transfer frequently involves the marketing of scientific and technological data and has become a source of income for institutions and individuals alike, with a percentage of successful sales going to the university and a percentage to the individual or group providing the expertise.

In Vietnam, state ministries previously decided, and usually allocated research contracts to research institutions rather than universities. This continued into the doi moi period. Between 1986 and 1990, the state allocated an estimated 10,100 research contracts, worth over US$5 million, yet only 6% of this money went to universities, the majority went to research institutions (Hoa Phuong Tran 1998: 159). While the state continued to encourage universities to undertake research, this was more in an attempt for teachers to improve their teaching than because universities were considered a suitable location for research (Hoa Phuong Tran 1998: 158).

The government has signed a number of contracts with universities to supply services (as opposed to research). Between 1991 and 1995, universities were allocated 42 central government production contracts, totalling VND 15,755 million (US$1.4 million), 129 ministerial level projects valued at VND 4,839 million (US$0.5 million), and several thousand technology contracts worth several hundred billion đồng. Of these, six universities (Hanoi Polytechnic University, Ho Chi Minh City Polytechnic University, Da Nang Polytechnic University, the University of Mining and Geology, the Transport and Communications University, and the Construction University), had income from contracts valued at VND500 billion (US$42 million) (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1997: 191). Many of these contracts are for training government staff, but occasionally universities are asked to research questions of national importance. For example, in the immediate aftermath of the Sixth Party Congress, the staff of the National Economics University were given responsibility for analysing the problems associated with the central planning system. They were then given responsibility for
developing new economics courses for use throughout Vietnam by the national government, as well as numerous other provincial and local government projects.\textsuperscript{120}

By contrast with China, the sale of technology or technical expertise developed within universities is a process still in its infancy in Vietnam. One of the more successful examples of this kind is that of the cooperation between the United Railroads of Vietnam and the Hanoi Polytechnic University. Under this arrangement the university developed a variety of different accessories for diesel engines, as well as different types of cogs and pumps to improve the quality and safety of the railroads. It also served the added purpose of giving practical experience to several hundred students, experience which Vietnamese graduates often lack (Binh Giang 1997). The university has also had good relations with less prestigious enterprises. It received commendations from the deputy director of a musical instrument making factory for designing specialist machinery that enabled the factory to increase its productivity two to three times (Phung Tân Tuyền 1987: 18).

Once again this is one of the prestigious universities in Vietnam, with marketable expertise. The ability of different HEIs to earn income in this way varies significantly, much in the same way that universities with popular courses are able to attract more fee-paying students. Less prestigious universities have been forced to find their own means of generating income outside the state sector and their efforts to generate income are far more modest. The Viet Bac Teacher Training University (ĐH Sát phạm Việt Bắc) established a Committee for Productive Labour and Service in 1980. As part of its activities the centre was involved in administering a small shop, a fish pond and growing rice as a form of extra revenue for the university. In 1988 these enterprises were put out to contract and after one year of production on a contractual basis, the output of rice and fish as well as the income from the shop had more than doubled (Thúc Mậu 1989). This represents an alternate source of funding for a

\textsuperscript{120} Interview with senior administrator, National Economics University, Hanoi, March 1998.
university in a remote area that is not able to attract fee-paying students to its courses. Another example is that of the Sub-Institute for Industry (Phân viện Công nghệ), a research institute in Hanoi, which has been doing experiments into the appropriate heating temperature for the production of dried and instant foods. It sells the products of its research on the market, both in the form of packaged instant noodles and bottled conserves, but also in the form of the technology to do these processes, which it sells to other producers (Thao Lâm 1997).

The majority of HEIs now have centres for research and production (Trung Tâm Nghiên cứu và Lào động Sản xuất) whose responsibility it is to link research more closely to the needs of production. This is not a new phenomenon under đồi mới, the first such centre opened in 1980, but they have expanded significantly since 1986. By 1989, 50 had been opened and 106 were in operation by the end of 1991. In an evaluation of these centres in 1989, the MOET placed 35% in a top bracket of achievement on the basis that they had been successful in obtaining research results, undertaking research projects given to the them by the ministry or local government and because they were contributing significantly to the income of the university. 58% were considered to be working in the right direction and 7% were in difficulties. Some of the centres were contributing to their parent universities a sum equivalent to 100% of the official income provided by the government (Nguyễn Văn Thân and Nguyễn Công Giả 1992).

Since 1998, universities are able to open state-owned enterprises under their own auspices (Decision 68/1998/QD-TTg), which puts such production centres on a more formal legal basis. It is not certain how much these will use the production of the universities themselves, however, as the decision refers to 'ministries, ministerial level agencies, Government agencies, provincial People’s Committees and cities' being allowed to set up State-owned businesses at the universities, rather than the universities themselves undertaking these activities.121

Some universities have been able to overcome their funding shortages, despite a relatively unattractive location or courses. Can Tho University (Đại học Can Tho) is located in a rural area, the Mekong Delta, and concentrates on teaching agricultural science, medicine and education, among the least popular subjects. It is located a long way from the centre of political power, and from the majority of prestigious universities in Hanoi, and yet it has managed to improve its facilities and multiply its sources of income dramatically.

Table 6.2: Sources of Income at Can Tho University, 1988-1992
(In thousand USD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finance from the MOET</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For operating costs</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>146.2</td>
<td>274.2</td>
<td>423.3</td>
<td>639.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For construction</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>84.2</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance from Can Tho University</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training contracts</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>128.0</td>
<td>184.0</td>
<td>168.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research contracts and commercial investment</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>72.6</td>
<td>105.4</td>
<td>148.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International support</td>
<td>94.8</td>
<td>138.0</td>
<td>313.0</td>
<td>328.0</td>
<td>506.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>179.7</td>
<td>460.9</td>
<td>872.0</td>
<td>1121.2</td>
<td>1617.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This table shows the rapid growth in income for the university both from increasing government allocations and a variety of other sources in the early years of đổi mới. In 1992, Can Tho University had established six in-service training centres to cater to 1,400 students in more remote areas, representing a 28% increase compared to students already taught at the main campus, and contributing an extra 10% to total revenue (Tran Phuoc Duong and Sloper 1995: 218). In terms of research projects, the
university has been active in seeking out contracts with local governments or cooperative agreements with international universities and research centres, based on its field of expertise (Tran Phuoc Duong and Sloper 1995: 219). Consequently it has been extremely successful in attracting overseas funding. In 1995 Can Tho received Japanese aid worth US$23 million to upgrade its agricultural centre (Nguyễn Minh Hiền 1998). 122

The university also has links with a long list of non-government organisations from Europe, the United States and Asia, and participates in a number of international research programs for agriculture (Tran Phuoc Duong and Sloper 1995: 227-228). As a result, 31% of the university’s total income in 1992 was derived from international support for local research projects.

In several interviews, both Vietnamese educators and foreign specialists working in the area attributed the success of the university to the energy and dedication of its senior staff, who had worked hard to establish and maintain projects with overseas research and aid organisations. 123 Unlike academics at other universities in the south after 1975, many at Can Tho University elected to stay in Vietnam, rather than flee overseas. They were able to achieve a modus vivendi with the local CPV leaders, and constituted a qualified and experienced body for the university to build on.

Overall, production and research contracts, technology transfer and university based enterprises represent a small but significant contribution to the overall income of universities. Many universities do not offer highly marketable expertise in the current Vietnamese climate. The example of Can Tho University, however, shows that

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122 According to the 'Report by the Government of Vietnam to 'Sectoral Aid Coordination Meeting on Education' (Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 1995) the amount was US$7 million.

123 Interview with Nguyễn Văn Chánh, senior lecturer, HCMC University of Technology, May.
apparent practical disadvantages such as location and subject specialisation can be overcome when educators within the university are able to draw on alternative resources such as the international community as well as the local community (see Chapter 3).

**Official Development Assistance (ODA)**124

As highlighted in the case of Can Tho University, income from overseas can have a significant impact on the overall financial capacity of a university. It can also have a strong influence on the views, strategies and direction of the recipient.

Patricia Denham points out, in the context of aid for Cambodian education, that the very assumption underlying official development assistance is that the donor has something to give which the recipient needs, in the form of money, skills, knowledge or modes of behaviour (Denham 1997:130). ODA is intended to change the status quo in the recipient country, hopefully in a direction that both donor and recipient consider appropriate. The nature of the relationship between the recipient and the donor country, however, often means that in practice the result is likely to reflect more closely the priorities and viewpoints of the donor. This is not a new phenomenon. Countries, or indeed any groups which are more 'successful', have always tended to impose their viewpoints and norms to a greater or lesser extent on those that are 'less successful', although in the past this practice was termed 'colonialism', 'imperialism', or more recently 'neo-colonialism' and 'westernisation'. Nowhere is this more evident than in the history of higher education in Vietnam, which, in the past, has successively adopted Chinese, French and Soviet models of

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124 'Official Development Assistance (ODA) comprises all grants and loans to developing countries, which are i) undertaken by the official sector; ii) principally aimed at promoting economic development and welfare; iii) given at concessional financial terms (if loan, have a grant element of at least 25%).' UNDP, 2000. *Overview of Official Development Assistance: Vietnam*, Hanoi, Internet Edition.
education among others, according to which nation had the greatest influence in Vietnam at the time. The significant difference between outside influences on Vietnamese higher education in the past and those in the present, is the variety of countries and organisations that now provide finance and advice to individuals and individual universities.

Table 6.3: ODA for Tertiary Level Education\textsuperscript{125}

(Amount quoted in US$ thousands at current prices).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1,778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>2,501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>3,784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>14,519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>30,647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>21,733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>28,027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>20,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>23,887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>21,422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>(4,743)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 6.3, ODA for tertiary level of education has increased significantly over the last decade, especially since 1994, with important impacts at the individual, institutional and national level. ODA at the individual level is found particularly in the form of scholarships for students. While arguments in favour of scholarships as a form of development assistance usually highlight the benefits the student will bring to their country on graduation, scholarships nonetheless have their first impact at the individual level. Prior to 1990, around 300-500 postgraduate students travelled to socialist bloc countries in Eastern Europe to study each year, on bilateral arrangements between Vietnam and the recipient country (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1997: 195). When the socialist bloc collapsed, so too did these training arrangements, but other countries have gradually stepped in to cover the gap. Beginning in 1991, the Australian government, for example, has provided around 150 scholarships a year for Vietnamese students to study in Australia. The fields of study are decided on jointly by the MOET and AusAID, the Australian aid body, and the

majority of scholarships are offered to undergraduates in the fields of engineering, economics/commerce, development studies and management. A smaller number are also offered in fields such as health and teacher training, and there are a number of Masters level, PhD and technical scholarships offered. Other countries have also offered scholarships. Singapore's Nanyang Technology University has set aside places for 60 Vietnamese students to study there, of which 20 students will be offered scholarships (Saigon Times Daily, 19/2/2001, distributed by VNA). Japan has supported tertiary education in Vietnam through initiatives such as the 1999 Nippon Foundation grant of US$1 million, to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City National Universities. The interest from the money will be used to provide 20 scholarships for students to undertake tertiary level study (VNA 1999).

While not strictly ODA, private overseas contributions to higher education have also increased and offer further variety of sources of income. The oil company Esso Vietnam, offers scholarships based on income as well as scholastic merit to students, for study within Vietnam. Between 1996 and 1999, Esso had granted students 400 scholarships to students at universities and colleges, worth VND one million each (VNA, 11-13 June 1999), or enough to cover most of their tuition fees. The example of Thang Long University in the previous chapter is the prime example of where overseas resources were instrumental in changing not only the fate of the university, but also the direction of higher education.

At the university level, ODA has also increased in variety and impact. Prior to the disintegration of the socialist bloc, university-level relations existed, particularly with Soviet Union universities, but often this was limited to the latter contributing teaching materials and occasionally teachers. Personal contacts might be limited to the senior staff in the rectorate, with little impact on the majority (Hoa Phuong Tran 1998: 133). By contrast, university contacts have broadened considerably in nature and scope since Vietnam has become more open to the outside world. One of the most common forms of assistance is the increasing numbers of volunteers travelling
to Vietnam to teach (particularly English), or to otherwise offer their expertise. This constitutes a level of interaction with foreigners not previously possible. At the institutional level, as shown in the case of Can Tho University, university level ODA can take the form of cooperative agreements with international organisations and with individual institutions.

Once again, however, the universities that tend to benefit most from ODA are those located principally in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (see Table 5.4). Of total ODA spent on the tertiary education sector in 1996, 71% went to the MOET and the university sector as a whole. Of the remaining 28%, 11.5% went to universities in Hanoi, 6.8% to universities in Ho Chi Minh City and roughly 1% each to the universities in Huế and Xuân Mai. Can Tho University stands out with 5.8% of the ODA to the sector. By contrast Đà Nẵng and Hải Phòng, with the largest concentration of universities outside the two main cities, appear to have received nothing. Xuân Mai Forestry University is another rural university, located around 50 kilometres outside of Hanoi, which has successfully attracted international funds. While I am unaware of the source of ODA for the Forestry University, it seems likely that it is part of ongoing efforts on the part of environmental organisations to protect the destruction of Vietnam's forests.
Table 6.4: Educational Institutions Receiving Official Development Assistance in 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beneficiary</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Centre for Social Sciences and Humanities of Vietnam</td>
<td>522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam National University, HCM City</td>
<td>1,704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi University of Technology</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi Medical School</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam National University, Hanoi</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Economics University</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franco-Viet Management Training Centre (National Economics University)</td>
<td>1,852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total for universities in Hanoi</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,668</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCM City University of Technology</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCM City University of Economics</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uni of Agriculture and Forestry, HCM City</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Training Centre, HCM City</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCM City Heart Institute</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total for universities in HCM City</strong></td>
<td><strong>581</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Hue</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural University of Hue</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Can Tho</td>
<td>1,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xuan Mai Forestry College of Vietnam</td>
<td>409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Training Colleges in Hanoi and Hue</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Institute for Nuclear Research</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities and Higher Education Institutes</td>
<td>2,118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Education and Training</td>
<td>19,089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Education and Research Disbursements</strong></td>
<td><strong>29,911</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


While these additions represent significant contributions to the overall income of individual institutions, the biggest contribution has been at the national level, in the form of multilateral assistance.

**World Bank Higher Education Project**

The Education Sector Review undertaken in 1991 and 1992 by the MOET and UNESCO was the first non-Soviet bloc assistance to higher education in Vietnam at the government level. The review was part of a broader process of government review of the education, and eventually culminated in an agreement between the World
Bank and the Vietnamese government for the largest single amount of outside funding ever to be contributed to the higher education sector in Vietnam.

In the context of creating a new direction for higher education, in late 1992 the MOET was under instructions from the Council of Ministers to undertake the reorganisation of higher education and research institutions, 'to establish both a strong university system and a strong research system in Viet Nam, able to contribute to the economic growth and social welfare of the country' (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 1992: 2). In order to achieve this, the MOET and the Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment (MOSTE) were to prepare plans for the reorganisation of the network of higher education and research institutions, and for the establishment of scientific research centres. The focus of these plans was the amalgamation of existing institutions and in particular the establishment of two national scientific research centres, and national 'pivotal' universities in which both research and teaching of a high quality were to be undertaken. It was also to include a series of regional and sectoral science and technology agencies focussing on regional problems (Council of Ministers Resolution 324/CT, 22/9/1992). The 'pivotal' institutions would receive a large quantity of available funding in order to provide high quality training and act as centres of excellence in the country. The institutions chosen for this role were, in particular, the two newly created national universities in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

In order to achieve this goal the government had acquired land on the outskirts of each city and intended to build a multi-faculty campus on the sites, which would replace the existing buildings scattered around the cities, but it awaited finance to begin the building. Four years later, in 1996, the Resolution of the Second Plenum of the Central Party Committee (8th Congress) went so far as to announce that ODA should be used specifically to build infrastructure for HEIs (Communist Party of Vietnam 1996b: 13). Undoubtedly this was a reference to the government's desire to build world-class modern multi-faculty national universities in the two
cities, but also perhaps an attempt to pre-empt on-going discussions with the World Bank concerning the appropriate use of multilateral funding.

Beginning in 1963 the World Bank has a long history of lending money for education projects in developing countries, and it has shown a shift in the types of projects funded from mainly construction projects to ones focussing more on qualitative improvement (World Bank 1995: 145). The international priorities of World Bank higher education lending, as outlined in its 1994 review of higher education assistance, include support for greater levels of private financing for higher education, emphasis on greater efficiency, equity of access, transparency of funding allocation and greater autonomy for HEIs (World Bank 1994: 86).

The World Bank became involved in Vietnamese higher education through the original Education Sector Review of 1991/2. As part of that project, the various groups involved identified a need for assistance specifically in the field of higher education, and the World Bank undertook several exploratory missions to the country in 1992 and 1993 in order to assess the situation (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 1992; Le Thac Can and Sloper 1995: 10). After many years of negotiation, the World Bank and the Vietnamese government finally signed an agreement in November 1998 whereby International Development Assistance (the World Bank) would provide a soft loan of US$83.3 million, while the ministry would contribute US$12.7 million and local colleges US$7.8 million, a total of US$103 million (Saigon Times Daily, 4/12/1998). The disbursement of the loan is to take place over six years, from 1999 to 2004 (Ministry of Education and Training 1999a: 3). The lengthy period of discussion before the agreement was signed reflects the difficulty in reaching a compromise between the fundamentally different views of the World Bank and the Vietnamese government.

According to Christopher Shaw, former head of the World Bank higher education mission in Vietnam, the aim of this loan, and of the World Bank in Vietnam was not to present a particular model for higher education. Instead it was
concentrating on highlighting weaknesses in the sector, in particular the separation of research and training in institutions, and the narrow focus of training. The original government plan requested funding to be allocated to pivotal national universities, in order for them to become centres of excellence in the country. Shaw argued that this original proposal was simply another form of central planning, whereby the money was allocated in the expectation that the allocation itself would have the desired effect. It did nothing to guarantee that the universities would necessarily be the most appropriate ones to receive funding in another five or six years, and would not increase flexibility to better meet crises. 'It became increasingly clear that this [proposed government] strategy would not improve the responsiveness of the entire system to the country’s rapidly changing needs, and that there was no guarantee that the two higher education institutions targeted to receive funds were in any better position than other institutions to take maximum advantage of project funds.' (World Bank 1998: 6).

Once the original proposal had been rejected, a second proposal was developed for a broad policy based approach, with World Bank funds used as direct budgetary support. This was rejected, according to a review of the process, because of the 'demanding character and the potential risks of a sector-wide adjustment operation with a higher education focus, and [concerns about] the readiness of Vietnam for a policy based operation.' (World Bank 1998: 6). The World Bank was apparently worried about what would happen to the funding if it was incorporated directly into the complex budgetary procedures for education, outlined above. The final option was considered to be a compromise between the two.

125 Interview conducted in Hanoi, July 1998.
In the event, the agreement signed offers funds to HEIs based on a process of competitive bidding. According to the agreement, the World Bank will provide needy institutions with funds based on their ability to show improvements in efficiency and management, including a higher degree of data collection and planning (World Bank 1998: 3). These funds, 'Quality Investment Grants' (QIGs), have been made available on a competitive basis, in three tiers, to HEIs that are able to demonstrate a commitment to improving institutional quality and efficiency. The HEIs must also enrol more than 2,000 full-time students to be eligible, as part of the incentive to increase the size of HEIs, or pressure smaller ones to close or amalgamate through the use of market pressure.

To receive the first tier of funding, the university needed to collect statistical material as part of the yearly Higher Education Institutional Monitoring Survey conducted by the government. They had to conduct a graduate tracer survey, and prepare and submit a medium term strategic plan for the development of the institution. For higher levels of grants, the institutions then needed to show that they were acting on the information collected to improve their institution. QIGs are offered for a wide range of institutional needs such as equipment, visiting scholars, staff training or remuneration to a maximum project value of US$750,000, for the third tier of grants (World Bank Consultancy 1997). There is a strict stipulation, however, that grants will not be used for construction purposes (except where this is incidental and necessary to another project, such as providing adequate facilities for the storage of equipment). This stipulation is in accordance with the stated international World Bank direction away from funding for educational construction projects, and in direct opposition to government plans to build multi-disciplinary campuses. The World Bank has specifically rejected construction projects as a secondary priority compared

127 An HEI in Vietnam was eventually defined as an institution of higher education with a separate accounting system (Ministry of Education and Training 1999: 14).
to teacher training and curriculum reform (World Bank Consultancy 1997: 23).

Various people within the World Bank expressed concern that investment in material infrastructure was being understood as a substitute for improvement in quality.

The review committee for the grants is appointed by the Minister of Education and Training, and includes representatives from the Ministry of Planning and Investment, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment, and the Ministry of Health, as well as the rectors and vice-rectors of universities, employer representatives and other education experts (World Bank Consultancy 1997: 12). By early 2002, 31 universities had received the first level of available grants and ten of these were nearing completion of their initial projects.128

Mr Shaw's claim that the grants do not encourage a particular 'model' of higher education, can only be considered valid from the point of view that they do not distinguish between private and publicly funded institutions, or between multi-faculty or specialised institutions. In every other way, the process of competitive bidding for Quality Improvement Grants clearly addresses all the major issues highlighted by the World Bank's international agenda for higher education development outlined above, not to mention the characteristics of the neo-liberal model of higher education outlined in the second chapter. The basic premise of the process of allocation is that competitive bidding will increase the efficiency and accountability of HEIs. An important component of the entire process is the introduction of the collection of statistics covering all facets of university life (Ministry of Education and Training 1999a). These statistics have already begun to constitute a set of performance indicators able to provide better information to students about the best place to study, and to employers about the quality of graduates each university produces. They effectively help to establish more of an informed 'market' in education, giving students more information about HEIs in order to make an

128 Interview with Mai Thi Thanh, World Bank, Hanoi, March 2002.
informed choice about the best place to study, and forcing more HEIs to compete to ensure they attract the highest quality students.

The outcome of the process was in direct contrast with the obvious preferences of the government at the outset of the process, however, in which they sought to direct the funding to particular elite institutions. The creation of a single campus for the two national universities in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City remains an unrealised ambition, as the government has been unable to secure alternative funding. The agreement signed between the World Bank and the Vietnamese government highlights the ability of the World Bank to push its own policy in a particular country because of the large financial capital it wields. In 1995 the government announced that the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was providing US$7 million to build the Hanoi National University, of which US$5 million was to be for equipment (QD 362-TTg, 20/6/1995), however I was unable to find any evidence of this project proceeding. In 1998 there were rumours that the government had approached the Asian Development Bank about funding for the Ho Chi Minh City National University, but these do not appear to have been any more successful.

The government still retains very tight control over the funding process, however, with representatives of all the important ministries concerned with higher education involved in the process of funding allocation, although the terms of the QIGs specifically reject their allocation for any form of construction. The final compromise reached between the government of Vietnam and the World Bank is one where the Vietnamese government still maintains substantial control over how the funds are disbursed, but that universities are obliged to undertake greater planning and budget responsibility in order to participate in the competitive bidding and provide evidence of their performance, in a simulation of a market process.
Unofficial funding

The commercialisation of education phenomena such as buying degrees, selling marks, enrolling students more than allocated quota, lack of discipline in charging fees and spending have badly affected the reputation of schools and teachers (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2001: 6).

Exercise:

$7 + 10 - 2 \times 6 = ?$

$3 + 2 \div 1 \times 7 = ?$

Solution: The maths exercise will ...

The cartoon shows a student looking for work. The employer states: 'Even though you have graduated with an 'excellent' diploma, you still do not have a 'dollar' diploma.

As shown in the cartoons on the previous page, money has become more important in many aspects affecting education. Not only are teachers setting supplementary classes for their students where the real content of the subject is taught, but students themselves are also finding that the quality of their diploma may be less important in finding a job than the quality of their money.

State funding, tuition fees and ODA all constitute important sources of more or less official funding. Fees charged outside official MOET regulations are nonetheless accounted for in the university financial arrangements. Other forms of 'semi-official funding' were highlighted in the World Bank report on education finance. With regards to primary education, for example, the report showed that while fees are officially set at zero, in fact in 1996 parents in rural areas had to pay as much as 139,618 dông (US$13) per child, and urban parents 418, 772 dông (US$38) per child, per year, through costs such as school improvement fees, uniforms, tutoring and so on (World Bank 1996: 54). Such costs also represent an income for the schools and the people associated with them that help the institutions to function in the wake of limited government funding. Not all unofficial funding is necessarily so innocent, however.

I use the term 'unofficial funding' here to refer to income from sources that are neither reported to the MOET according to official financial procedures nor documented anywhere else, unlike the 'semi-official' contributions outlined above. It may take many forms, and is perhaps best viewed as a form of corruption.

In higher education there is widespread awareness of practices such as buying examination questions and results, buying extra marks and even buying degrees. They are practices that are widely talked about, discussed and usually condemned. Not surprisingly there is little hard evidence of the scale on which this is happening, but anecdotal evidence suggests that it is very widespread. In 1997, many different students with whom I spoke in Hanoi readily admitted to copying off their fellow classmates during examinations, despite yearly reports in the newspapers about the
successful invigilation of examinations, and the successful discovery of students who had attempted to flaunt the system. In 1999, in informal discussions with students in their final year at the Hanoi National University, one group said that they had approached their appointed supervisors with offers of money for them to write their graduation thesis. One of them had been successful, and in order get the major part of his thesis written, typed and bound, he had paid US$100 (the equivalent of three months salary for a university lecturer) and graduated top of his class following an oral examination, a rubber-stamp affair where his supervisor had informed him of the questions and helped him to prepare for them before-hand. Others considered themselves less fortunate because they had had to spend months slaving over their dissertation. While they lamented the hard work they had to do, they were also sufficiently reticent about discussing the issue to show they did not consider it the most honest way of obtaining a degree.\textsuperscript{129}

The situation is not just prevalent among young undergraduate students, however. The government has gradually been introducing mandatory qualification levels as part of its drive to improve the quality of the public service. The result is that many established cadres who wish to shore up their position, have, among others, sought the least strenuous way of obtaining their expected degree certificate. One retired lecturer from the National Economics University related how he had been approached on several occasions by senior cadres who offered to pay him significant sums of money if he would write their Masters or PhD theses for them. He had refused, but insisted strongly that he knew some of his colleagues earnt extra income in this way.\textsuperscript{130} A middle-level cadre who had recently graduated from abroad, talking about his well-established superiors who were now undertaking postgraduate studies,

\textsuperscript{129} Interview with recent graduates, Hanoi, January 2000.

\textsuperscript{130} Interview conducted in Hanoi, June 1998.
asserted that he felt none of the traditional respect towards them, because they were not earning their degrees through hard work. The implication was that they had been awarded the degrees perfunctorily on the basis of a sub-standard thesis, or perhaps had not done the work themselves.\(^{131}\)

Ngô Vĩnh Long also decries the prevalence of this situation and its results. He argues that those who are buying their degrees 'are only using these academic degrees as barriers to prevent individuals who are talented but have no power or influence, from getting ahead in their careers or in public service.' (Ngô Vĩnh Long 2000: 17).\(^{132}\) An official in the Department of Postgraduate Education, MOET, argued that currently the demand for degrees was so high and the teachers so poor, that there was no administrative way of preventing the buying of degrees and results.\(^{133}\)

To graduate with a PhD, candidates must defend their thesis three times in front of different panels of experts set up by their faculty, their university, and the MOET. Despite this apparently rigorous process, which often takes over a year to complete, two doctoral candidates undertaking the process in 2002 asserted that there were usually no problems passing the oral examination, so long as you had enough money to ensure that all the examiners (often as many as seven) appeared for the examination.\(^{134}\)

Despite the prevalence of this form of alternative funding, real concern exists at all levels concerning the impact such practices are having on the quality of graduates, and the traditionally very high esteem in which education is held. The

\(^{131}\) Interview conducted in Hanoi, February 1997.

\(^{132}\) 'Họ chỉ dùng những tấm bằng này làm bằng chấn không cho những người có khả năng nhưng không có thể lực có cơ hội tiến thân hay phục vụ đất nước.'

\(^{133}\) Interview conducted in Hanoi, July 1998.

\(^{134}\) Interviews conducted in Hanoi, April 2001.
The principal response of the government has been to increase emphasis on Marxist-Leninist teaching, which is expected to raise the moral consciousness and ethical standards of the population (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo (Vụ công tác chính trị) 1998). In the broader context of helping the financial situation of teachers, the government has discussed raising teacher salaries, but without any significant outcomes. A recent attempt by the government to address the situation appears to be the punishment of perpetrators, as shown in the following press release.

HEADLINE: Vietnam sacks 1,500 students, state employees for forged diplomas

DATELINE: HANOI, March 15, 2001

A total of 1,433 students and state employees have been dismissed from their schools and workplaces after being caught with forged degrees and certificates, officials said Thursday. Another 404 people received warnings, said Tran Ba Giao, deputy head of the education ministry's inspection team.

"These are the initial findings after we carried out inspections and tests of more than 530,105 cases ... it is really a warning for the education sector in Vietnam," he said.

The fraudsters included some senior officials using false degrees to advance their positions. Nguyen Ba Thuyen, deputy chief prosecutor in the central highland province of Lam Dong, held two false university degrees even though he had not finished secondary school. The director of the provincial gas and oil company in southern Ben Tre province was also caught using false documents.

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
Conclusion

Higher education funding has undergone fundamental and far-reaching changes under doi mơi. From a situation in which even the constitution prescribed that all funding was to be provided by the state, Vietnamese universities now have substantial leeway in which to seek many alternative sources of funding. This change gained widespread support because of the very difficult situation in which HEIs and their teachers found themselves in the economic crisis of the 1980s, and the inability of the government to increase finance for education, given the available finance and current priorities.

The need to overcome the problems faced by the sector led to individual institutional experiments into alternative sources of funds, in a de-facto process of 'neo-liberalisation'. While many efforts, such as the creation of Thang Long (People-founded) University or the introduction of fees at Ho Chi Minh City University eventually became part of official government policy, they were initially undertaken by individual institutions drawing on resources from outside the government to achieve their aims. At the same time, the increasing availability of non-government funding gave certain universities the wherewithal and reason to offer degrees of less quality, and for individuals to buy them. While some universities and individuals have benefited substantially from the increased available resources, those with less finance, entrepreneurship or ability to access the outside world are being left behind.

In terms of international trends, these developments place Vietnam squarely on the path to a more neo-liberal model of higher education. They mark significant decentralisation in sources of funding, away from reliance on the central government, and in favour of universities seeking their own funding from the private sector, in the form of student fees and research contracts, or international sources, such as ODA.

In terms of state-society relations, in the policy development and implementation process itself there is evidence of close coordination between the government and institutions towards mutually supportive goals. The initial
introduction of fee-paying students undertaken at the Ho Chi Minh City University of Social Sciences and Humanities was initiated by the university itself, but also came at a time when the Ministry of Higher Education was looking at alternative ways to finance an increasingly under-funded higher education sector. Consequently, evaluating the influence of state as opposed to society is a difficult question to unravel.

In the area of unofficial finance, the relationship between state and society is even more closely interwoven and complex. High level official statements have frequently re-iterated a firm stand against the 'commercialisation' of education, as well as against corruption or the opening of distance education classes without formal approval, yet all these phenomena have continued, and could not occur without some tacit form of *laissez-faire* on the part of the 'state', whose individual constituent members continue to benefit from unofficial degrees, and even kickbacks from the complex awarding procedures of higher degrees as well as others.

The introduction to this thesis suggested that establishing a boundary between state and society for analytical purposes in the higher education sector is fraught with difficulties, and this is clearly the case with respect to funding issues. The picture is further complicated, and the relevance of analysis in terms of state and society is further undermined, by the importance of ODA in Vietnamese higher education funding. Overseas funds frequently attach conditions that have been proposed by neither state nor by society, and consequently lie outside of this framework altogether. A similar story is evident in the area of curriculum.
Chapter Seven -  
Higher Education Curriculum under Đổi Mới

In a review of literature concerning the curriculum of schools, particularly from the United States and Europe, Lawrence Stenhouse finds that writing on the subject can be broadly divided into two groups: those who identify the curriculum as the teaching plan of different subjects established by a school or a government agency, a 'written prescription of what it is intended should happen in schools'; and those who include not only the formal program of academic study in their analysis, but also the full experience of the student as a member of the school in which they are enrolled. Writers in this second category 'equate the curriculum less with the intentions of the school than with its performance' (Stenhouse 1975: 2). This second conception of curriculum, would ideally entail a study of the changes to university curriculum in Vietnam and would examine both the intended course of official study, as established by the MOET or the university, and the actual outcome of study, as reflected in the classroom and in the changes to the students who graduate from the university. Unfortunately, a comparison of the 'actual outcomes' of university study before and during đổi mới was not possible for the present study (see Chapter 1). Instead this chapter focuses principally on the 'intended' curriculum, the changes to courses of study - the set of subjects required to complete a degree - as established by universities and the MOET, and particularly those elements that were prescribed by the government at the national level. Again, the picture is far from complete, but the information available strongly suggests a trend away from narrowly focused courses and teaching by rote of the central planning era, and a push towards broadening the range of subjects included in the curriculum and upgrading the qualifications of teachers.
This chapter shows how the MOET has developed and put forward a number of policies, particularly based on overseas models, some of which have been successful, while others underwent several readjustments before being largely abandoned. The process shows that in cases where the policies were of benefit to those most affected by them they were readily accepted. Where the benefit was not so obvious and entailed significant readjustment on the part of those involved, the plans were ignored, criticised or undermined. Teachers who sought to introduce innovations into their classroom faced similar problems. They came up against entrenched existing practices, which were reinforced by both students and teachers.

This chapter highlights how some factors internal to the higher education system, in particular structures of decision-making related to the university curriculum and to job allocation, were bringing about a decline in the relevance and appropriateness of the existing higher education system. The overriding picture is a movement towards a much broader curriculum in Vietnamese universities, both in terms of the content of individual courses and in its overall educational aims. At the same time the process has not been an even one and it has been subject to a number of reversals along the way. The policies highlighted in this chapter include the introduction of a two-phase higher education system, which was abandoned in 1998, and a credit system. It also looks at changes to the courses of one of the universities most affected by đổi mới, the National Economics University, and changes to the hallmark course of central planning, Marxist-Leninist studies. Finally it takes a closer look at teachers, teaching methodologies and postgraduate qualifications to show that while a superficial analysis of statistics would seem to indicate far-reaching change has taken place, in practice the statistics may be somewhat misleading.

**Curriculum Issues in an International Context**

Discussion concerning the appropriate type of curriculum is invariably closely linked to considerations of the role of higher education more generally. In
many ways, particularly in Vietnam where research is still not a frequent occupation in universities (as opposed to research institutes), teaching is the university's central undertaking or raison d'être. Consequently the same issues surrounding the role of the university are also fundamental to consideration of which courses and methods of teaching should be used. As discussed in the first chapter, the role of the university is to shape graduates with particular characteristics, whether in a certain sphere of knowledge, certain practical abilities, or a certain mind-set. From within the broad range of literature concerning different types of curricula and different models of teaching, it is possible to distinguish two main streams of thought of particular relevance to Vietnam during the transition from central planning to a market economy.

The first could be termed the 'passive model', which is characterised by an emphasis on obedience in the classroom, respect for authority and assessment based on examinations. Abby Riddell argues that this was a particularly appropriate model to produce graduates for a 'Ford-style' factory production, where discipline, respect for authority and low initiative were characteristics to be encouraged. According to a study undertaken by Ray Marshall and Marc Tucker, however, the skills required by a post-factory style job market such as that Vietnam is looking to achieve, are a capacity for abstract conceptual thinking and an ability to apply that thinking to concrete situations, as well as communication skills, interpersonal skills, and the ability to assume responsibility for work under limited supervision. Consequently, Marshall and Tucker emphasise the need for a more 'active' style of learning (Marshall and Tucker 1992: 80). In the classroom this translates into an emphasis on problem solving, the encouragement of active participation, and a multi-disciplinary approach to learning. Under this type of education, textbooks are used for basic knowledge, which is then applied to real world situations.

Laurence Stenhouse also notes two distinct methods of learning, 'rote learning' and 'insightful learning'. For him the distinction arises from 'Psychologists' exploration of the role of structure and meaning in learning
[which] are an underpinning of, if not the foundation of, a curriculum based on disciplines rather than on the encyclopaedic view of knowledge reflected in the typical nineteenth-century school reader' (Stenhouse 1975). The conflict presented by these two models has been particularly evident in Vietnam under đổi mới with those wishing to move from a passive to a more active system of learning within universities coming up against significant opposition from proponents of the existing system. It offers an important model from which to understand changes to curriculum that have been taking place in Vietnam under đổi mới.

**Higher Education Curriculum in Crisis**

One of the main functions of higher education, as outlined in Chapter 2, is to prepare graduates for employment (Castells 1993: 72). In Vietnam, at the end of the 1980s, however, the system was neither providing suitable graduates for the state sector, nor for the newly emerging 'society' sector.

Under the state planning system, not only were students admitted to universities following nationally organised entrance examinations, they also entered directly into a particular faculty (khoa) to study for their degree. The faculty then became responsible for the course of the students' degree. The Vietnamese 'faculty' is not so much the 'faculty' familiar to graduates of anglophone universities, which often comprises a wide variety of subjects (for example the Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Engineering), but often equate more closely to subject departments, teaching narrowly focussed individual subjects. For example the 'Faculty' of Mathematical Economics (National Economics University), the Faculty of Chinese Language (University of Foreign Languages) or the Faculty of Telecommunications Electronics (Khoa Điện tử Viễn thông - Polytechnic University, Hanoi), which might each teach several subjects. Each faculty was then responsible for twenty to forty students in each year of its four or more year program.

The faculty was effectively the most important administrative unit in students' lives. It organised their course of study, from their first through to their
final year, and ensured that they completed all the necessary requirements to graduate. It was the unit responsible for the specialist curriculum of the course, although it would also cooperate with 'subject departments' (bộ môn), in order to teach cross-faculty subjects such as Marxist-Leninist studies, sport or military training, which were compulsory for all students. Essentially, however, it had little need for contact with other 'faculties', and was responsible only to higher levels of the university hierarchy and to the MOET (or other responsible ministry). Students had little or no opportunity to learn to undertake academic study from faculties other than their own faculty of specialisation.

The program of study was established by each faculty, including study materials and textbooks, and was then reviewed by a curriculum committee, usually under the auspices of the phòng đào tạo (training office) and the vice-rector responsible for training. The proposals were then submitted to the rector for official (usually rubber-stamp) approval. In order to establish a new course or a new branch of study, a similar procedure had to be followed, except that once the rector had given his or her approval, the proposal was then submitted to the Ministry of Education and Training (or the relevant line ministry) for government approval. In universities, therefore, the most important body responsible for the course of study followed by a student was the faculty, and the individual teachers in their classrooms. While they had to report to higher levels to introduce significant changes, the day to day practicalities of running students' courses of study were in the hands of the faculty, with very little input from higher levels or other faculties.

For students, the program of study was very rigid. Students had no say in their course of study once they had entered the university, and undergraduate degrees were very narrowly focussed. For example, students studying at the National Economics University (Hanoi) might graduate with a bachelor degree in agricultural statistics or in industrial statistics, rather than simply a degree in statistics. Courses were organised on a year-long basis and consisted principally of teachers lecturing to students from their own notes so that students could copy
down the information and learn it for their examinations at the end of each year.  

For regular courses, if students failed any part of that year they were expected to repeat the entire year, and if they wished to study in a new area they had to begin again from the first year. Rather than studying the subject again, the student might be asked to sit the examination for that subject instead at the end of their final year in order for them to graduate.

Once the students graduated, the university was responsible for finding them a job, in cooperation with the overseeing line ministry and in accordance with the plans of the State Planning Commission. This practice encountered two principal problems. The first was the system of job allocation itself and especially the lack of clarity in how decisions were taken to allocate students. One critic complained:

... places with work were not published so students simply handed in their application forms. It was not clear according to which standards work was distributed or who did the distribution. In this manner it was easy [for those responsible] to do things casually (Bùi Trọng Liệu 2000: 183).  

For one university at least, the lack of clarity in the job distribution process created a significant amount of extra work. In the 1980s, the University for Communications and Transport (ĐH giao thông vận tải) claimed that it was usually able to find jobs for all its graduates in accordance with the planned

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135 Interview with senior lecturer, Faculty of Mathematics, National Economics University, Hanoi, April 1997.

136 Interview with teacher, Faculty of English, University of Da Lat, Đà Lạt, 1/6/1998.

137 '... không công bố các "chỗ làm' nên thí sinh không biết mà nộp đơn, phân phối göre nhiệm cò tác theo những tiêu chuẩn nào, do ai tiến hành, cũng không rõ rệt, vì vậy mà dễ tùy tiện.'
figures of the Ministry of Communications and Transport. This placement then had to be changed for around a quarter of the students, however, because of student or employer dissatisfaction, and the university was forced to re-process the graduates. In order to overcome the problem of second placements, in 1985 the university introduced a single placement policy, whereby students wishing to be reallocated to a new job had to get the written permission of their employer and the Ministry of Higher and Professional Education. At the same time the university made the process of distribution more public, by giving 'excellent' and 'priority' students their first choice of placement. By 1988 the university was pleased to announce that the number of students seeking a second placement had been reduced to a trickle (Đảm Quốc Trư 1988). It is difficult to tell, however, to what extent this was due to a higher level of student and employer satisfaction and to what extent it was a result of the new difficulties involved in requesting a change.

The second major problem common to many centrally planned economies was the difficulty inherent in accurately predicting the labour requirements of an entire country. The problems were not only in allocating individual students to available jobs, but also in working out which jobs were available. A 1975 evaluation report of the job allocation system had already concluded that the labour planning of the State Planning Commission did not always reflect the real need of different state sectors, so that students often had to be sent back for alternative placement. 'Graduates who had been distributed to, say, Vietnam television and radio company, and water and agriculture services were sent back (to the Ministry of Higher Education) for alternative placement' (Hoa Phuong Tran 1998).

The problems of job allocation which were already well-known under a centrally planned economy became even more acute under doi moi due to the

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138 'Priority' students were war orphans or the children of parents injured in the war, and students from remote areas (see also Chapter 6)
significant reduction in the size of the state sector in the early 1990s. In the light industry and heavy industry sectors, each with its own university supplying graduates, many of the state enterprises were closed, leaving students at the universities without immediate employment (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 64). The decision that graduates should be given responsibility for finding their own jobs was a significant part of the programs of action put forward at the Nha Trang Conference in 1987, and constituted an important form of decentralisation brought about by economic necessity, if not by political will.

Some universities at least were aware of the discrepancy between their courses and what was required for the state sector jobs. The University of Construction (ĐH Xây dựng) developed a number of post-graduation courses to cover the need for the retraining of recent graduates. In addition to regular postgraduate studies leading to a further qualification, the university introduced programs of less than one year comprising 'single subjects' (môn lẻ) for students who had been trained in the wrong specialisation for the work they had been allocated. For students who had been trained in the correct specialisation but who nonetheless needed further in-depth training, the university had established 'single subject' programs of two to five years (Phạm Khắc Hùng 1989).

Some measures were in place to give students practical experience. Students were expected to undertake a period of practical training in a workplace, usually in a factory or a rural state enterprise or cooperative, which was paid for by the government. With the advent of đổi mới, however, even this practical training became problematic, particularly outside the major cities. At the Western Highlands University (ĐH Tây Nguyên), the end to fully funded central planning meant that there were no longer funds available for students to undertake practical training with a state enterprise. Instead they had to look for a placement a long way from the university to find a place with sufficient funds to employ them (Tạ Lý 1991: 8). Universities, in fact, had very few direct horizontal linkages with employers in order to ensure that their courses matched the requirements of
the labour market. Such factors were supposed to be taken care of through the appropriate vertical hierarchies and via the relevant ministries.

Into the 1990s, the lack of integration between higher education and productive sectors had further practical implications. If the universities had trouble supplying appropriately qualified graduates for the state sector, then 'society' sector enterprises that were newly allowed under mới were even more badly serviced.

One of the biggest needs was for managers trained in the exigencies of a market economy. According to one of the World Bank consultants working in the education sector in the early 1990s, new international companies setting up business in Vietnam under mới faced serious problems because there were no skilled workers in Vietnam to support them. They effectively ran up against a human resource brick wall and struggled to continue working in the country.¹³⁹ This opinion was supported by a study published in the ASEAN Economic Bulletin, which argued that the biggest constraints on production in Vietnam into the second half of the nineties included the extensive use of labour intensive methods in low-producing enterprises, the lack of capital and equipment, but perhaps more importantly a shortage of entrepreneurs, middle managers, and suitable laws, regulations and work habits within enterprises (Curry 1996: 232).

In a study of management training needs under mới, Nithinart Sinthudeacha found that Vietnamese managers felt considerable need for further training in order to undertake their job more effectively. Some of the areas they highlighted included finance, accounting, staffing, computing or planning (Sinthudeacha 1996: 126). These were areas for which they had been given new decision-making capacity under mới but in which they had little experience. The study concluded that '... the role of management education can significantly contribute to the preparation of a new generation of managers. It was apparent

that unfortunately Vietnam's management education system itself needs to be upgraded' (Sinthudeacha 1996: 138).

The difficulties were not restricted to a lack of knowledge of market economics. In contrast to the evaluation above, two foreign businessmen who had spent two years looking at opportunities for doing business in Vietnam felt that the biggest hindrance they encountered was the lack of local people who were able to set priorities and actually manage projects (Sinthudeacha 1996: 23). The problem was less the practical skills base than the more intangible qualities such as motivation and attitude, which were currently not appropriate for the exigencies of a market economy. This was in part a legacy of the existing system of central planning, where low-level managers were allowed little initiative and were expected to follow closely the decisions of higher levels (see Chapter Four), but it was also an outcome of a schooling system which firmly encouraged respect of authority over independent decision-making or creative thinking, in other words a 'Fordist-style' education system. A different attitude and way of thinking were needed over and above new practical skills.

If foreign businessmen had noted a frequent lack of initiative on the part of Vietnamese managers, the passivity of teachers, as well as of students, was of significant concern for Vietnamese educators (Phạm Minh Hạc 1987a; Thái Duy Tuyên 1988: 6; Đào Dung Thành 1989). In the case of teachers, the reason for their lack of interest in the teaching profession was clear. The economic crisis had eroded government salaries to the point where teachers could no longer afford to live off them. At the same time, even teachers in higher education were given little opportunity to do research, and thus opportunities for professional advancement were limited (Nguyễn Cảnh Toàn 1994). This not only affected existing teachers, but prospective teachers as well. The government faced significant difficulties in recruiting new students, particularly good ones, to the specialist teacher training institutions (Nguyễn Đình Chính 1996b; Nguyễn Lê Ninh 1997).

The problem was particularly acute with regard to the teaching of Marxism-Leninism. General Vô Nguyên Giáp, hero of wars against France and the
United States, who became a prominent education speaker, insisted in the early 1980s that teachers lacked 'political ideology' and for this reason launched 'good teaching emulation movement' as early as 1984. He emphasised the need to build staff with good political qualities, able to ensure the protection of society and socialism (Võ Nguyên Giáp 1985: 1).

With the collapse of Eastern bloc communism in Europe in 1989, the passive and sometimes less passive opposition of students towards the teaching of Marxism-Leninism was increasingly commented upon (Phúc Tiến 1988; Đại học và Giáo dục Chuyên Nghiệp 1989; Đào Dung Thanh 1989; Đào Quang Ngọc 1989). The issue was of such concern that it even received a special mention at the Seventh National Party Congress in 1991 (Đảng Cộng Sản Việt Nam 1991: 33).

The study of Marxism-Leninism was not only important for itself, but also for what it indicated about the rest of the education sector. The study of Marxism-Leninism was considered to imbue people with the ardour and revolutionary spirit that had helped the Democratic Republic of Vietnam reunite the country. 'Government’s concern in ensuring political correctness of teachers and students led to political education becoming a qualitative indicator of the whole education system' (Hoa Phuong Tran 1998: 145). As outlined earlier, for the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the aim of education was not only to provide suitable training for jobs, but also to create socialist people. The solution to changing student and teacher attitudes and improving the quality of university graduates in the early years of đổi mới, however, was far from clear among education policy-makers.

Hoàng Nghĩa’s solution to the problem was to insist that students should be encouraged to meet the aims of the party and become good specialists with a revolutionary spirit. He argued that students should consider the important role higher education had played in the Vietnamese revolution and become imbued with the spirit of results (Hoàng Nghĩa 1989). He re-echoed the 'red and expert' debates presented in Chapter 3.
In 1987, Võ Nguyên Giáp, by contrast, blames students' attitude more on the structure of central planning itself. 'Narrow specialisation has both blunted the graduates' capacity to adapt to their work requirements and denied them professional mobility...The output has been bound by the illogical principle of bureaucratic centralism - "training by planned quota" ' (Hoa Phuong Tran 1998: 169). The system of central planning did not offer any incentives for students to study hard as there was no guarantee their results would be taken into account when they were allocated their job. Nor, given their narrowly specialised training, could they expect to change jobs easily once they were allocated to a particular position. Within the university system itself, the emphasis tended to be on equality, rather than individual achievement. This was particularly evident in the allocation of scholarships on an equal basis, and even the tendency to allow students to continue their studies with only marginal results rather than have them repeat a year, and allowing them to repeat any failed exams in their final year (Chu Thái Thành 1989: 65).

Yet another stream of thought, however, placed the blame for lack of student commitment and quality both on the lack of incentives to achieve high results and on the learning experience of students. In 1989, the Minister for Higher Education, Trần Hồng Quán, complained that there was no individual encouragement given to students to choose courses that suited them, the content and methods of teaching were old-fashioned and university equipment was in bad condition. Consequently students were only interested in receiving their diploma, rather than in any sort of intellectual achievements (Nhân Dân, 23/8/1989: 3). These conclusions were echoed by a number of other educational bodies. A United Nations Development Program survey of 352 students, conducted in 1990, determined that two-thirds of the students found their lessons tedious. By contrast, of 306 faculty members surveyed, only 10% felt that they needed to upgrade their teaching methodology (Hoa Phuong Tran 1998: 165). One official in the MOET complained 'Teaching methods are backward, in particular they use monologues and they don't teach students to study by using such methods as
discussion, research, essays, specialist workshops, situational exercises, problem solving etc' (Nguyễn Đình Chinh 1996b: 2). In other words, he wished the students to become more active in their learning process.

Vietnamese higher education curriculum in the early years of đổi mới was characterised by its narrow focus, under the direction of a single, narrowly specialised faculty. It was a system that emphasised the learning of set bodies of knowledge established by teachers working in a narrowly focused, specialised faculty, which allowed for little flexibility in the adaptation of courses to changing outside factors, or to changing student interests. It was a system closely akin to the 'Fordist-style' education system, in that it emphasised the respect of authority over independent action. Universities were aware that their graduates had difficulties finding jobs, but there were few mechanisms in place to remedy this situation. Links with the outside world were principally through vertical hierarchies, and faculties jealously guarded the disciplinary qualities of their graduates from outside influence.

The Search for Solutions in the Higher Education Curriculum

The MOET adopted a number of policies to address the crisis in curriculum relevance facing the Vietnamese higher education in the late 1980s. Overall, the government's policy concerning curriculum during the first ten years of đổi mới stressed the need to raise the standards, content, program and methods of higher education training (CT27), and the standard of teacher training (CT49). These were very general aims, and took the general direction of opening the university system up to more influences from the outside world. It was also supported by several very practical measures to achieve these aims. Undoubtedly the most controversial and widely discussed of these was the decision to introduce a two-phase higher

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140 'Phương pháp dạy học lực học, chủ yếu là dọc theo, chưa sử dụng kịp thời các phương pháp dạy học tập của sinh viên như thảo luận, thảo luận, bài tập tình huống, giải quyết vấn đề...'
Two-phase higher education

Two-phase higher education was undoubtedly the most important and comprehensive of the government’s efforts to achieve positive changes to the curriculum of higher education institutions in Vietnam. At one go it was intended to achieve an increase and a standardisation in the quality of the foundation (cơ bản) subjects in universities, greater opportunities for students to change their specialisation (at the end of the first phase) and greater accessibility for rural students to attend university, while ensuring their standard of education through an examination at the end of the first phase (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995c: 5).

Between 1987, when a two-phase system was first raised as a serious possibility, and 1998 when it was undergoing a thorough review, it underwent a number of incarnations during its implementation. These included the introduction of first-phase examinations, then the establishment of a foundations studies programme, faculty of foundation studies and foundation studies certificate, the introduction of a seven-stream studies program for the first year and a half of studies and a credit system establishing equivalency between the seven streams and later level subjects.

According to Vũ Văn Tào, former assistant to the Minister for Higher Education, the idea for the two-phase higher education system was introduced by the then Minister for Higher Education, Tạ Quang Bửu, during the 1970s. The initial idea was to select students with insufficient standard to study at the

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141 In defining curriculum, Vietnamese educators make a distinction between ‘cơ bản’ (fundamental) subjects, those subjects in which every student needs at least a basic understanding, and ‘cơ só’ (basic) subjects which constitute the basic knowledge for a particular specialisation, and which will vary across different specialisations.
university level, but who were suitable for a lower level award or professional training, at the post-secondary level. A specialist committee was established within the Ministry of Higher Education at that time to consider the issue but the idea remained at the research stage and did not produce any concrete results (Bích Hằng 1998).

The matter was again raised as part of a general strategic review of technical studies in Vietnam, in preparation for the Sixth National Party Congress in December 1986, and became official government policy following the general higher education conference in Nha Trang in 1987 (Bích Hằng 1998). In essence, the two-phase system proposed to divide university education into two parts, a foundation phase of two years (in the first instance), after which students would sit an exam to move into their specialist faculty, as before. It was to be linked to the introduction of community colleges (discussed in Chapter Five), in that students could undertake their first phase of studies at their local college, and then ask for a transfer to a university for their specialist studies. This examination would also encourage students to study diligently and overcome the passivity educators were anxious about. The first phase would give students a more generalist, cross-disciplinary higher education foundation across a wide range of subjects, overcoming the narrow focus of the existing training in a single faculty. The second phase would then still allow students to concentrate on their specialisation in later years (Bích Hằng 1998).

The 1987 conference laid the official foundation for the system of đai cutong (generalist) education, but this proved to be more a statement of the planned intent for higher education than a pre-determined plan of action. One senior MOET official explained that while the 1987 conference marked the official beginning of two-phase higher education, in fact it was not until 1991 or 1992 that the system began to show tangible results.142 The system was implemented in

stages, through a series of pilot experiments and ongoing analysis of how to rectify problems as they arose. In the initial stage, beginning at the rector’s conference itself, universities were asked to set about broadening the programs of study taught at their own university, but for many this meant little more than a periodic readjustment to ensure their courses took into account current realities.\textsuperscript{143} Such adjustments might include updating statistics or introducing more recent examples into lectures.

Following on from the 1987 conference, the MOET set about researching the full implications of the two-phase system. This included studying similar systems already in place in other countries in the region and around the world, in particular the United States.\textsuperscript{144} Some educators even used the developments in the higher education of their former mentor, the Soviet Union, as a justification for change (Tuổi Trẻ Tp.Hồ Chí Minh, 11/4/1998, pp. 1,10).

The two-phase system began on a trial basis in 1989-90, but effectively this initial stage involved only the introduction of an examination after the second year of study, with few changes to the course of study. According to the rector of Da Lat University, his university was one of the first three universities to introduce the examinations between the two phases, firstly in natural science subjects in 1989/90, and in all areas of study from 1990/1.\textsuperscript{145} Other universities followed suit and by 1993/4 three-quarters of universities were holding the examination for students to pass between the first and second phase of training. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of these were those universities directly under the MOET (teacher training institutions, generalist universities...). Specialist universities under other ministries continued with their former, united program of study

\textsuperscript{143} Interview with a lecturer from the National Economics University, Canberra, 23/9/1998; and senior MOET official, Hanoi, 30/6/1998.

\textsuperscript{144} Interview with senior MOET official, Hanoi, 30/6/1998.

\textsuperscript{145} Interview with Nguyen Huu Duc, rector of Da Lat University, Đà Lạt, 1/6/1998.
(Department of Higher Education (MOET) 1993:7). While all universities were nominally under the MOET for their first phase curriculum, the MOET continued to have substantially less say in those universities not directly under its authority.

Initially it appears that the MOET intended only around 10% of students, the weakest, to take the examination, while the rest would be admitted directly into the specialist course relevant to their first phase stream of studies. In some universities, however, it appears that up to 60% of students were required to take the examination (Lao Động 13/4/98: 3). According to the vice-rector of the Ho Chi Minh City National University, the first year that the examination was instituted at the university (around 1995), a relatively large number of students failed to gain entrance to the second phase.146 The vice-rector of the new Foundation Studies University for the Ho Chi Minh City National University, Dương Đức Niêm, said that his university had also had a lot of problems the first year the examination was introduced, as there had been a lot of weak students of insufficient standards to pass into the second phase (Dương Đức Niêm 1998: 11). This had led to a public outcry, which was taken up in the newspapers, and gave the two-phase system a bad name from the outset. Parents, who thought their children were guaranteed a bachelor degree and work upon graduation after being accepted into university, complained bitterly.147 By 1998, however, the vice-rector felt that the aims of the new system were better understood, there were fewer problems, and that this procedure had been largely accepted by the public (Dương Đức Niêm 1998: 11).

Other problems became evident as the separation between the two phases became more institutionalised.

146 Interview with the Vice-Rector of the HCMC National University, Lam Quoc Dung, Ho Chi Minh City, 15/5/1998.

After a year of deliberation within the MOET, an experimental program was established and trialled at the University of Hanoi towards the end of 1993. The university announced the initial success of the innovation, and the MOET immediately took this initial approval as a basis for a formal decision introducing the framework of a seven-stream first phase program for universities throughout Vietnam (QD 2677 and 2678/GD-DT, 3/12/1993) (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995c: 5). According to the plan established by the MOET, students could study according to one of seven different streams, which students would undertake in accordance with their future specialisation (See Table 7.1). This program was introduced across the country in order to overcome the difference in standards in the first phase complained about by universities, standardise the knowledge of students in the first phase and facilitate their transfer between universities once they had received their certificate of first phase studies. The seven-stream program was complemented by a more detailed curriculum in 1995, which established the number of hours to be devoted to each subject in the first phase allowed (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1997: 179). By 1994/5, the MOET claimed that 21 universities were using the seven subject group system and that students were benefitting from the greater flexibility which the program allowed (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1997: 182).

The introduction of the two-phase and credit systems (discussed below) were accompanied by a structural reorganisation in order to meet the administrative requirements of the new system. At the smallest end of the university scale, the introduction of a first phase program meant little more than an increased workload for existing teachers. The University of Vinh, outside of the main urban centres, complained that it did not have the staff or the expertise to found even a separate office to administer the foundation studies program, and consequently the work was undertaken by existing staff with experience teaching at this level (Trần Hữu Cát and Trần Đình Toàn 1994: 20).

Other universities opened a separate administrative office, a 'Faculty' of Foundation Studies Faculty (Khoa đại cương) to handle the paperwork for first phase students and their examinations. These responsibilities were then passed to
the specialist faculties once the students had completed their requirements for the first phase. This was the option adopted by the more specialised institutions such as the National Economics University or the Hanoi University of Agriculture or smaller non-specialist universities such as the University of Da Lat.

At national and regional universities, however, there was a fundamental change in the structure of the universities. The national and regional universities, which had been formed on the basis of existing specialist institutions, were required to become more integrated through the creation of a common Đại học Đại cương (School of Foundation Studies - Refer to Chart 5.3). Students from all the different faculties would study at this university until they had achieved their foundation studies certificate, after which they would transfer to their specialist faculty, usually at a different campus. This new 'university' was introduced at the same time as each of the national or regional universities was officially founded, namely between 1993 and 1995 (see Appendix 1). At the National University of Ho Chi Minh City, this system was only imperfectly in place, however, as not all of its component institutions agreed to send their students to this separate university. Of the nine institutions amalgamated to create the university, only four, those with existing foundation studies programs, combined in order to create a School of Foundation Studies. The others instead maintained a separate administrative office, as for the specialist institutions, rather than a fully fledged separate organisation.

The creation of separate foundation studies universities tended to exacerbate the problems that had already become evident with the formalisation

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148 Ho Chi Minh City National University was the last one to be created on 27/1/1995.

149 The School of Social Sciences and the Arts, the School of Science, the School of Teacher Training and the School of Teacher Training in Technology. Following dissolution of the Foundation Studies decree in 1998, the School of Foundation Studies was maintained only for the School of Teacher Training in Technology, the School of Law, the School of Agriculture and Forestry, and the School of Technology.
of separate courses between the first and second phases. For the national and regional universities, the creation of a separate foundation studies university separated the first phase course not only spiritually, but also physically from the specialist courses, by locating it in a separate building away from the main campus. This exacerbated the problems of communication between first and second phases, and the feeling of resentment among teachers located away from their colleagues. Teachers worried that they were teaching low-level students and would have limited opportunities to conduct research and advance their career.150

The foundation studies schools, or administrative offices, further undermined the grip of individual faculties on the course of studies followed by their students, and the management of their graduation requirements. These became divided between two separate administrative bodies, depending on whether the student was in their first or their second phase of studies. It was principally the students and curriculum that suffered from the administrative tussles as they were forced to re-learn the same subject content two or three times.

Previously faculties made decisions about their courses independently of other faculties. With the introduction of the two-phase system they were now forced to cooperate not only with a separate 'foundation studies' administration body, but also with other faculties in order to ensure that students acquired a sufficient body of knowledge across their full program. There were few established channels of information between the new and established faculties, with the result that there was little communication across different subjects about what students were receiving in the classroom. Consequently, many specialist faculty staff were mistrustful of the quality and depth of content of the program taught in those first years of study, and felt that they needed to re-teach elements in order to ensure that students had the proper knowledge foundation for their specialist course. The

150 Interview with Lả Văn Phi, head of the Faculty of Mathematics, School of Economics (HCMC), Ho Chi Minh City, 26/5/1998.
problem was compounded by teachers of the foundation studies program re-
teaching elements of the secondary school program as well. This resulted in a
situation whereby specialist faculty staff complained they did not have time to
teach their full program of study, while students complained that courses were
repetitive from year to year, and even from course to course within the same
year. Faculties were unwilling to renounce their control over the students' entire
course of study.

The division of course content into two phases implicitly required a certain
hierarchy of knowledge. In order for students to have an appropriate foundation
to transfer into a different area of specialisation after the first phase, teachers had
to establish a hierarchy of knowledge for study in successive years, not only for
their own subjects, but also in relation to other fields of study. As the new system
was based on semesters rather than year-length courses of study, they also had to
reorganise the content of programs in order to create a complete, logical unit of
study within the shorter time-frame. It had to link in with subjects that might be
taught by other teachers within their own, and other, faculties (Bộ Giáo dục và
Đào tạo 1995c: 7). This meant that teachers had to agree on where the boundaries
between different subjects lay, and on which bodies of knowledge had to be learnt
before others, and therefore, which subjects were at a 'higher' or 'lower' level.
Implicitly, such discussions also had implications for the status of the teachers
who were teaching them - teachers taking higher level subjects would have a
higher status than those taking lower level ones. This already difficult process was
further hindered by the fact that there was no established way of representing the
subject levels and no established nomenclature with which to discuss program
coordination issues in abstract, making it difficult to attempt any discussion of the
issue (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995c: 7).

151 Interviews with staff at students in Hanoi, April 1998 and Đà Nẵng, June 1998. See also Lao động,
The much-vaunted two-phase system was designed at one stroke to counter the dominant problems facing the higher education sector. Despite the apparent simplicity of the initial program, the introduction of a general examination after the first year or two of study, in fact it undermined the foundations on which the previous system had operated - faculty autonomy. It opened up the courses of individual faculties to outside scrutiny by a new administrative authority, the Faculty of Foundation Studies and by other faculties compared to which they had to establish subject equivalencies. The previous organisational structure, as well as existing faculty interests, were directly undermined by the new system.

In 1993, the separation between first and second phases was institutionalised with the introduction of the 'foundation studies graduation certificate' (chứng chỉ đại chúng), as part of the national education system (Decision 90/CP, 24/11/1993). This decision formally established the foundation studies certificate as a separate level of study following two or three years of university level study, at a level lower than that of a full Bachelor degree. The certificate in particular was intended to give students a tertiary level qualification which would enable students to transfer to a different university, enter the workforce, or take a break from their study so that they could return to it later. Perhaps understandably, given the wide discrepancies between different universities in financing, staffing qualifications and the standards of students, universities were not so keen to take students who had studied elsewhere into their second stage program. The vice-rector of Thang Long University noted that his university would not accept students who had undertaken studies at another university because of fears about the standard of their previous institution, although many of their own students had returned to study after a break at the end of the first phase. He also complained that his students found it very difficult to find jobs with a first phase certificate, as workplaces were also unwilling to
recognise it as a serious level of tertiary qualification.\(^{152}\) This problem was echoed by a senior official of the MOET, who complained that students were not being admitted to new universities, while there were problems with the cavalier attitude of students and examiners towards the examination for the first phase certificate, which undermined its effectiveness and reputation.\(^{153}\) While universities implemented the examination in theory, in practice many showed their lack of support for the innovation by marking exam papers carelessly, leaking examination questions to students, and undermining the overall intent of the examination.

Despite these difficulties, by 1998 large numbers of students were applying to change their specialisations at the end of the first phase. At the School of Foundation Studies (Hanoi National University) in 1998, 6,785 students sat examinations for the end of the first phase, of which 3,153 put their names down to change specialisations, albeit within the same university. In the same year 800 students applied to enter the second phase of studies at the School for Teacher Training (HNU), of which initially only 200 were admitted, although this number was later raised to 391, creating chaos for the school’s administrative system (Đỗ Nhật Trưởng 1998: 3). The ongoing doubts about the value and the standard of this level of award meant that although the qualification was recognised in the structure of national awards promulgated in 1993 (Decision 90/CP), it was removed from the list of recognised levels of study certificates in the final Education Law adopted in 1998 (see Chapter Five). One MOET official explained that the biggest difficulty with implementing a broader curriculum, was that most teaching staff had no experience with designing a multi-disciplinary curriculum.

\(^{152}\) Interview with vice-rector of Thang Long University, Hanoi, 16/4/1997.

\(^{153}\) Interview with senior MOET official, Hanoi, 30/6/1998.
They had no notion of how to establish a balance between different subjects, or the appropriate number of hours to allocate to each.\textsuperscript{154}

**Credit system**

Closely linked to the introduction of a broader curriculum was the decision to allocate existing subjects a certain number of 'credit' points which would later enable students to choose their own subjects for study. The credit system was considered important for similar reasons as the introduction of the two-phase system. It was expected to make the curriculum more flexible, enabling students to choose their own program of study and become more responsible for their studies, but also hopefully ensuring that teachers would change their course more often to keep the interest of students (Thuy Ngân 1997). It was also argued that the introduction of a credit system would bring the structure of the curriculum more closely in line with that of neighbouring countries and enable students to change universities more easily at the end of the first phase of studies, by introducing similar standards across the country (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1997: 179).

The principal source of inspiration for the introduction of the system among policy-makers in Vietnam was undoubtedly the United States. According to the United States system, a certain number of points are allocated to each subject, according to their level (first year, third year...) and the amount of work required. Students must complete a certain number of these 'credit' points across a broad range of subjects, as well as in a 'major' field of study, in order to graduate. In theory these credits are considered to be of equivalent worth across the country, also enabling students to transfer between different tertiary institutions during their study. Other countries in the Southeast Asia region, in the particular the Philippines, have adopted a similar system, also placing emphasis on the

\textsuperscript{154} Interview with Mai Văn Tinh, Senior Expert, Department of Higher Education, MOET, Hanoi, 30/6/1998.
accumulation of credit points in a wide variety of subjects in order to be awarded a degree (National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition 1991).

In Vietnam, the structure and volume of credits decided upon by the MOET was closely based on that of the United States (Decision 59/DH, Minh Vu 1994: 24). Even before the term 'tin chi' was introduced to describe a credit system in Vietnam, subjects were already calculated according to 'tiếtt học' or the number of 'hours of teaching' that was involved in a subject. Previously each subject was allocated a certain number of hours over a year, or over the course of a degree. Under the credit system, the time-frame was a semester, and students would be able to choose their own subjects. The existing tiếtt học were used to establish an initial value for the subject in terms of credit points. In effect each credit point became worth 15 'tiếtt' or teaching hours, and 15 hours of home study. For example, in the first year and a half of foundation studies leading towards a degree in biology, 40 credits meant that a student would have 800 hours of science classes, 20 credits or 300 hours of foreign language classes, 12 credits or 180 hours of humanities classes and so on, with an equivalent number of hours of study at home. By contrast, one credit point in the United States is calculated as one hour of teaching and two hours of home study, or, as having one-third more value than that in Vietnam. With this in mind, it is interesting to note that the number of credits introduced for the first phase of training in Vietnam was 90 credits, while the figure for the United States is 60 credits, representing the same number of hours of 'learning time' overall (National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition 1993a).

Alongside ongoing revisions to the first-phase curriculum (to incorporate more detail concerning compulsory and elective subjects, give credit values to subjects... see previous section), the MOET experimented with the first 'full'

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credit system in the 1993/4 academic year at two universities, the University of Da Lat and the University of Technology (Ho Chi Minh City).

Chart 7.1 - First Phase of Education at the University of Da Lat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of credits allocated to each stream of study</th>
<th>1 Maths/Physics</th>
<th>2 Chemistry</th>
<th>3 Biology</th>
<th>4 Econ/Bus Management</th>
<th>5 Social Sciences</th>
<th>6 Literature/Fine Arts</th>
<th>7 Vietnamese/Foreign Languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics and natural sciences</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social sciences</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign languages</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National defence studies</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total credits</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This table is a summarised version of the first phase studies program that was established by the MOET at the University of Da Lat. It shows how credits were allocated to different branches of study, and students were required to study from a broad range of subjects, to a total of 90 credit points in their first year and a half of studies. Students at the University of Da Lat and the University of Technology (Ho Chi Minh City), were able to change the focus of their study following the end of the first phase, within certain limits. Students from the first three streams could change within those three, provided they took extra classes in the subject area they were missing, as could streams 5 and 6, or 6 and 7, depending on the exact areas they had been studying in their foundation program. Other universities continued to award degrees on the completion of year-long units of study (niên chế), with no student choice.

156 'Natural science' for biology students meant greater hours biology and less of chemistry, which they would have to make up in order to specialise in chemistry.
The rector of the University of Da Lat was pleased that his university had been chosen for the experiment and emphasised how students could now change their specialisation after they had already begun study at the university. They had also introduced student advisors to ensure the students made appropriate choices following their foundation studies program.157 In reality, however, according to one teacher, students continued to follow the same program of study as their classmates throughout their four years of study, even if they failed a year. She argued that the student advisors might help students in their first year to select the foundation studies program that would lead to their planned specialisation, but overall very few students changed their program of study once they had begun their first year.158

The rector also agreed that the experiment had faced a number of problems. In particular he felt that staff at the university did not have enough collective experience to implement a credit system, and they did not know how to put together a course appropriate to the requirements of a credit system. He argued that students were insufficiently prepared in secondary school to make their own choices and take responsibility for their studies, which created difficulties as students then needed a lot of guidance in choosing their course of study at the university level. At the same time, he felt that they could not introduce too much student choice because it might leave some subjects with too few students, which the university could not afford to support. Ironically, one of his other worries was that student numbers had increased so dramatically in the previous years (as the university had opened to fee-paying students) that there was no longer any personal contact between students and teachers. In fact class sizes were so large that classrooms could no longer accommodate students in many foundation studies courses, and the university had set up videos so that

157 Interview with Nguyen Huu Duc, rector of Da Lat University, Đà Lạt, 1/6/1998.

158 Interview with teacher at the English language department, Đà Lạt, 1/6/1998.
students could watch the lecturer from an adjoining room.159 This would seem to indicate some scope for reducing class sizes, perhaps by offering some elective subjects and spreading students between different classes, but this was clearly not on the university's agenda.

Effectively the rector’s comments, while showing full support for the 'tin chi' experiment in theory, showed a high level of ambiguity in the practical implementation of the program. In 2000, this ambiguity was translated into reality as the university abandoned the credit system due to a 'lack of understanding on the part of the university's staff'.160 This was another experiment which required a substantial reorganisation of the existing way that courses were organised, a significant departure from the status quo. Increasing student numbers at the university contributed to a perceived decline in the quality of teaching (at all universities during this period), while the credit system itself created an extra administrative workload on teachers who had to reorganise and re-define their subjects, and help students choose the appropriate stream. Consequently the University of Da Lat withdrew from the experiment in which it was involved.161

While the University of Da Lat and the University of Technology (Ho Chi Minh City) implemented a 'full' credit system, other universities introduced a mixed full-year (niên chế) and semester-length (học phần) courses (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1997: 179). Consequently the majority of university staff with whom I spoke in 1996/7 were unsure of the meaning of the term (tin chi), and when I explained the way it was used by the Ministry of Education and Training, they preferred to talk in terms of học phần (semester-length) courses, which was

159 Interview with Nguyen Huu Duc, rector of Da Lat University, Đà Lạt, 1/6/1998.


161 Interview with senior MOET official, Hanoi, 9/7/1998.
another concept much discussed and regulated in the same period. Here referred to dividing an academic year, and consequently individual subjects, into two semesters, instead of the previous one-year system (niên chế). While this in itself involved a re-arrangement of year-long courses, it did not require a re-assessment of existing subjects to the same extent.

From the point of view of university staff, what actually constituted a 'credit system' was a matter of some confusion, and one educator at least thought that teaching universities were deliberately not telling their teachers about the credit system (Nguyễn Đình Chính 1996b: 2), perhaps because the administrators did not understand the system themselves.

At the National Economics University I also encountered a lot of different opinions about what constituted a credit system. Some considered that it meant establishing a fixed program of study at the beginning of the academic year, such as a course outline describing what would be taught in some detail. One faculty head also commented that although the heads of faculty had had several meetings in order to discuss issues concerned with introducing a credit system, they had achieved little agreement on how the subjects were to be assessed for equivalence. In any case the lecturer was not very concerned about the lack of progress in the discussions because the government had not brought down a firm ruling about the date by which a credit system was to be implemented. University staff were not aware of government policies and plans, except insofar as they themselves were affected, even though there had been ongoing discussion about the introduction of the credit system since 1988/9 (Department of Higher Education (MOET) 1993: 9).

162 See Appendix One on regulations concerning curriculum structure (semester units, credit system, transfer of studies...) passed in 1993/4.

163 Interview with senior staff lecturer, National Economics University, Hanoi, April 1997.
By 1997/98, however, and prior to the abandonment of the credit system at the University of Da Lat, many universities, particularly in Ho Chi Minh City, were introducing credit systems for the first time. These were set out in the course outline (also a first for many universities that year), which presented their subjects in terms of credit points and explained how many of the credit points students had to accumulate in their first and second phases of study (Đại học Quốc gia TpHCM (Trường Đại học Khoa học Xã hội và Nhân Văn) 1997; Đại học Quốc gia TpHCM (Trường Đại học Kinh tế) 1997). This was a significant innovation in a country where the list of courses had previously been kept under lock and key, inaccessible even to the students studying at the university.\footnote{Staff at the academic offices (phòng đào tạo) at the National Economics University and the University of Đà Nẵng, where I came across this phenomenon showed me the course outlines and explained that they could not let me take them out for photocopying because there was only one copy, which was handwritten. Students confessed to relying on students from previous years in order to know where to attend their classes. Interviews at the University of Đà Nẵng in Đà Nẵng, June 1997, and at the National Economics University, Hanoi, April 1997.} This trend was not necessarily a case of internal innovation on the part of university administrators, but was strongly influenced by incentives offered by outside. In particular the first stage of money available from the World Bank QIG loans was dependent on establishing a course outline (see Chapter 6) and was a deciding factor in encouraging the National Economics University, for one, to produce its own course outline.\footnote{Interview with Head of Office for Organisation and Personnel, NEU, Hanoi, 25/4/2000.} In 2001 these early attempts were supplemented by a 'Study of Higher Education in Vietnam in the Field of Economics and Business Management in the Economic Transition Period' funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which gives comprehensive listings of courses at the various economics-related universities in the country, broken down into number of credits for each subject and giving a brief summary of the conditions at each university (staff, classrooms, library facilities etc). In this way
alone international donors have had an immediate impact on opening up universities and their faculties to the outside world. Although the process to achieve the seemingly simple dissemination of student courses of study has been a long one, this will undoubtedly now have an important if gradual impact on the flexibility and accountability of universities and their faculties both to their students and to the outside.

**End of two-phase higher education?**

By 1995, the two-phase system had reached its final stage of metamorphosis. A formal separation had been achieved (in theory if not always in practice) between a first, general phase of studies, and a second, specialised phase, through the introduction of a separate administrative authority, a formal examination and a certificate of graduation. Despite the stage by stage introduction of the system and the adjustments that took place along the way, by 1998 the government was forced to abandon central elements of the process.

The two-phase system and particularly the exam between the two phases underwent significant criticism at every stage of its transformation from the time it was first introduced in the 1989/90 academic year. Things came to a head at the rector’s conference convened in Hanoi from 9-11 April 1998, which brought together the most senior CPV and government members, as well as senior representatives from higher education institutions around the country. At the conference the Minister for Education and Training, Nguyễn Minh Hiến, announced the end of two of the most important and disputed innovations of the two phase program, namely the examination at the end of the first phase, and the end of a separate school to teach the first phase courses at the national and regional universities (*Đại học Đại cương* - Decision 67/1998/ND-CP, 1/9/1998).

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166 The meeting was attended by a vice president of the country, politburo members, members of the central office of the party, representatives from the committee organising the central committee, from the office of the government, the committee of junior party staff, and the leadership of the committees and branches of every higher education institution in the country.
While the MOET did not admit to abandoning the two-phase system as such, these were nonetheless the central pillars of the system, and the elements that had caused the greatest changes to university administration and curriculum.

The decision to allow universities to abandon these cornerstones of the system arose out of a project to evaluate ten years of higher education reform (1986-1996) which revealed a high level of dissatisfaction on the part of educators with the two-phase system, and especially with its implementation (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1996; Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1997: 85-88). At the rector’s conference in 1998, the vast majority of speakers appear to have been critical of some or all of the aspects of the new program, claiming that it had met very few of the government’s objectives and that some or all of it should be abandoned. The discussion at the conference was very vigorous, despite, or perhaps because of the announcement of the Minister of Education and Training at the outset of the conference that aspects of the system would be dropped.167 Those involved in the conference could be divided into four categories: those who argued that the two-phase system should be maintained because of the work that had gone into establishing it, the most conservative position; those who argued it had brought positive benefits to the universities (and therefore should be maintained); those who argued that it might be appropriate in the future but not for now; and those who wished to see it abandoned as soon as possible because it had already caused too many problems. Interestingly, the rectors of the universities do not appear to have held a united point of view, any more than officials from the Ministry of Education and Training.168 These positions and the reasons that they were held by individuals offer a good indication of what led the Minister to abandon the program as it began to enter full implementation across the country.


Among those who argued for the first position was Vũ Văn Tào, one of the most senior advisors within the MOET. He said that the changes had been carefully planned and studied since the 1980s in order to achieve the goals of social equality and international recognition. It had now been tested extensively and fully institutionalised by a number of Communist Party decrees. Consequently, he argued, the problems were not because of the ideas underpinning the system, because these had been thoroughly researched. The problems had arisen because their implementation had been inappropriate. Among educators within the universities making similar arguments were the rector of the University of Commerce, Hanoi (ĐH Thương mại), the rector of Da Nang University and the vice-rector of the Foundation Studies University (National University of Ho Chi Minh City),\(^\text{169}\) who opposed changing a system without having something to propose in its place.

Other rectors also favoured maintaining the new system, despite its problems, because they felt that it had brought positive benefits to their universities. Hoàng Xuân Sinh, rector of Thăng Long University supported the two-phase system because she felt it had enabled her students to have greater access to both Vietnamese and overseas universities at the end of their first phase of studies. It had also enabled them to find work at the end of the first phase, and then come back later to finish their studies when they had more money. This is ironic, given the comment of the vice-rector cited earlier, that the university would not accept students from outside into its second phase. In other words, the university was interested in the system insofar as it benefited the university or its students, but had little trust in the system on a general national level. The concern with the uneven quality of students was supported by a report of the MOET itself, which found that despite the introduction of the two-phase system into forty universities (in 1994), the universities themselves tended to maintain their narrow focus. This meant that the standards of students at the end of the first phase were

very different in different universities (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo (Vụ Đại học) 1994: 11).

Other universities supported the introduction of the two-phase system for other reasons. The vice-rector of the University of Hue noted that his university, particularly the School of Agriculture and Forestry (*ĐH Nông Lâm Huế*) had previously written several letters to the MOET requesting an end to the examination at the end of the first phase. Now, he said, they had become used to the system and appreciated its benefits.\(^{170}\) Students who failed to pass the entry for the more prestigious science or medical science colleges in the University of Hue, were now applying to the College of Agriculture and Forestry in the hope that they would be able to move across to their preferred college in the second phase. The college had effectively become more attractive to students (despite the low regard in which it was generally held) because it now offered a path to a more prestigious career, while the college itself benefited from the increased revenue brought by these extra students. By contrast the School of Fine Arts (*ĐH Nghệ thuật*) also within the University of Hue, argued that the introduction of two phases was a waste of time because their own students had been very carefully chosen at the outset and they would not accept students directly into the second phase from outside,\(^{171}\) much the argument used by Thang Long University. The positions of the two colleges within the University of Hue were diametrically opposed on the question of whether to keep the two-phase system, according to the perceived benefits accruing to each at different points in time. Their position also highlights a failure on the part of the MOET, as the initiator of the change, to fully explain the system and its benefits to those who were most affected by its implementation, as demonstrated by the change in opinion of the vice-rector of


the University of Hue. Universities do not appear to have been willing to give
the system even a grace period to see how it would work.

The third group consisted of those rectors who considered that the two-phase system was a good idea, but that Vietnamese universities did not currently have the knowledge and ability to implement it. They argued that the Ministry had been looking too closely at overseas and adopting a system that was not suited to Vietnam, at least not in its current stage of development. They were countered by those who wondered why they should abandon something if it was only to re-implement it in the future.\(^1\)\(^2\)

The final group consisted of those who thought that the program had been close to a disaster and that it should be abandoned as soon as possible. Among these was the Minister of Education and Training, who, only six months after being transferred from his position as rector of the Polytechnic University in Hanoi (ĐH Bách Khoa), effectively announced the end to a program that had already occupied specialists in higher education in the Ministry for many years. He was supported by the head of the Department of Higher Education, who specified that the system was expensive, and had created many 'negative phenomena' (Võ Hồng Quỳnh 1998b: 3).

The two-phase system, which was fully in place by the academic year 1995, had gone through a number of stages before reaching its final form, the strict division into two phases with an examination between the two, and been subject to significant complaints at each stage. In essence the two-phase system was a policy decided on by the MOET, and then instituted through a series of decrees and decisions that the universities were expected to implement. In his analysis of the reasons for abandoning the two phase system at the rectors conference, the Minister for Education and Training concluded that perhaps the most important of the problems faced was that the policy-makers had not asked widely enough for the opinion of those directly involved in implementing the system. This had led to

\(^1\)\(^2\) ibid.
a situation in which teachers resented the imposition of the program and became unwilling to support it.\textsuperscript{173}

The comments by educators at the 1998 conference show that they were particularly sceptical of the two-phase system at its outset, but those who perceived a direct benefit to their institution during its implementation gradually became more positive. The introduction of the two-phase system made sound policy sense. It introduced a structure with the potential to tackle some of the biggest problems in Vietnamese higher education: to achieve greater flexibility, equality of access and a broader curriculum. Despite the potential benefits the system proposed, the implementation of the MOET did little to bring on side those who were directly involved in its implementation, the teachers and faculties with their strong tradition of academic autonomy.

\textsuperscript{173} Đài đạo kết, 13/4/1998, p.3.
The picture shows two students riding around in circles carrying a sign reading 'Two-phase university training', on a platform labelled 'Experiment'. The teacher on the left says 'ABOLISH!', the teacher on the right 'DON'T ABOLISH!'. The caption reads:

Renovating higher education in Vietnam:
The Minister of Education and Training pronounced "We must pay the price for our weakness and immaturity". Our question is: "Who will pay the price?"

Course content - The National Economics University and the Study of Marxism-Leninism

While the two-phase higher education program was a major set-back for education policy-makers, Ngô Đình Giao made an important point when he asserted that the two-phase education system should not be seen as the be-all and end-all of the government's higher education renovation program, because the system would only bring results if the matter and content of teaching were improved (Ngô Đình Giao 1991b: 15). It is in the changes to curriculum content and teaching methods that movement towards a post-Fordist education system is most evident, in theory, if not always in practice.

As mentioned above, in the immediate aftermath of the Nha Trang conference in 1987, universities were encouraged to change their own curriculum to include a broader range of courses, particularly in the first years of undergraduate study. The renovation of existing courses effectively rested primarily with the MOET, and senior staff of 'peak institutions', who developed the courses and examinations for each branch of study (ngành). 'Peak' institutions refers to the most prestigious and often the oldest institutions under the former DRV (mostly in Hanoi), which had responsibility for developing courses for use in the whole country. This legacy can in part be blamed on the situation after 1975, when many of the most qualified academics from the south escaped the country, and those remaining were considered to need 'guidance' from the north. It is also a legacy, however, of the overall low number of academic staff with postgraduate, and sometimes even with graduate qualifications, particularly outside of the two largest cities.

The result of the 'big brother' system was a certain amount of unity in courses across the country, but it also meant that academic staff outside of Hanoi had little experience and little scope for learning about curriculum design and content, and local conditions were not always addressed. It meant that a curriculum decision-making hierarchy not only extended through a vertical hierarchy from central government ministries to individual institutions, but also
through a hierarchy of prestigious through to weaker institutions. While teachers might be responsible for what they actually presented in the classroom, the overall structure of curriculum decision-making was effectively quite centralised.

Despite the apparent willingness of the Ministry to allow universities some freedom in developing their own courses, this process of appointing formal curriculum revisors in different areas of curriculum also allowed it to keep a close eye on developments. According to one educator at the School of Economics in Ho Chi Minh City, the MOET watched changes to curriculum very closely and was very concerned to keep a unified training content across the country. Consequently the School of Economics in Ho Chi Minh City continued to follow closely those changes introduced in Hanoi, with only a few variations. In order to encourage improvements to the courses of study, following 1987, the Ministry of Higher, Technical and Professional Education commissioned specialists in different fields to re-write the textbooks for their specialisation. The programs introduced in economics, for example, were written principally by senior staff of the National Economics University, the 'peak' institution for economics, who were

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174 As late as 1998, teachers at the Hanoi National University, one of the more prestigious of the universities in Vietnam, some staff were still resorting to hand-written notes, which were photocopied and given to students in place of any sort of textbook (Bich Hà 1998a). This lack of predetermined course material could have given teachers wide scope for innovation if they, and their students, so wished.

175 Interview with head of faculty, the School of Economics (Ho Chi Minh City National University), Ho Chi Minh City, 26/5/98.

176 Interview with Director, Department of Science Research Administration and International Co-operation, School of Economics, Ho Chi Minh City. The National School of Economics had a 'Faculty of Labour Economics', while at the School of Economics (Ho Chi Minh City National University), this faculty was only a department within the Faculty of General Economics. The director considered that otherwise the universities were largely similar.
allocated a small amount of funding to re-write economics textbooks for use throughout the country. 177

Not all faculties or even universities were willing, or able, to develop their own curriculum, however. The University of Vinh, a university in north central Vietnam, for example, set up meetings for its staff in order to edit and produce a new collection of study materials for students to use from the 1990 academic year in line with the instructions from the Ministry (Trần Hữu Cát 1993), and in 1994 the rector was proud to announce that the university had itself assumed responsibility for teaching almost all students in the first phase. The university had opened subjects in completely new areas, including law, foreign languages, engineering and fisheries, but was in fact heavily reliant on the help of other, more established, universities to both open and maintain these courses (Trần Hữu Cát and Trần Đình Toản 1994).

Duy Tan People Founded University (ĐH Dân lập Duy Tân) in Đà Nẵng later faced a similar situation. Around two years after opening, the English faculty was heavily reliant on guest lecturers, particularly from Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, to teach its courses. This meant that they often had difficulties scheduling their courses because they had to fit around the whims of the guest lecturers who might decide to postpone their visit for a few weeks. At the same time the university relied on Hanoi National University to write and mark the examinations for the end of the first phase studies and sometimes this meant that students were not tested on what they had been learning in class. The dean of the English faculty considered that the arrangement was still appropriate, however, because the teachers of the new university were mostly young, and had little experience in writing examinations. He hoped that in the future the university would be able to develop more cooperation in the region so that they were not so dependent on Hanoi. 178

177 Interview with senior lecturer, NEU, in Canberra, 23/9/1998.

178 Interview with Nguyễn Văn Thọ, Dean of English Faculty, Duy Tan University, Đà Nẵng, 4/6/1997.
A large disparity existed between institutions, particularly in the level of qualifications of their staff. In 1993, while 39% of teaching staff at the Hanoi National University held higher degrees, this was true of only 1.8% of staff at the Hue Medical School (Department of Higher Education (MOET) 1993: 4). In the 1999 - 2000 academic year, the discrepancy between the ratios had vastly improved, with 55% of teachers at the Hanoi National University holding postgraduate degrees, and 21% of teaching staff from the Hue Medical School (now under the umbrella of Hue University), half of them of them with the newly introduced Masters degrees. Consequently, at the time when the MOET left the universities to develop their own broad-based curriculum for the newly introduced first phase of studies, many universities struggled to do this. Central planning had provided little scope for rural universities to develop expertise in planning curriculum, while the more qualified staff inevitably gravitated towards the larger universities in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, where there were increasingly good opportunities to earn an income outside of the state sector. At the same time, without a financial incentive to re-work the program of study, underpaid teachers were likely to lack incentive to undertake the revision on their own initiative.

While the MOET was apparently willing and even encouraging of universities establishing their own programs, only some were offered incentives for doing this (such as the National Economics University), and many were not willing to take on an extra workload, particularly for a study program that they did not strongly support. Consequently they apparently petitioned the MOET for assistance with establishing a 'foundation studies' program, leading to the MOET's extensive work to establish a seven-stream program across the country which would be used to reinforce the faltering first phase of the system, as discussed above (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995c: 5).

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The field of economics, understandably was one of the teaching areas most affected by the decision announced at the Sixth Party Congress to move away from a centrally planned economy. The National Economics University (Hanoi) began to experiment with some new courses from as early as 1988/9 (Ngô Đình Giao 1991a: 17). The School of Economics (Ho Chi Minh City National University) also began to introduce new elements to its economics program from 1990, including important market concepts such as price theory, macro and micro economics.¹⁸⁰

By 1992 the National Economics University had completed the review of its courses of study on the basis of semester-length instead of annual units, and changed 40 out of a total of 110 courses, most of which were in phase one (14 of the total 17 subjects in phase one) (Ngô Đình Giao 1992: 7). Some of the new subjects introduced for the second phase included business administration, marketing, macroeconomics, microeconomics, investment and insurance, in other words the new subjects were those thought to be most suited to the new economic environment (Ngô Đình Giao 1991b). Staff at the National Economics University developed courses for use in economics universities in Ho Chi Minh City and Đà Nẵng (Ngô Đình Giao 1991a: 17), and other disciplines benefited from similar arrangements.

The National Economics University (NEU) offers a particularly interesting case study of a university which was fundamentally affected by the 'open door' policy and the decision to move towards a more market oriented economy.

Prior to đổi mới the university was known as the University for Economic Planning, and despite its position as the pre-eminent economics university in a reunited Vietnam, the University for Economic Planning did not usually attract the best, or even enough, students. Economics under socialist central planning, in practice, if not in theory, consists of the application of the objective laws of

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Trần Vũ Hồng Sơn, head of Department of General Economics, the School of Economics (Ho Chi Minh City National University), Ho Chi Minh City, 26/5/1998.
political economy initially laid out by Marx and Lenin. Under these conditions the study of economics became the study of how to best apply these laws in practice, rather an exercise in understanding economic processes, a technical rather than an academic subject. This perhaps explains why the best students were attracted to subjects such as mathematics and physics, where Vietnam (and Soviet Union) have had international renown, rather than economics which provided less intellectual satisfaction.

This university has become the focus of more than usual attention by international observers because of its perceived importance in training the country's staff in market economics, and the extent of the changes that it has had to undergo to gain a place as a much sought after institution at which to study.

In 1998 Adam McCarty and Sasha Fink completed a Report on Curriculum Reform at the NEU, which sought to define what the university was trying to achieve through its reforms, and then evaluate its performance according to these goals. According to the authors, the ultimate goal of the NEU was to create a Western-style university teaching Western-style market economics, and a system in which education is as much the responsibility of the student as of the teacher. It implied changes to both curriculum and teaching methodology. Western economics is defined as

the standard micro and macro neo-classical economics, and the various related or contesting schools of thought which are typically taught as the core of an undergraduate economics degree in England, the USA, Australia, Canada, India, Japan and most other countries. It is, effectively, the international curriculum for teaching economics (McCarty and Fink 1998: 9).
The second chapter of the report goes on to describe the typical features of teaching Western economics and the difference with the existing Vietnamese practices.

Economics under central planning was a completely different subject to Western economics [...] Central planning economics was strongly grounded in philosophy, and was focussed on political economy issues [...] Western economics is much more concerned with pragmatic issues of measurement and prediction [...] It is, essentially, teaching students how to think and analyse, and there is a strong bias towards quantitative analysis [...] Western economics is also taught differently. The NEU continues to focus on rote learning [...] In Western economics that approach is only applicable for learning theory [...] Students must [be able to] demonstrate their knowledge of theory, but more importantly they must be able to show how they can apply it to develop strong and consistent economic arguments (McCarty and Fink 1998).

Moving towards an 'international economics' curriculum therefore required fundamental changes to the way in which economics was both conceived of, and taught, at the university. Many of these changes ostensibly focussed around the introduction of a foundation studies program (first phase program) at the university in the late 1980s. From 1988 the university embarked on a concerted attempt to re-write course materials and textbooks in support of the _dai cureng_ system. For example, between 1988 and 1991 the university reformed 110 teaching programs, including 17 programs for the first phase and 93 for the second phase. It also experimented with introducing new teaching matter and some new subjects (Ngô Đình Giao 1992: 7). These new teaching programs were approved by the
Ministry of Higher and Technical Education for use in economics universities throughout the country, as it had also done in 1975, reaffirming the NEU as the parent institution in the field of economics (Đại học Kinh tế Quốc dân 1996: 7; Ngô Đình Giao 1996: 17). The process of re-writing the curriculum, was only completed in 1990 for the first phase, and 1991 for the second phase, some four years after the new system had been officially introduced (Ngô Đình Giao 1991b: 14).

The university also sought to expand the number of courses being taught, and increase the number related to market economics. The extent of these efforts can be gleaned from the figures on the opening of new courses and faculties, which were collected by McCarty and Fink. Of 144 subjects being taught in 1997/8, 111 of those had been created since 1988. While seven new subjects were introduced in 1988 and 1989, including some which had more of an aura of socialist planning than market economics (the introduction of Socialist Economic Planning Analysis, for example), the real expansion began in the years 1990 and 1991 when 40 new subjects were established. This was followed by 20 in 1992 and 1993 and 28 in 1994 and 1995. This includes a number of new subjects opened by the Faculty of Banking and Finance and the establishment of an entirely new Faculty of Marketing, teaching 14 subjects.\(^1\)

It is very difficult to get an accurate idea of the development of different subjects within the university. The statistics used above are based on a survey of faculties existing in 1998, and do not take into account those that may have closed during that time. The statistics also do not include those departments which are directly under the administration of the university, but only those under faculties, and they do not always make a clear distinction between those subjects which are entirely new and those which are based on some combination of previous

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\(^1\) I am grateful to Adam McCarty and Sasha Fink for permission to use the unpublished data they collected during the survey for their report on the National Economics University, from which these results are drawn.
subjects. They do, however, show that the university as a whole has been very active in introducing new programs to support a market economy since 1989 but particularly during 1990 and 1991.

The emphasis of the new subjects, if the titles are any indication, is market economics. 'Credit Planning' has become 'Commercial Banking' while 'Planning Skills of Investment Banks' has become 'Establishment and Consideration of Credit Investment Programs'. The number of individual subjects offered by the university overall has gradually been reduced, however the number is still very large by international standards and very narrowly focussed. For example, the Faculty of Statistics previously had three separate subjects of Industrial, Agricultural and Trade Statistics, which have now been combined to form the Department of Enterprise Statistics. The Faculty of Statistics, however, still has a large number of different subjects such as 'Labour statistics', 'Population Statistics' and 'Industrial Statistics', where it may be wondered if the content of the three different courses is fundamentally different. McCarty and Fink advise that meeting international norms would require reducing the number of subjects by a further 30%. The high degree of subdivision of courses remains a legacy of the central planning system, but also reconfirms the lack of integration between different faculties, and even different departments within faculties which teach very similar subjects.

While the opening of new courses would seem to indicate a real process of change occurring, the difficulty occurs in evaluating the practical impact represented by this flurry of activity. The introduction of a marketing faculty means little if the staff are simply taken from other subjects such as economic planning with no training in the new subject and no new course materials. A survey conducted by three foreign economists teaching in a newly established Masters program at the university in 1996 found this to be a significant problem.

In the survey, they asked their students, approximately half of whom were economics teachers at the NEU, to list previous economics subjects they had studied. More than two-thirds had at least studied introductory market
economics-type subjects such as microeconomics or macroeconomics, but only 15% and 3% had studied these subjects to a more advanced level (15% being the proportion of economics teachers, 3% being other students). At the same time 85% of economics teachers had studied a significant amount of Political Economy, Planning Theory or History of Economic Thought. Based on these results, the authors then tested their general understanding of basic market concepts. The authors asked respondents to evaluate their own understanding of basic market concepts such as: demand and supply, marginal cost and exchange rates. On a scale of 0-3: 0 (none), 1 (slight), 2 (good), 3 (good enough to teach), the average understanding the students claimed for almost all these market concepts was under 1. Only the concept of demand and supply averaged between 1.44 and 1.81, which was the highest result for any of the concepts proposed. In the words of the authors: 'The results revealed that courses with familiar titles evidently did not cover what we had expected.' (Gottschang, McCornac et al. 1996: 73). This is perhaps further borne out by the survey conducted by McCarty and Fink, from which they conclude 'None of the teachers of microeconomics studied microeconomics, they all studied agricultural, development or financial economics. Similarly for macroeconomics, most of the teachers are statisticians or mathematicians. These teachers may therefore lack firm knowledge of the theoretical frameworks of microeconomics or macroeconomics' (McCarty and Fink 1998: 13).

The NEU has nonetheless prioritised overseas training for younger staff members, so that in 1998, 65 of 365 staff surveyed (17.8%) had studied in 'Western-style' countries (and the same number in socialist bloc countries), and 47% (172) teachers claimed to have had market economics training (McCarty and Fink 1998: 11-12). More experienced teachers were expected to update their knowledge through local training courses in Vietnam, and through self-study (Lương Xuân Quý 1996a).\(^\text{182}\)

\(^{182}\) Also, interview with Trần Chí Thành, Head of the Office for Academic Affairs (Phòng Đào tạo), NEU, Hanoi, 27/3/1998.
The case study of the National Economics University shows a significant effort to reform existing courses, by changing both the structure and content of existing subjects and faculties. At the outset this was significantly encouraged by the MOET, which both specifically assigned responsibility to NEU staff, and supplied initial funding. With the introduction of fees and the increasing popularity of economics as a subject, the NEU had a lot to gain at all levels by offering courses that were suited to the new economic openness of the country. Nonetheless, even the strong incentives for changing the curriculum could not entirely overcome the existing human resource and knowledge bases of the university, as represented by its teachers, in a short space of time.

In other areas anecdotal evidence suggests that the most popular changes to learning at the post-secondary level have been in the introduction of English, computing and business administration or related courses. Privately owned centres teaching these skills have become noticeable in many cities since the mid-1990s, catering to an immediate demand that universities had difficulties meeting. The rector of the Hanoi Open University (ĐH Mở Hà Nội), established in 1993, felt that his university had many advantages over long-standing institutions because it was able to start with new teachers, newly trained in important subjects in heavy demand. He did not have to contend with the problem of changing an already existing system. The most popular courses in which the university was rapidly expanding were economics, business administration and English.183

While other universities also sought to broaden their courses to include more 'modern' subjects, they did in fact run up against constraints imposed by their existing resources, in particular their human resources. The School for Foreign Languages Teacher Training (HNU) (Đại học sư phạm ngoại ngữ Hà Nội) moved from offering degrees in a single language, to requiring students to take a second language at a lower level. It also opened a new department teaching

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Chinese in 1990/91, and began teaching Japanese and German as lower level languages in 1992/3. The biggest drawcard for the School now, however, were their English language courses, as their Russian language classes all but folded. Consequently the School opened a special program to retrain teachers of Russian as English language teachers (Ngô Doãn Đại 1994). Existing teachers of Russian were placed in a special class where they learnt English for four years, studying part-time for 7.5 months a year. They sat their own special examinations so that they could become English teachers. The first group of 71 teachers from this re-training course graduated in 1993 teachers (Ngô Doãn Đại 1994). The School faced a crisis with the collapse of the Socialist bloc in Eastern Europe and the immediate obsolescence of its main activity: teaching the Russian language. It was able to recoup its losses, however, with the very lucrative market that quickly opened up in teaching English to fee-paying students.

Other universities also began to adapt their courses, in line with international academic trends. Between 1986 and 1991 the Hanoi University of Construction (Đại học Xây dựng Hà Nội) introduced at least three new areas of expertise: construction computing, environmental construction and work on an ocean floor project (thềm lục địa) (Nguyễn Văn Chơn 1991). In 1996 the School of Social Sciences and Humanities (HCMC National University) opened an 'Australian Studies' specialisation for the Bachelor degree level, a course which would have been unthinkable a decade earlier.

Like the field of economics, and, under central planning, closely related to the field of economics, Marxist-Leninist studies was a second field of study that was fundamentally challenged by the new openness introduced by đổi mới, by an end to central planning and by the later collapse of the socialist bloc in Eastern Europe.

'Marxism-Leninism' is the general term used by Vietnamese educators to encompass the study of all subjects that are loosely related to the works of Marx,

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184 Interview with English teacher in Faculty of English, Ho Chi Minh City, March 2000.
Engels, Lenin and Ho Chi Minh. It includes subjects such as political-economic theory, Ho Chi Minh thought or the history of the CPV. These were the cornerstone of the programs taught at the specialist economics universities (such as those in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City), prior to changes in the curriculum in the late 1980s. As outlined above, even before the fall of the socialist bloc in Eastern Europe, students and teachers were increasingly questioning the relevance of spending many hours studying a doctrine that no longer appeared to be relevant, as central planning was abandoned and the country entered a new stage of openness.

Faced with the increasing irrelevance and growing passive resistance to Marxist-Leninist studies, the response of the Ministry of Higher, Technical and Professional Education was to issue an instruction for amendments to the existing program in December 1988. According to Instruction No. 12 (Chi thừ 12, 1/12/1988), universities were asked to divide existing subjects into semester-length programs, graded on their level of difficulty, and to abandon the final year examination in Marxist-Leninist studies in favour of smaller examinations at the end of semester-length units. The instruction also specified that Marxist-Leninist studies should not represent more than 8% of the total study time for natural and physical sciences, 10% for the social sciences, 12% for a five year economics course, and 14% for a four year economics course (Doàn và Thanh niên, 15/12/1988, p.6). Principally the instruction was an administrative readjustment designed to coincide with the government’s plans for all courses to be run on a two-semester rather than a yearly basis. For economics universities in particular, however, this required substantial changes to the existing system. In 1988 the School of Economics (Ho Chi Minh City National University) was teaching 300 hours of Marxist-Leninist subjects, out of a total of 1300 hours required for a degree program, or almost a quarter of all teaching hours. By contrast, at the same time, other universities were only teaching around 80 units of the same subjects (Doàn và Thanh niên, 29/12/1988, p.6). In this situation it is perhaps understandable that the rector of the School of Economics (Ho Chi Minh City...
National University) was unwilling to abandon the existing structure and face the possibility of not only undermining the importance of one of the central courses of the university, but also of making a significant number of staff redundant. The matter was brought to a head as students at the university protested against the university continuing to hold the examination in political economy at the end of 1988, despite the instruction of the MOET abandoning it (Chu Thái Thanh 1989: 64). Officials from the Ministry met with the board of management of the university and students, and upheld the position of the rector to maintain the examination on the grounds put forward by the university, namely, that political economy subjects were a pivotal part of the curriculum studied at the university and could not be slighted (Đoàn và Thanh niên, 12/1/1989: 6).

Almost ten years later, the Marxist-Leninist studies at the School of Economics (Ho Chi Minh City National University) had fallen in line with those programs now being taught in other universities. The hours had been greatly reduced from 300 hours to 90 hours. Marxist-Leninist philosophy is now being taught in a historical framework, and in the context of other theories (including market philosophies), under title of 'History of Economic Thought'. Across universities in Vietnam other subjects included under the heading of 'Marxist-Leninist' studies include 'History of the Vietnamese Communist Party' and 'Scientific socialism'. Out of a total of 208 credits required for a Bachelor degree at the National Economics University, 17 (12%) of these could be termed 'Marxist-

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185 I am grateful to Russell Heng for access to his collection of newspaper clippings regarding student protests in 1988 and 1989.

186 Interviews with Trần Võ Hồng Sơn, Head of Department of General Economics, the School of Economics (Ho Chi Minh City National University), Ho Chi Minh City, 26/5/1998; and with Nguyễn Quoc Te, Director, Department of Science Research Administration and International Co-operation, School of Economics (Ho Chi Minh City National University), Ho Chi Minh City, 21/5/1998.
Leninist studies' (Hanoi National Economics University and Japan International Cooperation Agency 2001: 77).

Marxist-Leninist studies remain an important priority for the government. The new economics and business curriculum framework approved by the MOET in 1994 contained a number of possible specialty areas for universities to choose from, but political ideology subjects remained compulsory (Hanoi National Economics University and Japan International Cooperation Agency 2001: 29). With the passivity of students and teachers outlined at the beginning of this chapter, together with the increasing irrelevancy of the subject with regard to the economic realities of Vietnam, it is tempting to think of the 'Marxist-Leninist' studies as being exclusively upheld by the central government. In 1998 one of the lecturers from the School of Economics (HCMC) asserted that the only reason the university was keeping Marxist-Leninist subjects was because otherwise the teachers would not have any subjects to teach. He thought that the hours the subjects were taught would continue to be reduced, as the older teachers retired and less and less new teachers could be found to teach the subjects.187 His views were certainly not those of the upper echelons of the Communist Party, who continued to emphasise the need for students to study Marxism-Leninism in order to improve their moral and ethical qualities (See for example (Lê Xuân Lựu 1991; Nguyễn Quốc Anh 1997; Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo (Vụ công tác chính trị) 1998).

**Teaching and Postgraduate Training**

In the first decade of đổi mới, Vietnam faced an increasing shortage of higher education teachers. While in 1986/87 there were a total of 18,702 teachers for 127,312 students (or a ratio of 1:6), by 1998/9 that ratio had grown to 28,035 teachers for 798,857 students (or a ratio of 1:28.5) (Đào Quang Ngọc 1999). The increase in teachers also included a very large increase in the proportion of female

187 Interview with senior lecturer, School of Economics (Ho Chí Minh City National University), Ho Chí Minh City, May 1998.
teachers, which rose from 7.25% in 1992 to 44% in 1998/9 (Nguyen 1994: 6; Ministry of Education and Training 1999a:3/6). As mentioned above, this national ratio masked large discrepancies between rural and urban areas. The 1996 review of higher education found that both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City had a surplus of teachers, while rural areas were lacking (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1997: 192).

The most obvious answer to the problem was to increase the total number of teachers being trained, but it also meant retraining existing teachers with outdated skills, to improve the overall quality of teaching. Previously between 300 and 500 postgraduate students were trained in socialist countries each year (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1997: 195). Until 1995, this meant a total of 6,584 phó tiến sĩ, and 526 tiến sĩ. In addition, in the Soviet Union alone, 6,000 student teachers were trained, many of whom could be expected to return to the universities and research institutions (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 426). By contrast, Vietnam itself had only trained 2,642 phó tiến sĩ and 27 tiến sĩ in-country, since 1970 when postgraduate training was introduced. It was only in 1983 that the 'short-course' phó tiến sĩ (nghiên cứu sinh ngắn hạn) was upgraded to include a thesis as a requirement of graduation, thus raising the quality of that award to international standards (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1997: 196).

When overseas training in socialist bloc countries dried up, Vietnam was left with a serious hole in its training because of its underdeveloped postgraduate education sector, and because many of the skills that had been learnt in the Soviet Union were no longer applicable in a market economy. Teaching was further hampered by the fall of the socialist bloc because higher level, and not so high level courses had also previously been based on teaching materials provided by the Soviet Union, a source which also completely dried up from around 1990.

The MOET recognised the urgent need for retraining, as did many teachers themselves, but this was not quite so easy to undertake. Firstly, those teachers who had previously spent many years studying in the Soviet Union did not necessarily wish to spend another four or five years learning English or Business Management in short-term courses, in addition to their own duties, while
attempting to live on a teacher’s salary. Another problem was the length of time required to complete a postgraduate award and thus raise the standard of teachers. A full-time phó tiến sĩ (Candidate of Science), required three to six years to complete, while the even longer tiến sĩ (Doctor of Science), required five or six years of study following completion of the phó tiến sĩ. At the same time, the existence of ad hoc awards reducing the thesis requirements for graduation were increasingly frowned upon as lowering the quality of standard awards. This implied a long lag time to build up qualified university personnel within the country. Under the previous system, only one tiến sĩ graduated in each year 1987, 1988 and 1989, which rose to six in 1992 and 13 in 1995 (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1997: 198). Despite these difficulties, the number of phó tiến sĩ graduating each year rose by almost ten times between 1986 and 1995 (See Chart 7.2), indicating a significant increase in highly qualified potential staff in the country.

The Candidate of Science was officially abolished in 1996 (QD 647/GD-DT, 30/6/1998) and replaced by a new, shorter, form of postgraduate award the thạc sĩ (Masters degree). The Masters degree was particularly important because it enabled students to gain a postgraduate award in 2-3 years instead of the much longer Candidate of Science. In 1991 the first regulations establishing 'cao học' (high education) leading to a Masters degrees were promulgated by the President of the Council of Ministers (QD 55-HDBT, 9/3/1991).

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189 Many senior cadres had this requirement waived as a recognition of their service to the country.
Chart 7.2 - Candidate of Science Students 1986-1995

Source: Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo, 1997: 199

Chart 7.3 - University Teachers with Masters Degrees

Note: Statistics for 1998/9 are approximate only and extrapolated from statistics for total postgraduate qualifications in Ministry of Education and Training 1999a.
While Masters degrees were introduced across all branches and subjects of study, the introduction of a Masters degree was particularly important for teachers because it enabled an increasingly large number of teachers to gain a postgraduate degree, and thus higher level teaching qualifications in a much shorter time-frame. While later regulations governing the structure and content of the degree did not specify a duration for the award (QD No.647/GD-DT, 14/12/1996), universities have tended to require students to complete 1.5 to 2 years of full-time study to complete course units and a thesis for the award. This is a considerably shorter time period than that required for the phó tiến sĩ, and has enabled the country to rapidly increase the qualifications of staff across the country. Charts 7.3 and 7.4 together show the impact of the Masters degree on the qualifications of teachers. While numbers enrolled in both the phó tiến sĩ and Masters degrees began to increase significantly from 1992, and particularly from 1994, the phó tiến sĩ was abolished in 1996, at a time when the percentage of
teachers with postgraduate degrees continued to rise, and despite a rapid rise in the total number of teachers from 1994. This rise can be explained principally by the impact of the introduction of Masters degree programs.

While students have been quick to seize the opportunity offered by these new levels of awards, and the Masters degree in particular, the MOET was cautious in allowing universities the opportunity to develop their own courses. Given the rapid rate at which universities introduced Masters courses, the Ministry claimed it was still necessary to check all the documents used, in particular because staff lacked experience at this level. This worry also prompted the introduction of detailed instructions governing the structure and content of Masters and PhD courses (QD No. 647/GD-DT, 14/12/1996).

In line with the new international orientation shown by the introduction of the Masters degree, in 1996 the government also formally abolished the tiến sĩ (Doctor of Science) inherited from the Soviet Union, and replaced it by the shorter PhD, common to anglophone countries and those of the region, which has retained its name of tiến sĩ.

Formal and informal in-country training was paralleled by increasing opportunities for overseas study helped by the country's increasing openness to the outside world. This soon offered a number of new opportunities for international cooperation, including contact between universities, students, researchers, teachers and companies, in both directions (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995a: 425). By 1998, the director of the Faculty of English (Khoa tiếng Anh) at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences (National University of HCMC), claimed that two-thirds of the teachers in the faculty had studied overseas, in the United Kingdom, United States, and especially in Australia.\(^{190}\) Her claim was refuted by one of the teachers in the department, however, who claimed that two-thirds of the teachers may have studied overseas, but the majority of these would still have

\(^{190}\) Interview with Director of Faculty of English, School of Humanities and Social Sciences (National University of HCMC), Ho Chi Minh City, 18/5/1998.
been in the Soviet Union. Similar to the NEU outlined above, Thang Long University also had a policy to send one or two young teachers overseas a year for postgraduate study, although they were still seeking the funding to enable them to do this. Teachers who studied overseas brought back the triple benefit of their own experience from those countries, their contacts with those institutions in which they had studied and new teaching materials from the courses they had been taught. The availability of scholarships and travel grants, even though only available to a few among the increasingly growing numbers of teachers, also continued to help make the teaching profession more attractive, as teachers' salaries remained low. It offered a way to rapidly expand the quality of teaching staff to international standards without placing a greater burden on the existing education system.

Scholarships to study overseas offered students a chance to learn skills and knowledge which were not always taught in Vietnam, which they could then contribute to their home country upon their return. Aside from the question of whether the students actually return to Vietnam to work, anecdotal evidence suggests that often the returned graduates seek jobs in more lucrative areas which are not directly in their line of expertise or within the public education system. Furthermore, where graduates return to work in their own field, they often find it difficult to use the knowledge they have gained. In terms of physical infrastructure, students trained to use hi-tech engineering equipment will only be able to apply their knowledge if the facilities are available when they return home. An economist will only be able to undertake macro-economic planning if the statistics are available on which to base his or her forecasts.

191 Interview with senior lecturer, Faculty of English, School of Humanities and Social Sciences (National University of HCMC), Ho Chi Minh City, May 1998.

192 Interview with vice-rector of Thang Long University, Hanoi, 16/4/1997.
The biggest problem faced by the graduates on their return I found, however, was not the lack of physical or material resources to do their job, but the low salaries available to them and the stifling human atmosphere in which they worked. Graduates in engineering or agriculture are likely to find themselves teaching English, working as interpreters for foreign companies or hiring their services to aid organisations in order to supplement their regular salary. Several people working in government departments with whom I spoke, complained that they were unable to influence decisions made by their seniors, and felt that their overseas degree was wasted because their new ideas were not listened to. 193

Teaching staff I spoke to complained that they were severely constrained in their ability to implement the new teaching methods, or introduce new knowledge which they had acquired because of impediments ranging from the resistance of students to innovation and insufficient time to prepare course materials, to official disapproval from upper levels of university hierarchy. These difficulties were felt very acutely by teachers who had studied overseas. Perhaps the most telling story of the hindrances imposed by the general atmosphere at universities in Vietnam, was that told to me by a senior teacher in the Faculty of English (School of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ho Chi Minh City National University). She and several colleagues had traveled to Australia and spent a year studying advanced English and innovative teaching methods. One colleague in particular had received high marks in a course on teaching languages using communicative methods. Several months after their return the teacher was surprised to pass by the classroom where her colleague was teaching and to hear her repeating lessons slowly so that students could copy down what she was saying, as in the old style of rote learning.

She gave several reasons for what her colleague had been doing. The first was that preparing a lesson word for word before the start of the class ensured that students would not have time to ask questions which the teacher might not

be able to answer, causing her to lose credibility with her students. It also gave less scope for the students to complain about an unfamiliar method. The second was that, while a number of staff in the department had traveled overseas to study and were familiar with overseas methods, the majority had yet to do so and they were apt to be suspicious of any innovations made by their colleagues. She herself claimed to be less worried about both the opinions of students and of teachers because she had a certain amount of confidence in her ability, and her position within the faculty gave her some independence and freedom from worry about the opinions of staff and students. Despite this, she still did not feel that she could introduce as full range of activities to her students as she would like, as students were resistant to her style of teaching which was different to what they had been used to in secondary school, and different to what her colleagues used. The environment in which she was teaching hindered her from being able to push forward her own view of how the classroom should change.

A similar problem was faced by a lecturer who had completed postgraduate studies in both the Soviet Union and Australia. He had the highest regard for the system of lecturing in the Soviet Union, which consisted in the lecturer speaking at a normal pace while the students copied down what they thought was important. He complained that he had tried this system in his own classes on his return to Vietnam, only to find that he was reprimanded by his Head of Faculty following complaints by students. In this situation he felt that it was far easier to conform, rather than to keep pushing through the changes he wished to see happen.

Even foreign teachers coming into the country from outside are similarly constrained by the environment in which they work. One story that was repeated

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194 Interview with senior lecturer, Faculty of English, School of Humanities and Social Sciences (National University of HCMC), Ho Chi Minh City, May 1998.

195 Interview with senior lecturer, National Economics University, Hanoi, April 1997.
to me several times by MOET officials, as well as by overseas teachers working in the country, was of a US volunteer worker in Ho Chi Minh City teaching economics in 1996. She gave her students a number of articles to read, one of which was a criticism of the foundations of central planning, but she did not first seek approval from her department. Shortly afterwards she was asked to leave the country, both because of the content of the article, and because she had not first sought permission to use the article. One of her students had complained to the department about the inappropriateness of what they were being taught in class. In my experience, expatriate teachers working in Vietnam are generally given a far greater level of freedom in their teaching in Vietnam, consequently it is not surprising that Vietnamese teachers should be even more wary of trying to introduce fundamentally new materials to their classes.

These examples highlight that even where the direction of change is known, in this case towards Western-style teaching methods and curriculum, and even where the training is available to instruct and explain the new system, and those who are trained are keen to impart their new learning within universities, this is still only possible to the extent that the environment in which they are working is supportive of their aims, or at least not opposed to what they are hoping to achieve. Students and parents had not been brought into the process of innovation, even though they were just as affected as teachers.

**Conclusion**

Since the start of đổi mới, universities have steadily attempted to change their courses in line with the international political and economic orientations of the country, including a reduction in the number of hours in Marxist-Leninist studies, the introduction of market economics subjects, computing and English language studies. At the same time, the overall direction of these policies has been towards greater decentralisation of curriculum decision-making in favour of universities and students who could decide their own subjects, a more 'neo-libera' model of curriculum.
As in the areas of finance and administration, these trends are clearly in the direction of a more neo-liberal model of education, albeit with some hesitation on the part of the MOET. While the MOET has actively encouraged a number of universities to change their own curriculum, this support has been conditional, with smaller, usually newer, institutions forced to rely on the established institutions for their courses, examinations and even teachers, and remaining under the close supervision of the MOET. This situation is generally encouraged by the MOET in the interest of ensuring quality standards and a reasonably unified curriculum across the country.

In the area of curriculum, the 'state' in the form of the MOET, as well as 'society' in the form of students and teachers in particular have all been important motivators for change. Each group has shown a different role depending on the individual issue. For the introduction of new teaching methods, these have been much discussed and encouraged among policy-makers, and have been conscientiously adopted by a number of teachers, but often against stiff institutional (faculty) and student opposition. In the case of Marxist-Leninist studies, students and the MOET were strong proponents of reducing the number of hours, in line with the decreasing emphasis placed on their theories at the highest levels of policy-making, but met significant opposition from staff within faculties teaching these subjects.

The most significant issue discussed above is the introduction of a two-phase higher education system. This decision was largely an initiative of the policy-makers within the MOET, although it was discussed with university rectors in 1987, several years before its implementation. The problems that it was meant to overcome, in particular the passivity of students in their study and the narrow skills base of graduates that was ill-suited to jobs in a market economy, were widely recognised among educators, students and parents, but the solutions were not evident. Unlike issues such as the introduction of student fees or private universities, in the period under question the two-phase system was introduced in progressive stages. It began with the introduction of an examination between two
phases, and moved through a more clearly defined first-phase studies course divided into seven streams, and an embryonic credit system. Similar to issues discussed previously, however, at each stage of implementation the introduction of the proposed change was undertaken first on a limited basis, which was then expanded to other universities. At the same time, there appears to have been no systematic process of evaluation undertaken before expanding pilot phases, until a thorough review of the education sector was undertaken in 1996.

The process shows a complex process of interaction among the actors. At each stage there were protests from different elements of the education sector that resulted in changes to policy, for example the introduction of the examination between the two phases led to protests by parents in particular, that helped to result in some clarifications from MOET about who should sit the examinations. The biggest protests, however, came when the combination of changes implied in the new system directly impinged on the existing authority of faculties as the most important quasi-independent providers of education to university students, leading to an about-face in policy direction, under the authority of a newly appointed Minister for Education and Training. The two-phase system does offer important examples of the way in which the state influences society and vice versa, but this is far from the full story.

In cases where there were large financial incentives to achieve these changes, in this case largely initiated by the MOET, and the human resource capacity to conduct them, they moved forward. Policies came up against serious problems, however, when they sought to disrupt the foundational structure of the status quo. This was the case when the two-phase program undermined the independence of faculties. It was also the case where the re-writing of courses required fundamentally new knowledge or skills that could only be achieved through a slow process of human resource development, and it was also the case when teachers returned to their classrooms wishing to use the new teaching methodologies they had learnt, only to face students who had already spent many
years learning by rote in general education and were unwilling to accept any new method of learning.

Again, this points to an important area of change analysis that is not adequately encapsulated in the state-society framework. The existing traditions and culture of the higher education sector created an environment in which innovation within the classroom was far more difficult than it would have been in a country with less of an academic tradition. If teachers are respected in Vietnam, then they are also expected to perform to high standards, and expected to drill their students memories so that students perform well in examinations, and they in turn often expect their students to master certain quantities of knowledge. These expectations, however, are antithetical to current thinking on the best way to produce graduates for a 'Post-Fordist' economy and ensuring that education contributes fully to the development of the country.
Conclusion

To return to the quotation with which I began this thesis, in the period between 1986 and 1998, many Vietnamese 'educators, policy-makers, government officials and other organisational personnel' significantly changed their assumptions underlying the 'specific relationship between education and national development objectives' (Fagerlind and Saha 1983: v).

The Vietnamese government, led by those specialising in education, in the early period of đổi mới fundamentally but subtly changed the way in which it viewed education and its value to society. Long-standing belief stated that education was a foundation for creating a cultured and unified country, under đổi mới, however, arguments of human resource development and the creation of knowledge as a productive investment for the growth of the country provided wide-spread appeal so that education began to take a larger place in national development policies.

Once the idea of education as a motor force for development had gained popular currency among Vietnamese policy-makers, many of the practical questions concerning the best method to achieve education for development have revolved around the appropriate distribution of responsibilities between central government agencies and universities, a debate between the state-centric and neo-liberal models of education management. The Vietnamese government has shown an ambiguous attitude to this issue. Despite decentralising many important responsibilities to universities, it has been unwilling to fully adopt the neo-liberal model propounded by the World Bank.

In administration, as detailed in Chapter Five, the groundwork was laid for decentralisation through the streamlining of responsibilities in higher education as part of an overall public administration reform process. The tendency for streamlining at the national level was evident in the reorganisation of government ministries, which, for the education sector, focussed on centralising overall authority under the auspices of the MOET. This structural re-organisation was
largely completed by 1990, although research institutes and publishing departments were later added in 1994. The restructuring enabled higher education policy to be more easily unified across the country. Through this process the MOET became responsible for all matters relating to curriculum and the awarding of degrees across HEIs in the country, although centralised control was undermined as other ministries retained responsibility for the finance and appointment of senior personnel for the institutions under their control.

Within the universities themselves, the MOET attempted to change the administrative structure through the creation of two-phase higher education. This allowed greater flexibility and greater student choice in their course of study, but also diffused the power of existing teaching faculties. Consequently, key areas of this policy were undermined, as university staff involved in the implementation were wary of the fundamental restructuring and transfer of authority the proposal involved.

Alongside the streamlining of the MOET came the streamlining of the existing system of dispersed universities. The MOET put forward proposals for the amalgamation of the many small dispersed universities on the basis of perceived international models of multi-disciplinary institutions and community colleges. The institutions were in turn supposed to be delegated more control over the elaboration of their own courses. These moves were undermined on two fronts. Firstly by the universities themselves, which found a number of arguments and methods for avoiding or weakening these amalgamations. Secondly by the MOET, which, despite officially encouraging universities to develop their own curriculum, in fact continued to insist that any new courses be submitted for approval, and that smaller or less-established universities rely on peak institutions for their courses, lecturers and/or examinations. An unofficial policy of encouraging a unified curriculum across the country also undermined university autonomy. With reference to the model presented in Table 2.1, while there has been ongoing discussion about introducing separate inspection authorities to ensure that universities are operating in accordance with regulations, and while the World Bank higher education project has gradually been putting in place the foundations
for performance indicators, these elements of a neo-liberal strategy are yet to have an impact on higher education administration in Vietnam. Higher education administration has certainly become more decentralised, at least in the thinking and theory of the MOET about how higher education should be managed, but this thinking has not always filtered through into the universities, and in practice higher education still shows dominant tendencies from the state-centric model of administration.

In terms of finance, a far greater level of decentralisation is evident. The introduction of private universities marked a real decentralisation of both administrative and financial responsibility previously unheard of in socialist Vietnam. These universities were able to make their own decisions in various different areas, about how to make money, and where to use the money. The introduction of fees for public universities allowed universities significantly more autonomy in paying their teachers and generating their own revenue. The possibility of earning extra money from fees also encouraged some universities, particularly well-placed in the new economic climate, to expand their classes well beyond their ability to guarantee the quality of the graduates they were producing. The ability of universities to earn extra income through fees was complemented by many universities' increased ability to undertake production contracts, and permission to establish relations with international donors at the university level, instead of passing through a ministry first.

The government does still show a concern to direct funding into areas of strategic importance, such as national universities, 'peak' universities and teacher training universities, but finance shows by far the greatest level of decentralisation of any area in higher education. Undoubtedly this is because it was the area where the existing system was most clearly failing to meet the needs of universities. While Vietnamese higher education is far from reaching an integrated neo-liberal model based on performance indicators and competitive bidding among universities for finance, the introduction of fees and private universities is a very significant step away from the state-centric model.
Finally the changes to curriculum were actively pushed by the MOET in order to achieve a broader outlook and wider qualifications so that university graduates would be better prepared for finding a job in a market economy. Beginning in 1987 the MOET actively encouraged universities to adjust their curriculum to take into account the new economic situation of the country. Once again, despite much greater flexibility and encouragement for universities to develop their own curriculum, curriculum development continued to closely reflect the state-centred model. The MOET had the deciding influence on the structure of the curriculum for all degrees, and all new subjects and textbooks had to be potentially approved by it. The content taught within classrooms also continued to focus on the acquisition of knowledge over the acquisition of analytical skills and creative thinking, despite increasing recognition among many teachers and policy-makers alike that this style of teaching needed to be changed. At the same time, students continued to have very limited, if any, control over their course of study once they entered the university, and their opinions are rarely taken into account for academic matters -- the noticeable exception being when they reported unconventional teaching methods to those higher in authority.

The most appropriate division of responsibility in higher education in Vietnam is a topic of ongoing discussion reflecting a compromise between necessity, ability and willingness to share power. In broad outline the MOET appears to officially espouse a movement towards a more neo-liberal model of higher education but to have many hesitations about putting this in place in practice. These hesitations may stem from a well-founded fear of the capacity of many institutions to make use of their new authority responsibly, and the value of decentralising many responsibilities, or from a more authoritarian concern about what would happen if universities were allowed to appoint their own senior personnel and design their own curriculum without reference to higher authorities. In part it also reflects a justified concern that the market mechanism may not be the most appropriate method for managing higher education, given the success of other more centrally directed education systems in the region.
To return to the international models of higher education administration outlined by Guy Neave and Frans Van Vugt in Chapter Two, their assessment concludes that the overall trend in the world is towards a greater decentralisation of higher education administration. At the same time they note that those countries (particularly in Africa) which are resource poor and which are modernising their education systems as part of overall development strategies, have tended instead to increase the central control of higher education (Neave and Van Vught 1994c: 309). Such strategies were adopted by countries such as Taiwan and Singapore, with results that argue in favour of more centralised direction of higher education as possibly a more efficient means of ensuring the appropriate distribution of scarce resources. While proponents of the neo-liberal model argue that such a strategy is less efficient and less flexible, countries with a limited number of universities, and little information or qualitative assessment of universities available, in other words, in countries with few foundations for an effective market in education, there is little reason for an increase in competition to have a qualitative impact on higher education.

The balance is perhaps a fine one. Too active a role played by central authorities could easily undermine the process of modernisation by stifling creative work and limiting the chances of different universities developing a variety of blue-prints for change, which may be just as valid as those proposed by the central authorities. Too little direction from central authorities on the other hand, assuming that they are working in the best interests of the country, may not be making the most efficient use of existing resources. While Vietnam has a sufficient number of universities and sufficient demand for university education to justify a neo-liberal strategy on some fronts, students are still far from having sufficient information with which to make informed choices about their courses of study, and, except in some limited cases, universities are still a long way from answering to any sort of market demand.

The issue of state-society relations has also been a significant theme of this thesis, with questions about whether this was the most appropriate model with
which to understand the changes that have taken place in higher education and higher education policy.

On the ground, the activities of the 'state' are most closely associated with the policy decisions and regulations put forward by the government, while 'society' is more closely associated with university educators, students and the wider community. As suggested in Chapter One, it is difficult to place higher education institutions clearly in the realm of the 'state' or of 'society', and perhaps in the final analysis this is a mute point.

According to the analysis in the preceding pages, there are clearly instances where the state has pushed forward its own direction in the higher education sector, such as in the creation of multidisciplinary universities, or the introduction of an examination at the end of the first phase of study. In other areas individuals and universities have been effective in pushing forward their own initiatives, such as the initial introduction of open enrolment, fee-paying students, private universities or the dismemberment of multi-disciplinary universities and the winding down of the two-phase education system. There is no clear evidence of a process of corporatism occurring in the higher education sector.

If such examples lend themselves more or less readily to an analysis in terms of state-society relations, then there are numerous other examples that do not. Two notable exceptions stand out, the effect of international trends in thinking about education policy and higher education changes, and the important influence of the educational traditions and culture that had been established prior to đổi mới.

International influences are not clearly accounted for in the state-society dichotomy, which paradigmatically emphasises the interplay of relations internal to a single country. In terms of Vietnamese higher education, however, educational ideas from outside the country, from China, France, the Soviet Union, the United States as well as other countries in the region, have clearly had an ongoing impact on the shape and content of higher education in Vietnam. Under đổi mới, as highlighted in Chapter Four, policy-makers across the board have been highly influenced by theories of human capital, human resource development, the
knowledge-based economy, and the idea of education as a productive investment in its own right, all ideas originating from outside Vietnam. International relations also had a more practical impact on changes to higher education. Outside funding was also both an important constraint and opportunity guiding the practical implementation measures to achieve improved higher education, both for universities (Can Tho University) and for the government (more neo-liberal of the World Bank higher education project). While the government has shown a clear desire to follow the more Asian or state-centric model of deliberately directing funding to elite institutions, it was constrained in its ability to do this by the significant amount offered by the World Bank, on the condition that more market-oriented conditions be introduced into the higher education sector. Community colleges, similarly, have not moved forward without funding from outside the country and have changed their structure and form depending on where this funding was coming from.

The second area that is not sufficiently taken into account in the state-society framework is that of historical characteristics of the education system, as outlined in Chapter Three, that continued to have an important impact under đôi môt. These include the high respect and day-to-day autonomy accorded to teachers, and later faculties, the close involvement of the state in broader key areas of university activities, such as examinations, enrolment or curriculum design, and finally, top-down, rote learning methods of teaching. As characterised in Chapter One, these were elements representative of the broad social, cultural, political and historical factors that go to make up the total environment in which both state and society actors operated. It was because of the well-entrenched traditions of elite specialisation and faculty autonomy (where these did not contravene political concerns), for example, that attempts to broaden the curriculum and introduce a wider subject focus by the MOET encountered stiff opposition. It was because of a very long-standing tradition of teaching by rote, and an examination system based on quantities of knowledge rather than methods of learning, rather than anything the government did or did not try to become involved in, that created enormous difficulties for individual teachers trying to
introduce new teaching methods. In these examples, a more obvious analytical
dichotomy for understanding changes to higher education is not state and society
relations, but rather that of the relationship between tradition and modernity.

In short, while analysis based on a state-society framework offers insights
into some of the changes that have taken place in higher education under doi mơi,
explanation for many of the changes lies outside this framework altogether,
including, but not limited to, the areas of international influence and historical
conditioning. Other issues that have been touched on in this thesis are the impact
of technological change, and the ability of particular actors to mobilise finance.

It is not the purpose of this thesis to elaborate a fully developed alternative
theory to the state-society dichotomy, however, based on the preceding chapters,
an alternative approach to analysing changes to higher education policy (rather
than higher education as a whole) suggests itself.

This approach sees changes to higher education policy in Vietnam as a
process which follows a number of identifiable stages, each of which may have a
multiplicity of factors influencing them. For significant initiatives, these stages
usually involve, first, the universal identification of the issue -- in most of the
examples given in the preceding pages the problems were recognised by MOET
officials and university educators alike). Such issues included lack of finance for
the sector, lack of motivation and relevant skills among university graduates and
overlapping bureaucracy, among others. Second, a possible solution to the issue
was usually trialled in the form of a pilot experiment, initiated by either the
government (examination following first phase studies) or by the private sector
with more or less tacit approval of the government (Thang Long University and
forms of unofficial funding could also be placed in this category). If the pilot
experiment showed positive results, it was then given formal approval (the third
stage) through the promulgation of relevant regulations that provided a legal basis
for other universities to follow suit. In cases where there was a clear advantage for
the university to do so, these regulations were quickly taken advantage of
(introduction of Masters degrees, fee-paying students...), but where there was no
clear advantage for the implementers in the change, then these were likely to be
implemented half-heartedly (university amalgamations), not at all (community colleges), and in extreme cases led to overt disagreement (two-phase university, seven-stream curriculum...). For those policies that were readily adopted by universities, such as allowing open enrolment students and regular fee-paying students, the rapid expansion of the programme itself, in the fourth stage, led the MOET to re-assess the issue and then impose important modifications or even the reversal of a previously supported policy. In the final stage, the process of formulation of the problem, pilot experiment and expansion of successful trials might begin again.

At each of the five stages outlined above, a number of factors may come into play. As stressed throughout this thesis, international thinking and overseas practices have often had an important impact on influencing the direction for change. The success or otherwise of the pilot experiment may depend on ensuring all the different actors involved in the implementation process both understand the change that is sought, and the general benefit that it will, presumably, bring. It will depend on the extent to which the change is a radical departure from the past, and the extent to which financing and technology are brought in to support the change. It may also depend on willingness of talented individuals to invest time and energy in pushing through the change (as in the example of the successful search for outside funding by Can Tho University senior staff members). In short, each proposed policy change will stem from a particular set of circumstances, and be more or less successful depending on a number of factors that are specific to each proposed change.

In order to formulate in more detail a general theory of the relative importance of different factors in hindering or pushing forward change at each stage of the policy implementation process, it would be necessary to look at the many different changes highlighted in this thesis in more depth, for individual comparison. In the event, this thesis has been able to do little more than give an

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196 An interesting perspective, for example, would be to examine the six steps of successful policy implementation proposed by Derick Brinkerhoff and Benjamin Crosb, for their relevance to the
overview of the changes to higher education as a whole, and to suggest some areas where the frequently used state-society framework of analysis fails to adequately explain a number of outcomes in the sector.

As I write, many of the problems highlighted in this dissertation continue to be solved and become approved policy or a new way of doing things, and new problems continue to emerge. The year 1998 marked an important turning point where many of the experiments and even well-planned policies reached the important fourth stage of re-evaluation. While the period 1986-1998 saw a renewal of commitment to education as a productive force for the development of the country, developments in the higher education sector nonetheless suffered from the lack of a clearly articulated framework against which to formulate and consider individual initiatives.

The National Commission on Education, created in 1997, finally approved a new blueprint for learning with wide cross-sectoral support in 2001. It reflected most forcefully the impact of international thinking on education and development, as presented in Chapter Two.

This [international] context has created radical changes in education, from views on the quality of education, building the personality of students, through to the programs of study and the education system. Schools are changing from being closed to open, undertaking a dialogue with society and close links with science-technology research and its applications.

Teachers are changing from transferring knowledge to

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Vietnamese situation: legitimisation, constituency building, resource accumulation, organisational design and modification, mobilising resources and actions, and monitoring progress. These can then be broken down into further specific elements during the implementation stages of the policy (Brinkerhoff 2002: 25).
providing learners with methodologies of systematic absorption of information, and analytic and synthetic thinking. Investment in education is considered to be investment in development instead of investment in social welfare as before.

For these reasons, all countries from developing to developed countries, all recognise the foremost role and importance of education, and they all recognise the need to renovate education to respond more dynamically, effectively, and directly to the requirements of the country’s development (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2001: 9).

This quotation is taken from the Vietnamese government's strategic plan for education for the years 2001-2010. It states clearly and unambiguously the type of education that the government is hoping to achieve. It is no longer one which emphasises only education to supply skills for production, or to create socialist people, but one which emphasises instead the contribution of education to the overall development of the country through teaching 'methodologies of systematic absorption of information, analytic and synthetic thinking'. It lays the foundation for further developments in higher education, and represents a higher level of co-ordination and consideration by the different ministries involved in the education sector. It remains to be seen, however, whether the government will be able to formulate successful strategies for implementation in this direction, whether institutions or individuals will take the initiative and draw the country in a different direction, or whether the important multiplicity of interests at play will serve to undermine the agenda of education for development itself.

And one has to reflect that there is nothing more difficult to handle nor more doubtful of success nor more dangerous to conduct than to make oneself the leader in introducing a new order of things. For the man who introduces it has for enemies all those who do well out of
the old order and has lukewarm supporters in all those who will do well out of the new order. This lukewarmness arises partly from fear of their adversaries who have the laws on their side, and partly from the incredulity of mankind who do not put their trust in changes if they do not see them in actual practice (Machiavelli, 'The Prince', Chapter 6).
## Appendices

### Appendix 1 - Major Events in Higher Education Since 1986

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>Sixth National Party Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>16 February</td>
<td>Head Office for Vocational Training absorbed into the Ministry for Higher and Professional Secondary Education</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 August</td>
<td>Meeting of higher education officials at Nha Trang establishes three programs of action based on the Sixth Party Congress. Announces Decision 730/QĐ broadening 'open' enrolment for fee-paying students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31 August</td>
<td>Decision QĐ 134/HĐBT encourages science and technology institutes to seek extra funding through outside contracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18 December</td>
<td>QĐ 1564/QĐ introducing the election of university rectors by their staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>1-5 July</td>
<td>Ministry conference to sum up the academic year 1987/8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Date uncertain</td>
<td>Introduction of two levels of university studies (giai đoạn I and II)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2-12 August</td>
<td>Meeting of university rectors to review one year of implementation of three programs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 June</td>
<td>Regulation on admission to HEIs full-time long-term programs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December</td>
<td>Thang Long University established as the first non-state, non-profit university with one class of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>10 June</td>
<td>Decision 63-HĐBT introducing tuition fees and scholarships for universities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-12 July</td>
<td>Conference for heads of universities and colleges, mass organisations and party cells to examine two years of implementing the three programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25 September</td>
<td>153-HĐBT establishing committee to examine and approve the titles of Candidate of Science, Doctor of Science, Associate Professor and Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 December</td>
<td>196-HĐBT places cross-disciplinary education matters under the jurisdiction of the MOET (See also 418-HĐBT, 7/12/1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19 December</td>
<td>Thong tu 3950/TT-DH on ways to transfer between the two levels of university study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>22 February</td>
<td>50/CT from Council of Ministers delegates management of the budget for graduate education to MOET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 March</td>
<td>72/LD-TBXH establishes five different levels of teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<td>------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 March</td>
<td>QD 244-NQ/HDNN8 on the founding of the Ministry of Education and Training, based on two previous education ministries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 May</td>
<td>325/QD-CB establishing qualifications and procedures to grant titles for teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 July</td>
<td>Thông tư 16-TT/DHTC instruction on how to found open universities and colleges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 December</td>
<td>418-HDBT establishes function, responsibilities and limits of power of the MOET (follows on from 196-HDBT, 11/12/1989)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 December</td>
<td>2301/QD-LB MOET and Gen Dept of Statistics issues joint decision listing Index of Specialties trained at HEIs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>23-27 January Conference of educators reviewing three years of implementation of three education programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Beginning of UNDP/UNESCO project on reforming education (VIE 89/022)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 March</td>
<td>QD 55-HDBT establishes Masters degree program (cao hoc)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Seventh Party Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 August</td>
<td>255/CT, gives MOET and local authorities responsibility for restructuring and reorganisation of the national network of universities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>New constitution promulgated emphasising the importance of education for development</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 February</td>
<td>30/DH Decision to abolish 'open' system of enrolment, and introduction of fees for all students in its place</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 March</td>
<td>MOET report advising the establishment of community schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 August</td>
<td>287-HDBT MOET given responsibility for full government budget for education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 September</td>
<td>324/CT Policy to link research and training activities and institutions more closely to each other and to production</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>10-14 January Fourth Plenum of the Seventh Party Congress. Comprehensive review of educational system, focuses on education and the needs of human resource development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 March</td>
<td>535/TTg, decision to open Hanoi Open University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 May</td>
<td>241/TTg, on the collection and use of tuition fees in schools and HEIs; also MOET/MOF circular 20/TT-LB, 28/10/1993</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 July</td>
<td>389/TTg, decision to open Ho Chi Minh City Open University</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>27 July</td>
<td>1584/QD, on student affairs, giving students the possibility of changing between courses or between institutions and participating in course design</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 August</td>
<td>QD 241/TTg Rules for establishing private universities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 September</td>
<td>5717/DH first universities allowed to enrol part-time students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 November</td>
<td>90/CP Restructures all education levels and degrees, introduces national universities, open universities, people founded universities, masters training and regularises PhD training and examination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 December</td>
<td>2677 and 2678/GD-DT, list of subjects for giao doan I established, and minimum teaching qualifications for different levels stipulated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>During 1993 and 1994 national and regional universities were created, amalgamating several specialised institutions, including: DH Thái Nguyên (31/CP), DH Quốc gia Hà Nội (87/CP), DH Huế (30/CP), DH Đà Nẵng (32/CP)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Founding of private universities: DH Dan lập Phượng Đông (QD 350/TTg), DH Dan lập Đồng Đô, DH Dan lập Ngoại ngữ-Tin học TpHCM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Founding of Hanoi National University (DH Quốc gia Hà Nội) (ND87/CP)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 January</td>
<td>Công văn 59/DH on the model programme for higher education in the first phase</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>21 January</td>
<td>196/QD-TCCB, provisional regulations governing people-founded unis</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>25 January</td>
<td>256/GDDT, universities now responsible for the selection of students for admission</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 March</td>
<td>4/QD-TCCB, provisional regulations governing semi-public unis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 March</td>
<td>ND 29/CP on the responsibilities and organisation of MOET (replaces 418/HDBT, 2/7/1990)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 April</td>
<td>35/TT-LB signed by MOF and MOET detailing the management of the state budget for higher education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 December</td>
<td>QD 2241/GD-DT and TT 24/GD-DT specifying conditions of university entrance for in-service students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>ND 16/CP Official decision to create DH Quốc gia TpHCM (Ho Chi Minh City National University) on the basis of nine existing schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 January</td>
<td>QD 71/TTg on the founding of DH Dan lập Văn Lang (People Founded University of Van Lang)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 April</td>
<td>QD 235/TTg On the founding of DH Dan lập Kỹ thuật Công nghệ (People Founded University of Industry and Technology)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 September</td>
<td>QD 3244/GD-DT, MOET introduces curriculum for first year and a half of study, divided into seven streams</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Month</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>Abolishment of phó tiến sĩ level of training, and giving instructions on Masters and PhD levels of training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>June</td>
<td>Eighth National Party Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20-21 August</td>
<td>Conference for educators evaluating 10 years of đổi mới in education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14 December</td>
<td>QD 64/GD-DT giving detailed instructions on the structure and content of the new Masters and PhD levels of study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16-24 December</td>
<td>Second Plenum of the Eighth Congress regarding education, science and technology strategies to the year 2000 (known as Nghị Quyết Trung Ương II - NQTWII)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>Series of meetings to discuss implications of NQTWII with different groups of educators in Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Date uncertain</td>
<td>Creation of National Commission on Education (Hội đồng Quốc gia Giáo dục)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24 July</td>
<td>Decision establishing principles and methods for the establishment of community colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24 September</td>
<td>Decision to establish the first community college, Hong Duc, in Thanh Hoa province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>27 March</td>
<td>Decision 68/1998/QD-TTg, tertiary institutions and research institutions allowed to create SOEs on an experimental basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9-11 April</td>
<td>Higher education conference. MOET officially advises the prime minister to end the separation between the first and the second phase of university education (hai giai đoạn)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 September</td>
<td>67/ND-CP abolishing the separate foundational studies faculty (ĐH đại chúng) in the universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November</td>
<td>Agreement signed with World Bank to provide Quality Improvement Grants to HEIs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 December</td>
<td>Education Law passed in National Assembly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 2 - Creation of Universities in the Early Years of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Creation of University</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1954/5</td>
<td>- ĐH Y Dược (University of Medicine and Pharmacy)</td>
<td>Formed on the basis of area specific teacher training and universities existing prior to the division of the country. Began teaching 1955/6.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- ĐH Sự phạm Văn khoa (University of Teacher Training in Letters)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- ĐH Sự phạm Khoa học (University of Teacher Training in Sciences)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>- Trường Kinh tế Tài chính Trung Ương (Central School of Economics and Finance)</td>
<td>Founded as secondary level school but begins teaching teachers from 1959/60, when it is placed under the Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>- Đại Học Tổng hợp (General University)</td>
<td>Based on letters and sciences pedagogical schools, trains research students and higher education teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- ĐH Bách khoa (Polytechnic University)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- ĐH Nông Lâm (University of Agriculture and Forestry)</td>
<td>Became the Học viễn Nông Lâm (Institute of Agriculture and Forestry) in 1958&lt;sup&gt;197&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957/58</td>
<td>- Trường Mỹ thuật (School of Fine Arts)</td>
<td>Restored. Begins teaching tertiary level teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>197</sup> Several institutions changed their names as they were upgraded. Post-secondary level institutions were called 'Trường', universities were 'ĐH (đại học)', while institutions also undertaking research were called 'Học viên' or 'Viện', according to the highest level of activities undertaken. I have not listed these changes in full.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>- <strong>ĐH Sư phạm Vinh</strong> (Vinh University of Pedagogy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- <strong>Học Viện Thủy lợi</strong> (Institute of Hydrology)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Separates off from <strong>ĐH Bách khoa</strong> in 1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>- <strong>ĐH Giáo thông Văn tài</strong> (University of Communications and Transport)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- <strong>Trường Tăng cường</strong> (School of International Commerce)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Separates off from <strong>Trường Kinh tế Tài chính</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962/3</td>
<td>- <strong>Trường Ngoại thương</strong> (School of International Commerce)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- <strong>Trường Bưu điện</strong> (Post Office School)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- <strong>Trường Thể dục</strong> (Sports School)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- <strong>Trường Dược</strong> (School of Pharmacy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Separated from School of Medicine and Pharmacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- <strong>Trường Lâm nghiệp</strong> (School of Forestry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Separated from University of Agriculture and Forestry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- <strong>Trường Tài chính Kế toán</strong> (School of Finance and Accounting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Separated from School of Economics and Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966/7</td>
<td>- <strong>Trường Xây Dựng</strong> (Construction School)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- <strong>ĐH Mỏ-Dịa chất</strong> (School of Mining and Geology)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- <strong>ĐH Công nghiệp nhẹ</strong> (School of Light Industry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Separated from the Polytechnic University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- <strong>ĐH Thủy sản</strong> (University of Aquaculture)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Separated off from the University of Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Three new teaching training institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Separated off from original teacher training institutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compiled from Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo (1995). 50 năm phát triển sự nghiệp giáo dục và đào tạo. Hà Nội, Nhà xuất bản giáo dục, 199-215. This is not a complete list of universities created between 1955 and 1970, but offers a good example of the process of specialisation of universities during this period.
### Appendix 3 - Education Spending as a Proportion of the Government Budget - Alternative Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEAMEO, Internal statistics</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>8.80</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>8.60</td>
<td>8.20</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>9.20</td>
<td>10.56</td>
<td>10.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pham Quang Sang and Sloper 1995: 164</td>
<td>6.87</td>
<td>6.18</td>
<td>6.93</td>
<td>8.13</td>
<td>11.67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist Republic of Vietnam 1995</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9.80</td>
<td>11.40</td>
<td>11.20</td>
<td>10.70</td>
<td>10.20</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Bank 1996: 42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Expenditure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.80</td>
<td>6.80</td>
<td>7.30</td>
<td>9.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Expenditure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11.60</td>
<td>9.30</td>
<td>9.90</td>
<td>11.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is difficult to ascertain why the statistics vary so widely. The SEAMEO statistics were two separate pages of an internal collection of education statistics provided to me by members of the organisation. These statistics had been provided to SEAMEO by the MOET. The statistics provided by Phạm Minh Hạc and Pham Quang Sang are also sourced to different MOET publications. The World Bank researched and prepared their own statistics. The reason that the figures provided by the organisation statistics are higher than the majority of other figures originating from the MOET is partly due to the fact that they have included Overseas Development Assistance as part of the government budget, by contrast with the usual practice of the Vietnamese government.
Appendix 4 - Students Enrolled in Higher Education in Vietnam 1986 - 2000


Note: Figures for students in non-regular modes of study after 1997 have not been included as definitions for those students to be included under these headings began to vary.
## Appendix 5 - List of University Names Referred to in the Text and their Vietnamese Equivalent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Name</th>
<th>Vietnamese Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can Tho University</td>
<td>Đại học Cần Thơ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Da Nang University of Technology</td>
<td>Đại học Kỹ thuật Đà Nẵng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duy Tan People Founded University</td>
<td>Đại học Dân lập Duy Tân</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Languages Teacher Training University</td>
<td>Đại học Sư phạm Ngữ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi Agricultural University I</td>
<td>Đại học Nông nghiệp Hà Nội I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(also University of Agriculture I (Hanoi))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi (General) University</td>
<td>Đại học Tổng hợp Hà Nội</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi National University</td>
<td>Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi Foreign Languages University</td>
<td>Đại học Ngữ ngữ Hà Nội</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi Open University</td>
<td>Đại học Mở Hà Nội</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi Teacher Training University 1</td>
<td>Đại học Sư phạm Hà Nội 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi School for Foreign Languages Teacher Training (HNU)</td>
<td>Đại học Sư phạm Ngữ ngữ Hà Nội (Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ho Chi Minh City (General) University</td>
<td>Đại học Tổng hợp Tp Hồ Chí Minh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ho Chi Minh City National University</td>
<td>Đại học quốc gia Tp Hồ Chí Minh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ho Chi Minh City Teacher Training</td>
<td>Đại học Sư phạm Tp Hồ Chí Minh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hue Medical School</td>
<td>Đại học Y khoa (Huế)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polytechnic University (Hanoi)</td>
<td>Đại học Bách khoa (Hà Nội)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phuong Dong People Founded University</td>
<td>Đại học Dân lập Phương Đông</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Agriculture and Forestry (Hue)</td>
<td>Đại học Nông Lâm (Huế)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Fine Arts</td>
<td>Đại học Nghệ thuật</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Humanities and Social Sciences</td>
<td>Đại học Xã hội và Nhân văn (ĐH Quốc gia TpHCM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(National University of HCMC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Economics (National University of HCMC)</td>
<td>Đại học Kinh tế (ĐH Quốc gia TpHCM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Institute for Industry</td>
<td>Phân viễn Công nghệ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Accounting</td>
<td>Đại học Kế toán</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Architecture (Hanoi)</td>
<td>Đại học Kiến trúc Hà Nội</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Commerce (Hanoi)</td>
<td>Đại học Thương mại (Hà Nội)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Construction</td>
<td>Đại học Xây dựng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Da Lat</td>
<td>Đại học Đà Lạt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Finance</td>
<td>Đại học Tài chính</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Health</td>
<td>Đại học Y tế</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Hue</td>
<td>Đại học Huế</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Technology (Ho Chi Minh City)</td>
<td>Đại học Kỹ thuật Tp Hồ Chí Minh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Vinh</td>
<td>Đại học Vinh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viet Bac Teacher Training University</td>
<td>Đại học Sư phạm Việt Bắc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Highlands University</td>
<td>Đại học Tây Nguyên</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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