ABSTRACT

This scientific paper evaluates and classifies the current degree of self-governance of Vietnam higher education institutions as well as the State’s role (through policy system) in the implementation of the self-governance’s strategy of Vietnam (shown in 5 different levels: Very high, high, medium, low, very low).

In this paper, we used some methods, such as specific research method of survey, international experience' reference and refer to and survey the trends, the nature of the higher education self-governance in a number of universities around the world.

The results of the paper show that the levels of the higher education's self-governance are inversely proportional to the State intervention. That is, higher education institution is more in self-governance, then the State mainly performs the supervisory function; the higher education institution is less in self-governance, then the State mainly performs a control function.

Besides, Vietnam higher education institutions are considered by the most of the respondents to be average, low and very low levels in their self-governance; especially in the financial realm in which including the right to pay for the lecturers by agreement, tuition, material infrastructure and financial expenditure. That is, most of Vietnam higher education institutions do not have much self-governance, it is synonymous with that the State’s control role is still very large, while its supervision’s role is limited. The opinions of the respondents also showed that the function of State

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management was not changed or changed slowly compared with the development trend of the higher education system.

Based on the above-mentioned assessment of the State’s role, the authors recommend:

1. For the State: To build a number of world-class universities in the Vietnamese conditions; To convert a management model from control’s model to monitoring one; To enhance the State management’s effectiveness and efficiency; To reduce the State’s intervention toward the universities.

2. For the higher education institutions: Be active, be creative and to take the initiative; To determine and identify an opportunities and challenges in higher education’s self-governance; To train and foster the staff of lecturers; To reform goals & targets, objectives, contents, methods and training’s programs; To increase a transparency and social accountability.

Keywords: Strategy; the State; higher education’s self-governance; policy system; higher education institutions; assessment of the degree of self-governance; a ranking of higher education institution; controlling function; monitoring function.

1. INTRODUCTION

A higher education’s self-governance is an inevitable trend of the higher education institutions in the world and in Vietnam [1]. So far, in the world there are some forms and degrees of higher education’s self-governance (along with the role and level of the State’s control) as followings [2]:

- Completely State-controlled model: Malaysia, for example.
- Semi - self-governance model: Singapore, for example.
- Independent model: the United Kingdom, for example.

(According to the World Bank’s general overview report over trends of the world’s higher education management, 2008).

However, the above-mentioned definition is only relative because even in the completely State-controlled model, the State can not completely control all the contents and activities of the higher education institutions, and in the independent model, there is still the State’s intervention [3]. In general, the general tendency of the State’s role for higher education institutions is the gradual shift from the State-controlled model to the State’s supervised one [4].

The development history of higher education in the world and in the region shows that: The State’s role is not only connected with the degree of higher education’s governance but also associated with the creating favourable conditions, building environment for the development of the higher education system [5]; [6]. Typically, it is development practice of Harvard University and Peking University, Tsinghua (China). At Harvard University, the State’s role and intervention in the development of this university are very blurry. Scholars argue that the United States administration of education has almost nothing to do with the development of this university apart from carrying out research contracts worth a total of 15% of Harvard’s revenue; 85% of the remaining revenue is from tuition fees (20%); donation fund (34%); scientific research contracts with organizations and enterprises (4%); gifts (7%) and other sources (20%) [7]. One of Harvard's principle typical traits is the self-governance’s mechanism and commitment to academic freedom [8]. In the speech at the graduation ceremony, President of Harvard University - Prof. Dew France said: “The privilege of academic freedom attaches to the obligation to speak the truth, even if it is extremely difficult or unfavourable”. And, that is the immutable principle in the four-century history of the Harvard University existence and development [9].

On the contrary, Peking and Tsinghua Universities are heavily invested in the Chinese government. For the 985-project alone, US$ 234 million has been allocated over three years to the two above-mentioned universities with the resolve to turn them into world-class universities [7]. This investment immediately brought the result: From 2000 to 2005, the number of international publications of the Chinese leading universities (especially the two above-mentioned universities) in the SCI was doubled. The Tsinghua University alone has 2,700 international publications listed in the SCI, close
to the number of top 50 universities in the world; the number of lecturers of the university with a doctoral degree is 50% (2005) and 75% (2010) [7]. From the abundant source of funding, the world's leading universities can pay an immense salary for a lecturer ($ 625.00 a year for a dean's professor) [7]. Thus, the State's role in the development of leading universities and higher education's governance in China shows that the State still plays a very important role. However, many scholars argue that this role can not fully determine the degree of the rank and the result of knowledge creation & of science and technology transfer of the universities [10]. The fact that the Chinese top two above-mentioned still can not keep up with Harvard is the evidence of that situation. The issue here is how the higher education’s governance of each university is promoted?. Endogenous factors will play a decisive role and the State's role is to create favourable conditions and environment for the development of the universities [11].

In Vietnam, the higher education self-governance’s trend is linked to the State’s role through the system of laws and legal normative documents promulgated by the State [12]. Initially, the State (through the Ministry of Education and Training) applied the control model, that is the universities are subject to State strict management in all aspects (organization, apparatus, academics, finance) [13].

However, the State above-mentioned role is shifted step by step. Starting with the Prime Minister’s Decision No. 153/2003 / QD-TTg, in which the article 10 clearly states that “the University has the right to the self-governance and self-responsibility under the law on planning, on development and on organization of all activities of planning, technology, finance, international relations and personnel” [14].

Subsequently, the Law on Education promulgated in 2005 whose article 14 clearly specifies the assignment, decentralization of education management, increasing the self-governance and self-responsibility of education institutions [15]. The Resolution No. 14/2005 / NQ-CP of the Government dated November 2, 2005, on the fundamental and comprehensive renewal of higher education in the period of 2006-2010 partly mentioned the deletion of the ministry-in-charge and establishing the State ownership representative mechanism toward public higher education institutions [16]. Joint Circular No. 07/2009 / TTLT-BGDDT-BNV dated April 15, 2009, provided guidelines on self-governance and self-responsibility toward the performance of tasks, organizational structure and staff for public education and training units. In those guidelines, the self-governance is clearly determined in the following areas: planning and implementation; organizational structure and staff in the unit; recruit, manage and use cadres, civil servants and officials [17].

Thus, Vietnam higher education self-governance has been institutionalized, concretized, with sufficient legal corridor to operate [18]. However, many scholars and independent organizations argue that higher education self-governance has not really worked out because of the insufficient nature and the lack of consistency and synchronization in the State’s policies and guidelines regarding the higher education [4]. The higher education institutions seem to be keen on increasing their self-governance, particularly in the areas of financial management, staff recruit, enrollment, facilities and equipment [19]. Some higher education institutions said that the shift from the control-to-monitoring model was slow; the State role toward higher education self-governance shows its irrationality when too deeply interferences in the internal affairs of higher education institutions. It even hinders the higher education self-governance’s trend and the development of the institution itself [20].

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

In this study, I used the following specific research methods:

- Classification: Vietnam current higher education system consists of 251 universities and institutes [21], dividing into the following groups:

The universities & institutes managed by the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Public Security composed of 16 pieces (6.37%) in which the total of the universities and institutes under the management of the Ministry of Public Security is 7 (accounting for 43.75%); the total of the universities and institutes under the management of the Ministry of national defense is 9 (accounting for 56.25%).
The total of the private universities and institutes is 60 (accounting for 23.90%); universities, 100%-foreign capital's universities and institutes is 5 (accounting for 1.99%).

+ By the self-governance criteria:

The total of the universities and institutes were approved for self-governance by the Prime Minister is 13 (accounting for 5.18%). The total of the universities and institutes are underway for the preparing's process for self-governance is 238 (accounting for 88.45%).

The division of the above-mentioned groups is based on the following criteria and characteristics:

+ Functions and tasks of each university or institute.
+ The level of the State intervention toward the operation of each university or institute.
+ The State regime and policies that are applied to each university or institute.
+ Property ownership representative of each university or institute.
- The quantification, establishing, dividing into different self-governance’s levels of higher education institutions were based on the State intervention’s level for each higher education institution.

The survey, data analysis and interview results show that there are 5 specific levels as follows:
Very high (5 points): The higher education institution is allowed to decide on all their issues (organization, organization, finance, enrollment ...). The State performs the monitoring function only.

High (4 points): The higher education institution is allowed to decide on almost all their issues (organization, apparatus, finance, enrollment ...). The State (whose representative is the Ministry of Education and Training) performs the function of control and supervision in which the supervision is essential.

Fairly high level (3 points): The higher education institution is allowed to decide the most of its issues. The State implements both monitoring model and controlling model but the monitoring is still the main one.

Average level (2 points): The higher education institution can decide only some of their problems; it must apply the directions & orientations before the implementation of their problems. The State implements both monitoring model and controlling model but control model remains dominant one.

Weak level (1 point): The higher education institution is subject to absolute management by their charging bodies & agencies. Controlling model is given priority for the application.

The higher education’s self-governance in Vietnam shows that the levels of the higher education’s self-governance are inversely proportional to the State intervention. That is, higher education institution is more in self-governance, then the State mainly performs the supervisory function; the higher education institution is less in self-governance, then the State mainly performs a control function.

2.1 Method of the Survey

In this survey, we designed and distributed 1,200 questionnaires and get back 982 votes (accounting for 83.33%). The number of respondents was 1097 people in which 982 people were surveyed by questionnaire and 115 people were interviewed (accounting for 10.48%). The surveyed subjects included: educational managers (91 people, accounting for 8.29%); teaching staff (186 people, accounting for 16.95%); service personnel (85 people, accounting for 7.75%); learners (539 people, accounting for 49.13%); recruiters (135 people, accounting for 12.31%); personnel in independent organizations (61 people, accounting for 5.56%).

Survey results by questionnaire are quantified and analyzed quantitatively and processed according to mathematical statistical methods; then an assessment of the research problem is given. The results of the interviews were analyzed, confronted, compared and combined with the results of the questionnaire survey to help evaluate the truthfulness and accuracy of the self-governance’s situation as well as the State role toward the current trend of Vietnam higher education self-governance.

Diagram 3. Distribution of the survey’s participants
2.2 International Experience’s Reference

In this survey, we specifically refer to the experiences of some countries in the process of development of higher education institutions in the self-governance’s trend, namely: the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Australia, India, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, and China. These countries address the issue of higher education self-governance in different ways. Their success is the valuable experience for the State management bodies & agencies in Vietnam education and training [22].

We also refer to and survey the trends, the nature of higher education self-governance in a number of universities around the world, including:

- Harvard University, Saint John University (USA).
- Beijing University; Tsinghua University (China).
- Seoul National University (Korea).
- Chualalongkorn University; Chiangmai University (Thailand).
- National University of Singapore.
- Sunway University, Swinburne University (Malaysia).
- RMIT University; Latrobe University; University of Canberra; Institute of Technology (Australia).

3. RESULTS AND COMMENTS

The results of the survey show that Vietnam higher education institutions are considered by the most of the respondents to be average, low and very low and very low levels in their self-governance; especially in the financial realm in which including the right to pay for the lecturers by agreement, tuition, material infrastructure and financial expenditure. That is, most of Vietnam higher education institutions do not have much self-governance, it is synonymous with that the State’s control role is still very large, while its supervision’s role is limited. Most of the higher education institutions have to get written approval from the State management bodies & agencies (the Ministry-in-charge and the Ministry of education and training) to agree on guidelines and then be allowed to implement. The opinions of the respondents also showed that the function of State management was not changed or changed slowly compared with the development trend of the higher education system, especially in the period in which the higher education institutions face the challenges from the industrial revolution 4.0. They also give to know that the legal system, legal corridors are not synchronous, lack of systematization and imbued with voluntarist factors, not caught up with the movement and development of the higher education system.

The results of the ranking and classification of higher education institutions in the above four groups clearly shown the State role toward four groups and clearly shown the different levels of self-governance of the four groups. For the group of non-public higher education institutions, the self-governance in the issues & problems such as organization, personnel, finance and tuition is very clearly presented. At these non-public higher education institutions, the role of the managerial board is viewed as absolute in deciding movement and development process of the institution; the State intervention is only at a very fuzzy level (not appointed but only recognized the managerial board and the executive board, no funding for recurrent expenditure, no investment for building infrastructure’s facilities, but providing a privileges to land tax and to some other policies only).

For the higher education institutions that have been given self-governance by the Prime Minister, the self-governance level has been greatly improved; they have a rights to decide in the most of the issues such as personnel, tuition fees (with tuition fee ceiling’s limitation), training and enrollment programs, infrastructure investment and tax incentives. However, the State still limits the self-governance of these higher education institutions through the tuition fee ceiling’s limitation, the cutting off salary and recurrent expenditures, the promulgation of rules & regulations and sanctions that are mainly demonstrated the monitoring function.

For the higher education institutions that are on a self-governing road-map, the State control role stillbullies the supervision one. The government is undertaking regular recurrent expenditures, redefining salary fund, reducing personnel staff and by the road-map to the year of 2020 to force all the higher education institutions to to be financially self-governance. These higher education institutions are faced with many difficulties and challenges. Obviously, if there were no success, some of those higher education institutions will have to dissolve or merge.
Diagram 4. Assessment of the degree of self-governance of the higher education institution

Table 1. Ranking of higher education institutions by the self-governance’s level

<table>
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<tr>
<th>TT</th>
<th>Self-governance’s level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Non-public higher education institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Higher education institutions allowed self-governance by the Primer Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Higher education institutions in preparing for self-governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>National defence &amp; security higher education institutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For national defence and security higher education institutions, the State control role is absolute. Even if the three above-mentioned groups were given self-governance, this group is still subject to the State strict control in all respects: organizational structure, personnel, academics, and finance. However, we believe that the stronger management decentralization for the heads of these higher education institutions with individual responsibility and a certain power-control mechanism that is an inevitable trend in the future of this group of universities.

Classification into the four groups of the higher education institutions under five self-governance levels (Very High, High, Medium, Low, Very Low) are relative based on basic classification criteria. We think that after the year of 2020, the above-mentioned four groups of higher education institutions will be transformed into three groups by which the already self-governance group and the group is on the roadmap of self-governance will be integrated into one. However, the tendency of merging or dissolving some low-quality’s higher education institutions is inevitable. At the same time, with the trend of higher education’s self-governance, the State role, as well as its interventions, will also change in nature. This is a shift from a controlling mechanism to a monitoring one. Even in national defence & security higher education institutions, the State monitoring role will be promoted to create an environment and favourable conditions for the development of these institutions. This is an inevitable tendency of the movement and development of the higher education system that imbued with of Vietnam characteristics.

From the real situation of the State role in Vietnam higher education self-governance and the reference of the State role in higher education self-governance of the universities in the world and in the region, we propose some following suggestions & recommendations:

For the State of Vietnam: It is quickly transforming from a controlling model to a supervisory one. This transformation will arouse activeness, initiative and creativity; promote available resources and attract external resources for the development of universities. Simultaneously, with the monitoring mechanism, the State should have practical activities to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the State management and reduce too deep
interference in the internal problems of universities. The State can refer to the State management of the United States and China to develop a number of Vietnam key universities into a world-class university. This is important because the world-class universities will be the driving force behind the development of the whole higher education system in Vietnam.

For the higher education institutions: It needs to aware the higher education self-governance is an objectively inevitable development trend. This trend creates opportunities for development but also, at the same time, contains certain difficulties and challenges (especially for the non-public universities). From that perception, each university has no other way than to be proactive, active, creative to attract external resources, to train & foster the lecturer’s staff in combining with reforming content, training programs and increasing a transparency and social accountability.

5. CONCLUSION

The results of the survey show that Vietnam higher education institutions are considered by the most of the respondents to be average, low and low and very low levels in their self-governance; most of Vietnam higher education institutions do not have much self-governance, it is synonymous to that the State’s control role is still very large, while its supervision’s role is limited; the levels of the higher education’s self-governance are inversely proportional to the State intervention.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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