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The Changing Needs for Higher Education Organizations Structure in Vietnam: Evidence from Japanese, Taiwanese and Thai Universities

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Abstract

Organizational change is the process of changing the structure of the organization and the attitudes of members in the organization. During the last decade, both Vietnamese social and educational organizations have slowly changed in their organizational structure as a barrier to the development in the era of globalization and internationalization in Vietnam. This paper is an attempt to discuss the factors which affect Vietnamese higher educational organization. Discussions on the viewpoint of higher educational organization structure of Japan, Taiwan, and Thailand. Furthermore, this paper will contribute to improve educational management, and serve as a useful reference for future higher education's school mergers.

Keywords: *higher education organizations, organizational structure, organizational change*

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Introduction

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, socio-economic welfare of a country is becoming more dependent on the methodology that knowledge is taught in that country. Universities and colleges could be expected to be key socioeconomic organizations in any country. According to Thomas and Ben (2008), the economic development of East and Southeast Asia reveals the close relationship between development and higher education. Although the most prosperous countries in the region-South Korea, Taiwan, and China have followed unique development paths, their single-minded pursuit of excellence in higher education and science is a common theme in their success.

Vietnamese higher education is facing many problems about organizational management. The scale of universities in Vietnam is small and simple, but the organizational structure is complex and cumbersome. State own of higher institutions can not openly change their internal organizational structure without government authorization, leading to ineffective administration and teaching strategies. On the other hand, State governance on universities, colleges were slow to change, does not facilitate or promote the improvement of training quality of the whole system, and does not encourage the creativity of teachers, education administrators and students. Furthermore, the limitation lasted for a very long time, from 1975 to 2004, the Government let loose quality management in higher education (MOET, 2009a). Thus, Vietnamese educational organizations need to change and develop openly to catch up to the rest of the world.

Change is the process of implementing an innovation in the organizations. Bolman & Deal (2003) showed that organization is always under the influence of social, politic, economic and technology. On the other hand, an organization adjusts its strategy, structure, and *idea* of value in order to reach new organization goal. Some researchers realized that change in organizations is defined by Hanson (2003) as the process of altering the behavior, structures, procedures, purposes, and outputs of some unit within an organization.

There are inside and outside factors to the inevitable adjustments of any school organization. Wu, Tseng & Li (2009) showed that the outside factors are: political change, economic change, and the educational market-discrepancy between demand and supply of the education market. The inside factors include the change of the member structure, administration structure, teaching methods, teaching materials, school development prospects, adjustment to the social needs, and contemporary trends. According to Hellriegel, Sclocum & Woodman (1986) the resistance factors to organizational change can attribute to personal and organizational factors. There are many personal resistance factors include selective cognition and intention, person habit, dependency, unknown fear, and the organizational factors include power threat and effect, organizational structure, influences of resources distribution, influences of economic resources and influences of organizational coordination.

According to Jones (2007), the aim of organizational change is to find new or improved ways of using resources and capabilities to increase an organization's ability to create value and, hence, its performance. Thus, organizational structure and culture are the principal means or fulcrum managers use to change the organization so it can achieve its future desired state. The paper begins by looking at current discussions how changing needs to Vietnamese higher educational organization structure. The Vietnamese higher educational organization structure has been compared with those in Japan, Taiwan, and Thai.

Factors That Affect Higher Educational Organization

Purkey and Smith (1983) showed that factors affecting school organizational effectiveness included two variances as follow: (1) structure variance such as the management of the school environment, pedagogical leadership, recognition and stability felt by the faculty and the staff, curriculum design and organization, on-the-job training for faculty and staffs, parents' participation and support, recognition of academic performance, the duration of learning, and support from the school district, (2) process variance including total participation by faculty and staffs, participation by local community with sense of belonging, definite goal and high performance expectation and well-ordered school ambience.

The challenges to Vietnamese Higher Education Management

Vietnam joined the World Trade Organization (WTO), which has provided both opportunities and challenges for Vietnamese higher education. Globalization refers to the trend toward countries joining together economically, through education, society and politics, and viewing themselves not only through their national identity but also as part of the world as a whole. According to Atkinson (2001)

for universities, the biggest challenge to globalization is how to advance their institutional structures and institutional policies.

Vu, Dang & Tran (2007) realized that the challenges of Vietnam education includes: (1) the guarantee of Vietnamese communist party guidelines will successfully lead educational system toward socialist-oriented market economy, (2) management experiences in creating conditions for educational market to develop in the Vietnamese Government proper is weak and lack. MOET (2009a) is facing a huge challenge in higher education: the management methods have become underdeveloped and slow to changes. In addition, Ministry of Education and Training has not ensured the improvement in the quality of teachers in higher education.

The Pressure of Human Resources

Vietnamese higher education is weak and seriously short of staff. According to MOET (2009b) there are over 1.700.000 students, and only a little over 61.000 high level educators, with a student to educator ration of 1 per 28. Among the total number of educators 3.74% are professors and associate professors, 10.16% are doctors, 37.31% are masters, and 48.79% are other levels. According to statistics, more than 60% of educational doctors and about 70% to 90% of professors and associate professors are over the age of 50. About 80% of lecturers have academic titles and degrees whose are coming to retirement age. Furthermore, some private schools have only 15% full-time lecturers. The number of universities is always on the rise, but the number of lecturer stay static.

The Limits of Organizational Sources

Vietnamese higher educational organization has three big problems:

1. Structure inertia: Vietnamese higher educational organization structure is cumbersome and complex. Higher educational organizations have narrowly defined roles, responsibility, and authority in their organization. Thus, they have only interested in their own work and wait for the information to come from top-down.
2. Slack management: Currently, the management focuses mainly on the management maintenance itself instead of process implementation, which can improve educational policy outcome.
3. Limited resources: the organizational change requires many resources such as, human capital, finance, time, and human resources. Vietnamese higher education will have many difficulties in the change process, because it is facing staff shortage, funding shortage, and quality management.

In order to modernize the Vietnamese higher education must simplify organization structure, switch management focus, and additional research.

Organizational Structure of Higher Education in Some Countries

According to Ranking Web of World Universities in 2009, Vietnam did not have any universities the 100 universities in Asia. Vice versa, both Japan and Taiwan have 25 universities while Thailand has 7 universities in the Asia top 100 universities. Japan and Taiwan also have universities to in the top 100 universities in the world (including Japan: 3 universities and Taiwan: 1 university). Doan (2004) observed that Taiwan is one of most develop countries Asian in the higher education. Thus, this paper selected and compared the models of Japanese, Taiwanese, and Thai higher educational organization structure against Vietnamese higher educational organization structure.

Vietnamese Higher Educational Organization Structure

According to MOET (2009b) Vietnam has 376 higher educational institutions. Most of them located in urban centers of the country like Ha Noi (83/376), Ho Chi Minh City (67/376) as well as Da Nang (19/376). The communist party of Vietnam plays an important role in making decisions both in university strategies and specific issues. The presidents, who are representative of the communist party, have more power in decision marking than before. Private institutions are more complex where Presidents make their decisions under the Board of Director's control, as well as the communist party.

The organization of University in Vietnam was shown in Figure 1.

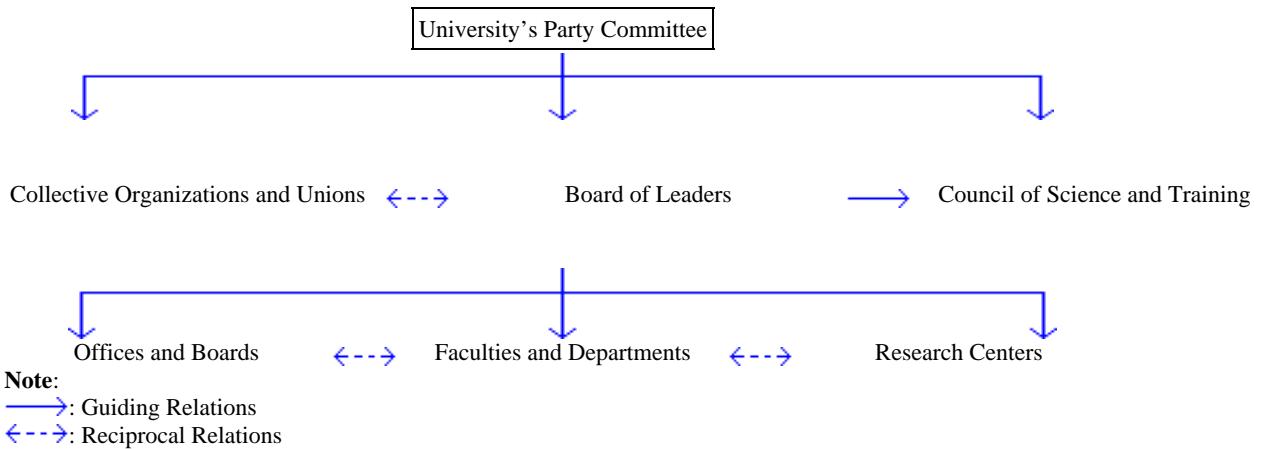


Figure 1. The organization of University in Vietnam

Generally, Vietnamese higher educational organization structure is complex and cumbersome although the scale of universities is not large. Vietnamese higher educational organization structure consists of the communist party, Board of Director (private universities), Board of rector (including the president and vice-presidents), Deans and Vice-deans of faculties (chairs and deputy chairs of departments – a part of faculties), chairs and deputy chairs of departments (a part of university), Directors of institutes, officers, and centers.

Japanese Higher Educational Organization Structure

According to Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), Japanese universities are divided into the following three categories by founder: national universities originally established by the Japanese Government, public universities established by local public entities or public university corporations, and private universities established by organizational corporations which is the primary authority over higher education. The organization of university in Japan showed in Figure 2.

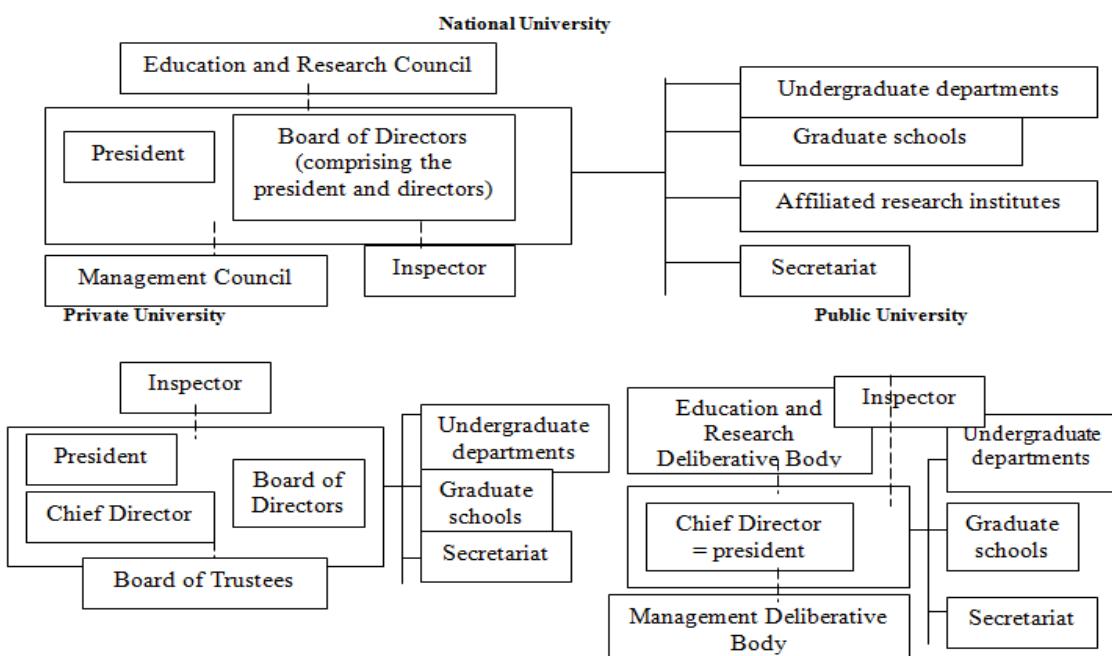


Figure 2. The organization of university in Japan

For example, the organizational structure of the University of Tokyo (2008) consists of Education and Research Council, Administration Council, the President, Executive Vice-presidents, Managing Directors, Comptroller, Associate Managing Director; Directors of Graduate schools, Directors of University-wide centers, Deans of faculties, and Heads of offices, centers.

Taiwanese Higher educational organization structure

According to Ministry of Education in Taiwan (2007a), a university may appoint one president responsible for the overall management of the university and development of academic affairs. Vice-presidents will be appointed by the president to assist with the promotion of academic affairs. The Ministry of Education regulates all operating and procedural regulations in regard to all state run universities. Ministry of Education (2007b) showed that private schools shall establish a board of directors with between 7 and 21 directors, whose will be as follows: the hiring and dismissal of directors, the election and removal of the chairman of the board; the hiring and dismissal of the school's principal (president).

Article 11 of University Act Law in 2007 showed that universities may establish colleges or independent graduate schools within the university, while colleges within universities may establish departments or graduate schools. Each college under a university will appoint a dean responsible for the overall management of the college. Each department will appoint a chair. Each graduate school will appoint director responsible for school.

Generally, Taiwanese higher educational organization structure includes the Board of Directors (Private universities), the President, Vice-presidents, Secretariats, Deans of colleges/schools, Directors of institutes, research centers, departments, Heads of offices and centers.

Thai Higher Educational Organization Structure

According to Ministry of Education in Thailand, higher education institutions have been categorized into four groups including Research/Graduate University, Specialized/Comprehensive University, Liberal Arts University, and Community College. The four groups will have different the missions and goals. Thai public universities administrated under a new administrative system is called the "autonomous university". The policy of the autonomous university is to strengthen university governance by delegating authority to university councils and executives, resulting in a more accountable university management. The autonomous university has heightened flexibility and administrative independence in its internal affairs, giving authority and responsibility to each university council.

Thai higher educational organization structure includes the President, Vice-presidents, Assistants to the presidents, Deans of colleges and schools, Directors of Graduate schools and institutes, Deans of faculties, Heads of centers or officers. All departments of Thai Universities have a vice-presidents and the least from one to four presidential assistants.

Summary

From the higher educational organization structure above, we have distilled some things within Table 1. From the Table 1, we can remark something:

1. Vietnamese higher education organization structure is cumbersome and complex. In each school department adds to the organization's complexity large number of administrators. Each faculty, office and center has one to two deputy heads. For instance, Faculty of Mathematics – Statistics (University of Economics - Ho Chi Minh City) has eleven managers including a dean, two vice-deans, five chairs (faculty has five departments), and three vice-chairs of each department.
2. All departments of the universities in Taiwan, Japan and Thailand do not have deputy heads. The University of Tokyo is very large with ten faculties/departments, fifteen graduate schools and eleven institutes and nineteen university-wide centers; but there are only five vice presidents. The smaller University of Economic - Ho Chi Minh City has ten faculties with five vice presidents as well.
3. The Chulalongkorn University in Thailand is very interesting. It has thirteen vice presidents, but they play dual roles in their school. They are both vice president and concurrent directors of departments in school.
4. The universities in Japan, Taiwan and Thailand are large multidisciplinary schools. An example is the University of Chulalongkorn, which has eighteen faculties, three schools and nine institutes

- including economics, medicines, law, architecture, engineering, and education. Meanwhile, University of Economics of Ho Chi Minh City has only ten faculties within economic sciences field.
5. Japanese, Taiwanese, and Thai colleges are a part of universities. For instance, College of Humanities, College of Management, College of Science and Technology, College of Education are members of the National Chi Nan University, Taiwan.

Table 1. The distilled of the higher educational organization

Administrators	Vietnam	Taiwan	Japan	Thailand
University	President	1	1	1
	Vice president	5	3	5 11**
Colleges/Schools (a part of University)	Dean		1	1
	Vice Dean			
Faculties	Chair	1	1	1
	Vice chair	1-2		
Departments (a part of Faculty)	Head	1		
	Deputy head	0 - 2		
Institutes	Director	1	1	1
	Deputy Director	1		
Offices & Centers	Head	1	1	1
	Deputy head	1		
Total persons:	13 - 15*	8*	10*	16*

Note: * each university is representative of each country (including University of Economic – HCMC in Vietnam, University of Tokyo in Japan, National Taiwan University in Taiwan , and University of Chulalongkorn in Thai) , ** concurrent.

Conclusion

Vietnamese education is becoming antiquated falling behind in both quality and quantity to the rest of the world. The Government is trying to expand labor pool, while attempting to enhance and reform the quality educational. The following are ideas to improve educational management:

1. Ministry of Education and Training should be the sole governing body in regard to higher educational organization structure.
2. To reduce the number and increase the quality of management staffs in universities. Ministry of Education and Training should give schools more self-control and greater freedom.
3. Each department in school need to reduce personal management in the deputy positions. Leaders of departments will increase mission and responsible in their organization. Moreover, every individual need to increase understanding, insight and self-awareness in the organization.
4. To strengthen and reorganize or restructure the higher educational organization to become the multidisciplinary university. For instance, it can combine the University of Law, Economic, Arts, Information Technology, Science, and Humanities to become the colleges of university.

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