

## **Renovating Higher Education in Vietnam: A Case Ho Chi Minh City**

**By:**

**Nguyen Minh Tri**  
HUTECH University, Vietnam  
Email: [nm.tri@hutech.edu.vn](mailto:nm.tri@hutech.edu.vn)

**Le Thanh Hoa**  
Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam  
Corresponding Author Email: [lethanhhoa@iuh.edu.vn](mailto:lethanhhoa@iuh.edu.vn)

### **Abstract**

Universities act as a pillar in the innovation system of countries, through missions such as providing human resources, promoting scientific and technical progress, transferring knowledge, and new technologies and providing entrepreneurship and innovation skills... Many researchers believe that higher education has contributed to the nation's contribution to development of high-quality human resources to meet the requirements of the association international import. However, higher education in Vietnam currently still has limitations such as outdated content and teaching methods, high-quality human resources that do not meet the requirements of international integration, and technology from schools to universities production, business, and social organizations through technology transfer are still low. The approach of the article is a qualitative method based on data from the General Statistics Office of Vietnam and the Ministry of Education and Training to analyze the reality of higher education development in Vietnam, typically in Ho Chi Minh City. Ho Chi Minh. The article also uses a combination of specific research methods such as comparative, analytical, synthesis, induction and inference methods, data synthesis, etc. to serve the research and presentation of the article. Research results can be used to innovate higher education in Ho Chi Minh City soon.

**Keywords:** Educational innovation, university, international integration, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

### **Introduction**

International integration is an inevitable movement trend of history forcing countries that want to develop to immerse themselves in the common flow of the times in all fields. Therefore, it is required that the national education system also quickly integrate and catch up with the educational trends of the region and the world to train human resources with the full qualities, qualifications, and skills of a citizen globally to enter the international labor market. HCMC is a special city, a big economic center, a driving force, a driving force, with great attraction and influence on the region. The city occupies only 0.6% of the country's area, and has a population of 8,643,044 people, accounting for about 9.2% of the population (Ho Chi Minh City Statistics Office, 2020, p. 47) but has made the largest contribution to the overall economic development of the country. The city's economy has grown quite and stably over the years, GRDP has increased by an average of 8.3% per year, and the city's GRDP scale in 2020 is estimated to account for 22.2% of the country's economic GDP and 27% of total revenue national budget (Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee, 2020, p.73).

Ho Chi Minh City is also the science-technology, education, and training center of the country with the training scale increasing year by year. In the district, allocate land funds and increase investment in school construction according to the planning on education and training development, education expenditure accounts for 27.7% of the recurrent budget, and 20% of the infrastructure construction investment budget. City version. The development of the education system in general and higher education, in particular, has contributed to socio-economic development. However, the development of higher education in HCMC is still limited, and the quality of education is not appreciated in the rankings of some prestigious educational institutions in the world. Therefore, we need to objectively assess, that universities are forced to re-evaluate their training quality, and at the same time change according to the trend of integration, according to the labor quality needs of society. Research Questions

The article focuses on clarifying the research questions, which is also the orientation in which the report conducts research:

- Why innovate higher education in HCMC?
- What are the achievements and limitations of higher education innovation in HCMC?
- What is the solution to promote higher education innovation in HCMC?

## Literature Review

Related to the research topic, there are typical works such as the book "Vietnam's education in the early decades of the twenty-first century: Development strategy" which is presented in six parts with the following sections: Current educational situation in our country; context and opportunities, challenges for education in our country in the next few decades; the guiding viewpoints of educational development; action programs in education have concretized goals, guidelines, policies, and implementation solutions, demonstrated the spirit of educational innovation in Vietnam, and implemented the Party's resolutions on industrialization, modernizing the country for the period 2001 - 2010 and orientation to 2020 (Lam, 2003). "Current educational problems: Perspectives and solutions, Publishing House. Knowledge, Hanoi, 2008, analyzed the view that education and training are the leading national policy; analyze some theoretical and practical issues of education and training in our country and some countries in the world. From there, identifying some basic views on education and training in our country need to be properly aware and propose solutions and recommendations to innovate education and training to develop high-quality human resources to meet the needs of the future. meet the requirements of the new era (Many authors, 2008).

"Development of education and training of human resources and talents: Some experiences of the world" has analyzed quite deeply the basic issues of human resources, talents, and development of education and training of human resources. human resources and talents of some countries in the world, drawing useful experiences is fundamentally and comprehensively renovating education in Vietnam (Tan, 2012).

The study "Impact of industrial revolution 4.0 on education and training in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam" analyzed the impacts (positive and negative) of the industrial revolution 4.0 on education and training in HCMC (Tri et al., 2020); "Impact of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 on Higher Education in Vietnam: Challenges and Opportunities" analyzed the opportunities and challenges posed to Vietnamese higher education in the context of the industrial revolution 4.0, thereby offering some recommendations. solutions to develop higher education in the coming time (Tri et al., 2021); The article "Education and training development: The case of Ho Chi

Minh City, Vietnam" has assessed the results, limitations, and solutions for education and training development in HCMC (Tri et al., 2022).

In summary, on educational innovation in HCMC, there have been many works mentioned. But that research is still not in-depth and systematic under the philosophical background. However, the above works are a valuable resource for us to inherit and develop systems and more deeply the theoretical and practical issues in the article.

## **Material And Method**

The article is made based on the worldview and methodology of Marxism, the views of scientists and organizations in the world, and Vietnam on the innovation of higher education. Historical and logical methods are used to summarize the basic issues, development trends of higher education in Vietnam, and issues that need to be resolved throughout.

The systematic approach is used to classify higher education in HCMC, and to develop guidelines and policies in all fields to propose systematic and inclusive solutions. At the same time, the article also uses a synthesis of specific research methods such as comparison, analysis, synthesis, induction and inference, data synthesis, etc. to serve the research and presentation article presentation.

## **Result And Discussions**

### ***The Urgency to Innovate Higher Education In HCMC***

*Overview of the higher education system in Vietnam.* Higher education in Vietnam has a history of more than a thousand years, with different stages: feudalism, colonialism, and neo-colonialism (in South Vietnam before 1975). The first Western-style university in Vietnam (Indochina University) was established in Hanoi in 1906. After the August Revolution in 1945, higher education in Vietnam has made great strides and achieved great achievements. According to statistics from the Ministry of Education and Training, in 2014 there were 472 universities and colleges in Vietnam. If only higher education institutions are counted, by the end of the 2016-2017 school year, the Vietnamese higher education system has 235 schools and academies (including 170 public schools, 60 private and people-founded schools, and 5 universities with 100% foreign capital), 37 scientific research institutes are assigned the task of training doctoral level. The number of students is 1.76 million people. The rate of high school students entering universities and colleges is 41%. The Vietnamese higher education system consists of the following four types of universities:

**National University:** includes Hanoi National University and Ho Chi Minh City National University. These are two special, multi-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary, high-quality higher education institutions directly under the government. Each national university consists of member universities, research institutes, centers, affiliated faculties, and many other institutions. The director of the national university is appointed by the Prime Minister.

**Regional universities:** similar to national universities, but under the Ministry of Education and Training. The regional university director is appointed by the Minister of Education and Training. Currently, there are 3 regional universities, including Thai Nguyen University, University of Danang, Hue University

Universities under the Ministry of Education and Training: for example, Hanoi University of Science and Technology, Hanoi National University of Education, and Can Tho University...

Universities are affiliated with several ministries/sectors: for example, Hanoi University of Architecture is under the Ministry of Construction.

The Ministry of Education and Training is the agency that manages the education and training of the country on behalf of the State, so in principle, all four types of universities mentioned above are subject to the state management of education from the Ministry of Education and Training. Education and Training. As such, universities under ministries/sectors will be directly under the direction of two superior agencies, including the Ministry of Education and Training and the management ministry/sector (for example, the University of Architecture by the Ministry of Construction). Directly managing and rector of the school is appointed by the Minister of Construction. In its operation, in addition to reporting to the Ministry of Construction, the Hanoi University of Architecture also needs to report to the Ministry of Education and Training from the perspective of the Ministry of Construction. Education Management.

The two national universities receive special investment and priority from the government, have the highest autonomy, and have special powers compared to other higher education institutions.

*The urgency to innovate higher education in HCMC.* HCMC is the educational center of Vietnam, an active and proactive locality in international integration because it sees the objectivity of this process in the development of mankind. Therefore, after coming out of the socio-economic crisis, HCMC has gradually transitioned from international economic integration to extensive and comprehensive international integration in all fields. To have "global citizens" who can compete in the world human resource market, it is imperative to renovate higher education in the direction of preserving the characteristics of domestic higher education, while maintaining an approach to the common standards of world higher education. Thus, the internal development needs of HCMC require a strong "transformation" in higher education.

Besides, the need to change higher education also comes from the strong development of the Industrial Revolution 4.0. Under the impact of this revolution, professional knowledge becomes obsolete very quickly, and new knowledge and scientific information will be generated exponentially and can be stored in very compact means. In the "digitized" environment, higher education will be drastically changed from the philosophy and goals of education to the role of the teacher, from the teaching method to the "central" position of the learner. Therefore, innovation in education in general and innovation in higher education, in particular, is a global trend and Vietnam cannot be out of that trend. Currently, the competition between countries is essentially the competition for human resources and science - technology, so, after all, this is the competition for the quality of human resources that determines growth opportunities.

#### ***Achievements And Limitations for Educational Innovation In HCMC***

- Regarding the management and administration of the higher education system, HCMC has gradually increased the autonomy of universities. The quality of higher education has been gradually raised and approached to international standards. The high quality of education in

HCMC has contributed to bringing Vietnam's education system to the 68th out of 196 countries in the world in 2019 (up 12 places compared to 2018). As of December 31, 2020, there were 149 higher education institutions and 9 pedagogical colleges that met the accreditation standards according to the set of criteria for accrediting the quality of higher education in Vietnam (accounting for about 55% of the total number of teachers) universities in the country), in which 7 universities have been recognized by international organizations and accreditations. In 2020, for the first time, Vietnam has 3 universities ranked in the top 1,000 best universities in the world, including Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City, the center of human resource training in the country.

- The work of inspection and quality assurance is more and more in order. Recently, many universities in Ho Chi Minh City have focused on accrediting education quality to evaluate and improve administration, management, and training organizations. This is a way to improve the quality of serving the needs of learners, raise the school's position and integrate internationally. According to the Department of Quality Management (Ministry of Education and Training), many universities in HCMC have now achieved school- and program-level accreditation standards according to international standards, such as AUN-QA accredited by the Network of Southeast Asian Universities), European International Accreditation Standards, American Accreditation Standards, High-Level Council on Accreditation Standards. Research and Education Accreditation of the French Republic.... Which, the Open University of Ho Chi Minh City has completed the accreditation of the master's degree programs according to the FIBAA standards, including Theory and methods of teaching English; Business administration, economics, finance - banking...

- The increase in the rankings of the universities goes hand in hand with the enhancement of the quality of the teaching staff according to international standards. Previously, the recognition of professor, associate professor, and doctoral degrees was not required to have internationally published articles, from 2018 the new regulations require applicants to have international publications in the list of prestigious journals such as ISI or Scopus... In 2019, HCMC's total number of scientific articles increased rapidly. If we consider the organizations with many international publications in Vietnam, the top 10 organizations with the best scientific publication productivity in the country in 2019 include 6 public universities. 2 private universities and 2 research institutes. Among these 10 organizations, HCMC is honored to present 4 typical representatives: Ton Duc Thang University, HUTECH University, Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City, and the Institute of Computational Science and Technology.

According to the statistics of the Science and Technology Information system

- Ton Duc Thang University (TDTU) not only took the lead in the country in terms of international publications, but the number of publications was double that of the 2nd unit (Duy Tan University) with 2,710 published in 2019 accounting for nearly 22 % of national publications. Thanks to this publication. TDTU has been included in many university rankings. In November 2019, the higher education ranking organization QS (UK) ranked TDTU at position 207 in the top 500 universities in Asia (QS Asia University Rankings). In December 2019, URAP (University Ranking by Academic Performance) announced the rankings of the world's top universities for 2019-2020. TDTU is ranked 1st in Vietnam and 960th in the ranking of 2,500 best universities in the world.

- HUTECH University has the sixth largest number of international publications in the country in 2019 with 554 publications. Focus on building and developing a team of key researchers, a team of young researchers with research ability; established research institutes such as the Hutech Institute of High Technology. CIRTECH Institute of Technology... are practical policies to promote research activities and international publication as well as to train high-quality human resources of the university. Hutech also organizes many international scientific conferences to improve the quality of scientific research and promote the ability to integrate and connect with international experts and researchers.

- National University of Ho Chi Minh City. Ho Chi Minh City ranks 7th in the country in terms of several international publications with 553 publications in 2019. National University of Ho Chi Minh City builds its target toward a research university model of multidisciplinary training, scientific research, and a technology transfer center multidisciplinary. Ho Chi Minh City National University is home to a large number of high-quality intellectuals with more than 6,000 lecturers, cadres officials, and employees, including more than 1,000 doctors, professors, and associate professors.

- The Institute of Computational Science and Technology has 499 international publications in 2019, ranking 9th in the country in terms of several international publications. The Institute of Computational Science and Technology (hereinafter referred to as the Institute) is a public non-business unit under the Department of Science and Technology of Ho Chi Minh City with more than 10 years of operation. The Institute has established itself as a research organization in computational science and technology. To improve research capacity, and promote scientific research activities and international publication. The Institute has enhanced the attraction of highly knowledgeable human resources (The Science and Technology Information system, 2020).

International scientific publications contribute to bringing domestic research results to the international scientific community to enhance the position of the organization's country and scientists.

Ho Chi Minh City has attracted prestigious international schools and educational institutions to establish branches in the city, becoming one of the localities that have implemented exciting educational socialization activities most active in the country. It is also here that attracts the international labor force to work, live and study. Up to now, the city has more than 20 schools and universities with foreign elements that play an important role in creating a good learning environment for children of foreigners and Vietnamese residing abroad to come to Vietnam to work or business, contribute to promoting foreign investment in the development of the city by providing international education for children of foreigners working in Vietnam.

In universities, the application of information technology and digital transformation is gradually deployed to serve teaching and learning. In the 2020-2021 school year, in the context of complicated and unpredictable developments of the COVID-19 epidemic, all universities have conducted online teaching, so that teaching and learning are still guaranteed quality.

However, besides the achievements, Vietnamese higher education still has limitations.

- The quality and effectiveness of education and training are still low compared to the country's socio-economic development requirements, and lack of cohesion in the labor market.

Currently, many new universities only provide what they have, not what society needs. That is one of the reasons why in 2020, Vietnam in general, and HCMC in particular, have 225,000 bachelor's, engineers, and master's graduates who have not yet found a job or are accepted to work in the wrong profession, causing a huge waste. According to the survey results at 60 enterprises in the field of industrial services in Ho Chi Minh City on "Assessment of the satisfaction level of enterprises about the quality of students trained in the first year after graduation (the set of criteria for evaluation are theoretical knowledge, practical skills, foreign language proficiency, working style, and professional skills), only 5% of the total number of students participating in the survey were evaluated at a good level, 15% at a good level, 30% at a moderate level and 40% at bad level (Binh, 2014). This result not only reflects the weakness in higher education but also indirectly indicates a danger: in the condition that enterprises have been using automatic technology in human resource management, if Vietnamese workers do not actively improve their professional qualifications, practice industrial style, discipline and professionalism, they will lag behind other countries in the region.

- The ability to research and publish research results is still limited. Most of the advanced education systems of countries in the region and the world have trained a large team of scientists who can research and publish domestic and international research results economic. Along with the trend of integration, the quantity and quality of international scientific publications have become an important measure, the objective index not only reflects the development of science and technology as well as scientific performance but also reflects the actual level and quality of education in each country. In Vietnam in recent years, although there has been the interest of many educational institutions in creating a mechanism to encourage scientists to focus on research and publish domestic and international research results, this operation still has many weaknesses. If compared with research results and published research results of many countries in the region and around the world, our capabilities are still limited, and even tend to lag further and further behind.

- In terms of teaching methods and forms, many universities in HCMC have not yet approached the "student-centered" approach, the teacher still plays the leading role, the learner is still very passive, and the interaction between teachers and students is not many. The "overload" of knowledge and the constant change of curricula are also consequences of the teaching style that favors the provision of specific knowledge, while this knowledge is constantly being added. Although in recent years, according to the policy of the Ministry of Education and Training, most universities have started to teach according to the credit program like in other countries around the world, however, in essence, it is still not enough innovated compared to previous teaching methods, not much different from teaching methods at all levels of general education. Specifically, the initiative of students has not been promoted; methods of education, testing, and assessment are outdated and lacking in substance; The education on morality, lifestyle, and working skills has not been given due attention... This is unreasonable because the goals of general education and higher education are different. General education is about equipping students with basic knowledge and training basic qualities. Higher education is about practicing practical skills and creative thinking, teaching how to learn and how to research. Therefore, it is necessary to quickly overcome the situation of "the teacher reads, the students copy" at the current university level.

- Higher education in HCMC is relatively "closed", not yet creating a connection between domestic and international higher education standards. Even in the country, despite being placed under the general management of the Ministry of Education and Training the ability to transfer knowledge between higher education institutions is still limited. Universities

and majors rarely recognize each other's training results, so learners face many difficulties when transferring schools or majors. The transfer of knowledge between domestic and foreign higher education institutions is even more difficult due to differences in training objectives, content, and methods (except for international joint programs as agreed upon by the Ministry of Education and Training). Currently, most countries in the world have not recognized university degrees and certificates trained by Vietnam; Therefore, it is very difficult for Vietnamese people to want to go abroad to continue studying or settling or working.

Despite recent changes, the number of international publications of universities in HCMC is still inferior to many countries in the region. Along with the trend of international integration, the quantity and quality of works published in international scientific publications have become an important measure of the quality of higher education in countries.

### ***Solutions To Promote Innovation in Higher Education In HCMC***

To innovate and improve the quality of higher education in HCMC, it is necessary to focus on implementing the following solutions:

*First of all*, strongly renovate program content and teaching methods towards international integration. Regarding the content of the program and curricula, it should be organized and implemented openly (allowing for regular updates on domestic and foreign knowledge, using domestic or foreign curricula and learning materials reasonably), and the teaching content must be closely related to and suitable to the practical requirements of the profession that learners are pursuing. In terms of methods, it is permissible to use a variety of teaching methods according to the principle of "taking the learner as the center", minimizing class time so that learners have time to study and research on their own. Training institutions need to regularly conduct rigorous and objective testing and evaluation to ensure the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

*Second*, strengthen the autonomy of public universities. University autonomy is a necessary condition for implementing advanced university governance methods to improve and improve training quality. Although the State and the Ministry of Education and Training have paid great attention to the issue of autonomy and created a legal corridor for the autonomy of higher education institutions, they have not brought it into play. According to the provisions of the Law on Education of Vietnam, universities have autonomy in five areas: building programs, curriculum, and teaching plans; organizing enrollment, training, and graduation recognition; organizing committees; mobilizing, managing, using resources, cooperating at home and abroad. However, the degree of autonomy has not been specified. To increase the autonomy and self-responsibility of universities, it is necessary to have clear, feasible, accurate, and correct guiding circulars. In addition, it is necessary to review legal documents related to the management of activities of universities, contents of management of training, finance, human resources... in universities; develop criteria and level of relationship between autonomy and self-responsibility of universities.

Autonomy and self-responsibility are two sides of the same coin. Over-increasing autonomy without demanding self-responsibility runs the risk of being arbitrary, reducing quality, and pursuing immediate benefits. On the contrary, increasing responsibility but limiting autonomy will bind university institutions, not create motivations and mechanisms for natural operation, and limit flexibility, flexibility, and responsiveness to diverse requirements of society. Maintaining proper state intervention through legal, regulatory, and financial tools, and then gradually giving up direct intervention in micromanagement, and increasing



autonomy for university institutions are necessary needs. On the other hand, to be able to properly use market forces to motivate higher education, it is necessary to involve social forces inside and outside the university in adjusting and improving the quality of education responsibility of universities.

*Third*, improve the quality of lecturers and staff engaged in higher education management. The quality of the higher education system is always closely linked to the quality of the teaching staff. To build and develop this team, it is necessary to have appropriate training and retraining plans and plans and to have policies to attract good students to stay at the university to do teaching work. Create conditions for overseas Vietnamese scientists and international experts to participate in teaching and research at domestic universities. Besides, it is necessary to have people in charge of education management with enough heart, enough reach, and enough talent to employ the right people and well solve problems arising in higher education in the spirit of democracy. Improve the regime and policy on remuneration for lecturers and educational administrators, because up to now, the teaching profession is still a low-income profession in society. Further, strengthen the work of information and communication so that the society can understand and share the difficulties and hardships of the teaching staff and preserve the tradition of "respecting the teacher and respecting the religion" of Vietnamese culture.

*Fourth*, continue to promote the socialization of higher education and strengthen international cooperation and integration in higher education. Review, amend, supplement and gradually improve the system of policies, laws, and regulations to encourage domestic and foreign investors to actively invest in higher education in HCMC; encourage and create conditions for leading international universities to open training institutions in HCMC, especially non-profit institutions. Currently, several foreign universities have opened branches or are affiliated with Vietnam, such as RMIT University (Australia), Vietnam - Japan University, and Swinburne University of Technology (Australia) associated with FPT Vietnam Corporation. In addition, creating opportunities for students to participate in exchange programs or study abroad, open international seminars and seminars on university expertise and teaching methods to improve high academic quality, and advance teaching skills for the teaching staff. Having mechanisms and policies to encourage and encourage scientists to actively publish research results in prestigious international scientific publications, considering it as a criterion for assessing the level of research completion science of universities and faculty.

*Fifth*, strengthen research activities and international publication of research results, towards internationalization of scientific assessment standards and professional activities at higher education institutions. In the immediate future, the State and higher education institutions need to have mechanisms and policies to encourage and encourage scientists to research and actively publish research results internationally. In the long term, it is necessary to set a roadmap toward the internationalization of standards for assessing scientific and professional activities in all higher education institutions. Vietnamese higher education is more deeply integrated into the international environment. Continue to accelerate the process of "digital transformation" in higher education. Implement effective construction of industry databases, enhance skills and improve the quality of online teaching and online public services. Continue to effectively use the system of exchanging electronic documents and digital signatures between the Ministry of Education and Training and relevant educational institutions and individuals... to reduce troublesome procedures for subjects participating in higher education activities.

## CONCLUSION

In today's era, when humanity is entering the knowledge economy and science becomes a direct productive force, especially in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, higher education plays an increasingly important role and positions important for the development of each country, each nation. However, in the context of HCMC's current lagging behind compared to the general level of the region and the world, if you want to bring HCMC's education to an advanced level in the region and meet the requirements of international integration, then we must quickly fundamentally and comprehensively innovate university training, must be determined to choose methodical ways of doing things, following a certain route; develop a higher education system that fosters innovation and creativity, emphasizing the importance of lifelong learning and the long-term development of learners. Practical experience shows that investment in education in general and in higher education, in particular, contributes to the development of human resources, bringing about the highest and most stable economic growth. On the other hand, the effectiveness of investment in human development has an equal spread, bringing more equality in development opportunities as well as enjoying the benefits of development. Therefore, investment in higher education and human development is very necessary today.

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