

Governance Reform in Higher Education of Vietnam

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Bio

Dr. Ho Thanh My Phuong has been working as an instructor and educational administrator at Higher Education for 24 years. In addition, she has been an active facilitator in many training workshops regarding English teaching methodology, curriculum and course development, educational assessment, educational leadership and research methods both domestically and internationally. Dr. Phuong has been the principle supervisor of many Master theses at the University of Social Science and Humanity in Ho Chi Minh City and Can Tho University and Doctorate dissertation at the National University.

Dr. Ho Thanh My Phuong earned her Bachelor Degree of Arts in English Teaching from the University of Education in Ho Chi Minh City. She earned a Master Degree of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) from the University Of Canberra, Australia. In the year 2000 she won a scholarship from the Ford Foundation International Fellowship Program and went to study at the University of Southern California, USA. From this university she earned her Master of Science in Education (MSEd) in 2002 and Doctorate Degree in Educational Leadership and Management in August 2004.

Dr. Phuong was in the post of the Director of Research and International Relations Department concurrently the Director of the Resource Center for Community Development at An Giang University until she joined SEAMEO RETRAC in June 2007. Since that time she has been working as a trainer, curriculum designer for training courses offered at SEAMEO RETRAC, and a researcher in quite a lot of international collaborative research projects.

Abstract

During the past ten years Higher education in Vietnam has made a lot of changes clearly seen in the expansion of the existing institutions as well as the establishment of new universities and colleges in all parts of Vietnam. The whole educational system including higher education of Vietnam has been for a long time controlled by the central government particularly the Ministry of Education and Training and some other related ministries. Higher education in Vietnam continues to face big challenges. The centralized system of control and governance did not promote the improvement of training quality of the whole system, and does not encourage the creativity of teachers, education administrators and students (Hayden& Lam, 2007). As a result, there have been a number of government reforms implemented in an effort to improve the situation. These actions come in the form of Decrees or Circulars or Resolutions. This paper is also to investigate the impacts of the governance forms particularly the increased autonomy given to higher education institutions from the perception of national decision makers.

An Overview of the Higher Education System

Higher education in Vietnam includes Associate, Bachelor, Master and Doctorate level. Associate level is for 2 to 3 years depending on the disciplines and it is for students with upper secondary education certificates, 1.5 to 2 years for students with secondary vocational certificates of the same disciplines. Bachelor programs are from 4 to 6 years depending on the disciplines and for students with upper secondary education certificates. Master level is from 1 to 2 years for students with bachelor degrees. Doctoral level is for 3 - 4 years for students with master degrees. In special cases, training duration may be longer in accordance with the regulations of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). In the national educational system, besides regular full time training, there is another system called continuing education. Continuing education provides opportunities for lifelong learning for people while working to improve their knowledge, skills, and quality of life, to find jobs or to create jobs for others, and to meet the changing requirements of the society. The government has policies to encourage the development of continuing education, education for all, and the development of learning society.

There are different types of educational institutions in the HE system of Vietnam such as public, people –established, and private institutions. Public institutions are established by the State and receive funding for the infrastructure, facilities and operational expenditures. People-established institutions are funded by the communities for their infrastructure, facilities and operational expenditures. Private institutions are funded by social, professional, economic organizations or individuals for their infrastructure, facilities and operational expenditures. The Government supports public institutions to ensure that they are playing the key role in the national education system.

Higher Education Development in Vietnam

The last two decades have witnessed a rapid change of higher education in Vietnam and this change has been clearly seen in the expansion of the existing institutions as well as the establishment of new universities and colleges in all parts of Vietnam. There were 101 universities and colleges in the country in 1987 in compare with 376 in 2009. The number of HE students increased from 133,000 in 1987 to over 1.7 million in 2009, which was 13 times higher; and the number of lecturers increased over 3 times from 20,000 to 61,000 (MOET, 2009). With rapid socio-economic changes, twenty-first century higher education faces major challenges to its governance systems, curriculum, mission focus, external relations, research, and financing (Shin & Harman 2009). According to a report from the MOET (2009), the development of HE in Vietnam has undoubtedly faced lots of challenges including the inability to meet the demands of industrialization, modernization, international integration and the learning needs of the people. In addition, the U.S. - Vietnam Education Task Force Final Report (September 2009) depicted that Vietnam is under the “pressing need for significant modernization of Vietnam’s higher educational system, including fundamental changes in governance, institutional autonomy, financing and administration, faculty hiring, promotion and salary structure, as well as in curricula and the modalities of teaching, evaluation, and research” (p. 3). While Vietnam’s higher education system is developing rapidly and on a large scale, the education ministry’s management is failing to keep pace and Higher education management lagging behind” (MOET, August 2009).

In the last few years, non-public institutions concentrated mainly on such areas of study as economics, business administration, foreign languages, and subjects requiring little investment in equipment and laboratories. These institutions have now expanded their training fields to

include technology and engineering to meet the needs for the human resources for industrialization and modernization. The training quality of non-public colleges and universities has been improved, especially after the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) issued the “3 commons” regulation (same entrance examinations, same examination schedule and using same examination scores for admission consideration, and minimum band scores for all college admission).

Governance Structure and Reform in Higher Education

A culture of centralized planning and bureaucratic decision-making is deeply rooted across most areas of public service provision in Vietnam (Hayden& Lam, 2007). The whole educational system including higher education have been for a long time controlled by the central government particularly the Ministry of Education and Training and some other related ministries. There is a desire by the central government to decentralize decision-making accountabilities to higher education institutions for the purposes of achieving greater efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources; and on the other hand, there is also a desire by the central government to retain control of the socialist orientation of higher education and of the deployment of the sector within a framework of centralized national economic management.

Objectives of higher education system in Vietnam

The objectives of higher education are to educate learners in acquiring political and moral qualities, to serve the people, to provide professional knowledge and practical skills relevant to educational levels, and to develop physical health of the students, thereby meeting the needs of national construction and defense.

College education provides students with professional knowledge and basic practical skills in a profession, and with the ability to solve common problems in that field of study.

University education helps students acquire in-depth professional knowledge and good practical skills in a profession with the ability to work independently and creatively as well as to solve problems in their fields of study.

Master programs help students master theories, acquire advanced practical skills with the ability to work independently and creatively, as well as to identify and solve problems in their fields of study.

Doctoral programs provide students with advanced level theories and practice with the ability to conduct independent and creative research, to identify and solve emerging issues relating to science and technology and to carry out scientific research and professional activities.

In recent years, higher education in Vietnam has gained significant achievements contributing to the socio-economic development of Vietnam. Aligned with the “Doi moi” (renovation) policy, higher education in Vietnam has undergone some important reforms, bringing about important gains, and has found its way forwards in the context of Vietnam’s transition to a socialist-oriented market economy. The reforms aim at bridging the development gap between Vietnam’s higher education and that of regional and international countries, creating favorable conditions for future development and national competitiveness” - Vietnam Education in the Early Years of the 21st Century (p. 113)

The Development of the Higher Education System in Vietnam after 2000

The system of higher education in Vietnam, in many ways, has been growing at a rate that was not anticipated in the year 2000.

Number of schools

In 1987 there were only 101 universities and colleges (63 universities, and 38 colleges); by September 2009 there were 376 universities and colleges (150 universities and 226 colleges). More recent preliminary data for 2009-2010 would suggest that the number of universities and colleges now exceeds 400.

Insert Chart 1 about Here

Types of school and ownership

In 1987 of the 101 public universities and colleges, there were no non-public institution; by 1997 when there were 126 universities and colleges, there were 15 non-public universities; finally, by September 2009, among the 376 universities and colleges 81 were non-public universities and college (44 of the universities were non-public while 37 of the colleges were non-public). Among the 403 universities and college as reported as preliminary data for the 2009-2010 academic year, 326 are public institutions (80.9%) and 77 were private (non-public) institutions (19.1%). In other words about 1/5 of the institutions of higher education in Vietnam are now private institutions.

Post-graduate institutes

By September 2009, there were 159 post-graduate institutes (71 stand alone research institutions and 88 at universities). Of those, 121 institutes (76.1%) offer a PhD degree and 100

institutes (69.8%) offering the master degree (4 non-public universities have been allowed to offer master degree).

Higher education network

Since 1998 until the present 33 universities have been established (2 public and 31 non-public) and 54 colleges have been upgraded to universities (51 public universities and 3 non-public universities). A total of 35 of the 63 provinces currently have new universities; 23 of the provinces have more than one university or college. A total of 10 provinces have 3 or more higher education facilities; in Ho Chi Minh City alone, there are 18 new universities and in Hanoi there are 23 new universities. The number of new universities in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City accounts for 43% of newly established or upgraded universities. Currently, 40 of the 63 provinces and central cities have universities. A total of 60 of the 63 provinces and central cities have colleges. Finally, all but one (62) provinces and central cities have at least one college or university (Dak Nong Province is the exception).

The number of universities and colleges in the mountainous and disadvantaged socio - economic areas has increased, such as the North West areas (1 university, 8 colleges), Highland (3 universities, 10 colleges); the Mekong Delta (11 universities and 27 colleges), creating more opportunities to higher education for people, especially in rural, remote, mountainous and ethnic minorities living areas.

Public universities and colleges have been the key provider of qualified human resources in Vietnam; total number of students in higher education in 2009 was 1,796,200 students. In 2009 there were 1,547,400 (86.1%) students enrolled in public institutions and 248,800 (13.9%) enrolled in private institutions.

University and College Enrollments and Graduates

Training scope of universities and colleges increased gradually over the years, the percentage of students out of ten thousand people also increased; in 1997, it was 80 students for every ten thousand people; in 2006, and it was 166.5 students for every ten thousand people; and in 2009, it was 195 students out of every ten thousand people. By 2010, this figure could reach 200 students for every ten thousand people, a number in line with Resolution No. 14 and Decision No. 121 approved by Prime Minister of Education and Training.

Insert Chart 2 about Here

In comparison with other countries, the rate of students for every ten thousand people in the population is still low in Vietnam. In 2005, Thailand experience 374 students enrolled for each ten thousand of the population; Chile had 407 students for every ten thousand people; Japan had 316 students for every ten thousand people; France has 359 students for every ten thousand people, the UK has 380 students for every ten thousand people, Australia has 504 students every ten thousand people, the U.S. has 576 students for every ten thousand people and Korea has 674 students for every ten thousand people.

In 1987 there were 19,900 university and college graduates and in 1997 there were 73,736 graduates. By 2009 there were 222,665 students who graduated from universities and colleges.

From 2000 to the present, post-graduate institutes have provided training for an average of 650 doctorates per year. In 2008, post-graduate institutes recruited 1,805 doctoral students and 22,885 master students. In 2009, the post-graduate institutes in the country registered 2,504

doctorates and 30,638 masters level students. In 2009, the number of national doctoral students was 3.57 higher than the number being trained abroad and the number of master students were 15.3 higher than those going abroad.

Quality Management

The Quality management system in higher education has only recently been established in Vietnam. The Department of Testing and Educational Quality Evaluation within MOET was established in 2004. Reforms which focus on this aspect of the system of higher education are among those to be discussed below.

Higher education in Vietnam continues to face big challenges. The state control and governance of universities and colleges is only slowly changing. Many believe that the old system of control and governance did 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.” As a result, there have been a number of reforms implemented in an effort to improve the situation.

Recent Reforms in Higher Education: In search of quality

There have been many government actions aimed at reforming and improving higher education in Vietnam over the past 10 years. These actions come in the form of Decrees or Circulars or Resolutions. A sampling of the major reform actions are organized and summarized here. The range of topics is extensive covering everything from curriculum to equipment and facilities.

Solutions leading to these reform actions suggested by MOET in the Vietnam Education in the Early Years of the 21st Century include:

1. Renovating of training structure and completing the network plan for higher education institutions
2. Renovating of training contents, methods and procedure
3. Renovating the recruiting, training and retraining of lecturers and educational managers
4. Renovating research activities
5. Renovating financial mechanism and resource mobilization procedure
6. Renovation of management mechanism
7. Increasing investment in infrastructure for higher education

Curriculum Frames

One of the major reforms in the past few years can be found in the introduction of “curriculum frames. “Advisory Councils for Higher Education Curriculum Frames have been established to ensure modern contents and high quality standards of training, similar to those in other advanced countries in the region and in the world. Many curriculum frames for higher education have been issued; hundreds of other curriculum frames are being developed. These curriculum frames are the guidelines for colleges and universities to develop their own specific curricula. Since 2001, these councils have submitted 207 higher education curriculum frames to

the Ministry of Education and Training for approval (of which 154 curriculum frames are for university level, 53 for college level) and 1 for integration education.”

Training Programs and Teaching Materials

“Another reform introduced has been the standardizing of training programs, the authorization of colleges and universities to design textbooks and teaching materials with updated and advanced content. Many universities in Vietnam have carried out pilot training courses using international advanced programs and textbooks from other countries.”

“By the end of 2008, 23 international advanced programs have been applied at 17 institutions, and taught directly in English. Since academic year 2006–2007, higher education institutions have promoted the links between educational institutions and social demands by renovating their teaching process, needs analysis and program designs”

Quality Assurance and Accreditation

Quality management has been given great attention in recent years. Agencies in charge of quality assurance and accreditation have been established. Besides the General Department for Educational Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Testing under MOET established in August 2004, Centers for Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Testing have been founded in 60 out of 63 Provincial Departments of Education and Training (95%), and 77 Units for Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Testing have been set up at colleges and universities. By December 2008, 114 out of 163 (70%) universities have completed their internal auditing, and 40 of which have received external auditing.

Decision No. 4138/QD-BGDDT Sept. 20, 2010, speaks to the system of accreditation in Vietnam. This decision approves the project of building and developing quality assurance systems for education and vocational higher education.

Renovation of Higher Education

Fundamental and Comprehensive Renovation of Higher Education during 2006–2020 was addressed in Resolution 14/2005/NQ-CP of the Government dated 2 November, 2005. This document stressed that:

“The scope and efficiency of scientific research activities in higher education institutions must be strengthened. Universities must become strong research centers of the country and revenues from research, technology transfers, production and services should account for 15% of the total revenue of universities by 2010 and 25% by 2020”.

“The Education Development Strategy for 2001–2010 and the draft Vietnam Education Development Strategy to 2020 reflect the determination of the Vietnam Government and the whole society to enhance educational development in Vietnam, and to prepare highly qualified human resources for the country’s international integration with the world.”

Other documents addressing these issues included No. 760/BC-BGDDT, dated Oct. 29, 2009 on the development of the Higher Education System; No. 05-NQ/BCSD, dated June 01 2010 which was a Resolution of the Communist Party and MOET on management innovation of higher education during the period 2010-2012 and Decision No. 4713/CT-BGDDT, dated as recently as October 19, 2010 which is a directive clarifying the central task of higher education academic year 2010 - 2011.

GOVERNANCE REFORM IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Review on Governance Reform and Increased Autonomy

On March 06, 2010 Prime Minister Nguyen Thien Nhan chaired an important meeting which discussed on Educational leadership and administrative reforms. The meeting was participated by over 1,400 people who are decision makers at national, provincial and institutional level. Prime Minister Nhan called for the active participation of all levels in the educational reform particularly in management. To explain why choosing reform in educational governance as a breakthrough for education in Vietnam, Prime Minister Nhan said that the main causes of most of the systematic weaknesses in higher education were from poor educational management. He requested all the institutional leaders to use the autonomy given in a more effective way particularly to realize the autonomy in deciding the payment for faculty and staff on their work performance. He also mentioned that the MOET will provide technical support in initial stage so that institutions can realize their autonomy in this field (Giao duc Thoi dai, September 2010)

The Resolution on Innovation in Higher Education 2010-2012 (No: 05-NQ/BCSD) issued on January 2010 by the Minister of Education and Training also emphasized that the mechanism in which presidents/rectors of higher education institutions determine the pay scale for faculties in accordance with their contribution and therefore the annual evaluation on work performance needs to be more seriously implemented. The Resolution also suggested “promoting the autonomy, accountability, internal self-control of the institutions in accordance with the regulations of the State and of the institutions”

Two major decisions in the last five years focused on providing institutions of higher education within Vietnam with more Autonomy and at the same time requiring great accountability. Issued in April 2006 and the other was passed in April 2009.

Overview of the Decisions on increased autonomy for HEIs

HERA Provisions

The Government promulgated resolution No 14/2005/NQ-CP dated 2 November, 2005 on “Fundamental and Comprehensive Renovation of Vietnam Higher Education for 2006–2020” (HERA). The government adopted HERA, a reform plan which will result in a system that is “more flexible in providing opportunities for course transfer, more equitable, more financially self-reliant, more research oriented,” (Dao & Hayden, 2010 p. 133). Thirty two specific reform measures were endorsed in HERA, one of which concerns conferring on public higher education institutions “legal autonomy in their operations, giving them the right to decide and be responsible for training, research, human resource management and budget planning” (Hayden and Lam cited in Dao & Hayden, 2010). These developments will result in a significant transfer of decision making authority from the state to the public higher education system (Dao & Hayden, 2010). A second measure of HERA is to “eliminate line-ministry control” which will strongly reinforce the transfer of authority from the state to the higher education institutions (Dao & Hayden, 2010 p. 133). A third measure is to “focus state management on the implementation of the development strategy and on the development of a quality assurance and accreditation control for higher education; improve the legislative and regulatory environment; accelerate the State’s stewardship role in monitoring and inspecting the overall structure and scale of higher

education" (Dao & Hayden, 2010 p. 133). This reform measure indicates a new kind of relationship between state and higher education.

The Education Law of 2005:

Article 14 provides that the State will "implement decentralization of management to local agencies and enhance the autonomy and accountability of grassroots education establishments".

Regulations on autonomy and accountability for the performance of duties, organizational structure, staffing and finance of public units (No. 43/2006/NĐ-CP April 25, 2006) signed by Prime Minister Phan Van Khai

The 2006 regulation stipulates the autonomy and accountability for the performance of duties, organizational structure, staffing and finance of the public institutions which are established by the State as authorized agencies.

This regulation delegates the autonomy and accountability for higher educationa institutions in their organization of tasks, re-arrangement of the apparatus, and utilization of human and financial resources to complete assigned tasks; it is meant to optimize all the capabilities of units to provide high-quality services to the society; and increase revenues in order to gradually raise income for working people. In order to implement autonomy and accountability for institutions, the State is still focused on investments to help the continual growth of institutions; and to ensure that the services are better and better provided to the poor, the minority, and particularly those from underprivileged areas.

Joint circular on Instruction for autonomy, accountability, duty performance, organization and staffing toward public education and training institutions (No.07/2009/TTLT-BGDDT-BNV) signed by Minister of Interior Tran Van Tuan and Minister of Education and Training Nguyen Thien Nhan on April 15, 2009

While Decree No. 43/2006/NĐ-CP laid the groundwork for the beginning of the process of providing institutions of higher education some autonomy and at the same time increasing their accountability, it was followed in 2009 by a “Joint Circular” that provided some clarification concerning the implementation of autonomy and accountability. In its own words the circular says:

This joint circular directs the implementation of autonomy and accountability regarding duty performance, organization and staffing of public institutions which have legal status, seal and account and were established by proper authority.

In the section on duty performance, organization and personnel, heads of units were delegated the responsibility for planning, approving the annual plans of the units, and reporting to authorities as stipulated by laws; for defining detailed solutions and being responsible for quality assurance and progress toward tasks assigned by State-owned agencies, agreements and contracts with individuals and organizations as stipulated by laws; and for launching services relevant to professional fields and ability of the institutions as stipulated by laws.

Specifically, in the area of international cooperation, for higher-education institutions, leaders are allowed to:

Develop and execute plans of in-out delegations through income, fund, presents, and other sources of income as stipulated by laws;

Collaborate with foreign organizations and individuals in field of education and scientific research, implement projects of the institutions as stipulated by laws;

- Proactively collaborate and associate with foreign higher education institutions to train academic staff, lecturers and to exchange students in order to improve the quality of staff and lecturers and educators stipulated by laws;
- Decide to nominate staff for studying and visiting abroad in accordance with the regulation in point b of item 5 in Term 7 of this Circular;
- Decide to invite foreign experts to teach and do scientific research based on the budget and financial strength of the institutions and the regulation of authorities;
- Supervise programs, ODA projects of technical support and assigned ODA projects as stipulated by laws.

In article 4, leaders were authorized to set up, re-organize, integrate, separate, dismiss or suspend the activities of departments (if any) according to the plans or solutions approved by the authorities as stipulated by law. In article 5 leaders were given more authority over staffing decisions.

A whole chapter of this circular is devoted to autonomy and accountability in the area of staff recruitment, appointment and management. A sampling of the provisions is as follows:

- Based on the yearly approved personnel plan, leaders should develop recruitment plans which identify the number and structure of every position, condition, standard, form and recruitment time and report to the authorities. However, for institutions that self-assure their expenditures, leaders are allowed to make decision for plan and the recruitment modes.
- Leaders are to recruit officials by signing labor contract after some time of probation to see if they meet with the professional characteristics of each field and condition of the institutions as stipulated by laws.

- Identifying and recruiting staff at public educational institutions are implemented in accordance with the Government's regulation of Staff Law.
- Leaders of institutions are allowed to sign contract between them and employees; assigning ranks to first-time recruited staff based on assuring the standard of the ranks suitable for the positions available as stipulated laws;
- Leaders of institutions report to authorities for approval for assigning the ranks and transferring official ranks toward specialist scales or equivalent ranks; making decision to transfer ranks, assigning ranks after training or raising ranks for officials based on the authority of the institutions as stipulated by laws.
- Leaders of the institutions are responsible for organizing, assigning tasks to staff and officials based on their educational background and the ranks, assure the policies and necessary conditions so that staffs and officials can execute their tasks;
- Leaders of the institutions are allowed to decide to organize, second, receive and exchange staff and officials based on the institutions' authority from the main specialist scales or relevant scales to lower scales according to the law; make decision for staffs' retirement, ending labor contracts in their authority. For staffs and officials having ranks not being in the authority of the institutions, the decision of retiring or ending labor contracts must be solved by the authorities in accordance with laws.
- Leaders of the institutions make reports to authorities for making decision to assign, re-assign, exchange, leave positions and end deputies of the heads; decisions of assigning, re-assigning, exchange, leaving positions and ending leadership positions of agencies in the institutions are solved according to the law
- Leaders of the institutions are allowed to decide the rise of salary scales periodically and ahead of time, increase seniority allowances for staff and officials based on the authority of institutions from the principal specialist scales and downwards according to the law; The increase of the salary of the head or his/her deputies is decided by proper authorities; In case of the regular salary increase or ahead of time for senior specialists or equivalent, leader of the unit will propose to the authority for approval.

- Leaders of higher-education institutions are allowed to assign, accept staff and officials in terms of studying, abroad, study visits, research. For those who study overseas by government scholarships will be subsidized by the Government in accordance with the regulations issued by the Ministry of Education and Training;

In short, the national decision makers are very keen on the governance reform particularly in the innovation of educational management and increased autonomy which have been provided to institutional decision makers and those are clearly reflected in the Educational laws in 2005, the HERA provisions in 2005, the official regulars and decrees in 2006, the Joint circular on Instruction for autonomy, accountability, duty performance, organization and staffing toward public education and training institutions in 2009.

Governance reform from the perception of national decision makers

Data Collection

Data related to the governance reform at national level was collected by a survey followed by telephone interviews on 10 national decision makers at the MOET. The return rate of the survey was 70 %. The highest position of the respondents was Deputy Minister and lowest was the Deputy Director General of different departments at the MOET. The interview protocol consisted of 13 open – ended questions related to governance reform and autonomy introducing to higher education institutions and 04 closed- ended questions on personal information of the respondents. The purpose of the survey on questionnaire was to find, from their perspective, the rationale behind introducing governance reform, impacts of increased autonomy given to HEIs on a variety of dimensions such as impacts on the organizing structure and decision making procedure at national level, the personnel and financial planning procedure at HEIs, the monitoring and evaluation of HE, the academic management at institutional level, the financial

management and human resource management at national and institutional level. The questionnaire also included question items to find out whether there were unexpected impacts of governance reform and if the increased autonomy given by the central government to institutional decision makers reached its objectives. In addition to the survey on questionnaire, telephone interviews were made with four respondents from the MOET to clarify the responses and to get more information which help achieve the purpose of the survey.

Rationale behind introducing governance reform

From the responses of national decision makers, there are some important reasons why the increased autonomy has been introduced to institutional level. Two of the respondents (28.57 %) said that it was to increase the training quality at Higher Education institutions (HEIs) especially to meet the demands of high quality trained man power in the age of globalization. Five of the respondents (71.42%) indicated that autonomy was introduced in order to facilitate the implementation of the directives on innovation of the educational management at HEIs. Four out of 7 respondents (57.14%) indicated that autonomy was an important condition for institutional decision makers to operate their institution in a more effective way. Six out of seven respondents (85.71%) stated that one of the reasons for governance reform was to reduce the working load of national level, giving decision makers of this level more time to focus on macro decisions instead of controlling the HEIs on so many things at micro level. Five out of seven respondents (71.42 %) answered that governance reform and increased autonomy given to HEIs was an obvious tendency in the world development and Vietnam is certainly not an exception if the country does not want to be behind. Six out of 7 respondents (85.71%) stated that governance reform was the result of the HEIs' rapid growth of both quantity and capacity during the past ten years and the national decision makers have to decentralize the system by giving more autonomy

to HEIs and governance reform is a must; otherwise, they will hinder the development of the educational system in general and the HE system in particular. In one of the interviews with the Director General, he said that the central government needs to provide HEIs a “bigger outfit” in order to fit into the rapid growth of HEIs now and in the years to come. Three out of seven respondents (42.85%) mentioned that increased autonomy was given to HEIs in order to increase the accountability of institutional decision makers as well as of managers at this level. One out of seven respondents (14.28%) stated that autonomy was given to HEIs so that institutional makers can be more creative in their operation to make breakthrough in their leadership.

Insert Chart 3 about Here

Impacts of governance reform and increased autonomy

Impacts of increased autonomy on the organizing structure at national level

Seven respondents (100%) stated that increased autonomy given to HEIs led to changes in the organizing structure at national level. The structure was simpler and fewer people are needed to work at this level. Five out of seven (71.42%) said that the ministry level can now function more on national management on strategic planning, development directions, educational laws and policy, and quality management and less on micro management. One example of the role changes in the organizing structure at national level was reflected in the interview with a national decision maker which is “to remove the testing function of the Department of Testing and Accreditation at the MOET and delegate it to institutional level to be taken care”. One out of seven respondents (14.28%) mentioned that governance reform

gradually helped reduce the bureaucracy existing for a long time at this level due to too much control and authority holding at so many departments at the national level.

Insert Chart 4 about Here

Impacts of increased autonomy on the decision making procedure at national level

Increased autonomy and governance reform have impacts on the decision making procedure at national level as well. Five out of seven respondents (71.42%) stated that the decision procedure at national level are faster and in time due to the nature of the decisions which aim at giving directions and the fewer numbers of decisions being made. Explanations in the interviews with national decision makers indicated that “with increased autonomy at HEIs, quite a lot of decisions are expected to be made by the institutional decision makers”; many of which used to be made by the national level. One example of this fact, according to one interviewee, is the decision on “how to best use the human resources within the HEIs” and to have “the best payment system” for their own institution. Three out of seven respondents (42.85%) mentioned that the decision making procedure at national level were more efficient and convincing. One out of seven (14.28%) stated that the MOET or the central government acted as a “referee”, observing the operation of HEIs and “react on those going against the common directions of the nation”.

Insert Chart 5 about Here

Impacts of increased autonomy on personnel and financial planning procedure at HEIs

Basing on the respondents to the questionnaires, the personnel and financial planning procedures at HEIs can better fit into the actual situations or reality of each HEI. This idea was

recorded from 4 out of 7 respondents (57.14%). Two out of seven (28.57%) stated that personnel and financial planning procedure may be lack of the consistency due to the low ability of certain institutions especially the newly established ones. Two out of 7 respondents (28.57%) indicated that the personnel and financing procedure at HEIs could only be consistent with the development of its institution and of the country when institutional decision makers are capable enough to do so; otherwise, negative impacts which hindered the institutional development are unavoidable.

Impacts of increased autonomy on the monitoring and evaluation of HE

The majority of respondents (six out of 7 respondents composing 85.71 %) stated that increased autonomy created positive impacts on the monitoring and evaluation of HEIs. Explaining to this view was reflected from the responses of the phone interview on three out of six mentioned respondents. All three clarified that monitoring and evaluation were performed through self-assessment, cross-institution assessment and external assessment and due to the increased autonomy, HEIs are “more accountable on the results of assessment” and they were “more responsive to the assessment findings”. Four out of seven respondents to the questionnaire (57.14%) mentioned that increased autonomy given to HEIs certainly gradually increased their accountability on the quality of their own institution.

Impacts of increased autonomy on the academic management at institutional level

Responses from the national decision makers have indicated some impacts of increased autonomy at HEIs on academic management at institutional level. Four out of seven respondents (57.14%) indicated that HEIs were more active and creative in academic management. Two out of seven respondents (28.57%) mentioned that institutional decision makers could find it a must

to identify and acquire a suitable and effective ways for academic management. Three out of seven (42.85%) stated that there were no same paths for academic management among all HEIs due to their differences, so increased autonomy possibly created problems on academic management especially to HEIs with low management capacity or newly established ones. Two out of seven respondents (28.57%) mentioned that increased autonomy led to the requirements on HEIs for visionary academic decision makers and more professional and able people working in academic affairs.

Insert Chart 6 about Here

Impacts of increased autonomy on the financial management at national and institutional level

Four out of seven respondents (57.14%) stated that increased autonomy at HEIs rearranged the financial management role of national and institutional level. While decision makers at national level are to monitor and manage the effectiveness and efficiency of the financial management done at institutional level, the decision makers at institutional level are responsible to operate, monitor and evaluate the finance to make sure things are done correctly, effectively and efficiently. Five out seven institutions (71.42 %) noticed that institutional decision makers are more creative and flexible in managing the finance or budget of their institution. Four out of seven respondents (57.14%) mentioned that HEIs were able to mobilize more financial resources due to their flexibility in financial arrangement. However, three out of seven respondents (42.85%) mentioned that impacts on financial arrangement were seen in the uncertainty or confusion at HEIs particularly the institutions which were newly established or low capacity in management. Two respondents (28.57%) stated that national decision makers need to issue enough guidelines to help HEIs manage the finance effectively.

Insert Chart 7 about Here

Impacts of increased autonomy on the human resource management at national and institutional level

Responses from five out of 7 respondents (71.42%) stated that increased autonomy had positive impacts on the human resource management at institutional level. Explanation to this idea was reflected that institutional decision makers are “free to use the human resource in the best way possible”. Institutional decision makers can make decisions on “appointing their employees to suitable position or can decide on the size, the quality the recruitment of the human resource”, thus “leads to the achievement of efficiency in human resource management”. Three out of seven respondents (42.85%) mentioned that increased autonomy required institutional decision makers to have “a good strategy to develop the human resource in the long run” and to “reduce the brain drain from their institution” which is unavoidable when institutions can be flexible in their financial arrangements to attract well trained and experience human resource from outstanding HEIs.

Regarding the impacts on human resource management at national level, four respondents (57.14%) mentioned that instead of closely managing the human resource at HEIs, now national decision makers do not have to decide on human resource at micro level but monitoring the task done by institutional decision makers. Two out of these respondents (28.57%) added that the national decision makers then have more time to deal with personnel issues at macro level. Five respondents (71.42%) stated that increased autonomy on human resource management at HEIs could reduce the working load at the national level explicitly. Three

respondents (42.85%) mentioned that increased autonomy on human resource management at HEIs was shifting the role of national decision makers to more monitoring and assisting functions.

Conclusion

Quite a lot of directives, decrees, circulars related to governance reform and increased autonomy were introduced in Vietnam during the last five years. Impacts of governance reform and increased autonomy can be summarize in the below chart.

Insert Chart 8 about Here

Chart 1: Number of University/College Institutions

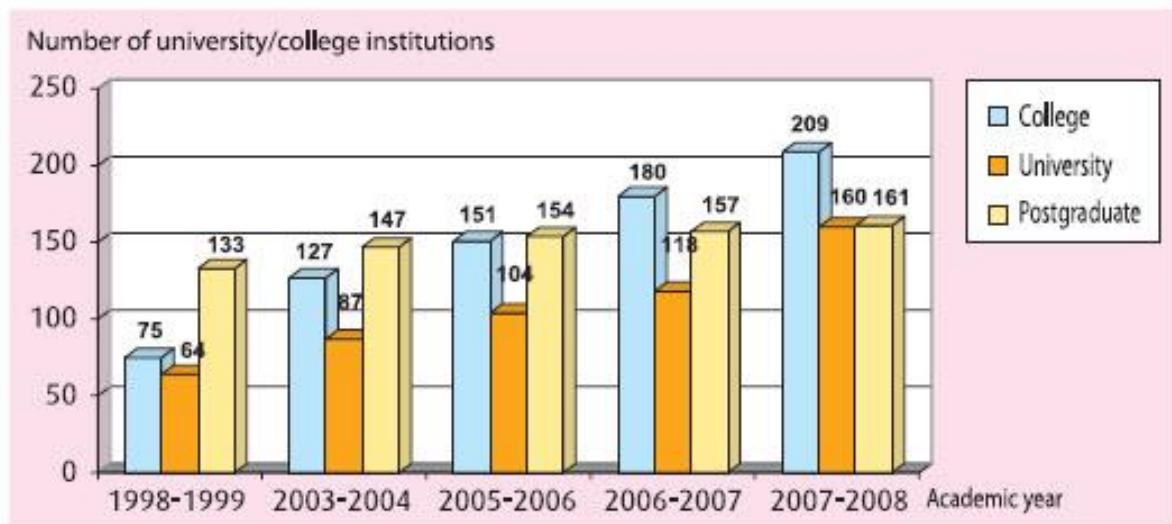


Chart 2: Enrollments by Year

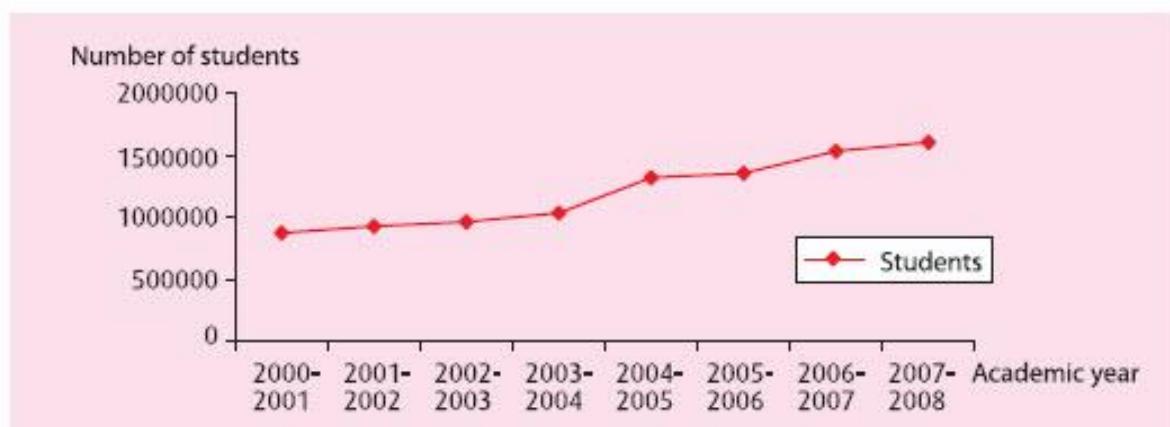


Chart 3: Rationale behind introducing governance reform

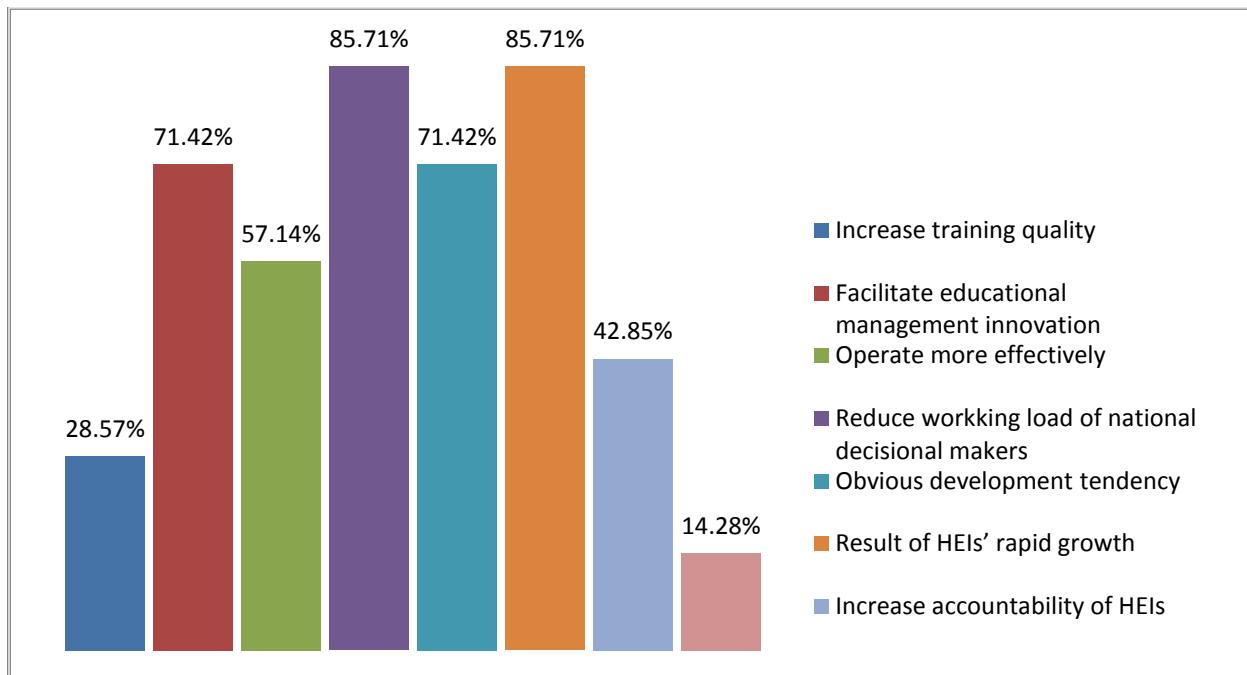


Chart 4: Impacts of increased autonomy on the organizing structure at national level

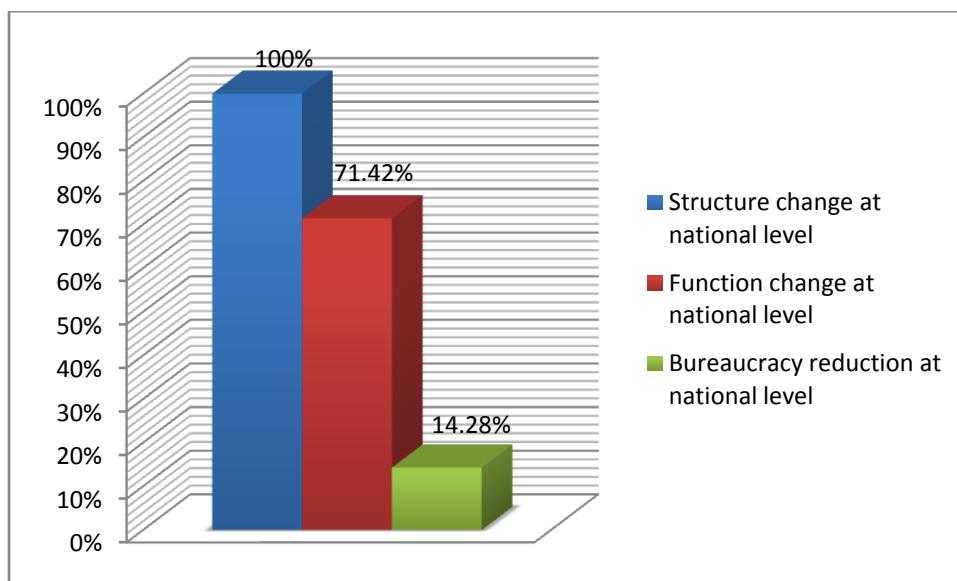


Chart 5: Impacts of increased autonomy on the decision making procedure at national level

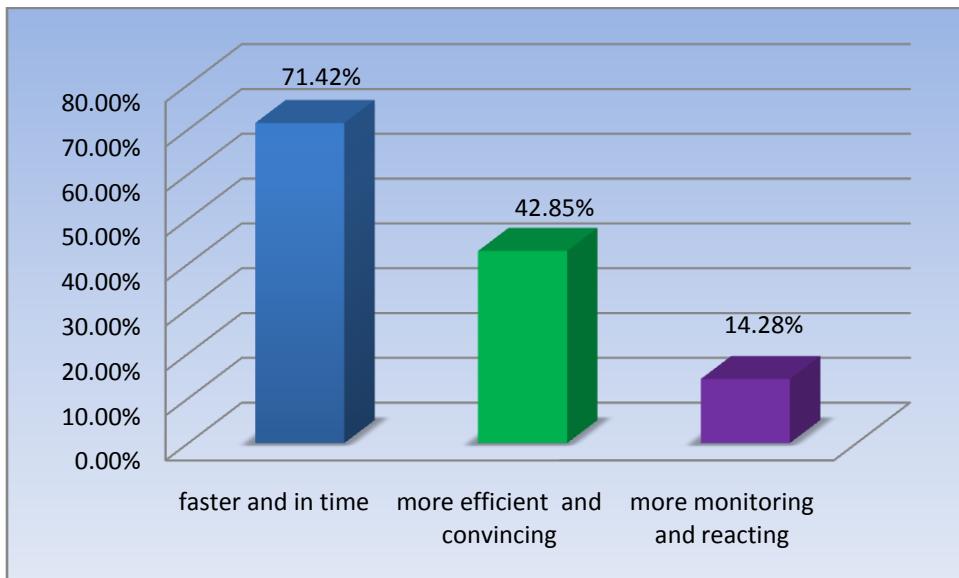


Chart 6: Impacts of increased autonomy on the academic management at institutional level

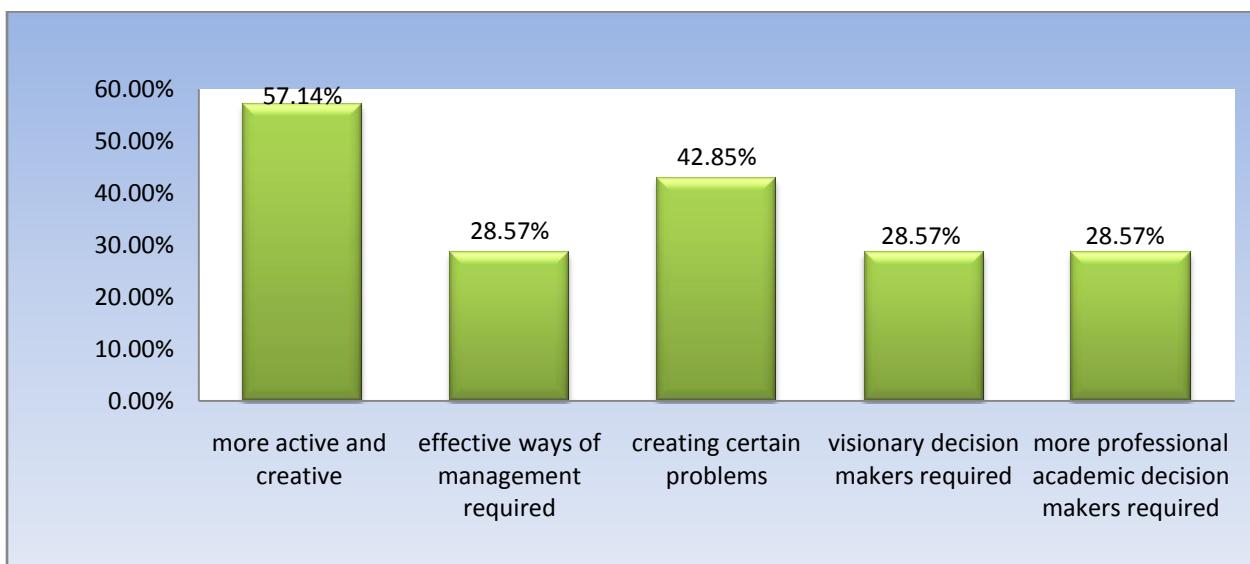


Chart7: Impacts of increased autonomy on the financial management

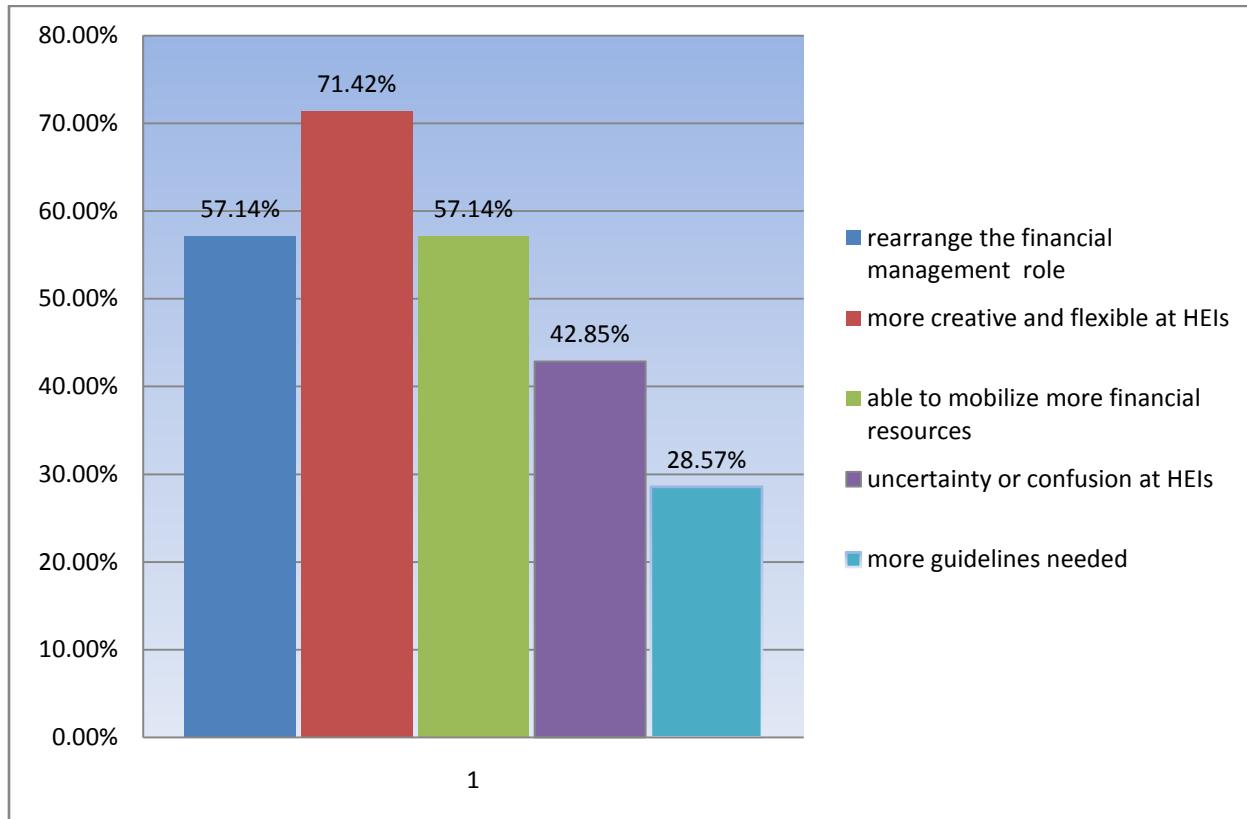
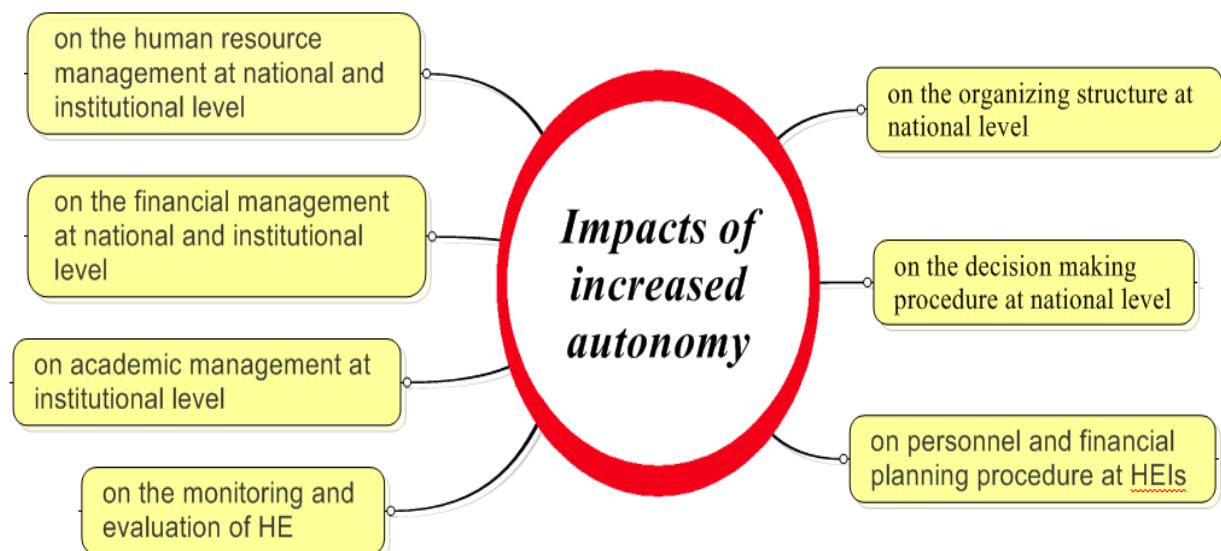


Chart8



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Decision No. 4138/QD-BGDDT Sept. 20, 2010, on system of accreditation in Vietnam.

Resolution No. 43/2006/NĐ-CP dated 25/04/ 2006 by Communist Party on Autonomy and Accountability in higher education.

Resolution No. 07/2009/TTLT-BGDDT-BNV by MOET dated on 15/04/ 2009 on Instructions for autonomy, accountability, duty performance.

Resolution No: 05-NQ/BCSĐ dated 06/01/2010 by MOET on Management innovation in Higher Education during the period 2010 – 2012 and the Action Plan to implement the Resolution 05-NQ/BCSĐ according the Decision No 179/QĐ-BGDĐT dated 11/01/2010.

Resolution No. 14 and Decision No. 121 approved by Prime Minister of Education and Training.