

The Impact of Globalisation on Higher Education in China and Vietnam: Policies and Practices

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Abstract

With nearly 1,000 years under the Chinese imperial rule prior to its independence in 938, Vietnam has in subsequent centuries continued to be strongly influenced by Chinese Confucian ideas and the ideology of its neighbour, leaving indelible impacts on Vietnamese education and culture that still persist today. Accelerating globalisation since 1980 has affected the approaches of individual states, including China and Vietnam, toward economic and social policies. The shift from a subsidised and centralised economy to market-oriented socialism, along with open-door policies, have been driving forces behind the reconstruction of the Chinese and Vietnamese economies and social systems. The countries' increasing integration into the world economy has resulted in two of the fastest economic growths in the world, with Vietnam's GDP growing 8.5% in 2005, and China's at 10.2%. This has put new pressures on their education systems to keep up with the market demand for knowledge workers. This paper reviews and analyses within a comparative framework six peer-reviewed articles written by Chinese and Vietnamese scholars from 2002 to 2006 about the reform of higher education in China and in Vietnam in the context of globalisation, with the focus on policy and practice. This study determines how globalisation has influenced the policy making in both countries, and how it is impacting their respective education systems. Although the focus here is on globalisation of education, the implications are wider with the emerging privatisation and decentralisation of social services. This paper also discusses how global trends of decentralisation and marketisation have affected not only, educational governance, educational financing and delivery, but also curriculum change, student enrolment and graduate assignments. The author finds that for both education systems in China and Vietnam these impacts have included the merging of higher educational institutions, abandonment of state monopolies in education, increasing diversity in education provision, re-orienting curricula to meet market needs, and introducing competition into the educational sector in order to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the educational services.

Introduction

China and Vietnam are two neighbouring countries that share more than a border. With nearly 1000 years under the Chinese imperial rule prior to its independence in 938, Vietnam has over the centuries been strongly influenced by Chinese Confucian ideas and ideology, leaving indelible impacts on Vietnamese education and culture that still persist today. With globalisation accelerating since 1980, it has affected the approaches individual nation-states use to pursue their economic and social policies (Waks, 2006), China and Vietnam were not immune from this trend. The shift from a subsidised and centralised economy to market-oriented socialism, and the open-door policies have been driving forces behind the reconstruction of the Chinese and Vietnamese economies and social systems. The countries' increasing integration into the world economy has resulted in two of the fastest economic growths in the world, with Vietnam's GDP growing 8.5% in 2005, and China's at 10.2% (CIA, 2006). In the meantime, this has also put new pressures on their education systems to keep up with the market demand for knowledge workers.

This paper reviews and analyses within a comparative framework six peer-reviewed articles (Mok, 2005; Ngo, Lingard and Mitchell, 2006; Ngok and Kwong, 2003; Pham and Fry, 2002; Pham and Fry, 2004; Xu, 2005) written by Chinese and Vietnamese scholars from 2002 to 2006 about the reform of higher education in China and in Vietnam in the context of globalisation, with the focus on policy and practice. The authors may have different views, but they all agree that globalisation leaves both positive and negative impacts on the education system (Mok, 2005; Ngo et al, 2006; Ngok and Kwong, 2003; Xu, 2005). Although the focus here is on globalisation of education, the implications are wider with the emerging privatisation and decentralisation of social services. This article also discusses how global trends of decentralisation and marketisation have affected not only, educational governance, educational financing and delivery, but also curriculum change, student enrolment and graduate assignments. These changes included the merging of higher educational institutions, decreasing of state monopolies in education, increasing the diversity of education provisions, re-orienting curricula to meet market needs, and introducing competition in educational sector in order to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the educational services. Other authors even assert that private higher education provides more equity than public funded higher education (Pham and Fry, 2002).

Historical Development of Education Systems in China and Vietnam

In the analysis of the contemporary education system, it is important to review the historical and cultural context that has led to changes. Looking back at the history, we see an explanation as to why Vietnam has always shared a similar approach with its neighbouring counterpart in terms of policy making and practice.

With over 1000 years under Chinese imperial rule (111 BC – 938 AD), Vietnam was strongly influenced by Chinese Confucian ideology, which continued to be discernible until the 1980s (Pham and Fry, 2002). This resulted in Vietnam building its first higher education institution in the 11th century, with the statute of Confucius in the school showing the teaching and ideological influence (Pham and Fry, 2004b).

During the colonial period, Vietnam experienced both western colonialism and pre-modern Chinese influence. Vietnam used Chinese writing characters until the 17th century, when a French missionary and scholar, Alexandre de Rhodes, helped develop a simple Romanised script for writing (Nguyen, 1997). This new writing system was accessible for ordinary Vietnamese, and significantly raised mass awareness of education and politics. The return of Vietnamese scholars from Japan and China in the middle of the 19th century significantly influenced education and the political environment in Vietnam (Marr, 1981; Dinh, Nguyen and Nguyen, 1999). Phan Boi Chau (1867-1940), one of the prominent scholars returned from Japan, inspired by reforms in Japan, arranged for young Vietnamese to study in Japan. At the same time, Chinese intellectuals and nationalists also influenced Vietnamese scholars by their reaction against the Chinese imperial rule, providing examples of nationalism and resistance. During this time, the Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc (Eastern Capital Non-tuition School) was established by these reformists, which also provided education and intellectual opportunities for women (Marr, 1971). The French shut it down in 1908, and its leaders were sent to prison (Pham and Fry, 2004). Education in Vietnam under the French colonial period was for “rich landlords, magistrates, and government employees living in cities” (Ngo, 1973, p. 75). However, the 1920s saw the increasing numbers of Vietnamese students going to study in France. Consequently, Ho Chi Minh’s overseas experiences helped inspire his nationalist fellows to overthrow the French colonial rule in Vietnam, leading to the independence declared in September 1945 (Woodside, 2000). In a different situation and context, China also started to experience the western influence as a result of the return of students, who rushed to the USA, Japan and France after the abolition of the civil service examinations in 1905. Following the mantra of “Chinese learning for the foundation, and Western learning for practical use” (Pepper, 1990, p. 11), waves of returned students established a new educational system.

After the communists came to power in 1945 and 1949 respectively in Vietnam and China, both countries adopted the Soviet model of education system, which was strictly controlled by the central government and served the purpose of resource allocation (Pham and Fry, 2004). Following the Geneva agreements in 1954, Vietnam was divided into the North and South. The South continued to experience the colonial education system under the French, and later the Americans. The involvement of the Americans in the South led to major changes in the education system, which was practical, aiming to provide greater access, to facilitate the economic development, and to assist the South Vietnamese regime in fighting against communism (Green, 1973). Meanwhile, North Vietnam and China adopted the Soviet central planning economy and education system. The Soviet influence was reflected not only on the organisation and the administration of higher education but also in the way that textbooks were written, in teaching methods and the design of classrooms. Vietnam and China sent their students to countries in Eastern Europe including the Soviet Union for higher education. Upon graduation, these students were assigned to positions in government organisations, with the plan to replace the older generation and continue to foster the communist ideology. All universities and colleges were state-run, which was narrowly specialised according to the manpower planning derived from the central planning economy (Min, 1994; Ngok and Kwong, 2003; Pham and Fry, 2004). Student admission to higher education in Vietnam during this time was screened based on the moral and ideological standards that were imposed by the Communist Party; therefore, only small number of high school graduates continued with higher education. Intellectual values weren’t highly regarded; a doctor earned just as much as a manual worker who repaired bicycle tires on streets (Pham and Fry, 2004). On the other side of the border, a decade-long Cultural Revolution in the 1960s almost dismantled the education system in China (Ngok and Kwong, 2003). Intellectual people were branded “capitalists”, and were persecuted. Government controlled the implementation of instructional plans, course syllabi and textbooks in colleges and universities through the country.

China and Vietnam also had similar, if not the same, diversified education systems in terms of governance. Although universities and colleges were funded and regulated by the state, many universities and colleges were run and administered by different ministries and government departments, while many others were under control of provincial governments (Mok, 2005; Pham and Fry, 2004). For example, in Vietnam, universities/ colleges of medical studies were and still are under control of the Ministry of Health, universities of finance were administered by the Ministry of Finance, The Institute of Banking is under the State Bank governance, and the majority of universities were/are under the control of Ministry of Education, lower level colleges and

vocational educational institutions were/are under control of provincial governments. Higher education institutions under those specific economic management ministries were narrowly specialised to fit with the manpower planning mandated by these specific organisations. Mok (2005) argues that since central government had absolute control over financing, provision and management of education, the enthusiasm of local governments and higher education institution was jeopardised. Such a governance model was also infamous for the separation of the centre and the locality, under which each higher education institution was directed by their departments in charge at the central and local levels, resulting in lack of coordination among these levels and inefficient administration and ineffective service delivery (Fan, 1995). With a highly subsidised and centralised planning economic model, both Vietnam and China experienced serious economic crisis. In Vietnam, the economy stagnated and inflation rocketed (Pham and Fry, 2002). Education was used as a means of indoctrinating political doctrines, and for maintaining political loyalty.

With the collapse of the Eastern European communism, especially in the Soviet Union, in the 1980s, the financial aid from these countries to Vietnam was cut; Vietnamese students, who studied there under government subsidised funding, returned. This forced Vietnamese communist leaders to rethink their own future and their political economy strategies (Pham and Fry, 2002; Pham and Fry, 2004). At the 6th National Communist Party Congress in 1986, communists leaders and members acknowledged the central planning Stalinist economic model followed since 1954 had failed. The term *doi moi* (reform) was coined for the transition from the central planning economic model to the market socialism. Although this term wasn't meant for the political liberalism, it opened the door for private sector to get involved in building the economy, attracted foreign investors, and introduced market-oriented mechanisms. Learning from its Asian neighbouring countries like Japan, Korea and Singapore, where education is considered a key factor for industrialisation and modernisation, Vietnam decided to strengthen its education system to facilitate its goals through processes of marketisation mechanisms and international integration (Pham and Fry, 2002; Pham and Fry, 2004)

Elsewhere, in China its government again was a step ahead of Vietnam in recognising the need for economic reform to end its decades of isolation. In the late 1970s, Chinese communist leader Deng Xiaoping initiated economic reform, opening the door for foreign investment and for China to integrate into the world economy. Market-oriented reform was the main economic domain, which endorsed the individual initiative, free enterprise and the pursuit of profit. The reform of education system was seen as a must in order for country to cope with the market demand of human capital (Xu, 2005; Ngok and Kwong, 2003; Mok, 2005).

Globalisation and the Policy Context of Higher Education

A brief description of policy initiatives implemented by governments throughout the world reveals the unprecedented scope of university change taking place in the past two decades as well as the striking similarity of tendencies taking place in a wide variety of nations with different social, political, historical and economic characteristics. According to Torres and Schugurensky (2002), the process of globalisation is seen as blurring national boundaries, shifting solidarities within and between nation-states, and deeply affecting the constitution of national and interest group identities. Since the Bretton Woods conference in 1944, in which the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank were founded, national trade barriers have been eroded, and global economic forces have played a more significant role in local economies. The convergence of higher education reforms in different societies can be explained mostly by the international economic imperative to remain competitive in the global market. China and Vietnam's increasing participation in the global economy has forced them to reassess the structure, function and roles of education. Opening to the outside world means opening the home market to increased foreign investment, transnational corporations, advanced technology, quality products and services. Thus, Xu (2005), Pham and Fry (2002), Ngok and Kwong (2003), and Mok (2005) agree that governments have to surrender some state autonomy in exchange for a better position in the global market place, and the old central planning model of higher education governance does not seem to be appropriate anymore.

Like many other countries in Europe, North America, Africa, and Asia Pacific, Chinese and Vietnamese governments have drastically reduced subsidies, forcing institutions of higher education to rely more on private funding and to compete among each other for funding and students (Xu, 2005; Ngok and Kwong, 2003; Pham and Fry, 2002). New legislative frameworks to propel university restructuring have been developed, plus waves of government plans, acts, regulations and recommendations are hoisting university into the marketplace, proposing radical changes in all aspect of academic life, from finance to curricula and to research agendas (Ngok and Kwong, 2003; Xu, 2005).

The Restructuring of Higher Education and Policy Making in China

Under the Mao Zedong regime, the adoption of a centralisation policy in the educational sphere gave the central government a relatively tight control over financing, provision and management of education. Living in this policy context, Chinese citizens were accustomed to free education provided by the state sector (Yao, 1984). Openly acknowledging the fact that the traditional welfare/social policy model is inappropriate and increasingly less efficient and competitive in the global market place, the party leaders in the post-Mao era have begun to roll back welfare/social policy provision and financing (Leung, 2004). Under the slogan of 'socialist construction', the central government has tried to reduce its involvement in direct provision of educational services. The government, in their two documents issued in 1985 and 1993 (CCPCC, 1985; CCPCC, 1993), called for the devolution of power to lower levels and the reduction of the rigid government control over schools, and gave local governments power and authority to administer elementary schools. However, local governments are required to bear the cost of education while multiple methods of financing education were encouraged, and the establishments of schools by non-governmental sector was allowed.

In 1998, the leadership of 152 universities originally administered by different ministries was transferred to local governments; 81 of them were merged and administered by the central government (General Office of the State Council, 1998). In 1999, 59 universities originally run by the Ministry of Defence were transferred to the governance of local education departments. In 2000, 97 universities originally administered by the central level were transferred to local governments (General Office of the State Council, 2000, cited in Mok, 2005). In order to resolve problems of overlapping and wastage, an additional 66 universities previously run by ministries in the central government was transferred to the Ministry of Education (MOE). Among these 66 universities, the Ministry of Education administered 22, 27 were merged with existing universities under jurisdiction of the MOE, and 11 of them were merged into five new institutions (General Office of the State Council, 2000, cited in Mok, 2005). With this restructuring of higher education, it seems the authority of the central government has diminished while the autonomy of universities has increased. However, Ngok and Kwong (2003) argue that these changes strengthen the macro-management of education by the government. With more autonomy, university presidents now are responsible for formulation of policies, long-term development plans as well as objectives. Under the macro-management of the government, universities have autonomy in the organisation of teaching and research, hiring staff, and in distribution of funding and materials (Fan, 1995).

Ngok and Kwong (2003) later stated that although the central government has reduced its role in education financing and administration, its influences in curricula has increased, as it has taken various administrative and financial initiatives to influence research and the teaching curricula of higher education. Through the competitive allocation of operational funds, the government has concentrated the limited resources to influence the direction of higher education development, and encourage competition among higher education institutions. Besides, the government also imposed more laws in administering education. More and more laws on education have been enacted since 1980 (Ngok and Kwong, 2003). They also address financing as a major aspect of education restructuring. Funding for education is gravely insufficient. Therefore, the government searched for multiple channels of educational financing, instead of solely relying on the state's support, including local taxes, tuition, overseas donations, fund raising and income from enterprises. Since the 1980s, state funding in higher education has been gradually reduced, while grants, funds and loans from other non-state sectors have become increasingly important. Students are no longer financed by government, but have to pay tuition fees while students from poor family can apply for scholarships or subsidies from their universities (Agelasto and Adamson, 1998; Cheng, 1997). Tuition fees have become the main source of income for higher education institutions. This, therefore, forces educational institutions to engage in different revenue generating activities to find additional funds to sustain their operations.

Restructuring of Higher Education and Policy Making in Vietnam

The higher education system in which specialised and professional education was offered in a comparatively large number of small and mono-disciplinary institutions is also changing. Vietnam is no longer operating the completely centrally planned economy, and graduates are no longer assigned jobs and guaranteed employment upon graduation (Pham and Fry, 2002; 2004). The narrowly focused training model doesn't seem to be appropriate. The transformation of the higher education system was an important part of the transformation from the old to new style economy, and for the creation of an education system that was responsive to the new and diverse demands of the society (Lam, 1992; Ministry of Education and Training, 1997). Ngo et al. (2005) argues: "*globalised policy discourses in education attempt to reconstitute education as an element of economic policy for the*

production of the requisite human capital in the so-called knowledge economy and learning society". Thus, higher education becomes an element of economic policy.

Several important changes have occurred since the introduction of "Doi moi" (Reform/ Renovation), and have left impacts on the education sector in important ways. First, government spending on education has increased from 10.8% of the national budget in 1996 to 17% in 2002. The budget is projected to increase to 18% of the national budget in 2005 and 22% by 2010 (Pham and Fry, 2002; 2004). The second major change during the 1990s was the elimination of many regulations restricting or proscribing the private sector's role in education and training. Although there were only 18 private universities and colleges formed by 2001 in the national total of 197 higher education institutions, the number is increasing rapidly (Pham and Fry, 2002; 2004). Third, related policy changes have allowed public institutions to levy tuition fees, though only within rather strict limits, and to charge for other goods and services sold to the public.

In term of the bureaucratic structure of higher education, Vietnam has also made a significant change. First, three agencies that shared the responsibility for the provision of educational services in Vietnam: the Ministry of Education, the General Department for Vocational Training, and the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Technical Education, were merged to a single ministry, Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), in 1990. MOET has major responsibility for planning and directing Vietnam's system of education, and training as well as for many aspects of curriculum development and material productions. The management and financing of education and training are becoming more decentralised in Vietnam. It can be seen from two different perspectives: vertical and horizontal decentralisation. Vertical decentralisation refers to the functional departments responsible for education and training in the central government. Although MOET plays a primary role, many institutions in Vietnam fall under line ministries or departments. This model can create duplication, confusion and waste. The horizontal decentralisation refers to the different levels of government responsibility. Provincial governments are responsible for higher education and vocational training, except universities. Their role in running educational institutions is at least as large as the role of central government. However, the lack of formal legal management system leads to extreme dependency on MOET, which in turn reduces the ability of each institution to respond to community's needs in the market economy.

Another major change also happened in 1995, when under the government Decree 16/CP dated 27 January 1995, two multi-disciplinary Vietnam National Universities were established by merging several single-disciplinary universities. The Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City (VNU-HCMC) was formed by nine universities in the South, and the Vietnam National University – Hanoi was formed by merging four major single-disciplinary universities in the North. The aim was to create strong, comprehensive multi-disciplinary international standard universities in the key economic, cultural and political cities, in order to develop high national and regional recognition (Ngo et al, 2006). However, the merger of the VNU-HCMC became problematic, as the management became too complicated, and subsequently created inefficiencies in the use of common resources (Ngo et al, 2006). Furthermore, all member universities were independent public universities with long histories and reputations. It has become a great challenge for the leadership to create and sustain the healthy organisational culture and structure. After a few years of operation, the government in February 2001 had to detach some colleges out of VNU-HCMC, leaving only three universities within VNU-HCMC (Government, 2001 a,b,c). It seems that mergers within higher education are a norm of globalisation, particularly in developing countries, where the pressure to create international standard educational institutions is greater than it is in developed countries. Merging seems to be the most economical way to achieve the goal, since there are already foundational and financial resources.

As far as the policy and the politics of policy implementation are concerned, it is particularly important to acknowledge that 'policy intentions may contain ambiguities, contradictions and omissions that provide particular opportunities for parties to the "implementation" process' (Bowe et al., 1992, pp. 13-14). The possibility of successfully implementing large-scale restructuring, as Berkhout and Wielemans (1999) argue, is dimmed in the absence of the micro-details needed for proper reflection and adjustment.

While pointing out problems in merging universities in Vietnam in their case study of VNU-HCMC, Ngo et al. (2006) affirm that it was a necessary move to meet national demands of the new time – the period of promoting the country's industrialisation and modernisation. However, they point out that it is naïve for central policy makers to believe that the top-down policy would be faithfully implemented at local sites. They argue further that

“in order to meet the requirements of the new socioeconomic environment, and to achieve best expected outcomes, the production and implementation of higher education reform policies in Vietnam should not only aim to serve the challenges of globalisation and the accomplishments of particular national interests, but also take into consideration of the local micro-contexts.”

Meanwhile, Mok (2005) applauds the merging of universities in China, citing that it helps avoid the duplication of disciplines in higher education, improves economies of scale, and improves teaching quality and academic research.

Privatisation and Commercialisation of Higher Education

“Higher education is increasingly seen as a commercial product to be bought and sold like any other commodity. Higher commercialisation has now reached the global marketplace. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) is considering a series of proposals to include higher education as one of its concerns, ensuring that the import and export of higher education be subjected to the complex rule and legal arrangements of the WTO protocols and free of most restrictions.” (Altbach, 2001).

Empirical studies reveal that strong market forces and the ideas of corporate management have significantly affected the development and reform of education in many countries (Jones, 1998; Welch, 1998). The economic rhetoric of individual rights and the ideologies of “efficiency” are gaining momentum not only in industrialised countries but also in less developed ones (Bray, 1996). In many nations in East Asia and the Pacific region, the notions of “excellence”, “enhance international competitiveness”, “quality”, “increasing system effectiveness”, and the like have become evident in education reform agendas. Privatisation of educational institutions or sectors has become an instrument of economic and social policy in education, as a more user-pays philosophy takes hold. Education now focuses on results, efficiency and effectiveness, decentralised management environments, flexibility to explore alternatives to public provision of services, establishment of productivity targets and competitive environment between public sector organisations, along with the strengthening of strategic capacities at the centre of organisation. While universities are not immune from the impact of globalisation and managerialism, not all nations or institution have responded to globalisation in the same way, because of the individual specificity in politics, history and cultures.

Like many other developing countries, China and Vietnam’s education systems have been under direct government control, such that they were run and funded by the government. Higher educational institutions are mostly poorly funded by states, while the demand for human resources with high technical capability and new management skills increases. This forces universities to marketise their educational services for more sources of income. Many universities open branches in other provinces, offering technical and financial courses that are in demand in the job market. Other seeks funding through cooperation with other foreign educational institutions with hard currencies. With the participation of non-state run higher educational institutions, competition is now introduced to the “educational market”. Although these private educational institutions are relatively new and ill-equipped, and not in the position to compete with public institutions for students, they have put pressure on state-run educational institutions to improve their teaching quality (Pham and Fry, 2002). Competition is seen as the effective way to elevate the country’s education and technology profile (Ngok and Kwong, 2003).

Pham and Fry (2002) asserted that it is wise to privatise the educational services in order to remove the burden on state budgets. Although the Vietnamese government increased the national budget for education from 10.08% in 1996 to 15% in 2000 of which 80 to 85% was for personnel expenses, it is still not adequate for all public universities. In contrast, the Chinese government has cut down the funding for education to only 60% of the educational cost (Ngok and Kwong, 2003), because higher education is seen as benefiting individuals, those who seek education should contribute (Pham and Fry, 2002; Ngok and Kwong, 2003). Furthermore, the major role of higher education is for skills, not political training, the governments have been willing to decentralise to allow private providers of education.

Since private higher educational institutions have started to emerge in late 1980s, there have been a number of problems in the Vietnamese private higher education sector. The incomplete legal system in Vietnam has led to confusion in policy, practice, and capital distribution (Pham and Fry, 2002). Although teaching programs are more flexible than that in the state-run universities, they are still not consistent with the practical needs of the society. No private higher educational institutions receive any funding from the government. Private educational institutions are supposed to develop their own programs, but in reality, compulsory curriculums

that have excessive theory are still imposed by the government. In addition, teaching methods currently used in Vietnam are still the same as before the reform occurred, which is traditionally teacher-centred. Students are required to sit through the class listening to the lecturers, and they do not have opportunity to do their own research, which also is often assigned by teachers. Moreover, there is a crucial shortage of teaching staff; private universities still have to hire lecturers from the state-run universities; and most experienced lecturers are at the retiring age. There are also problems with student evaluation, and the acceptance of educational credentials of students from private universities upon their graduation. Despite these weaknesses in private higher education in Vietnam, Pham and Fry (2002) pointed out that private higher education has provided access to higher education for more than 104,255 students of the 918,228 total nationally without any expenditure from the government budget. It has also opened up opportunities for more students to access higher education, which has been only open to a small number of the population in the state-run educational institutions. Pham and Fry (2002) also go on to argue that private higher education provides more equity than that of the state-run higher education, as it attracts more students from wealthy families, leaving more spaces in the state-run universities for students from poorer families. However, this argument doesn't have a strong foundation, because, in reality, most students from the urban areas with more resources often get the top spots in the public higher educational institutions. They have more financial support from families helping them to access better educational resources before entering higher education, while children from rural areas and poor families do not have these opportunities. This leaves poor students no choice but to choose the high tuition private universities if they would like to pursue higher education. Students graduating from state-run universities are more highly regarded in the job market. Following this logic, it means the gap between rich and poor in the society is only getting wider.

Private, or for-profit, universities started to emerge in 1980s, and higher education, now regarded as a commodity, came to be recognised as a profitable business. Then came WTO and GATS, promoting free and liberalised trade in higher education across national borders. The ground in developing countries is, therefore, fertile, and the conditions favourable for enterprising foreign providers of higher education from developed countries to move in. In addition to for-profit institutions, many foreign universities with hard currency press for increasing enrolment, and seize the opportunity to capture the market in those countries.

While Vietnamese counterparts applaud private higher education in Vietnam, Chinese scholars point out the intrusion of foreign institutions from developed countries that will inevitably take away student resource as a result of privatisation and commercialisation of higher education (Xu, 2005). The question as to how Chinese universities and colleges can find ways to reach the advanced level of international institutions as well as to survive the international competition could be also raised for those in Vietnam. Since curriculum development in both countries is still partially controlled by the state, students in every discipline are still required to study Marxism and history of the Communist Parties, the problem does not seem to be easily resolved.

Like Vietnam, with the door open to private higher education, students have more opportunities to access higher education. China also uses the university entrance exam model to select students for entry to higher educational institutions. Higher educational institutions in China can enrol additional students on the basis of contracts with enterprises. Students with lower scores in the university entrance examinations are still accepted if they pay their own fees (Ngok and Kwong, 2003). As a result, the level of student enrolments has increased significantly in both countries. While Ngok and Kwong (2003) argue that the increase of student enrolment *"has not only greatly satisfied the huge social demand for higher education, but also stimulated the deflated economy and eased up the huge pressure of employment in China"*, Xu (2005) and Pham and Fry (2002), however, question the quality of student intake as a result of this expansion. Many students who are accepted to universities and colleges are, in fact, less competent in academic development than expected. Furthermore, the shortage of qualified universities lecturers has been the chronic problem in both countries, as young lecturers prefer to do non-teaching jobs with higher pay and experienced lecturers are retiring. This only holds back China and Vietnam longer before they can guarantee a high quality of education that meet the international educational standard.

Ngok and Kwong (2003) argue that while educational opportunities have expanded rapidly, and the gap between demand and supply of education decreased, especially in the sphere of higher education, not all Chinese people benefited from that. The equality of educational opportunity has in fact worsened. There is an increasing rural-urban disparity, which has widened since the 1970s, in terms of educational opportunity. The enrolment ratios of rural students at all levels are lower compared to their urban counterparts. Many rural students discontinue studying due to financial hardships. More importantly, state funds for education in rural

areas have always been insufficient. Evidently, this contributes to widen the gap of knowledge and financial resources between urban and rural. This isn't only China's problem, but also Vietnam's.

A number of delivery methods of higher education are available as a result of the marketisation of higher education. With the presence of foreign providers, students can have degrees from a foreign institution while sitting at their home country's university. However, an increasing number of students are opting for cross-border delivery of higher education. Ngok and Kwong (2003) mentioned that distance learning has started to gain prominence; new information and communication technologies made it possible for courses to be delivered online via the Internet.

Discussion and Conclusion

I hope that the purpose of this paper is clear: to identify the impacts of globalisation on policy making on higher education in Vietnam and China, and to understand the practice of higher education under the influence of globalisation. In summarising the consequences of globalisation for educational policy, let us discuss some of the economic impacts, the political impacts, the social and the cultural impacts. In the economic context, globalisation can undermine the traditional purpose for which universities are created: creation of new knowledge and preparing knowledge workers for the work force. Ngo et al. (2005) rightly put *"Globalised policy discourses in education attempt to reconstitute education as an element of economic policy for the production of the requisite human capital in the so-called knowledge economy and learning society"*. Schools have to reconsider their mission in light of changing job markets in the new economic environment; new skills and flexibility to adapt to changing job demands; and how to deal with an increasingly competitive international labour market. The broader economic impacts of globalisation tend to force national educational policies into shrinking the public sector and providing education in the most cost-effective way, promoting market approaches to school choice, decentralisation of management, performance assessment, and deregulation in order to encourage new providers of educational services. This impact may enhance the economy and reduce financial burden on national budgets, the quality of education may suffer as a result of marketisation and privatisation.

In the political context, it has been the constraint on national policy making posed by external demands from foreign providers, which come from more developed countries. At the same time, economic coordination and exchange have become increasingly well regulated, and bigger transnational institutions are emerging to regulate global economic activities. There is the danger that once higher education has been liberalised, it is the rules of GATS and WTO that will regulate the market. As a result, countries like China and Vietnam will be flooded with foreign and private providers, delivering essentially profitable subjects. They will pose serious competition to local universities, leaving the later with non-profitable subjects, such as arts, humanities and science, which are vital for the countries' development.

In the cultural and social context, globalisation promotes multiculturalism. There is a democratic dimension to globalisation via expanded access to the Internet and electronic mail, and cable TV that promotes the Americanisation of taste and values. The increasing number of students seeking education overseas, Pham and Fry (2004) raise concern about the social and political consequences when students return in large numbers. Language is also another factor of influence, as English has become the common language for foreign providers to deliver lectures. Consequently, this may lead to losing national values and identities. In addition, the presence of a large number of foreign providers could also further increase the social division in these countries. Affluent students and those from the middle class will opt for enrolment in private, foreign institutions, leaving public institutions, which are already poorly funded and unable to afford to offer the best academic environment, to cater for poorer students.

With the progress of globalisation and increasing influence of the world economy, the higher education systems in the developing countries like China and Vietnam may move further to the decentralisation, merging, marketisation and privatisation. The question exists as to what steps countries should take to minimise the negative impacts of these practices, and how to nurture and sustain the positive impacts. Chinese and Vietnamese governments may not be fully committed to the ideology underpinning the global economy; they have been driven to it by more pragmatic consideration of financial stringency and desire for economic advancement (Ngok and Kwong, 2003). Nevertheless, integration into the world economy has led to the redefinition of the role of education in China and Vietnam. For policy makers, impacts of globalisation have to be taken into consideration as a factor, which has opened up opportunities for many people, yet has been increasing social disparities, and widening the gap between the rich and the poor.

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