

Solutions for Promoting International Cooperation Activities at Universities in Vietnam Today

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Abstract: *International cooperation at universities plays a crucial role in both education and scientific research, especially in the context of modern education development. The international cooperation activities at universities in Vietnam are considered essential and increasingly assert their important role in the development process and integration with the global higher education system in general and in Vietnam in particular. Over the past 35 years of national renewal, Vietnam has achieved significant success in international cooperation in education and training with various successful training cooperation programs, ODA projects, lecturer and student exchange projects, international training partnerships, etc. However, international cooperation activities at universities in Vietnam still face certain limitations, such as a large number of signed MOUs and MOAs whose implementation and results have not met expectations and progress, a limited number of prestigious universities worldwide engaging in training and scientific research activities with Vietnamese universities, and a small number of leading scientists participating in teaching and research at universities in Vietnam. The article highlights the significance of international cooperation at universities, provides an overview of the outcomes of international cooperation activities at universities in Vietnam, and suggests solutions to enhance international cooperation activities among universities in Vietnam today.*

Keywords: International cooperation, cooperation activity, solution, university, Vietnam.

1. Introduction

Globalization and international integration in education have become an inevitable trend. Additionally, the trend of globalization and the explosion and strong development of science and technology are driving continuous innovation in higher education in each country, necessitating international integration to quickly update new trends and knowledge in the training process of universities. Therefore, deep and extensive international integration in education and training is one of the key tasks of universities in Vietnam today. In recent times, Vietnamese universities have diversified their international exchange relationships with universities and research institutes worldwide. This has led to the implementation of various equipment and training projects to help improve infrastructure and quickly update training programs. International cooperation programs focus on specific activities such as exchanging lecturers and students, cooperating on scientific research, training, cultural exchange, economic exchange, etc. Through international cooperation activities, universities have attracted many foreign experts and volunteers to work and directly support teaching and research activities, thereby providing opportunities for university staff, lecturers, and students to enhance their professional capabilities, promote training links, and exchange experiences in research, training, and management with international partners. Nevertheless, university-level international cooperation remains restricted, with signed cooperation papers not fully executed. Despite

the establishment of the university's global cooperation network, there remains a lack of strong coordination between specialized faculties and functional divisions. Therefore, universities in Vietnam need to enhance international cooperation activities to effectively contribute to improving the quality of human resources.

2. The importance of international cooperation activities at universities

In the current globalized and internationalized context, the development of education is an inevitable trend in the process of increasing the exchange of knowledge and experiences across nations. This exchange is carried out by individuals, information technology and communication, and the shifting structure of the economy. In a broader context, universities are not just educational institutions but also prestigious environments that lead various fields in society through their research activities. The continuous development of universities occurs within an open environment influenced by new external factors. In the socio-economic context, international cooperation in education in general and higher education in particular is an inevitable trend to enhance research quality, training quality, competitiveness, improve infrastructure, etc.

Reputable rankings use criteria related to international factors such as the proportion of international students, the number of international scientific publications, the number

of international lecturers, and the number of joint training programs with foreign countries. According to Quacquarelli Symonds, 5 out of 13 ranking criteria are related to international factors: Proportion of international lecturers, proportion of international students, proportion of international lecturers and researchers, proportion of students going on foreign exchange. Quacquarelli Symonds states that the proportion of international lecturers and students demonstrates the attraction and ability to build the international brand of each educational institution by providing a multicultural environment, fostering cultural exchange, and developing soft skills - increasingly valuable skills for employers. For Times Higher Education, the international outlook (lecturers, students, and research) comprises 7.5% of the weight in the five main index groups. This includes the following ratios: international students/domestic students (2.5%), international lecturers/domestic lecturers (2.5%) and international cooperation (2.5%). According to Times Higher Education, the ability to attract university students, postgraduates, and lecturers from around the world is the key to a university's success in strengthening its international position.

The current form of international cooperation is incredibly varied; it includes cooperation in scientific research, training, managerial capacity development, and university administration. In addition to helping to increase quality, international cooperation initiatives enable the creation of university growth plans and strategies for the future. These days, international cooperation is broad and integrates into all facets of university life, not only at the major or field level. This helps institutions become more globally integrated and perform at a higher level. Additionally, international cooperation does not solely originate from highly esteemed colleges abroad supporting Vietnamese universities as they progressively become more integrated into the global community. Nowadays, it has a two-way nature based on the spirit of mutual benefit based on the advantages that the parties have as well as mutual understanding and integration into diplomatic programs between regions, cities, or even national levels. International cooperation is not only an inevitable trend but has actually become an inseparable part of the life of a university today. In the future, international cooperation will no longer be seen as a supplement or a full component of a university, but its role will be more prominent and more deeply integrated into school activities.

International cooperation and exchange with foreign universities has become essential in higher education institutions because of their advanced educational levels, the need for a broad and deep knowledge base, and their ability to connect with information internationally and access cutting-edge scientific and technical foundations. In a world without cultural boundaries, people will gain a deeper understanding of themselves. For students in higher education institutions, participating in international student exchange programs becomes even more attractive as it is a time when students begin to accumulate more work experiences to prepare for their future. Engaging in university-level cultural exchange programs will undoubtedly provide valuable experiences and insights.

3. Results of international cooperation activities at universities in Vietnam

In recent years, especially since the early 1990s, international cooperation activities in education have provided tens of thousands of bachelors, engineers, and masters in various fields to meet international standards. Particularly notable is the field of economics and business administration. Through international cooperation activities, many large universities in Vietnam have acquired a team of lecturers capable of teaching international programs and engaging in lecturer exchanges with numerous universities worldwide. Additionally, Vietnamese universities have a team of education and training management staff capable of developing and overseeing international programs. Several training programs at some universities have been recognized as equivalent by reputable European, American, and Australian institutions, allowing for credit transfers. Many universities in Vietnam have joined international education alliances, with some being recognized as official members by reputable foreign educational organizations.

Currently, many universities in Vietnam offer international training programs provided by foreign universities or through partnerships between Vietnamese and foreign universities. In these programs, graduates receive degrees (bachelor's, engineer's, or master's) from either foreign universities or joint degrees from both foreign and domestic universities.

International cooperation in scientific research has also been yielding significant benefits, enabling Vietnamese experts, lecturers, and students to access the latest research methods, knowledge, and results, helping many institutions succeed in staying ahead of global trends and adapting to the pace of contemporary international environments. International cooperation in research has yielded significant results through the publication of joint scientific publications and the establishment of common research facilities in Vietnam, demonstrating the effectiveness of this approach.

A vibrant international cooperation activity at universities in Vietnam involves student and lecturer exchanges as well as cooperation with researchers, contributing to creating an environment for academic exchange, cultural exchange, and mutual understanding. Initially, this helps students integrate into the international environment and develop broad perspectives on a globalized world in the borderless working environment of their era. This exchange assists students in building social relationships, knowledge foundations, skills, and attitudes for their future careers.

International cooperation activities at universities in Vietnam in particular and Vietnamese higher education in general have actively and proactively integrated into the region and the world, bringing new opportunities for learners and playing a significant role in training high-quality human resources to serve the industrialization and modernization of the country. However, alongside these efforts, international cooperation in education and training at Vietnamese universities in recent years has faced some difficulties and shortcomings. The demand for international training cooperation is increasing in scale, becoming more

complex and diverse in methods, accompanied by higher quality requirements. On one hand, it demands more effort from learners, while on the other hand, it requires partner institutions in Vietnam to invest in both physical infrastructure and human resources. The Vietnamese higher education market will open up more with increased participation from educational organizations and foreign universities, leading to greater and fiercer competition not only in tuition fees but, more importantly, in the quality of services provided.

4. Solutions for promoting international cooperation at universities in Vietnam today

4.1. Promulgation of strategic plans, medium-term plans, and annual plans on international cooperation activities of universities

- Review all ongoing international cooperation projects at universities to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each project, drawing lessons for developing future international cooperation project plans.
- Develop and issue a strategic plan for the international cooperation activities of universities, based on which to establish medium-term and annual plans for international cooperation activities.
- Set goals for the development of international cooperation projects in terms of progress, quantity, and quality at the university.
- Assign specific tasks to relevant units for the construction, management, and implementation of international cooperation projects.
- Develop plans to search for partners and funding sources for the construction and implementation of international cooperation projects.
- Draft plans, then consult the opinions of exemplary staff, lecturers, students within the university, and close partners of the university, and adjust the plans accordingly.
- Regularly review and adjust plans to suit each stage of development and practical implementation, ensuring that the plans align with reality.

4.2. Promulgation and implementation of documents for selecting, monitoring, and evaluating international cooperation partners of the university

- Review and evaluate existing documents for selecting, monitoring, and evaluating international cooperation partners to provide directions for supplementation, adjustment, or new compilation. This is an essential step in refining documents, especially those with international elements. The explanation for this is that, just as national foreign policy fluctuates frequently, so do the workings of international universities, which adapt to their unique circumstances as well as to broader sociological and diplomatic developments.
- Conduct an accurate assessment of the current status of existing international partners to identify strengths and weaknesses while also proposing more effective guiding measures and instructions.
- Develop guidelines for selecting, monitoring, and

evaluating international partners, including specific provisions on management activities, assignment of functions, duties at each level and department, and a clear and specific management hierarchy to avoid overlaps.

- Organize conferences to guide the selection, monitoring, and evaluation of international partners for managerial staff of functional units, department officials, and university lecturers.
- Regularly disseminate guidelines on selecting, monitoring, and evaluating international partners from the Ministry of Education and Training and universities through the official university website and internal newsletters, clearly outlining the functions and responsibilities of relevant departments in selecting, monitoring, and evaluating international partners, as well as the steps involved.
- Conduct quality assessments of international partners for selection, monitoring, and evaluation purposes. Develop and update quality assessment tools, including standards, criteria, guidelines, and especially legal frameworks for this type of work. Here, standards refer to the level of requirements and criteria that the university or its international cooperation projects must meet to be recognized as meeting quality assessment standards.

4.3. Review and completion of the university's international cooperation network

- Compile a list of selected partners after a thorough review based on specific criteria to meet the university's strategic plan regarding international relations activities.
- Annually, assigned departments at each unit are responsible for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of external activities to rigorously review the outlined plan and assess key performance indicators for timely adjustments. Following each assessment, units address and improve existing issues while enhancing international cooperation activities with partners.
- Continue to engage the contributions and support of alumni who currently hold high-level leadership positions in local governments and businesses.
- Invite managers from businesses, leading foreign scientists, and experts to participate in teaching, sharing practical knowledge, and providing feedback to enhance the university's training programs, playing the role of critics and scientific consultants in the acceptance councils of scientific research topics at all levels and the thesis and dissertation defense councils.
- Develop various new forms of cooperation, such as cooperations to promote innovative teaching methods and share teaching materials from partner universities in developed countries.
- Implement extensively across the entire system the development goals of the network and external relations, establishing a crucial foundation to drive the rapid expansion of partner relationships with the university.
- Encourage faculties to strengthen network development and external relations to contribute to the advancement of these activities, directly benefiting the promotion of innovative teaching methods within departments and helping to achieve the university's vision, mission, and strategic objectives.

- Assign functions and tasks should not overlap but should not be separated in international cooperation activities, where the functions of units act as a continuous chain for an operation. Functional units carry out work under the general direction of the Rector and coordinate with each other to achieve the highest efficiency.
- Regularly organize meetings, reviews, and summaries to timely evaluate the management of international cooperation projects in related units. Draw lessons, make timely adjustments, and make additions to necessary changes for the project. Encourage and remind through various forms: education, motivation, praise, rewards, etc.

4.4. Diversification of content and forms of international cooperation at the university

- Expand international cooperation programs to ensure all departments in the university have opportunities to exchange, study, and research with foreign partners. Expand the scale of training foreign exchange students. Enhance training linkages with foreign countries while monitoring conditions to ensure quality and regularly conducting quality assessments of training programs linked to foreign countries. Expand and develop internship programs abroad.
- Enhance the search for international cooperation programs and projects in education, science and technology, and social services. Coordinate with relevant ministries, departments, and other agencies to effectively implement international cooperation activities and strengthen international cooperation.
- Increase the organization of international conferences and seminars. Enhance the exchange of staff and students with educational and scientific research institutions in the region and internationally. Establish library partnerships, exchange scientific information, and publish internationally.
- Regularly organize and create opportunities for staff and learners to participate in international conferences, seminars on education, training, and scientific research; participate in educational and scientific organizations, networks, forums, and regional and international professional conferences.
- Enhance foreign language proficiency for staff and learners; cooperate to develop and implement specialized programs in English with the participation of foreign lecturers.

4.5. Implementation of improvements for the international cooperation activities of the university

- Continue to implement certain improvements that not only help maintain relationships with partners but also expand and enrich the network of partners and appropriate international relations in line with social changes, development, and international integration to achieve strategic development goals and meet the requirements of relevant parties.
- Maintain the development of new policies to support staff and lecturers with scientific research works or articles published in international journals and policies to attract foreign individuals for study, work, and research

at the university.

- Further upgrade infrastructure to be more modern, meeting the needs of learners and partner requirements.
- Implement improvements to the electronic information system to quickly and effectively deliver information about networks and international activities to relevant parties.
- Regularly organize delegations to visit and work with current partner institutions and new foreign universities to seize opportunities to establish new relationships, maintain and strengthen friendly relations. In addition to the purpose of maintaining, consolidating, and expanding international cooperation, these trips to foreign universities also provide opportunities for university leaders and managers to learn management experience from foreign counterparts and inspect the actual infrastructure conditions of partner institutions.
- Regularly exchange information with partners, actively seek basic information sources such as project objectives, link the strategic development goals of the university, support the university's general objectives, and provide information about partners.
- Enhance the search for information from Vietnamese diplomatic representatives abroad and explore information through various channels, directly or indirectly, to find new partners suitable for the current conditions of the institution.
- Actively seek and participate in international university organizations and networks to develop collaborative relationships, seek opportunities to engage in collaborative training and research projects with international partners, find scholarships for staff, lecturers, and students of the institution, and seek financial resources to maintain and develop international cooperation projects in training.

5. Conclusion

International cooperation plays a positive role in shaping and innovating education, scientific research, and implementing advanced applications. This process brings valuable experiences to Vietnamese universities in innovating thinking, educational management methods, selecting directions, improving training systems and processes, and getting closer to advanced education systems worldwide. International cooperation increasingly plays a vital role in the development of universities, enhancing the quality of higher education towards modernization, accessing advanced higher education in the region and globally, creating conditions for sustainable development of higher education institutions, training high-quality human resources, and serving the development of the local area and the country. Promoting international cooperation is an urgent requirement, a mandatory task, and a societal demand for universities in Vietnam. Therefore, Vietnamese universities need to implement comprehensive solutions to promote international cooperation, contributing to training human resources for the local area, region, and country.

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