

ASSESSMENT FOR THE ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL OF THE RESEARCH SYSTEM OF SOCIAL SCIENCES IN VIETNAM

Dr. Tran Xuan Dinh

Former Deputy Head, Organization-Personnel Department, MoST

Abstract:

Social sciences in Vietnam have a long years history and they keep a very important position among the system of sciences. The organizational model of the research system of social sciences now passes a change process oriented to modernity, democracy, socialization and autonomy. This change would link closely scientific research activities and graduate and post-graduate teaching activities. This paper presents studies, analyses and assessments of the strong aspects as well as shortcomings of the organizational model of the research system of social-human sciences in Vietnam during the recent time. On basis of outcomes of studies, many recommendations are proposed for renovation of the organizational model of the research system of social-human sciences in Vietnam in the coming time.

I. INTRODUCTION

The research system of social sciences in Vietnam has a long story of development rooted since 1953 when the country passed the war time against French colonialism. It started with a small department for Literature-History-Geography studies established by Decision No. 34/NQ/TW dated 2 December 1953 by the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Party of Laborers. 60 years passed and the small research department of that day became a full system in the field of social sciences covering research institutions of the Vietnamese State, the Communist Party of Vietnam, socio-political organizations, socio-professional organizations and non-government organizations. The scope of research covers all the scientific fields including social sciences, human sciences, economic and business management, cultures, arts and pedagogical science.

The strong development, in term of quality and quantity, of the research system of social sciences in Vietnam is closely linked to development of the country, the growth of the State management system and the community of researchers in the field of social sciences. From another side, the growth of

the research system of social sciences is reflected in the links between organizations, individual researchers and international cooperation contacts. Today we have developed cooperation activities with counterparts in many countries including Russia, China, France, US, Germany, Japan, Korea, Laos, Cambodia and others. The cooperation covers large fields of research, information exchange and staff training.

This paper is to present the analysis and assessment of the research system of social sciences in Vietnam. It is also to provide some proposals to renovate the organizational model of the system for the future development.

II. POSITIVE ASPECTS IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL OF THE RESEARCH SYSTEM OF SOCIAL SCIENCE IN VIETNAM

1. Organizational model of the research system of social sciences meets the requirements in various stages of the country's development

The research system of social sciences was formed from the war time against French colonialism and passed a long way of development. The history of development passed the four important stages, namely:

- 1953 - 1959: Stage of establishment and initial development. The immediate tasks were to collect and study the Vietnamese history, geography and literature, and edit historical, geographical and littertural documents to serve the resistance war and economical activities;
- 1959 - 1975: Stage of growth. The research activities were to serve the two stratal tasks of the construction of North Vietnam and the liberation war of South Vietnam. At this stage the most important research institutes were established within the Vietnam Institute of Social Sciences under management of the State Committee of Sciences;
- 1976 - 1985: Stage of development after the reunification of the country. The system of research institutes was extended to include research organizations and universities in many ministries;
- 1986 - now: Stage of the Doi Moi and full development. The organization system for research of social sciences passes a fast development process. Some NGOs in field of social sciences were set up. The formation of high qualification researchers in field of social sciences, particularly for post-graduate level, passes a very fast growth.

The development of the research system of social sciences has been coupled with the country's development. It made great contributions to meet the requirement of development process, namely the studies for the development strategies, policies for socio-economic development, social

awareness and knowledge, international experiences and etc. Particularly the research of social sciences has a great role in consulting and training activities for high qualified staffs.

The research system of social sciences was set up and implemented to meet the requirements of the initial stage of development. The next requirements of the national development and the international integration put new demands of restructuring and renovating the system of activities. They set up the objectives as well as responsibilities to management organizations and researchers in field of social sciences

2. Organizational model of the research system of social sciences implements the initial steps of international integration

The world is passing the globalization process. Every nation, in its development strategies, would identify its position in the global development picture. The immediate objectives of the research system of social sciences, of course, are oriented to the national interests but the research results could have also global values and contributions to the human knowledge. These links are clearly seen in research fields of culture, literature and archeology. These objectives can be achieved only on basis of international integration. A Vietnamese proverb says “We can win if we understand ourselves and the others”. Large topics of research would provide the background for international integration.

In research activities, from one side, we study the development experiences from other nations to identify opportunities for our development. From another side, we are ready to share and exchange our experiences in research fields of history, geography, culture, education and science-technology with partners. The activities of international exchange and cooperation would let us to improve our research system, knowledge level, system structure, research methodology, language and communication level and human resource development. As result we would have competent staffs and they, in their turn, give contributions to the country’s development as well as consolidation of the international position of Vietnam. The international community would understand better and then would support Vietnam. The integration to the international research community is one of the greatest initial successes of the research system of social sciences during the recent time.

It is worth to underline that they are only the initial success because we need more time to get stronger to go off-shore. Our most weakness is related to the foreign language capacity, particularly English for communication (those who disagree with it would be considered as exceptional case). It is

possible to say that the generations from 1960s to 1990s experienced seriously the limited capacity of foreign languages. The generation from 2000 is the transition one and the younger generations are seen to cover better this shortcoming. The low level of English would limit our activities in document search and access, communication, exchange, discussion, scientific report and publication works. It is obvious that the younger generations with their better language preparation would have a stronger integration in communication, experience exchange, research coordination with international community.

3. Organizational model of the research system of social sciences is the open model for development and improvement

The last 60 years were the long step of development of the research system of social sciences, particularly in organizational aspects. The open model is based on the Law of Science-Technology according to which every organization and individual (of all the economical sectors, local or overseas) are permitted to establish science-technology research units and conduct science-technology activities within the Vietnamese territory. The “open” principle would say that they need only to respect the legal regulations and have no limitation in volume, scale, scope of activities and financial sources. The open model reflects the policies of the Party and the State. They create opportunities of development for all the scientists to give their contribution to the socio-economic development of the country. They are also to give opportunities to scientists to develop and implement their capacities. Clearly those scientists who do not go this way would never implement their capacities even when our system is the open one.

The concept of open system is applied for the whole research system. In context of the actual limited financial potential, this open system requires the restructure for objectives to become more scientific, efficient, concentrated and large scaled. In this process the big attentions should be taken to avoid the overlapping tendencies.

4. Organizational model of the research system of social sciences allows to conduct social science activities in a largely open and objectively independent way to serve the national interests

For purpose to facilitate the approach to this analysis and assessment, first of all, it is necessary to refer to some regulations and guidelines of the Party and the State in field of science-technology management, namely:

- Resolution No. 24-NQ/TW dated 30 Mars 1991 of the Politbureau on the science-technology in the “Doi Moi” policies with the emphasis

made for the construction of democratic rules in science-technology activities;

- Science-Technology Law with the emphasis made for:
 - + Democratic and equal principles in science-technology activities;
 - + Rights for all organizations and individuals to conduct science-technology activities;
 - + Rights for all organizations and individuals to establish or participate in establishment of R&D organizations and science-technology service organizations. They need to register their activities in competent State agencies and get the license for science-technology activities;
 - + Permission, for the first time, for overseas Vietnamese, overseas organizations and scientists to establish or jointly establish science-technology organizations and register for activities in Vietnam.
- Resolution No. 115/2005/ND-CP dated 06 September 2005 by the Government for the self-management status of public science-technology organizations.

The above mentioned documents demonstrate the State policies to encourage the establishment of democratic environment for science-technology activities.

Maslow had noted two aspects of motivations for scientists, namely to be respected (mentally) and to be satisfied (materially). These requirements can be met only when they live and implement capacities in the environment of democracy and freedom for creative works. The democracy is reflected in the free discussion and presentation of points of view, free determination of topics of research, free determination of research methods and free selection of co-researchers, freedom and self-control in publication of research results, free dedication of research results for development of the community. It is possible to emphasize a higher level of democracy which is the freedom and the happiness to give contributions for the social development, for the people and the nation. This aspect gets particularly important in the field of social-human sciences.

5. Organizational model of the research system of social sciences gets oriented to the socialization

The socialization is seen in the rights of every organization and individual (no different treatment in qualification level, sex, age, economic sector status and etc.) to conduct research activities.

The system of policies for human resource management in fields of science-technology reflects the State fixed orientation to socialization of science-technology activities. The organizational aspects make focus to all the types of organizations including national, overseas and jointly set up organizations. The individual aspects make focus on individual scientists including Vietnamese nationals, overseas Vietnamese and foreigners. Naturally the State policies require them to conduct their activities in conformity to legal regulations. The the Science-Technology Law and Resolution No. 81/2002/ND-CP dated 17 October 2002 by the Government can be seen as fundamental documents to regulate this matter.

The concepts of socialization of science-technology activities, in general, and social-human science activities, in particular, are here to indicate that:

- Scientific activities do not exclude any one, even peoples who do not get a proper formation (meaning those who has no official certificate of formation and gets nicknamed “bare footed researchers”);
- Scientific activities can be conducted by the established organizations or by individuals themselves;
- Fields, scale and scope of research activities can be diversified (excluding the fields prohibited by the Science-Technology Law);
- Capital and financial resources mobilized for research activities can be diversified;
- Research results get protected by the State regulations. Researchers are fully entitled to decide the beneficiaries of their research results.

The socialization means the orientation to the development of scientific R&D organizations, the maximal mobilization of resources (human, material and financial resources) for development, the creation of equal opportunities for scientists to give their contributions to the country’s development.

6. Organizational model of the research system of social sciences is oriented to the status of autonomy

Recently in the State issued documents for science-technology management, it is usual to see the words “self-management” or “self-control” (namely Resolution No. 115/2005/ND-CP dated 06 September 2005 by the Government).

In some aspects the Vietnamese concept of “self-management” or “self-control” is similar to the Western concept of “autonomy”. The State assigns

the large self-management rights to science-technology organizations so that they can decide themselves the model of activities, targets of activities, organizational chart, human management, financial management, international cooperation and etc.

In this paper the author would like to discuss in more details about a specific “right” for universities and research institutes which scientists want to get from the State. Namely it concerns the status of establishments to confer the scientific titles of Professor and Associate Professor. As by international practice, the right to confer these titles is assigned to universities and the universities are responsible for their reputation when they confer these titles. In practice the titles are conferred to lecturers of the universities. These titles reflect the qualification, the teaching career of lecturers and then the salary they can get (the universities have the budget for salary of their staffs). There is no title of Professor or Associate Professor conferred by the State to lecturers for the whole their life. In Korea, for example, the private universities have the right to confer the title of Professor and Associate Professor. Naturally the State conducts its management function for the conferring procedure by issuing the unified standards and regulations as well as its controlling function.

In fact, in the world there is no title of Professor and Associate Professor conferred without so-called “destination” (meaning that they may not be attached to any teaching establishment) and for the whole life. These titles have to be attached to concrete universities and research institutes. From another side, the universities and research institutes when assigned to confer these titles cannot do it in a “generous” way. They have to deliberate it, even in a tougher way, because of the following reasons.

- They have to base their decision to confer the titles on the set of standards issued by the State to fit the nationwide unified system of management and some other rules additionally issued by the universities and research institutes to meet their actual requirements;
- The universities and research institutes need to keep their high reputation for the titles they confer;
- The universities and research institutes need to pay the salary at the level corresponding to the scientific titles they confer. This reason would play the decisive role.

7. Organizational model of the research system of social sciences is oriented to the objectives of human resources development through the links to universities

Actually in Vietnam the human force having the higher education qualification has a very low share in the total labor force of the society. Some sources [6] say it has only 2% by 2000 which is much lower than some other countries in the region (5% in China and 8% in India). This situation puts heavy loads to the human resource development. It is not easy to make a clear announcement that our teaching staffs experience a large shortage in term of quality and quantity. Many teachers have to give lectures three times more than the fixed norms. It is totally difficult to cover this gap in a few days. The ultimate solution is to link closely universities and research institutes for development of human resources in the following directions.

- Maximizing the number of researching staff in institutes who can give additionally lectures in universities.
- Encouraging research institutes to conduct the formation and training activities for post-graduate and doctor grades through their coordination with universities. In the actual context we need to take to account that the private universities in field of social-human sciences prefer the formation mainly for economic management, financial-banking specialties and foreign languages.

III. SHORTCOMINGS IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL OF THE RESEARCH SYSTEM OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

From the scientific point of view we can see some shortcomings, from the system structure to the operation mode, of the the actual research system of social sciences. This consideration is presented for purpose of discussion and analysis to identify the common view to set up a more proper and efficient model of the research system of social sciences.

1. The State owned research organizations have the dispersed development

It is possible to say that the development of State owned research organizations almost do not follow any planning scheme. It concerns particularly the economic specialties (Vietnam economy, world economy, sector economy, regional economy, local economy and etc.). The strong development in term of quantity in context of limited budget for sciences leads to the inefficient operation of research institutes. Many research topics overlap. Many important topics of contemporary development get missed

(including forecast of economic development, development sociology, economic statistics and analysis).

2. Social science research divisions in universities are not organized in a proper and scientific way in context of low State investment volume

Actually there exist research divisions in universities and they operate on self-financing basis. Their researchers are mainly from departments of the universities and from exterior organizations. Their research works are voluntary and additional jobs. Therefore the research works are small scaled and depend much on the reputation of leading researchers.

It would be a better chance for us to have a survey of social science research divisions of the two biggest universities of Vietnam in this field, namely University of Social Sciences and Humanities, VNU Hanoi and University of Social Sciences and Humanities, VNU HoChiMinh City.

University of Social Sciences and Humanities, VNU Hanoi has 11 social science research centers, namely:

- Asia-Pacific Research Center;
- Gender and Development Research Center;
- Center of Chinese Studies;
- International Culture Research Center;
- Contemporary Religion Research Center;
- Population and Social Affairs Research Center;
- Policy Analysis and Research Center;
- Consultancy and Research Center for Socio-Economic Development of Ethnic Minorities;
- Consultancy Center for Legal Affairs;
- Center of Korean Language and Korean Studies;
- Center of Foreign Languages and International Education Exchange Promotion.

University of Social Sciences and Humanities, VNU HoChiMinh City has 9 social science research centers, namely:

- Vocational Promotion and Human Resource Development Consultancy Center;
- Center of Foreign Languages;

- Human Resource Training and Development Center;
- Social Development Consultancy and Research Center;
- Center for Vietnamese and South-East Studies;
- Religion Research Center;
- Center for Japanese Studies;
- Center for Korean Studies;
- Center of Taiwan Education Information.

The list of centers shows that there is almost no “Master designer” for research topics. This leads to a situation of dispersing and even overlapping research activities (for example, topics of *human resource development*)

The most important and positive point here, however, is the fact that the two biggest universities of Vietnam orient their development to research activities (to become “research universities”) and to the regional grade. We support their efforts to achieve these objectives and recommend to carry out an innovative restructure of centers. We call also for the stronger State investment for research centers of universities and then the gradual shift of social science research activities to universities.

3. Organizational model of the research system of social sciences in the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences has an irrational structure

The irrational structure is seen in the following aspects:

- Axe oriented structure

This structure leads to surplus and lack at the same time. Actually the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences has three institutes for Asian studies, namely North-East Asia Research Institute, South-East Research Institute and China Research Institute, one institute for European studies and one institute for American studies. This structure leads to the absolute absence of research institutes for West Asia, Africa and Oceania.

From another side, from global vision, China is an East Asia country and why we need to have two research institutes, one for North-East Asia and the another for China?

- Overlapping structure

One can pose easily a question: why the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences has two economic research institutes, namely Vietnam Economics Institute and World Economics and Politics Institute. Naturally, Vietnam

Economics Institute does not limit its research activities only for intrinsic economic problems of Vietnam.

Therefore it is necessary to conduct studies to establish the rational structure of the Academy of Social Sciences for a country of 86 million population. We would like to emphasize the objective to have the rational structure. The essential matter here is not the size, scale or volume of staff but the quality of human resources for development.

4. Organizational model of the research system of social sciences starts the operation mode which is based on principles of socialization in its initial stage but the operation does not get smooth

The socialization-model is reflected in the multimodal structure of research organizations including the State owned research institutes, research units of political, socio-economic, socio-vocational and private organizations. The policy of the Party and the State is oriented to mobilize in maximum all the resources for the country's development. In fact, social-human scientists want, through their activities, to give contributions to the development of the country, community of ethnic minorities, women and children. We may remind that the scientific activities have their high social-human values and meanings. From this stand we, against our willing, have to address dissatisfaction to a very small group of social scientists who profit the socialization policy for social-human science activities to cover their targets of "politization" of scientific activities. They go against the national interests. They would not do it and they are unable to do it too.

5. Organizational model of the research system of social sciences really is not linked to production activities and the social realities

In many cases we have a common practice to propose so-called "in-pocket" research topics or, in a few cases, we carry out researches on the themes demanded by the State organizations (for example, the topic "Mekong Delta region belongs to Vietnam" - the fact which is historically clear already) rather than to set up research topics raised from production requirements or social realities. We can list some of the very important topics:

- Forecast of economic development and crucial economic sectors (production of rice, coffee, rubber, and etc.);
- Psychological particularities of rice cultivators in Red River and Mekong River regions (which are reflected in their customs, cultivating practice, post-harvest product reserving practice, consuming products, etc). These particularities are closely linked to a higher rate of production activities and a better quality of life;

- Low efficiency of the privileged selection program of education applied for rural and mountainous regions and measures for improvement;
- Fisherman and the sea defence problems;
- Research topics required by enterprises;
- Training of human resources for enterprises.

Scientific research activities when closely bound to matters of production and social realities would give a higher effectiveness. And in this environment they get more financial resources for development.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RENOVATION OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN FIELD OF SOCIAL-HUMAN SCIENCES

On basis of research of positive and negative aspects of the organizational model of scientific research in fields of social-human sciences the following recommendations are proposed for renovation of the model. The recommendations are related to the improvement of working environment and life quality of researchers for their higher efficiency of works.

1. Renovation oriented to centralization of State-owned research organizations

From one side, the concentration of State-owned research organizations is focused for:

- a. Renovation of the system structure of research institutes of the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences to focus resources for development namely:
 - Removing the axe oriented structure which is geographically based (big countries, group of countries, regions and continents);
 - Setting up new research institutes based on the development level of concerned countries such as Research Institute of Developing Countries, Research Institute of Developed Countries and Research Institute of Low Developed Countries;
 - Combining into a unique economic research institute;
 - Merging research institutes of literature, philosophy and sociology, and politics and religions.

The actual implementation for these recommendation should be carefully studied and discussed among managers and researchers.

b. Other State-budgeted research organizations should be reasonably re-structured to be more concentrated. They must meet the requirements of the national development and fit the national economic potentials.

From another side, incentive measures for development and enhanced legal regulation for control should be applied for research organizations which are not State-budgeted.

2. Renovation oriented to the autonomous status

Here the autonomous status refers to the self-control in management scheme, the self-control in establishing trademark, self-responsibility in all the fields of activities including:

- Decision for the structure of research institutes (departments, branches, representative offices and joint units);
- Selection of leaders of research institutes (which may be elected through votes). Highest leading positions in State-owned research institutes would be appointed on basis of open surveys;
- Decision for human resources and affiliated units. This measure would minimize the volume of administrative staffs (which is traditionally over-sized in State-owned organizations);
- Decision to confer the scientific titles (Professor/Associate Professor);
- Decision of development orientations;
- Decision of the financial scheme based on the State issued regulations;
- Development of local and international cooperation and coordination of research activities;
- Decision of evaluation and self-evaluation activities;
- Decision based on a fair, democratic and civilized background.

These renovation measures would provide research institutes with a new development which leads to higher efficiency of management activities.

3. Renovation oriented to higher links with universities

The links with universities are considered as indications of scale, reputation and efficiency of activities of research institutes of social-human sciences. The following points would present systematically the elements of links between research institutes and universities.

- Links would be self-promoted and self-motivated between partners;

- Links would be beneficial for partners on basis of equality and mutual benefits;
- Research institutes would send highly qualified researchers to give lectures or to participate in forming highly qualified human resources of universities. High qualified researchers from research institutes would participate actively in the preparation of teaching materials and programs without increasing the number of official lectures;
- Universities would actively participate in post-graduate training activities for staffs of research institutes and transfer their experiences in formation activities;
- Universities and research institutes can jointly develop research topics and projects, scientific publications and workshops;
- Links would be beneficial for the State-owned and non-State-owned blocks in the research system of social sciences, particularly for private universities and colleges.

4. Renovation oriented to socialization of activities of scientific research

The system of issued legal documents and regulations reflects well the policy of the Party and the State toward the socialization of activities of scientific research. The State encourages all the organizations and individuals to conduct scientific activities in all the fields of sciences including natural sciences, technics, agricultural sciences, medical-pharmaceutical sciences and social-human sciences.

The renovation oriented to socialization of research activities is well reflected in the following aspects.

- Research organizations of all the economic sectors are legally equal. They respect and follow all the legal regulations;
- Research organizations are equal when bidding for the research programs and projects;
- Research activities in universities should be stronger promoted. Then research programs and projects would be shifted to research units of universities;
- Re-structuring process of State-owned organizations should be rationally and scientifically conducted. They would not be overlapping or largely scattered. Then the investment would be enhanced for the system;

- Financial sources should be diversified for research activities and human resource development for research organizations of all the economic sectors (State-owned, public and private).

5. Renovation oriented to the model of “co-existence and mutual development with the society and the market”

The concept of “co-existence and mutual development” is very close to the concept of “biological symbiosis”. For large senses, the research system of social sciences has to conduct research topics for the development of the country, regions, business enterprises, communities, ethnic minorities and etc. The activities in fields of social-human sciences have to demonstrate the necessity of their existence for the country, society and market activities. The State is the main fund provider (except the non-State-owned sector) but this source is not enough for better operation. The research system of social sciences must be bound to the society needs and contribute to the social development through activities of research, consultancy, training and service. These moves would enhance the infrastructure of research activities and the life quality of researchers.

Actually the non-State-owned research units develop on autonomous basis. These units, as rule, are small sized, well organized and flexibly operated. They are in good position to get financial supports from international organizations, NGOs and enterprises through research topics and projects./.

REFERENCE

1. The Science-Technology Law. (2000)
2. Nguyen Thi Anh Thu, Tran Xuan Dinh, Hoang Xuan Long. (2000) *Renovation of policies toward human resource use in R&D organizations*. Hanoi. Social Sciences Publishing House.
3. MoST. (2009) *50 years of Vietnam Science and Technology, 1959 - 2009*. Hanoi. Science and Technics Publishing House.
4. Do Hoai Nam. (2009) *55-year development of the Academy of Social Sciences*. Social Science Review, No 58, June 2009.
5. Ta Duc Thinh. (2010) *Science-technology activities and development of education and training*. Newspaper Nhan Dan, No. 19858, 09 January.
6. David Dapice. *Successful Choice*. Harvard University.
7. www.vass.gov.vn - website of the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences
8. www.vnu.vn - website of Vietnam National University, Hanoi.

9. www.ussh.edu.vn - website of University of Social Sciences and Humanities, VNU Hanoi
10. www.vnuhcm.vn - website of Vietnam National University, Hochiminh City
11. www.hcmussh.edu.vn - website of University of Social Sciences and Humanities, VNU HoChiMinh City