



AN INQUIRY INTO VIETNAM BUDDHIST HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO VIETNAM BUDDHIST UNIVERSITY IN HUE

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Abstract

Vietnamese Buddhist Education plays an important role in the national education system. It has a network of 33 Buddhist high schools, 9 colleges and 4 Buddhist universities. These educational institutions have been acknowledged to have made significant contributions to the country's reforms today. Especially the Buddhist universities are recognized as having been active in contributing to the construction of intellectual resources for the country. In doing so, it is assumed that these Buddhist universities must improve and upgrade some parts of their educational institutions. What they are? and How they are? Here, a thorough survey of them must be an imperative.

This survey began with the Vietnam Buddhist University in Huế, one of the four Buddhist universities of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha.

Key words: Education, Education activities, Education quality, Buddhist Education, Vietnam Buddhist Universities, Vietnam Buddhist University in Huế.



I. General introduction

Buddhism is, as it itself declares and shows, to aim at bringing forth the innate potentials of individuals and societies for sublimation and knowledge. It is in fact commonly recognized to be more than a religion or an ideology as such since it is both a practical and ideal system of education. It is in such a meaning that Buddhism is said to have given its significant contributions to social and human growth. So is Vietnamese Buddhism. It is known to have gone along with the country's ups and downs in building and preserving Vietnamese culture and morality of typical traditions. In a broad meaning it could itself quite be regarded to be a system of education.

More significantly than that, this Vietnamese religious organization, viz., Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, still possesses a web of Buddhist high schools and higher education institutions which are specially reserved for training Buddhist monks and nuns and wide spread in all over the country. The Buddhist educational web has been acting as a sub-system of education within the national education system of Vietnam.

Possibly it goes without saying that Vietnam Buddhist education plays a significant role in the national education system. Nevertheless, the fact is that, along with the economic development of the country, this Buddhist education system, especially Buddhist higher education, is changing day by day in itself to adapt to the new developments of the country and the world. This also means that it is facing various challenges which could not just result from external impacts such as IT advances, Industry 4.0, or the essential needs of industrialization and modernization in the country, but also from internal factors, that is to say, the organizational structure, educational programs, development policies and other resources of its own. Yet how is it? And then what have been taking place with it? Going to a possible answer for these questions must need a certain inquiry into it through which an intended assessment of it could be produced. Here is a part of a such research study with regard to Vietnam Buddhist University in Huế, one of higher education institutions of Vietnam Buddhist Sangha.

II. Buddhist higher education system in Vietnam

Similar to the national education of Vietnam, these Buddhist educational system is also composed of three levels of education. These are:

1. Buddhist Primary education
2. Buddhist Secondary education
3. Buddhist Higher education

Of which the first level is equivalent to primary school and the second level, senior high school, in national education. The both are under the direct management of provincial departments of Buddhist education. It has been statistically reported so far that in all over the country there are hundreds of Buddhist primary classes for novices and 35 Buddhist high schools for seminarians (sramaneras) at different provinces. The last is the very Buddhist universities and colleges which totally consist of 9 Buddhist college classes and 4 Buddhist educational centers of university level.



The Buddhist college classes are almost associated with the establishments of Buddhist high school in Hà Nội, Hồ Chí Minh, Thừa Thiên - Huế, Quảng Nam, Cần thơ, Bà Rịa - Vũng Tàu, Lâm Đồng, Tiền Giang, and Bạc Liêu. They are so called as Buddhist college classes it is because they are designed for those who are not eligible for Buddhist universities or cannot pass entrance exams in the Buddhist universities (Central Buddhist Education Department, 2018).

As for 4 Buddhist educational centers of university level, they are Vietnam Buddhist University in Hà Nội, Vietnam Buddhist University in Hồ Chí Minh City, Vietnam Buddhist University in Huế, and Vietnam Buddhist University in Cần Thơ which is reserved for Khmer Thevarada with a particular education and not included in the present study. Historically, they were developed from Vietnam Buddhist Schools for Advanced Students (Trường Cao Cấp Phật học Việt Nam). Of which the first Buddhist school was that of Hà Nội, the capital of Vietnam, founded in 1981; the second was that of Hồ Chí Minh City, established in 1984, and the third was that of Huế, in 1997. Vietnam Buddhist University in Cần Thơ city which is specially for Khmer monks is the last built in 2006 when the name of "Vietnam Buddhist Schools for Advanced Students" was no longer (Nguyen Cao Thanh, 2008, 201). That is to say, in 1997, all of three Vietnam Buddhist Schools in Hà Nội, in Hồ Chí Minh city, and in Huế were allowed to change to their name to become Vietnam Buddhist Academies (Học viện Phật giáo Việt Nam) (National Executive Council, 2018). Time rolls by and today they have all somehow grown up into the fully-fledged Buddhist universities of different specialties and functions with three levels of educational program: Undergraduate, Postgraduate and Ph.D Research course.

Unfortunately, these higher education institutions were designated as specialized religious education centers, reserving for educating and training Buddhist monks and nuns only. This means they are basically not included in the national education system, not officially admitted by Ministry of Education, regardless of whether they were granted to establish and operate by Prime Minister of Vietnam Government and under the umbrella of Ministry of Internal Affair. Nonetheless, they have not been settled but tried their best to manage to be acknowledged by local and international communities. As a matter of fact, they signed up to join the International Association of Buddhist Universities which was founded in Thailand in 2008. They also signed the memorandums of educational cooperation with different Buddhist Universities in the world such as Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Mahamakurt University, International Buddhist College in Thailand, Gautam Buddha University, Delhi University in India, Dharma Gate University in Hungary, or educational linking with universities in the country such as University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Tran Nhan Tong Institute, Hanoi National University, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ho Chi Minh National University, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Hue University, etc. As a result, they might somehow extend their educational activities to other student objects, viz. lay people in a certain limit. Concretely, Vietnam Buddhist University in Hồ Chí Minh has pioneered to open Distance University Classes for lay Buddhists, and all of three Vietnam Buddhist Universities in Hà Nội, Hồ Chí Minh and in Huế have at present had lay students to take post graduate and doctoral courses.



The Vietnam Buddhist Universities are somewhat autonomous ones in terms of financial activities and educational mechanism even though they bear the same name as "Vietnam Buddhist University" (from here on, shortly VBU) and under the umbrella of National Executive Council, as well as the immediate management of Buddhist Education Department, Vietnam Buddhist Sangha. While VBU in Hồ Chí Minh have followed a credit - based education mechanism like national higher education since 2006, VBU in Hà Nội still keeps its traditional education mechanism, year-based education, and VBUH assigns module-based education mechanism for undergraduate program and that of credit-based education for post graduate level. Furthermore, each of them too appears to determines a particular academic strength of its own. That is, VBU in Hà Nội puts a stress on Vietnamese traditional Buddhist study; VBU in Hồ Chí Minh City leans forward applied Buddhist specialties; and VBUH determines to lay a considerable emphasis on pure Buddhist learnings. It is because of such differences among them that it partly becomes difficult for them in the student's exchange program. Though they are so, they agree with each other at two points:

- To endeavor to stick to the curriculum framework of Ministry of Education for higher education as much as possible;
- To balance knowledge blocks in educational curriculum between and among Buddhist subjects and non-Buddhist subjects as well as academic studies and applied sciences.

Unlike the national universities which yearly organize periodic college entrance exams, the VBUs could only take the enrollment plans by course following the graduation of Buddhist high schools. Concretely, VBU in Hà Nội organizes entrance examination 4 years per one course; VBU in Hồ Chí Minh City and VBUH follow the enrollment of bachelor's course for every two years. Their enrollments for post-graduate programs which have recently been started are not planned periodically either.

With such educational curricula and activities, VBUs have produced thousands of Buddhist monks and nuns who graduated bachelor program in Buddhist studies. According to the latest annual summary report (2018) of the National Executive Council, Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, the result of education activities from VBUs is as follows:

- VBU in Hà Nội: 296 monks and nuns obtained Bachelor degree in Buddhist Studies; New BA. and MA. and Ph.D courses are being taken place.
- VBU in Hồ Chí Minh City: 336 students graduated BA. in Buddhist Studies; there are 1535 students of different BA. courses and 162 students of MA. courses and 4 Ph.D candidates.
- VBUH: 510 monks and nuns of different courses are following BA program; The enrollment of MA. specialties and Ph.D. course are being worked out (National Executive Council, 2018, 1).

In addition to this, there have been hundreds of monks and nuns who graduated BA. program from these VBUs have been studying at higher levels in abroad such as India, China, Taiwan,



Korean, Australia, United State, and Thailand etc. At the same time, hundreds of monks and nuns have just finished Master and Ph. D program in different disciplines in India, China, and Japan, Thailand, etc. and returned to the country, working and serving at different levels of Buddhist Sangha in the Buddhist institutes and universities.

The above mentioned numbers must suggest something. They show that these VBUs are quite dynamic and flexible in managing their education activities, but at the same time also reflect that they are still in a limited scale and agonizing over self-assertion. Generally speaking, there are two things that greatly influence on these VBUs' educational achievement: internal structure and external conditions. Of these two things, the latter is sometime beyond the VBUs' reach, but the former is definitely in the control of their own.

The concept of internal structure is of broad dimensions. In terms of the VBUs's education activities, it could be limited in the following aspects:

- Educational programs that the VBUs are providing to their students
- Teaching materials and references
- Human resource of teaching and lecturing
- Infrastructure, materials and equipment's for teaching and learning
- Education and assessment methods applied
- Education quality and the input for research programs

Below is what are found out in VBU in Huế (hereafter, VBUH).

III. Vietnam Buddhist University in Huế

Huế is well - known as a Buddhist cultural and educational cradle of Vietnam in contemporary time, and VBUH could be seen as one of its excellent examples. It is one of four registered higher education establishments of Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, founded in 1997 under the auspices of Vietnam government Prime Minister. Most Venerable Thích Thiện Siêu, a Vietnamese renowned scholar in Buddhism, was its first Rector, Most Venerable Dr. Thích Chơn Thiện, who was also a scholar of national fame in Buddhist psychology and education, the second. At present VBUH is under the leadership of Most Venerable Dr. Thích Hải Ấn, a medical doctor, its present Rector.

VBU in has two campuses. One is located in Minh Mạng Str., Thủy Xuân Ward, Hue City and the other is at Mount Ngự Phong, An Tây Ward, Huế City. The former is the old campus, and the later is a new one with an area of 25.6 hectares. After over 20 years of growth and development, VBUH has been undergoing several reforms and up growths in the direction of a full-fledged university.

Thus, in its vision, VBUH is directed to be a leading center of higher education of Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Central region, with a variety of scientific disciplines and departments and



with multi-functions to keep pace with other universities in the country and abroad. And in its missions, VBUH is assigned to undertake four noble missions:

- Training and cultivating young persons, especially monks and nuns; in so doing, exploring gifted persons and supplying high quality human resource to the country and the Sangha;
- Succeeding and developing the noble traditions of wisdom and culture of Buddhism in general, of Vietnamese Buddhism in particular;
- Researching on different practical applications of Buddhist philosophy and ethics to serve and the country and society;
- Playing a pioneer role in research to new technology and science, especially in the reform movement of Buddhist education in Vietnam (Vietnam Buddhist University in Hue, **The University Missions**).

In terms of core values, VBUH embraces in itself 5 criteria:

- Standard: standard in management, education and research.
- High quality: High quality in training and in its outputs.
- Open-minded: Open- minded for new knowledge
- Often upgraded: To keep pace with other universities in scientific development and breakthroughs.
- Commitment: Engagement for the welfare and prosperity of the country and society.

VBUH 's motto is **Listening - Meditating - Practicing**.

A. Education programs

Based on the policy of educational reform held by the National Department of Education, Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, VBUH 's education programs, including undergraduate and post-graduate degree, are upgraded according to the following three criteria:

1. To succeed and develop the Buddhist values as well as educational achievements which VBUH has been sown and reaped so far.
2. To fall in line with the international and national web of higher education.
3. To prepare and build the grounds for further developments toward a full-fledged university with a variety of functions and departments and scientific disciplines.

Similar to education programs applied in the other universities in country, VBUH 's education program for undergraduate level is composed of three batches of knowledge. The first batch is called as the general knowledge, which consists of background and general disciplines such as research methodology, logic, Western and Eastern philosophy, psychology, Vietnamese literature, etc. The second batch is the basic knowledge of Buddhism which is composed of such modules as Buddhist philosophy, Buddhist literature, Buddhist psychology, Buddhist education, etc. The rest is of the specialized knowledge of Buddhism which refers to the Buddhist texts of



Sutra, Vinaya and Sastra of three main Schools of Buddhism, i.e., Early Buddhism, Sectarian Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism. In addition, such important ancient languages of Buddhism as Sanskrit, Pali, Old Chinese and international languages as English, Chinese also take a considerable rate in the program. The knowledge batches of modules are shown in details in the following framework:

A.1. Education Program for Bachelor Degree

VBUH 's Undergraduate program is totally composed of 50 subjects or modules of 3 knowledge. Of which the general knowledge has 19 modules, taking 68 credits and 1012 periods; the basic knowledge of Buddhism has 15 modules, occupying 49 credits and 735 periods; and the specialized knowledge has 16 modules, taking 38 credits and 570 periods.

Thus, totally, the program includes 155 credits, equal to 2325 periods. If compared to other universities' BA. programs, including national and international universities, this BA. program looks heavier, 5 to 10 credits more. However, it keeps in mind that the VBUH's BA. course is of year-based education institution and one period is counted to be 45 minutes instead of 50 minutes as in credit - based education institution.

A.2. Education Program for Master Degree

Based on the framework of education program for post graduate level issued by Ministry of Education, Vietnam, and popularly applied by domestic universities, VBUH 's Post-graduate programs are designed according to the principles of credit system.

The education program for Master degree is at present in VBUH composed of 4 specialties. These are Buddhist Literature, Buddhist Philosophy, Buddhist History and Buddhist Old Chinese and Nom Language and Literature. Each of specialties has three batches of knowledge, viz. general, basic and specialized knowledge, and each of batches has compulsive courses and optional courses, and one dissertation.

Compulsive courses which consist of general courses and core courses are mainly distributed in the first academic year. Optional courses are mainly distributed in the second academic year.

In the beginning of the second academic year, students must make a decision on the research direction of their own. Topic of their dissertation which is of a compulsive condition for graduation is subject to their choice. The following is the general framework:

General Framework of Post graduate program



Knowledge			Number of credits	Percentage (%)	
General knowledge	Philosophy		3	6	10
	Foreign languages (English and Chinese)		3		
Basic and Specialized knowledge	Basic knowledge	compulsive	12	40	66.7
		optional	4		
	Specialized knowledge	compulsive	18		
		optional	6		
Dissertation				14	23.3
Total				60	

The number of 60 credits as shown above is of the prescribed limit of Ministry of Education for MA. program. However, it also looks heavier as compared to other MA. programs such as that of VBU in Hồ Chí Minh City, which has 48 credits. This appears partly to reveal VBUH 's philosophy of education. Above all, its purpose of education that it pursues is to create the competent forces of monks and nuns who could effectively carry out Dharma propagation which requires a large amount of knowledge as possible. In addition, Buddhist study is, in the mind of VBUH 's educational strategic planners, a specific interdisciplinary one which also requires a certain amount of knowledge regarding such old languages as Pali, Sanskrit, old Chinese etc.

In sum, the VBUH 's applied education programs, including Undergraduate and Postgraduate, is designed on the basis of the framework for higher education issued by Ministry of Education also by National Department of Education of Vietnam Buddhist Sangha as well. However, it is often adjusted and supplemented in accordance with specific situations of each academic year.

B. Textbooks, Teaching Materials, References and Course Outlines

Textbooks, teaching materials, references and course outlines are the essentials for the work of teaching and learning in an education institution. Yet, this is perhaps the weakest part in VBUs in general, VBUH in particular.

B.1. Textbooks and Teaching Materials in VBUH

A textbook of a certain study branch is not only a material used for teaching but also for learning. It is in generally defined as a comprehensive compilation of contents regarding to a certain educational theme. Well-defined textbooks are a must for teaching and learning in high schools but it is relatively open in higher institutions where puts a stress on the freedom of creativeness, creative both in conveying and absorbing knowledge.

As a matter of fact, VBUH appears not to be very earnest for the fact of textbooks. It almost entrusts this to its lecturers who have determined to choose available books for their own use and then introduce them to their students. What VBUH 's educational leaders have done in terms of textbook so far is to have suggested the possible directions of teaching contents for each of specific



subjects to the lecturers who is responsible for the subject. Such possible directions are clearly noted in the designed syllabus and discussed with the lecturer in charge.

For the general knowledge which consists of secular subjects and languages, they are mainly undertaken by visiting lecturers from Huế University. The contents of these subjects are quite in line with what they are taught in Huế University, one of critical universities in Vietnam. Therefore, the textbooks of them are available. As for the subjects belonging to the basic and specialized knowledge of Buddhism, the standard and well-written textbooks are not much in Vietnam as a whole. And, VBUH has seemly been not very earnest for compiling textbooks yet, though this work has sometimes been taken into consideration by its leaders. Why it is so, may be it is because of the following two main reasons:

1. The first may be due to lack of money as this work costs much time, money and care.
2. VBUH 's leaders have not had determination enough for it as they held that the fact of textbook is just suitable for high school level but not much for higher education.

Anyhow, textbook plays a certain important role in teaching and learning, at least at BA. level which requires, in the writer' opinion, a relatively basic and standard knowledge provision. The textbooks of Buddhist studies are not much available in Tiếng Việt (Vietnamese) but rich in such foreign languages as English, French or Chinese. The foreign language materials which are in printed and digital form have become helpful for both instructors and students. Without usable textbooks but the teaching materials or lesson plans of each specific subject are a must in VBUH. They have been done by its lecturers and based on the already- worked out syllabus of the VBUH.

B.2. Course Outlines and Teaching Plans in VBUH

Syllabus and course outline are not the same in notion. A syllabus is a descriptive document that conveys information of a specific course and a course outline is prescriptive one that contains information such as instructor information, general and detailed course description, course schedule, learning outcomes, grading and evaluation, learning resource, etc. In a broad meaning, a set of course outlines makes a syllabus. Teaching plans are included in course outlines.

In VBUH, its course outlines have been done by lecturers in charge. The subjects of general knowledge at BA. level as a whole which have mainly undertaken by visiting lecturers from Huế University have fully their course outlines. Nevertheless, they have not been seriously carried out for the subjects of basic and specialized knowledge relating to Buddhism in BA. program. They have not fully been submitted to the academic board of the university, despite it has called for this a number of times. Some of them are available and have been collected for this research work.

The Post graduate program has been just started in VBUH. The compilation of course outlines for this educational level is known to have been being called to carry out. It is also known that VBUH's managers seem to have determined to take this task more seriously this time.



B.3. Resources of References

Library is one of the most important infrastructures for any education institution, especially higher educational one. It is a place that contains resources of books and materials for teaching, learning and studying. However, this is also one of the most inadequate parts of a higher institution as VBUH.

VBUH owns a library and reading room of small-scale. Stored in the library is only about 4000 books and materials of different kinds. The majority of them are sources of reference in Old Chinese characters such as Chinese Tripitaka. The poorest are the reference sources of other foreign languages such as English, French, Japanese, Thailand, etc., also the books of non-Buddhist disciplines. Such important resources of references for Buddhist Studies as Pali Tipitaka, Sanskrit Tripitaka and Tibetan Tripitaka are not found either.

In order to correct the shortage of references, VBUH has managed to link up with the library of Liễu Quán Center, a Buddhist Cultural Center of Huế 's Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, and that of Huế University 's Learning Material Center. In addition to this, those who are in charge of the library have also moved to build digital data and electronic library with the management soft-wares provided by Lạc Việt Company, one of leading IT companies in Vietnam.

At any rate, if desiring to become a full-fledged university, the library situation needs to be improved and VBUH 's managers need to put more their mind on it.

C. Human Resources of Teaching and Lecturing

For any social organization, the issue of human resources is extremely important. Education institutions are no exception. Beside the administrative personals, the human resources of education institutions are nothing other than teachers and lecturers. It is this force that decides the quality of education and the reputation of an educational institution.

The human resources of teaching in VBUH are relatively abundant. It has two principal forces: organic lecturers and visiting lecturers. The force of organic lecturers is about 30 in number, consisting of monks and nuns and eminent scholars who got MA. degree or higher or authority over an academic discipline. This is the resource that creates the core values and stable development of VBUH. The force of visiting lecturers mainly comes from University of Education and University of Humanities and Social Sciences, Huế University, and also from other VBUs as well. They are invited to take part due to two reasons, that is, either because of a partnership or because of the desire to integrate into the national education. Every year, the number of visiting lecturers participating in teaching at VBUH ranges from 5 to 10 people. The number of the regular lecturers and professors invited is about 20 in total. Thus, if the population of VBUH 's regular students is 500, the ratio between teachers and students would be about one-tenth. This is a too ideal ratio indeed. In addition, there are still some monks and nuns who obtained MA. and Ph.D. degrees of different disciplines, residing at present in Huế, and always being willing to join VBUH. They could be quite considered as its reserve force.



In general, with such a workforce, it is relatively satisfying to meet the needs of the university's teaching and research.

D. VBUH's Infrastructure and Equipment for Teaching and Learning

Infrastructure is a concept of broad dimensions and often understood as the fundamental facilities and systems serving a certain institution. It is generally divided into two principal categories, hard and soft. Of which, hard infrastructure refers to the physical works such as houses, roads, etc., and soft infrastructure speaks of all the institutions that maintain the activities of an organization. For an education institution, the former is none other than its campus and the latter is its educational programs as well as its services and equipment that support to teaching and learning.

D.1. VBUH 's Campuses

VBUH owns two campuses, old and new. The old one was built in 1997, at Minh Mạng st. Thủy Xuân Ward, Huế City. This is its original campus which is only about 9000 square meters. At present, it is temporarily used as a dormitory of nun students. In plan, once the nun dormitory is completely constructed, it would be embellished into a central library which serves not only for the purpose of storing materials but also for that of research.

In 2016, owing to being sponsored by Vingroup Corporation, a new campus which is at Ngũ Phong Mount, An Tây Ward, Huế City, started being under construction. This new campus is about 5km away from the old one and occupies an area of 25.6 hectares. According to the plan it is expected to undergo 3 stages of construction to complete all the items of a university. However, in 2017 when the first stage was finished with such basic items as classrooms, conference hall, Buddha hall, and Monk dormitory, VBUH was moved to the new campus. The second stage of its construction is in progress, but somehow rather slowly.

The current status of the VBUH 's new campus where its educational activities are taking place consists of 4 two - story buildings, one conference hall, one Buddha hall and one complex for Monk dormitories. Of the 4 two-story buildings, one is temporarily used as VBUH 's administrative center and other three for classrooms. Each of the buildings has from 6 to 8 rooms of large and medium kind. All the classrooms are well equipped for teaching and learning.

D.2. Teaching and Learning Equipment

Teaching and learning equipment are the tools used to assist student 's learning. They play an essential role in teacher's teaching quality. Equipment serving for the purpose of teaching and learning have a wide range, from such physical facilities as laboratory, audio-visual room, projectors to instruments designed by teachers as maps, models.

In VBUH, what has been taught so far is purely theoretical and the practice here is only at spiritual practices, such as meditation. That's all, so experimental equipment like science labs have never been thought of yet. While waiting for a mediation center to be built, the existing Buddha hall is alternately used for such religious practices as meditation, Buddhist rituals.



Other facilities such as gymnasiums, stadiums are not found here and teaching models are not found to be developed either. However, the classrooms at new campus are fully equipped with projectors and rolling screens besides essential teaching aids such as blackboards.

Although it is, VBUH is primarily inclined to theoretical teaching, it also takes language teaching as its key task. Such a kind of teaching often requires well-equipped audio-visual rooms but these basic and important conditions are quite absent here. It is an inappropriate thing for VBUH in terms of teaching equipment.

E. Education and evaluation methods applied in VBUH

One of the extremely important institutions in education is the teaching method and the way of evaluating teaching and learning results. Various teaching methods and approaches have been distinguished by leading educationists in the world so far but generally there are 3 approaches summarized. That is, teacher-centered approach, learner-centered approach and reciprocal approach. Each of them has its own features regarding to ways of instruction, teacher 's tasks, learner's works, and suitability for each age group and educational level. Various ways of assessment relating to teaching and learning outcomes have also been applied in educational context. The assessment method that is very often used in education is test, but of course not limited to tests. It depends on the theoretical framework and educational purpose of the practitioner conducting assessment.

E.1. Education Methods Applied in VBUH

Similar to other universities in Vietnam as a whole, all the three education approaches mentioned above are interchangeably applied in VBUH. In case of the need to mold a certain knowledge base for students, the teacher- centered approach is applied. This is often the case of teaching old languages, such as Pali, Sanskrit or Old Chinese. In order to encourage a lot of creativity at students, the learner-centered method and reciprocal method are approached. As for a higher education institution as VBUH, creativity, reasoning, and original thinking are very often encouraged. Thus, beside the lecturing and explaining method that is performed by teacher, other teaching methods such as demonstration, group discussion or classroom action research etc., are also found to be applied in VBUH setting. Teaching and evaluating are connected; student 's learning is continuously measured through both formal and informal forms of assessment during teacher instruction and after the course.

E.2. Evaluation Methods Applied in VBUH

Quite not different from other universities in the country as a whole, once the teaching process of a module is completed with the required lessons, an exam is organized by the lecturer in charge to get the final score for the module. This is known as summative assessment. It is so called because it is made to summarize what the students have learnt and to assign the students course grade. However, as a way to maintain the good tradition of examination of the year- based education, every year VBUH keeps to organize two collective exams for some courses at the end of each semester.



It must be added here that an academic year in VBUH is divided into two semesters. The semester I is started in the first week of September and finished in the end of December. Followed next is the semester II, which is ended in the last week of May. Thus, VBUH's academic year lasts for 9 months and 38 weeks.

For each course of a subject or module, there are three evaluation scores: class participation, middle test score and final test score. These scores are used for grading purposes. The grade is carried out according to a scale of 10 (from 0 to 10), rounded to the whole part. The grade score calculated on a scale of 10 is the average of evaluation scores. Generally, there are 4 grades to pass over a course: excellent (from 8.5 score to 10 score), good (from 7.8 to 8.4 score), fairly (from 7.0 to 7.7 score) and average (from 5.0 to 6.9 score).

In sum, in terms of education and evaluation methods, what is applied in VBUH is not different from other universities in the country. One thing that should be noted here is its examinations as a whole have been carried out with a very serious manner. The phenomenon of cheating or copying in examination is strictly treated.

F. Educational quality and the input for research programs

All that an educational institution would talk about and would be talked about is its educational quality. That's because the quality of education created by itself defines its position and makes its name. What makes the education quality of an educational institution include a wide range of dimensions. They can range from soft institutions such as program content, curriculum to hard institutions such as classroom facilities, halls, laboratories, libraries etc. Assessing the quality of education an educational institution, there are many ways, but the most objective way is often done on the product, i.e., its students.

F.1. VBUH's Education Quality: a Survey

In order to carry out the education quality survey of VBUH, a questionnaire of 5 scales with 73 questions on 8 dimensions has been carefully designed. The scale of 5 levels of selection is indicated as increasing from 1 to 5 as follows: 1 = totally disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = relatively agree; 4 = agree; 5 totally agree. 8 dimensions that have been expected to survey are:

1. Educational objectives, program content, curriculum and teaching materials
2. Human resources of teaching
3. Methods of teaching approached
4. Plan and schedule for teaching and evaluation of students
5. Infrastructure, equipment and facilities for teaching
6. Counseling and supporting for students
7. Student's sense of results achieved from the course
8. Student's recommendations and suggestions

These 8 dimensions cover all of what want to know about the educational quality of the university. 200 copies of questionnaire have been randomly sent to its students of course VIII, IX



and X for evaluation, but 144 feedbacks have been received only. All of this obtained data is processed through the SPSS statistical tool. The results that are seen are as follows:

- Generally, the rating scale of 3 (relatively agree) and 4 (agree) for all items has been mostly selected. Of which the rating scale of 3 has frequency ranging from 21 (14.6%) to 60 (41.7%); The rating scale of 4 has frequency ranging from 39 (27.1%) to 72 (50%).
- The items of dimension 1 (questions 1 to 15) are mostly rated at rating scale 3 (relatively agree) with frequency from 33 (22.9%) to 58 (40.3%) and at rating scale 4 (agree) with frequency from 34 (23.6%) to 61 (42.4%).
- The items of dimension 2 (question 16 to 21) are also mostly rated at rating at rating scale 4 (agree) with frequency from 23 (16.0%) to 64 (44.4%). The item speaking of whether having foreign lecturer is rated at rating scale 2 (disagree) with relatively high frequency: 42 (29.2%).
- The items of dimension 3 (questions 22-34) are mostly rated at rating scale 4 (agree) with frequency from 44 (30.6%) to 66 (45.8%).
- The items of dimension 4 (questions 35-42), 5 (questions 43 - 52), 6 (questions 53-56) and 7 (questions 57-64) are also mostly rated at rating scale 3 or 4.
- The items of dimension 8 (questions 65-73) are mostly rated at rating scale 4 (agree) and 5 (totally agree). Specially, the item 72 which speaks of the need of enhancing the forms of learning by practical experiences has the highest selected rate (frequency: 73, 50.7%) with rating scale 5 (totally agree).
- The item 73 in relation with the need of e - libraries and electronic accounts to access to large libraries in the world has also relatively high selected rate (frequency: 44, 30.6%) at rating scale 4 (agree) and (frequency: 63, 43.8%) at rating scale 5 (totally agree).

It is said that numbers themselves could say something. They could be not all as they are still up many internal conditions such as their reliability. Even so, they could always suggest something significant. Through the statistics described above regarding the students' evaluation of their VBUH's educational activities, some suggestions may be as follows:

- In general, educational conditions in VBUH are relatively satisfactory for majority of their students. This implies that the educational factors resulting in a good quality of education in VBUH need to be much more improved.
- Especially, there are two things that need to be much more considered by VBUH leaders: one is the need for foreign teachers and the other is the demand for electronic libraries as well as electronic accounts to access large libraries around the world.

In sum, what is discovered through the survey for students is also relatively not a far cry from the original data collected from the field.



IV. Conclusion

For Vietnamese young people, classroom instruction has become so routinized and boring that they consider going to school as a punishment rather than an adventure in learning, and many of them easily become restless with senseless violence, addiction to drugs, gambling, games on line, sexual experimentation, and so on. As a consequence, Vietnamese young people of today in general are attributed as degradation of morality. An explanation for this is that there are two major causes:

1. The proper objectives of education are neglected for some immediate social needs.
2. The formal education is commercialized for immediate economical profits.

In such a sad situation, whether could Vietnamese Buddhist education with VBUS as its good examples be a good complement for the formal education in Vietnam? In my opinion, it could be because there are the three following reasons:

1. Vietnamese Buddhism is deeply rooted in Vietnamese culture and to be a part of it. It is fit for Vietnamese people's way of life.
2. Majority of population in Vietnam are Buddhists.

Above all, Buddhist education is entirely built on three Buddhist basic principles, viz. virtue, meditation and wisdom, and this is entirely well matched the original aims of education.

It is obvious that the first two things mentioned above are advantageous conditions for Vietnamese Buddhist education as a whole to be able a good complement for the formal education of Vietnam and the rest is an essential one for the task.

In order to fulfill such a lofty task, Vietnamese Buddhist education in general, VBUs in particular, especially VBUH, needs to be often upgraded themselves in their constitution of educational activities. As seen through the survey on VBUH, almost every internal constitution of its Buddhist education needs to be improved and upgraded. In particular, the factors related to course outlines, teaching materials, and reference sources need to be more concerned. The same goes for factors such as educational cooperation to enrich teaching resources. It is definitely a long road for it to go ahead. However, the bright horizon would always be open for those who constantly step forward./.

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