

REFORM IN UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL GOVERNANCE TOWARDS AUTONOMY MODEL: A CASE STUDY OF REALITY AUTONOMY MODEL IN VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT--In Vietnam, general education includes primary education, lower secondary education (the period of basic education) and upper secondary education (the period of vocational orientation education). In particular, primary education is compulsory for all children from 6 to 14 years old, is implemented in 5 school years, from first grade to fifth grade. The age of students entering first grade is six years old. Primary education aims to help students form the initial foundations for proper and long-term development of morality, intelligence, physicality, aesthetics and basic skills for students to continue high school. Secondary education is conducted in four school years, from grade six to grade nine. Students entering sixth grade must have an elementary school diploma. Secondary education aims to help students consolidate and develop the results of primary education; have basic secondary education and initial knowledge about technology and career to continue high school, vocational high school, vocational training or enter a working life. High school education is conducted in 3 school years, from grade ten to grade twelve. Students entering tenth grade must have a junior high school diploma. High school education is aimed at helping students consolidate and develop the outcomes of lower secondary education, complete high school education and common knowledge about technology and career guidance for further college education, college, professional secondary school, apprenticeship or enter the working life. Thus, the term general education is a term with broad connotation including primary education, lower secondary education (basic education period) and upper secondary education (education period) career orientation. Within the scope of this research, we use the term school governance used to mean a mode of action, which is directed toward the goal of being accomplished effectively, by and through others. Governance activities are indispensable activities that arise when people work together to accomplish goals.

Key words-- General education; Basic education; School governance; Secondary education

I. INTRODUCTION

An overview of upper secondary schools in Vietnam

The system of upper secondary schools in Vietnam

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According to Education Law, Vietnam’s national education system is open and transitional, which includes full-time and continuing education. The education ladder covers 4 levels namely pre-school education, general education, vocational training and higher education.

In particular, the general education is comprised of primary school, lower secondary school and upper secondary school. Education at upper secondary school aims at career orientation. It takes 03 academic years from grade 10 to grade 12 to accomplish this stage [1, 2]. At the beginning of grade 10, students must have got lower secondary diploma. Upper secondary schools are categorized based on public schools (central or local), which are invested in terms of finance and facilities (land, buildings) and operated by fundings mainly collected from public financial sources or other non-beneficial ones; and private schools, which, by contrast, are operated mainly by fundings invested by an individual or a group of people for the establishment and development of the schools [3]. Currently, the objective of achieving universal upper secondary school education is demonstrated by the Communist Party and the State. The Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW released on November 4th, 2013 by 8th Plenum of the 11th Party Central Committee on fundamental and comprehensive reform of education and training strongly stated out the determination of ensuring “80% of adolescents in the age of high school completes upper secondary school and equal by 2020”. Calculation by 2017 – 2018 revealed that the number of students at upper secondary schools and equal level in Vietnam was more than 2.5 million, which accounted for more than 65% of adolescents at the high school age.

Table 1: Statistic data about Vietnam’s upper secondary school students

	Academic year 2016-2017			Academic year 2017-2018		
	Total	Division		Total	Division	
		Public sector	Non-public sector		Public sector	Non-public sector
Number of students	2,477,175	2,290,929	186,246	2,508,564	2,313,315	195,249
<i>In particular:</i>						
Female	1,332,651	1,260,334	72,317	1,344,453	1,267,197	77,256
Ethnic minorities	301,502	296,884	4,618	306,091	301,544	4,547
New enrollee	928,444	862,457	65,987	912,704	840,185	72,519
Disadvantaged	1,603	1,578	25	2,887	2,865	22

Source: Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam

- *Public upper secondary schools in Vietnam*

There was a modest rise in the proportion of public upper secondary schools in Vietnam’s system of upper secondary school. Calculations by 2017 – 2018 academic year showed that public upper secondary schools played the key role in national upper secondary school system, which accounted for 84.4% of total educational institutions.

Table 2: Number of upper secondary schools in Vietnam

Academic year	2014 - 2015	2015 - 2016	2016 - 2017	2017 - 2018
Number of schools	2,767	2,788	2,811	2,834
Public	2,367	2,348	2,376	2,393
Non-public	440	440	435	441

Source: Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam

Despite the above modest increase in the number of public upper secondary schools in those years, the number of teachers in those public schools experienced a slight decrease in recent academic years. Specifically, from 2014 – 2015 to 2017 – 2018, the number of teachers in public upper secondary schools went down by 1,719 people. The main reason for this decline was due to workforce reduction policy in the system of public upper secondary schools. However, by 2017 – 2018, the teaching workforce in this sector still accounted for the majority of current upper secondary teachers with 90.4% teaching staff in public schools.

Table 3: Number of teachers at upper secondary schools in Vietnam

Academic years	2014 - 2015	2015 - 2016	2016 - 2017	2017 - 2018
Total number of teachers	152,007	150,900	150,721	150,288
Public	137,672	137,475	136,830	135,819
Non-public	14,335	13,425	13,891	14,469

Source: Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam

In general, in recent years, there has also been a slight rise in the number of students at public upper secondary schools. By 2017 – 2018, there was 92.2% of students in these institutions, accounting for a major proportion of total upper secondary school students.

Table 4: Number of upper secondary students in Vietnam

Academic years	2014 - 2015	2015 - 2016	2016 - 2017	2017 - 2018
Total number of students	2,439,919	2,425,130	2,477,175	2,508,564
Public	2,264,503	2,250,972	2,290,929	2,313,315
Non-public	175,416	174,158	186,246	195,249

Source: Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam

Regarding geographical aspect, there are public upper secondary schools in all 63/63 provinces/cities, which aims at implementing the policy on national education. At upper secondary schools, students should be taught general and fundamental subjects. However, in reality, gifted and specialized classes are organized in these schools. In some cities/provinces, there is one or more than one upper secondary school, operating as a gifted school, which focuses on training gifted students only. At the same time, different socio-economic conditions in different regions and areas result in unequal conditions for investment, construction, development and enhancement of upper

secondary schools' quality nationwide. In terms of management hierarchy, the line agency of upper secondary institutions is Department of training and education in a specific local city/province. Consequently, the management mechanism still largely depends on different managing levels, which is inclined to administration. Then, management outcomes can only cover instruction execution and implementation whereas they should aim at proposing development orientation compatible with typical conditions of a specific upper secondary institution. As a result, the quality and equality of education nationwide has not been assured [3, 4].

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF PUBLIC UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN VIETNAM

Followings are some typical features of public upper secondary schools in Vietnam:

Firstly, the quality of upper secondary schools is not high, which is lack of competitiveness in comparison with other schools in the same region and in the world: According to the Report on Global capacity competitiveness 2017 - 2018 by World Economic Forum (WEF) in 137 countries, the efficiency of Vietnam's educational system ranked 55/137. In the aspect of training and education, Vietnam was number 84 in the rankings and number 7 among ASEAN countries, following Singapore (1st), Malaysia (45th), the Phillipines (55th), Thailand (57th), Indonesia (64th) and Brunei (67th) [5, 6].

Secondly, the student-teacher ratio in public school sector is higher than that number in non-public one and greater than other countries: Teacher plays a vital role, which largely puts an impact on the quality of upper secondary schools. In addition to a slight decline in the number of teachers in public upper secondary schools (from 137,672 in academic year 2014 – 2015 to 135,819 in 2017 – 2018), there has been a huge increase in the number of students. As a consequence, the student-teacher ratio in public upper secondary institutions in Vietnam reaches an extremely high level. In academic year 2017 - 2018, this ratio in public schools was 7.03, which was 13.49 higher than non-public ones. In comparison with other countries in the same region, the student-teacher ratio in Vietnam in 2013 was at much higher level.

Table 5: Student-teacher ratio in public and non-public upper secondary schools in academic year 2017 – 2018

Academic year	Public	Non-public	Total
Number of students	2,313,315	195,249	2,508,564
Number of teachers	135,819	14,469	150,288
Student/teacher ratio	17.03	13.49	16.69

Source: Ministry of Education and Training

Thirdly, training quality and effectiveness have not met the practical requirements: In the past time, the quality and effectiveness of upper secondary education in Vietnam have not exposed to any breakthroughs; which maintains a great distance to practical requirements in the context of national development as well as higher social expectations in the context of knowledge-based economy development. This is proved in certain aspects: upper secondary institutions in Vietnam only concentrate on students' acquiring knowledge, whereas they have not paid appropriate attention to the development of specific learner's competence, which is in connection with social

requirement and skill improvement; the training curriculum, in general, still undervalues practical skills and lacks performance of career orientation for students-this is contrastive to the acknowledgement of upper secondary education as a transitional period, of which one of the main responsibilities is orienting future jobs for students [3, 7].

Fourthly, public upper secondary schools have not taken optimal advantage of opportunities from global and economic integration: After Doi Moi (Reform), Vietnam has been more intensively and greatly integrating into international community. It is an active member in international organizations such as ASEAN - AEC economic community, Comprehensive and progressive agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership - CPTPP signed in 2015. However, upper secondary institutions in Vietnam have not successfully taken advantage of these opportunities to create breakthroughs in their development. Vietnam's upper secondary schools mainly work on available curriculum but have not focused on getting updated and approaching international standard. Also, these schools have not greatly co-operated and exchanged their programs with foreign institutions.

- The reality of autonomy model in the governance of upper secondary schools in the context of education and training reform

- Policies by the Communist Party and the State on the autonomy of upper secondary schools

It should be notified that currently, the autonomy of upper secondary schools in Vietnam is implemented in the context of financial autonomy at first. This is the key and important point for these schools to effectively use their available sources and mobilize social sources for the development of human and facilities, which are decisive factors for the quality of education and upper secondary level. In the past years, the Communist Party and the State have issued numerous vital policies stating regulations which have direct impacts on investment into education.

Table 6: Certain documents related to autonomy policies on operation and finance for public upper secondary schools in Vietnam

Document number	Issuing authority	Contents	Issue date
No:29-NQ/TW	Approval by The Central Committee of the Communist Party- 8 th Central Committee (tenure XI)	Fundamental and comprehensive reform in training and education to meet industrialization and modernization requirements in the context of socialist market oriented economy and international integration	4/11/2013
No:44/NQ-CP	Government	Government's action plan for the implementation resolution no. 29-NQ/CP	9/6/2014

- Resolution 29-NQ/TW:

It is demonstrated in resolution 29-NQ/TW that "Training and education is the national priority and the career of the Communist Party, the State and the whole population. Investment into education is the investment for development, which is prioritized in socio-economic development plans and programs. Fundamental and

comprehensive reform in training and education refers to changes in huge, core and alarming problems; changes from different perspectives and ideologies to objectives, contents, methods, mechanism, policies and conditions for successful implementation; those in management approach of the Communist Party, control of the Government, governing activities of training and education institutions as well as involvement of families, community, society and the students themselves; and changes in all stages of the education ladder and specialization. It is essential for the education sector to actively participate in the international integration to serve the purpose of training and education development. At the same time, training and education should meet the requirements of international integration for the aim of national development.”

Base on this perspective, the central committee of the Communist Party proposed missions and solutions to successful implementation of the above resolution as the following:

1- Empowering the management of the Communist Party and the control of the Government towards training and education reform.

2- Maintaining strong and consistent changes in basic elements of training and education under the orientation of learners' competence and quality appreciation.

3- Fundamentally innovating formats and methods of testing, examinations, training evaluation and education assessment to ensure objectiveness and truthfulness.

4- Completing national education system under the orientation of an open, life-long learning system with learning society.

5- Fundamentally innovating education management and training activities to ensure democracy, consistence; increase autonomy and social responsibility of training and education institutions; highly appreciate quality assurance.

6- Developing the workforce of teachers and managers to meet the requirement of training and education reform.

7- Reforming financial policies and mechanism, mobilizing the participation from the society; improving investment efficiency for training and education development.

The Government should play the key role in investing into the development of education and training. The state budget for education and training should be at least 20% of total budget. Especially, it is essential for the Government to focus on improving budget capital effectiveness, gradually ensure adequate expenses for specialized activities in public training and education institutions and complete fee policies.

Regarding upper secondary education, the Government should prioritize the focus on establishing, developing public educational institutions and creating supportive mechanism for gradual completion of universal education achievement as stated in the law. There should be encouragement for developing non-public schools, which meets the demand of the society for high-quality education in urban areas.

8- Improving quality and effectiveness and technological, scientific research and application, especially education and management sciences

9- Actively participating in and promoting efficiency of international co-operation in education and training.

So, in order to make these missions and solutions feasible and effective, it is recommended to empower the autonomy right in schools' operation, in which financial autonomy is the crucial issue as the priority in education institutions in general and current upper secondary schools in particular.

- Resolution no. 44/2014

For the implementation of Resolution number 29-NQ/TW dated on November 04th, 2013 by the 8th plenum of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party related to fundamental and comprehensive reform of training and education to meet the industrialization and modernization requirements in the context of socialist oriented market economy and international integration, the Government issued Resolution number 44/2014 on Government’s Action plan with the content demonstrating that “It is essential to identify key missions and main solutions for the Government to supply concrete guidance for Ministries, sectors and provinces to build up their action plan; implementation, examination and observation procedure for the execution of Resolution 29. This aims at making fundamental and comprehensive changes in the area of training and education towards Vietnam’s advanced education in 2030 in the region”. Also, the main solution stated the Action plan covered “Enhancing the hierarchical system, improving the responsibilities as well as creating motivation, activeness and creativity of educational and vocational training institutions. Establishing and submitting to the National Assembly the plan for issuing law on amendment and supplements to law on education. Researching and proposing the amendment for law on State budget under the orientation of ensuring adequate budget for educational quality requirement. Completing national management hierarchy on education and training for specific Ministries, sectors and provinces; implementing autonomy and social responsibility rights of educational and vocational training institutions on a consistent and effective basis; reviewing, adjusting and supplementing mechanism for educational management authority in local area to participate in making decision related to human resource management and financial sources for the education sector”.

- Legislative regulations on autonomy in public upper secondary schools in Vietnam under the globalization trend

There has been a number of documents issued in order to put into effect the Communist Party’s guidelines, policies, roadmaps as well as the Government’s perspectives, management in terms of improving the quality of education and innovating operation mechanism of educational institutions, especially public upper secondary schools [8, 9]. Followings are specific documents:

Table 7: Documents related to autonomy in public upper secondary schools

Document number	Issuing agency	Contents	Issue date	Date of availability
Law number: 38/2005/QH11	National Assembly	Law on amendment and supplements of certain articles of Law on Education	14/06/2005	01/01/2006
Law number: 44/2009/QH12	National Assembly	Law on amendment and supplements of certain articles of Law on Education	25/11/2009	01/07/2010
Law number: 83/2015/QH13	National Assembly	Law on State Budget	25/06/2015	1/1/2017
Law number: 09/2008/QH12	National Assembly	Law on management and use of State assets	30/06/2008	31/12/2010

Law number: 22/2008/QH12	National Assembly	Law on cadres and civil servants 2008	30/06/2008	01/01/2010
Law number: 58/2010/QH12	National Assembly	Law on public employee 2010	15/11/2010	01/01/2012
Decree number 16/2015/NĐ-CP	Government	Regulation on autonomy mechanism of public administrative units	14/2/2015	16/4/2015
Decision 22/2015/QĐ- TTg	Prime Minister	Transformation of public administrative units to joint stock companies	22/6/2015	10/8/2015
Decree 86/2015/NĐ-CP	Government	Regulations on collecting and managing school fee educational institutions of national educational system as well as policies on reducing and supporting fee from academic year 2015-2016 to 2020-2021.	02/10/2015	01/12/2015

- Law on Education number 44/2009/QH12:

The first Law on Education was approved in 1998, amended in 2005 and supplemented in 2009. The highlighting point of this law is its particular article stating regulations on allowance for public upper secondary schools to implement autonomy and take self-responsibilities for their expenses, enrollment; curriculum, materials, syllabus; and employment, etc. There are also regulations on social sponsor and support for the education, which are regarded as reasonable expenses and excluded from income tax, etc. There are rules relevant to budget distribution based on specific socio-economic development conditions and local size of different area. Other contents of this Law also state that education is a typically invested field with privileged conditions. Especially, public schools play the core role in the education system. It is essential to prioritizing the investment in finance and land for the school's construction.

- Law on State budget (NSNN) in 2015

The Law on State budget was issued for the first time in 1996, then, amended and supplemented in 2002. According to Law on budget in 2002, public educational institutions should be in charge of making annual expenditure estimation as well as plan; and reporting these documents to the line authority for further consideration, synthesis as well as submission to competent authorities. Then, after the competent authorities approve these plans, they should send notifications to the line authorities who would provide schools with further information. This process reveals that financial management mechanism, budget supply procedure and Government's control on expenses of schools are too complicated with different levels for approval; as well as inflexible with inspecific criterion for budget distribution and non-application of sponsor formula based on each school's input, output and activities' efficiency.

Law on State budget (NSNN) in 2015 (replacing Law on State budget in 2002) was approved by the 12th National Assembly and officially put into practice since the budget year 2017. This is an important law, creating a new milestone in managing the state budget based on a new legal corridor which is more completed, consistent

and appropriate with current context as well as international integration trend. Then, it significantly contributes to the reform of public finance in a modern basis. However, according to Article 64 on year-end expense report of the state budget, it is demonstrated that “By the end of the year, even during budget balancing time as regulated, all expense estimations, including added items during the year that have been neither completed nor spent, must be called off, except for items moved to the upcoming year’s source for implementation and accounted in that year’s budget”.

Current regulations of Law on State budget might result in the case that certain units are urgent in “disbursement process” at the end of the year. This raises the question of the quality and effectiveness of products during this time, which might be affected to some extent. Specifically, in public upper secondary schools, being urgent in disbursement might influence the quality of teaching activity, lesson plan and scientific studies [10, 11].

- Law on use and management of State assets

Law on use and management of State assets was issued in 2008. It brought about changes in terms of mechanism and managing hierarchy of the state assets, which must be attached with the market (for instance, allowance of asset purchasing activities; transference of land use right; asset, land lease based on market price). However, the limitation of this law is related to its partial allowance of autonomy right to working units; this leads to a big waste when assets are used at low efficiency and effectiveness in these agencies (including public upper secondary schools).

- Law on cadres and civil servants 2008 and Law on public employee 2010

Law on cadres and civil servants 2008, and Law on public employee 2010 clearly differentiate responsibilities of civil servants and employees. This makes it more flexible in managing the school’s staff, teachers and workers, which no longer depends on civil authority relation. For example, a teacher can change his/her working position; ask for allowances and salary in accordance with the position and missions. This is an attracting point for teachers to work in the long run for the schools. However, this regulation also requires schools’ continuous improvement and enhancement in physical and mental life for the teaching staff. In order to achieve this goal, schools must be provided with autonomy at a high level so that they can increase the productivity and efficiency, which creates a financial source huge enough for the rise in competitiveness to attract labour.

- Decree number 16/2015/NĐ-CP

For better effectiveness of autonomy implementation in public service units, the Government issued the decree number 16/2015/NĐ-CP on October, 14th, 2015 related to regulations of autonomy mechanism in public service units. This Decree was put into effect from April, 06th, 2015 and replaced the Decree number 43/2006/NĐ-CP. The release of Decree 16/2015/NĐ-CP on February 14th, 2015 by the Government on autonomy mechanism in public service units (Decree 16) timely met the requirement of reform and development of public service operations in the socialist market oriented economy. Decree 16 provided the adjustment of operation and finance mechanism in public service units under the tendency of fostering the allowance of autonomy right, self-responsibility and encouraging appropriate units to reach autonomy at higher level. In Decree 16, there are eminent points compared with Decree 43/2006/ND-CP on April 25th, 2006 by the Government. This is proved in the following aspects:

Firstly, the classification of public service units is based on level of financial autonomy in terms of both regular expenses and investment expense. Then, according to level of self-assurance for regular expenses and investment expense, public service units are divided into 4 categories:

- Public service units with self-assurance of regular expenses and investment expense,
- Public service units with self-assurance of regular expenses,
- Public service units with partial self-assurance of regular expenses,
- Public service units with Government's assurance of regular expenses.

Secondly, the autonomy of these units in implementing their missions, and organization of human resource as well as finance is regulated in parallel with their kind of public service units. The general rule is that the more these units can self-assure their operation expenses, the higher level of their autonomy is. This can encourage these units to increase their income and gradually decrease provision from the state budget. In specific, the increase in salary provision helps to step by step transform these units to the type of self-assurance of regular expenses and that of both regular expenses and investment expense. In specific, public service units with self-assurance of regular expenses and investment expense are provided with a great autonomy right such as making their own decision in the number of employees, borrowing privileged capital from the state or being supported with interest for investment projects based on borrowing capital from credit organizations as regulated, making decision of income-supplemented budget without the restriction of income-supplemented budget regulations like other units (units with self-assurance of regular expenses are restricted to optimal 3 supplementing times of salary budget for compatible ranks, grades, positions and allowances regulated by the state; units with partial self assurance of regular expenses are restricted to optimal 2 times, units with the state's assurance of regular expenses are restricted to optimal 1 time).

In terms of salary expense and extra income

This decree regulates that public service units have to pay salary based on ranks, grades, positions and allowances as demonstrated by the State for public service units. When the Government adjusts the basic salary, units with self assurance of regular expenses and investment expense should self assure the increasing amount of salary from their income. The State budget would not provide any supplements; in the case of units without self assurance of regular expenses and those with the State's assurance of regular expenses, the increasing salary is decided based on income sources as regulated, including the source from the state budget.

In terms of extra income

All units should be active in using the income supplementary budget to divide the extra income for employees. This should be carried out based on their own units' internal expense regulations with the rule of quality-attached and effectiveness-attached quantity. However, in order to ensure that the extra income for managing staff is not too different from that of other staff, the new Decree demonstrates that in the process of distributing extra income, the extra income coefficient of managers of public service units must not exceed 2 times of the coefficient of average extra income of the units' staff.

In terms of budget establishment and extraction

According to this Decree, every year, after the complete accounting of all expenses, tax payment and other possible payments (if there are) as regulated; the amount of income-expense differences can be extracted to establish budgets for public service development; budgets for added income; budgets for welfare and awards. In addition, this Decree also allows all units to extract those differences for other budgets as regulated by the law, which is appropriate with reality.

In terms of extraction amount

It should be based on the autonomy level as the followings: Regarding budgets for public service development: units with self assurance of regular expenses and investment expense, and ones with self assurance of regular expenses: the minimum amount of extraction is 25% of income-expense differences; units with non-partial self-assurance of regular expenses: the minimum amount of extraction is 15%; units with Government's assurance of regular expenses: if there are savings from expenses, which are one time greater than current salary income, then, the minimum extraction number is 5%. Regarding budgets for extra income: units with self assurance of regular expenses and investment expense can make their own decision of the amount of extra income (no restriction); units with self assurance of regular expenses extract 3 times as maximum of salary budget; units with partial self assurance of regular expenses extract 2 times as maximum of salary budget; units with Government's assurance of regular expenses extract 01 time as maximum of salary budget. Regarding budgets for awards and welfare: units with self assurance of regular expenses and investment expense: extract the maximum amount equal to salary and payment of 3 months of the units; units with partial self assurance of regular expenses extract an amount equal to no more than salary and payment of 2 months; units with Government's assurance of regular expenses extract an amount equal to no more than salary and payment of one month.

In terms of autonomy in financial transaction

In order to provide favorable conditions for public service units in carrying out transactions with external units, especially in joint-venture and partnership activities; and to create more income sources for the units themselves, it is regulated by the Decree that: public service units are allowed to open a deposit account in commercial banks or the state treasury to reflect income sources, expenses for public service activities without the state budget. The interest from deposit should be added to the Budget for public service development or other budgets based on specialized laws (if there are). This interest amount must not be added to the Budget for extra income. Regarding expenditure belonging to the state budget, public service units must open an account in the state treasury to reflect their income from public services based on state budget as well as fee collection according to fee frame and state law. The Decree also states that public service units can mobilize capital and borrow capital to invest and build up facilities based on law's regulations. Also, there must be feasible financial solutions to pay for borrowed capital; and measures to take responsibilities for the effectiveness of capital mobilization and borrowing.

Thirdly, the cost of public service is regulated at Section 2, Chapter II in the Decree. This section covers regulations on cost, fee for using public service, method to identify the cost of public service without state budget and cost of public service with state budget. Then, it is demonstrated that concerning public services without state budget, the cost is determined based on the market; concerning public services with state budget, the cost is

determined based on economic-technological norm, cost norm as regulated and costing roadmap illustrated by the Decree 16/2015/NĐ-CP. At the same time, there are specific regulations on the roadmap for fee calculation of public services, which receive the state budget. This helps to bring about favorable conditions for gradual complete calculation of public service fee into the cost.

Fourthly, public service units are allowed to apply the same financial mechanism as business. The Decree 16 clarifies that units with self assurance of regular expenses are approved to use the same financial mechanism as business (one member limited liability company with 100% charter capital from the Government) if they meet the following requirements: public services have great conditions of socialization, the Government no longer subsidizes; the cost of public services covers all expenses (including depreciation extraction from fixed assets); the Government determines the value of these units' assets and it provides these units with the right of capital control based on law on state's asset use and management; and there is accounting record to reflect activities following business-related accounting standards. Therefore, according to Decree 16, when they are allowed to apply the same financial mechanism like business, public service units can determine charter capital by themselves and preserve it; mobilize capital and invest it into external sources; manage, use and extract depreciation of fixed assets like the business; manage their income, cost and distribute interest; and implement the same accounting and statistics as business. However, there are still inconsistent points related to regulations on expenses: in Decree 16, the Government regulated the roadmap for calculating public service fee in the companion with milestones in 2016, 2018 and 2020. Then, by 2020 public service units (including public universities) must have "calculated all of salary cost, direct cost, management cost and fixed asset depreciation cost". Nonetheless, in "Key missions of colleges and universities in 2015-2016", it is only reminded by Ministry of Education and Training that "It is necessary to build up a financial autonomy roadmap to provide income for paying salary and direct cost, management cost as well as depreciation cost".

- Decision number 22/2015/QĐ-TTg

On June 22th, 2015, the Prime Minister signed the decision number 22/2015/QĐ-TTg on transforming public service units to joint stock companies (QĐ-22). It is emphasized by the Government that "Public service units in the areas of healthcare, education and training need to enhance operations under the autonomy mechanism moving towards complete autonomy and business-based accounting". Therefore, a "contract-management" policy in education is planned by the Government.

- Decree number 86/2015/NĐ-CP

On October 02, 2015, the Government announced the decree number 86/2015/NĐ-CP with regulations on the mechanism for collecting and managing fee in educational institutions belonging to national educational system as well as policies on tuition fee waiver from academic year 2015 - 2016 to 2020 - 2021. Then, from this academic year, the fee is adjusted based on annual increase in consumer price index released by Ministry of Planning and Investment. Moreover, according to this decree, high quality public upper secondary institutions should be active in setting up the compatible fee which can afford their training cost. However, this estimation should be approved by the local People's Committee and managed in line with the regulations on publication by Ministry of Education and Training.

Table 8: Fee frame for general education in public upper secondary schools in academic year 2015 - 2016 - Unit:
1.000 VND/month/student

Area	Academic year 2015 - 2016
Urban	from 60 to 300
Countryside	from 30 to 120
Mountainous	from 8 to 60

- ***Reality of autonomy model***

According to the statistics by Ministry of Education and Training, currently, the autonomy model in upper secondary schools is mainly implemented in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh cities, which have the most favorable conditions for socio-economic development nationwide in order to ensure the autonomy requirements [12-14]. In specific, there are 105 public upper secondary schools in Hanoi which have implemented financial autonomy model; there are 24 schools in Ho Chi Minh city which have been provided with autonomy right. Then, the number of autonomous upper secondary schools in compared with the number of total upper secondary schools nationwide is limited. In addition, changes in curriculum of upper secondary education require the certainty that schools should be autonomous in their specialization, human resource and finance. However, autonomous upper secondary schools mainly cover financial aspect. Especially, most upper secondary institutions in the country are still either partially or fully supported by the state.

In terms of the State Budget

The financial sources for public upper secondary schools are still mainly allocated by the State Budget in the form of recurrent and non-recurrent expenditures as well as revenue from tuition fee according to the legal framework of the Government (which is lower than non-public schools). However, funds provided by the State Budget source for investment activities, recurrent and non-recurrent expenditures of these public upper secondary schools are limited and on the verge of declining. Gradual reduction of revenue from the State Budget for upper secondary school education is conducted concurrently with the increasing implementation of financial autonomy in various schools. In fact, when comparing the State Budget spent on education as well as the education expense spent on an individual, Vietnam consistently has the high rate in the region, even remarkably higher than that of other countries including Philippines, Thailand, Singapore and developed countries such as USA, UK, Australia [1, 15].

In terms of tuition fee

Tuition fee is the main source of revenue for many upper secondary schools nowadays. However, the current tuition fee for public schools is still regarded as remarkably low. As stated in the above analysis, the tuition ceiling for public schools is regulated in Decree 86/2015/NĐ-CP regarding the collection and management of tuition fees from 2015 to 2021. The tuition fee in some public upper secondary schools has increased as a result of their approval on the Scheme for Reforming the operating mechanism and finance mechanism in educational units. Nevertheless, the increasing amount is insignificant and the current tuition fee is still regarded as a considerably large amount of capital for economically disadvantaged students. Therefore, it can be seen that increasing tuition

fee in public upper secondary schools is necessary. However, appropriate financial solutions for economically disadvantaged students are required to be concurrently carried out to prevent the widening in social stratification in quality educational units.

In terms of other revenues

Being financially independent, these schools, in addition to revenue generated from tuition fee complying with State's regulations, all make great efforts to diversify their revenue sources by collecting service fees. This is also the primary solution to increase their revenue. Revenues from various services such as parking fees, payments for cafeteria rentals, dormitory fees... barely make up for derived expenses and regulated taxes. These services are operated according to student-based principle which leads to a comparatively low amount of revenue. To sum up, although the revenue originated from tuition fee increases at the pace of consumer price index throughout each year, it is still considered as low and revenue from other fees' collection still accounts for only a small proportion. Notably, schools without well-known reputation do not meet the standard in students' quantity which results in difficulties in increasing their revenue. Insufficient revenue may lead to many negative effects such as low entry requirements to increase the number of students, non full-time programs' expansion which considerably increases teachers' working hours and deducts the amount of time spent on academic research. Additionally, lack of investment in infrastructure can lead to poor quality of education and training.

- **Autonomy in expenditures**

Investment expenditures: In terms of public upper secondary schools independently operating recurrent and investment expenditures, investment expenditures are provided by the Career Support Fund, borrowings and other legal financial sources. Public upper secondary schools can receive preferential credit borrowings from the government or interest rate support in investment projects using capital of credit agencies which comply with State's regulations. In terms of approved investment projects or those in the deployment stage, other investment projects will still be carried out according to authorized agencies' approvals.

Recurrent expenditures: Salary expenditures account for the largest proportion in upper secondary schools' ordinary expenditures. However, due to insufficient revenue, the salary of upper secondary school teachers in Vietnam is significantly lower compared to the average amount of all professions, even in the context of comparatively low living cost in Vietnam. According to a 2018 survey, the average amount of salary of a fresh upper secondary school teacher is roughly 3 million VND and for a upper secondary school teacher at his retirement age, the number ranges around 12 million VND. In the current mechanism, teachers' over-time income is calculated according to the teaching hours. Due to the low salary, teachers have a tendency of increasing their teaching hours to receive this extra income. This leads to the overload of teaching hours and insufficient amount of time spent on preparing quality lesson plans. In the case of upper secondary schools that are completely independent in self-financing or recurrent expenditures, teachers' income has been improved. For example, in Phan Huy Chu High School (Hanoi), the average income is 15 million VND per month for a teacher while it ranges from 15 to 20 million VND for teachers in Marie Curie High School. The lowest income is roughly 10 million per month and the highest income can reach up to 30-40 million VND per month. This serves as a positive effect of self-financing mechanism. If public upper secondary schools are effectively independent in self-financing and

successfully increase their revenue, their teachers' income can be considerably increased. This positively encourages their devotion and enhances their dedication in the profession as well as the school's training quality.

- Case study at High School Education Science, Hanoi, Vietnam
- *Teachers' scale and quantity at High School Education Science (HES)*

High School Education Science was founded in 2016 and the quantity and quality of teachers have always been the school's priority. Until now, throughout four years of development, the school teachers' structure is demonstrated in these following figures:

Figure 1: Number of HES teachers throughout each school year

It can be seen that the number of active teachers in school's education and training system witnesses a gradual growth throughout each year. In the first school year, there were only 26 qualified teachers and until the latest school year, it has gone up to 64. The staff quality also constantly improves including two teachers with Doctor Degree, 26 ones with PhD degree and others with very good and excellent bachelor degrees.

Figure 2: Qualifications of HES teachers throughout each school year

- *Students' scale at High School Education Science (HES)*

Throughout four years of development, the number of students registering for education at HES increases considerably which is presented in figure 3:

Figure 3: Number of students at HES throughout school years

In the first year of establishment, the total of students in all three grades was only 125. Until now, in the school year of 2019-2020, the figure has increased to 337 students which is 2,7 times higher compared to the first year's.

- *Students and teachers' ratio at High School Education Science (HES)*

Figure 4: Students and teachers' ratio at High School Education Science (HES) throughout each school year

The ratio between students and teachers at HES ranged from 4,81 to 6,35. Specifically, in the school year of 2019-2020, the ratio was 5,27 while the nation's average ratio was 24. The data proves great efforts of the school's executive board in improving the recruitment process and successfully conducting the government's preferential policies for teachers. This significantly contributes to the enhancement of education and training's quality for students.

- *Status quo of autonomy in revenue of High School Education Science (HES)*

Figure 5: Structure of HES's revenue throughout each school year

The total revenue of HES consistently increased throughout each year. In the first two school years, the State Budget served as the main source of the school's revenue by accounting for 78%. However, in two recent school years, by applying the financially independent model, being less dependent on State Budget and conducting many policies to attract more students, the school's revenue from tuition fee and other services had remarkably increased their market share in the total revenue up to 60% averagely.

Revenue from the State Budget

Figure 6: Revenue from the State Budget of High School Education Science (HES) throughout each school year

Since its establishment, High School Education Science has been legally receiving funds from the State Budget. Nevertheless, after four school years, these funds have a slight decrease from 14.989 million VND in 2016-2017 to 14.000 million VND in 2019-2020. One of the primary reasons for this decrease is the school's financial autonomy mechanism, except for the period of 2017-2018 in which funds provided by the State Budget was substantially high as a means to ensure its activities during first years of operation.

Revenue from tuition fee

Figure 7: Revenue from tuition fee of High School Education Science (HES) throughout each school year

Despite the decreasing amount of funds received from State Budget, the school's total revenue experienced a remarkable increase throughout years due to the increasing amount of revenue from tuition fee. In detail, revenue from tuition fee had increased from 2.256 million VND in the period of 2016-2017 to 19.500 million VND in the school year of 2019-2020 (8,6 times higher). This positive outcome is due to the high quality in the school's education and training which cements its reputation and greatly attracts an increasing quantity of students registering at HES.

Other revenues

Figure 8: Other revenues of High School Education Science (HES) throughout each school year

Additionally, other revenues originated from application fee, records' purchase fee... considerably contribute to the school's process of applying financial autonomy. Specifically, revenue from application fee experienced a two-time growth from 291 million VND in the period of 2016-2017 to 603 million VND in the school year of 2019-2020. Moreover, other revenues also derive from funds contributed by students or service fee collections in the school's facility exploitation.

- *Status quo of autonomy in expenditures of High School Education Science (HES)*

Figure 9: Structure of expenditures of High School Education Science (HES)

In recent school years, expenditures used to improve the quality of education and training of HES constantly increased throughout each school year with investment expenditures constituting for the largest proportion (72%) in the total expenditures.

Investment expenditures

Figure 10: Investment expenditures of High School Education Science (HES) throughout each school year

Investment expenditures of HES witnessed a remarkable increase after four school years. It increased from 13,488 million VND in the period of 2016-2017 to 24,730 million VND in the school year of 2019-2020, which is the highest recorded amount. The expenditures mainly involve in primary construction sites, equipment purchasing, fixed assets repairing, which aims towards the improvement of school's education and quality.

Recurrent expenditures

Figure 11: Recurrent expenditures of High School Education Science (HES) throughout each school year

Recurrent expenditures constitute a considerable proportion in the annual total of expenditures of HES. They increased from 2.414 million VND in school year of 2016-2017 to 10.270 million VND in the period of 2019-2020. The increasing amount mainly results from the increasing payment in salary for the significantly increasing number of teachers and staff in four school years. Additionally, the school's recurrent expenditures are spent in these following aspects including expenditures for students (scholarships, social benefits, bonuses, culture or sport activities and events.), administration (electricity, water, cleaning, stationery, public services, business trips and meetings, promotion, telephone, fax...), profession (books, newspapers, magazines, laboratories, field trips, contract payments, overtime payments, recruitment, excellent students contest, graduation examinations). Moreover, there are some recurrent expenditures related to regular purchasing and repairing of fixed assets and equipments for educational purposes and maintenance of infrastructure.

Other expenditures

Figure 12: Other expenditures of High School Education Science (HES) throughout each school year

In recent school years, the school's other expenditures increased from 972 million VND in the period of 2016-2017 to 1.500 million VND in the school year of 2019-2020.

- Evaluation on the status quo of management in upper secondary schools under the context of education reform

Currently, the autonomy mechanism in public upper secondary schools is being implemented according to Decree 16/2015-CP. Public administrative units possess the autonomy in different degrees according to the principle: the larger financial source the school self-governs, the higher autonomy degree it manages and utilizes financial outcomes. There are four autonomy degrees which are regulated in the Decree.

- Benefits from Decree 16/CP

The establishment of Decree 16/CP has fully demonstrated the spirit and policy of the State and government regarding comprehensive education reform according to the contents of Decree 22/NQ-CP. Decree 16 offers impressive transformations in the operation and financial mechanism of public administrative units which is to orientate towards distribution of public services instead of distribution of estimated budget. This deeply connects with benefits that these units actively offer under various forms of service supply and also encourages them to actively increase its revenue and reduce the dependence on the State Budget. Autonomy mechanism of public administrative units refers to a set of regulations on autonomy and responsible autonomy to duty performance, organizational, workforce and finance structure of public administrative units. Decree 16/2015/NĐ-CP establishes the legislation on state management of public administrative service and public administrative units, encourages and creates favorable conditions, set up the equal and competitive environment for organizations or individuals in all economic sectors to get involved in offering public administrative services; plans the network of public service units by industries and sectors; compile the list of public services funded by the state budget; issues economic – technical norms applying the field of public administrative services managed by the Government; establishes regulations on bidding, placement of orders and assignment of tasks to supply public administrative services; establishes criteria and standards for the quality of public administrative services; offers the mechanism for

supervision, evaluation and inspection of the quality of public administrative services and the efficiency in operations of public administrative units; creates roadmaps for sufficiently calculating prices and fees on public administrative services that public administrative units set and directly pay for people entitled to state policies; arranges the procedure, process for establishment, reorganization and dissolution, and specifies conditions for organization and operation of public administrative units; transforms public administrative units according to the planning approved by competent authorities; delegates the autonomy to affiliated public administrative units; stipulates transformation of public administrative units into non-public ones or enterprises; issues the mechanism and policy to encourage social involvements in public administrative services; inspects, examines and imposes penalties for violations in public administrative service supply.

III. VALIDITY OF FINANCIAL AUTONOMY MECHANISM

Decree 16/CP is a legal transaction with practical validity. The targets and contents of Decree's regulations related to autonomy, self-responsibility are presented clearly and legally and suitable with socioeconomic conditions in Vietnam as well as international integration trends.

Compared with Decree 43/CP, Decree 16/CP offers a legal framework for schools to organize financial activities and fulfill targets and missions more effectively such as expanding rights of capital mobilization, organization of services and joint-ventures according to functions and missions. The distribution of estimated budget focuses on the stability, generality, accuracy and details in revenues and other incurred expenditures of the planned year. While in the process of distributing estimated budget, schools are allowed to self-adjust sections of expenditures suitable with assigned tasks (except for non-recurrent expenditures). Recurrent expenditures (including funds provided by the State Budget) in reported year which have not yet to be used can be transferred to the next year for spending. Therefore, targets as well as procedures related to autonomy and responsible autonomy stated in Decree 16/CP have ensured the publicity, transparency and acknowledgement of schools being legal entities that are responsible for making decisions to improve the effects of exploiting their own resources.

IV. EFFECTIVENESS OF FINANCIAL AUTONOMY MECHANISM

Decree 16/CP offers outstanding impacts, increases the scale of revenue and staff's income as well as enhances the effects of using funds provided by the State Budget. The number of science research, the amount of investment per student and training quality also improves significantly which meet the market's practical demands.

V. FLEXIBILITY OF FINANCIAL AUTONOMY MECHANISM

Decree 16/CP provides favorable conditions for schools to be more active and flexible in exploring, exploiting and diversifying sources of revenue from State Budget and non State Budget, participating in bidding and science research projects and proposing new suggestions for education and training programs. The promulgation and deployment of regulations related to internal spending in expenditures have encouraged and promoted schools to improve their internal management, actively renovate their operations in a more capital-saving and effective usage of funds and resources as well as become less dependent on funds provided by the State Budget. The distribution

of estimated budget was completed before the deadline (December 31st of the reported year) and administrative procedures was simplified (for example, in the past, regarding the requirement to adjust different categories in the estimated budget, schools were required to compile the list of estimated expenditures and submit it for authorized bodies and only adjusted upon receiving their permissions. Currently, the modification of estimated budget has been simplified as schools only have to re-establish the list of estimated expenditures and send it to authorized bodies and treasury for management and supervision).

VI. EQUALITY OF FINANCIAL AUTONOMY MECHANISM

The individual is open to select the training schedule and programs suitable with his financial situation. Schools hoping to recruit more students are required to actively offer more opportunities and technology transfer as well as the transparency of their team of teachers, staff and education programs. Schools with high tuition fee are required to explain notable features of their new programs being different in which characteristics compared with old ones. Decree 16/Cp stipulates the income expenditures based on the principle: the higher productivity and more efforts an individual spends on increasing the school's revenue and saving expenses, the higher income he will receive. This guarantees the equality in labor and creates the connection between individuals and schools' rights and responsibilities with assigned tasks.

VII. COMPULSION IN ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF FINANCIAL AUTONOMY MECHANISM

Financial autonomy mechanism promotes schools to make more great efforts in saving and using resources effectively and accurately according to the planned targets, enhances the consensus among teachers and staff in establishing the brand of the school.

VIII. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY

Financial autonomy mechanism undeniably offers new rights for public upper secondary schools and the society in improving the quality of education and training programs. The autonomy is also acknowledged as an inevitable objective trend.

- Limitations in the deployment of Decree 16/CP

Decree 16/CP officially came into effect since June 10th, 2015. Specific assessments have not yet to be made as there are some limitations in the deployment of this Decree including:

Firstly, the degree of synchronization with other mechanisms and policies is not sufficient and the regulations and guidelines are not timely implemented. Although the decree came into effect since June 2015, guiding documents have not yet to be issued. Many schools have high quality training programs and joint ventures with foreign institutions, but the Ministry and other departments have not had documents guiding the consensus of administrative management and its revenues and expenses. This results in the confusion among schools in the deploying process. Guiding documents and circulars for the implementation still lack of consistency and have not yet to remove "favor-asking" mechanism which is against the objective of assigning financial autonomy to schools.

The financial autonomy mechanism remains to have some inflexibilities: Schools are still under the management and control of many authorities, especially the State Treasury in the payment and withdrawal of funds for operating expenses (There are some Treasuries have not yet to comply correctly with the contents of the financial autonomy mechanism such as not allowing the school to withdraw recurrent expenditures for other high-cost spendings despite all the regulations regarding the internal spending stated in the school's records).

Secondly, reality shows that the current financial autonomy mechanism does not ensure the fairness for involving staff and schools. It only encourages schools to expand their scale, increase financial revenue without improving the quality of education and training and the allocation of state budget to schools has not yet to equally and effectively connect with targets of the mechanism in upper secondary school education. For example, low tuition fees result in insufficient compensation for recurrent expenses, reverse funding for the rich and there is a notable number of schools having yet to apply financial autonomy model. Tuition fee is a non-State-Budget revenue source as well as the main financial source to maintain the operation and development of upper secondary schools. However, in Vietnam, the government is still implementing a policy to support students which leads to the tuition fee not being calculated according to service fees. The policy is only considered as a means to partly share students' expenses in education. Because low-tuition-fee policy is not timely updated with consumer price and the adjustment of workers' minimum wage, many schools hesitate to apply the financial autonomy model (as the model equals to the removal of funds provided by the State Budget) and they have to "break the law" to obtain unofficial revenues which leads to a lack of publicity and transparency in their revenue and usage of revenue. Another consequence is that the schools do not have sufficient financial resources to ensure the quality of equipments, classrooms, libraries, teachers and the training program due to low investment expense per student. In order to increase the revenue, most schools have to expand the scale of training, forms of association with other institutions and non full-time training programs which exacerbates the contrast ratio between students and teachers; students and libraries, laboratories... and results in the decrease in the quality of training.

Thirdly, the financial autonomy mechanism has yet to provide any sanctions or requests of financial explanation from schools and state authorities which leads to schools' inaccurate and unrealistic establishment and distribution of estimated revenue. For example, the governing body offers a too low estimated revenue or the estimation does not base on previous year's revenue or suffers miscalculation leads to the actual revenue is remarkably higher than the estimated one. The reason for this is a large number of schools are still afraid that if all sources of revenue are accurately listed and calculated, the total revenue would increase which results in the schools would no longer be partly or completely supported by funds provided by the State Budget and they would be required to apply the model of financial autonomy.

Fourthly, the current financial autonomy mechanism does not have effective regulations in detail. Schools are forced to set up their own targets and commitments with State authorities to ensure their organizational structure (by establishing executive board, government-owned representatives mechanism, supervision of the community), on financial targets for each year and each period. This creates an remarkable amount of pressure on schools in making physical and mental efforts to propose solutions with practical impacts in linking schools' teaching activities with the nation's demands of socio-economic development (which includes exploring, exploiting and improving the structure of financial resources in order to expand their scale and use them economically and effectively).

Fifthly, increasing tuition fee according to the Government's schedule to ensure a sufficient frame of service fees will create a significant amount of pressure on students, which leads to numerous difficulties in schools' recruitment. Therefore, the decisive issue is that the quality of education and training must be commensurate with the tuition fee. Concurrently, a policy with the aim of supporting and encouraging students should also be concurrently issued.

Sixthly, the transformation of public schools into businesses is likely turn the State's assets into private assets if they are not properly managed. Additionally, the quality of education and training is likely to depend greatly on investors which possibly results in companies operating only for profits.

IX. CONCLUSION

In Vietnam as in many other developing countries in the region, the model of school autonomy has not been formally incorporated into educational management. However, due to the impact of the process of globalization, many ideas of the above model have been shared, penetrated and transformed into the process of renovating educational management in our country through a number of prescribed policies. regulated by the State. Educational policy makers still see the school as a compliant school, responsible for executing administrative orders or regulations communicated by higher management. On the other hand, in terms of autonomy of public non-business units, the extent to which public schools are autonomous and autonomous depends entirely on their ability to guarantee self-sufficiency. Therefore, from the autonomy of the Education Law to the autonomy of the subordinate documents, there is a big difference in awareness as mentioned above. Education managers need to fundamentally and comprehensively renovate education and training to meet the requirements of industrialization and modernization in the context of socialist-oriented market economy and international integration. It is required to separate state management from educational institution administration. However, at present, the policy of separating state management from institution administration has not been mentioned. It is the slow institutionalization of this policy that makes the school autonomy still face major barriers in implementation. The fact that state management has not been separated from education institution governance will lead to the state management agency continuing to keep its intervention in all activities related to direction and decision on major issues of the state. educational institutions, thereby neutralizing school councils, turning school councils into a formal institution in school organization in Vietnam today.

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XI. CONFLICTS AND INTERESTS

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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