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**THE EFFECTS OF UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE  
ON NEW PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL PROCESS  
IN VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITIES**

**LE THI ANH TRAM**

**SINGAPORE MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY  
2020**

The effects of university governance structure on new programme development  
and approval process in Vietnamese universities

by  
Le Thi Anh Tram

Submitted to Lee Kong Chian School of Business in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Business Administration

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I hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work  
and it has been written by me in its entirety.

I have duly acknowledged all the sources of information  
which have been used in this dissertation.

This dissertation has also not been submitted for any degree  
in any university previously

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tram", is positioned above a solid horizontal line. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail.

Le Thi Anh Tram  
30 November 2020

## **Abstract**

The effects of university governance structure on new programme development and approval process in Vietnamese universities

By Le Thi Anh Tram

Universities and other higher education institutions are viewed as social organizations which play a crucial role in developing the economy, politic, culture, talent, and society of the country. Society expects the universities to well-fulfill their mission in education, academic research, public engagement for the economic development and sustainability of the country and the government is also accountable for supporting the universities to accomplish their missions.

In the context of the increasingly dynamic education industry, between a) internationalization with foreign schools establishing new ventures abroad or local schools recruiting students worldwide, b) the rapid development of information technology as digitization is expanding not just reach but the content and delivery capabilities of faculty, and c) the pace of change and increasing demand for knowledge and specialization in national development and global industries, it can be summarized that the higher education institutions have many opportunities, otherwise they are also facing numerous challenges in their activities. In these circumstances, the governing and strategic issues of the higher education institutions have to be considered with both a local and a global perspective in mind. A good university governance model has become more important than ever before. Many universities in the world have changed the governance structure, process, and procedures at the State and University level towards distributing autonomy for universities to better implement the roles and responsibilities of the universities to industry demands and society development.

In Vietnam, in the process of switching the economic landscape from a state-controlled model to a market-centric model, the higher education system gains remarkable achievements. However, the quality of education is facing difficulties and shortcomings. Educational degree programs and courses are out of date and behind market demands and modern businesses. Training quality in Vietnamese

universities is still considered low compared to the prevailing international standards. As a result, many students find difficulties looking for jobs after graduation or need to be re-trained when they begin to work for enterprises, high unemployment rates among graduates, and questions about the need or effectiveness of university education. Numerous commentators have questioned if it is a waste of money and time. Meanwhile, public trust and confidence in the current Vietnamese universities are decreasing over time.

While all administrators of public universities in the Western and Asian countries would claim that there are opportunities to innovate governance, developing many new degree programs to adapt to market demands, in Vietnam the critical question is whether the current government governance on the university is the problem for the reluctance of universities to submit the new programmes proposals when this is desired by the Vietnamese government. It examines the question through the lens of agency theory, exploring the reason the agents (the universities) might have for not acting upon the principal's (the Vietnamese government's) instructions. The research examines the governance and new programme development processes for explanations for the agency problem (inaction or lack of motivation in new programme development).

Through the research methods including document review, semi-structured interview, and survey, the research provided critical findings regards with the problems of the new degree program governance in areas of approval authority, process requirements, process procedures, and policies. Recommendations were suggested to solve the fallings of the new degree program governance.

This research is very importantly significant for the Vietnamese public university system and stakeholders such as the Government, leaders, policy-makers, scientists, and educators. Outcomes of this research provide scientific knowledge course and experiences of the university governance which serve as the foundation and guidelines for the Vietnamese Government and Universities to innovate university, especially the governance of new degree programs to respond to industry demands as well as enhance the performance and reputation of the universities.

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## **List of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
BOD	Board of Director
BOT	Board of Trustee
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOST	Ministry of Science and Technology
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
NDP	New Degree Program
NDPs	New Degree Programs
LDPs	List of Degree Programs
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VNUHCM	Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City
WB	The World Bank
VN	Vietnam
VCP	Vietnam Communist Party

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## **Chapter 1 : INTRODUCTION**

### **1. Introduction and problem statement**

Universities not only serve as the foundation of their existence (Hayter & Cahoy, 2018) but also contribute to the development and prosperity of the countries. In the context of knowledge-based, technology-driven societies, and the obvious interconnected economies of a global world, the roles and responsibilities of the higher education institutions are becoming more and more critical. Universities and other higher education institutions are viewed as social organizations which play a crucial role in developing the economy, politic, culture, talent, and society of the country. In the past years, society expects universities to well-fulfill their traditional responsibilities, which are education, academic research, public engagement, and service. First, they teach workforces with essential skills, attitudes, and knowledge to work in a competitive environment. Second, they generate new knowledge and value-added products through research and innovation processes. Third, they positively contribute to community service through social and cultural programs, educational activities, technology exchange, and so on (Austin & Jones, 2016; Cotelnic et al., 2015; Hendrickson, Lane, Harris, & Dorman, 2013; McCaffery, 2010; OECD, 2011; Ruben, Lisi, & Gigliotti, 2017). But in recent years, in the context of the increasingly dynamic environment and dramatic competitiveness among countries, universities are expected to meet not only traditional responsibilities but also dynamic ones, which are economic development and sustainability (Hayter & Cahoy, 2018). Under the real circumstances, a good

university governance model has become more important than ever before (Gul, Gul, Kaya, & Alican, 2010). The good university governance model will produce high-quality outcomes of the universities such as graduates' competencies, outstanding research output, good services, and outreach, which are responsive to market demands and strongly contribute to the development and sustainability of the country as well as enhance the university's reputation.

Since then, the relationship between the university governance and university becomes one of the important issues that many scientists and scholars are recently studying with the expectation to find out a good university governance model that helps the university fulfill its social responsibilities.

Within the university's daily operations, the introduction of a new programme to meet market needs is considered as one of the university's social responsibilities. Thus, in this situation, the role of the university governance is by what to establish the effective process and procedures of new programme development and approval with the minimum amount of time to introduce high-quality programmes that provide the human resource market with a high-quality workforce.

In practice, under the impact of globalization on higher education, the scientific and technological advances, opportunities and challenges raised, and from that the university governance and the effects of the university governance on the process of new program development and approval have dramatically shifted according to

different countries and universities of theirs. Many universities take opportunities from the context to develop academics, enhance their reputation, and improve their contribution to society. Otherwise, other universities with the lack of innovation in university governance have badly influenced the performance of universities in particular and the higher education industry in general.

*The context of the higher education governance and role of the university governance on new programme developing and approving process*

Globally the education industry has become increasingly dynamic, between a) internationalization with foreign schools establishing new ventures abroad or local schools recruiting students worldwide, b) the rapid development of information technology as digitization is expanding not just reach but the content and delivery capabilities of faculty. And, c) the pace of change and increasing demand for knowledge and specialization in national development and global industries. It can be summarized that the high needs of the knowledge economy, and the ever-changing role of the state on universities, the higher education sector has many opportunities, but at the same time, it is also facing numerous challenges (Austin & Jones, 2016; Barnett, 2000; Marginson & Considine, 2000; McCaffery, 2010; Trowler, 2002).

In terms of the opportunities, the university operational models are diversifying into many types such as public and private sectors, international cooperation, for profit, not for profit, online, off-line, blended, etc. The number of new universities and enrolments

are increasing rapidly as government leaders, and their populations seek higher participation rates among universities. New training models (e.g., e-learning, distance learning, etc.) are developing and come into practice at an ever-increasing rate as technology is becoming less expensive, more robust, more distributed, and more accessible. The student mix is also changing as more females are included in the university education journey. In fact, in numerous developed and developing countries, females greatly outnumber males in the student and graduation numbers. Many international students can also take part in programs at universities in other countries through student exchange projects. These advantages have contributed to the development of the higher education sector in general.

Growth brings with it many challenges. The sudden development of the number of institutions and swelling enrollments causes difficulties in the operations, staffing, delivery as well as financing of the whole higher education system. While taxpayers may want more education, they are not always willing to pay for it. Massive expenditures on skilling faculty and expanding infrastructure are needed to keep up with demand. The imbalance of the speed of the growth and the current conditions in higher education institutions have brought problems of quality in education, research, and management. In addition, many governments are gradually reducing their rate of financial investment in universities and requiring institutions and their management to diversify resources for development. For instance, from 1980 to 2014, the State level contribution to student tuition fees in the United States decreased by 72%. All the while,

the demand for high-quality education services, well-educated workforces, and increased competition are adding to the pressures on the higher education section.

The governance and strategic issues of the higher education sector have to be considered with both a local and a global perspective in mind. Reputations, the market for talented faculty and student recruitments are mainly focused on both domestic and international in nature. And while universities have been land-locked members of a community, their students and publications have reached far beyond their gates. Higher education has taken on a strategic and important mission in solving numerous socio-economic and cultural problems that we come across today. Therefore, the quality of the higher education services is critical.

Under the real circumstances, scientists and educators have realized that a good university governance model has become more important than ever before (Gul et al., 2010). The better the governance model is, the greater the performance outcomes are achieved. Good governance models may improve the outcomes of the higher education institutions and enhance the competitive advantages in the higher education industry (Agasisti & Catalano, 2006; Aghion, Dewatripont, Hoxby, Mas-Colell, & Sapir, 2010; Austin & Jones, 2016; Berdahl, 1999; Bratianu & Pinzaru, 2015; Braun & Merrien, 1999; Christensen, 2011; Christopher, 2012; Dao, 2009; Davidovitch & Iram, 2015; de Boer, Enders, & Schimank, 2005; Fielden, 2008; Henard & Mitterle, 2009; Khanh & Hayden, 2010; King, 2007).

Many universities in Europe, the USA, and Asian countries have strongly reformed their university governance model of both the Government and university level (Neave & van Vught, 1994; van Vught, 1994; Varghese & Martin, 2014) with the perspective that the universities must have a high degree of independence and autonomy in making decisions of their activities to develop services and create products that meet the expectations of society. In the meanwhile, the State's university governance mechanism has shifted gradually from centralization to decentralization, granted more autonomy to universities with different kind of models such as full-dependent, semi-independent or independent (Fielden, 2008). At the same time, excellence, or even competence in universities is a moving target. Institutional leaders have to innovate in the way they govern their universities, reform the governance structure and leadership style, improve the leadership's capabilities to meet the values, requirements, and expectations established by the stakeholders, including the state, society, faculties, staffs, and students. In the lens of new program governance at the universities, the relationship between the government and university on the governance of new programs has changed. The university becomes the main subject of the process, which makes approval of introducing a new program at the universities instead of the government of the ministry of education. Meanwhile, the government or the ministry of education is responsible for regulating the national quality standards which the universities must follow and meet as well as legislative policies or guidance which support universities to implement their daily operations to ensure the quality of the programs delivered. Under such specific conditions, the leaders of the universities set up the full process of new programme development and approval with clear duties and

criteria for school, faculty, and departments to implement. Many universities have utilized the advances of technology, such as an online system of processing and approving the proposal of new programs. These make the approval process more convenient and effective (Deakin-University; Florida; Iowa-State-University; Reading; Washington-State-University). In addition, many courses of leadership for leaders of universities are carried out, and the outcomes of these courses are the perspectives and capabilities of leaders being enhanced. From the shifting of university governance mechanism and effective processes and the good execution by leadership, the universities have created many useful courses and programs to meet market demands and gained distinct and outstanding outcomes, leading local universities to world-class universities as well as high responsiveness to market and society (Estermann & Nokkala, 2009; Estermann, Nokkala, & Steinel, 2011; Salmi, 2009; Varghese & Martin, 2014).

*The Vietnamese university governance and the development and approval process of new degree programs*

The international developments described earlier have been mirrored in Vietnam as its economy opened up and adopted certain free market practices. In Vietnam, a "Đổi Mới" (reform) policy on the economy was implemented in 1986. Nearly 20 years later, in 2005, Vietnam issued a policy of fundamental and comprehensive reform of the Vietnamese higher education sector with the general goals presented in HERA 2005 as follows.

- (1) To carry out a fundamental and comprehensive reform of higher education,
- (2) To undertake a process of profound renews in quantity, quality, and effectiveness to meet all the demands of industrialization, modernization, global economic integration and
- (3) To have a higher education system meeting international standards, highly competitive, and appropriate to the socialist-oriented market mechanism by 2030 (Vietnam, 2005).

During the period of the past 20 years, Vietnam has made significant progress in the higher education section in terms of quantity, quality, and diversification with some remarkable outcomes in the period from 2005 to 2015. The number of enrolments has grown tremendously. Statistical figures from the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) say that from 2005 to 2010, the enrolment rate increased by 37%, and from 2005 to 2015, this number is 74%. Similarly, the number of universities, especially private universities, has also increased to meet the growing demand of learners. For instance, from 2005 to 2010, the number of public universities increased by 33%, and from 2005 to 2015, this rate was 113%. In the total of public and private universities, the increasing rate was 67% in 2010 and 150% in 2015 compared to the year 2005. Many new programs and methods of education have been developed to offer learners as many as opportunities to approach higher education levels. The relationship between universities and enterprises have been changed. In 2012, the Law on Higher Education was enacted with open policies, giving more opportunities and autonomy for universities to develop their organizations. The Vietnamese higher education system is partaking in the higher education systems of Asia and of the world through cooperation in training, research, and student exchange programs. In general, the Vietnam higher

education system has shifted and transformed itself along with the significant change of the higher education systems in the world.

However, the rapid and “hot” development of the higher education system has led to unexpected results. There are negative gaps between the quantity and quality of the development of higher education institutions and programs. Some new universities have been established despite a shortage of equipment, facilities, and even professors and staff for teaching and managing these institutions. Outcomes of scientific research have not yet met the demands of economic and social development. Especially, in terms of the new degree programs, many reports claimed that the educational programs and curriculum are out of date and behind the demands of the market and modern businesses. Processes of operations in the universities are cumbersome with many steps and strict requirements. Besides, the administrative procedures are complicated and take a long time to get approval. Many universities find difficulties in introducing new programs to respond to market needs. Training quality in Vietnamese universities is still considered low compared to the prevailing international standards (World Bank, 2016b, 2016c, 2016d). As a result, many students have difficulties looking for jobs after graduation or need to be re-trained when they begin to work for enterprises, the high unemployment rates among graduates and questions about the need or effectiveness of university education (Anh, 2011; Harman, Hayden, & Nghi, 2010; Hayden & Thiep, 2007, 2010; Khanh & Hayden, 2010; Li & Yang, 2014; Nghi, 2010; Tung, Hang, Hiep, & Trang, 2017; Van, 2017, March 17; Varghese & Martin, 2014; VOV, 2017; World Bank, 2016a). Numerous pundits have questioned if it is a waste of money and time (Hien,

2017; Thu, 2014; Tran, 2017). In the meanwhile, public trust and confidence in the current Vietnamese universities are decreasing over time.

Investigating the university governance structure, process, and procedures in general and governance on new programme developing and approving process in particular, researchers have found that the universities are still managed with a state-centralized model, in which the Government manages all aspects of strategies and operations of the universities. The internal university governance is not fully completed, and the management mechanism lacks transparency. The leader's capabilities are limited in terms of skills, attitude, and knowledge in leading and managing the universities in the dynamic environment. The current university governance structure and mechanism are facing difficulties and shortcomings (Brooks, 2010; Dao, 2009; Duong, 2014; Harman et al., 2010; Hayden & Thiep, 2007, 2010; Ho & Berg, 2010; MOET-Vietnam, 2017b; Nghi, 2010; Pham, 2012; Vallely & Wilkinson, 2008). The current picture of the university system has several atypical characteristics as follows.

The first characteristic relates to the relationship between the Government and universities. The management of public universities is fully centralized by the government in which the ministry of education and training is on behalf of the government to govern the universities. Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) keeps the authority to make most of the decisions on the university daily operations such as the strategic plan, appointment of leaders, allowance of financial resources, development of facilities, policies on tuition fees, and approval process of the

introduction of new degree programs through the policies and procedures issued by the Government or the MOET. Such management causes many obstacles and hinders which slow down the daily activities of universities. The tendency has been to seek to control the universities and the dissemination of information, rather than to allow them to evolve and model best practices (Khanh & Hayden, 2010; MOET-Vietnam, 2017b; Tuyet, 2014).

The second characteristic relates to the low internal governance efficiencies in both governance structure and mechanism. Governance and leadership by the university council, executive board, and academic board is the new university governance approach which the modern universities all the world have applied their situation to explore the energy and passionateness of whole human resources, creating products for own universities and society. But, in Vietnamese universities, the authority and responsibility of each unit, such as the university council, executive board, and academic board are not clear in distribution. The majority of the universities are running the governance structure, which includes an executive board and an academic board while there is lacking a university council. Some universities have a university council, but their role and responsibility are not clear. The responsibilities of the university council are more advisory than governing. The chairman of the university council is one of the executive board and is appointed by the President of the university. He or she is not allowed to appoint or recruit the president of the university. The leader of the academic board is appointed by the president of the university. The role of the academic board is to advise the president in academic affairs. Governance sharing of

responsibilities and authority among the university council, executive board, and academic board is weak and unclear. The president directly controlled and managed by the Minister of Education and training holds the highest authority to make all decisions at the university (MOET-Vietnam, 2017a, 2017b; Nang, 2017; University of Foreign Language Studies, 2017; University of Science and Technology, 2017). This governance structure and mechanism have caused negativities in the process of development of new degree programs.

The third characteristic relates to leadership. Leader capabilities are also acknowledged to be one of the most pressing problems of the universities in Vietnam. The recruitment of the university's presidents and senior staff often lacks fairness and competitiveness. The Minister of MOET appoints the president. Although the appointment process is strict and has many steps, political appointments and the shuffling of administrators between University and Government roles have led to inexperienced senior administrators rather than career academics with the depth and soft power to drive institutions. And the more important thing is the leaders' dynamic capabilities that are essential for the educational leaders in the dynamic environment. Ms. Tuyet (2014) revealed that leaders of Vietnamese universities lack the knowledge and skills of university governance to propose and implement shifts to keep up with the rapidly changing higher education environment (Tuyet, 2014).

While all administrators of public universities in the Western and Asian countries would claim that there are opportunities to innovate governance and adapt to the market

demands, in Vietnam, with the aforementioned governance issues, a) the highly state-controlled environment, b) weak internal university governance structure and mechanism and c) ineffective leadership selection and capacity, the critical question is whether the current government governance on the university is the problem for the reluctance of universities to submit the new programmes proposals when this is desired by the Vietnamese government. It examines the question through the lens of agency theory, exploring the reason the agents (the universities) might have for not acting upon the principal's (the Vietnamese government's) instructions. The research examines the governance and new programme development processes for explanations for the agency problem (inaction or lack of motivation in new programme development).

There are many studies on Vietnamese university governance. However, there has not been any specific study on university governance structure, processes, and procedures on the developing and approving process of new programmes in the Vietnamese universities to meet market demands. With that in mind, this study is conducted to examine the government governance on the new degree program formation in the Vietnamese universities and then, propose recommendations to improve the governance process and procedure so that new degree program development and approval process will be the outcome.

## **2. Purpose of the Research**

This research aims to investigate the Vietnamese public university governance and its effects on the development and approval process of new degree programs to meet market demands, and then provide solutions on the manners in which the development and approval process of new programs can be improved from the innovation of the governance processes and procedures.

### **3. Objectives of the Research**

This research has three following objectives:

- to study scientific knowledge courses and practices related to university governance structure, processes, and procedures at both the government and university levels.
- to examine the current Vietnamese university governance and how it affects the development and approval process of new degree programs to meet market demands, and
- to recommend solutions that would improve problems of the Government governance on the university so that NDP governance will be the outcome.

### **4. Research methods**

Based on the research objectives and questions, the author designed a master plan of research with methods as below.

For insightful understandings of the foreign and Vietnamese university governance structure and mechanism and especially the innovation of university governance as well as the approval process of new degrees, the researcher used document review as methods to collect information and data (reported in Chapter 2 in the Literature Review).

For exploring the current Vietnamese university governance structure and approval process, especially the process impediments from the ongoing governance manner, the semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 participants who are working at the universities in Vietnam and keeping the roles such as presidents, deans, or heads of departments as well as faculty members (findings are reported in Chapter 4 in Findings from the semi-structured interviews).

For a better assessment of issues raised from interviews and exploring better solutions for the research, the survey with more than 100 respondents was conducted. Respondents are working at the Vietnamese universities at the levels of deans of faculty, heads of departments, and faculty members. The survey aims to examine aspects identified in the interviews and the effects of the governance factors on the NDP process (reported in Chapter 5 in Findings from the survey).

Thus, three methods, document review, semi-structured interviews, and survey used in this research to explore issues both advantages and impediments in the relationship

between the government and university to govern the development and approval process of new degree programs in the Vietnamese universities.

## **5. Significance of the research**

This research is very importantly significant for the public university governance system in Vietnam and stakeholders involved in the university sector, such as the Government, universities' leaders, policy-makers, scientists, and educators. Outcomes of this research are expected to provide scientific knowledge course and experiences of the excellent university governance structure and mechanism which serve as the foundation and guidelines for the Vietnamese Government and Universities to develop novel perspectives of university governance, forcing to enhance the performance and reputation of the universities.

As for the policy-makers or educational managers, the outcomes of this research are recommendations that would contribute to reform the developing and approving process of new programs for Vietnamese universities.

As for the Vietnamese university system, the examination of the relationship between the university governance structure and the developing and approving process of new degree programs are considered as a specific instance of university innovation. Since then, university leaders can make plans to innovate other processes in daily operations.

As for researchers and educators, this research reviews and provides theoretical and practical lessons on university governance, serving as a foundation for the Vietnamese university system to develop an innovative perspective on university governance, especially issues related to university governance in the context of a rapidly changing and diverse environment. This research also supports to deeply understand the research methodology and methods in the education context, enhancing the capabilities of scientific research of researchers.

## **6. Limitations of the research**

Limitation of types of universities. There are two different types of universities in Vietnam, public and private. In response to each type, the government sets its policies and governance models (Vietnam, 2012, 2014). In this research, the researcher takes into account only the public universities.

Limitation of the number of universities. There are around 400 Vietnamese universities nationwide (public and private). But in this study, only around ten public universities were used to collect data.

Limitation of types of informants and survey respondents. This study only focuses on and examines the perspectives of educators, educational managers, policymakers, and does not take into consideration the views of other stakeholders such as industry, employers, students, and graduates.

Limitations from the coronavirus pandemic. The survey happened in the period time of the coronavirus outbreak. All universities in Vietnam were required to close the doors and deans and members of faculty were away from their office. Therefore, the collection of survey data was challenging. It took more time to liaise with respondents.

## **7. Definitions of Terms**

In order to provide a specific context for this research, many terms need to be defined as below.

1. Higher education institutions (HEIs) refers to all universities and institutions which offers bachelor degrees (three to five years of study), master degrees (1-2 years of study after gaining bachelor degree) and Ph.D. degree (3-4 years of study after gaining bachelor degree) (Vietnam, 2016a, 2016b)
2. National universities or public universities refer to the public ones which are established by the government and operate under the Law on Higher Education and Charter on Higher Education Institutions. They also receive state budgets and fundings from the government for their investments and operations (Vietnam, 2012, 2014).
3. The status of a university's leader is named President or Rector.
4. Governing bodies include a university council (or governing board), an executive board, and an academic board.

## **8. Organization of the Dissertation**

The dissertation intends seven main chapters as follows.

Chapter 1: Introduction and problem statement

Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 3: Research methodology and methods

Chapter 4: Findings from the semi-structured interviews

Chapter 5: Findings from the survey

Chapter 6: Discussion and Recommendations

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Limitations

## **Chapter 2 : LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Overview of the Chapter**

In this chapter, the research presents some main concepts which are related to the global perspective of higher education from theory to practice. There are governance, governance structure, governance in higher education, university autonomy, and leader's capabilities. In addition, this research also studies concepts related to university activities such as university responsibilities and degree programs. In the light of university governance, this research uses the works of Clark (1983) and Vught (1997), Verhoest (2004) to guide this research. In which, the work of Clark (1983) and Vught (1997) present three main basic models of the relationship between the government and university, namely, "Academic model" "State model" and "Market model". The work of Verhoest (2004) presents the organizational autonomy conceptualization, which better clarifies the two different kinds of autonomy and autonomous areas in the organization. Especially, the spirit of the Agency theory will be used as core guidance to innovate the relationship between the State and university in the context of university autonomy and accountability shifted.

### **2. Governance on higher education**

#### **2.1. Governance**

Reviewing the literature generally concludes that the term “governance” is used in many ways and many different meanings (Austin & Jones, 2016; Huisman, 2009; Rhodes, 1996; Shattock, 2006a).

According to the online business dictionary, “governance” is defined as the establishment of policies and continuous monitoring of their proper implementation by the number of the governing body of an organization. It includes the mechanism required to balance the powers of members (with the associated accountability) and their duties of enhancing the prosperity and viability of the organization.

As for the Oxford Academic English Dictionary, governance is how a country is governed or a company or an organization is controlled; the activity of governing a country or controlling a company or an organization.

Defined in the Anglo-American political theory, the term “governance” refers to the formal institutions of a country and their monopoly of legitimate coercive power. The government can make decisions and enforce their institutions to implement. Generally, governance is the formal and institutional process that operates at the national level to maintain public orders and facilitate actions.

Tierney and Lechuga (2004) define that governance is the process of policy-making or macro-level decision making at an organization or company (William G. Tierney & Lechuga, 2004).

Generally, governance is defined as the policies and processes to govern the daily activities of a country or organization. Policies and processes approved by the national level or macrolevel to maintain orders and facilitate actions of the country or organization. Policies and processes are designed into the daily operations of the organization in which the authority of decision-making and activities of each level or member is defined clearly step by step. In addition, policies also set rules, regulations, or requirements which the process is required to follow. Under policies and procedures, activities, and interactions in the country or organization happen.

## 2.2. Governance structures

The concept of “governance structures” was first introduced by Williamson (Williamson, 1975, 1985), who said that governance structures are defined as “sets of relationships concerned with organizing transactions in such a way as to facilitate efficient adaptations”. Following the work of Williamson and other researchers, Vught redefined the concept of “governance structures” as “the ways governmental actors try to influence the behavior of other actors in a specific policy field” (Vught, 1997).

## 2.3. University governance structure, mechanism, and process

Governance in higher education has been studied by many scholars who have proposed different definitions of this concept. To date, these definitions have moved to some

consensuses from the simple conceptualization focusing on authority and legitimate rule to specific definitions. For instances, governance structure in higher education is defined as “the structure and processes of decision-making”, “establishment of policies to guide the work of the institutions” and “constitutional forms and processes through which universities govern their affairs” (Shattock, 2006a, 2006b; W. G. Tierney, 2004).

Governance in higher education is the structure and process of decision making on the objectives, programs, procedures, and policies within a university (Austin & Jones, 2016; Millett, 1978) in which governance structure is the relationship and role of each party in this relationship and process is a series of actions, phrases or steps that are taken in order to achieve a particular result. The structure and process are decided by the national level of the country or macro level in the universities through the policies which are rules, regulations, and requirements to define clearly authority and responsibilities of each party in the process and facilitate efficient adaptations and procedures which guide clearly steps of the process and smoothly go to the outcomes of the operations of the universities.

University governance structure includes external and internal ones (Austin & Jones, 2016; William G. Tierney & Lechuga, 2004), in which the external governance structures is defined as the relationship between the Government and universities and the way the Government controls the universities (Austin & Jones, 2016; Lingenfelter, 2004) through its lines of authority or its governance mechanism. The internal governance structure is the relation among internal governing bodies, including a

university council, an executive board, and an academic board, and the way the governing bodies govern the universities at the university level.

*The external university governance and mechanism*

According to the works of Clark (1983) and Vught (1992), there are three main models of the state-university relations and authority lines, namely, Academic model, State model, and Market model. Vught (1997) classified the State model into a State-controlled and State-supervising model (B. R. Clark, 1983; Pusser, 2008; Vught, 1997) according to the best practices from the European universities.

*i) Academic model*

With this model, the universities are subject to the state's management, but at the same time, they are independent and governed by themselves. The important positions such as senior academic managers, professors, and individuals make decisions related to the entire operation of these universities. But, the disadvantage of this model is that professionals may lack skills and experience in governance and management, especially in terms of finance and strategic plan. Pusser (2008) argues that in the past, in the United States and elsewhere, many higher education institutions had been established before the presence of the government and the academics were responsible for the development of universities. When the government is formed, it continues to give autonomy to universities to decide on their daily activities.

*ii) State-controlled model*

The State controls the universities and they are subject to political and administrative actions by the state. In this situation, the state-university relations and authority lines are the state-controlled models, meaning that the state controls universities by political and administrative rules and regulations with top-down and high-order hierarchy. In this situation, the state is the heart of determining the goals of universities and universities are less autonomous and completely perform their activities under the complete control of the state. This model was seen in countries like Russia and China before the 1970s (Austin & Jones, 2016; B. R. Clark, 1983; Vught, 1997).

*iii) State-supervising model*

The State plays a supervisory role and allows universities freedom to regulate themselves. This model showed a less governmental influence on higher education. In other words, the state's influences are weak. The State sees its role as a supervisor who steers from a distance and helps the university assure academic quality and maintain a certain level of accountability through broad terms of regulation. The State does not rule universities by regulations, but it will set the national quality criteria for universities to follow (van Vught, 1994; Vught, 1997).

*iv) Market-driven model*

In this model, the market plays an important role in adjusting the university's activities. The university will reset its structure and procedures as the corporate model. The State strongly decentralizes universities and expected that this is the best way for them to succeed in their activities. The State, as the regulators, facilitates market development. In return, the market affects the universities to promote development through competition among universities in the country and worldwide. The heart of this model is the effectiveness, efficiency, competition, quality, and diversification of services. The United States is one of the countries which has strongly applied this model (Austin & Jones, 2016; B. Clark, 1998; Pusser, 2008, 2014).

As mentioned above, it is obvious that there is no one best model. Each model has a distinctive perception and serves different purposes in a different context and at a different time. Up to date, the selection of models depends on the political, economic, social, cultural, and human circumstances of the country (Ehrenberg, 2004; Hussin & Asimiran; McCaffery, 2010; OECD, 2003; Shattock, 2006a; Trakman, 2008; Vught, 1997). Some countries can choose a mixed model that is synthesized from other models on the strength or characteristics of each model. The understanding of the university governance structures should examine two national instruments, namely, policy and funding instruments.

*The internal university governance structure and mechanism.*

The internal governance structure is the relation among internal governing bodies, including a university council, an executive board, and an academic board, and the way the governing bodies govern the universities at the university level.

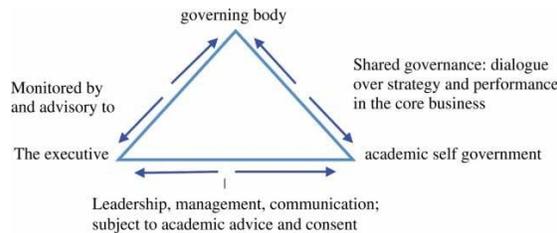
Shared governance is a concept of governance and is widely seen in the university environment. It is a mechanism in which roles, responsibilities, and authorities are shared by three sides including the university council, executive board, and academic board<sup>1</sup> (Pierce, 2014; Shattock, 2010, 2012, 2013) in which the university council is responsible for missions, strategic decisions, finance, reputation and position of the university. The academic board is responsible for academic affairs. The work of Julie (2014) addressed the importance and participation of the academic board and professional voices in deciding on universities' activities (Jacqmin, 2014). The executive board is responsible for implementing activities to achieve results (Shattock, 2012; Trakman, 2008). The basic principles are collaboration, transparency, inclusiveness, and accountability (Hendrickson et al., 2013). Each of the sides has decision-making power on its own operational matters. Therefore, shared governance is a collaborative process while also an outcome of collegiality. In this regard, the shared governance model is one of the ways to improve the quality of the decision-making process, leading to solve problems better and improve university productivity. The shared governance model is introduced as the effective internal university

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<sup>1</sup> AAUP<sup>1</sup> + AGB<sup>1</sup> + ACE<sup>1</sup> defined the notion of shared governance in 1966. <sup>1</sup> (AAUP: American Association of University Professors; AGB: Association of Governing Boards; ACE: American Council on Education). Father of AAUP is John Dewey (Pierce, 2014).

governance in the US and other countries, and the implications of this model depend on each situation (Shattock, 2006b, 2010, 2012).

The picture below describes the relationships and communications among three sides of the university leadership under the shared governance perspective.



*Figure 2.1: Good university governance by Shattock (2012)*

Thus, there are two university governance structures, external and internal structures. The external process is the relationship between the state and university, in which the role of the state can be controlling or supervising depending on the country. The internal structure is the internal university governance that sets up the relationship between the university council, board of executives, and board of academics to govern the university to gain the objectives.

#### 2.4. University social responsibility

The social responsibilities of universities serve as the foundation of their existence. Social responsibilities of universities are ones that society expects the universities to

well-fulfill their traditional missions (education, academic research, and public engagement and service) and dynamic missions (economic development and sustainability) through universities' daily operations (Hayter & Cahoy, 2018). In other words, university responsibilities to society are outcomes of the universities such as graduates' competencies, quality degree programs, outstanding research outputs, good services, and outreach, strongly contribute to the development and sustainability of the country. In this regard, the development of a new degree program to meet market demands is one of the university's social responsibilities.

## 2.5. Development and approval process of a new degree program

### *New degree program at the university*

Based on the definition of the university social responsibility, a university degree program is one of the university social responsibility, which is in charge of educating workforces for the market.

A degree program, for example, a Master Program in Accounting or Ph.D. Program in Business, etc., is a cohesive whole of course components aimed at achieving clearly defined exit qualifications, such as the Master degree or Ph.D. degree. The degree program includes an examination; each course component consists of an interim exam. Each degree program or group of degree programs is managed by a program director.

The leader of the university is responsible for ensuring that the program offered is provided and meets the applicable quality standards.

*Development and approval process of a new degree program*

The process is a series of actions that are taken in order to achieve a particular result. In the process, there are many phases and steps in which many activities are done to move the next phases or steps.

The approval process of the new degree program depends on the policies of the country or university. In some countries, the Government approves to open a new degree program; Meanwhile, in other countries, the Government empowers the authority to universities to decide to open the new degree programs. The degree of empowerment from the Government to the universities reflects how highly autonomous the universities are granted.

The process of development and approval of new programs is the series of phrases or steps from the development of the proposal to the approval of the proposal to deliver the new degree programs to meet market demands. In this process, there is the participation of many parties with different roles or actions such as approval, review, or consulting.

In practice, reviewing the ongoing approval processes of new degree programs from some universities in the world shows that there are four main elements of the approval process of new degree programs, which are requirements (Government requirements and university policies), phases (or steps), human resources/parties involved and timing.

As for the Government requirements and university policies, these are built on the basics of the current performance of the country, such as the political, social, and economic system as well as the mission and goals of the university. Different countries and universities have developed different requirements and policies.

For the phrases (or steps) of the process, there are existing 3, namely, Proposal development, Proposal Review, and Proposal Approval. Each phrase has one or many steps, differently depending on the university or country.

For the parties involved in the process, there may be a university council, university academic board/Senate, Provost, President, or Department. Different phrases, different parties involved. One of the most important parties is the approver who not only makes an approval or the final approval but also contributes to making the whole process more effective and efficient, responding to the university development. At some universities, this is the role of the university council. Meanwhile, at others, these are belonging to the university academic board or university president.

For the timing of the whole process, this element varies from six months to one year, and the variation belongs to the universities or country/state policies.

In sum, the reviewing of the real approval processes of universities worldwide shows main findings such as University leader is the final approver of the proposal of new degree programs (instead of the Government like Vietnamese universities case); Phases or steps vary from three to ten steps, depending to the other universities and Timing is around six months to one year. For the Government requirements and university policies, it is essential to make more studies on them to develop the better one for Vietnamese universities case.

## 2.6. Dynamic capabilities

Dynamic capabilities are an organization's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to address the changing environment rapidly. In other words, dynamic capabilities are an organization's capabilities and processes to undertake constructive change (Helfat et al., 2009; D. Teece, 2007, 2012, 2014; D. Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997).

Dynamic capabilities are a set of 3 elements such as *sensing*, *seizing*, and *transforming*. More specifically, "sensing" is the identification and assessment of threats and opportunities. "Seizing" is the mobilization of resources to address threats and opportunities and to capture value. "Transforming" is the reconfiguration and

modifying of existing assets. Literature review releases that the relationship between dynamic capabilities and outcomes of universities is positive (Hayter & Cahoy, 2018; Siegel & Leih, 2018; D. J. Teece, 2018). This tendency influences the quality of the governance process at the university.

## 2.7. University Autonomy

The concept of “university autonomy” refers to the extent/degree/level of decision-making competencies on policy (rules and regulations within the organization), finance, and management aspects by the public organizations. When the public organizations receive priorities, especially state budget funding, the state has influences on their activities by many different means. The extent to which the state grants the rights to university depends on specific conditions of given contexts (Berdahl, 1990, 1999; Verhoest, Peters, Bouckaert, & Verschuere, 2004).

There are four autonomous areas in the university.

- a. Organizational area: the capability to decide organizational structures in universities such as the governing bodies (e.g., university council, executive board, academic board) or sub-units such as faculties, centers, and so on.
- b. Staffing area: the capability to set procedures to select leaders and seniors, to decide the salary, promotion, benefits for leaders, seniors, faculties, and staffs.

- c. Academic area: the capability to define, introduce, and develop the academic program, the structure and content of programs, quality assurance, and student enrollment, etc.
- d. Financial area: the capability to determine tuition fee, to use the land as a financial resource, and to make decisions on all financial matters at the university's operations.

The research of Bedahl (1999) on university autonomy said that there are two types of university autonomy, namely, *substantive* and *procedural autonomy* in which “substantive autonomy” is the power of the university to determine its goals and programs while “procedural autonomy” is the power of the university to make decisions on how its goals and programs will be achieved. Moreover, Berdahl claimed that substantive autonomy covers areas of academic and research (curriculum design, research policy, enrollments, staffing appointment) which the university academic board makes decisions while procedural autonomy covers non-academic areas (budgeting, financing, purchasing, etc.) which the university council is responsible for making decisions (Berdahl, 1999).

From the analysis of the university autonomy aspects, this research can realize that there are many different kinds of autonomous areas, and the authority to decide on areas is regulated by Government policies. However, in terms of the academic area, scientific research claimed that university leaders are responsible for approving academic actions. Therefore, the approval of new degree programs may be the responsibility of

the universities, particularly the academic board, which many studies have revealed that their contribution in terms of voices and knowledge fosters the quality and prestige of the new programs (Jacqmin, 2014).

### **3. The innovation of the university governance and development and approval process of new degree programs in foreign universities**

In order to have insightful understandings of governance innovation at the universities in the world, this research also studies the governance structure and mechanism at some universities in European and Asian countries.

In European countries, higher education sectors transformed the governance model dramatically in the 80-90s to meet the fast-growing requirements of universities. Van Vught's research suggests that the university governance reform was directed toward reducing the state management of universities, changing the role of the state from the controlling to the supervisory (Neave & van Vught, 1994; van Vught, 1994), giving the universities more autonomy in the operations and academic activities. In this situation, the State has responsibilities to develop rules, regulations, and policies to ensure the quality of the education service instead of directly controlling the universities' operations and activities. The universities have more power to make decisions on their operations in organizational matters such as staffing, academic affairs, operational policies, and financial activities. In addition, the internal university governance arrangement has changed remarkably from the "faculty governance model" (Trakman,

2008) that the academic board had full authority to make the important decisions about their university's operations to the "shared governance model" (Shattock, 2012) that communications and the lines of authority are shared in the governing bodies to improve the quality of decisions or new university governance that governing bodies make decisions based on the needs of the market to meet the demands of the dynamic market (Mora, 2001). Research suggests that the change of the governance mechanism has created a new university governance approach which gives institutions more independent in management and operation, flexible and creative in academic and research activities, abundant in high-quality human resources and output of research (Mora, 2001; Turcan, Reilly, & Bugaian, 2016). More examples, studies by Enders, Boer, and Weyer (2013) found that outputs or performance of the university are improving in terms of better managerial decision-making capabilities and healthy financial resources when the state changes its governance on universities (Enders, Boer, & Weyer, 2013). Or an example from the case of Kazakhstan universities, which means that the reform of university governance by decentralized control with greater institutional autonomy, the overall quality of universities is improving (Hartley, Gopaul, Sagintayeva, & Apergenova, 2016). While granting the HEIs higher autonomy, the State has also set higher requirements to evaluate the quality of education and the effectiveness of management (Mora, 2001). "The state supervision model is indeed better suited to produce higher levels of innovativeness, and flexibility at universities than the state control model" (Vught, 1997). The shifting of the university governance mechanism has helped Western higher education institutions overcome challenges that came with social demands, falling demographics and tight

national budgets to improve their professional performance, scholarship and reputation at the country and global level, not only meeting their social responsibilities of universities, but also moving them to world-class universities (Enders et al., 2013; Estermann & Nokkala, 2009; Estermann et al., 2011; Fielden, 2008; Salmi, 2009).

In Asian countries, some of the universities reform in the same direction as their Western counterparts and have been carried out to enhance the national capacity in producing knowledge and improving economic and market competitiveness (Varghese & Martin, 2014). Simultaneously, the Governments have demanded that their universities attain higher rankings in national and international polls. To realize these goals, Governments often decrease their centralization and set higher requirements for the universities' educational and research outcomes. Accordingly, overall, the autonomy of a typical university has increased. But, the degree of autonomy is different from country to country. For example, Singapore's higher education system is the case of the semi-independent model, while Malaysia is the case of the State-controlled model (Fielden, 2008). In this situation, universities have to make intensive changes in internal governance models to meet the requirements set by the Government and gain high performance in education and research, contributing to the social and economic development of their countries (ADB, 2012; Hartley et al., 2016; Kabir, 2010; Rungfamai, 2016; Varghese & Martin, 2014).

From the analysis above, it is obvious that the governance structure and mechanism between the government and university has shifted from centralization to

decentralization, and the models of autonomy change in the direction of state control, semi-autonomous, semi-independent and independent (Fielden, 2008). This shifting of the governance model depends on the country by country. At the same time, excellence, or even competence in higher education institutions is a moving target. Institutional leaders have to innovate in the way they govern their universities, reform the governance structure and leadership style, improve the capacity of leaders to meet the values, requirements, and expectations of society and learners. From the shifting of governance structure and the execution by leadership, universities have created distinct and outstanding outcomes, leading local universities to world-class universities (Estermann & Nokkala, 2009; Estermann et al., 2011; Salmi, 2009; Varghese & Martin, 2014).

In the lens of new program governance at the universities, the relationship between the government and university on the governance of the new program has changed. The university becomes the main subject of the process who makes approval of introducing a new program at the universities instead of the government of the ministry of education. Meanwhile, the government or the ministry of education is responsible for regulating the national quality standards which the universities must follow and meet as well as legislative policies or guidance which support universities to implement their daily operations to ensure the quality of the program delivered. Under such specific conditions, the leaders of the universities set up the full process of new programme development and approval with clear duties and criteria for school, faculty, and departments to implement. Many universities have utilized the advances of technology,

such as the online system of processing and approving the proposal of new programs. These make the approval process more convenient and effective (Deakin-University; Florida; Iowa-State-University; Reading; Washington-State-University). In addition, many courses of leadership for leaders of universities are carried out and the outcomes of these courses are the perspectives and capabilities of leaders being enhanced.

#### **4. The current development and approval process of new programs in the Vietnamese universities from the document review**

##### 4.1. Legal documents for the development and approval of new programmes at Vietnamese universities

The Government of Vietnam issues lots of legislative documents that govern and manage the Vietnamese universities of which the most important ones are the Law on Higher Education (Vietnam, 2012) and the Charter on Higher Education (Vietnam, 2014). These two documents are considered important key ones to establish rules and regulations to manage relationships and activities at universities. In terms of the development of new programs, the Government issues some legislative documents to control and manage these activities. Those are including as follows:

- The Law on Higher Education (Vietnam, 2012)
- The Chapter on Higher Education (Vietnam, 2014)
- The Decision number 1982/2016/QD-TTG on Vietnamese Qualification Framework (Vietnam, 2016b)

- The Circular number 22/2017/TT-BGDĐT issued by the MOET regulating the introduction of new degree programs (MOET-VN, 2017)

From these documents, it is clear that authorization and the approval process of the development of new programs are described primarily by identification of the roles, responsibilities of the Government, MOET, and universities.

4.2. The Ministry of Education and Training is responsible for the comprehensive management of education and training activities from elementary to higher education levels in Vietnam

In Vietnam, the National Assembly stipulates the functions and tasks of the Government and Ministries in the field of higher education. Accordingly, the Government uniformly manages the higher education sector. The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), on behalf of the government, manages the higher education sector comprehensively. For academic activities, MOET is responsible for approving the development of new training programs as well as developing a curriculum framework. Based on a training curriculum framework, the universities will develop their training programs.

The Law on Higher Education states:

... The Government fully controls higher education institutions. 2. MOET, the representative of the Government, manages the higher

education institutions. 3. Ministries and ministerial-level agencies coordinate with MOET in the management of the institutions based on their authority... (Article 69, Item 1,2,3. p.34)

In terms of academic management, the Law on Higher Education states:

.... The Minister of Education and Training decides to approve the development of the new programs or suspend the implementation of the degree programs... (Article 33, Item 2, p18)

... The Minister of Education and Training decides the yearly enrollment quotas and issues the regulations on the university admissions... (Article 34, Item 3, p. 18)

...The Minister of Education and Training approves the joint training programs between the Vietnamese universities and foreign universities... (Article 45, Item 4, p.24)

... The Minister of Education and Training decides the minimum amount of knowledge and capability that the learners must gain after graduation...; The Minister of Education and Training decides the compilation, evaluation, and approval of the teaching materials and curricula (Article 36, Item 3, p.20).

In terms of the curriculum, the Law on Higher Education states:

.... the Minister of Education and Training is responsible for regulating frameworks of educational knowledge that students must study to gain the diploma and bachelor's degree. These frameworks fully prescribe the structure of knowledge, duration of the study, allocation of time, and the percentage of time allocated for theory and practice. Based on the general frameworks, universities are responsible for building their own curriculum program... (Article 41, Item 1, p.34).

4.3. The Ministry of Education and Training is fully responsible for approving the development of the new programs

As mentioned above, Circular 22 is a specific document issued by MOET to govern and manage the operation of the introduction of new programs at Vietnamese

universities. Circular 22 regulates the requirements and regulations, the authorization and the approval process of the introduction of new programs as follows:

- *Requirements and regulations to develop new programs*

MOET stipulates in detail the requirements and regulations for developing and approving new programs at universities. For example, new programs on the list of national training programs, the number of lecturers with doctoral degrees, curriculum, and so on. The most important is that the universities must meet these requirements and regulations to get the approval of new program development.

Circular 22 also regulates the requirements to develop new programs.

... the new programs are in the National List of Degree Programs (hereinafter shorted as LDPs) (Article 2, Item 1b, page 2)

In case the new degree program is not including the LDPs, Circular 22 is requesting that

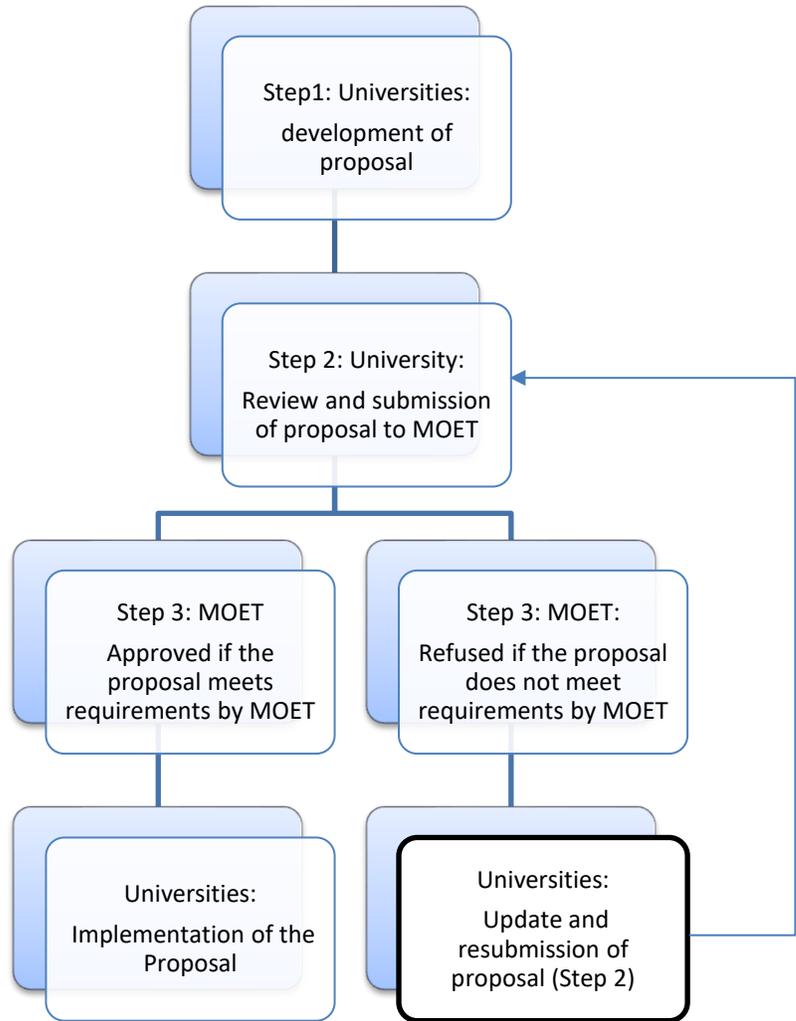
Concerning a program that has not been included in the LDPs, the training institution must clarify:

- Scientific statements and society needs relating to the new program (with at least two opinions about the necessity of the program offered by 2 entities wishing to employ human resources after training);
- Reality and experience in educating and training this program at foreign universities and at least two training curricula used as a reference; these curricula have quality recognized or have been permitted by a competent authority, and degrees/certificates have been issued (except for a program only be trained in Vietnam or relating to national defense and security) (Article 2, Item 1b)

- *The current approval process of the development of new programmes in the Vietnamese universities*

The current approval process of the development of the new programs regulated by MOET includes two processes, namely, internal and external processes. The internal process begins with the development of a proposal and the review of the proposal by the leaders of the university to submission of the proposal to the Ministry of Education and training. The external process is the approval process by the ministry of education and training.

*Diagram 2.1: Developing and approving process of new programs in the Vietnamese universities*



- *The authority agencies to approve the new programs*

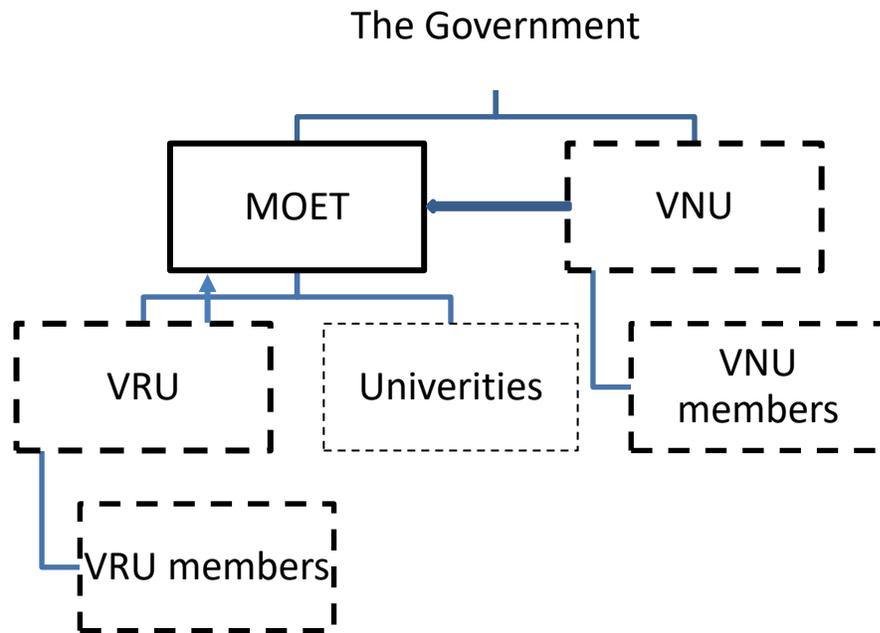
Generally, the Ministry of Education and training is liable for approving the proposal of new programme development in the Vietnamese universities. However, in the process of reforming university governance, the State especially grants two VNU and the VRU an authority to make approval of new program development within their system, and these universities have to make reports to MOET after approval activities

are done. Therefore, MOET is full authority to approve the development of new programs while VNUs and VRUs are partial authority to approve the development of new programs. Circular 22 claims:

... The Minister of Education and Training decides to permit the opening of the new program which meets conditions prescribed in Article 2 of this Circular. The Minister of Education and Training shall also consider allowing the opening of new programs in special cases that meet the needs of high-qualified human resources or particular programs. President of Vietnam National University (VNU) decides to permit the opening of the new programs under a bachelor's degree for its subsidiary faculties and members if they satisfy conditions prescribed in Article 2 of this Circular. The President of Vietnam Regional University (VRU) under delegation by the Minister of Education and Training offers the new programs for its subsidiary faculties and members when the conditions prescribed in Article 2 of this Circular are fulfilled... (Article 3, page 7)

Shortly, the authority to approve the development of new programs can be modified in the Diagram below.

*Diagram 2.2: Description of the authorized agencies to approve the new programs*



Note (\*):

Agencies with full authority

Universities requesting an approval

Agencies with partial authority

Reporting

Note (\*\*): the parties involved in the NDP process at each agencies and universities will be modified clearly in the next section.

Generally summarized the development and approval process of new programs in Vietnamese universities has some typical characteristics as follows as.

- 1) Proposal of new programs must strongly and fully meet the requirements and regulations regulated by MOET to get approval from the MOET

2) The universities (school or faculty) are responsible for developing the proposal of new programs.

3) The Ministry of Education and Training empowered by the State fully approves and manages activities in the form of new programs.

4) VNUs and VRUs are particular educational organizations that partially authorize approval of the development of new programs within their system and report to MOET after approval activities are done. New programs which the leaders of VNU and VRU intend to introduce have to be one of the LDPs.

Thus, generally, the Ministry of Education and training is keeping the authority to approve the new programs in the Vietnam universities. The MOET set up policies, including rules, regulations, and requirements to introduce new programs. The universities follow these policies to get the approval of the new program introduction.

## **5. Comparison of the development and approval process of new degree programs between Vietnamese universities and foreign universities**

Reviewing through document reports from Vietnamese universities, policies of the state and ministry of education and training as well as information from the website of foreign universities, the research summarized developing and approving process of new degree programs in the universities as the following table.

This table just describes the process of the new program development and approval. Moreover, the table also explained the authority to decide for each step of the process. The table has not yet mentioned the specific details of the process, such as rules and regulations relating to time, resources, submission and approval manners, and so on. The practice of the development and approval process in Vietnamese universities will be presented in the chapters of findings from the interviews and survey.

*Comparison of the development and approval process of new programs between the Vietnamese universities and foreign universities in terms of university governance*

<b>Processes</b>	<b>Steps</b>	<b>Vietnamese universities</b>	<b>Washington State University (US)</b>	<b>University of Florida (US)</b>	<b>Deakin University (Australia)</b>
Internal process	Development of proposal	Faculty or school	College	College or department	College
	Review of proposal and submission to the approval authority	Presidents of universities	Provost and Faculty Senate	- Graduate council - Senate - Academic Affairs - Board of Trustees	Course Standards Committee
	Approval of the proposal		Board of Regents of university	Board of Governors	Academic Board of university

				of university	
External process		Ministry of Education and training			

From the table above, the research can obtain knowledge basics of the process as follow:

There are three main steps in the process of the introduction of the new program, namely, development of the proposal, review of the proposal, and submission to the approval authority and approval of the proposal.

For foreign universities, the process of development and approval of the new programme is the main responsibility of the universities. The State or government is in charge of regulating higher education national standards, requirements, and criteria or policies which facilitate actions in the universities such as human and financial resources, management and monitoring policies of program quality, and so on. The state is also responsible for coordinating resources among universities, providing infrastructure systems to help universities operate their daily activities. In the meantime, the universities set up the whole process based on the requirements issued by the state and university policies. They also develop the process of managing and improving the approved programs to make sure that the program quality meets market

demands. Thus, as for foreign universities, they only implement the internal process of new programme introduction and approval.

For Vietnamese universities, there are two clear processes, including internal and external processes in which the internal process is the duties of the universities and the external process is the authority of the state (Ministry of education and training).

The summarizing table also showed that there is a difference in authority to make approval of new programs from the foreign and Vietnamese universities. For foreign universities, the authority to make approval is belonging to the university, specifically the responsibility of the university council (board of trustees, the board of governors, or board of regents). Meanwhile, making approval in Vietnamese universities is the state.

One more difference between foreign and Vietnamese universities is the participation of the academic community in the process. The presence and voices of academics are one of the most important things, and even at Deakin University, the academic board keeps the right to make approval of the proposal.

## **6. Agency theory**

### *Origins*

Agency theory, also known as the principal-agent theory or principal-agency theory (PAT), (Jensen & Meckling, 1976) has its roots in economics (Alchian & Demsetz, 1972; Ross, 1973) and finance (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). This theory focuses on the relationship between principals (owners or shareholders) and agents (managers or executives). The principals have funding, authority, and tasks, but they cannot run businesses or organizations because they may lack time, knowledge, and skills. As a result, they need other people to run their businesses. The individuals who help the principals to manage the businesses are called agents. The relationship between principals and agents is developed to manage and operate their businesses. The principals grant authorities, appoint tasks and pay money for the agents to make the best interests of the principals. The agents, taking authority, tasks, and money, have the responsibility to meet the principal expectations and ensure their best interests (Jensen & Meckling, 1976).

In the principal-agent relationship, the theory assumes that the principals have problems controlling the agents because of “*informational asymmetries*” and “*goal conflict*”. “Informational asymmetries” suggests that agents have better information, ability, and knowledge related to their assigned tasks rather than principals. A second important point of divergence in this theory is around the topic of goal conflict. “Goal conflicts” refer to a situation in which the agents take opportunities to maximize their own interests, which are not in the best expectations of the principals. In other words, there are differences or conflicts in the principal’s and agent’s desires and interests.

Informational asymmetries and goal conflicts constitute the *agency problem* – defined as the possibility of opportunistic behavior on the agent's party that works against the welfare of the principals (Kovisto, 2008, p.342). In order to overcome the agency problems or to decrease the conflict of interests, the principals, therefore, need to develop proper oversight mechanisms to monitor the agents (Davis, Schoorman, & Donaldson, 1997). The oversight mechanisms not only monitor agents in implementing activities but also make them more accountable for their jobs.

#### *Solutions to principal-agent relationship problems (agency problems)*

The framework of agency theory claims that the principal needs to develop oversight mechanisms to control agency problems. Researchers have studied and proposed different kinds of solutions such as “police patrol” and “fire alarm” (McCubbins & Schwartz, 1984), “behavior-based contract” or “outcome-based contract” (Eisenhardt, 1989), governing board for public universities (Toma, 1986, 1990) and “performance-based funding” or “establishment of quality assurance system” (Kivisto, 2005; Kovisto, 2008). However, the effectiveness of a mechanism generally depends on the specific context in which it is applied, with culture, politics, and economics as major aspects needing consideration.

#### *Agency theory in the higher education sector*

In the context of higher education, agency theory has been studied since 2000 and focused on the government-university relationship (Kivistö & Zalyevska, 2015; Kivisto, 2005). According to Kivisto (2015), the government-university relationship can be characterized as a good agency relationship when it satisfies three factors, namely, (a) tasks that the government assigns to a university; (b) resources and conditions that the government distributes to a university to implement tasks; and (c) proper mechanisms that the government monitors the accomplishment of the tasks by universities.

The principals can be single, multiple, or collective. In the field of higher education, the principal can be the government, the ministry/ministries while the agent can be universities that receive tasks, resources, and authority from the principal to implement tasks.

As the same to agency assumptions in the business industry, the principal (the government) and agent (the university) relationship can make information asymmetries and goal conflicts (Moe, 1984; Waterman & Meier, 1998) in which information asymmetries are considered as a claim that the university or its members own more and better information about the details of tasks that they are assigned to do.

Goal conflicts refer to a situation in which the desires and interests of the government and the university are different. For instance, the goal of the government is to want the universities to follow policies and processes to train and provide society with a qualified workforce, knowledge, and research products that contribute to

national economic growth (Bleiklie, 1998; Schmidlein, 2004). Meanwhile, the goal of the university is the degree of autonomy in operations, especially in academic areas that the university expects the academic freedom to generate their energy and capacity in education and research. Thus, the goal conflicts can be made by the government's accountability demands for the universities and the cultural perspective on academic freedom and university autonomy.

From the information asymmetries and goal conflicts, the government-university relationship can constitute agency problems which possibility of opportunity behaviors of the universities that work against the interest of the government. In this situation, the government cannot directly manage the universities' action and the universities are pursuing their own interests, ignoring the goals and demands of the government. As a result, the government cannot gain expected national goals while it still investigates resources (budgets and human resources) on the universities (Kovisto, 2008).

As mentioned above, the main points of the agency theory in the higher education sector are that the relationship between the government and university is the agency relationship in which the government, as the principal, is expected to delegate authority, conditions, and tasks to the university to accomplish, as the agent. At the same time, the government should better oversight mechanisms to overcome agency problems, to minimize the opportunistic behaviors on the part of universities, and to gain the highest goals of the government.

*Agency theory and the government – university relationship in the Vietnam situation*

In Vietnam, the Law on Higher education stipulates that the government governs comprehensively the university. For example, for the approval process of a new degree program at the university, the government issued Circular 22 that regulates details of authority, process, and procedures to approve the NDP at Vietnamese universities. In other words, a university that wants to develop an NDP must strictly comply with Circular 22.

The fact that the government wants universities to develop NDPs to meet the market demand, while there is a reluctance from universities to develop new programs. Literature review indicates many universities find difficulties in introducing new programs to respond to market needs. The educational programs and curriculum are out of date and behind the demands of the market and modern businesses. Training quality in Vietnamese universities is still considered low compared to the prevailing international standards (World Bank, 2016b, 2016c, 2016d). As a result, many students have difficulties looking for jobs after graduation or need to be re-trained when they begin to work for enterprises, the high unemployment rates among graduates and questions about the need or effectiveness of university education (Anh, 2011; Harman et al., 2010; Hayden & Thiep, 2007, 2010; Khanh & Hayden, 2010; Li & Yang, 2014; Nghi, 2010; Tung et al., 2017; Van, 2017, March 17; Varghese & Martin, 2014; VOV, 2017; World Bank, 2016a). Numerous pundits have questioned if it is a waste of money and time

(Hien, 2017; Thu, 2014; Tran, 2017). In the meanwhile, public trust and confidence in the current Vietnamese universities are decreasing over time.

Under the framework of agency theory, the government is the principal and the university is the agent. The government and university constitute the government and university agency relationship. The lack of NDPs may be the goal conflicts between the government and the university as the government sets out too detailed regulations to approve NDPs at universities while universities consider approving an NDP is the responsibility of the university. In addition, behavior in the universities may also be the cause when the university has not seen the government's incentives and encouragement to open NDPs. Goal conflicts between the government and the university and behaviors on the part of the university constitute the agency problem that governance issues may be the cause.

Theoretically, this research attempt to understand effective governance would have incorporated behavioral and outcome processes and procedures that made for the alignment of goals between the government (principal) and university (agent).

## **7. Conclusion of the chapter**

The research in this chapter provided the overview of the available picture relating to the university governance from the government and university structure, process and procedures, in which the research mainly addressed the government governance on the

university in general and the government governance on the NDP process in particular. Surroundings of the governance concept, the research also studied different kinds of governance models in Western and Asian countries to discern the reforming process of governance in the world.

The final section reviewed the literature on the agency theory that offers the appropriate framework for examining the relationship between the government (principal) and the university (agent) in the university governance in Vietnam, especially this relationship on approving NDPs at the universities. This theory serves as the theoretical framework for this research to develop improvement solutions.

The next chapter details the methods for executing the study.

## **Chapter 3 : RESEARCH METHODS**

### **1. Overview of the chapter**

This chapter presents the research methods to conduct this research. The thesis employs three methods - document review, semi-structured interview, and survey – to address the objectives of this research.

### **2. Research phases and methods**

2.1. Phase 1-Document Review: University governance and its effect on the developing and approving process of a new program from the document review approach

Documents are materials that help researchers learn, explore, and understand the issues that they are researching or related to the purpose and research questions (Merriam, 1997). The documentary source is materials in both printed and visual form, collected from public and private sources or internet sources (Bryman, 2004).

In this phase, the research explored the university governance in Vietnam and the approval process of the introduction of new programs through published literature. Through the document review results, the research seeks to understand the issues of university governance and the process of renewing university governance of foreign universities as well as the application of the management innovation perspective into

daily operations of universities such as the process of approving new training programs. One of the challenges of using the document review is "biased selectivity" (Yin, 2014). In order to overcome these challenges, the materials used in this research have to relate to research questions and investigated context.

For the theoretical foundation of the research problems, this study uses documents from books and articles which were published in national and international magazines. These materials include both theory and practice implemented at different universities. For the study of universities in Vietnam, documents from governmental organizations, ministries (MOET, MPI, etc.), international organizations (WB, ADB, etc.), universities through their annual reports, and documents at the meeting, conferences, and working sessions. Outcomes of this phase are considered a valuable lesson for research and application at Vietnamese universities and are presented in the chapter of the literature review and some other chapters of this research. The findings were reported as part of the literature review in Chapter 2.

## 2.2. Phase 2-Interviews: University governance and its effect on the developing and approving process of a new program from the semi-structure interviews

Following phase 1, the researcher conducted a practical study of the Vietnamese university governance model and its impact on the program approval process. The semi-structured interviews were used for this research phase. Findings from this phase have provided the actual program approval process in Vietnam, which is presented in

the chapter of results from the interviews. The following presentation describes in detail the research methods and data collection.

### 2.2.1. Semi-Structured Interviews

An interview is a purposeful conversation (between two or more people) directed by one person to get information from another. Moreover, the interview is also a flexible tool for data collection through channels such as verbal, non-verbal, spoken, and heard. The interviews are used in case the research aims to get more in-depth information about perceptions, insights, attitudes, experiences, or beliefs. The advantages of the interview method are amounts of pure information and daily updated information. On the other hand, the author uses interviews with specific protocols to decrease bias in the transaction of information (Galfo, 1970). There are many types of interviews, such as structured interviews, unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and so on (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

This research chooses a semi-structured interview as a conjunction with a documentary review to help achieve research purposes. One of the most advantages of this method is flexibility in times and distances. Therefore, it is approximate for interviews and interviewees to present and deeply understand the research topic.

Scientists include that face-to-face interviews help to improve the reliance and value of the research results while phone calls or internet phone calls are proper and convenient

for distant interviews, especially international ones (Burns, 2000; Cohen et al., 2007). In this research, the interviews are conducted by the face to face approach. In some cases, if it is difficult to set up the face to face interview session because of distance or time conditions, etc., internet phone calls can be used to collect data.

Results from the interviews help deeply understand the overall research questions. However, like other collection methods, interview questions need to be tried before implementation. On the other hand, experience from trial interviews can help to improve the results of the real interviews (Cohen et al., 2007).

The interview questions are composed of two parts. The first is the interviewees' personal information. The second is questions related to governance issues on the process of developing and approving a new program, especially the internal process, external process, and the capacity of leaders of universities in making a difference in the governance process. The same questions will be sent to all informants to collect data.

### **2.2.2. Samples**

#### *Selected universities for the research*

According to the typology of the Vietnam public university system, there are four types of public universities in Vietnam, including National Universities, National Regional Universities, Regular Universities, and Excellence Universities. All universities are

implementing their activities under the Law on Higher Education and the Charter on Higher Education. However, the Government differently grants authority and autonomy for each type of the university system.

This research selected two university systems, namely, Vietnam National University (VNU- located in Ho Chi Minh City) and Vietnam Regional University (VRU- located in Hue) for investigating. The introduction of these universities was presented in the Appendix of this research. The reasons for choosing these universities are that they are two of the biggest universities in Vietnam with many member universities belonged and a large number of faculties, faculty members, educational degree programs. In addition, these universities have high autonomy granted by the Government. These universities are different from the remaining types of universities (e.g., the regular universities and excellent universities) in organizational structure that there are two layers, central university, and member university. Central University is responsible for developing policies and regulations operating within the university system, allocating resources, and monitoring the member universities' operation. Member universities are in charge of implementing education, research, and service activities. Investigating these universities is beneficial for research in terms of insightful information and best practices.

### *Informants*

According to the research method in education, the quantity of interviewees is around 12 to 30 (Cohen et al., 2007; Creswell, 2012). This study is intended to choose 15-18 interviewees from universities. But the list of potential informants is around 22 in case some of the participants cannot interview because of impossible reasons. Moreover, the main focus of this research on the university governance structure and mechanism which are related to the approval process, informants will be those who are decision-makers or those who are keeping managerial positions or those who are working at the faculties of universities.

Informants are those who are working at these types of public universities. The sampling method is purposeful, and the aim is to interact with those whose experiences and insights are most likely to be informative. Therefore, the informants should be managerial positions at general management or academic affairs. They should be presidents, rectors, vice-rectors, or managers of academic affairs. Males and females were included in the process of interviews.

The total of expected informants is around 22, of which 14 from Vietnam National University and its members, 08 from Vietnam Regional University and its members. The perspective and experiences of informants are precious for this research. Data collected from informants through a one-hour semi-structured interview schedule.

*Recruitment of informants for the semi-structured interviews*

The researcher develops a list of 22 participants who meet the criteria listed above. Participants are keeping positions such as institutional leaders (presidents, vice-presidents), and departmental managers working in academic areas.

Invitation letters to participate in the interviews were sent to University Administrators of two universities to send them to potential participants. For those who agreed to do the interviews, they contacted the researcher via email. Then, the schedule for interviews will be set up and follow between the interviewer and interviewees. For those who denied the interviews, the researcher closed individual cases.

### 2.2.3. Procedures

There are two steps in this research which the first step is the pilot study, and the second step is the semi-structured interview.

#### *Step 1: Pilot study*

The questions for the semi-structured interviews were trialed on two participants selected from VNU. The interviewees include one departmental manager and one university leader. After the semi-structured interviews were trialed, the questions were amended to make them more comprehensible to all participants in the second step (i.e., semi-structured interviews).

### *Step 2: Semi-structured interviews*

After the pilot study, the conduct of semi-structured interviews was done. The invitation letters to participate in the semi-structured interviews were sent to 22 prospective participants of the universities through the university administrators. After receiving the consent to attend the interviews from participants, schedules for the interviews were arranged. The researcher made contact and discussed specific information such as time, duration, location, and content of the discussion. Interview questions were delivered to informants 2-3 days before the interview session with the purpose that informants had time to prepare for the discussions. Each discussion intends to last for about sixty minutes. Face to face interview sessions was used at conversations. All conversations were audio recorded with the consent of the informants. The locations mostly were the universities where the informants are working. It took three months to conduct all semi-structured interviews.

The interview language is Vietnamese and translated into English after conversations. The translation was carried out by a lecturer who is teaching the English language at the university in Ho Chi Minh City to ensure transparency and accreditation in research.

At the conversation, first of all, the researcher took two or three minutes to introduce herself, along with the purpose of this conversation. Then, question by question was discussed between the interviewer and the interviewee. The interview happened in

open-ended nature, focusing on the understanding of the problem. The informants were asked about facts, their opinions about events, and their insights.

Participation in this research was completely voluntary. There were no disadvantages, penalties, or adverse consequences for not participating. The participants could withdraw from the study at ANY time. During the semi-structured interviews, if the participants felt uncomfortable answering any of the questions in one of the surveys, they were allowed to skip the questions or took a short break as the planned interview was about 1 hour.

The information was kept strictly confidential. Only the researcher has had access to the raw data. Any reports from this research have been done at the aggregate level and with individual information anonymized or disguised so that it would not be possible to identify participants. All audio-recordings and data files have been carefully stored in the researcher's laptop with the password carefully set up. These files have been kept until the research completion. After that, the audio-recordings and data files will be disposed of completely from the researcher's laptop.

#### 2.2.4. Data collection and analysis

The total of key informants interviewed is 18, in which positions as leaders, heads of department, and deans are 3, 11, and 4, respectively.

In terms of the semi-structured interviews, based on the objectives and research questions, 20 questions were developed to investigate the views and experience of key informants in the governance and management of new degree programs. The semi-structured interview questions are divided into three parts, the external and internal approval process and the leadership capacity in the decision-making process.

This research conducted 18 interview sessions, in which 12 potential informants from the Vietnam National University and 06 from the Vietnam Regional University. In 18 informants, five interviewees are working at the VNU system, seven interviewees are working at one member of VNU, three informants at VRU, and three from one member of VRU. Thus, informants participating in the research are managerial positions at the central university and member university. These are very beneficial for the investigation to have insightful information and experiences in managing the whole system of the university. Four informants denied attending the interviews because they are busy with the activities of the new academic year.

The data analysis process started by transcribing from the raw data of interviews into texts, translating from Vietnamese to the English language, analyzing and comparing thematically. The whole process of analyzing and comparing was utilized by Word and Excel software, which facilitated a comparative analysis of the informants' responses.

The interview schedule is included in this thesis in Appendix C. Findings from the semi-structured interviews are presented in chapter 4 of this study.

### 2.3. Phase 3-Survey: University governance and its effects on the developing and approving process of new programs from conducting a survey.

Through 18 direct interviews with university leaders, heads of department, deans, and lecturers working at Vietnamese universities, the data collected showed a picture of the role and responsibilities of the state and the university in the process of developing and new programme approval process. The interviews revealed process impediments raised by the current university governance at both the state and university levels.

To better understand the issues raised by 18 interviewees, the thesis embarked on an additional study involving a survey of the key stakeholders in new program development in Vietnamese universities. The survey is examined the university governance factors that impede new programme development and satisfaction of the stakeholders with the university governance mechanisms and processes.

Surveys are used for gathering factual information, data on attitudes and preferences, beliefs and predictions, behavior, and experiences – both past and present (Burns, 2000; Cohen et al., 2007; Kothari, 2004).

As the context in Vietnam is unique, it was not possible to use any existing scales. A questionnaire was developed with items employing a Likert-type scale. The survey will be administered using online means (see the following section) and was tested for face

validity with a professor at SMU and with 2 faculty members in Vietnam (see below section 2.3.3). The survey questionnaire is comprised of three sections, demography, internal process, an external process with a total of 41 items in which 5 for the demographic part, 18 for the internal process, and 18 for the external process. It took around 40 minutes to complete the survey. Respondents were required to indicate their opinion on a scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The survey instrument was subjected to SMU IRB and obtained approval on 06 Mar 2020 and is included in this thesis as Appendix E.

#### 2.3.1. Online survey

In advance of information technology, using the internet for the conduct of surveys is becoming commonplace in many branches of social science. There are some advantages to the online survey. It reduces the costs (e.g. of postage, paper, printing, processing data). It reduces the time take to distribute, gather and process data (data entered onto a web-based survey or software can be processed automatically as soon as they are entered by the respondent rather than being keyed in later by the researcher). It can reach a larger population. Also, it is convenient for the respondents to complete the questionnaire over time from their homes.

This research used Qualtrics as a platform and software to collect data from universities in Vietnam. It is very convenient that Qualtrics guides more clearly on how to develop

a form to collect data, distribute email, analyze results, and create a report of the research.

### 2.3.2. Sampling

#### *Sources for respondents:*

Respondents are those who are working at public universities in Vietnam. The perspective and experiences of informants who are working at universities are precious for this research. Data collected from respondents through the surveys. The sampling method is purposeful and the aim is to interact with those whose experiences and insights are most likely to be informative. Therefore, the respondents are administrators, deans of faculty, heads of departments, and faculty members of the universities in Vietnam. Males and females were included in the process of surveys.

#### *Recruitment of respondents*

First, the researcher chooses three universities. Respondents of each university are keeping positions such as administrators, deans, heads of departments, and faculty members of the universities in Vietnam.

This research chose 100-120 respondents, three universities from the higher education system of Vietnam, including one university is National University, one university is

the university member of the National University, and one university is regular universities. For each university, we collect data from 5 administrators, 5 deans or heads of departments, and 20 faculty members who are experiencing the development and approval process of new programs at their university.

### 2.3.3. Procedure

#### *Step 1: Pilot study*

The online questions were trialed on one SMU professor and two participants selected from National University Ho Chi Minh City. After the survey questions were trialed, the questions were amended to make them more understandable to all participants in the next step (i.e., surveys)

#### *Step 2: Survey*

After the pilot study, the conduct of the survey was done. All surveys took around 30 days to complete. It took approximately 40 minutes for a survey.

Presidents of three universities helped the author distribute questions to respondents chosen. The survey language is Vietnamese. The translation was carried out by a lecturer who is teaching the English language at the university in Ho Chi Minh City to ensure transparency and accreditation in research.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. There are no disadvantages, penalties, or adverse consequences for not participating. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time. Participants can also ask to withdraw their data from the research by contacting the researcher anytime without penalty.

During the survey, if participants feel uncomfortable answering any of the questions, they are allowed to skip the items or take a short break as the planned survey is about 40 minutes.

Password-protected data file. The information is kept strictly confidential. Only the researchers and supervisors can do access the raw data. The results of the surveys were collected and analyzed. Any reports from this research were done at the aggregate level, and with individual information anonymized or disguised so that it would not be possible to identify participants.

All data files were stored in the researcher's laptop with a password set up. These files are kept until the research completion. After that, the data files will be disposed of completely from the researcher's laptop.

#### 2.3.4. Data collection and analysis

The data analysis process started by transcribing the raw data from surveys into texts, numbers, translating from Vietnamese to the English language, analyzing and comparing thematically. The whole process of analyzing and comparing is utilized by Word and Excel software, which facilitates a comparative analysis of the responses.

### **3. Ethical issues**

Before the study was conducted, approval to do this research was obtained from the Institutional Review Board at Singapore Management University. For this study, ethical issues were carefully considered and followed up during the data collection. Participants were volunteers who were invited to participate in the interviews and surveys through invitation letters, which were sent to the participants. All letters of invitation were in the Vietnamese language with English translations provided for the Institutional Review Board.

For the whole study, as suggested by Kvale (1996), informed consent, confidentiality, and consequences of interviews were taken into consideration. Before the interview session was conducted, the interviewee was again informed that his or her participation in the study was completely voluntary. There are no disadvantages, penalties, or adverse consequences for not participating. The participants may withdraw from the study at ANY time. During the semi-structured interviews or survey, if the participants feel uncomfortable answering any of the questions, they are allowed to skip the questions or take a short break. Besides, the participants were also told that the

information would be kept strictly confidential. Only the researcher, translator, and research supervisor have access to the raw data. Any reports from this research are done at the aggregate level, and with individual information anonymized or disguised so that it would not be possible to identify participants. All audio-recordings and data files will be carefully stored in the researcher's laptop with the password carefully set up. These files are kept until the research completion. After that, the audio-recordings and data files will be disposed of from the researcher's laptop. Transcriptions of the interviews were also sent to interviewees to allow them to verify and confirm their statements. This guaranteed that only the participants' ideas were presented in the research.

The semi-structured interviews and surveys were presented in the Vietnamese language to optimize the participants' perspectives and experiences of the research. Data collected were treated confidentially and were only accessed by the researcher, translators, and the research supervisor.

#### **4. Conclusion of the chapter**

This section modifies the research methods which are deployed to study this project. Accordingly, three research methods were used, such as document review, semi-structured interview, and survey. Interviewees and survey respondents are those who are working in Vietnamese universities at positions such as university leaders, heads of department, deans of faculty, and faculty members. Word and Excel software were used

to analyze data. The results of the data collection and analysis are presented in the next chapters.

## **Chapter 4 : FINDINGS FROM THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS**

### **1. Overview of the chapter**

This chapter presents the findings from the semi-structured interviews.

The main objectives of this research are to study the effects of the university governance structure on new degree program development and approval process in Vietnamese universities. Therefore, research concentrates on the issues related to university governance from the Government, University, and Leader capabilities and their effects on the developing and approving process of new programs at the universities in Vietnam. These issues are discussed with informants who are working at two public university systems in Vietnam, one from Ho Chi Minh City, and one from Hue City. Reasons to choose these universities and informants are presented in the next section.

This chapter is composed of three sections, in which the first is the overview of the chapter, the second is the findings from the semi-structured interviews including the demographic information of informants and main findings from the interviews. The last is the conclusion of the chapter.

The following details below are profoundly modifying the results from the interviews. From now, the term “new degree program” (“NDP”) and “list of national programs” (“LNP”).

## **2. Results of the semi-structured interviews**

### 2.1. Demographic information

#### *Brief introduction of the Vietnamese universities system*

Before describing the interviewees, the research introduces the background of the Vietnamese public university system. Two following tables describe the typology of the Vietnam public university system: the first table focuses on introducing the structure and organization, and the second table presents the governance and management of the university system.

According to the typology of the Vietnam public university system, there are four types of public universities in Vietnam, including National Universities, Regional Universities, Regular Universities, and Excellence Universities. All universities are implementing their activities under the Law on Higher Education enacted by the Parliament and particular policies and processes issued by the Government or the Ministry of Education and Training (hereafter in this chapter shorted by MOET).

*Table 4.1: Typology of the Vietnamese universities*

	National University	Regional University	Regular University/ Institution	Excellent University
<b>The number of universities</b>	02 (Vietnam National University – Ha Noi and Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh city)	03 (University of Thai Nguyen, University of Hue and University of Da Nang)	Around 212	03 (Vietnam-German University, Vietnam-Japan University, and Vietnam-France University)
<b>Organization Chart</b>	<pre> graph TD     G1[Government] --&gt; VNU[VNUs]     VNU --&gt; MU1[Member Universities]     MU1 --&gt; DF1[Departments/Faculties] </pre>	<pre> graph TD     G2[Government] --&gt; MOET[MOET]     MOET --&gt; RU[Regional Universities]     RU --&gt; MU2[Member Universities]     MU2 --&gt; DF2[Departments/Faculties] </pre>	<pre> graph TD     G3[Government] --&gt; MOET_Parent[MOET and/or parent Ministries]     MOET_Parent --&gt; U3[Universities]     U3 --&gt; DF3[Departments/Faculties] </pre>	<pre> graph TD     G4[Government] --&gt; MOET4[MOET]     MOET4 --&gt; U4[Universities]     U4 --&gt; DF4[Departments/Faculties] </pre>

VNU = Vietnam National University

VRU = Vietnam Regional University

MOET = Ministry of Education and Training

The following table aims to generally introduce the current picture of four kinds of public universities and their management in Vietnam.

*Table 4.2: Clarification of the Vietnamese universities*

Type of higher education institutions	The number	Description	Classification of an administrative agency

1	Vietnam National University	02	<p>The Government established two National Universities in 1996 with a multi-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary university model that is the flagship of higher education in Vietnam, integrating into the international higher education system.</p> <p>There are 7 member universities under the control of the Vietnam National University Ha Noi and 6 member universities under the control of the Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City.</p> <p>The National University - Ho Chi Minh City offers training and research in five areas: natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities, science and technology, management science - economics - law, health sciences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Under the direct control by the Prime Minister's cabinets.</li> <li>- Prime Minister appoints the chairman of the university council; the President and board members of the President.</li> <li>- President of VNU appoints Rectors of member universities.</li> <li>- The Rector of the member universities appoints Deans of Faculties and Director of Departments.</li> </ul>
2	Vietnam Regional University	03	<p>The Government established three regional universities - Thai Nguyen, Hue, and Da Nang with the aim of investment priority.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Under the control of the MOET</li> <li>- Minister of MOET appoints leaders of regional universities</li> </ul>

			Three regional universities have the responsibility to supply a good quality workforce for their own region.	
3	Regular university	around 212	The government established these universities nationwide to teach human resources, contributing to economic and social development in localities and the country.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shared governance by MOET and other line ministers, province authorities.</li> <li>- Minister of MOET appoints leaders of regular universities</li> </ul>
4	Excellent university	03	<p>The government established the excellent universities based on the cooperation between the Vietnam government and other foreign Governments with a viewpoint of developing an excellent higher education model and international standards.</p> <p>Example: Vietnam German University (VGU) was established on the cooperation between the Government of Vietnam and the Government of Germany.</p> <p>Vietnam Japan University (VJU) was established based on the cooperation between the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Under the control of the MOET</li> <li>- MOET appoints leaders of the universities</li> </ul>

			<p>Government of Vietnam and the Government of Japan</p> <p>Ha Noi University of Science and Technology was established based on the cooperation between the Government of Vietnam and the Government of France.</p>	
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VNU = Vietnam National University

VRU = Vietnam Regional University

MOET = Ministry of Education and Training

*Universities and informants are chosen for the research*

### *Universities*

From the clarification of the Vietnamese universities, this research selected two university systems from Ho Chi Minh City and Hue City for study. They are chosen because they are developed from the regular universities and their leaders and managers have intensive experiences in the process of NDP development and approval. Moreover, many current professors working at these universities are responsible for contributing ideas, notions, and proposals for developing new policies on education and training in Vietnam. From that, perspectives and insightful understanding from informants of these university systems are useful for the research.

The table below briefly introduces two investigated university systems, named by Uni A and Uni B, in terms of their governance and management, history and development as well as the academic capacity of these universities.

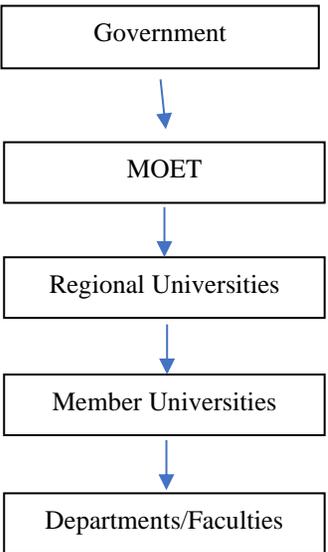
Table 4.3: Brief introduction of two investigated university systems

#	Universities	Introduction	Governance structure	Classification of governance and management	Number of programs	Number of faculty and faculty members	Number of regular students)
1	Uni A	Located in the eastern part of HCMC - the most developed urban area of Vietnam, Uni A was established in 1995 by the government to create a training center for undergraduate, postgraduate, and science research, following high-quality and innovative multidisciplinary	<pre> graph TD     A[Government] --&gt; B[VNUs]     B --&gt; C[Member Universities]     C --&gt; D[Departments/Faculties]             </pre>	i. Under the direct governance by the Prime Minister's cabinets. ii. Prime Minister appoints the chairman of the university	309, including 99 graduate programs, 121 master's degrees, and 89 doctoral programs, ranging from technology, natural science, social	5,500 staff and faculty members, in which around 3,000 faculty members	60,000

	<p>technology. Uni A serves as the core of the higher education system and dedicates to the needs of socio-economic developments.</p> <p>Uni A is one of the largest educational institutions in Vietnam. The university has 27 units of training, scientific research, and technology transfer, as well as 7 member universities: the University of</p>		<p>council; the President and board members of the President.</p> <p>ii. President of VNU appoints Rectors of member universities .</p> <p>iv. Rector of the member universities appoints Deans of Faculties</p>	<p>sciences, and humanities to economics, healthcare.</p>		
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	<p>Technology,  University of Science,  University of Social  Sciences and  Humanities,  International  University, University  of Information  Technology,  University of  Economics and Law,  and Institute for  Environment and  Resources.</p>		<p>and  Director of  Departmen  ts</p> <p>v. University  operations  under the  Law on  Higher  Education  and the  Decree of  National  University  (high  autonomy  in training  and</p>			
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				research compared to other types of universitie)			
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2	Uni B	<p>Uni B is a large non-profit public coeducational higher education institution, officially accredited and recognized by the Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam. Uni B offers courses and programs leading to officially recognized higher education degrees.</p> <p>Uni B is responsible for training students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, conducting research,</p>	 <pre> graph TD     A[Government] --&gt; B[MOET]     B --&gt; C[Regional Universities]     C --&gt; D[Member Universities]     D --&gt; E[Departments/Faculties] </pre>	<p>i. Under the governance by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET)</p> <p>ii. Minister of MOET appoints leaders of regional universities</p> <p>ii. Rectors of universities appoint Deans of faculties</p>	<p>253, including 119 undergraduate programs, 82 Master-degree programs, and 52 Doctoral degree programs</p>	2,600	52,000
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	<p>and applying science and technology in a multitude of disciplines to serve the construction and development of the country in general and Central Vietnam and Western Highlands in particular.</p> <p>Uni B has been developing into a system of 8 member universities, 2 faculties, one branch, 11 research and training institutes,</p>		<p>and Director of Departments</p> <p>iv. University operations under the Law on Higher Education.</p>			
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		centers, and publishing houses.					
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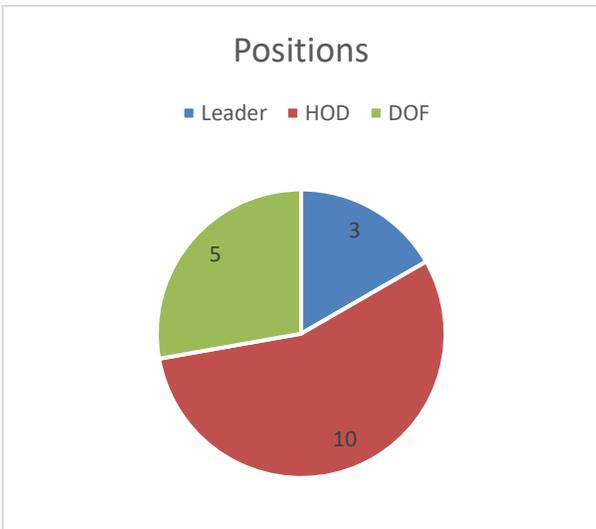
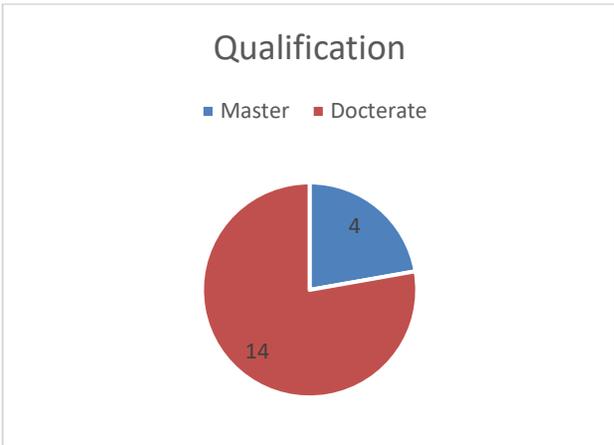
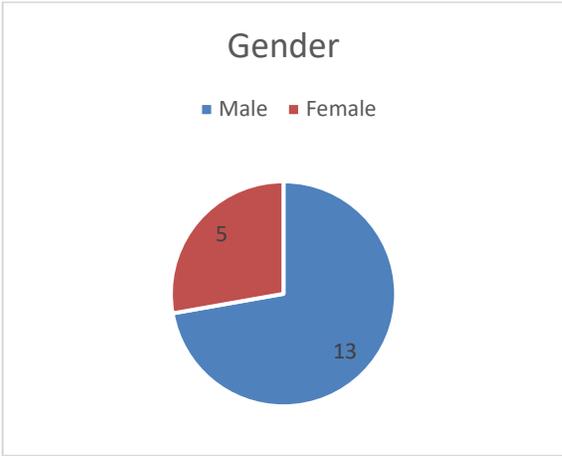
Especially paid attention here is that two university systems are different in governance structure, meaning that Uni A is under control by the Government and Uni B is belonging to the MOET. The difference in governance structure gave various points of view about the implementation of the process of the development and approval of NDPs.

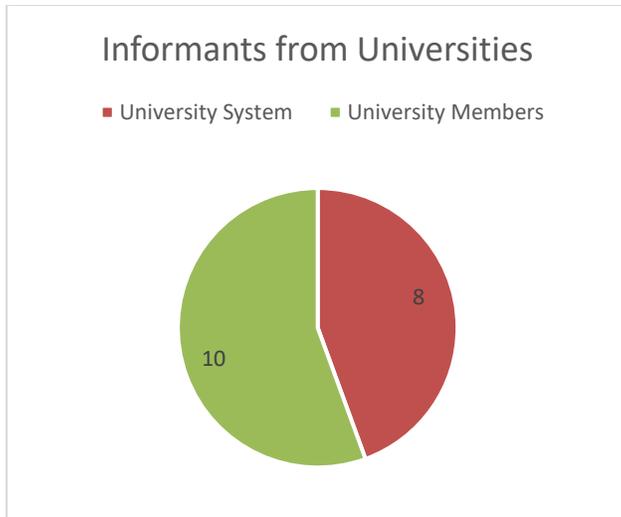
### *Informants*

Eighteen informants from two university systems participated in the semi-structured interviews. These informants are working at two university systems and their members. This research wants to study the effects of university governance structure on the new program development and approval process, therefore, informants chosen are those who keep managerial positions and have intensive experience in academic areas such as university leaders (President or vice-president of the university system or university members), deans of faculty (DOF), and heads of department (HOD).

The following pictures describe the demographic information of informants participating in the interviews of this study.

In the group of key informants, 5/18 (28%) are female, 14/18 (78%) possess Doctorate degrees, 3/18 (17%) are leaders of the universities including university systems and university members, 10/18 (56%) are heads of department, 5/18 (28%) are deans of faculty.





By choosing the particular university systems and informants with intensive experience in university management and academics, information and knowledge gained from the interviews not only present the university governance status on the NDP developing and approving process but also provide expectation to make the process better.

## 2.2. Findings from the semi-interview

For an intensive understanding of the current process of NDP in the Vietnam universities, 18 interviews were conducted with informants such as university leaders, HOD, DOF who are mainly responsible for introducing new programs in their universities.

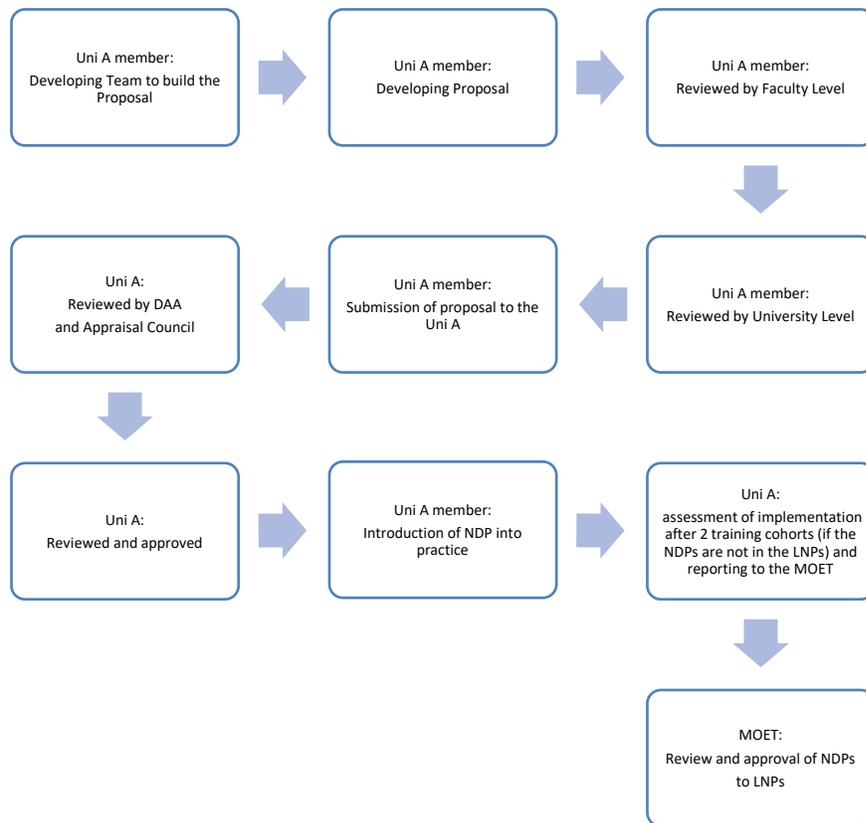
The interview questions have three main parts. Part 1: the external approval process of NDPs, part 2: the internal development and approval process of NDPs, and part 3: the capacity of leader's universities in the innovation of the process. These questions on

part 1 and 2 mainly sought information on the presence of the NDP Approval process such as governance structure, authority, requirements, elements of the process (time, actions, steps, participants, and so on), and policies supporting the process at both national and university levels and how could improve the status of failures of the process. In Part 3 the questions concerned the capacity of the leaders of universities identified in the literature as essential for making innovation of process in the changing and dynamic environment (appendix ... is the interview questions). The followings are the findings from the interviews.

#### 2.2.1. The ongoing process of NDPs employed

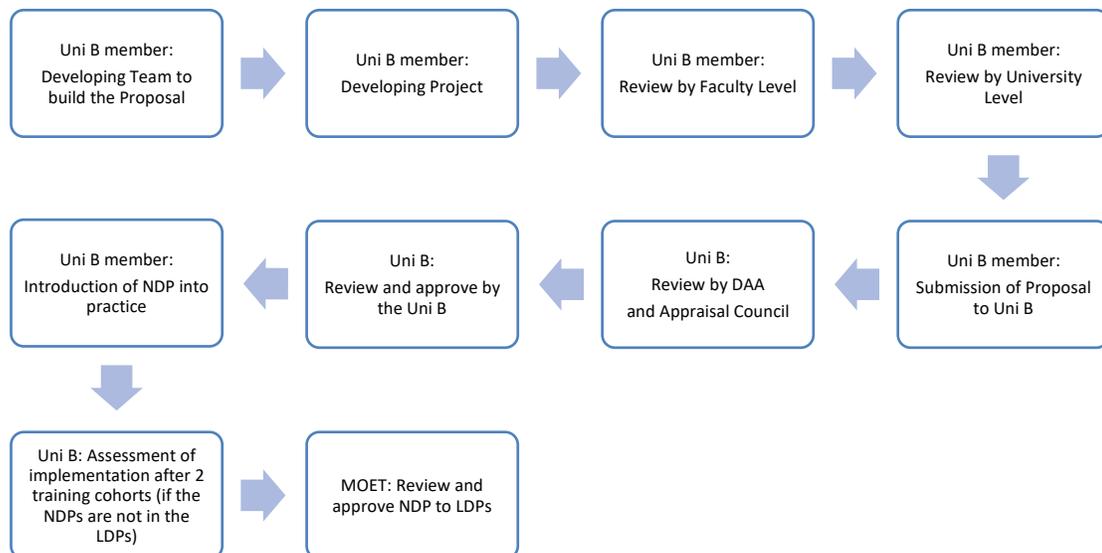
When investigating the ongoing process of NDPs at the universities in which informants are working, the researcher found out that there are three current development and approval processes for NDPs. Generally, these processes are following the instructions of Circular 22 issued by the MOET to introduce NDPs at their universities. The informant number 7 and 16 modified processes at their universities as well as process applying at the regular universities in the following diagrams.

*Diagram 4.1: NDP Process at the Uni A*



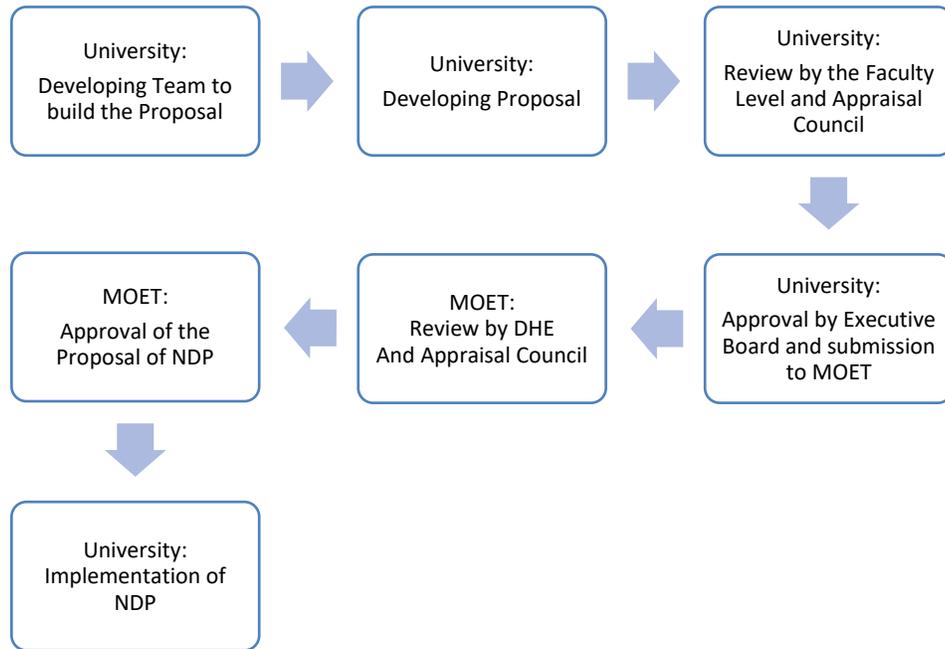
\*DAA: Department of Academic Affairs

*Diagram 4.2: NDP process at the Uni B*



\*DAA: Department of Academic Affairs

Diagram 4.3: NDP Process at the regular universities



\*DHE: Department of Higher Education, MOET

Comparing these processes, generally, the processes at 3 types of universities are the same with three main steps, including the development of the proposal, submission of the proposal, and approval of the proposal. However, there are differences between the types of universities. Especially, the authority of approval and the number of steps at different universities. For Uni A and Uni B, the development and submission of the proposal are duties of the university members while the authority of approval is belonging to the President of Uni A or B and they are responsible for reporting to MOET after making approval. For regular universities, universities are responsible for developing and submitting the proposal of NDPs, but the authority of approval is the MOET. In addition, there are differences in the numbers of steps among these

universities because of the different university governance structure of each university mentioned in the section below.

Generally, Circular 22 issued by MOET is the key document that all universities are requested to apply to the introduction and approval process of new programs. The process of NDPs composes three main steps, namely, development, submission, and approval of the proposal, in which the development and submission of the proposal are the duties of the universities and the approval of the proposal is the responsibility of the higher governance levels such as MOET or Vietnam National Universities (VNU) or Vietnam Regional Universities (VRU). For VNU and VRU, after approving the new programs at their universities and faculties, they are responsible for reporting to MOET about these new programs.

In Vietnam, there are around 400 universities including public and private universities (about 230 public universities). Although VNUs and VRUs have the right to approve NDPs depending on Circular 22, they are responsible for making reports to MOET after approval of new programs. The remaining universities (350 universities) have to submit the proposal to the MOET for getting approval. Discussions among interviewees mainly focused on the common approval process of NDP and suggest to make the process better.

### 2.2.2. The effects of the State on the NDP development and approval processes

Findings from 18 interviewees revealed the main point of view of the process of developing and approving new programs in the Vietnamese universities under the authority of the State.

#### *The landscape of the governance on the universities by the State*

In Vietnam, the MOET, on behalf of the Government, is responsible for overall governing and managing the higher education institutions including universities and academic institutions. MOET regulates policies and processes to govern and manage daily universities activities in different areas such as organization, human resources (staff and faculty members), academics (programs, curriculum, enrollments, and so on), and finance (allocation of the national budget to the universities yearly, the decision of the investment portfolio, etc.).

The MOET governs the NDP process by specifically setting out in Circular 22 the process including structure and authority of decision making, regulations, requirements, the procedure of the process, and policies to manage the new programs. Up to now, the MOET retains the approving authority for new programs with the universities are responsible for developing new programs which they submit to the

MOET for approval. The followings are the details of the process of NDPs from the perspectives of informants of universities.

*The details of the governance on the process of new program development and approval by the State*

Findings were collected from 18 interviews relating to roles of the State in the current process of new program development and approval.

**a. The structure and authority of NDP development and approval process**

- i. MOET keeps authority to approve new degree programs while the universities are responsible for developing and submitting the proposal of new programs to the MOET

Mentioning the current governance structure of NDP development and approval in Vietnam, Interviewee 1 and 3 reported and explained clearly the role of the State and university in the NDP development and approval process. They said that the State governs NDPs by issuing Circular 22 to regulate the process of building and approving new programs. The content of Circular 22 includes the authority of the State and university in the process, regulations, and requirements which the universities must meet to introduce new programs and process procedures which the universities have to follow in the progress of NDP development and approval.

Accordingly, the State reserves the right to accept new programs while the university is obligated to comply with and meet State regulations and requirements to develop new programs. Currently, interviewees claimed that such division of labor between the State and the university is causing tardiness for universities in the form of NDPs and one of the most serious problems is the duration to get approval from the MOET for NDPs.

Interviewee 9 emphasized the culture of university governance in Vietnam as well as his thought about the current process of NDP development.

“.. In Vietnam, governance is often based on strict rules because of the culture of organizations and individuals in implementing their duties. Otherwise, it would be difficult to achieve goals. Therefore, the State imposes many detailed regulations to guide universities and individuals on how to execute the universities. For example, regarding opening new programs, MOET is responsible for setting step-by-step regulations and approving new programs while universities identify market demand and deploy programs to meet demand. Thus, it takes a long time to go from demand to approval...”

Interviewee 1 complained

“... Vietnam has more than 230 public universities, it takes a long time to get the approval of new programs from MOET. The university has to spend around one year to two years to get approval from the MOET for one new program. The current approval process has slowed down expectations to open new programs to meet market needs...”

In addition, Circular 22 regulates regulations and requirements which the universities are requested to follow and meet to get approval for NDPs. Interviewees claimed that regulating specifically items as it does now is not suitable for

Interviewee 10 said that

“... regarding university governance, I think that the current state management imposed by the Government and MOET cause difficulties for and slows down university development. Each university is an independent entity with its unique features of specific strengths and weaknesses. Universities are the center of intellectual activities and play a guiding role in social development and human progress. Imposing regulations and procedures on creativity and innovation will lessen the capabilities of universities. Stagnation in state management and the application-approval procedure also account for decreased flexibility in university development, contributing to the development of the country...”

Moreover, the assignment of labor between the State and the university also raises ideas that the State is intervening deeply into the daily activities of the universities that are really belonging to the authority of the universities, especially activities relating to the academics.

Interviewee 9 complained that

“...the MOET deeply intervenes in many university activities. Because of intervention in specific university activities such as the approval of new programs, the MOET is neglecting macro-management and other educational policies...”

Interviewee 10 expressed her ideas on the role of the State and MOET in the process of NDP development

“... I think the right to approve new programs should be part of university autonomy. MOET should not hold the exclusive right to approval as it does now because it is overloaded with macro and administrative management... MOET should not develop too detailed policies that may affect the autonomy of universities. MOET should reduce bureaucratic management and allow greater autonomy. Autonomy is in accordance with state policies and increased social responsibility through the transparency of information...”

Interviewee 18 who was the full professor and spent more than 40 years teaching at the American universities said

“... in foreign universities, the approval of new programs is decided by the university. The university is responsible for the quality assurance of the program based on the state and university standards. Evaluation of the university’s effectiveness is the accountability of the State and the State decides whether the university still operates or not depending on the results of assessment...”.

ii. Need to shift the extent of the State control on the university

Interviewees suggested that shifting the State control on university governance is the most important thing in the progress of higher education section development. Informants claimed that the world universities have shifted a lot in governing universities, the role of the State changes from control to supervising and deregulates authority to universities in their daily operations. Especially, opinions of the informants who are holding the management position suggest that the State should change the role

and duties of MOET. The MOET should play a role in macroeconomic management of higher education, formulating regulations to ensure the quality of education and social security policies in education. Approval of new programs should be assigned to the university because the university itself can understand the needs and implement them effectively.

Interviewee 8 is the former president of the university and now he is the congress-man of the Parliament of Vietnam. He shared his thought about the university governance

“ ... in my opinion, the state should be more open in university administration, reduce bureaucratic regulations and grant greater autonomy for universities to develop appropriate training programs and specializations according to their capabilities and social requirements. University leaders should be aware of their responsibility to society and act to improve training quality. Poor quality programs that fail to meet market requirements will be naturally eliminated. Therefore, the role, capabilities, and responsibility of the university leaders should receive priority and training to meet practical requirements...”

Interviewee 9, ex-vice president of the university system, shared his thought about the university governance:

“...I want to share my thoughts on university governance. There are two trends of governance in the world: rule-based governance and principal-based governance. Advanced countries primarily follow principle governance. They are very particular in governance and inclined to provide general guidance. Currently, increased autonomy, social development, and global integration require a different approach to management because over-strict management cannot unlock the full potential of institutions and individuals. The government should be more open and flexible in governance activities to allow universities to

develop and unleash their full intellectual capacity. The higher education institutions are getting freed from statutory management, starting to apply principle-based governance. They have greater autonomy in terms of policy and management...”

Interviewee 10 from the dean of faculty at the international university expressed:

“... The State should loosen its management and not intervene too much in a university’s activities. MOET needs to review current documents and make adjustments so that MOET will only manage macro issues and not get too involved in university activities. MOET should exchange information on its documents with all relevant ministries to allow consistency in management, avoiding cases where other ministries issue documents that overlap or conflict with those of MOET regarding university management. MOET should design a framework, norms, or standards on education quality to ensure consistency in implementation among all parties. MOET requires greater accountability of universities via the reporting system...”

**b. Process’s requirements and regulations.**

In this section, findings show difficulties or inconsistencies which the universities are facing in the progress of the introduction of new programs at their universities.

i. Requirements are many and unsuitable for universities to form NDP

The interviewees were most concerned with State requirements and regulations. The requirements are not consistent with the actual conditions of Vietnamese universities because the universities are not able to meet the strict human resources and finance requirements. For example, to develop one NDP, these policies request at least one

faculty members who hold a doctoral degree and nine faculty members who hold a master's degree with the same discipline as NDP's discipline. Another example, these requirements also require the name of the degree owned by the faculty members must be suitable for (or the same) the name of new programs that universities want to open. Especially for universities that want to open new programs that are not yet on the national program list, it is very difficult for them to get approval from the MOET.

Interviewee 1 who is the head of the academic department of the university system and has taken part in many meetings on academics organized by MOET or other universities said that such unsuitable requirements are raised by many university presidents, deans of faculty, and faculty members at the meetings or seminars, but up to now, there has no change from the authority agents (State or MOET or Departments of MOET).

- ii. Requirements to develop the new program which is not in the list of national programs are very difficult to meet by the universities

MOET manages the list (or portfolio) of degree programs that are delivering at the universities in Vietnam. These programs are approved by the MOET. Any NDP which has not been approved by the MOET is not a legal program in Vietnam. Informants said that currently there are many NDPs that are very essential for the human market but they are not in the LDP, therefore, the universities are facing difficulties getting approval for NDP introduction. For instance, medical psychology program or hospital

management program, etc. For two university systems, the development of these new programs at university members or faculties is also difficult to meet the requirements even though these universities have multidisciplinary and high-quality human resources.

Interviewee 7 and 15 said that:

“... According to current regulations, the approval of new programs development depends on the list of national programs, specifically,

- If the new programs in consideration are in the list of national programs, the university is entitled to open them.
- If the new programs in consideration are not on the list of national programs, the university should request the MOET’s consent before developing the proposal.

... in practice, for new programs not in the list of national programs, it is difficult to get approval from the Ministry of Education and Training...”.

Interviewee 15 from Uni B also commented:

“... the application process is easier if new programs in consideration are listed in the list of national programs; otherwise, there are more strict rules applied to them ....”

Interviewee 13 from the Uni B explained clearly difficulties in meeting requirements,

“... it is much more challenging to get approval for new programs (especially multiple-disciplinary NDP such as Mathematic-Technological Program, or emerging programs such as biomedical engineering) not in the list of national programs than for those in it. The

university must prove that the new programs respond to market demand for human resources. It must complete the following tasks: conducting demand survey, interviewing entities that will use the human resources produced by the new programs, requesting a program code similar to those in the list, designing the curriculum, requesting a subject code, recruiting enough faculty members who will use their names to open the new program code, listing the faculty members and providing guidance on the subjects, learning materials, and references, preparing necessary facilities and convincing the approval council... It is a complicated and hard shift ...”

From the opinions of interviews, the research reveals that it is very difficult for universities to introduce new programs that are not in the list of national programs even though these programs are very essential for the Vietnamese market and society.

iii. Criteria for the inter-disciplinary programs are unclear and inflexible

The current social trend in job diversification. That is, an employee can perform a variety of related works. Therefore, training human resources cannot go in each direction; it is necessary to have a mix of knowledge such as economy, politics, culture, etc. Therefore, to develop the NDP to meet the current social requirements, it is necessary to have the cooperation of many universities and specialized faculties, especially for single-disciplinary universities such as the information technology area. However, the criteria for developing new interdisciplinary programs have not been clear. Therefore, the development of new interdisciplinary programs is still in a difficult period, and there is always a gap between social and university expectations.

Interviewee 13 claimed:

“... science, economy, culture, politics, society, etc. are deeply intertwined in the development of modern society. Training should not be divided into separate programs. It should rather be inter-disciplinary and employ different knowledge modules to ensure learners can survive in the actual work environment. The list of national programs has not yet been updated to follow this trend. It still lacks flexibility and diversity, causing difficulty in opening interdisciplinary programs. Therefore, it is necessary to have a more open system in terms of deciding appropriate programs. There should be regulations on inter-disciplinarity to make it easier to open new programs that are not on the list ...”

From that, the research may understand that inter-disciplinary programs are urgent and necessary needs from society as well as the expectation and responsibility of universities to develop these programs. But it is very difficult to develop these programs because of requirements and regulations from the State.

iv. Requirements have not matched to international standards

Moreover, the current regulations are lacking the integration of the standards of foreign universities; therefore, the universities that have many international lecturers are finding difficulties in responding to the criteria of faculty and staff to open NDPs. For example, the definition of the title of professor is the issue that is arguing in Vietnam higher education right now and has not moved to consent among universities and education managers.

Interviewee 11 said that

“... currently, many lecturers returning from overseas wants to open new programs with international trends and meeting requirements of social development (e.g., biomedical engineering). However, strict regulations on the number and degrees of lecturers as well as the name of the new programs have created a multitude of difficulties for the opening of new programs and wasted time... There needs to be changed in mindset in education management in Vietnam, especially the standards of professors, associate professors, and other criteria from foreign universities...”

A professor who was a full professor at the famous university in the United States of American for about 40 years and now teaching in Vietnam said that

“.... fortunately, we have good leaders in the right vision and decisions, but I have given up on developing a new program at our faculty because of the difficulties in the requirements and procedure. Education officers asked me to show the evidence of my full professor certificate when I was a professor at the US university. It is impossible for me because I was recognized as a full professor and I left this university a long time ago...”

As result, requirements such as name/title of degrees owned by lecturers or names of the new programs/subjects have not updated the international standards yet, causing some difficulties in benchmarking among Vietnamese university standards and foreign ones in meeting the requirements set by the Circular 22.

- v. Inclusion of stakeholders in the process are not clear

Interviews said that the current regulations also do not specify the participants in the process of developing and approving the new program. This has confused the universities in setting up groups or councils to contribute ideas to the proposal.

In addition, comments from interviews that the quality of voice and knowledge of participants in the process are very important. Review meetings play an essential role in providing professional opinions for the university leader to decide whether the new programs should introduce or not. In some situations, the quality of the review meetings is not sufficiently professional, and the leaders face difficulties in making decisions. From that, the quality of approval decisions is limited and affects the quality of implementation of new programs into practice. Some interviewees claimed that it is necessary to pay attention to invite persons to take part in some meetings of the process and their capacity so that they can contribute quality opinions to the proposal.

Interviewee 7 stated that

“... Suggestions from stakeholders for new programs sometimes are more a formality rather than contributive comments. Therefore, the programs will encounter difficulties and challenges during the implementation phase...”

**c. Process’s procedures employed**

i. The whole process is cumbersome

Based on current documents and interview results, the new program development and approval process consists of two stages, called the internal process and the external process. In particular, the internal process is the process of the development and submission of the NDP proposal to MOET. These activities are done by the university.

The external process is the process of the NDP proposal approval. After the university submits the new program proposal to MOET, MOET organizes a council to approve through the meeting session. In each internal and external process, there are a lot of steps described in diagrams 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 in this chapter. In general, the processes are quite cumbersome and administrative even though the internal process is the one which the universities themselves prescribed depending on the Circular 22 issued by MOET.

- ii. The duration of the process is long

According to informants, the time taken for the approval process is long. As a rule, the approval period (from submission to approval) is 30 days. However, many proposals take 6-12 months and maybe 2 years to get approval.

Interviewee 1 said that

“... the approval process is too time-consuming. Universities opening NDPs want to start enrollment in the same year the programs are opened. However, in reality, enrollment cannot be initiated until the next year. To ensure the timescale, the universities, therefore, should actively plan one year ahead...”

Interviewee 15 also complained about the time for the approval process

“... the approval time is too long, hence not meeting the urgent demand for training and human resources for the society. In fact, current

regulations are very strict, so universities have to prepare sufficient proof, thus prolonging the approval time...”

- iii. Paper-based submission of proposal for approval is not effective and productive

Currently, to apply for a new program, faculties or schools submit their applications to the university by printing around 20 copies. Each set of files is over 500 pages. Copying documents is a waste of money and effort. After the meeting ended, the storage of documents also encountered difficulties in cabinets and document storage space, not to mention the risk of management and toxic paper materials. The submission of the proposal of new programs to MOET is also in the paper, so the cost of transporting documents increases.

Many interviews said that while countries around the world have used information technology in managing education in general and opening new programs in particular, Vietnam has not changed the application method. This affects the quality of management and innovation rates of universities.

As such, the current paper-based submission is affecting the quality of the process of developing and approving new training programs and wasting money, time, and human resources.

Interviewee 10 shared her experience:

“... most of the foreign universities, the process of NDP approval is uploaded on the website of the university. Any school or faculty wants to develop NDP, they need to follow instructions from the process and submit an NDP proposal via the internet. Some universities do approval via the internet instead of organizing the meeting for approving...”

- iv. Lack of feedback from MOET on proposals submitted by universities

One of the important issues in the approval process is the lack of feedback from the approval council. According to the current process, universities must submit their proposals to MOET and wait for the final decision. They are not allowed to attend the approval meeting, and in case the new program is not approved, the university also does not have information on how to improve the proposal. Informants claimed that the universities' participation, comments, and feedback in the approval meetings are essential for universities to explain clearly and finalize their proposals.

**d. Lack of Policies in Encouragement, Guidance, and Incentives for NDP development**

- i. State management and implementation discourage the universities from launching new programs for which they are responsible and accountable

The policy of encouraging and rewarding universities for opening new programs is not paid attention to the management of new programs being implemented by the State. Since then, the development of new program schemes is derived from actual needs at

the university. Universities rely on their competence and leadership capacity to proactively develop new programs that meet market requirements. Thus, under the current regulations, universities are not under pressure to renovate training programs and are not encouraged to open new programs that society is in great need of. This has affected the development of industries, the economy, and society of the country.

Interviewee 9 said that

“... we develop new programs based on our university capabilities and social demand rather than a request or encouragement from the State. Recently, the State has not had any policies or incentives to require or encourage universities to develop new programs to meet market needs. I know that some foreign universities, the State orders the universities to open new programs to meet the country demand or some particular programs such as security or defense...”

- ii. The State lacks a punishment policy for the low-quality programs

Concerning the new program approval process, in addition to monitoring and improving the quality of the program, the punishment policy of poor-quality programs should also be considered and established in the process. However, the State is lacking policies for this poor-quality program. These programs still deliver in universities.

Interviewee 5, DOF at the university, said that the State should pay more attention to review the quality of the programs annually as well as close the low-quality programs if they cannot meet the national standards.

- iii. The State lacks the policies to manage programs after they are approved

Upon further understanding of the process of managing approved programs, the interviewees stated that the State is lacking steps concerning the management of the implementation of programs and policies to improve the programs after they are approved. Currently, the state only issues the Circular regulating development and approval of new programs. After approval, the program will be transferred to the university for deployment without the stage of monitoring or improving the programs.

In addition, some informants express their experience with MOET that State management on the NDP process still some inconsistency such as some programs are delivering at some universities but are not in the NLP or many programs are no longer studied at the universities for a long time but remain in the NLP.

In terms of MOET management, interviewee 9 complained:

“... the two Vietnam National Universities are currently implementing a lot of pilot programs that have been reported to MOET but are yet to be approved. MOET wants to carry out strict management but has not quite succeeded...”

Interviewee 10 emphasized:

“... In fact, MOET currently plays a decisive role in opening a new program but is not following up on practical implementation. Therefore, many programs are no longer in practice but remain on the national list

of programs. This shows inconsistency in management and practical implementation...”

- iv. The state has not yet put high priority to develop an online system of NDP process

The approval process takes a long time because of the current submission process. Currently, to submit a new program proposal, it is required to provide no less than ten copies, each with over 500 pages with full information on opening a new program such as a training program, evidence of teaching staff, facilities, and related legal documents.

All documents were mailed to MOET in northern Vietnam. In case the proposal lacks some other materials, the university will continue to complete the dossier and send it by post to MOET. Sending documents in this manner was very time-consuming and materially wasteful.

While universities in the world have applied information technology in handling training issues, Vietnam has not yet made efforts to approach this new manner. Interviewees said that MOET should innovate management by creating an online system of the submission and approval process. As such, the approval process will be faster and more convenient.

- v. The State has not well-performed the role of forecasting the country’s human and employment demands.

In the course of learning about the difficulties faced by the university in the process of adopting the new program approval process, the interviewees also said that they were having trouble with the forecasting data of occupational and human resource needs in the market context. Currently, the government or local authorities have not well performed this data, so the university is quite confused in deciding to develop new training programs to meet market requirements.

Interviewees 1 commented:

“... the State or the MOET should do well in the country's human resource planning and career needs in the coming years. If yes, the university will do better in training human resources to meet market demands...”.

vi. Need for University Leadership Development

The policy of improving governance capacity for educational leaders is also one of the issues related to the state's tasks that the interviewees also mentioned. Currently, the state or MOET does not have many training courses on university governance or the implementation of specific government documents. Interviewees 8 and 9 emphasized that the State or MOET should regularly organize classes to improve management skills and management capacity, supporting university leaders in the process of management and administration.

In conclusion, the State regulates Circular 22 which is the guidance for universities in developing and getting approval of new degree programs. However, this executive order also brings many difficulties and challenges which are hindering universities to meet to introduce new programs. The research points out some obstacles which negatively affects universities in introducing new programs such as the process are cumbersome with many steps, time taken to get approval is long, requirements and regulations are not approximate for the current conditions of the universities while the state is lacking policies to develop human and finance resources and well as policies to encourage to develop NDPs and manage NDP effectively. Difficulties and obstacles seem to hinder the universities from the introduction of new programs to meet market demands.

### 2.2.3. The effects of the internal university governance on the process of NDPs in the Vietnamese universities

After investigating the external process of development and approval of the NDPs, the research continued to interview to have an insightful landscape of how the NDP develops and approves at the university level.

According to the interviews, universities have no role in approving new programs. They are in charge of developing new programs and submit them to MOET for approval, except the National and Regional universities which have around 30 member universities in total. For regular universities, to get the approval of new programs by

the State, new programs must meet requirements and regulations presented in Circular 22 set by MOET.

Circular 22 stipulates in detail step by step in the process of new program development. Therefore, the university's responsibility is to organize its operations to follow Circular 22 exactly.

Findings from the interviews have revealed some issues from the internal university governance in the implementation of the process as well as challenges from the university to meet the requirements of the process.

**a. Structure and authority internal university governance on the NDP process**

Taking about the current structure of the internal university governance, interviewees described that the internal university governance consists of the university council, the academic board, and the executive board in which the existence of the university council and its operations at the Vietnamese universities are quite silent. In practice, even though the government is requested for all public universities to form university councils, the number of university councils is limited. The university council keeps the role of an advisor rather than makes decisions on important issues for the development of the university.

For the academic board, the literature review shows that at foreign universities, the academic board has an important role in deciding the formulation and approval of new program proposals. The academic board's voice and content are some of the determinants of success in the implementation of new programs. However, there is a difference from the Vietnamese university context that the academic board is responsible for contributing academic ideas rather than taking part in deciding to develop NDPs. Also, the current process has not been clear the decisive role of the academic board in the development process of new programs. Therefore, the ideas of the academic board may be considered as advice for the president in his/her decision-making task.

For the role of the executive board in the process of developing and approving NDPs, interviewees said that the president of the university plays a key role in deciding on the development of a new program. He or she is responsible for signing the documents to submit the proposal to MOET for getting approval. In practice, there happen conflicts between the president and faculty in the process of developing NDPs. One interview from the university shared his experience from his own situation.

Interviewee 1 said that:

“... the proposal usually is made by the faculty while the president is the main person to decide the development of NDPs. And, sometimes, there is a contradiction in the proposal between the president and the faculty which makes slow the process. Therefore, in the internal process, it is necessary to have a principal agreement between the leadership and deanship in the development of NDPs before starting to write the

proposal. Moreover, NDPs development should be engaged in the university strategy...”

As a result, some new programs remain shortcomings against the expectations of students and enterprises. Some concerns show that by the current governance manner and if MOET assigns the authority to approve the new programs to universities, it may be difficult for universities to accelerate the formation of new programs with high educational quality.

**b. Internal Process’s procedures are cumbersome and ineffective**

Relating to the process’s procedures, interviewee 1 and 3 said that the universities develop the internal process based on Circular 22, including the development of proposals and submission of proposals for getting approval.

Interviews presented some main issues of the internal process such as time taken for the internal process is quite long, the staff is less experienced in the writing of proposals, the internal process has not paid attention to the ideas from the business, the way of submission is not efficient, information on the market demand to build the proposal is not enough, tardiness in revising and editing the proposal after the meetings also makes the process longer in the timing framework. These back draws make internal process’s procedures is not effective in operation.

Interviewee 5 said

“... the universities have not paid attention to business consult in the development of proposal of new programs and as the result that the new programs have not been responsive to market demands...”.

Interviewee 16 claimed the difficulties in lacking a database as well as the ability to survey society needs

“... the most challenging is the ability to capture and forecast social needs about the new training programs.... we also need a database of market survey or direction in marketing needs and database of university human resources ....”

For paper-based proposal submission, interviewees were of the view that submission is not effective and wasted time and money when every university has to copy around 10-20 sets of the proposal and submit it to the university level. These opinions were the same as external process submission, meaning that so many copies will be sent to the MOET to get approval.

**c. University governance lacks policies and agenda to develop resources to meet the regulations of the NDP process**

Internal governance is not only to organize universities to gain objectives but also sets policies and agenda which support the universities in their daily operations, especially agenda to develop resources and finance to meet the requirements of the NDP process. The findings of the interviews also present the current human resources, facility, and finance of the university in responding to the regulations of the NDP process.

- i. The university has not enough staff well-trained to develop a proposal for new programs

In addition to the difficulties required by the approval process, the university's capacity to launch new programs is also an issue. Universities lack human resources and finance to open new programs that are currently taking place at Vietnamese universities. In these difficulties, the capacity to develop proposals for new degree program development is also one of the university's barriers to the development of new programs. The university lacks people who are well trained, understand regulations, and knowledgeable about formulating proposals. Therefore, if the state strengthens the training of rules, it will support the university in developing programs.

- ii. The university has not enough professors and needs more financial resources for developing new programs that meet market demands

Regarding finance and human resources, these are the two most difficult issues for the university to meet process requirements.

Interviewee 5 and 6 stated difficulties in human resources

“... reasons why the universities can’t develop some NDPs which response to market needs are because they lack Professors and lectures to teach these new programs ...”

One interviewee from Uni B (interviewee 13) said their real situation in human resources

“... Currently, students graduated from universities are not enough and do not meet practical market requirements.... it is impossible for us to expand or increase the number of lecturers before opening the program as it would become a financial burden for the institution given that fact that the program has not enrolled any students. As a result, opening the new program and expansion of faculties must be done simultaneously...”

Interviewee 14 also experienced difficulties in human resources at his universities

“... in our university, the approval process does not affect the opening of a new program because our application documents meet the required criteria, though it is not easy because our country is lacking high-quality faculty with practical experience...”

**d. University governance lacks policies to attract professors who meet the requirements of the process**

Interviewees said that Vietnam now needs a lot of new programs according to the market demand situation, especially new ones related to medicine, psychology, and management. These programs, at foreign universities, are teaching very popular. However, in Vietnam, the universities have not been able to open because we are short of human resources to meet the requirements of the process. Therefore, policies to attract human resources from foreign universities are very necessary. The current state-issued regulations do not yet have a mechanism to attract foreign professors, so the

university has not been able to develop regulations to attract this human resource. This is a difficulty for universities in recruiting personnel with the current governance mechanism.

**e. University governance has not paid attention to the strategy of new degree program development to effective support for the developing and approving internal process**

While the government requests the critical developing and approving process of the new degree program, the university governance has not well-prepared the strategy of new program development as well as plans to achieve the goals of the strategy.

University strategy is one of the important guidelines for university development. However, the strategy-based management of the university is still very fragmented in Vietnam. Many universities are not familiar with strategic management, therefore, they cannot develop a new program strategy that needs investment for a long time. The current development of new programs is ad hoc and situational rather than a long-term strategy. Since then, the university is facing difficulty in preparing conditions on facilities and human resources. Interviewee 1 emphasized this point while he compared the leadership between VNU's member universities and regular universities and he reported that VNU's member universities better do this task rather than other universities.

**f. Lack of encouragement to develop new degree programs in the universities**

Asked about motivation to develop new programs in the universities, informants said that their universities had policies to maintain the quality of programs approved, but they have not yet policies to encourage their faculties of schools to develop new programs. The development of new programs depends on the demands of the faculty and professors. These points were emphasized by the Dean of faculty and one HOD of Uni A.

“... actually, we have not yet policies to encourage the development of proposal of new programs. Our faculty develop proposal depending on the demand of society rather than the strategy or policies of the university...” or “...at some universities, developing the proposal of the new program depends on the opinion of professors who have experience from the foreign university and wants to open in Vietnam because they think that these programs are novel and necessary for Vietnam...”

In conclusion, from the interviews, the research can summarize that the difficulties of the university in the introduction of new programs is due to the following reasons. Firstly, ineffective internal management capacity. Secondly, the university has not promoted the strength of its organizations such as the academic board and university council. The authority to decide on the opening of a new program is the president, so there is no right and correct decision on the new training program. Thirdly, conditions for opening new programs are difficult and inappropriate while university resources remain limited because of the real financial resources. Finally but not lastly, procedures of the process such as time, submission, etc. are not enough expertise and also need to be improved.

Thus, to timely develop training programs to meet market demand, both the state and the universities also need to change. The State adjusts the process to more appropriate conditions and criteria, while the universities need to improve the capacity of university governance and develop proper resources in terms of quantity and quality to develop new excellent programs.

#### 2.2.4. Roles of the university leaders in the university governance and developing and approving process of new degree programs

After learning about university governance for the approval of new training programs, the study is conducted to explore the role of university leaders in university governance and the process of the development and approval of new programs.

There are two emerging themes while investigating the role of university leadership, including 1) the leader who plays a vital role in the process of development and approval of NDPs, and 2) the capacity of the educational leaders in the dynamic and changing environment to run effectively university governance and the process of NDPs development and approval.

##### **a. The leaders play an important role in the process of the introduction of new programs**

University leader plays an important role in promoting the development, especially for new, pioneering, and leading activities, the role of the leadership becomes more and more important and necessary. For developing NDPs, if the leadership sees an opportunity and decides quickly to open the NDP to meet social requirements, the reputation will be increasingly developed.

Interviewee 15 from Uni B said that

“... whether a program is approved quickly and successfully depends on the role of the leader in terms of choosing the right discipline that serves market demands, choosing the right leader of the team, always urging and supervising the process, budgeting for opening the program...”

Interviewee 16 from the university member of Uni B said that

“... the leadership of an institution has a significant influence on the approval process, in terms of orientation, allocation of resources, and directing the development of new programs...”

Meanwhile, interviewee 5 confided and explained in detail why the leader holds such an essential position in the university

“... their contributions are very important and depend on their abilities and moral values. Leaders with good abilities and high moral values will make the most feasible decisions suitable to social conditions and actual situations of their institution, thereby avoiding wasting time and resources in low standard programs, preventing unnecessary problems for the society and especially for learners after graduation because without proper training they cannot meet the market demands and find a suitable job, making their investment wasted...”

**b. The capacity of the educational leaders in the dynamic and changing environment**

In a competitive, dynamic, and ever-changing environment, especially the development of the 4th industrial revolution, leaders need to have other qualities to adapt to the environment, leading and developing their universities. Since then, the interviewees have contributed opinions for the essential capacity of university leaders in the renovation period. The followings are capacity of the leaders collected from the interviews such as the ability to plan and implement strategies, to be sensitive to the changing external environment, to be assertive in their work, critical thinking, understanding and applying laws and regulations scientifically and effectively, the ability to analyze and predict, listen, take risks, cooperate and develop. In addition, an important thing is the ability to use fluent foreign languages, especially English.

Interviewee 7 said that

“... If the leadership has an appropriate mindset, good leadership skills, and visions, it will make wise decisions for the development of the university, and vice versa. Therefore, choosing a leader with the heart and the head is the most important factor in the development of the university...”

More clearly, interviewee 13 claimed that

“... the leader needs to be sensitive to changes and developments of the society, the country, and the world to have a thorough observation and make open decisions that work for the current time. A leader must have

the courage to make prompt decisions when enrollment and training have changed due to the demands of the labor market. A leader must integrate the university into the criteria of regional and international universities to improve its reputation and the quality of its training...”

In conclusion. University leaders play an important role in promoting development, especially for new, pioneering, and leading activities, the role of leadership becomes more and more important and necessary. Interviewees said that in the competitive, dynamic, and ever-changing environment, especially the development of the 4th industrial revolution, leaders need to have other qualities to adapt to the environment, leading and developing their universities. In this point, interviewees suggested capabilities that are important and essential for leaders of universities.

### **3. Conclusion of chapter**

This chapter presents an overview of the interviewees' opinions from the semi-structured interviews related to the effects of university governance structure on the development and approval process of new degree programs in Vietnamese universities. In particular, how the state and the university govern the new programs via the process of new program development and approval.

For the effects of the State on the process, the research reports current issues of governance and management by the State on the process. Accordingly, the State intervenes in the specific activities of universities, especially, the State keeps the authority to approve new programs and affects university autonomy and innovation.

The process requirements and regulations are many, criteria for interdisciplinary programs and NDPs which are not in the LNP are not unclear. The process procedures are cumbersome with many steps and a long time to get approval. The current manner of submission and approval are not effective. The State lacks policies to manage and encourage the universities to develop new programs as well as enhance the university's leader capacity. These issues are affecting the form of the development of new programs in the universities. They are reluctant to develop NDPs because the process is too complicated and takes a long time from the proposal development to approval. In some cases, when the proposal is approved, the competition and adaption of the NDP cease. Some universities feel a waste of time because they cannot know if and when their proposals have been approved. Lack of information on the country's human and employment demand also reduces the motivation to open NDP. The things that requirements and regulations are not clear and difficult to meet in the current conditions of Vietnamese universities are hindering the development of special NDPs such as interdisciplinary programs. Meanwhile, the State has not had policies to encourage or force universities to open NDPs to meet market demand, and the universities are lack directions of the NDP development. Thus, the development of NDPs remains limited.

Besides, the role of internal university governance still has issues that need more improvement. The relationship between the university council, academic board, and executive board is not strong enough to promote the university's management capacity in the process of development of new programs. The role of the academic board is unclear in the internal university governance and the notion of a strategy of new

programs seems not to engage in the universities while well-building of NDPs development strategy is of the manners to contribute to run effectively the process of NDPs development at the universities. Additionally, the resources of the universities such as human, finance, technology are still limited and find difficulties in meeting the requirements and regulations of the process. University policies to manage and promote the introduction process of new programs don't make good effects.

Findings from the interviews showed some main dynamic capacity of the leaders in the universities and expectation that leaders of universities should be trained for making innovation of the university governance and the process of NDP development and approval in the universities in Vietnam.

The weakness and fallings of the process caused by the State and the internal university governance are affecting NDP development. While the interviews indicate areas for improvement in the governance and processes if NDP is to produce its desired results in terms of programs that benefit the participants and meet market needs, there a need delve into details of the aspects in the process that could be identified for improvement. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a survey to validate the interview findings and provide specific details on how NDP in Vietnam's university could be improved. Chapter 5 presents the findings from the survey.

## **Chapter 5 : FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY**

### **1. Overview of the chapter**

This chapter presents the findings from the survey. It is composed of 3 main sections, the first is the overview of the chapter, the second is the results of the survey and the third is the conclusion of the chapter. In each section, many sub-sections are organized to well-clarify the contents of the chapter.

### **2. Results of the survey**

To better understand the issues raised by 18 interviewees, especially the fallings and failures of the current process, the thesis embarked on an additional study involving a survey of the key stakeholders in new program development (NDP) in Vietnamese universities. The survey was examined the university governance factors that impede NDP and the satisfaction of the stakeholders with the university governance mechanisms and processes.

The survey questions consist of 3 parts, demographics, questions on the external process of approval, and internal process of approval with 41 questions in total (appendix D is the survey questions).

Generally, survey questions investigated 5 issues of the NDP process at both the State and university levels which are found out from the interviews. There are (i) structure

and authority of decision making in the NDP process, (ii) process's requirements and regulations issues, (iii) process's procedures issues, (iv) managerial issues, and (v) university's leader capacity issues.

The research examined these issues to discover satisfaction with the current NDP development and approval processes and to ascertain the areas for improvement from the respondents' perspectives.

The followings are the findings from the survey.

## 2.1. Demographic information

### 2.1.1. Brief introduction of the universities and respondents chosen for the survey

#### *Universities for survey*

This research chose three universities for the survey. Reasons to select these universities based on different locations, types of universities, and the extent of State control on the university in Vietnam. In terms of location, Ho Chi Minh City and An Giang Province are chosen. Ho Chi Minh City is one of the most dynamic and fast-changing cities in Vietnam. Universities and their staff and faculty members in Ho Chi Minh City are proactive and innovative. Therefore, respondents from these Ho Chi

Minh City universities are good samples for the research. In the contrast, education matters in provinces in the Mekong Delta are facing difficulties in governance and management, from that An Giang Province was selected to have an insightful understanding of this area. In terms of types of universities, the survey examined university governance at one national university and one regular university. In terms of the extent of the State control on the university, the research chose one university with high autonomy controlled directly by the State, one university member of the national university, and one university managed by the MOET. Especially, Uni 1 is the national university in Ho Chi Minh City; Uni 2 is the university member in Ho Chi Minh City and Uni 3 is the regular university controlled by MOET and located in An Giang province, Mekong Delta. The brief description of these universities shows details of these universities in terms of history and evolution, programs, students, staff, and faculty.

*Table 5.1: Description of the universities chosen for the survey*

#	Universities	Introduction	Governance and Approval process of NDPs	Number of programs	Number of faculties	Number of staff and faculty	Number of regular students)
1	<b>Uni 1</b>  Location:	- Uni 1's Administration (headquart	- Under the direct governance by the Prime	309	6 universities and 2	5,500	60,000

	Ho Chi Minh City	er) is responsible for building policies and regulations to govern and manage Uni 1's system - School of medicine - School of political and administrative sciences	Minister's cabinets. - authority to approve new programs for member universities and faculties and report to MOET - Compliance with Circular No 22 to develop new programs - Be responsible for reporting MOET if the new programs are not on the national list of programs.		schools		
2	<b>Uni 2</b> Location:	Established in 1954. It is one of the two biggest institutions in	- Under the governance of the Vietnam	100	29	890 faculty members	16,000

	HCM City	the field of social sciences and humanities in Vietnam. The school is always the pioneering institution in terms of offering new academic programs to meet societal demands such as Vietnamese studies, Oriental Studies, Anthropology, International Relations, Urban Studies, Spanish Linguistics and Literature, Italian Linguistics and Literature, and so on.	- National University Compliance with Circular No 22 to develop new programs				
3	<b>Uni 3</b>	Established under Decision	- Under the governance	86	10	834	10,000

	<p>Location: An Giang Province (Mekong Delta)</p>	<p>No. 241/1999 / QD-TTg of December 30, 1999 of the Prime Minister, Uni 3 is a public higher education institution recognized to meet the educational quality standards with the mission of training high-quality human resources, prestigious scientific research (scientific research) and technology transfer (technology transfer), contributing effectively to economic</p>	<p>of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minister of MOET appoints leaders of regional universities</li> <li>- Rectors of universities appoint Deans of faculties and Director of Departments</li> <li>- University operations under the Law on Higher Education.</li> <li>- New programs are approved by MOET.</li> <li>- Compliance with Circular No 22 to</li> </ul>				
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		development and social progress festival; At the same time, Uni3 strives to become a multi-disciplinary, multidisciplinary, postgraduate, research and technology transfer training center serving the international community.	develop new programs				
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*Respondents*

Respondents are those who are working at public universities in Vietnam. The perspective and experiences of informants who are working at universities are precious for this research. Data collected from respondents through the surveys. The sampling method is purposeful, and the aim is to interact with those whose experiences and insights are most likely to be informative. Therefore, the respondents are administrators, deans of faculty (DOF), heads of departments (HOD), and faculty

members of the universities in Vietnam. Males and females were included in the process of surveys. The number of respondents presents in the following table and the demographics of respondents will be presented in the next section.

*Table 5.2: Distribution and Responses at each university*

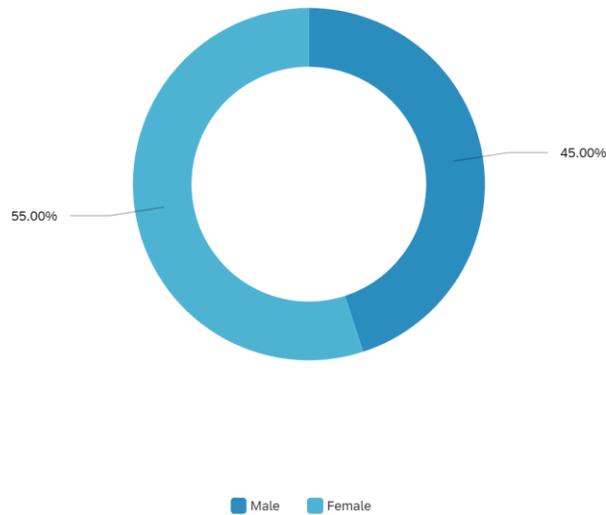
	<b>Distribution</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Uni 1	49	41
Uni 2	69	39
Uni 3	68	40
Total	186	120 (65%)

### 2.1.2. Demographics of the respondents

#### a) Gender

In terms of gender to take the survey, the statistical figure showed that the percentage of male and female respondents participating in the survey is the same. Meaning that, in universities, male and female employees are responsible for developing new programs.

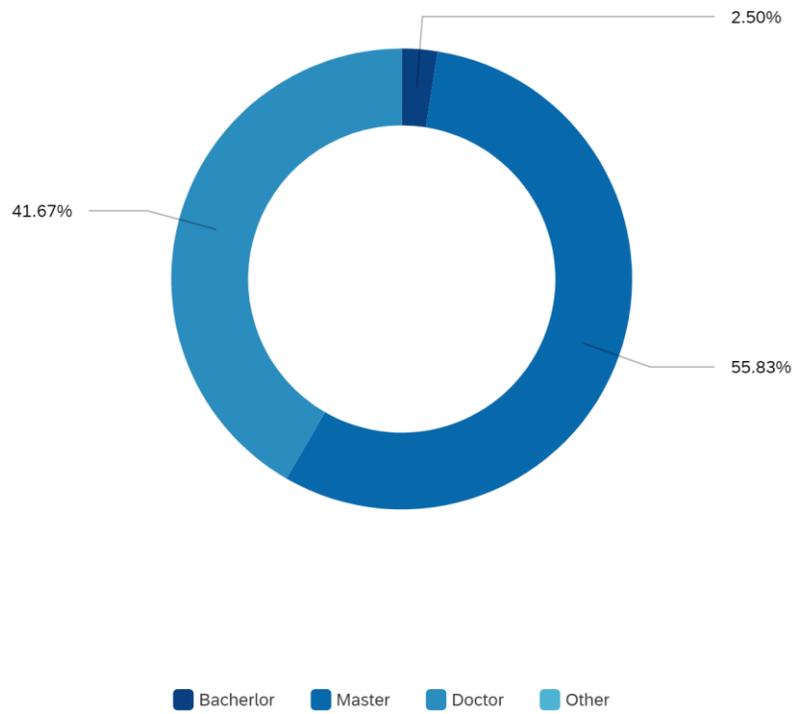
*Figure 5.1: Genders of the respondents*



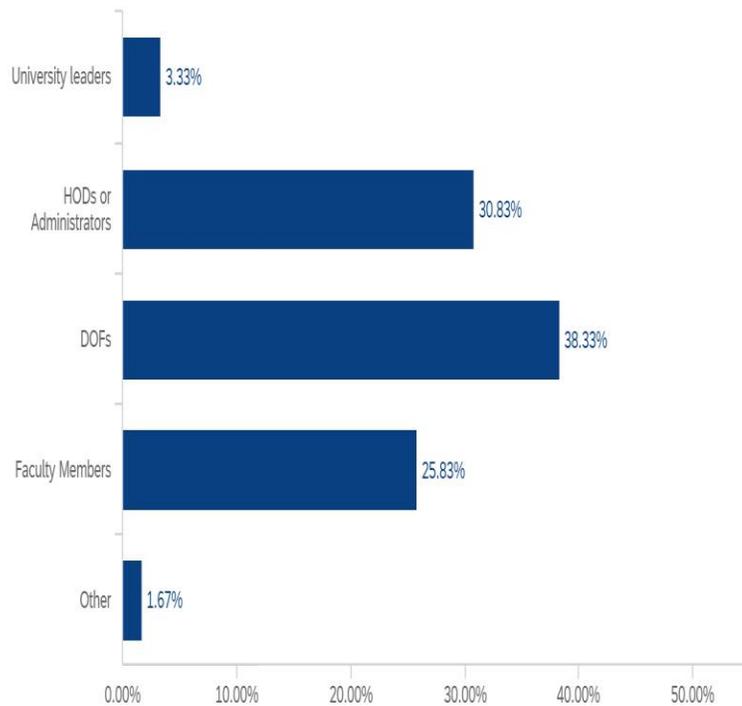
b) The highest qualification and current positions of respondents

The following figure 5.2 showed that the majority of respondents participating in this survey are keeping a high degree of education, in which the master's degree (55.83%) and Doctor degree (41.67%). And figure 5.3 said that those who are responsible for the development of new programs at the universities are university leaders (3.33%), administrators and heads of departments (30.83%), deans of faculty (38.33%), and faculty members (25.83%) in which HODs and DOFs are remaining the higher number of persons concerning the development of new programs. From that, the research reported that HODs and DOFs keep the main role in the development of new programs in Vietnamese universities while the role of faculty members in this process is slightly weak.

*Figure 5.2: Highest qualification of the respondents*



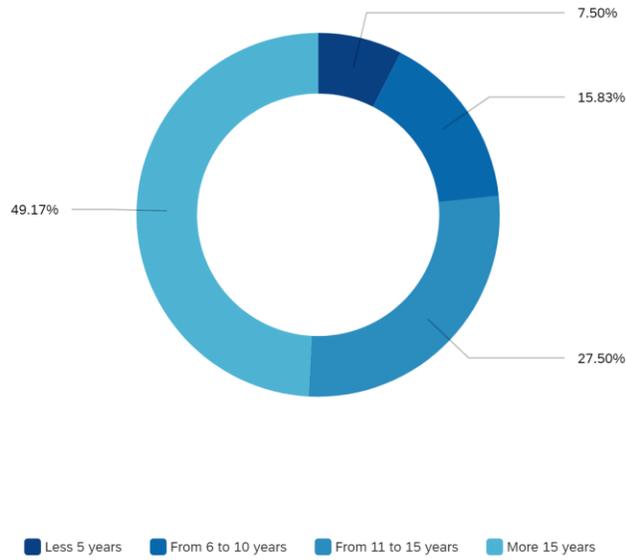
*Figure 5.3: Current positions of the respondents*



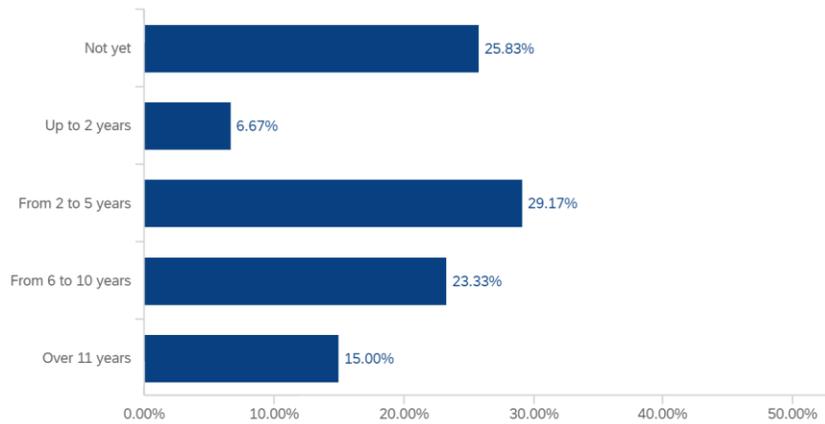
c) Experiences and managerial positions of respondents

Figure 5.4 and 5.5 gave the real situations that the respondents have gained more than ten years of working for the universities (about 92%) and most of them are keeping managerial positions in the universities (around 75%) that are consistent with the current positions such as university leadership, HODs, and FODs. Figures pointed out that knowledge and information which were collected from these persons are very insightful and significant for the research.

*Figure 5.4: Length of service of the respondents*



*Figure 5.5: Duration in university leadership/management roles of respondents*



A quarter of the respondents are not in leadership roles. However, they are participants in NDP and their responses are still relevant.

In conclusion. The demographic information section provided the general picture of how to choose samples (universities and respondents) and statistical figures of

respondents who are involved in the research. Statistical data shows that samples are suitable for the research objectives and from that, findings from those will provide good value for the research results.

## 2.2. Procedures

This research used Qualtrics as a platform and software to collect data from universities in Vietnam. It is very convenient that Qualtrics guides more clearly on how to develop a form to collect data, distribute questions, analyze results, and create a report of the research.

After choosing 3 universities (uni 1, uni 2, uni 3), the research went ahead to administer the survey. The distribution of questions was sent to universities in the order from uni 1, uni 2, to uni 3. Meaning that, after collecting enough responses from uni 1, the research proceeded with the distribution of questions to uni 2 and then to uni 3.

The objective of this research is to get at least 100 responses from three universities (e.g. 35-45 responses/each university). For each university, the researcher wants to collect data from administrators, deans of faculties or heads of departments, and faculty members who are experiencing the development and approval of new programs at their universities. Therefore, the researcher sent 60-70 distributions to each university in case some respondents could not answer because of unexpected reasons.

There are two ways to distribute the questions, email invitation, and anonymous link via social media invitation. First, the researcher liaised with the President of each university to explain the objectives of the research and request their assistance in providing the email list of the persons who met the criteria of the research. Second, the researcher sent survey questions to these persons via email and waited for around 5 days to get responses (Qualtrics supports to alert time point to respondents). After that time, the researcher sent the anonymous link to the president to be distributed to persons who did not answer via email along with the gentle reminder of “please conduct the survey within 3 days”. The President sent an anonymous link to respondents through social media networks such as Zalo, Viber, and Facebook messenger. After collecting enough responses through email distribution and social networks, the research moved to the next university. After one month, from 9 April to 11 May 2020 (response collection paused at 10 pm, 11 May 2020), the research distributed 186 surveys and collected 120 responses from 3 universities (response rate is 65%).

The following pictures and tables are the survey statistics which were extracted from the Qualtrics software.

*Figure 5.6: Distribution Channels*

All Responses

Distribution Channel	Audience Size	Surveys Started	Responses	Completion Rate
Invite Over Email	83	37	28	76%
Anonymous Link	N/A	N/A	92	N/A

Depending on the survey statistics, there are 83 invitations via email and got 28 responses from the email channel, and received 92 responses through the anonymous link (the Qualtrics software could not track the quantity of social media invitations sent).

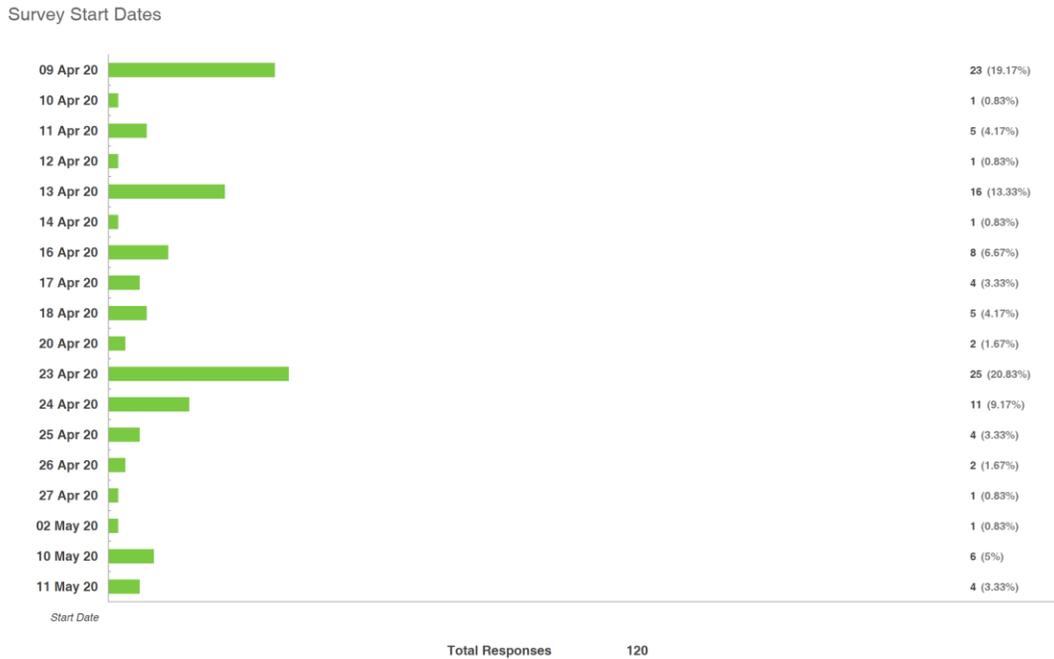
The following picture reveals more details of distribution channels to universities chosen for surveys.

*Table 5.3: Responses at each university*

	Distribution		Responses				Responses in total
	Mail	Link	Mail	Mail (%)	Link	Link (%)	
Uni 1	24	25	18		23		41
Uni 2	26	43	4		35		39
Uni 3	33	35	6		34		40
Total	83	103	28	34%	92	88%	120 (65%)

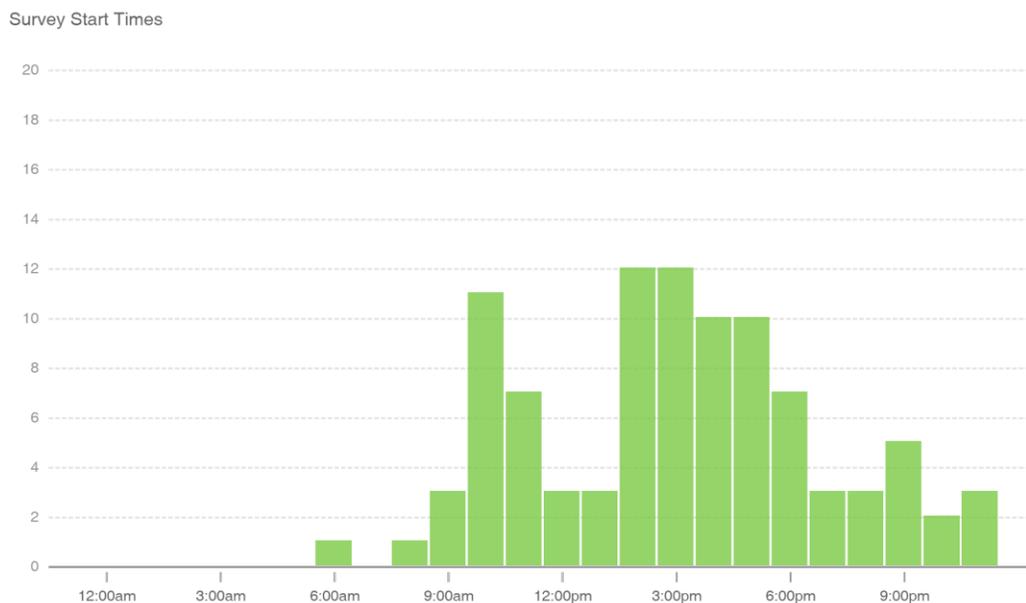
From this table, it is important to address that the response rate is 65%. In addition, respondents tend to prefer answering questions through a link via social networks rather than checking email to conduct surveys. The role of the presidents of universities contributed importantly to the success of the surveys when he or she often helped remind his/her staff and faculty members to run surveys.

*Figure 5.7: Time of Data collection*



This figure illustrated the time taken the surveys from 9 April to 11 May 2020, in which the number of responses for every day was different. These surveys happened during the Covid-19, so the research faced more difficulty in collecting data.

Figure 5.8: Survey Start Times



This figure modified the timeframe that respondents answered the questions. It showed from 6 am to 11 pm, in which from 10 am to 11 am and from 2 pm to 5 pm with a high rate of responses. Maybe it is working and studying time of respondents at the universities. Results have revealed the behavior of respondents about the responding time which is helpful for further research.

*Figure 5.9: Survey Durations*

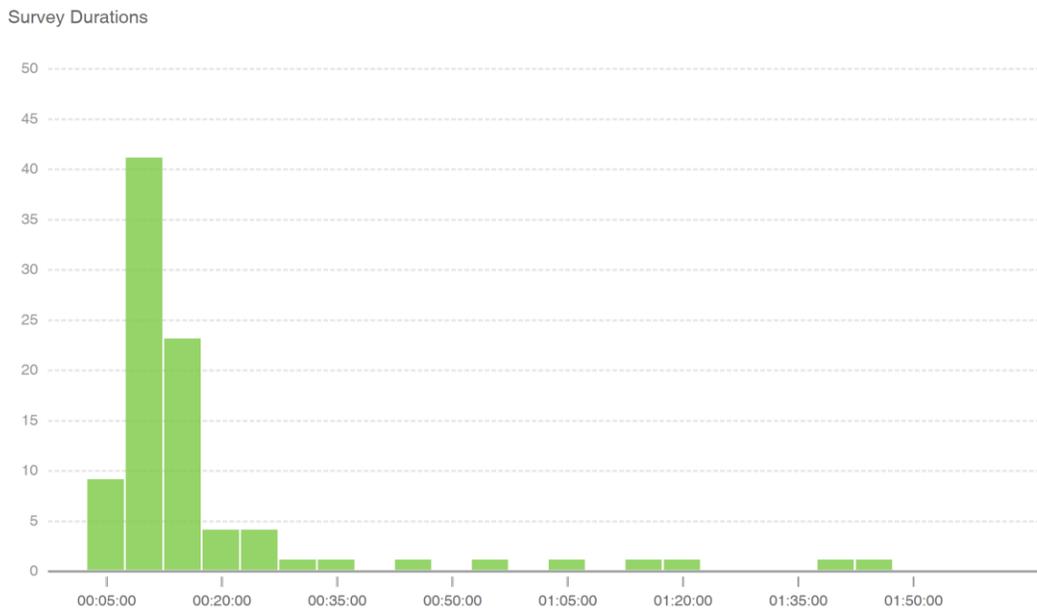


Figure 5.9 showed it took from 5 to 20 minutes to answer these questions, in which it mainly focused on 10 minutes (42.71%) and 15 minutes (23,96%) to run a survey. According to Inna Burdein, director of panel analytics with the NPD Group, when saying some heuristics for the survey, she paid attention to keeping a survey under 20 minutes to get a high quantity and quality of the responses. Hence, for this research, the picture of the survey duration showed that the majority of survey duration is less

than 20 minutes and hope that the outcomes of surveys contribute to high quality for the research.

### 2.3. Findings from the survey

This research uses the Likert Scale to collect respondents' views on the NDP Process with agreement and disagreement on the scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

Based on the research questions, the research wants to present the findings from the surveys depending on the order of research questions.

#### 2.3.1. The effects of the State on the development and approval process of new degree programs

The following findings from surveys presented the effects of the State on the process with four main themes: structure and approving authority, process requirements and regulations, process procedures, and managerial issues. These themes reflect the governance of the state on the development and approval of new programs in the universities.

##### a) Structure and authority of decision-making issues

As stated in chapter 4 on findings from the interviews, the State is now keeping the right to approve new programs at the universities by issuing Circular 22 which guides the NDP process and approval. When asked whether such approval process is slowing the process of the introduction of new programs (#3.7), the summary statistics are calculated that mean is 2.04 ( $SD = 0.74$ ), meaning that respondents said that the current approval process delays the introduction of new programs. And for a preferred approach to the current approval process, respondents believed that the approval process will increase effectiveness if the State empowers the university authority to approve the process ( $M = 2.0, SD = 0.79$ ) (#3.16). Continuing the logic of authority of decision-making, the research made the question 3.17 which surveyed the satisfaction of the respondents about who is the best in making approval of new programs if the State transfers the approval right to the universities. It is very interesting to show that 65.69% of respondents expect that the academic board keeps this authority while 24.49% of respondents are satisfied with the university council and a very little response rate, 8.82% (#3.17), sticks that this authority should belong to the academic board (table.5.4).

*Table 5.4: NDP Approving Authority*

#	Questions	Min	Max	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
3.7	Approving the new programs by the State makes tardiness in the introduction of new	1	4	2.04	0.74	0.55

	programs at the universities.					
3.16	The approval process will increase effectiveness if the State empowers the university authority to approve the new programs.	1	4	2	0.79	0.63

3.17	The following board should be responsible for approving new programs at our university	<b>A</b>
	University council board	24.49
	University academic board	65.69
	University president board	8.82

b) Process requirements and regulations issues

Continuing to investigate the satisfaction of respondents with (a) the number of requirements in the State's NDP process, (b) clarity of the requirements for the approval of new interdisciplinary programs which the universities are very interested in developing, and (c) the resources available for NDP at their universities. Respondents said that the current process has so many requirements that the universities have to meet if they want to develop new programs ( $M = 2.16$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ) (#3.1). For interdisciplinary programs, respondents claimed that criteria are not clarity ( $M = 1.94$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ) (#3.2) and the universities are facing lot of difficulties in human resources to follow these requirements ( $M = 2.24$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ) (#3.3). Especially, for the programs not including the national programs, respondents reported that the universities are

facing difficulties to get approval because of the requirements and regulations as well as precedents ( $M = 2.3$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ) (#3.4) (table 5.5).

*Table 5.5: Process's requirements and regulations*

#	Questions	Min	Max	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
3.1	There are too many requirements placed by the State for new program development by the universities	1	5	2.16	0.86	0.74
3.2	The state requirements lack clarity on criteria to open new interdisciplinary programs.	1	4	1.94	0.62	0.39
3.3	Our university has difficulties in human resource to develop new interdisciplinary programs according to the state requirements.	1	4	2.24	0.89	0.79
3.4	Our university faces a lot of hindrances (time, human and financial resources) to develop new programs if they are	1	5	2.3	0.93	0.86

	not on the list of national programs.					
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c) Process's procedure issues

The process's procedures are one of the items that the informants of interviews also commented on the current process. They are expecting that the process's procedure should be convenient for universities to follow. When distributing survey questions relating to the process's procedures, respondents showed that it takes a long time to get approval from the State from submission ( $M = 2.17, SD = 0.73$ ) (#3.5). And respondents claimed that time for reviewing and approving should be less than six months ( $M = 1.91, SD = 0.67$ ) (#3.6).

Asking about the feedback from the authority to the proposal submitted, nearly 50% of respondents agreed that the authority has not given sufficient feedback on the proposal submitted ( $M = 2.58, SD = 0.91$ ) (#3.8). It means that this rate is not enough to affirm insufficient feedbacks from the authority in the approval process.

Relating to the way of submission and approval, the majority of respondents strongly agreed that the State should develop the online system of new program submission and approval ( $M = 1.78, SD = 0.62$ ) (#3.12) (table 5.6).

*Table 5.6: Process's procedure issues*

#	Questions	Min	Max	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
3.5	The approval process from the time of submission to approval is too long	1	4	2.17	0.73	0.53
3.6	The approval process for new program development should not take more than six months	1	4	1.91	0.67	0.45
3.8	The authority has not given sufficient feedback on the proposal submitted	1	5	2.58	0.91	0.83
3.12	The State must take advantages of the advances in IT and the internet to introduce an online system for the submission and approval of new degree programs	1	3	1.78	0.62	0.38

Asked about who should present in the approval meetings, most of the respondents showed that the university leaders, enterprise, Quality Assurance Agency, and professor community should participate in the meetings, while the item of MOET taking part in the meetings occupied around 59.80%. The following table modifies more details of respondents' satisfaction (#3.18).

Table 5.7: Inclusion of other stakeholders in the NDP Process

3.1 8	The following individuals should be involved in the new program approval process.	<b>A</b>
	Representative of enterprise	80.39
	Representative of Ministry of education and training	59.8
	Representative of professor community	77.45
	Representative of Quality Assurance Agency	87.25
	Representative of the university which submits the proposal.	91.18

d) Managerial issues

In this section, the research wants to explore respondents' satisfaction with current policies that the State is applying the approval process as well as their preferred approach for this process.

The research organizes 7 questions relating to these issues. Findings from the survey gave some perspectives which the State should consider and shift if it wants the universities to develop more new programs to meet market demands. Table 5.8 below provides summary statistics of respondents' ideas on investigated issues.

Incentive policies to develop new programs is one of the managerial issues that the State should pay attention to encouraging and forcing the universities to develop new programs. However, survey statistics revealed that respondents agreed that the State lacks policies to encourage the universities to develop new programs ( $M = 2.27$ ,  $SD =$

0.89) (#3.10), meaning that most of the respondents are strongly unsatisfied with the current policy of management from the MOET. This is the main point for research to discuss and recommend for the State in the management and development of new programs.

Along with the incentive policies to encourage the universities to develop new programs, providing necessary information relating to demands of society in profession, skills, and knowledge to develop the proposal of new programs is significant for universities. In the interviews, informants commented that their universities are not enough information. By the survey, the research gains the mean of 2.0 with SD is 0.73 (#3.13), meaning that respondents agree that the State has not well-performed the role of forecasting the country's human and profession.

Continuous management and improvement of approved programs and punishment of poor-quality approved programs are managerial issues of the process with the aim that the State determines to maintain the quality of the programs. Investigating the policies of the approved program management, respondents agreed that the State is lacking policies to manage the approved programs ( $M = 2.34$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ) (#3.9). In addition, the policy on poor-quality programs, respondents said that the State lacks punishment policies for the poor-quality programs ( $M = 2.04$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ) (#3.11). This point needs to be considered to innovate the approval process under the university governance approach.

For the preferred approach to improving the quality of the process, the majority of respondents expressed their desire that the State should develop a policy to manage the approval process via an online system ( $M = 1.99$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ) (#3.14). And especially, respondents strongly emphasized that the policy to enhance the leader's capacities is particularly important ( $M = 1.75$ ,  $SD = 0.57$ ) (#3.15).

*Table 5.8: Managerial Issues of the NDP Approving process*

#	Questions	Min	Max	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
3.8	The authority has not given sufficient feedback on the proposal submitted	1	5	2.58	0.91	0.83
3.9	The State lacks policies to manage the approved new programs	1	4	2.34	0.73	0.54
3.10	The State lacks incentive policies which encourage the universities to develop new programs	1	4	2.27	0.89	0.79
3.11	Universities are not penalized by the State for introducing poor-quality programs	1	4	2.04	0.75	0.57
3.13	The State has not performed well the role	1	4	2	0.73	0.53

	of forecasting the country's human and professional demands					
3.14	The State should develop a policy which manages the new program development and approval process via online system	1	5	1.99	0.65	0.42
3.15	The State should develop the policy to enhance the university leader capabilities	1	3	1.75	0.57	0.33

In conclusion, through 18 survey questions, the researcher better understands the issues raised in the interview phase. The followings are the crucial issues of the effect of the State on the development and approval process of new programs in the Vietnamese universities gained through the survey

The majority of surveys expect that the State empowers the right to approve the latest programs to the universities and the academic board keeps strongly supported as the unit in the universities to keep approval authority.

The current process has many requirements that the universities have to meet if they want to develop new programs. Criteria for the interdisciplinary programs are not clear and the universities are facing a lot of difficulties to follow. Especially, the universities

are facing difficulties to get approval, even they cannot get approval if they want to develop new programs that have not yet on the list of national programs.

For process procedures, it takes a long time to get approval and respondents earnestly suggest that time taken for review and approval should be less than 6 months and strongly recommend that the State should develop the online system for submission and approval of new programs.

For significant individuals to take part in the approval meetings, university leaders, enterprise, Quality Assurance Agency, and professor community are those who keep an important role in the approval meetings. Their voices contribute to the success of the new programs when they come into practice.

For managerial issues, the State lacks policies to encourage new programs. Additionally, the State has not well-performed to supply information relating to the country's human and profession that help the universities develop new programs to meet market demands. The State is good at managing approved programs, but in the contrast, the State is still lax with poor-quality programs.

For the preferred approach for the current approval process, respondents suggest that the State develop a policy to manage the approval process via an online system policy to enhance the leader's capacities.

2.3.2. The effects of the internal university governance on the development and approval process of new programs

This research uses the Likert Scale to collect respondents' views on the NDP Process with agreement and disagreement on a scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

a) Structure and authority of decision-making

The internal university governance on the development and approval process of new programs is the role and responsibilities of the university council, academic board, and executive board in making decisions relating to the new programs at the universities. Recently, the President of the university keeps the authority to approve the NDPs at the universities. Asked about the authority of the academic board in this process, respondents believed that the academic board has not enough authority to make decisions on NDPs ( $M = 2.51, SD = 0.97$ ) (#2.3).

*Table 5.9: Adequacy of the Authority of the Academic Board*

#	Questions	Min	Max	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
2.3	The academic board has not given sufficient authority to make final decisions	1	5	2.51	0.97	0.95

on developing new education programs.						
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b) Process's procedure issues

Analysis of data collected for items concerning the internal process's procedures (table 5.10) showed that respondents were of the view that there are too many steps in the NDP process ( $M = 2.18$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ) (#2.1), and respondents reported that the universities do not consult with industry leaders when they have decided to develop new programs ( $M = 2.56$ ,  $SD = 0.96$ ) (#2.4). Respondents held the view that the universities are not satisfied with paper-based proposal submission as now ( $M = 2.24$ ,  $SD = 0.8$ ) (#2.7).

If timing affects the process, respondents were the view that the time taken for the development of a proposal is too long ( $M = 2.78$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ) (#2.5). However, respondents expressed their belief that the universities should set the rule to keep the time of the proposal development ( $M = 2.24$ ,  $SD = 0.8$ ) (#2.6).

Table 5.10: NDP Approval Procedures

#	Questions	Min	Max	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
2.1	There are too many steps in the process of	1	4	2.18	0.83	0.68

	new programmer development					
2.4	We do not consult with industry leaders and consider their inputs in our new program development	1	5	2.56	0.96	0.93
2.5	Time taken for development of proposal is too long	1	5	2.78	0.91	0.83
2.6	Our university needs more rules to keep the time of proposal development process on time	1	4	2.07	0.76	0.58
2.7	We are not satisfied with paper-based proposal submission	1	4	2.24	0.8	0.64

Analysis of data collected for items relating to individuals who should be in the internal process of NDPs, over 70% of respondents were the view that those who should attend the meetings are university's leader, professional community, faculty/school, deans of faculty and enterprise. However, only 35.78% of respondents reported that local government officials should be in the meetings (#2.17) (table 5.11).

*Table 5.11: Participants of the NDP Approval Meetings*

2.17	The following individuals should be involved in our university new program development process	<b>A</b>
	Representative of the University's leaders	88.07
	Representative of the local government officials	35.78
	Representative of the professional community	78.9
	Representative of Faculty/School which is submitting the proposal	88.99
	Representative of Faculties' heads	77.98
	Representative of Departments' heads	64.22
	Representative of enterprise	86.24

c) Managerial issues

As for rewarding policy to develop new programs, respondents were the opinion that their universities have incentive policy to develop new programs ( $M = 3.14$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ) (#2.12). This figure said that incentive policy to develop new programs is not ready in the universities.

As for policy to maintain the quality of new programs they were approved, respondents showed that it happened at their universities ( $M = 2.53$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ) (#2.13).

For the policy to attract international professors to work at Vietnamese universities, respondents agreed that their universities lack this policy ( $M = 1.94$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ) (#2.14).

For a web-based system, respondents said that the universities should use web-based system for new program submission ( $M = 1.99$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ) (#2.15) and for whole NDP process, including submission, review and approval ( $M = 2.32$ ,  $SD = 0.9$ ) (#2.16).

*Table 5.12: Policies for NDP Approval Process*

#	Questions	Min	Max	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
2.12	We are rewarded for developing new education programs	1	5	3.14	0.94	0.89
2.13	Our university has policies to maintain the quality of new programs after their approval and implementation	1	5	2.53	0.85	0.73
2.14	We lack incentives to attract international professors to work at our university.	1	4	1.94	0.78	0.61
2.15	Our university should introduce a web-based system for new program submissions.	1	4	1.99	0.75	0.56
2.16	An online system should be developed for the review and approval of new	1	4	2.32	0.9	0.81

program submissions as our university's new program approval process					
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d) University's capacity employed

When studying the developing and approval process of new programs and policies that are applied to this process, the research also examines the university's capacity in terms of resources and facility to meet the requirements and regulations in meeting the processes.

Data collected shown in the table 5.13 reported that respondents were the opinion that the universities need more finance to carry on the development of new programs ( $M = 1.94, SD = 0.8$ ) (#2.9) and lack information of market demand in the NDP process ( $M = 2.22, SD = 1.03$ ) (#2.8). Respondents held the view that they have not paid attention to the strategy of NDP ( $M = 2.77, SD = 1.02$ ) (#2.2). Respondents believed that they have professors for NDP ( $M = 2.6, SD = 0.94$ ) (#2.11). Like the professors at the universities, respondents also said that they have enough trained staff to develop a proposal ( $M = 2.71, SD = 0.99$ ) (#2.10).

*Table 5.13: University's capacity for the formation of NDPs*

#	Questions	Min	Max	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
2.2	New program development is not something our university has engaged in the strategy before	1	5	2.77	1.02	1.04
2.8	We are lacking available information in market demand for development work of new programs	1	4	2.22	1.03	1.05
2.9	Our university needs more financial resources to carry on the necessary steps in new program development	1	4	1.94	0.8	0.64
2.10	We have enough trained staff to develop new programs	1	4	2.71	0.99	0.98
2.11	We have professors for new programs which meet market demand	1	5	2.6	0.94	0.88

In conclusion, this section presents the effects of the internal university governance on the developing and approving process of new programs with 18 questions over charming 4 issues, namely, structure and authority of decision-making, process's

procedures, managerial issues, and university's capacity to meet the process to develop new programs. Statistical analyses employing ANOVA of the means of the responses on the 18 questions between gender and management and non-management respondents revealed no significant differences. Analyzing data collected from 120 respondents, the research moves to some summaries as the followings below.

The authority of the academic board in the developing process of the new program in Vietnamese universities seems quite light. For the process's procedure issues, data collected reported that there are too many steps in the NDP process. Moreover, the universities do not consult with the industry leader in the process to develop a proposal of new programs to meet market demands. The current submission of the proposal by the paper is not satisfied by the universities. Although less than half of respondents were the view that the time taken for the development of the proposal is too long but most respondents expected that the universities should set rules to keep the time to write a proposal on time.

For those who should be in the meetings relating to process, university's leader, professional community, faculty/school, deans of faculty and enterprise gained high response rate, while local government officials remained not high response rate.

For managerial issues, incentive policies to develop new programs are not ready in the universities to encourage the universities to develop new programs. Policies to maintain the quality of new programs approved should pay attention to. Policies to attract

international professors to work at Vietnamese universities are also not ready at the universities. And item of a web-based system for new program submission got a high response rate as the recommendation to the universities in the innovation of process. For universities' capacity to meet the regulations and requirements of the process issued by the State, the universities need more finance to carry on the development of new programs. They are lacking information on market demand in the NDP process. NDP strategy is not part of their university strategy in the past. Half of the respondents reported that their universities enough trained staff and professors to develop new programs like the State requests.

### 2.3.3. Leaders' capacity in the dynamic environment

Table 5.14 shows rates of respondents to agree with capabilities that are essential for university leaders. According to the survey statistics, capacities relating to strategic vision, the mindset of innovation, ability to seize opportunities, network-developing, ability to manage and allocate the financial and human resources gained a high rate of percent (more than 90%) (#2.18) (table...). From that, recruitment or training of leaders should pay more attention to these capacities to contribute to the success of the universities.

Additionally, the ability to seize threats gained the lowest rate of responses, meaning that comparing to other capacities, the ability to seize threats is not essential enough for the university leaders (#2.18).

*Table 5.14: University leader capacities*

#	Questions	SA+A
2.18	The following capabilities are essential for university leaders	
	Strategic vision	97.25
	Mindset of innovation	94.5
	Ability to seize opportunities	81.65
	Ability to seize threats	67.89
	Comprehensive understanding of Vietnamese laws and regulations	77.98
	Ability to develop national and global networking	87.16
	Proficient in the English language	73.39
	Ability to manage and allocate financial and human resources to meet the strategy.	90.83

### **3. Conclusion of the chapter**

This chapter presents the results of the survey that was administrated within one month in three Vietnamese universities with a 65% response rate of 187 distributions. Data collected contributes to a better understanding of the results from the interviews. The State controls the developing and approving process of new programs in the Vietnamese universities through regulating Circular 22 to manage this process. In practice, this process unveils some fallings and problems which affect the introduction of new programs in the universities.

Research results show that the launching of NDPs to meet market demand is a regular activity of the university. The university itself will see social needs and is responsible to meet social needs by generating NDPs to train human resources for the market. However, in Vietnam, the state is intervening in the development of NDPs. The state governs the development of new programs by establishing processes and retaining the authority to approve. The current NDP process is revealing shortcomings such as an authority to approve, process requirements and regulations, process procedures, and managerial issues at both the national and university levels.

*For the Government governance*

For new program approval authority, it is assumed that approving the NDPs by the State makes tardiness in the introduction of NDPs. MOET is managing the whole system with nearly 400 public and private universities in Vietnam. It is irrational to keep the right to approve each new program for each university. Current governance on the NDP process not only slows the development of a new program for the country but also creates cumbersome in the state management apparatus. At the same time, the state is also indirectly creating university reliance when it does not promote the creation of universities in the NDPs innovation activities. Respondents expect the State to give NDPs approval rights to universities, and the academic board should be the one holding the right to approve NDPs.

For process requirements and regulations, findings also show that the others are not happy with the current process. There are too many requirements that schools must meet when they want to develop NDPs such as the number of organic faculty holding doctorate and master's degrees or facilities. In addition, in some cases, these requirements are not relevant in specific Vietnamese conditions such as having to match the names of NDPs and the name of the degree held by the instructor and so on.

Criteria for interdisciplinary programs are unclear and inflexible. The current world trend is the training of interdisciplinary programs, providing multi-dimensional knowledge for students to master in knowledge and problem-solving. However, the current criteria are not clear for the development of interdisciplinary programs and mainly single-disciplinary programs, so the university faces many difficulties in developing these types of programs.

Along with social and economic development, the demand for new study programs has also increased. More and more NDPs that are not included in LNPs are being expected by businesses and the market. They want the university to train human resources according to business and market needs. Examples are biomedical engineering programs or hospital administration. However, the current requirement of the NDP process is creating problems for universities. Also, there are requirements related to the academic titles of lecturers when international and Vietnamese standards have not yet matched. therefore, the university is confused and difficult to meet the requirements of

the process. During the NDPs appraisal sessions, stakeholder engagement and their role are also unclear in the current process.

For the process procedures, research results show that the whole process is cumbersome with many steps and takes a lot of time. In some cases, it takes almost 2 years to get a program's approval. Respondents said that the approval process should take about 6 months, and the approval agency should have feedback to the university in the process of processing the application. Besides, the application of IT in the NDP process has a lot of agreement from the researcher.

In addition, research results also show that the state is lacking many policies to govern and support universities in the development of NDPs such as policies to encourage open NDPs, policies to develop leadership, policies to manage and improve NDPs after being approved or punished for poor quality programs, policies that prioritize the use of IT in the approval process.

*For the internal university governance*

The current process has not yet played the role of the academic board in universities. The study shows the academic board is not yet competent enough to make NDPs development-related decisions. Their opinions are more contributory than participating in the decision-making process. Respondents expect the academic board to be the one that holds the decision to develop the NDPs

For internal process procedures, the comments are that the process is multi-step and takes a lot of time, especially the proposal writing phase. The comments said that the university should have specific provisions on the time to write a proposal to ensure the NDPs development process is on time. In addition, the universities lack the consulting opinion of enterprises as an input parameter for the development of NDPs. Like the application process to MOET, it is expected that universities should apply information technology in the NDPs approval process. The findings also suggested stakeholders participate in NDPs appraisal sessions such as the university's leader, professional community, faculty/school, deans of faculty, and enterprise. Meanwhile, the rate of the local government official as a member of the meeting is low (35.78%).

For managerial issues, the findings also indicate that the university is lacking many policies to support the development of NDPs such as rewarding policies, NDPs quality maintenance policies, human resource development, and finance policies. policies to attract foreign professors to work for universities as well as policies to prioritize the use of information technology in the NDPs approval process.

For managerial issues, the findings also indicate that the university is lacking many policies to support the development of NDPs such as rewarding policies, NDPs quality maintenance policies, human resource development, and finance policies, policies to attract foreign professors to work for universities as well as policies to prioritize the use of information technology in the NDPs approval process. In addition, the results

also show some difficulties for universities in developing NDPs such as lack of financial resources, lack of market information to develop NDPs, and special attention to the strategic formulation of NDPs in the university's overall strategy.

In addition, the research found out capabilities that are essential for university leaders. There are strategic vision, the mindset of innovation, ability to seize opportunities, network-developing, ability to manage and allocate the financial and human resources.

Findings from interviews and surveys will be discussed in the next chapter to well-understand the nature of these fallings of the process, and from that the research will propose recommendations to improve the current situation, contributing the university innovation and development.

## **Chapter 6 : DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. Overview of the chapter**

From the findings of the research presented in Chapters 4 and 5, this chapter presents the picture of NDP governance processes and procedures with issues related to the relationship between the government (as the principal) and the university (as the agent) in the formation of NDPs at the universities. Then, the research works on linking the story of NDP governance processes and procedures with the Agency theory to identify agency problems that need to be improved. Finally, the research proposes solutions that can be applied to reform the NDP governance in Vietnamese universities.

### **2. NDP governance processes and procedures story under the framework of agency theory**

The agency theory framework states that the good relationship between the principal and agent is a situation that the principals grant authorities, appoint tasks and pay money for the agents to make the best interests of the principals. The agents, taking authority, tasks, and money, have the responsibility to meet the principal expectations and ensure their best interests (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). In the higher education section, Kivisto (2015) said that the government-university relationship can be characterized as a good agency relationship when it satisfies three factors, namely, (a) tasks that the government assigns to a university; (b) resources and conditions that the government distributes to a university to implement tasks; and (c) proper mechanisms

that the government monitors the accomplishment of the tasks by universities. Agency problem – *defined as the possibility of opportunistic behavior on the agent's party that works against the welfare of the principals* (Kovisto, 2008, p.342) can appear if the goal conflicts and information asymmetry (Moe, 1984; Waterman & Meier, 1998) are constituted, and this lead to less governance which possibility of opportunity behaviors of the universities that work against the interest of the government. In this situation, the government cannot directly manage the universities' actions and the universities are pursuing their own interests, ignoring the goals and demands of the government.

In the case of Vietnamese universities, the government wants the universities to introduce NDPs to meet the market needs. Observation of the NDP governance processes and procedures via interviews was substantiated by the survey showed the agency problems that appeared in the NDP governance and are presented in the following section.

Findings indicate that the Government and MOET are responsible for NDP governance in Vietnamese universities. In order to govern the new degree programs, the Government issues Circular 22 that regulates the process of new degree program development and approval, and all universities in Vietnam are requested to comply if they want to get an approval of NDPs. Circular 22 is considered as the legal document for new program development and approval in which the role of the Government and MOET is to approve the new programs. They set the authority of decision-making, regulations, procedures, and policies.

2.1. The system indicated the government centralized controls NDPs at the universities

The findings claimed that the procedures and processes centralized control in the government for approval even where it would appear to have been delegated to VNUs and RVUs, still in the hands of the MOET. In practice, for more than 400 universities (230 are public universities), the government keeps the authority to approve each NDP at each university. This situation arises the fact that the current governance not only delays the progress of the introduction of NDPs but also appears to conflicts of interests between the government and the university. While the government claims that the universities have to follow governance processes and procedures set by the State in their operations, the universities believe that extent of university autonomy, especially academic freedom is their interest and they have authority to make the decision. The delays of the processes by the centralization and the goal conflicts between the government and the universities lead to the less NDPs approved at the universities.

2.2. The system did not provide enough policies and incentives for the universities of NDPs assist from the opportunity to introduce NDPs if approved

Agency theory states that good governance is a situation where the government assigns tasks to the universities and delegates the resources and conditions for the universities

to accomplish their tasks. Findings showed that the system is lacking incentives, guidelines that encourage the universities to introduce the NDPs.

Governance is not only set processes to guide the university's activities but also set policies and incentives to govern and motivate universities in their operations to ensure that universities gain performance well as align the goals of the government and the universities. However, both the State and universities are lacking policies to support the NDP development in short and long terms such as policies to attract and retain the high-professional faculty members; policies to diversify the financial resource for universities; policies to train university leadership; policies motivate the application of technology information on governance and management through the submission and approval process, and policies to maintain the quality of NDPs after they were approved. As for incentives, both the government and the universities have not yet issued guidelines and incentives to encourage the universities to form NDPs. ; lack of policies to maintain the quality of NDPs after they are approved;

Thus, lacking incentives can contribute to making behavior on the party of universities that are ignoring the government's goals

### 2.3. Inclusion of stakeholders in the process is not clear in attendance and authority

Findings from the research indicate that the inclusion of stakeholders is not clear. In other ways, the government has not regulated participants who are responsible for the

process. In addition, the voices and the degree of the authority of the participants, especially the academic board addressed in the interviews that expect that the academic board should be the party that takes part in the making-decision process.

2.4. The interviews indicate the areas of dissatisfaction with the governance procedures for NDPs to be approved

NDP governance processes are requesting so many requirements for a NDP formation. The State regulates NDP Approval Process which have disparities against expectation from the universities in terms of internal and external processes' requirements. Findings said the process has so many requirements and they are unclear and difficult for universities to meet such as the number of faculty members, facility, and proposal's content.

For inter-disciplinary programs, results said that these programs are a current trend in universities around the world while the State of Vietnam is slow in the process of promoting this kind of program. The current NDP approval process governed by the State lacks criteria to develop these programs. For the NDPs which are not in the list of national programs, requirements are very difficult for universities to meet.

2.5. The survey findings show there are areas where the processes lead to behaviors that detract from the government's goals

### 2.5.1. Process complexity and cumbersomeness with many steps

The new program development and approval process consists of two stages, called the internal process and the external process. In particular, the internal process is the process of the development and submission of the NDP proposal to MOET. These activities are done by the university. The external process is the process of the NDP proposal approval. After the university submits the new program proposal to MOET, MOET organizes a council to approve through the meeting session. In each internal and external process, there are a lot of steps described in diagrams 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 in this chapter. In general, the processes are quite cumbersome and administrative even though the internal process is the one which the universities themselves prescribed depending on the Circular 22 issued by MOET.

### 2.5.2. Insufficient resources and support to the universities (agents) for work to be done

Agency theory points that along with assigning tasks to the universities (agents), the government (principal) should distribute the resources to the universities. However, findings from the research released that the universities have not enough well-trained staff to develop the proposal and qualified faculty members to develop NDPs. In addition, findings also showed that the universities is insufficient money to form NDPs.

2.5.3. Information asymmetry is a cause of agency problem and this is the case in the surgery and interviews

the interviewees also said that they were having trouble with the forecasting data of occupational and human resource needs in the market context. Currently, the government or local authorities have not well performed this data, so the university is quite confused in deciding to develop new training programs to meet market requirements.

Interviewees 1 commented:

“... the State or the MOET should do well in the country's human resource planning and career needs in the coming years. If yes, the university will do better in training human resources to meet market demands...”.

2.5.4. The length of the decision-making process is too long

The time taken for the approval process is long. As a rule, the approval period (from submission to approval) is 30 days. However, many proposals take 6-12 months and maybe 2 years to get approval.

Interviewee 1 said that

“... the approval process is too time-consuming. Universities opening NDPs want to start enrollment in the same year the programs are opened. However, in reality, enrollment cannot be initiated until the next year. To ensure the timescale, the universities, therefore, should actively plan one year ahead...”

Interviewee 15 also complained about the time for the approval process

“... the approval time is too long, hence not meeting the urgent demand for training and human resources for the society. In fact, current regulations are very strict, so universities have to prepare sufficient proof, thus prolonging the approval time...”

#### 2.5.5. Submission is not productive

Currently, to apply for a new program, faculties or schools submit their applications to the university by printing around 20 copies. Each set of files is over 500 pages. Copying documents is a waste of money and effort. After the meeting ended, the storage of documents also encountered difficulties in cabinets and document storage space, not to mention the risk of management and toxic paper materials. The submission of the proposal of new programs to MOET is also in the paper, so the cost of transporting documents increases.

As such, the current paper-based submission is affecting the quality of the process of developing and approving new training programs and wasting money, time, and human resources.

#### 2.5.6. Lack of feedback

One of the important issues in the approval process is the lack of feedback from the approval council. According to the current process, universities must submit their

proposals to MOET and wait for the final decision. They are not allowed to attend the approval meeting, and in case the new program is not approved, the university also does not have information on how to improve the proposal. Informants claimed that the universities' participation, comments, and feedback in the approval meetings are essential for universities to explain clearly and finalize their proposals.

The existing agency problems inside the current NDP governance processes and procedures show that the governance and decision-making process by the government are the issues that are hindering universities to attempt in the formation of NDPs to respond market needs. Consequently, being unwilling of the universities to develop NDPs affects the economic development of the country as well as the belief of the people on the university responsibility to society.

### **3. Recommendations**

Examination of the views, beliefs, and experiences of Vietnamese respondents from the different kinds of universities about the government and university governance on developing and approving the process of new degree program indicates problems in the current process. The problems point to low-quality practices in the formation of the introduction of new programs in Vietnamese universities to meet market needs. New programs are considered as innovations of universities as well as university responsibility to society. However, the current governance mechanisms at both the government and university levels on new program development and approval reduce

the innovation and willingness of the universities in the formation of NDPs. Hence, both the State and university capacity must be improved and shifted.

In addition, the adoption of Western ideas of the NDP process requires the adoption of governance practices to fit. The adoption of practices to a limited extent cripples the university's ability to meet local needs. In addition, centralization in a Communist country has its merits but the controls may need to be relaxed and this might require a revisit of governance of the State and MOET over universities. From that, the findings from the research point to issues in the processes and procedures that constitute the NDP governance. They point to areas for improvement.

<u>Governance Aspect</u>	<u>Resultant Behaviour</u>	<u>Recommendations</u>
Centralization of the approval process	Lack of ownership of NDP	<p>Engagement of the university stakeholders.</p> <p>The State reduces the centralization of the NDP process. Meanwhile, the State develops effective oversight mechanisms of the university's performance with a clear key performance index</p> <p>The State should develop educational national standards, educational</p>

		quality framework, and national strategies for education and training.
Lack of policies and incentives for universities to introduce NDPs	No motivation and no determination on the progress of NDP formation from the universities and faculties	Development of policies, incentives, and guidelines that support and encourage the universities in the formation of NDPs
Lack of clarity in the role of stakeholders in the process. It is not clear how they are to participate and what authority they had.	<p>Less accountability for the quality of comments on the proposals from the participants.</p> <p>The unclear role and authority of the academic board directly and indirectly limited their potential contribution to the proposals.</p>	<p>The inclusion of stakeholders at the meetings of the processes needs to clarify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- External NDP process: enterprise, professor community, Quality Assurance Agency, and University/School;</li> <li>- Internal NDP process: university leaders, professor community, Dean of Faculties, Head of Departments, and enterprises</li> </ul> <p>Revisit the role and responsibility of the academic board in the process</p>
So many requirements that the universities have to meet to form NDPs	Afraid of proposing NDPs because the universities face difficulties at the	NDP Process should be designed on the base which depends on market

	beginning steps of the processes	demands rather than the State administrative procedures. In addition, the NDP process should be based on the alignment of the goals of the State with the university to gain higher objectives of the State and university.
Process complexity and cumbersomeness with many steps	Frustration & decision not to submit a proposal	Simplify procedures and reduce steps of the processes
Insufficient resources and support to agents for work to be done	Inability to develop proposals	Development of policies to attract high-professional human resources; policies to innovate the recruitment and appointment processes of leaders; and policies to enhance leader and staff's capabilities.  Implementation of training courses for leadership development and staff's proposal writing skills  The State distributes the universities mechanisms so that they can diversify

		financial resource for the university development
Information asymmetry – lack of clarity on the criteria, information flows unidirectionally upwards but not bi-directional; lack of information about the employment demands	Procrastination and decision not to submit proposals	<p>Make requirements simpler, clearer and suitable for the university’s conditions</p> <p>Need to clarify criteria to develop inter-disciplinary programs and those not in the list of national degree programs</p> <p>The State should develop data center that provides information concerning employment and human resource demands</p>
Length of the decision-making process is too long	No motivation to develop NDPs	<p>Reduce the time of the decision-making process.</p> <p>Time taken from the submission to approval process keeps less than 6 months for one NDP</p>
Paper-based submission is not effective	Reluctant to submit proposals	Application of technology advances on the NDP process governance

Lack of feedback - no information on reasons for rejection or areas for improvement	Owing to the lack of feedback on the subsequent steps, the universities feel unexcited and bored in the process of NDP development.	Redesign of the processes that feedback from the authority should be provided for the universities for improvement.
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#### 4. Further research

These findings have revealed several areas that are in need of additional research. This research suggests that it is necessary to study more issues concerning university governance, especially issues raised from the research such as an effective internal university governance model and the role of the academic board. From that, directions for further research will mention as follow.

- **Internal governance structure of the university:**

In the lens of the framework of agency theory, this research found out agency problems raised from the relationship between the government and university on the NDP governance. However, findings from the research presented that the faculty is one of the core units that is accountable for developing the NDP proposal. Therefore, the need to study the relationship between parties that constitute the internal university governance such as executive board (principal) and faculty (agent) is essential for NDP governance improvement.

- **Academic Board:**

This research raised the view that the academic board keeps the authority to approve NDPs. However, in practice as well as the awareness of universities, this unit is considered as the advisory role rather than decision-making role in the process of NDPs. Therefore, further research should make brighten the role and responsibility of this unit in the relationship between the university council, academic board, and executive board as well as the contribution of this unit to the quality of the NDP approval process.

- **Expansion of research sample to different types of the university:**

The higher education system in Vietnam is including public and private universities. This research examines the public universities as the objects for study. Therefore, it is necessary to expand research to private universities to better understand the effect of the government governance on the process as well as how the private universities respond to the current processes, even though these universities still follow Circular 22. From that, the suggestion for the reform of the processes and university innovation is preciser and more effective.

## **5. Conclusion of the chapter**

This chapter presents the story of the NDP Process drawn from research findings as well as Vietnamese public documents. At the same time, in the line with Agency theory, the research also proposed recommendations to solve existing problems in the process and meet the expectations of stakeholders involved in the NDP process.

However, for these recommendations to become a reality, it is necessary to have specific activities from both the university and the State. The next chapter will present activities that both the State and universities commit to transfer suggestions into practice, contributing to university governance innovation, creating more NDPs to serve market needs.

## **Chapter 7 : CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS**

### **1. Overview of the chapter**

The previous chapter analyzed the relationship between the government and the universities in the NDP governance in Vietnamese universities and suggested recommendations to innovate the NDP governance, forming many NDPs. However, in order for recommendations to be put into practice and promote efficiency in the formation of NDPs to meet social requirements, both the government and the university need to take decisive actions.

This chapter presents the actions that the government and universities need to do for the NDP process to be implemented effectively, creating many NDPs to meet market demands as well as asserting university responsibility to society.

### **2. Steps needed from the Government and University for the NDP governance processes and procedures to be implemented effectively**

*For the University*

1. The effective internal university governance process and procedures
  - Based on the framework of agency theory, not only the government and university relationship, but also the university council, executive board and faculty relationship also affects the NDP governance. Therefore, the

universities should organize seminars and conferences to insightfully understand and reform the relationship and communications of parties in the internal governance structure of the university, especially in the situation that the public universities have the communist party in their organization.

- Examining the role and responsibility of the Academic Board in the NDP governance processes and procedures.
2. Need to complete the university policies
    - Development of reward, encouragement, and punishment policies to support the formation of the NDPs.
    - Redesign of the NDP governance process based on the alignment the goals of the the State with universities in relation to market demands.
  3. Development of short and long-term university strategy to optimize resources for university development in general and NDPs development in particular.
  4. Diversification of financial resources for university development through responsibility-shared cooperation among universities and business enterprises in training, research, and engagement.
  5. Enhancement of leader university leadership and staff's skills
    - Improving university leadership capabilities and skills through training courses in Vietnam and foreign countries. Paying attention to capabilities such as strategic vision, a mindset of innovation, ability to manage and allocate the human and finance resources, ability to develop

the national and global network, ability to seize the opportunities, understanding of Vietnamese law and regulations.

- Enhancing the staff's capacity in writing NDP proposals and university policies
6. Development of policy that applies technology advances on the internal and external NDP governance processes and procedures

*For the Government*

1. National policy system:
- Continue completing the institutional system for university governance in the direction of increasing university autonomy and social responsibility (Law, Decree and Circular, Regulation, and so on).
  - Developing national standards on education quality, the national strategy of education.
  - Developing an oversight mechanism of universities' performance, especially the quality of NDPs after they are approved.
  - Building national mechanisms of reward, encouragement, and punishment to support the implementation of the NDP process.
  - Developing data center that shares information relating to national education and employment so that the universities have enough materials to open NDPs.

- Redesign of the NDP governance processes and procedures in the manner that the State reduces the centralization on the NDP processes and increases the alignment of the goals of the State with universities in formation of NDPs.
  - Innovating methods of the government policy formulation in which paying attention to the consultation of stakeholders in the progress of the national policy development (for example, Circular 22).
2. Building a roadmap for university governance innovation in areas of academic autonomy, financial autonomy, staff autonomy, and organizational autonomy.
  3. Reforming financial mechanism which the universities are allowed to generate money from legal financial resources to develop universities
  4. Reforming the leadership appointment process towards competition and transparency; Building KPI as the tool for assessing the university leadership's ability
  5. Leadership development for university leaders through training courses
  6. Application of technology advances on university governance and NDP processes

### **3. Limitations of the research**

Research also found out some limitations that partly affected the research results.

Limitation of types of universities. There are two different types of universities including public and private ones (Vietnam, 2012, 2014). In this research, the researcher takes into account only the public universities. Therefore, more studying NDP Processes in private universities is necessary for the innovation of the process.

Limitation of the number of universities and geography. There are around 230 Vietnamese public universities nationwide. But in this study, only around ten universities which are located in Ho Chi Minh City, Hue City, and An Giang Province used to collect data.

Limitation of types of semi-structured interview informants and survey respondents. This study only focuses on and examines the perspectives of educators, educational managers, policymakers, and does not take into consideration the views of other stakeholders such as industry, employers, students, and graduates.

Limitations from the coronavirus pandemic. The survey happened in the period time of the coronavirus outbreak. All universities in Vietnam were required to close the doors, and deans and members of faculty were away from their office. Therefore, the collection of survey data was challenging. It took more time to liaise with respondents.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Through the research methods including literature review, semi-structured interviews, and survey, the research provided findings of the government governance on the developing and approving process of new degree programs in Vietnamese public universities.

University governance structure includes the external and internal governance in which external university governance is how the State governs the university and internal university governance is the manner that the university governing body governs the university's activities. There are different models that the State governs the university such as centralization and decentralization, or state-controlled and state-supervised. The choice of university governance model depends on the political and economic situation of each country.

In Vietnam, the State centralizes universities through enacting Law on the Higher Education and Degrees which the State comprehensively manages education and training activities at universities, including the NDP processes. Exploring the current NDP governance, findings from the research pointed out the governance of the State on the NDP by issuing Circular 22 with the legislative authority, requirements, and process procedures while the universities are requested to follow this process. The centralization by the State on the NDP Approval process makes inconsistencies in the progress of forming NDPs at the universities while the universities need autonomy to decide issues of their educational activities to meet local demands. The research found out agency problems of the government governance that affects the NDP process in the

areas of the approval authority, uncertain requirements, complicated and cumbersome procedures, lack of policies to support the implementation of the NDP process.

After highlighting areas in need of improvement in the NDP governance process and university governance in Vietnam, the research provided suggestions for improvement as well as steps that the government and university need to do so that the suggestions come into the practice. Therefore, the research has effectively contributed to the State in the adjustment of university governance policy, building effective university management processes. At the same time, through the research results, university leaders have a better understanding of the current NDP process, and set up activities to improve the process, innovate the internal university governance to achieve success.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Brief introduction of the typology of the Vietnam public university system

#### 1) The public university system in Vietnam

Public HE system in VN	National Universities	Regional Universities	Regular Universities	Excellent Universities
<b>The number of universities</b>	02 (Vietnam National University – Hanoi and Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh city)	03 (the University of Thai Nguyen, University of Hue and University of Danang)	Around 212	03 (Vietnam-German University, Vietnam-Japan University, and Vietnam-France University)
<b>Governance structure</b>	<pre> graph TD     G1[Government] --&gt; VNU[VNUs]     VNU --&gt; MU1[Member Universities]     MU1 --&gt; DF1[Departments/Faculties]             </pre>	<pre> graph TD     G2[Government] --&gt; MOET1[MOET]     MOET1 --&gt; RU[Regional Universities]     RU --&gt; MU2[Member Universities]     MU2 --&gt; DF2[Departments/Faculties]             </pre>	<pre> graph TD     G3[Government] --&gt; MOET2[MOET and/or parent Ministries]     MOET2 --&gt; U1[Universities]     U1 --&gt; DF3[Departments/Faculties]             </pre>	<pre> graph TD     G4[Government] --&gt; MOET3[MOET]     MOET3 --&gt; U2[Universities]     U2 --&gt; DF4[Departments/Faculties]             </pre>

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## 2) Classification of public universities in Vietnam

#	Type of higher education institutions	Quantity	Description	Classification of governance and management
1	Vietnam National University (VNU)	02	<p>The Government established two National Universities in 1996 with a multi-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary university model that is the flagship of higher education in Vietnam, integrating into the international higher education system. There are VNU Ho Chi Minh City and VNU Hanoi.</p> <p>VNU Hanoi has 7 member universities, and VNUHCM has 6 member universities.</p> <p>The National University - Ho Chi Minh City offers training courses and research in five areas: natural sciences, social science, and humanities, science and technology, management science - economics - law, health sciences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Under the direct governance by the Prime Minister's cabinets.</li> <li>- Prime Minister appoints the chairman of the university council; President and board members of President.</li> <li>- President of VNU appoints Rectors of member universities.</li> <li>- Rector of the member universities appoints Deans of Faculties and Director of Departments.</li> <li>- University operations under the Law on Higher Education, Charter for Higher Education and Decree of National University (high autonomy in training and research compared to other types of universities)</li> </ul>

2	Regional University	03	<p>The Government established three regional universities - Thai Nguyen, Hue, and Da Nang with the aim of investment priority.</p> <p>Three regional universities have the responsibilities to supply a good quality workforce for their own region.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Under the governance by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET)</li> <li>- Minister of MOET appoints leaders of regional universities</li> <li>- Rectors of universities appoint Deans of faculties and Director of Departments</li> <li>- University operations under the Law on Higher Education and Charter for Higher Education</li> </ul>
3	Regular University	around 212	<p>The government established these universities nationwide to teach human resources, contributing to economic and social development in localities and the country.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shared governance by MOET, other line ministers, and province authorities.</li> <li>- Minister of MOET appoints leaders of regular universities</li> <li>- Rectors of universities appoint Deans of faculties and Director of Departments</li> <li>- University operations under the Law on Higher Education and Charter for Higher Education</li> </ul>
4	Excellent university	03	<p>The government established the excellent universities based on the cooperation between the Vietnam government and other foreign Governments with a viewpoint of developing an excellent higher education model and international standards.</p> <p>Example:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Under the governance by the MOET</li> <li>- MOET appoints leaders of the universities with approval from the German side</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vietnam German University (VGU) was established on the cooperation between the Government of Vietnam and the Government of Germany.</li> <li>- Vietnam Japan University (VJU) was established based on the cooperation between the Government of Vietnam and the Government of Japan</li> <li>- Hanoi University of Science and Technology was established based on the cooperation between the Government of Vietnam and the Government of France.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training and research operations following the Vietnam and German Standards</li> </ul>
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Source: MOET-Vietnam (2016, 2017).

Appendix B: Interview Questions - Pilot Study and Semi-structured Face-to-Face Interview

**A. Demographics**

Please stick to the most appropriate box below

- 1. Gender:      a. Male                            b. Female
- 2. The highest qualification
  - a. Bachelor's degree
  - b. Master's degree
  - c. Doctorate
  - d. Other, please specify .....
- 3. Your current position
  - a. University Council
  - b. Leadership of university
  - c. Departmental manager
  - d. Deanship of faculty
  - e. Other, please specify .....
- 4. Your age
  - a. 30 and below
  - b. From 31 to 39
  - c. From 40 to 49
  - d. 50 and above
- 5. How many years have you been working for university?
  - a. Less than 5 years
  - b. 6 to 10 years
  - c. 11 to 15 years
  - d. More than 15 years
- 6. How many years have you been holding current managerial positions?
  - a. Up to 2 years
  - b. From 2 to 5 years
  - c. From 6 to 10 years
  - d. More than 11 years

**B. Interview Questions**

- 1. If your university wants to open a new degree program to respond to the market, would it be possible?

2. Who made decisions to approve a new degree program from university?
3. What would the approval process involve?
4. How long to introduce a new degree program?
5. Have there been examples where your university wanted to introduce a new program but was unable so?
  - a. What happened?
  - b. What were the reasons for these?
6. To what extent did the approval process affect the introduction of the new program?
7. If you had opportunities to make the approval process better, what would you recommend?
8. Why do you think so?
  
9. What/Who are the parties involved in the approval process for a new degree program at your university?
10. What is the decision-making process?
  - a. How many rounds or levels are there in the decision-making process?
  - b. How the fast to approve of a new one?
11. Have there been difficulties where the internal approval process is facing at your university?
  - a. What are they?
  - b. What were the reasons for these?
12. How does the internal approval process affect the introduction of a new degree program?
13. Have there been instances where another university does not agree with the introduction of a new initiative by another department or school?
  - a. What happened?
  - b. How are such instances resolved?
14. If you had the opportunity to change things, what changes would you suggest?
15. Why do you suggest these?
16. How to bring these suggestions into reality?

We have spoken about the external and internal approval processes. We have identified issues and suggested changes. And now, let's us to explore the role of the decision-makers.

17. How do decision-makers or leaders contribute to the approval processes for both the external and internal processes?
18. What is the experience or capabilities of decision-makers at your university?
19. Have there been other capabilities which make effective and dynamic decision-makers?
  - a. What are they?
  - b. Why do you think these capabilities are essential for the decision-makers?
20. What needs to happen before things improve?

## Appendix C: IRB Approval of Research (Semi-structured interviews)

SMU Classification: Restricted



14 August 2019

LE Thi Anh Tram  
SMU Student  
Lee Kong Chian School of Business

Dear Tram,

**IRB APPROVAL OF RESEARCH**

**CATEGORY 2A:**

**Title of Research:**

**Expedited Review**

**University governance and new programme development:  
an examination of effects of the governance structure on  
innovation**

**SMU-IRB Approval Number:**

**IRB-19-074-A071(819)**

Thank you for your IRB application for the above research that we received the latest revised copy on 13 August 2019.

I am pleased to let you know that, based on the description of the research in your IRB application, the IRB has determined that your research falls under Category 2A and has approved your application.

Please note the following:

1. Indicate the above SMU-IRB approval number in all your correspondence with the IRB on this research.
2. If any adverse events or unanticipated problems involving human subjects occur during the course of the research project, you must complete in full the SMU-IRB Unanticipated Problem/Adverse Events Report Form (see SMU-IRB website) and submit it to the SMU-IRB within 24 hours of the event.
3. If you plan to modify your original protocol that was approved by the SMU-IRB, you must complete in full the SMU-IRB Protocol Modification Request Form (see SMU-IRB website) and submit it to the SMU-IRB to seek approval before implementing any modified protocol.
4. This IRB approval for your research is valid for one year (12 months) from the date of this letter. If you plan to extend your research project beyond one year from the date of the IRB approval, you must submit a request to renew the research protocol using the Continuing Review Form (see SMU-IRB website) or Protocol Modification Request Form **prior to the IRB approval expiry date**.
5. Please be reminded to be compliant with Singapore's Personal Data Protection laws in carrying out your research activities.

If you have any queries, please contact the IRB Secretariat at [irb@smu.edu.sg](mailto:irb@smu.edu.sg) or telephone +65 6828-1925.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Chen", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Christopher Chen  
Member  
Institutional Review Board

## Appendix D: Questionnaire Survey

We are very pleased to thank you for participating in the survey.

We are conducting the survey which seeks your views on the process of development and approval of new degree programs in Vietnam universities. It consists of 41 questions in total. It will take approximately 40 minutes to complete. Please read the instructions carefully before answering each question.

### 1. Demographics

Please stick to the most appropriate box below

1.1. Gender: a. Male  b. Female

1.2. The highest qualification

- e. Bachelor's degree
- f. Master's degree
- g. Doctorate
- h. Other,   
Please specify .....

1.3. Your current position

- i. University leader
- j. Staff
- k. Faculty
- l. Department
- m. Other   
Please specify .....

1.4. How many years have you been working for university?

- a. Less than 5 years
- b. 6 to 10 years
- c. 11 to 15 years
- d. More than 15 years

1.5. How many years have you been holding managerial positions?

- a. Not yet
- b. Up to 2 years
- c. From 2 to 5 years
- d. From 6 to 10 years
- e. More than 11 years

2. Kindly indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements about new programme development at your university. Please indicate on the scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

2.1.	There are too many steps in the process of new programmer development.	1	2	3	4	5
2.2.	New programme development is not something our university has engaged in the strategy before.	1	2	3	4	5
2.3.	The academic board has not given sufficient authority to make final decisions on developing new education programs.	1	2	3	4	5
2.4.	We do not consult with industry leaders and consider their inputs in our new programme development.	1	2	3	4	5
2.5.	Time taken for development of proposal is too long.	1	2	3	4	5
2.6.	Our university need more rules to keep time of proposal development process on time.	1	2	3	4	5
2.7.	We are not satisfied with paper-based proposal submission.	1	2	3	4	5
2.8.	We are lacking available information in market demand for development work of new programs.	1	2	3	4	5
2.9.	Our university needs more financial resources to carry on the necessary steps in new program development.	1	2	3	4	5
2.10.	We have enough trained staff to develop new programs	1	2	3	4	5
2.11.	We have professors for new programs which meet market demand	1	2	3	4	5
2.12.	We are rewarded for developing new education programmes.	1	2	3	4	5
2.13.	Our university has policy to maintain the quality of new programs after their approval and implementation.	1	2	3	4	5
2.14.	We lack incentives to attract international professors to work at our university.	1	2	3	4	5
2.15.	Our university should introduce a web-based system for new program submissions.	1	2	3	4	5
2.16.	An online system should be developed for the review and approval of new program submissions as our university's new programme approval process	1	2	3	4	5
2.17.	The following individuals should be involved in our university new programme development process.					
	Representative of the University's leaders.	1	2	3	4	5

	Representative of the local government officials.	1	2	3	4	5
	Representative of the professional community	1	2	3	4	5
	Representative of Faculty/School which is submitting the proposal	1	2	3	4	5
	Representative of Faculties' heads	1	2	3	4	5
	Representative of Departments' heads.	1	2	3	4	5
	Representative of enterprise.	1	2	3	4	5
2.18.	The following capabilities which is essential for university leaders					
	Strategic vision	1	2	3	4	5
	Mindset of innovation	1	2	3	4	5
	Ability to seize opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
	Ability to seize threats	1	2	3	4	5
	Comprehensive understanding of Vietnamese laws and regulations	1	2	3	4	5
	Ability to develop the national and global networking	1	2	3	4	5
	Proficient in English language	1	2	3	4	5
	Ability to manage and allocate the financial and human resources to meet the strategy.	1	2	3	4	5

3. In this section, we turn our attention to the approval process of new programs developed by your university by the higher authorities such as the Ministry of Education and Training. Please as before indicate your agreement and disagreement using the scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

3.1.	There are too many requirements placed by the State for new programme development by the universities	1	2	3	4	5
3.2.	The state requirements lack of clarity on criteria to open new interdisciplinary programs.	1	2	3	4	5
3.3.	Our university has difficulties in human resource to develop new interdisciplinary programs according to the state requirements.	1	2	3	4	5
3.4.	Our university faces a lot of hindrances (time, human and financial resources) to develop new programs if they are not in the list of national programs.	1	2	3	4	5
3.5.	The approval process from the time of submission to approval is too long.	1	2	3	4	5
3.6.	The approval process for new program development should not take more than six months.	1	2	3	4	5

3.7.	Approving the new programs by the State makes tardiness in the introduction of new programs at the universities.	1	2	3	4	5
3.8.	The authority has not given sufficient feedback on the proposal submitted.	1	2	3	4	5
3.9.	The State lacks policies to manage the approved new programs.	1	2	3	4	5
3.10.	The State has incentive policies which encourage the universities to develop new programs.	1	2	3	4	5
3.11.	Universities are not penalized by the State for introducing poor-quality programs.	1	2	3	4	5
3.12.	The State must take advantages of the advances in IT and the internet to introduce an online system for the submission and approval of new degree programs.	1	2	3	4	5
3.13.	The State has not performed well the role of forecasting the country's human and professional demands.	1	2	3	4	5
3.14.	The State should develop a policy which manages the new program development and approval process via an online system.	1	2	3	4	5
3.15.	The State should develop the policy to enhance the university leader's capabilities.	1	2	3	4	5
3.16.	The approval process will increase effectiveness if the State empowers the university authority to approve the new programs.	1	2	3	4	5
3.17.	The following board should be responsible for approving new programs at our university					
	University council board	1	2	3	4	5
	University academic board	1	2	3	4	5
	University president board	1	2	3	4	5
3.18.	The following individuals should be involved in new programme approval process.					
	Representative of enterprise	1	2	3	4	5
	Representative of the Ministry of education and training	1	2	3	4	5
	Representative of professor community	1	2	3	4	5
	Representative of Quality Assurance Agency.	1	2	3	4	5
	Representative of the university which submits the proposal.	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you very much for your cooperation in completing the questionnaire

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## Appendix E: IRB Approval of Research (Survey)

SMU Classification: Restricted



6 March 2019

LE Thi Anh Tram  
SMU Student  
Lee Kong Chian School of Business

Dear Tram,

**IRB PROTOCOL MODIFICATION REQUEST APPROVAL  
CATEGORY 2A: EXPEDITED REVIEW**

**Title of Research:** The effects of university governance structure on new programme development and approval process in Vietnamese universities  
**SMU-IRB Exemption/Approval Number:** IRB-19-074-A071(819)  
**SMU-IRB Modification Number:** IRB-19-074-A071-M1(320)

Thank you for your IRB Protocol Modification Request application for the above research in which we received the latest revised copy on 5 March 2020.

I am pleased to let you know that, the IRB has approved your application for the modification based on the description of modified research protocol stated in your Modification Request form.

Please note the following:

1. Indicate the above SMU-IRB approval number and SMU-IRB modification number in all your correspondence with the IRB on this research.
2. If any adverse events or unanticipated problems involving human subjects occur during the course of the research project, you must complete in full the SMU-IRB Unanticipated Problem/Adverse Events Report Form (see SMU-IRB website) and submit it to the SMU-IRB within 24 hours of the event.
3. If you plan to modify your original protocol that was approved by the SMU-IRB, you must complete in full the SMU-IRB Protocol Modification Request Form (see SMU-IRB website) and submit it to the SMU-IRB to seek approval before implementing any modified protocol.
4. This IRB approval for your modified protocol is valid one year from the date of this letter. For Expedited Review applications, if you plan to extend your research project beyond one year from the date of the IRB approval, you must submit a request to renew the research protocol using the Continuing Review Form (see SMU-IRB website) or Protocol Modification Request Form **prior to the IRB approval expiry date**. Please note that for Full Review applications, continuing review applications must be submitted and approved until the research study is closed (i.e., at least one research paper has been published or presented).
5. Please be reminded to be compliant with Singapore's Personal Data Protection laws in carrying out your research activities.

If you have any queries, please contact the IRB Secretariat at [irb@smu.edu.sg](mailto:irb@smu.edu.sg) or telephone +65 6828-1925.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Chen", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Christopher Chen  
Deputy Chair  
Institutional Review Board