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VIETNAM - U.S. EDUCATIONAL COOPERATION (2013-2023): FROM A NATIONAL TO AN INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

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Abstract: Reflecting on a decade of robust bilateral relations between Vietnam and the United States, we recognize a significant transition from a comprehensive partnership in 2013 to a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2023. Given the dynamics of globalization and international integration, an exploration of educational cooperation between our two nations is not only relevant but essential. This study clearly outlines key educational support programs, evaluates their tangible outcomes, and showcases specific case studies that highlight the vital roles and shared concerns of both countries. A case study involving collaboration between a Vietnamese university and its American counterparts vividly illustrates the various levels of successful international cooperation. This analysis lays a foundation for anticipating the future of Vietnam-U.S. collaboration in education, especially within tertiary institutions.

Keywords: cooperation, education, programs

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HỢP TÁC GIÁO DỤC VIỆT NAM - HOA KỲ (2013-2023): TỪ CẤP QUỐC GIA ĐẾN CƠ SỞ

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Tóm tắt: Nhìn lại một thập kỷ quan hệ song phương mạnh mẽ giữa Việt Nam và Hoa Kỳ, chúng tôi nhận thấy sự chuyển đổi đáng kể từ quan hệ đối tác toàn diện năm 2013 sang đối tác chiến lược toàn diện năm 2023. Trong xu thế toàn cầu hóa và hội nhập quốc tế, việc tìm hiểu về hợp tác giáo dục giữa Việt Nam với quốc gia có nền giáo dục hàng đầu thế giới, Hoa Kỳ, là đặc biệt cần thiết cho kế hoạch phát triển nền giáo dục nước nhà. Nghiên cứu này phác thảo các chương trình hỗ trợ giáo dục chính, tổng kết sơ bộ kết quả của các chương trình này và giới thiệu một số nghiên cứu trường hợp nhằm làm nổi bật vai trò của hợp tác giáo dục và những mối quan tâm chung của cả hai quốc gia. Điều này được cụ thể qua một nghiên cứu trường hợp về hợp tác giữa một trường đại học Việt Nam và các đối tác Hoa Kỳ nhằm minh họa kết quả hợp tác quốc tế ở các cấp độ khác nhau. Nghiên cứu cũng góp phần đặt nền tảng đề dự đoán tương lai của quan hệ hợp tác song phương Việt Nam - Hoa Kỳ trong lĩnh vực giáo dục, đặc biệt là tại các cơ sở giáo dục đại học.

Từ khóa: hợp tác, giáo dục, chương trình

1. Introduction

The United States of America (U.S.) has long been regarded as a global leader in education, setting a standard for many countries to emulate since the Second World War. On November 1, 1945, President Ho Chi Minh conveyed his aspirations in a letter to U.S. Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, expressing a desire to “send a delegation of about fifty young Vietnamese people to the U.S. to establish a close cultural relationship with American youth, while also promoting valuable research in engineering, agriculture, and other professional fields” (Nguyen, 2020).

However, it was not until the normalization of relations between the two nations in 1995 - signified by President Bill Clinton's visit to Vietnam National University Hanoi - that educational cooperation truly began to flourish. Since 1945, Vietnam has undergone significant national education reforms at critical junctures: 1945 (combating illiteracy); 1954 (establishing a national education system); 1975 (unifying education nationwide); 2000 (opening up for innovation and economic reform); and particularly 2013, with a focus on fostering the country's development and global integration (Phan, 2022).

As the relationship between Vietnam and the U.S. has evolved - from a comprehensive partnership in 2013 to a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2023 - this article highlights the educational reforms of the past decade, specifically focusing on collaboration with the U.S. The concept of strategic partnership originated in the private sector, and such partnerships are often characterized by informal arrangements and lower commitment costs, enabling partners to

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retain a greater degree of independence and flexibility (Wilkins, 2008, pp. 360-361, cited in Domingo & Misalucha-Willoughby, 2020, p. 7). In line with this perspective, we aim to identify key programs that exemplify educational cooperation between our two countries. We will also summarize the outcomes of these programs over the past decade, supported by case studies, including one that explores international cooperation initiatives at a Vietnamese university. In our conclusion, we will discuss the achievements, areas that need improvement, and the potential for future educational collaboration.

As reminded by Chan (2004), the massification of higher education in the 1960s and marketization have accelerated international university cooperation, leading to fierce competition and strategic alliances across national borders. Globalization has transformed time and space, allowing universities to operate across spatial-temporal boundaries (Chan, 2004). In our research on international university cooperation, we attempt to include understanding institutional linkages, strategies, and organizational structures through a case study of a university's educational cooperation.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Previous Studies on Vietnam-U.S. Educational Cooperation

Nguyen (2023a) explored the collaboration between the United States and Vietnam in higher education from 1995 to 2016. Her research identifies several mechanisms for this partnership, including state diplomatic visits, cultural diplomacy, and people-to-people initiatives, all facilitated by stakeholders such as international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and commercial entities. Nguyen's (2023a) thorough analysis of over 16 years of US-Vietnam higher educational cooperation underscores significant advancements in the quality of Vietnamese higher education, resulting in transformative changes in educational models, training methods, and increased autonomy for universities. While she asserts that this collaboration successfully meets the needs of both nations and exemplifies the broader trend of educational globalization—reflecting key aspects of U.S. diplomacy—she emphasizes the necessity of reassessing its effectiveness in today's dynamic regional and global contexts.

In the burgeoning social work field, officially recognized by the Vietnamese government in 2010, Hines et al. (2015) evaluated the Social Work Education Enhancement Programme (SWEET). Their findings highlight the program's pivotal role in strengthening Vietnam's undergraduate social work programs by improving instructional quality and enhancing the employability of graduates. The SWEET initiative shows efforts to enhance the curriculum, develop faculty expertise, and integrate advanced networking technologies in educational administration. However, Robbins (2013) shows some challenges in U.S.-Vietnam educational exchanges, reinforcing the urgent need for ongoing enhancement in this vital field.

Robbins (2013) highlights significant opportunities for Vietnamese students, emphasizing the impact of various U.S. initiatives, such as the Fulbright Programs and Vietnam Education Fund (VEF) Scholarships, designed to help Vietnam address its burgeoning demand for skilled human resources. Before the 1993 academic reforms, Vietnam boasted an innovative higher education system but required Western, particularly American, assistance to elevate its academic standards. This collaboration benefits both Vietnamese and American students who study abroad, allowing them to broaden their skills and knowledge (Robbins, 2013, p. 49). Additionally, these collaborations foster meaningful partnerships between American and Vietnamese institutions. Initiatives like the Fulbright School have effectively utilized this opportunity to provide Vietnamese students with education at home in areas that promote

personal and professional development (Robbins, 2013, p. 49).

Examining these studies reveals the numerous advantages of Vietnam-U.S. educational cooperation from diverse perspectives. However, it is essential to present an overview of how a decade of growth has transformed the bilateral relationship from a comprehensive partnership to a comprehensive strategic partnership in education. At this critical juncture, it is equally important to consider the insights and aspirations of highly educated professors, particularly those who have attained their Ph.D. through Vietnam-U.S. exchange programs, as their experiences can significantly shape future collaborations and expectations.

Studies on educational cooperation between the two countries reveal their shared interests in using education to fortify international relations. Following the enhancement of a strategic partnership in September 2023, these promising developments pave the way for enhanced collaboration in education, offering mutual benefits and opportunities for both nations to thrive together.

2.2. General Opportunities for Both Sides

2.2.1. Opportunities for the U.S.

Vietnam is on a transformative journey toward international integration through comprehensive educational reforms. This commitment is evident in the Vietnamese government's Decree 140/2017, which aims to attract and cultivate exceptional graduates and young scientists (Gia, 2023). Notably, in November 2023, Deputy Minister Nguyen Van Phuc, representing the Ministry of Education and Training, signed a pivotal Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Department of State concerning education and training collaboration (Ministry of Education and Training, 2023). This agreement represents both an opportunity for Vietnam and a strategic partnership for the U.S. in fostering innovation and talent.

2.2.2. Opportunities for Vietnam

Expanding on the existing collaboration, Vietnam has various opportunities at its disposal. As of 2022, over 30 educational cooperation initiatives and 50 joint training programs were successfully established with the United States (Nguyen, 2022). On September 21, 2022, education institutions and agencies from both nations formalized 10 cooperation agreements, signaling a robust commitment to mutual growth (Do, 2022).

Moreover, the U.S. government has launched several impactful educational exchange programs with Vietnam, including the prestigious Fulbright scholarship program, English language training for teachers, and the Leadership Initiative for Southeast Asian Youth Leaders initiated by President Barack Obama (Nhat, 2016). These programs enhance academic collaboration and empower Vietnam's youth, laying the foundation for a prosperous future. These partnerships are beneficial to both nations and foster a greater understanding between cultures.

3. Reality of Vietnam-U.S. Educational Cooperation (2013-2023)

3.1. Key Programs

Over the past decade, various initiatives have been launched to foster mutual understanding and strengthen the Vietnamese education system. Key among these are two primary sources of funding: the Vietnam Education Fund (VEF), supported by the U.S.

Congress since 2000, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which initiated its partnership in 2022 through a Memorandum of Understanding with Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training. These organizations are instrumental in financing numerous student and professional exchange programs and courses, highlighting the commitment to enhancing educational opportunities for all.

Table 1*The U.S. Initiatives to Support Vietnam's Education*

Year	Programmes	Purposes and activities
2000 2016 - 2020	Vietnam Education Fund (VEF)	U.S. Government's English Language Investment - Allocation of 5 million USD annually for postgraduate exchanges (Nhat, 2016) - Enhancement of English language skills through Fellowship and Fulbright programs. - Plans to invest VND in English language training and doctoral education. (Hoang, 2023)
Since 2009	Fellowship, Access (The U.S. Department of State's English Scholarship Program)	Training Vietnamese English Teachers for Improved English Skills: - American students and teachers participate in exchange programs (Do, 2022) - English learning opportunities for disadvantaged students (Nguyen, 2022)
2013 2024	Fulbright scholarship: -Fulbright Visiting Scholar -Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence Program	- US Master's Degree Scholarships - Fully funded scholarships for Master's degree holders. - Funds for 850 international academics from over 100 countries for post-doctoral research at American universities. - U.S. institutions can host Fulbright lecturers from abroad, preferring less involved, minority-serving colleges. (U.S. Government, 2024; United States Department of State, 2024)
2014	Fulbright University Vietnam	Being funded by the US Congress since 2014 to establish an "American-style university in Vietnam" (Fulbright University Vietnam, 2024)
	Global Undergraduate Exchange Program (Global UGRAD)	- One-semester scholarships for full-time, non-degree study that includes professional development, cultural enrichment, and community service (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs: Exchange Programs, 2024)
2013 2020	Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) YSEALI Academy	- Southeast Asia Leadership Enhancement - Boosting networking opportunities: Developing youth leadership; Strengthening U.S.-ASEAN ties; Executive education seminars on technology, public policy, and entrepreneurship (Fulbright University Vietnam, 2024)
2015	The BUILD - IT project	Budget-Driven Program Enhances Leadership Skills: Leverages government, private sector, and academic partners; Promotes university autonomy; Improves academic programs and teaching quality; Maintains long-term partnerships with the private sector (Nhat, 2023)
July 2020	Peace Program's English Teaching (Peace Corps.)	U.S. Volunteers Enhance English Proficiency in Rural Schools - Assist Vietnamese students in developing essential English communication skills. - Focus on improving speaking, listening, and reading skills.

		(Hoang, 2023; Viet, 2023)
Sept. 2022	The Ministry of Education and Training and the American Educational Testing Service (ETS)	Enhancing English Training and Testing in the Vietnamese Education System: - U.S. experts to provide advice. - Sharing experiences on testing activities. - Collaborative research and professional exchanges. (Hoang, 2023)
9/2022 2023	The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)	- Memorandum of Understanding on Development Support to Enhance the Quality of Vietnamese Higher Education (Viet, 2023; Hoang, 2023) - Providing practical support to strengthen higher education capacity through the BUILT-IT and PHER programs (Viet, 2023) - An investment of 15.4 million USD aimed at enhancing the higher education capacity of the Ministry of Education and Training. - Collaborating on a financial loan program to assist Vietnamese students. (Thai & Bat, 2023)
2022	PHER: the Higher Education Innovation Partnership project (through USAID)	USAID Funds USD 14.2 Million for Vietnam's Leading Universities (from 2022 to 2026) - To enhance education quality and management capacity - To make these universities modern higher education models (US Ambassador to Vietnam Marc Knapper in Lan, 2017; Thai & Bat, 2023)

All of these programs are initiated and funded by the U.S. government. While Vietnamese students are the primary beneficiaries, several professional exchange initiatives and research-based projects are also included in these programs. This impact is more clearly illustrated in the results of the ten years of cooperation outlined below.

Conversely, a singular initiative in Vietnam encourages university and college lecturers, researchers, and recent graduates—both bachelor's and master's degree holders—to study abroad, including in the United States. This initiative is outlined in Decision 911/QĐ-TTg, dated June 17, 2010, which approves the Project for Training Lecturers with Doctoral Degrees at Universities and Colleges from 2010 through 2020. The aim is to train approximately 10,000 PhDs overseas at prestigious institutions and to facilitate the training of about 3,000 PhDs through collaborative efforts between Vietnamese and foreign universities.

3.2. Results of Vietnam-U.S. Educational Cooperation (2013-2023)

3.2.1. Overall Results

According to the 2021 rankings by U.S. News, Vietnam achieved a commendable 59th place in education, climbing five spots from the previous year. Despite this progress, Vietnamese education still trails behind neighboring countries like Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines (Hoang, 2022). However, a decline to 65th place in 2023 - dropping six positions since 2021 (U.S. News, 2024) - underscores the urgent need for reforms to elevate educational standards and competitiveness in the region.

Table 2

The Number of Vietnamese Students Studying in the U.S.

Year	No. of Vietnamese students	Rank of international students in the U.S.
1995	200	N/A

2014	24,000	(6th in ASIA)
2016	17,000	8th
2017	19,000	9th
2022	<30,000	6th
2023	> 3000	5th

(Sources: Manh & Tran, 2015; Nhat, 2016; Phuong, 2017; Hoang, 2022; Thai & Bat, 2023; Kieu & Doan, 2023)

The number of Vietnamese international students studying at American universities has grown remarkably. In 1995, there were only 200 Vietnamese students in the U.S.. Still, by 2014, that number skyrocketed to 24,000, positioning Vietnam as a leader in Southeast Asia and ranking 6th in Asia overall, following China, India, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, and Japan (Nguyen, 2023b; Manh & Tran, 2015). By 2016, Vietnam had nearly 17,000 international students, maintaining its status as the foremost ASEAN country and 8th worldwide for students studying in the U.S. (Nhat, 2016; Vietnam Business Forum, 2016).

By facilitating the exchange of students, teachers, and economic experts, the U.S.-Vietnam educational partnership is instrumental in cultivating a highly skilled Vietnamese workforce and fostering intercultural understanding (Nhat, 2016; Vietnam Business Forum, 2016). This collaboration has led to significant achievements, including partnerships between 23 Vietnamese universities and U.S. institutions. Notably, American economic experts in Ho Chi Minh City have laid the groundwork for future educational initiatives, promising to enhance the ties between the two nations (Vietnam Business Forum, 2016).

As of 2017, Vietnam had about 19,000 international students, securing its place as the 9th country worldwide for student representation in the U.S. (Phuong, 2017). Fast forward to 2023, the implementation of more than 10 educational, training, and cultural exchange initiatives has led to approximately 26,000 Vietnamese students studying in the U.S. under self-funded and scholarship programs, ranking Vietnam 6th among countries with the largest number of students there (Nguyen, 2023b). Since 2013, the average number of Vietnamese international students in the U.S. has hovered around 30,000 annually, with over 70% at the university level (Nguyen, 2022).

Between 2017 and 2023, around 10-20 American students have pursued studies in Vietnam, focusing on Vietnamese language and culture (Hoang, 2023). Acknowledging the successes of educational cooperation, the U.S. ambassador to Vietnam, Ms. Kate Bartlett, highlighted the achievements in fostering partnerships over the past decade. The United States has supported over 30 scholarship programs for Vietnamese individuals to study abroad, gain valuable experience, and contribute to various fields (Hoang, 2022).

Former U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam and Chairman of the U.S.-ASEAN Business Council, Ted Osius, underscored the importance of educational collaboration, noting that over 30,000 Vietnamese students are currently studying in the U.S., which brings economic and social benefits to both nations (Kieu & Doan, 2023).

The outcomes of these educational partnerships are impressive, with 121 programs achieving regional and international accreditation. Notably, for the first time in Vietnam, 12 programs received ABET accreditation, underlining their quality in engineering and technology. Furthermore, more than 2,000 courses have been redesigned to align with the demands of the digital workforce. In addition, 4,000 university leaders and staff have enhanced

their leadership skills and curriculum innovation, fostering stronger ties with the business sector and benefitting 4,600 students through project-based learning initiatives (Nhat, 2023).

3.2.2. Results of State-Level Programs

The U.S. government has financially supported Vietnamese education through various scholarship and exchange programs. These initiatives have provided hundreds of talented Vietnamese students with opportunities to pursue advanced degrees at prestigious U.S. institutions. While these in-person programs offer invaluable experiences, it's important to note that they do not encompass the broader spectrum of online learning opportunities, such as the DOOR program and other free resources, which have been crucial in supporting Vietnamese teachers and learners, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 3

Results of Common U.S.-Vietnam Educational Cooperation Programs

Program	Time	Activities
Foundation Vietnam Education (VEF)	2000-2017	Vietnamese Students' Scholarships in U.S. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Over 600 Vietnamese students receive U.S. scholarships. - Over 300 graduates return with advanced degrees. - 30 American professors teach at Vietnamese universities. (Nhat, 2016; Vietnam Business Forum, 2016; Phuong, 2017)
The Fulbright Program	1992-2017 10 th July, 2015, (New York)	Fulbright University Vietnam's Impactful Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Over 500 Americans and 700 Vietnamese participate in study, research, and teaching programs. - Vietnamese participants hold influential roles across sectors. - Fulbright University Vietnam awarded an inaugural certificate, marking an educational collaboration milestone. (Phuong, 2017; Vietnam Business Forum, 2016; Nhat, 2016)
The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)	2022-2023	USAID Funds Vietnam's Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BUILD-IT initiative: Promoting university-business collaboration through innovation and technology. - Enhancing medical training quality at Vietnamese medical universities. - Fulbright University Vietnam: Developing training programs, system administration, operational policies, and international accreditation. - Strengthening the higher education capacity of Vietnam National University Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and Da Nang University. (Hoang, 2023)
BUILT-IT	2015	Vietnam Higher Education Initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborating with eight Vietnamese higher education institutions. - Leveraging 20 business partners to invest an additional \$8.7 million in higher education. - Accrediting 121 educational programs, including 12 accredited by ABET. - Redesigning over 2,000 courses for the digital workforce. - Enhancing skills of 4,000 university leaders and staff. - Strengthening partnerships with the business sector. - Benefiting 4,600 students through project-based curriculum activities. (Nhat, 2023)
Peace Corps	officially since October	Vietnam's English Teaching Volunteers: Nine volunteers to teach English in nine districts (2023) (Viet, 2023) Peace Corps Acceptance for 2023-2024

	2021	- Acceptance by Peace Corps Office and Ministry of Education and Training. - Arrival expected in October 2023. - No openings in Vietnam in summer 2024. (Peace Corps, 2024)
English Education	2022	2 American Centers in Hanoi; Free English Courses in: Ho Chi Minh City, Thai Nguyen, An Giang, Can Tho (Nguyen, 2022)

In summary, the education fields emphasized in the programs mentioned primarily include the English language, healthcare, basic sciences, and government administration. Most beneficiaries are university graduates and postgraduates, particularly master's students, as indicated by the Fulbright programs. Additionally, a significant number of school-aged English learners in major cities and popular areas like Sapa receive English lessons from U.S. volunteers. However, the number of U.S. professors and volunteers in Vietnam is relatively small compared to the large cohort of Vietnamese students studying at U.S. universities.

3.2.3. Results of Institution-Level Programs: Sample Cases from the U.S

Table 4

Results of U.S.-Vietnam Educational Cooperation at some U.S. University

University	Year	Achievements
Harvard University	2017	- 16 Vietnamese Students - Formal Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc supported Harvard's president's approval and more Vietnamese students at Harvard - Aimed for continued university management and leadership development. (Lan, 2017)
The University of Virginia	Since 2008 In 2023	University of Virginia's Collaboration in Hue - Professors have taught advanced physics in Hue. - Over 180 students graduated from these programs. - 20 students investigated Vietnam's climate change effects. (Kieu & Doan, 2023)
The University of San Francisco (USF)	2023 18 th Sep., 2023	USF's Vietnamese International Student Enrollment: - USF ranks third with 80 Vietnamese students in 2023. - Only China and India send students. - 28th President, Father Paul J. Fitzgerald, S.J., praises Vietnamese students' strong work ethic. (Ha, 2023) Formal Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh's Visit to USF: - Highlighted USF's role in developing Vietnam's human capital. - Expected USF to produce more qualified experts for efficient development aid. (Quynh, 2023)

The visits of Vietnamese leaders to these esteemed institutions, coupled with the positive remarks from university representatives, highlight the Vietnamese government's commitment to fostering talent and the determination of its students. Strengthening the workforce remains a significant priority on Vietnam's agenda, and ongoing collaboration with the United States is crucial to achieving this goal.

Most Vietnamese students studying in the U.S. benefit from various scholarship programs, such as the Fulbright Program, while several students finance their educational expenses. An interview conducted in December 2024 with a specialist from an overseas study consulting center, along with insights from the manager of the Cooperation & Development office at a Vietnamese university in November 2024, reveals that tuition and living costs in the

U.S. are higher compared to other English-speaking countries like Australia and New Zealand. Furthermore, they noted that most student exchange programs are advertised on the websites of U.S. institutions and government agencies, as well as through networks dedicated to international cooperation. This is exemplified by the case of one Vietnamese university, which illustrates these points more clearly.

4. A Case Study at a University in Vietnam

4.1. An Overview of the Educational Cooperation Results

To better understand the educational collaboration between the two countries in higher education, we conducted a mini-study at a foreign language university in Vietnam. This institution was selected due to its associated high school specializing in foreign languages, including English, and its national reputation for English language education. The expectation for cooperation between this university and organizations from the U.S. is well-established.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews lasting 10 to 15 minutes with the manager of the Cooperation and Development Office and a leader from the institution's 2024 research project, in addition to reviewing the institution's reports. Content analysis was employed to analyze the interview data. The statistical findings are summarized in Tables 5 and 6 below.

Among 14 professors gaining doctorate degrees abroad, the institution boasts three senior professors who hold master's and doctoral degrees from U.S. universities, acquired through grants and scholarships provided by the U.S. government and various institutions (for instance, one professor earned a master's degree from Saint Michael's College in 1996). These former U.S. scholar holders enhanced the institution's educational and training mission, and actively researched, and supported educational cooperation programs between the two countries.

In addition to its partnerships with institutions in the United States, such as Resource Exchange International Vietnam (REI-VN), Missouri State University, and Resource Exchange International (REI), the institution is also connected with the University of New Hampshire. This university is recognized as "the seventh best value public university in the U.S." and a "Top-Tier Research Institution" (Carnegie Classification), boasting a 94% undergraduate success rate as reported in the 2022 First Destination Survey (University of New Hampshire, 2024).

The partnership between the two higher education institutions began with a memorandum of understanding focused on graduate and postgraduate education in 2021, as outlined in Table 5 below. Following the successful execution of programs during the initial three years of collaboration, the universities opted to renew their memorandum of understanding in 2024 (Table 5).

Although students benefit from reduced travel and accommodation costs while studying in Vietnam, their tuition fees are higher than those of standard education programs because most lecturers are from U.S. institutions. Furthermore, the program's impact is partially limited to those students who can pay the associated fees. To enhance opportunities for a broader range of students and faculty, the Vietnamese university is also working to attract more student exchange programs and to invite U.S. lecturers to conduct lectures, seminars, and short-term courses lasting from two weeks to three months (Table 6).

Table 5*Undergraduate and Post-Graduate Cooperation Programs (2021-2024)*

No.	Program	2021		2022		2023		Năm 2024	
		Target	Reality	Target	Reality	Target	Reality	Target	Reality
1	Undergraduate Cooperation: Economics - Finance								
	Admission results	220	261	500	418	350	405	350	341
	Number of degrees issued		40		89		63		52
Number of graduates	39	36	38	37	57	54	201	174	
2	Postgraduate Cooperation: Master's program in Teaching English as a Foreign Language								
	Number of degrees	60	60	60	77	60	70	80	67
	Number of graduates	60	55	60	58	60	56	80	76

Table 6*Scholar Exchange and Visiting Scholar Programs/Activities (2013-2024)*

No.	Programs	Participants	Year	Targets	Results
1	U.S. specialists	1 specialist	7/2015 - 6/2024	Constructing Vietnam's standardized tests on English proficiency	- 01 experts in language testing and assessment
2	Conferences, roundtables, workshops, and seminars (U.S. speakers)	1 speaker	2022	Presenting at conferences and workshops on language testing and assessment; second language acquisition, Artificial Intelligence in language education	01 international conference
		3 speakers	2023		02 international conference; 01 national conference 01 institution's workshop
3	U.S. Visiting Lecturers (irregularly)	1-7 lecturer(s)	2013 - 2023	- Exchanging scholars on culture and education; - Building teacher development materials for English language teachers at primary, secondary, and high schools; - Building assessment criteria, as well as test writing and test analysis skills	- 01 Four-week-course for the university's lecturers on American films and literature (2013); - 02 training courses for lecturers: One on scoring and the other on test analysis (2014); one on second language teacher competence

4	The institution's visiting lecturers to the U.S.	3 lecturers	2 weeks - 3 months	- Giving lectures and presentations on Vietnam's culture, teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in Vietnam, and professional development	- 01 lecturer on linguistics, 01 on culture studies, and 01 on EFL and English profession development
5	OPEN Open Educational Resources in English Language Teaching and Teacher Education	9 institution's trainers, 396 trainees	2/2022 - 10/2022 2	Workshops and conferences on leveraging open resources (OPEN: Online Professional English Network) in language learning and teacher education	- An online course for lecturers from 2/2022-5/2022 ; - A conference named "Exploring and Developing Open Resources for Language Teaching and Learning" in 10/2022
6	Access Training Course	19 trainers; 186 trainees getting degrees	2/2023 - 5/2023	Improving general English teaching capacity for K-12 teachers across Vietnam	"Happy English Teachers" Course (Supported by RELO - US Embassy in Hanoi): 195 teachers registered

4.2. Areas of Improvement

Among the institution's more than twenty professors specializing in English linguistics and second language education, fewer than half a dozen obtained their degrees from the United States. All 911 scholarship recipients have studied in English-speaking countries outside of the U.S. Despite the institution's efforts to foster educational collaboration with U.S. scholars through various initiatives, this university receives few U.S. and Vietnamese government educational cooperation programs.

Most of the programs mentioned above - such as the Vietnam Education Foundation (VEF), USAID, Fulbright grants for scholars, and BUILT-IT - tend to prioritize innovations in science and technology. Additionally, few scholars from the institution have applied for programs heavily focusing on English language learning, such as the Fulbright scholarship or the 911 projects for graduate students in the United States. The intense competition in these priority fields, along with the financial support coverage and the cost of living in the U.S. compared to Vietnam, contribute to the noticeable disparity between those studying in the U.S. versus those in other English-speaking countries, such as the United Kingdom (1 master's + 2 doctorate) and Australia (5 doctorate degrees).

Such a discrepancy reflects the unequal focus on educational cooperation between the two countries. In line with Gahungu's (2001) evaluation of the effects of a 45-day Summer Institute at Northern Arizona University (NAU) from 1988 to 1992, the U.S. government appears uninterested in the main areas of this institution's focus, despite the lecturers there strongly anticipating continued collaboration with the American researchers (Chu & Hoang,

2024).

Such mismatch again echoes the imbalanced attention toward educational cooperation between the two nations in education. Similarly, Gahungu (2001) assessed the impact of a 45-day Summer Institute at Northern Arizona University (NAU) between 1988 and 1992, while the lecturers at the institution under study highly expect further cooperation with the U.S. researchers (Chu & Hoang, 2024), the U.S. government seem to lack interests in the focusing fields of this institution.

Le (2013) once raised the lack of cooperation between native practitioners and local teachers, with limited communication and no participation in community activities with Vietnamese teachers. This may raise the question of trust again and thus affect the quality of collaboration in research and the experience of visiting scholars teaching in a faraway country. Additionally, the lack of continual and widespread international cooperation in the case study of a Vietnam university partly echoes Gray's (1996, cited in Chan, 2004) lists of challenges in managing educational networks, including individualistic organizational cultures, potential collapse of partnerships due to funding depletion, unclear goals, and unclear roles of representatives, delegates, and plenipotentiaries. These issues call for organizational and national cooperation and high-level interactions to create international education networks.

5. The Future of Vietnam-U.S. Educational Cooperation

5.1. A General Prospect for Vietnam

In 2024, The United States is collaborating with organizations such as the Vietnam National Innovation Center, and Ho Chi Minh City Hi-Tech Park. They are also working with US educational institutions such as State University Arizona, and Fulbright University to ensure that the necessary efforts can successfully create 50 to 80,000 new high-tech workers by 2030 (VOV, 2024). Ambassador Marc E. Knapper added that 300,000 Vietnamese people have some connection or contact with a US education program every year, which is meaningful. So, his goal is to find a way to increase the number of programs Vietnamese students can access, whether in person or online (VOV, 2024).

From 2024, there will be an increased focus on generative artificial intelligence (AI) and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education. The U.S. government is investing in STEM initiatives in Vietnam, collaborating with the U.S. Diplomatic Mission, the Scratch Foundation, the Hanoi University of Science and Technology, and the Vietnam General Education Innovation Fund (VIGEF). Together, they announced the "Train the Trainers" program, which aims to select and train educators on computational thinking and educational program design using generative AI (U.S. Mission Vietnam, 2024).

Specifically, from June to August 2024, an online course consisting of 12 lectures guided by AI experts will focus on the practical applications of AI in STEM education. In addition, from July 2024 to March 2025, educators can participate in various activities, including the STEM Festival 2024 in July, the Southeast Asia Scratch Practice Teacher Meetup in October, and a series of community development webinars from September 2024 to March 2025 (U.S. Mission Vietnam, 2024a; U.S. Mission Vietnam, 2024b).

PhD students in science and technology can apply for the Fulbright Vietnamese Visiting Student Researcher Program (VSR), a non-degree program that offers up to five full scholarships for research opportunities lasting 6 to 10 months at a university in the United States during the 2025-2026 academic year (U.S. Mission Vietnam, 2024b). These programs reflect

the ongoing support from the U.S. for Vietnamese education, evolving from broad fields of study (similar to the early years of the Fulbright scholarship) to more specific and trending areas, particularly in science and technology, including artificial intelligence, electrical engineering, and materials science related to semiconductor research (U.S. Mission Vietnam, 2024a). The focus of education is shifting toward more academic and research-oriented projects.

College and university students, particularly those demonstrating leadership (excluding seniors), who excel academically, engage in community activities, and participate in extracurricular events may benefit from student exchange programs such as the 2025-2026 Global Undergraduate Exchange Program (U.S. Mission Vietnam, 2024b).

5.2. The Institution Future Perspectives

The institution is redirecting its focus toward research with ongoing projects and collaborations in postgraduate education and research. In 2024, a set of four monographs on second language education was developed by a U.S. specialist alongside the institution's faculty. Furthermore, the institution has initiated a three-month contract with a U.S. professor, marking the first time such collaboration has focused on research practices. The professor contributed to the institution's annual international conference for postgraduates, led 12 seminars for faculty, postgraduate, and undergraduate students, taught three postgraduate courses, graded three master's theses, and participated in three projects to produce three articles for Q2 international journals. This partnership also creates opportunities for Vietnamese lecturers and researchers to attend conferences in the U.S. in the coming years. Two similar projects cooperating with U.S. scholars are also being planned.

Moreover, the institution's policy actively drives collaboration with international researchers to form dynamic research groups dedicated to producing high-impact publications in esteemed international journals. This strategic initiative is set to significantly elevate the institution's international publication output and enhance research projects at both the institutional and national levels, becoming an integral component of its Key Performance Indicators. Additionally, the institution is poised to strengthen its international cooperation in education and training by partnering with a leading U.S. technology company to develop a cutting-edge online language learning platform powered by artificial intelligence.

However, challenges remain, as the institution often needs help securing projects from the U.S. and Vietnamese governments due to various intellectual and logistical requirements and disparities in living costs between the two countries. Consequently, the tangible benefits of the strategic partnership between the two nations are expected to take time to materialize at this institution.

6. Conclusion

Over the past decade, the relationship between Vietnam and the U.S. has reached new heights, evolving from a comprehensive partnership to a comprehensive strategic partnership. This evolution reflects significant shifts in objectives and scope. In line with global advancements in fields such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) - particularly in semi-digital and generative artificial intelligence (AI) - Vietnamese students are well-prepared to pursue scholarships in these high-demand areas at advanced levels of education.

However, this cooperation seems imbalanced, with Vietnam primarily acting as the

recipient. The unequal collaboration in co-authoring research projects and professional publications underscores this disparity. Moreover, there is an urgent need for deeper analysis regarding the effects of language learning and testing on the Vietnamese market, especially in the context of ongoing globalization. It is imperative to address these issues to enhance mutual benefits and foster a more equitable partnership.

A university in Vietnam is taking significant steps to enhance educational cooperation, as highlighted in the case study. This institution is committed to elevating its focus on research that facilitates international publications and collaborations, even in the face of the stark mismatch between government-sponsored programs and its key academic areas, and the differing living standards in the two countries. This scenario clearly illustrates the vital need for proactive engagement from each institution and robust support from both nations to successfully cultivate human resources in the dynamic era of advanced digital technology and artificial intelligence. Specifically, institutions should adopt various organizational strategies to support their networks, focusing on coordinating capacity to link external networks to internal environments, ensuring successful university-to-university relationships.

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