

Higher Education Socialization in Vietnam: Governance Challenges and Policy Implications

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Received: June 1, 2026 Accepted: July 18, 2026 Published: August 1, 2026

doi:10.5296/jse.v16i3.23831 URL: <https://doi.org/10.5296/jse.v16i3.23831>

Abstract

This article examines higher education socialization in Vietnam as a public policy response to fiscal constraints and increasing demands for quality, accountability and system sustainability. Using a policy-oriented analytical approach and secondary data from official statistical sources and international reports, the study finds that public expenditure on higher education in Vietnam remains relatively low, accounting for approximately 0.18-0.27% of GDP during the period 2020-2024. Meanwhile, socially mobilized resources from enterprises, alumni networks, university development funds and public-private partnerships remain fragmented and insufficient to support long-term system development.

The findings indicate that higher education socialization should be understood not merely as a financing strategy but as a broader governance mechanism that promotes societal participation, institutional accountability and sustainable development. From a public policy perspective, the article proposes several policy implications, including strengthening legal and incentive frameworks, expanding public-private partnerships, diversifying institutional models, developing university endowment funds and promoting technology transfer. The study also highlights the continuing regulatory and coordinating role of the State in ensuring equity, quality and sustainability within the higher education system.

The findings provide policy-relevant insights for other middle-income countries facing similar fiscal and governance challenges in higher education.

Keywords: education financing; higher education governance; higher education policy; public-private partnerships; socialization; Vietnam

1. Introduction

The socialization of higher education refers to a policy-driven process in which responsibilities for educational provision, financing and governance are increasingly shared between the State and broader societal actors. Rather than indicating a withdrawal of the public sector, socialization reflects a transformation in public governance, whereby the State shifts from being the sole provider of higher education services toward regulatory, coordinative and facilitative roles. In Vietnam, this process has developed alongside the country's transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented system, requiring a redefinition of the State's functions in higher education governance.

Within this context, higher education socialization is closely associated with broader reforms in public administration and governance. The State has increasingly focused on developing legal frameworks, strengthening quality assurance mechanisms and promoting institutional accountability. At the same time, non-state actors including private universities, enterprises, communities and alumni networks have been encouraged to participate in educational investment, service provision and institutional development. This governance-oriented approach reflects broader international trends in higher education reform, particularly in countries facing fiscal constraints and growing demand for tertiary education.

In recent years, the implementation of socialization policies in Vietnam has produced several notable outcomes. The number of public and non-public higher education institutions has expanded, while some private universities have demonstrated improved competitiveness and training quality in selected fields. Social participation in higher education has become increasingly diversified, and state policies have gradually evolved to support institutional autonomy and flexible governance arrangements. These developments suggest that socialization has contributed to expanding access and system capacity within Vietnamese higher education.

Despite these advances, the socialization process has also generated significant policy challenges. Educational quality remains uneven across institutions and, in some cases, does not fully meet the requirements of a knowledge-based economy. Public perceptions of non-public higher education institutions continue to be shaped by concerns regarding quality and inequality, limiting their social legitimacy. In addition, excessive emphasis on enrolment expansion in certain institutions has raised concerns about academic standards and graduate outcomes. These issues indicate that socialization, without effective regulatory coordination and quality assurance mechanisms, may produce unintended consequences for higher education development.

Against this backdrop, a systematic analysis of higher education socialization in Vietnam from a governance and public policy perspective is necessary. This article examines the extent to which socialization policies have mobilized non-state resources for higher education and evaluates their effectiveness under existing institutional and fiscal constraints. It also proposes policy implications aimed at improving the sustainability, governance quality and policy coherence of higher education socialization in Vietnam. By doing so, the study contributes to ongoing discussions on higher education reform and public sector governance

in developing and middle-income countries.

Unlike existing studies that primarily focus on educational financing or institutional expansion, this study examines higher education socialization in Vietnam from an integrated governance and public policy perspective.

2. Literature Review

International scholarship increasingly conceptualizes the socialization of higher education not merely as an educational reform, but as a public policy response to fiscal pressures, governance transformation and changing state-society relations in public service provision. Within this perspective, existing studies primarily focus on two interrelated dimensions: the diversification of higher education financing and the changing role of the State in higher education governance.

A substantial body of literature suggests that the massification of higher education, combined with persistent fiscal constraints, has reduced governments' capacity to fully subsidize tertiary education. Consequently, many countries have adopted mixed-financing models in which public funding is supplemented by tuition fees, student loan schemes, university endowments, public-private partnerships and private investment (Johnstone, 1992; Altbach et al., 2009; Salmi, 2009). In this context, cost-sharing is widely viewed as a policy instrument for mobilizing additional resources while maintaining system sustainability rather than as a withdrawal of state responsibility.

Beyond financial diversification, international organizations such as the OECD and UNESCO emphasize that higher education socialization also represents a broader transformation in public governance. Socialization is associated with expanded institutional autonomy, stronger university-industry collaboration, diversified funding structures and increased accountability mechanisms. Under this governance-oriented approach, the role of the State shifts from direct provision toward strategic steering through regulation, coordination and quality assurance. These developments reflect broader public sector reforms aimed at balancing efficiency, equity and sustainability in higher education systems.

Comparative studies further identify different structural models of higher education socialization across countries. In some Asian countries such as Japan, the Republic of Korea, Indonesia and the Philippines, private institutions play a dominant role in absorbing demand for higher education. In contrast, many European and North American countries maintain parallel public and private systems operating under comprehensive regulatory frameworks. A third model, commonly observed in parts of Latin America, is characterized by the predominance of public higher education, with private institutions serving complementary functions (Le Quoc Hung, 2004). These comparative experiences suggest that the effectiveness of socialization depends not only on the scale of non-state participation but also on state steering capacity and policy coherence.

In Vietnam, the concept of education socialization emerged during the country's transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented system. Early approaches emphasized the mobilization of societal participation and non-state resources as a means of expanding

educational access under conditions of fiscal limitation. According to the Viet Nam Institute of Educational Sciences (1999), socialization includes the diversification of institutional forms, the engagement of social actors in educational activities and the creation of supportive learning environments. This perspective reflects an understanding of education as both a public good and a shared social responsibility.

Vietnamese scholars have also contributed to debates on the scope and objectives of education socialization. Nguyen Van Nam (2009) argues that socialization should function as a policy instrument to ensure equitable access to education rather than intensify inequality. Similarly, Tran Quoc Toan (2010) emphasizes that socialization reflects the social nature of education in the context of higher education expansion, requiring cooperation among the State, institutions and society. When effectively governed, socialization can mobilize diverse resources and support sustainable educational development.

Despite these theoretical contributions, empirical studies identify several persistent challenges in the implementation of higher education socialization in Vietnam. These include unequal access, disparities in institutional quality and infrastructure, limited regulatory effectiveness and uneven competition between public and non-public institutions (Nguyen Huu Khien, 2004). Such challenges indicate that the effectiveness of socialization depends heavily on governance quality, regulatory capacity and policy coordination rather than solely on the expansion of non-state participation.

Overall, the existing literature provides important conceptual and comparative insights into higher education socialization. However, limited attention has been paid to how socialization policies operate in practice within Vietnam's higher education system, particularly regarding governance effectiveness, policy coherence and financial sustainability. This gap highlights the need for policy-oriented research examining the implementation and governance of higher education socialization in Vietnam in order to support evidence-based policy reform and long-term system development.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative policy analysis approach supported by descriptive statistical evidence to examine the implementation of higher education socialization in Vietnam during the period 2020-2024. A qualitative policy analysis is appropriate because higher education socialization is a governance-oriented policy involving institutional arrangements, regulatory frameworks, financing mechanisms and stakeholder participation. These dimensions cannot be adequately explained through quantitative indicators alone but require systematic interpretation of policy documents and institutional evidence.

3.1. Data Sources

The study relies primarily on purposively selected secondary data obtained from official government documents, national statistical reports, legal documents and international publications. Data sources were selected according to three criteria: (i) they were issued by authoritative institutions; (ii) they contained information directly related to higher education governance, financing or socialization; and (iii) they provided reliable evidence covering the

period 2020-2024. Earlier legal and theoretical documents were included where necessary to explain the evolution of Vietnam's higher education socialization policy.

The documentary sources reviewed include:

- The **Law on Higher Education** (2012, amended 2018);
- **Government Resolution No. 90-CP** on the socialization of education, healthcare, culture and sports;
- **Decree No. 69/2008/ND-CP** on policies encouraging socialization activities;
- Annual reports and statistical publications of the **Ministry of Education and Training (MOET)**;
- Budget reports of the **Ministry of Finance**;
- Statistical Yearbooks published by the **General Statistics Office (GSO)**;
- International reports published by the **OECD, UNESCO** and the **World Bank** concerning higher education governance, financing and internationalization;
- Relevant academic studies addressing higher education governance, education financing and education socialization in Vietnam and internationally.

To improve transparency, the principal documentary sources used in this study are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Documentary Sources Used for Policy Analysis

Source	Document Type	Analytical Purpose
Law on Higher Education (2012, amended 2018)	Legal document	Governance framework, university autonomy and higher education policies
Resolution No. 90-CP	Government Resolution	National policy on education socialization
Decree No. 69/2008/ND-CP	Government Decree	Incentive policies for non-state participation
Ministry of Education and Training	Annual reports and statistics	Higher education institutions, enrolment, internationalization
Ministry of Finance	Budget reports	Public expenditure on higher education
General Statistics Office	National statistics	Socio-economic and education indicators
OECD, UNESCO and World Bank	International reports	Comparative governance, financing and policy benchmarks
Peer-reviewed journal articles	Academic literature	Theoretical foundations and comparative evidence

Note. Compiled by the authors based on the Law on Higher Education (2012, amended 2018), Government Resolution No. 90-CP, Decree No. 69/2008/ND-CP, annual reports of the Ministry of Education and Training, Ministry of Finance, General Statistics Office, OECD (2019), UNESCO (2017), and World Bank (2021).

3.2. Data Analysis

The collected documents were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. First, all policy documents and statistical reports were reviewed to identify information related to higher education financing, governance arrangements, institutional diversification and stakeholder participation. Second, relevant information was coded into recurring policy categories. Third, similar categories were compared across different documentary sources to identify common policy patterns and implementation trends.

Through iterative qualitative content analysis, two analytical themes were identified.

1. **Governance orientation of higher education socialization**, focusing on policy objectives, state steering, regulatory arrangements and institutional responsibilities; and
2. **Current implementation of higher education socialization in Vietnam**, focusing on institutional diversification, resource mobilization, financing mechanisms and internationalization.

Descriptive statistical analysis was employed to summarize key indicators concerning public expenditure on higher education, institutional development and international comparison. These quantitative indicators were not analyzed independently but were interpreted together with documentary evidence to support policy analysis and strengthen the credibility of the findings.

3.3. Research Scope and Trustworthiness

The study does not seek to establish causal relationships between policy interventions and educational outcomes. Instead, it aims to provide an evidence-based assessment of the current implementation of higher education socialization and its governance implications.

To enhance the credibility of the analysis, findings were triangulated across multiple documentary sources, including legal documents, official statistics, government reports and international publications. Comparing evidence from different sources reduced potential bias associated with relying on a single dataset and strengthened the consistency of the policy interpretations presented in this study.

4. Findings

This section presents the findings derived from the documentary analysis described in Section 3. Using qualitative content analysis of policy documents, official statistical reports and relevant academic literature, the study identifies key governance patterns and implementation trends related to higher education socialization in Vietnam during the period 2020-2024. Rather than relying on primary survey data, the findings are based on the systematic analysis and triangulation of documentary evidence from multiple authoritative sources. Consistent

with the analytical framework presented in the Methodology section, the findings are organized into two interrelated themes: (i) the governance orientation of higher education socialization, and (ii) its practical implementation within Vietnam's higher education system.

4.1. Governance Orientation of Higher Education Socialization

In Vietnam, higher education socialization has become an important component of broader public sector reforms aimed at diversifying the provision and financing of public services. Over time, socialization has evolved from a general policy principle into a strategic orientation shaping higher education governance. Rather than positioning the State as the sole provider of educational services, socialization reflects a gradual redistribution of responsibilities among the State, higher education institutions, enterprises and society within a public governance framework.

International experience indicates that socialization is not limited to developing countries but is also widely adopted in advanced economies facing fiscal pressures and increasing demand for tertiary education. In practice, socialization has been associated with decentralization, institutional autonomy, lifelong learning and community engagement. Despite differences across countries, a common objective can be identified: expanding societal participation in higher education while maintaining effective public regulation and state steering capacity.

The Vietnamese experience demonstrates that increasing societal participation in higher education has become both a policy necessity and an institutionalized practice. Importantly, socialization does not imply a withdrawal of state responsibility. The State continues to play a central role in establishing legal frameworks, setting quality standards, strengthening accountability mechanisms and conducting inspection and supervision. In this context, socialization functions as a governance arrangement in which non-state actors participate in educational provision under regulatory oversight.

A key finding is that higher education socialization in Vietnam should not be equated with privatization. While privatization generally involves transferring ownership or decision-making authority from the public sector to private actors (Johnstone & Marcucci, 2010), higher education socialization in Vietnam emphasizes shared responsibility among the State, higher education institutions, enterprises and society within a publicly regulated system (Vietnam Institute of Educational Sciences, 1999; Tran Quoc Toan, 2010). Under the Law on Higher Education (2012, amended 2018), higher education continues to be recognized as a public service in which the State retains responsibility for ensuring equity, quality and access through legislation, quality assurance and institutional oversight. Consequently, the participation of non-state institutions operates within state-defined legal and quality assurance frameworks rather than replacing the State's governance role.

Overall, the findings suggest that higher education socialization in Vietnam can be understood as a dual process. First, it involves mobilizing financial, managerial and intellectual resources from society to support higher education development. Second, it involves selectively delegating certain educational functions to non-state actors under regulatory supervision. This interpretation is consistent with previous studies on higher

education governance and financing, which suggest that appropriately governed socialization and cost-sharing mechanisms can reduce fiscal pressure, broaden stakeholder participation and strengthen institutional performance while maintaining public accountability (Johnstone, 2009; Fielden, 2008; OECD, 2019; World Bank, 2021).

4.2. Current Situation of Higher Education Socialization in Vietnam

4.2.1. Policy Framework for Higher Education Socialization

Over the past three decades, higher education socialization in Vietnam has been progressively institutionalized through a policy framework aimed at restructuring the national higher education system and diversifying sources of investment and service provision. Key legal instruments, including Government Resolution No. 90-CP, Decree No. 69/2008/ND-CP and the Law on Higher Education (2012, amended in 2018), have established the legal basis for encouraging private investment, promoting non-public institutions and mobilizing societal resources for higher education development.

These policy documents emphasize several major reform objectives, including the development of an open and flexible education system, the promotion of lifelong learning, the diversification of institutional models and the expansion of university autonomy. More recent implementation plans issued by the Prime Minister have reinforced this orientation by assigning responsibilities to ministries, local authorities and higher education institutions in attracting social and foreign investment, promoting public-private cooperation and strengthening connections between higher education and labor market demands.

Overall, the policy framework demonstrates a strong strategic commitment to higher education socialization at the national level. However, implementation outcomes remain uneven across regions and institutional types. Differences in local administrative capacity, regulatory enforcement and institutional readiness have created gaps between policy objectives and practical implementation. These challenges indicate continuing limitations in policy coordination and governance effectiveness.

4.2.2. Diversification of Institutional Types and Training Modalities

One of the most visible outcomes of higher education socialization in Vietnam is the diversification of institutional types and training modalities. Table 2 summarizes the development of public and non-public higher education institutions in Vietnam between 2019 and 2024. The data indicate that although the total number of universities increased gradually, the proportion of public and non-public institutions remained relatively stable, suggesting that private sector growth has complemented rather than replaced public higher education provision.

This development indicates that socialization has contributed significantly to expanding higher education access and system capacity. Non-public institutions have absorbed part of the increasing demand for tertiary education, particularly in applied and professionally oriented disciplines, while public universities continue to dominate research-intensive and high-prestige fields. As a result, Vietnam's higher education system has evolved into a hybrid

structure in which public and non-public institutions operate within a common regulatory framework but perform differentiated functions.

Despite these positive developments, diversification has also generated important governance challenges. Differences in institutional capacity, financial sustainability and quality assurance practices between public and non-public institutions have increased the need for stronger regulatory oversight. These issues highlight the importance of effective state steering to ensure that higher education diversification contributes to quality improvement, system coherence and equitable access rather than uneven development.

Table 2. Development of Higher Education Institutions in Vietnam, 2019-2024

Year	Total number of universities	Classification	
		Public	Non-public
2019	237	172	65
2020	237	172	65
2021	241	175	66
2022	242	175	67
2023	242	175	67
2024	243	176	67

Note: Compiled by the authors based on annual statistical reports of the Ministry of Education and Training (2019-2024).

Non-public and foreign-invested universities have played an increasingly important role in responding to rising demand for higher education, particularly in urban areas and high-demand disciplines. Institutions such as FPT University, VinUni, RMIT University and British University Vietnam demonstrate how private and international actors can introduce modern governance models, flexible curricula and stronger university-industry linkages, thereby improving graduate employability and training quality.

These institutions often operate under more autonomous governance arrangements, allowing them to respond more quickly to labor market demands and adopt internationally recognized academic standards. At the same time, international joint training programs have expanded, increasing access to global curricula and contemporary teaching approaches. However, participation in these programs remains uneven across regions and institutions due to disparities in institutional capacity and student affordability.

Overall, the expansion of non-public and foreign-invested institutions highlights both the opportunities and limitations of higher education socialization. Although these models demonstrate innovation and operational flexibility, their concentration in major urban centers

raises concerns regarding regional inequality and balanced national higher education development.

4.2.3. Mobilization of Societal Resources and Stakeholder Participation

Higher education socialization has expanded the participation of socio-political organizations, enterprises, communities and individuals in higher education development. According to the Vietnam Institute of Educational Sciences (1999), education socialization involves mobilizing the participation of society in educational development through both financial and non-financial contributions. Scholarship funds, learning-promotion associations, youth organizations and trade unions have contributed to student support, infrastructure development and community engagement activities (Nguyen Thi Huyen Trang & Tran Thi Hoai, 2018). However, these contributions remain fragmented and are concentrated primarily in economically advantaged regions (Parajuli et al., 2020).

Corporate participation has become increasingly significant through investments by major enterprises. Institutions such as VinUni illustrate a shift from traditional sponsorship toward more strategic forms of corporate involvement in higher education. Large corporations and technology firms have supported universities through infrastructure investment, scholarships, internship programmes and collaborative training initiatives (Parajuli et al., 2020; World Bank, 2021). Nevertheless, enterprise investment remains concentrated in a limited number of leading institutions, particularly those located in major urban centres, potentially increasing disparities within the higher education system (Ta Thi Bich Ngoc, 2025).

Alumni networks and university development funds also represent promising but underutilized sources of sustainable financing. International experience indicates that alumni giving and university endowment funds can provide important long-term financial support for higher education institutions (Clark, 1998; OECD, 2019). In Vietnam, although several universities have established alumni support funds and development foundations, these initiatives remain limited in scale and institutional maturity (Ta Thi Bich Ngoc, 2021). This indicates considerable potential for expanding educational philanthropy through clearer legal frameworks, stronger institutional capacity and more effective incentive mechanisms.

4.2.4. Financial Structure of Higher Education Socialization

* State Budget Allocation

Public expenditure on higher education in Vietnam remains relatively low, accounting for approximately 0.18-0.27% of GDP during the period 2020-2024, which is significantly below international benchmarks. Budget allocation mechanisms continue to rely mainly on input-based criteria, with limited linkage to institutional performance, research outputs or labor market relevance. As a result, insufficient public investment constrains infrastructure development, research capacity and the effective implementation of university autonomy, increasing institutional dependence on tuition revenue.

* Development Investment Expenditure

Investment expenditure for higher education accounts for only a small share of total

education spending, typically ranging from 5-10%. This has contributed to outdated infrastructure, limited laboratory capacity and insufficient support for research and innovation activities. University research and development expenditure also remains substantially lower than that of regional peer countries (Table 2), reducing competitiveness in knowledge-intensive sectors and limiting universities' contributions to national innovation systems.

Overall, the current financial structure reveals a mismatch between higher education development objectives and resource allocation mechanisms. Without reforms aimed at improving public investment efficiency and encouraging diversified funding sources, higher education socialization may reinforce financial vulnerability and institutional inequality rather than support long-term system sustainability.

Table 3. Comparison of Higher Education R&D Expenditure in Selected Countries, 2023

Nations	Total R&D expenditure (% of GDP)	Share of R&D allocated to universities (%)	Higher education R&D expenditure (% of GDP)
Vietnam	0.42	13%	0.05
Thailand	0.60	25%	0.15
Malaysia	1.30	30%	0.39
Singapore	2.00	28%	0.56
Korea	4.90	22%	1.08

Note. Author's compilation based on OECD and national statistical data.

Socialized funding, primarily derived from tuition fees, has become the dominant financial source for higher education in Vietnam, accounting for more than 70% of total system revenue. This shift has supported institutional expansion and strengthened financial autonomy, particularly among public universities operating under autonomy mechanisms. However, the increasing dependence on tuition fees raises concerns regarding affordability, equity and long-term financial sustainability.

Enterprise investment, public-private partnership (PPP) models and philanthropic funding remain limited and unevenly distributed across institutions. Consequently, the financial burden of higher education continues to fall heavily on households. This funding structure reflects an imbalanced form of socialization in which cost-sharing has expanded more rapidly than the diversification of non-tuition revenue sources. Without appropriate policy intervention, excessive dependence on household contributions may increase social inequality and reduce equitable access to higher education.

* Revenue from Public Service Activities

Beyond tuition fees, revenue generated from scientific research, technology transfer and professional services has become an increasingly important component of higher education socialization. Universities with stronger research capacity are progressively able to generate

income through research contracts, consultancy activities and innovation services, allowing reinvestment in infrastructure, academic staff development and quality improvement.

However, substantial disparities remain across institutions. Many universities, particularly those located in disadvantaged regions or with limited research capacity, are unable to generate significant non-tuition revenue and therefore continue to rely heavily on student fees. These differences highlight the need for differentiated policy support to strengthen research ecosystems, promote university-industry collaboration and reduce structural inequality within the higher education system.

4.2.5. International Cooperation and Internationalization

Internationalization has become an important dimension of higher education socialization in Vietnam. During the period 2020-2024, international joint programs, foreign-invested institutions and academic cooperation projects expanded steadily. Growth in international publications and student mobility has strengthened the role of universities within Vietnam's national knowledge production system (Table 3).

Table 4. Selected Indicators of Higher Education Internationalization in Vietnam, 2019-2023

Indicator	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
International students	18 000	18 500	19 000	20 500	22 000
Articles indexed in ISI and Scopus	12 475	14 000	15 500	17 000	18 500
Number of international joint programs	~320	-	-	~390	~408
FDI in education (million USD)	4 376	4 520	4 600	4 720	4 800

Note. Compiled from Ministry of Education and Training reports and national statistics.

International cooperation has contributed to mobilizing external financial and academic resources, improving governance practices and enhancing the quality of teaching and research activities. However, internationalization remains concentrated in major universities and urban centers, with limited diffusion across the broader higher education system. This uneven distribution suggests that although internationalization supports the objectives of higher education socialization, its benefits are not equally shared among institutions and regions.

Strengthening the linkage between international cooperation and national higher education development strategies is therefore essential to ensure that internationalization contributes not only to institutional prestige but also to system-wide capacity building and equitable development. Despite existing limitations, international cooperation continues to play an important role in supporting higher education modernization in Vietnam through knowledge exchange, governance improvement and academic collaboration.

4.3. Summary of Findings

Overall, the findings indicate that Vietnam's higher education system has experienced rapid expansion, increasing institutional diversification and growing reliance on socialized

resources. Socialization has contributed to broader access, greater institutional autonomy and deeper international integration. At the same time, the process has also revealed persistent challenges related to equity, financial sustainability, quality assurance and governance capacity.

The findings further suggest that the effectiveness of higher education socialization depends not only on the expansion of non-state participation but also on the quality of regulatory frameworks and policy coordination mechanisms. These issues provide an important basis for discussing policy implications and future reform directions for higher education governance in Vietnam.

5. Discussion

Building on the findings presented in Section 4, this section discusses higher education socialization in Vietnam from a governance and public policy perspective. Rather than viewing socialization as an ideological choice, the discussion interprets it as a structural response to fiscal constraints, institutional limitations and increasing development demands within Vietnam's higher education system.

5.1. Socialization as a Response to Resource Constraints

The findings indicate that higher education socialization in Vietnam is largely driven by long-term resource constraints. Public expenditure on higher education remains relatively low by international standards, accounting for approximately 0.18-0.27% of GDP during the period 2020-2024. Under these conditions, continued dependence on the State as the primary provider and financier of higher education is difficult to sustain.

Socialization therefore functions as a mechanism for expanding financial and institutional support through the participation of households, enterprises, alumni networks and broader society. This pattern is consistent with international experiences in countries facing higher education massification under fiscal pressure, where socialization serves as a strategy for maintaining system expansion and sustainability rather than replacing state responsibility.

Importantly, the Vietnamese experience suggests that socialization does not diminish the role of the State but instead redefines it. The State increasingly performs strategic functions related to regulation, coordination, quality assurance and resource allocation within the higher education system.

5.2. Participation and Governance Quality

Beyond financial considerations, the findings highlight the role of socialization in promoting broader participation in higher education governance. Through increased involvement of enterprises, communities and social organizations, socialization creates opportunities for stakeholder engagement in institutional development and educational activities.

This participatory dimension is consistent with contemporary public governance approaches emphasizing transparency, accountability and shared responsibility in public service delivery (Fielden, 2008; Marginson, 2011). However, the Vietnamese experience also reveals a gap

between policy objectives and implementation practices. Although policy frameworks encourage social participation, mechanisms for meaningful stakeholder engagement remain limited and often symbolic in practice.

These findings suggest that socialization alone does not automatically improve governance quality. Effective participation requires stronger institutional capacity, clearer accountability arrangements and more consistent regulatory oversight. Without these conditions, stakeholder involvement may remain fragmented and have limited influence on strategic decision-making.

5.3. Equity and Quality Trade-offs

An important issue emerging from the findings concerns the relationship between socialization, equity and educational quality. While diversification of institutional models has expanded access to higher education, increasing dependence on tuition fees has also created concerns regarding affordability and unequal access, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The findings indicate that socialization does not necessarily guarantee equitable outcomes. Equity depends heavily on complementary policy measures such as student financial aid, targeted subsidies and inclusive access mechanisms. Without adequate policy support, cost-sharing arrangements may increase financial burdens on households and widen existing social inequalities.

This challenge reflects broader international debates concerning the balance between efficiency, quality and equity in higher education reform. The Vietnamese case demonstrates the continuing importance of effective state steering in managing these trade-offs.

5.4. Quality Challenges and the Role of Non-State Actors

Despite significant expansion in institutional scale, Vietnam's higher education system continues to face quality-related challenges. Concerns regarding curriculum relevance, graduate employability and research capacity suggest that quantitative expansion has not always been accompanied by qualitative improvement.

Within this context, socialization offers opportunities to improve educational quality through diversified investment, stronger university-industry collaboration and increased exposure to international standards. Non-state actors, particularly enterprises and foreign partners, can contribute technological resources, management expertise and innovation capacity that complement public provision.

At the same time, the findings also highlight risks associated with rapid market-oriented expansion in the absence of effective quality assurance. Weak regulatory oversight may lead to uneven academic standards, credential inflation and reputational challenges for the higher education system. These issues reinforce the importance of maintaining strong regulatory and quality assurance mechanisms under socialization.

5.5. Socialization in the Context of Economic Transition and Globalization

The necessity of higher education socialization in Vietnam is closely connected to the country's transition from a centrally planned economy to a socialist-oriented market economy. This transition has reshaped the roles of key actors within the higher education system. The State increasingly focuses on regulation and coordination, universities operate with greater autonomy, and enterprises play a more active role in workforce development and skills formation.

Globalization has further intensified these changes. As knowledge, technology and human capital become increasingly important for national competitiveness, higher education systems face growing pressure to align with international standards while maintaining public values and social objectives. In this context, socialization enables Vietnam to mobilize both domestic and international resources, strengthen institutional adaptability and support higher education modernization.

5.6. Summary of Discussion

Overall, the discussion suggests that higher education socialization in Vietnam should be understood as a multidimensional governance strategy rather than merely a financial solution. Its development is shaped by fiscal constraints, institutional reform, quality demands and pressures associated with economic transition and globalization.

When effectively governed, socialization can expand access, improve institutional performance and strengthen system sustainability. However, weak regulatory capacity and excessive dependence on household contributions may undermine equity and long-term development objectives. These findings provide an important foundation for the policy implications presented in the following section.

5.7. Research Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the analysis primarily relies on secondary data and policy documents rather than primary survey or interview data. Second, the study focuses mainly on governance and policy dimensions of higher education socialization in Vietnam and therefore does not provide institution-level comparative analysis. Third, due to data limitations, several indicators related to private investment, public-private partnerships and university financial performance remain insufficiently standardized across institutions. Future research could incorporate empirical surveys, case studies and comparative institutional analysis to provide deeper insights into the implementation and outcomes of higher education socialization in Vietnam.

6. Policy Implications

Based on the findings of this study, several policy implications can be identified to improve the effectiveness, sustainability and equity of higher education socialization in Vietnam. These implications emphasize governance coherence, diversified institutional development and the strategic mobilization of social resources under effective state regulation.

6.1. Strengthening the Legal and Institutional Framework

A coherent legal and institutional framework is essential for effective higher education socialization. Although Vietnam has introduced policies related to university autonomy, private-sector participation and higher education reform, the regulatory environment remains fragmented, particularly regarding governance arrangements, public-private partnerships and investment procedures.

Given the relatively low level of public expenditure on higher education, legal reforms should prioritize regulatory clarity, administrative simplification and stronger incentive mechanisms for socially oriented investment. Potential measures include tax incentives for educational donations, support for non-profit institutions and clearer regulations governing public-private cooperation.

At the same time, greater institutional autonomy should be accompanied by stronger accountability, transparency and performance-based oversight. A stable and transparent regulatory framework would allow higher education socialization to function as a long-term governance strategy rather than a short-term response to fiscal pressure.

6.2. Diversifying Institutional Types and Delivery Models

Institutional diversification represents an important mechanism for expanding access and mobilizing non-state resources. Under conditions of limited public funding, the public university system alone cannot fully meet growing demands for scale, quality and research capacity. The development of non-public, non-profit, foreign-invested and internationally collaborative institutions therefore plays a complementary role within the higher education system.

Evidence from this study suggests that diversified institutional models, particularly those with flexible governance structures and strong industry linkages, can improve graduate employability and training quality. Expanding community colleges, open universities and digital learning platforms may also improve access for learners in disadvantaged regions.

Effective diversification, however, requires differentiated institutional missions and clear role allocation in order to reduce duplication, improve system coherence and support more strategic allocation of public resources.

6.3. Expanding Public-Private Partnerships in Higher Education

Public-private partnerships (PPP) provide important opportunities for mobilizing additional resources for infrastructure development, research and innovation in higher education. Through PPP arrangements, universities and enterprises can jointly invest in laboratories, digital infrastructure, research centers and student support facilities.

However, PPP implementation in Vietnam remains limited due to unclear legal frameworks, complex administrative procedures and weak risk-sharing mechanisms. Policy reforms should therefore prioritize clearer contractual regulations, transparent ownership arrangements and targeted incentives for private investment in higher education.

Universities also need stronger institutional capacity to design and manage PPP projects effectively. When appropriately governed, PPP can strengthen university-industry collaboration and support both educational quality and innovation capacity.

6.4. Developing University Endowment and Socialization Funds

The development of university endowment and socialization funds represents a strategic solution for creating sustainable financial resources beyond tuition fees and state budgets. International experience shows that well-managed endowment funds can support scholarships, research activities and long-term institutional development.

In Vietnam, however, university development funds remain limited in both scale and governance capacity. Policy priorities should therefore focus on establishing clearer legal frameworks, transparent financial management mechanisms and stronger accountability standards in fund operation. Tax incentives and independent auditing mechanisms may also help strengthen donor confidence and long-term sustainability.

In addition, universities should strengthen fundraising capacity, expand alumni engagement and explore innovative financing mechanisms to diversify revenue sources and support institutional autonomy.

6.5. Strengthening Alumni Engagement

Alumni networks represent an important but underutilized resource within Vietnam's higher education system. International experience demonstrates that alumni contributions can provide both financial support and broader institutional benefits through scholarships, mentoring, internships and professional networking.

To strengthen alumni engagement, universities should develop comprehensive alumni databases, improve financial transparency and establish long-term engagement strategies. Beyond fundraising, alumni participation can contribute to institutional reputation, accountability and stronger university-society linkages.

6.6. Promoting Technology Transfer and Innovation

Technology transfer and innovation activities provide an important pathway for improving both the financial sustainability and social relevance of higher education institutions. At present, revenue from research commercialization and technology transfer in Vietnamese universities remains relatively limited compared with regional benchmarks.

Policy support should therefore focus on strengthening innovation ecosystems through research centers, business incubators, university spin-offs and stronger enterprise collaboration. Improving intellectual property regulations, expanding incentives for enterprise-funded research and increasing targeted investment in strategic research areas are also important policy priorities.

When effectively integrated into university functions, technology transfer can reduce dependence on tuition revenue, strengthen research impact and support the long-term sustainability of higher education socialization.

7. Conclusion

Higher education socialization has become an important strategic direction for Vietnam in the context of economic transition and increasing integration into the global knowledge economy. This study shows that although Vietnam's higher education system has experienced significant expansion in institutional scale, diversification and social participation, public investment in higher education remains limited relative to growing development demands. At the same time, non-state resources including enterprise investment, alumni contributions, public-private partnerships and technology transfer revenue remain fragmented and insufficient to function as stable drivers of long-term system development.

The findings further indicate that higher education socialization should not be understood solely as a financial response to fiscal pressure. Rather, it represents a broader governance process through which responsibilities for investment, management and educational development are increasingly shared between the State and society. The effectiveness of this process depends on regulatory coherence, diversified institutional models, sustainable financing mechanisms and stronger collaboration among universities, enterprises and communities.

This study contributes to the literature by examining higher education socialization from a governance and public policy perspective rather than treating it only as a cost-sharing mechanism. The Vietnamese experience also provides useful insights into how higher education systems in developing and middle-income countries respond to fiscal constraints and increasing demand for higher education.

The analysis suggests that strengthening regulatory frameworks, expanding public-private partnerships, developing university endowment funds, enhancing alumni engagement and promoting technology transfer are important policy directions for improving the sustainability and effectiveness of higher education socialization. When implemented in a coordinated manner, these measures can support institutional autonomy, improve educational quality and strengthen research capacity within the higher education system.

Overall, higher education socialization should be viewed as a long-term governance strategy embedded within national development objectives rather than as a short-term fiscal adjustment. When effectively governed, socialization has the potential to support a higher education system that is more sustainable, inclusive and internationally integrated while contributing to Vietnam's long-term socio-economic development.

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