

To cite this article: Truong Thuy Dung (2023). U.S. INSTITUTIONS' ENGAGEMENT IN THE EDUCATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM - AN UNCONVENTIONAL PATH IN THE WAR CONTEXT (1954-1975), International Journal of Education and Social Science Research (IJESSR) 6 (3): 58-74 Article No. 773, Sub Id 1229

U.S. INSTITUTIONS' ENGAGEMENT IN THE EDUCATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM - AN UNCONVENTIONAL PATH IN THE WAR CONTEXT (1954-1975)

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DOI : <https://doi.org/10.37500/IJESSR.2023.6306>

ABSTRACT

Whether it comes from the desire to build a solid pro-American government in South Vietnam of the United States or from the aspiration for independent development of the Republic of Vietnam government, we can see that the two governments, the United States and the Republic of Vietnam, did cooperate in developing civil affairs, such as education, rather than solely focused on military issues during wartime. This study by analyzing the involvement of U.S. institutions in the education of the Republic of Vietnam in the years 1954-1975 with three studied cases: SEADAG, The Center for Vietnamese Studies and Programs at Southern Illinois University, and the Asia Foundation, not only contributes to pointing out the characteristics of the United States - Republic of Vietnam's cooperation in education in the twentieth century but also provides an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding about South Vietnam in another face of the war. Based on research findings, this study also hopes to review trends and lessons learned in building cooperative relations between two countries.

KEYWORDS: Education, Republic of Vietnam, U.S. Institution, Vietnam, Cooperation

INTRODUCTION

Reminiscing about Vietnam in the twentieth century, impressions of protracted wars, especially the Second Indochina War (1954-1975), widely known as the Vietnam War, often overwhelm military impressions of other problems. In the context of the war, when the confrontational trend became mainstream, many trends still occurred, having a lasting and decisive influence on international relations – i.e., the cooperation between the two countries in civil affairs, such as education. Although not many, some studies on education in the Republic of Vietnam have been published by both Vietnamese and foreign scholars in the last decades. Few of them study the influence of the United States on the Republic of Vietnam's education.

In a short essay, “Aspect of Recent Educational Change in South Vietnam,” Joseph Dodd presented a view on the development of South Vietnam education, primarily pointing out the altered aspects of education during Vietnamese history. The author elucidated and analyzed the changes in both quantity and quality assessments through three prominent educational paradigms, the pre-French educational system, which the Chinese model deeply influenced; the French system; and the

American system in the Independent Period, when the Americans engaged significantly in the educational affairs in South Vietnam. In his study, Dodd had to admit that in the nature of the education system, notably higher education, the French influences continued to impact and even dominated the American influences.

Sharing a similar perspective with Dodd, in the essay of Nguyen, Thuy Phuong, “The Rivalry of the French and American Educational Missions during the Vietnam War,” researched the involvement of French and Americans in the education of Vietnam in the twentieth century, the author admitted, in general, the French educational model and its effects continued to be eminent in the Vietnamese educational system until the late 1970s. She also elucidated reasons which enabled the French model to achieve more than the American model. Not only did the French have the advantage of a much longer presence, and moreover, the similarities of the French educational model with the conventional model, but also the situation worsened for the Americans as they confronted a myriad of obstacles during wartime.

While the two above-mentioned works elucidate the changing in the model of RVN’s education; the dissertation of Larry D. Lagow, *A History of the Center for Vietnamese Studies at Southern Illinois University, 1969–1976*, is a case study, clarifies the close connection of the United States and South Vietnam in cultural and educational activities through an individual institution. In this work, Lagow pointed out specific Southern Illinois University (SIU) activities from 1969 to 1976 and realized its achievements. For almost seven years, the Center tried to study and disseminate Vietnamese knowledge and culture to Americans. Furthermore, he also pointed out that the Center for Vietnamese Studies in Southern Illinois had to face myriad adversaries, which limited the accomplishments of the Center.

Nguyen Thanh Liem’s work, an edited book, *Giáo dục ở miền Nam tự do trước 1975* [Education in South Vietnam before 1975], brought a more comprehensive view on the RVN’s education system and its issues. This book comprised many retrospectives of educators, teachers, and educational managers, who worked under the government of the Republic of Vietnam. Aside from illustrating a comprehensive view of the education system of South Vietnam during the terms of the First and the Second Republic, the authors endeavored to give insights into the fundamental factors of the education system in South Vietnam, including educational leaders, educational concepts and organizations, and lastly educational institutions. The above matters were the four most important points the authors presented and analyzed in their works.

The previous works provide the foundation for us to explore intensively the educational cooperation between the United States and the Republic of Vietnam. However, unlike published studies, this study does not delve into changes in the model or evaluate the influence of the United States or other countries on Vietnam’s education. Instead, the paper focuses on clarifying the cooperation activities between American organizations and RVN’s educational institutions in 1954-1975 and points out the

characteristics of these activities. The research findings allow us to reach another face of South Vietnam in the war context, then examine the determination of the RVN's educators to seize opportunities to develop education. Further, based on this research, we can also draw lessons for educational cooperation in particular or principles for maintaining international cooperation in general. With the scope of an article, it is overambitious to mention all the U.S. organizations and agencies that had educational cooperation activities with the Republic of Vietnam from 1954 to 1975. This study only selected three typical cases considered the epitome of different aspects of educational cooperation, namely SEADAG, The Center for Vietnamese Studies and Programs at Southern Illinois University, and the Asia Foundation.

Material and methods: This study is based on two types of sources that serve to research inquiries. Of those, primary sources play the most prominent role, including hundreds of pages collected from diverse collections and fonds located in the National Archives II (Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam), The Vietnam Center and Archive (Texas, the United States), as well as local- based and digital archives and libraries.

To solve the research tasks, the author conducts research by visiting several distance archives and libraries to collect as many documents as possible that mention the Republic of Vietnam's education and the engagement of U.S. institutions in facilitating South Vietnam's education during 1954-1975. In addition to the archival and published materials, this study will apply interdisciplinary studying methods, such as analytical, synthetical, and comparative methods, to clarify all research issues.

SEADAG – Southeast Asian Development Advisory Group

SEADAG was formed in June 1965 and was funded by the United States Agency for International Development through a contract with the Asia Society (Letter to SEADAG Members, 01 August 1966). The members of SEADAG included American academicians with a professional interest in Southeast Asia. Most came from universities across the United States, and some were the experts of The Rockefeller Foundation, Ford Foundation, and The Asia Foundation.

In the beginning stages, SEADAG had clearly defined the core problems which would be discussed and tackled during its operation. Among the suggested matters from SEADAG members in their research seminars, it could be observed that this organization drew special attention to the RVN compared to other Southeast Asian countries in the 1960s and early 1970s. Moreover, among a variety of issues, the issue of education development was primary. Specifically, there was the Council on Vietnamese Studies in the SEADAG. The operating scope of this Council was six critical matters, comprising Vietnamese Studies, Research Completion Grants, Translations, Graduate Students, the Library Resources Program, Conferences on Vietnam, and the Clearing House and Inventory (Program of Vietnamese Studies, 20 March 1967).

In 1968, the SEADAG Research Fund was initiated. This created more chances for researchers to study a range of aspects of Asian countries (Memo to Members of SEADAG, 16 October 1968). One of the main goals of SEADAG was to inspire broader and profounder research programs in the social sciences on problems relevant to Southeast Asian development. In this regard, many projects on South Vietnam’s social and political studies were conducted by SEADAG members in the 1960s and 1970s. Below are examples of those projects.

Table 1. Applications for SEADAG Research Grant

Title	Date	Applicant	Institution	Amount of Grant Requested (in \$ US)
Direction of changes in Vietnamese villages from Tet Offensive, 1968 to July, 1969	1968	Joseph M. Hoc	Boston College	21,200
The changing composition of the political elite in South Vietnam as reflected in persons holding national office since 1954	1969	Wesley R. Fishel	Michigan State University	10,900
A study of political development under conditions of internal war in South Vietnam, which will focus upon the current and future role of the 1967 Lower House as an emerging political institution and its membership as an emerging elite	1969	Allan. E. Goodman	John F. Kennedy School and Department of Government	10,217
A study of the effects of long-term Viet Cong/Viet Minh control on rural Vietnamese social structure and attitude and value orientations of the Delta peasantry	1969	Neil Jamieson and Terry Rambo	Human Sciences Research	38,375
Blue-Eagle Television for South Vietnam	1969	Ron Hull	University of Nebraska Lincoln	2,000

Measurement of development levels, systems & change by socio-structural methods: A Giang Province, Vietnam and Northeast Thailand	1969	Harold E. Voelkner	Cornell University	29,987
Analysis of CBS Vietnam survey	1969	David O.D. Wurfel	Department of Asian Studies, University of Windsor	7,000
The relationship between economic change and peasant organizations in Vietnamese villages	1969	Samuel Lewis Popkin	Center for International Affairs, Harvard University	22,670
Initiatory activities in developing a study of village development, organization and village politics in Vietnam	1969	Council on Vietnamese Studies	SEADAG	17,338
Post-Election behavior and attitudes of defeated Vietnamese candidates for Election to the Lower House	1971	Jerry M. Silverman	McMaster University	16,478
Social and Cultural Change in Rural Vietnam – A Longitudinal Study	1973	Terry Rambo (with Neil Jamieson)	University of Hawaii	14,980

Source: Combined information from “Application for SEADAG Research Grant”.

Due to the academic characteristic of SEADAG, the intensive involvement of universities, and the primary method of this organization which promotes joint studies by Asian and American social scientists, many staff from RVN universities engaged and cooperated in these projects to help American experts conduct their studies. For instance, Dr. Nguyen Thi Hue, Professor of Sociology at the National Institute of Administration, and Dr. Ton That Thien, Professor of Sociology at the

Van Hanh University, worked on Terry Rambo's project. Or in another project, that of Jamieson and Rambo, two students in the fourth year from the University of Saigon, Mr. Doan Van Toai and Mr. Nguyen Van Nhang, participated in the project's operation (Application for SEADAG Research Grant, No Date). As indicated, the cooperated policy involved two nations of SEADAG subjected to not only Vietnamese scholars but also Vietnamese graduate students. Apparently, both SEADAG and South Vietnamese students benefited from those activities due to shared interests from this cooperation.

Not only participating in research projects, many South Vietnamese scholars, especially the professors from RVN public universities, also cooperated and played a notable role in the seminars and meetings of the SEADAG. A number of prominent names could be listed, such as Prof. Nguyen Duy Xuan (the University of Can Tho), Prof. Tran Vy (the University of Saigon), and Prof. Le Thanh Minh Chau (the University of Hue) (SEADAG Chairman's Report, 01 July 1972-30 June 1973).

The Center for Vietnamese Studies and Programs at Southern Illinois University

The shift of the United States in its global foreign policies in the late 1960s combined with the optimistic signs among the relationships of the United States, the People's Republic of China, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics germinated the great hope for peace, ending the protracted war in South Vietnam. Along with the withdrawal of the American troops from Vietnam beginning in 1969, American experts prioritized assisting South Vietnam in conducting postwar reconstruction projects. In that context, the Center of Vietnamese Studies and Programs was established at Southern Illinois University to adapt to new tasks. The Southern Illinois University engaged in educational activities in South Vietnam at the preliminary stages, officially in 1961, by fulfilling the contract with USAID to assist South Vietnam in technology and elementary education. The contract was extended several times and ended in 1971 after ten years of its implementation and operation (Lagow, 1978, p.60).

The Center for Vietnamese Studies at Southern Illinois University has achieved notable accomplishments based on many programs, such as the library, journal, conference, seminar, research, translation, Vietnamese Language, sister university, etc. The initial object of the training task of this Center aimed at veterans of the Vietnam War. However, in its operating years, the program of the Center was designed not exclusively for veterans but available for any interested persons.

All operations were predicated on the principle of cooperation between the Republic of Vietnam and American experts and educators. The responsibilities of facilitating RVN higher education and improving the American understanding of Vietnam was equally shared. This was evidenced in every aspect. For instance, when an award was granted to a Vietnamese, another would be bestowed to an American. Vietnamese and Americans alternatively assumed positions of the Chair of this Center for three years. The Center for Vietnamese Studies and Programs at Southern Illinois University did not

work separately but in collaboration with other U.S. universities and institutions, which were the Associated Universities for International Education members.

To meet the aim of the principal repository of Vietnamese materials in the United States, an enormous budget and immense efforts of Southern Illinois University's staff were invested in the section of the library during its six-year operation. In the summer of 1969, with the help of Charles T. Ladwig as an external consultant, orders were placed for 800 titles in the social sciences and humanities costing more than US\$ 10,000, and in October, the Center obligated another US\$ 10,000 (Lagow, 1978, p.150). In year two (from July 1, 1970 to June 30, 1971), US\$ 27,231 was allocated for the library section to collect all relevant documents (Lagow, 1978, p.287). The investment for the library program continued increasing in year three (from July 1, 1971 to June 30, 1972) and year four (from July 1, 1972 to June 30, 1973) with US\$ 30,077,18 and US\$ 29,876,03, respectively (Lagow, 1978, p.648-649). In year five (from July 1, 1973 to June 30, 1974) and year six (from July 1, 1974 to June 30, 1975), the figures were in a noticeable decline, nonetheless remaining a considerable investment with US\$ 10,919,5 and US\$ 13,438,37 (Lagow, 1978, p.650-651).

Together with the collections of Vietnamese studies-related materials, the Center also prioritized the task of publishing documents on Vietnamese studies. Joining the editorial phase were numerous South Vietnamese educators, namely Prof. Thich Minh Chau, Prof. Nguyen Huu Chau, Prof. Nguyen Khac Kham, Prof. Nguyen The Anh, Prof. Nguyen Van Trung, Prof. Ton That Thien, and Prof. Vu Van Mau (Lagow, 1978, p.252). During six years, 58 works (Lagow, 1978, p.636-640) were published by both Vietnamese and American professors, which concentrated on diverse matters of Vietnamese Studies. For example, Prof. Nguyen Dinh Hoa with *Colloquial Vietnamese* - a textbook for intermediate level, Prof. Donald E. Voth with *Seeking to Understand the Highland People*, Prof. William Turley with *Women in the Communist Revolution in Vietnam*, and Prof. Terry Rambo with *Comparison of Peasant Social Systems of Northern and Southern Vietnam: A Study of Ecological Adaptation, Social Succession and Cultural Evolution*. Noticeably, in the list of publications, the works of Vietnamese educators accounted for one-third, whereby Prof. Nguyen Dinh Hoa was acknowledged for his impressive contribution to ten publications.

In order to enhance the close relationships with sister universities in South Vietnam, more and more South Vietnamese professors were invited to Southern Illinois University through the years. For the spring quarter of 1970, Nghiem Xuan Thien performed duties as a visiting professor in the Department of Journalism (Lagow, 1978, p.248). For the 1970–1971 academic year, Nguyen Khac Hoach accepted an invitation from Southern Illinois University to research and lecture in the Department of Foreign Languages (Lagow, 1978, p.249). In year three, Prof. Chen Ching Ho, formerly at the University of Hue, was invited to contribute to the Center. In conducting the Ethnomusicology project, two professors, Nguyen Vinh Bao from Saigon and Tran Van Khe from Paris, were invited to join Pham Duy in developing a Vietnamese music collection. A mutual exchange agreement between the University and the Bureau of Cultural Affairs of the U.S

Department resulted in a visiting professorship of Duong Dinh Khoi, an anthropologist and Secretary General of the University of Hue, in the fall quarter of 1971 (Lagow, 1978, p.309). In year four, Duong Duc Nhu of the Faculty of Letters of the University of Saigon sojourned for six months at SIU, researching linguistics (Lagow, 1978, p.310).

The other positive results of the Center for Vietnamese Studies illustrate the close cooperation among South Vietnamese, American, and other renowned foreign educators in designing courses for Vietnamese Studies programs. In the fall quarter of 1969, Wesley Fishel conducted two courses: 1) *Political Development and Behavior: Vietnam*; 2) *Seminar in Government Problems: Vietnam*. With the assistance of Nguyen Thi Kim Sa, Prof. Nguyen Dinh Hoa offered a course in *Elementary Vietnamese*. This course continued to the winter quarter of 1969–1970, along with a newly-added course - *Advanced Vietnamese*. In the spring quarter of 1970, aside from the two mentioned courses of Prof. Nguyen Dinh Hoa, Wesley Fishel offered a course on *the Government and Politics of Southeast Asia*. In this quarter, Nghiem Xuan Thien introduced the course on *International Journalism*.

During the summer of 1970, Jean Donaldson of the Summer Institute of Linguistics at Santa Ana, California, and Nguyen Quy Bong of the University of Saigon offered these courses: *Intensive Lao and Education in Vietnam*; Prof. Nguyen Dinh Hoa added a new course, *Intermediate Vietnamese*; the visiting professor Nguyen Khac Hoach (formerly Dean of the Faculty of Letters at the University of Saigon) introduced *Survey of Vietnamese Literature*; additionally, many courses were offered by American professors, such as *Politics of Vietnam: North and South* by Professor I. Milton Sacks, *Government and Politics: Southeast Asia* and *Seminar on Comparative Politics: Vietnam* by Prof. Wesley Fishel. In year two - the intensive Vietnam year, several lectures were offered concerning Vietnamese affairs, such as *History of Vietnam* by Joseph Buttinger, *Education in North Vietnam* by Vu Tam Ich, *Grammatical Structure* by Nguyen Dang Liem, *Vietnamese Education* by Nguyen Quy Bong, and *The Role of Buddhism in Vietnamese Law* by Vu Van Mau. Early in year three, William Turley joined the Faculty of the Department of Government, initiating two courses: *Government and Politics* and *Seminar in International Relations and Problems: Southeast Asia*. During year four of the grant, Prof. Turley took a leave of absence to serve as visiting professor at the Faculty of Letters at the University of Saigon. In addition to Prof. Turley, another member of SIU, Prof. Mabelle Nardin of the Linguistics Department also served in year four as a visiting professor at the Faculty of Letters at the University of Saigon. In year three and year four, Prof. Chen Ching Ho presented a series of public lectures on Vietnamese history. Additionally, some new aspects of Vietnamese Studies were presented in these years, such as *Cai Luong Theater in Vietnam* by Duane Huach and *Graduate Education in Vietnamese Universities* by Le Van Diem (the University of Can Tho) (Lagow, 1978, p.249- 645).

The Asia Foundation

The Asia Foundation is a non-profit, non-political organization founded in 1951, and its headquarters is based in San Francisco. The Asia Foundation has carried out cooperation and assistance activities with Asian countries in various fields, including cultural development, education, and other civic programs since its establishment (The Asia Foundation, 01 March 1964).

In 1956-1975, the Asia Foundation's programs focused on auxiliary aspects supporting the RVN's education, including finance, educational materials, and facilities. These activities contributed to supplementing and completing the educational support and cooperation program of the United States in South Vietnam during wartime.

With the sponsorship of the Asia Foundation, many research and academic programs of the RVN's universities were implemented. In June 1962, the School of Science at the University of Hue held a workshop on experimental methods and teaching facilities for teachers of Science based on the Foundation's financial support. The workshop attracted the participation of 23 high school teachers and graduate students of the University of Hue. Accompany by the Asia Foundation, USOM also generously supported this workshop (University of Hue, No Date).

During 1964-1966, the Asia Foundation's representative office in Saigon provided financial support for two RVN's diplomats' trip to Korea and India. In 1965, the Asia Foundation also sponsored a trip to Saigon for Mr. Waldemar J. Gallman, a former U.S. Ambassador, to teach a short course on diplomatic practice. The Asia Foundation also paid Mr. Gallman to serve as an advisor in developing the center's diplomatic training program (Tài liệu về tổ chức). Mr. Gallman recommended establishing a Foreign Service Training Center, which began operation at the end of 1966. To promote the center's activities, the Asia Foundation provided furniture, books, and specialized materials for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs library.

Providing scholarships for projects and research topics related to Vietnam was another aspect the Asia Foundation supported for the RVN's education. For example, Ta Van Tai, a former student who later became a professor at the School of Literature as well as the School of Law, University of Saigon, received a scholarship from the Asia Foundation to conduct research on Electoral Politics in South Vietnam. This work was co-written with many other American scholars (Ta Van Tai, No Date).

The annual budget of approximately US\$ 250,000 to US\$ 300,000 was distributed rationally and effectively in providing financial support to research projects in South Vietnam in the years 1956-1975. During 12 years (1956-1968), the Asia Foundation provided US\$ 1,800,000 to educational institutions, groups, and individuals in Vietnam. In addition, the Foundation covered the expenses to research and drafting of the Criminal Code, Criminal Procedure, Civil Procedure, Commercial Law and re-compile a number of legal documents issued in the previous period (Tài liệu về tổ chức).

A 1966 report on American non-profit organizations' activities also outlined the Asia Foundation's critical activities in South Vietnam. With a budget of US\$ 300,000, the Asia Foundation allocated three main groups of activities, comprising education, public policy, and social work. Under the Second Republic of Vietnam period (1967-1975), educational cooperation and support programs were extended to private universities, such as Da Lat University and Van Hanh University. The total budget for cooperation and support programs at Van Hanh University was US\$ 63,000, of which the budget for teacher training at this institution costs US\$ 49,500. This budget was used to provide three scholarships for graduate students studying in the United States during the three-year course with the amount of about US\$ 5,500/person/year (Hồ sơ kiểm soát ngân khoản).

Noticeably, for each university, the Asia Foundation focused on distinct cooperation issues. At the University of Saigon, they paid attention to scientific research; at the Dalat University, they focused on business and economics seminars; Van Hanh University was sponsored to develop faculties and libraries, while at the University of Can Tho, the Asia Foundation worked more on cooperation in publishing (TAICH, March 1967).

The Asia Foundation worked with other U.S. organizations, such as the International Rescue Committee, American Friends of Vietnam, CARE, and Newland Foundation, to donate 2/3 of the total 10,000 books to the library at the University of Hue. Of these, 1,000 French books and 300 English books and art books were sent to the University of Hue in responding to the order of Director Cao Van Luan. In addition, the Asia Foundation and the above organizations also facilitated laboratory equipment and facilities for the institution. For example, the Asia Foundation donated US\$ 1,000 to purchase equipment for classrooms and laboratories of the School of Midwifery, University of Hue. The Foundation also sent a set of audio recorders along with microphones, amplifiers, and speakers for teaching purposes to this University.

In September 1970, the Asia Foundation granted a grant of US\$ 15,000 to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to build and equip a Study and Research Room for the Ministry's Training Center. This office was built at Pasteur Street 101, Saigon. Of the total budget spent on this item, US\$ 10,000 was transferred directly to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the construction of the office; the remaining US\$ 5,000 was paid by the Asia Foundation for the procurement of equipment for the office according to the list proposed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition to the financial support, the Asia Foundation also supports a large number of good books, serving the activities of the Training Center under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Viet- Nam Bulletin, 28 September 1970).

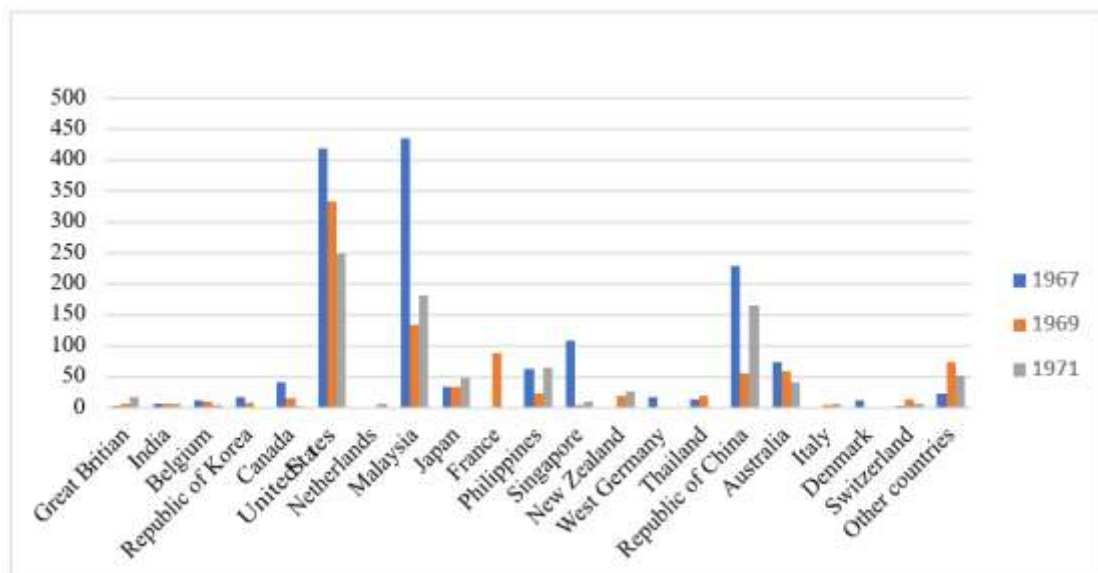
In 1971, the Asia Foundation spent US\$ 1,500 to equip the library of Dalat University and US\$ 7,000 to purchase special reference materials. Similarly, Van Hanh University also received US\$ 2,000 for this expenditure. In another category, the budget for procurement of laboratory equipment, tools, and school supplies was invested more by the Asia Foundation with the figure of US\$ 3,500 for Dalat University and US\$ 25,000 for Van Hanh University (Hồ sơ kiểm soát ngân khoản).

Perceiving another face of the Vietnam War based on educational development

It cannot be denied that the conflicts in the 1950s to 1970s caused lingering-impact tragedies for Vietnamese people and other engaged parties. Albeit, as mentioned, the confrontation might be mainstream but could not be the sole tendency in South Vietnam society in the mid-20th century. In the war context and the involvement of many allied nations, as well as generous subsidy from the United States, the RVN’s authorities and educators did not miss the opportunity to take advantage of these factors to develop education in South Vietnam. The transformation of the education of the Republic of Vietnam from the French elite model to the American mass education is not a contingent process but illustrates massive efforts for the long- term development goals of the RVN government.

Promoting cooperation between the RVN’s education institutions and U.S. organizations opened up more opportunities for Vietnamese students to study in the United States by the national budget, foreign scholarships, and self-sufficiency. From 1967 to 1970, in conducting the project of Leadership Training, also known as General Scholarship Program, four groups with 273 South Vietnamese participants were sent to the United States (Báo cáo kiểm tra). In the fiscal year 1973, USAID produced a substantial budget of US\$ 3,404,000 for South Vietnam’s officials in order to take part in the overseas-training programs (Tài liệu của Phủ Thủ tướng). This budget was distributed predominantly to educational fields, including Agriculture, Engineering, Industry, Labor, Public Administration, and Health.

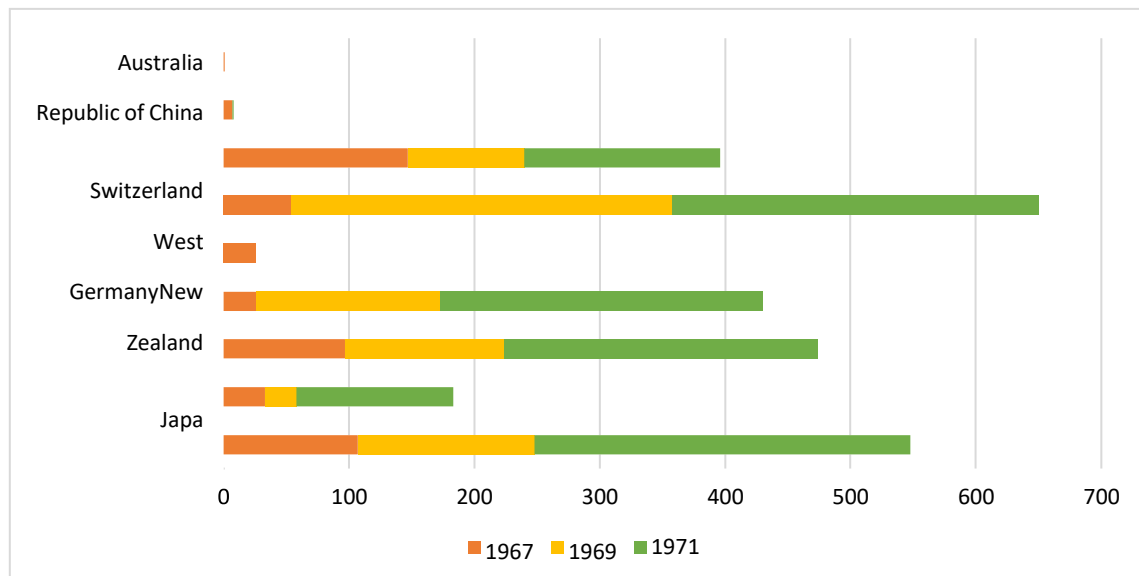
Figure 1. South Vietnamese Scholarship Holders by the Countries of Study



Source: Combined statistics from Việt Nam Cộng hoà, Niên giám thống kê Việt Nam 1967–1968, 1969, 1972, [Statistical Yearbooks of Vietnam], Viện Quốc gia thống kê.

It can be observed that the interest of students was not distributed equally to all mentioned countries but focused on specific countries, such as the United States, Malaysia, Australia, and the Republic of China. In 1967, the number of scholarship holders going to Malaysia for their training was somewhat higher compared to the figure in the United States. Nevertheless, in general, the United States became the most favorite destination for South Vietnamese students in the three years of 1967, 1969, and 1971 (see Figure 1). Sharing common interests with the national-granted students and the international scholarship holders, West Germany and the United States ranked as the first and the second, respectively, of the destination choices for South Vietnamese self-financed overseas students (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Self-financed Overseas Students by the Countries of Study



Source: Combined statistics from Việt Nam Cộng hoà, Niên giám thống kê Việt Nam 1967–1968, 1969, 1972, [Statistical Yearbooks of Vietnam], Viện Quốc gia thống kê.

It can be seen that the three organizations focus on different aspects or conduct distinct tasks when cooperating with RVN's educational institutions. SEADAG demonstrated its strengths in supporting research projects, the Center for Vietnamese Studies and Programs at Southern Illinois University focused on publishing and teaching activities, while the Asia Foundation paid more attention to financial support and educational facilities for RVN's educational institutions. The issue of specializing tasks is a principle in the educational cooperation activities of the United States with the RVN's government. Specialization in tasks will promote the strengths of each organization, then making the highest efficiency in each field. This was maintained during both the First and Second republics in South Vietnam. For example, regarding Agriculture Education, the University of Florida began to assist South Vietnam in training human resources, designing agricultural plans, and supplying

education materials for Agricultural Education in South Vietnam. In the field of Engineering Education, the University of Missouri-Rolla handled all related problems of this education, ranging from recommendations to develop engineering education in South Vietnam, sponsoring technical instruments, to evaluating the program's efficiency. Responding to the lack of teaching staff, Ohio University extended its contract with USAID to help in teacher training programs (Report-USAID/Vietnam, 1969).

The educational activities between U.S. organizations and RVN's educational institutions pointed out relatively equal cooperation between the two sides stemming from their demands. On the Vietnamese side, they aimed to build internal strength and necessary human resources for South Vietnam in the postwar period. On the U.S. side, there was a requirement for a deeper understanding of Vietnamese issues in order to plan policies in line with the new U.S. strategies in this region. Therefore, when launching cooperation programs, it was not only based on U.S. resources but mainly on the actual demands of the RVN government. This is evident in the adjustment of priorities for educational development under the coordination of USAID/VN. The priority investment of USAID on RVN education was not the same but diverse in each period. From 1954 until 1965, they focused on the qualitative improvement of teacher training institutions at all levels. Due to the change of the governmental policies of the RVN, which gave the preferences to pacification activities, the program of the USAID focused on constructing schools and equipping classrooms. Furthermore, from the late 1960s to the early 1970s, the scope narrowed to planning and higher education matters.

From the studies on the educational cooperation of American organizations with RVN's educational institutions in 1954-1975, we can draw some principles or experiences for development tasks of Vietnam's education recently. First of all, it can be seen that education development is a permanent and decisive task for each country; regardless of the circumstances, even in the severe context, one can still take advantage of opportunities to promote education. Education in the Republic of Vietnam is an example that can be referenced. In cooperation, it is necessary to show initiatives and propose the essential requirements and goals of the country to develop appropriate educational programs instead of passively waiting for random support projects from partners. This can be seen as a general principle in any fields of cooperation, not just limited to the realm of education.

The consequences of the war have left unhealing wounds in the hearts of Vietnamese and American society. However, from studying the process of cooperation in educational development in the context of the war, we can see another face of this war, i.e., humanity affairs' cooperation, that could help reduce the pain for people suffering war tragedies. Many former U.S. agencies and organizations, who used to work in Vietnam during the war, returned to Vietnam after the two countries normalized relations. Their return promotes U.S. cooperation in education with Vietnam today and proves that humanity values lasts longer than any military conflicts.

CONCLUSION

The cooperation between RVN higher education and the United States was not set up directly between the American institutions and the South Vietnamese universities but through the coordination of the USAID/VN. By signing the contracts with USAID, each American university and educational institute took responsibility for specific assistance for RVN education. The cooperation activities of SEADAG, The Center for Vietnamese Studies and Programs at Southern Illinois University, and the Asia Foundation, on the one hand, show the diversity and comprehensiveness in the contents of cooperation between U.S. organizations and RVN's institutions, which includes research projects, teaching, publishing, educational facilities, and financial support. On the other hand, it demonstrates the specialization and strengths of each organization to maximize efficiency in cooperation activities and avoid duplication of tasks.

The involvement of U.S. organizations in Vietnam in several aspects represents a new face of South Vietnam in the war context, which has not been exploited in the previous research works by both Vietnamese and foreign scholars. In the context of the war, military allies could still become educational partners, and the educators of the Republic of Vietnam made good use of that opportunity for their development goals.

Although the government of the Republic of Vietnam has collapsed, the educational values that this government built still exist and continue to contribute to the development goals of present education in Vietnam. The experience of cooperation of the RVN government with partners from the United States not only gives us lessons in the field of education but also experience in handling cooperation and international relations in general.

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