Vietnam seeks to give autonomy to state universities

A plan, if accepted, could confer autonomy on state-funded universities in Vietnam with full legal person status and the right to decide on all issues without intervention from the government.

The Hanoi-based National Education Council is drafting a plan to abolish the present mechanism under which ministries manage universities. The 20-year-old system sees public universities seeking permission from their ministries for all actions and, often, passively awaiting their orders.

Sometimes it leads to delay awaiting permission to make minor changes that are not understood clearly by their managing agencies.

This surely stood in the way of improving education quality, Professors Vu Minh Giang and Pham Phu from the National Education Council said.

The council’s proposed plan gives the universities the authority to decide on and bear responsibility for training, research, administration, personnel, and finances.

This wide autonomy would enhance their responsibility and transparency, they explained.

The National Education Council’s reform draft, to be submitted to the government soon, is in line with a recent resolution signed by Prime Minister Phan Van Khai, who is also chairman of the council.

Giang and Phu said that after the old system is abolished the highest authority would rest in university councils, comprising of headmasters, teachers, students, parents, local governments, and even ex-students.

The university councils thus composed would guarantee inspection and supervision by the community and promote the role of mass organizations in supervising the quality of tertiary education, they reasoned.

There are now more than 70 state-owned universities in Vietnam, 24 percent of which are administered by the Ministry of Education and Training.

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Story from Thanh Nien News
Published: 05 January, 2006, 11:16:19 (GMT+7)
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