

The Causes of Passiveness in Learning of Vietnamese Students

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Abstract: This article deals with the passive learning style adopted by many students in the higher education system in Vietnam. This learning style is claimed as no longer inappropriate, or even dangerous for the development of students in the contemporary society, especially at work and in life after graduation. One of the common explanations for this passiveness is the cultural features of the Confucian heritage culture which is claimed to shape students' learning style. Many scholars hold a negative view on this "cultural" learning style. By looking at different claims and assertions on different education stakeholders, including students themselves, their families, the educational management system, policy makers and university lecturers, this article investigates in depth the issue of existing problems in the system relating to students' study. It concludes that there are evidences of cultural factors affecting student learning in class, but the decisive factors affecting students' learning style come from the educational system. With the existing situation in the higher education system in Vietnam, students will continue to adopt the passive learning style, even though they want to adopt it or not. Much work needs to be done for the system before it is hoped that students can be able to develop their autonomous and independent learning and researching style.

Keywords: Higher education, learning style, Vietnam, Vietnamese students, passiveness.

1. Introduction

Vietnamese students were generally viewed as typically obedient, shy and unwilling to question their teachers in class. This learning style does not seem to change much even when these students study at tertiary level. Evidences from different research projects show that the dependent learning style is still popular in the system, and many students still consider

teachers as the main source of knowledge and rarely speak up in class. Thompson, for example, claims that "students are expected to accept the knowledge provided by the instructors as truth" [1], while Stephen *et al* [2] are critical of Vietnamese student learning, describing the process as passive and only involving listening to lectures, taking notes, and reproducing memorized information in exams. The comments on the passive learning style among Vietnamese students can be found in many academic articles and in the media.

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Not only Vietnamese students, but students from other Confucian heritage culture (CHC) countries in Asia such as China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Malaysia or Korea were also claimed to be passive. The image of a “passive, reproductive and surface” learner seems to be attached to Asian culture [3]. Many scholars have tried to create a close link between the traditional passive learning style with the cultural background of Asian students [1, 4-7]. It is suggested that in a CHC, children are expected to be obedient, and to respect people who are older and who have higher rank [8]. Thus teacher should be considered as the ‘found of knowledge’ and students should ‘struggle to attain’ that knowledge [9]. In addition, CHC is also considered as the face saving culture, which means that it is selfish and bad to cause someone to lose face [10]. Thus, students in CHC often ‘attempt to maintain a sense of harmony’ [11] and not often raise their voice or ask questions to challenge teachers in class. This is not only to keep face to the teachers, but also to show respect to them.

Similarly, in Vietnam Thompson [1] suggests that Confucian ethics dominate the mindsets of both teachers and students, and thus students are taught to be obedient from a very young age. As a result, rote learning has become a popular learning style of students from primary school to university. Nguyen Tuong Hung [12] also points out that, Vietnamese students usually keep quiet in class and wait until called upon by the teacher, instead of volunteering to answer questions. He also claims that ‘since keeping quiet in class is to show respect to the teacher as well as to create a productive learning environment, being talkative, interrupting, bragging, or challenging the teacher are not typical of Vietnamese culture’ [5]. However, this obedient, respectful and quiet learning style is claimed to be no

more appropriate for the development of these young people in the modern society. It ruins their creativity and critical thinking; it makes them passive and hard to cope with the real challenges in the globalisation era.

This article is written in response to the above claim of the passive learning style of Vietnamese students. It also aims to challenge the “common sense” [13] criticism that blames cultural features for the passivity among Vietnamese students. The main questions addressed throughout were “What shapes the learning style of the majority of the Vietnamese students?”, and why this passive learning style is still popular, especially when this learning style is considered negative for the development of each and any student who wants to be successful in the contemporary life? In addition, most of the new pedagogies originated from the West (such as “student-centred teaching’, cooperative learning”) and initiated in the system have co-aim of developing students’ autonomous learning style. Why reports on positive changes are still rare?

This paper aims to forward the argument that student learning style depends much on the educational context [14-16]. There are evidences of cultural factors affecting student learning in class, but the decisive factors are coming from the specific educational system, its requirements, the world load placed on students, and also related issues of curricula, exams and supports students receive in their study and other specific problems related to student study context and environment. This paper wants to illustrate the point that students will become passive and surface learners if that’s shaped by the system. By looking at different claims and assertion on different education stakeholders, including students themselves, their families, the educational management system and policy makers, and

university lecturers, this article investigates further into the issue of existing problems in the Vietnamese higher education related to students' study. It concludes that with the existing situation in the higher education system (HES) in Vietnam, students will continue to adopt the passive learning style regardless they want to adopt it or not. Much work need to be done for the system before the expectation of developing student autonomous learning style is to be met.

2. Students

Vietnamese and other Asian CHC students do not appear to appreciate passive learning style. In many research projects, Asian students start raising their voice about the learning style that they currently have to adopt but are not necessary in favour of. Littlewood [17] conducted research with the participation of 2,307 students studying at tertiary level in eight East Asian countries: Brunei, mainland China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam, and 349 students in three European countries: Finland, Germany, and Spain. The study found a similarity in study attitude between these two groups. The students' responses indicated clearly that:

The stereotype of Asian students as passive and obedient listeners - whether or not it is just a reflection of their actual behaviour in class - does not reflect the role they would like to adopt in class. They do not see the teacher as an authority figure who should not be questioned; they do not want to sit in class passively receiving knowledge; and they are only slightly on the 'agreement' side that the teacher should have a greater role than themselves in evaluating their learning [17].

In Vietnam, Thompson [1] also reports two different learning styles matched with two

different teaching methods in Vietnamese universities. In his research, he carried observations of university classes in Hanoi, Vietnam. One of the conclusions he could draw from his observation is that if the teacher remains authority and transmits knowledge to students, students will remain inactive, and sometimes they will not engage with the class activities. However, if the teacher delivers the lesson in a more interactive way, in which students are encouraged to provide comments and suggestions, students will be more open and actively engaged in class activities. Thompson [1] suggests that even though lecturers, administrators and outsiders of the university system complain that Vietnamese students are too passive, it is the rigidity of the system itself that causes such meek behaviour. Indeed students, when given the chance, are capable of much more engaged learning and independent thinking (p.34).

Apart from the research findings, Vietnamese students can now be seen voicing opinions on radio, TV shows, or on Facebook discussions. For example, in one face-book discussion, many Vietnamese students raise their voice. They believe that they are active, confident and dynamic and that they have changed and differ from previous generations. However, their heavy dependence on family and the educational context in universities does not give them opportunities to voice their real thoughts⁽¹⁾.

All of the above findings and discussions prove that Asian students in general and Vietnamese students in particular no longer want to be considered spoon-fed with information from a 'fount of knowledge'. They are probably still found to be passive and

⁽¹⁾ See

<http://www.facebook.com/topic.php?uid=133803095681&topic=13702> for more details (Facebook Discussion, 2009).

obedient somehow, sometimes. But, as suggested by students themselves in Littlewoods's [17] research, it does not reflect the role they would like to develop. If they do indeed adopt a passive learning style as is often claimed, it is more likely to be a consequence of the educational contexts that has been provided for them, than of any inherent dispositions of the students themselves [17].

There is another aspect that many people have misinterpreted about the common learning style of Vietnamese students in HE. This is related to a learning habit they have developed since the first day students go to school - that is the habit of "listening and repeating", of learning "by heart" the knowledge the teacher provides in class. In short, this is a dependent learning habit [18]. Entering universities, they all get a warning that university study requires autonomous learning style; but then, no one shows them how to study independently [19, 20]. Moreover, the current facilities, resources and infrastructure of each institution do not allow them to conduct normal class-study, let alone autonomous study. Many universities still use equipment and facilities in place since the mid 1970s. Most universities are very small and cramped⁽²⁾ [20], and near the road with car parking and motorbike parking allocated near classrooms, so that most of the time it is very noisy. Additionally, many new buildings built to meet the demand of an increasing number of students appear to have serious structural inadequacies with cracking foundations, buckling floor panels and leaking roofs. Libraries in most universities are too small to accommodate the demand of students, with limited number of books and materials. Some

small universities and colleges do not even have a library [21]. This makes it difficult for students to study independently. Besides, low quality course materials and the ambiguity or absence of course syllabus are also significant challenges for most universities in Vietnam [22]. Tran Quand Trung and Swierczek [23] point out that the existing materials in most cases would not facilitate deeper engagement in the learning process; and the unclear objectives, contents, learning approaches and assessment policy in the syllabus limits students from participating in the process actively.

3. Family expectation

A distinctive characteristic of the Vietnamese HES is the significant involvement of a student's family. Students in Vietnam, even in HE are traditionally too 'dependant' on their family [24]. While this may not be a negative factor, it is a cultural feature of education in Vietnam. Important decisions such as: which university their children should apply to, should children study in the community colleges, or go to large cities, or go abroad to study, are made, in most cases, by parents. While students may have their own voice, parents are considered more mature, more experienced, and are the ones who will pay for children to study, so their opinions are often considered the priority. Moreover, the cultural tradition of Vietnam is to 'respect elders', and the career of the child is the common concern of the whole family [25]. These all reinforce the important role of parents in Vietnamese children's lives.

The cultural tradition of respecting elders is itself not necessary harmful, but this tradition can sometimes be dangerous, especially when parents often lead their children by their own thoughts and experiences which were suitable for students more than twenty years ago [24].

⁽²⁾ Numbers of universities and colleges in big cities have less than 10 hectares of floor space, or the equivalent of 2.67 square metres per student while MOET guidelines say the necessary area per student should be 23 square metres (Down, 2009).

Until now, most families and their children still believe that university is the only place which could guarantee a good job and could lead them to success in the future. That is why after high school, 99% of students want to follow further education, with most of them wanting to go to university [26].

The investigation results in 2009 of the Institution for Education Research, Ho Chi Minh University of Pedagogy surprise the whole society when the findings show that more than 83% of students want to achieve well in the subjects at schools; 72% of them have difficulties and are not confident in their 'soft' skills such as communication, thinking, or team-work; 80% students have a dream about future jobs but do not have the self-confidence to follow; and 75% of students after graduation still lack self-reliant skills to pursue a career, still want to 'study more, study forever'⁽³⁾ to get higher degrees [27].

It is claimed that Vietnamese students are 'weak' in planning their future. This is easy to understand when many of them have to be directed or to rely completely on their family to make choices for them regarding study. Children's duty is to learn well, their future jobs can be designed by their families, so they do not have to worry about what they will do after they finish university [24]. Universities have also contributed to this situation by the lack of information provided to students. Universities do not have any department, or any plan which can help give job orientation to university graduates. Moreover, 75% of teachers at high schools and lecturers at universities either do not care or do not know, and thus, do not give

students any ideas about their future orientation [27]. So, students only can keep the hope that if they try to learn hard, to get good marks, to gain high result in university, they could have a good job with high salary after graduation.

Clearly, students' families or parents in Vietnam are also interfering into the system by their own thoughts. Vietnamese parents often follow the traditional notion that it is the parents who have the responsibility to find a job for their children [28], so they often place their children in the university that they want children to attend, or ask their children to take various extra-courses that they think necessary for children's future job. If possible, they will ask friends and relatives to find a place of work for their children after graduation. In the modern society, not many families, especially those from the countryside, could find a proper job for their children, but this traditional notion still exists. This distinctive cultural feature makes it hard for students to stand 'on their own feet', to decide their own matters, and to take responsibility for their study and their lives.

4. Educational management system

"While the Vietnamese HES is developing rapidly and on a large scale, the Education Ministry's management is failing to keep pace", the former Education Minister Nguyen Thien Nhan suggested at the 2009 Vietnamese universities conference in Hanoi [29]. The weaknesses of the education management system in Vietnam are widely acknowledged [30]. Nguyen Van Tai [31] suggests that the "level of management among education institutions is not transparency, lack of accountability and overlapping (SIC)" (p. 4). This can be seen in the management "layers" of 376 higher education institutions. MOET has

⁽³⁾ "Study more, study forever" (học, học nữa, học mãi) is a popular slogan used in the Vietnamese educational system. It is a famous saying of Lenin regarding life-long learning. However, there is another interpretation in the Vietnamese context, which is 'study further to get higher degrees'.

direct management in only 54 institutions. 116 institutions are under both MOET and other Ministries; 125 institutions are under people's committees of different provinces, and 81 are people-founded or private institutions [32]. According to the Education Law, only MOET could promulgate legal rules or regulations in education management. However, in many cases, other management 'layers' also issue different policy documents overlapping with the policies issued by MOET. In many cases, when MOET is the one who issues different resolutions, regulations, and instructions, the inspection of the implementations is carried by other ministries or provinces, it is very encumbering [32]. MOET also admits that it does not know whether universities obey the current higher education legislation, or the degree of effectiveness of state investment in education [20]. MOET takes the responsibility of governmental higher education management, but it also admits that its ability to control and inspect academic activities of the whole HES is very limited. As of now, MOET cannot answer three questions: "How do the institutions differ in their standards or quality of their education?"; "Do institutions obey laws relating to education and training"; and "How effective is the state's investment in public institutions?" (translate mine) [32].

The dangerous thing is that MOET, without the understanding of the whole system, without the firm control over institutions, is, in most cases, the educational policy maker. Most important policies in higher education such as curriculum design, teaching scale, assessment, are controlled by MOET. The argument I would like to develop here is that without the understanding of the underlying institutions, how MOET could issue policies which are suitable to them. Then, without the proper censor the implementation of different policies,

how would MOET know the level of effectiveness of these policies.

One obvious example of the weak management of MOET is in its policy modification. For years, MOET has encouraged teachers to change their teaching style, from "chalk and talk" to the use of modern technology, from "teacher-centred teaching" to "student-centred learning" [1]. Teachers and students have to work very hard for the change, but the results do not sound positive. Because all of the others factors (such as the curriculum framework, teaching and learning time, exam design) involved in the teaching and learning process remain unchanged. This proves one thing: if the renovation just wants to focus on one thing (i.e. teaching methodology) in the whole related system, the renovation may distort the system, rather than make any improvement for it [33].

Because the governance of the HES in Vietnam has remained highly centralized [34], the centric role of the MOET has remained strong in the system. Up until recently, MOET has still controlled in most aspects of life in the HES in Vietnam. MOET has been given the responsibility to prescribe the curriculum framework for all undergraduate courses, including "content structure, number of subjects, duration of training, time proportion between studying and practicing [35]. The Education Law also reinforces the centrist nature of managing the curriculum framework by confirming that MOET has responsibility for "compilation and approval of syllabi for common use by colleges or universities".

In addition to the curriculum, MOET also has control over the most important decisions of each institution: course approvals, number of staff, number of students admitted, and even the rector of each institution is designated by

MOET [36]. It seems that MOET interferes into most aspects of university life in Vietnam.

The curriculum framed by MOET is not only too heavy⁽⁴⁾, but also “outdated” and “underdeveloped” [37]. MOET also admits that “the curriculum is too rigid, lack of flexibility, too theory-focused, little practical (SIC)” [38]. Adding to the outdated and heavy curriculum framework, most important exams in the system are still designed in a very traditional way with the aim of rechecking the knowledge provided to students by teachers or in the textbook [39]. Until 2004, MOET had not had any department specialised in testing and quality management, as the General Department of Education Testing and Accreditation under MOET was founded in 2004 [40]. However, until now, the testing method basically has not changed much. The existing testing direction and the heavy teaching curriculum have not only been encouraging teachers and students to keep the traditional teaching and learning styles, but also negating the effort of renovating the whole system. If these two major issues are not soon recognised and settled, all the effort to change the teaching and learning method, to improve the quality of the system will be unsuccessful [33]. With the demands of modern life, with limited time and the need to transmit students as much knowledge as possible in order to prepare for exams, the teacher hesitates to change their authoritarian way of teaching, and the students, because of the requirement of the exams, will try to memorise as much as possible the knowledge delivered by the lecturers in class [22]. The passive learning style will continue to be adopted, regardless students want it or not.

⁽⁴⁾ MOET curriculum framework requires twice in length compared to the one in Northwestern University, USA. That is not included the other two compulsory subjects also set by MOET: Military education and physical study [33].

5. Lecturers

Lecturers make an important contribution to HE institutions and play an important role in delivering quality teaching for students. That is why lecturers seem to have most responsibility in student learning, and they also receive most complaints and blames from the government, researchers and bureaucrats for the existing situation in the HES. The low level of staff qualifications and outdated teaching method which are considered as the main hurdles for the innovation of the system are found in many articles about the HES in Vietnam. Nguyen Thuy Anh [41] suggests that both quality and quantity of lecturers in the HES in Vietnam is not sufficient, and that many lecturers do not have the means or necessary conditions to upgrade their skills, then “are left no choice but to engage in a myriad of income-generating activities to supplement a meagre teacher stipend”. Hoang Tuy looks at the problem from the other angle, and suggests that the problem originates from a wrong perception of the teacher’s mission and role in contemporary education:

Upon reactions on the outdated philosophy, ultimate privilege and power are given to teachers as traditionally known by “No one can be successful without teachers”. Education is interpreted as a process of knowledge transmission and passive reception... Student-centeredness is sometimes the key importance of the educational system; textbooks and materials are sometimes called the educational soul, leading to the assumption that the poor quality of HE is due to the materials, not the teachers [43].

The argument I am developing here neither agrees completely with Nguyen Thuy Anh, nor Hoang Tuy, but the points instead to look at the context and environment where the teachers are

still allowed or if not, still gain opportunity to keep the traditional outdated teaching method which is considered the main reason affected badly to the learning style of students and to the overall quality of the Vietnamese HES.

First, more than 50% of teaching staff in the HES have only undergraduate degrees, and the lecturer-student ratio is nearly 1-30. Then, not only with undergraduate qualification, but the majority of young teaching staff in the HES in Vietnam are also required to 'hit the ground running'. Because the demand for university lecturers is so high, universities often waive the requirement of a teaching training certificate for young lecturers [1]. Approximately half of the lecturers teaching in Vietnam today have not undergone any type of teacher training course, so they have never received any education about teaching and pedagogy. Unsurprisingly, many report that they face difficulties in learning about and utilizing new teaching methods. Due to the quick and wide expansion of the system, and the great number of lecturers retiring each year, the number of newly employed teaching staff in the Vietnamese HES will surely increase year after year, which assures the continuity of the "hit the ground running" situation of young teaching staff.

Then, after many years struggling over the "renovation" of teaching method; the Government, MOET, and each institution have printed out numerous resolutions, instructions, stipulations, and plans for renovation of teaching methods in the HES, the teaching method in Vietnam is still considered quite traditional with rote learning dominating in most institutions in the country. The question is why the traditional teaching method of lecturing, of transmission knowledge from the lecturers to students still dominates, even in very privileged universities in the country. It even dominates in the two National universities

and regional universities, where the qualifications of teaching staff is quite high, and where many lecturers have studied overseas and are familiar with the more interactive teaching methods. What stops them from applying the skills and knowledge they have acquired and have been encouraged to apply by various educational policies and regulations? If academics in these universities are not able to lead the change in teaching and learning, it is unrealistic to expect the change from other smaller institutions.

In looking for reasons for the situation, Stephen *et al's* [2] argument sounds reasonable when they claim that the main reasons for the slow change in teaching practices are the result of time constraints on teachers. Because of particularly low salaries, most lecturers in the HES have more than one working commitment with more than one employer. University teachers report that they have to find something else apart from their main teaching in their faculty to make a living [1, 42].

MOET stipulates that each lecturer working in a university needs to teach 260 lessons a school year, which is approximately 10 of 45 minute lessons each week. Other time is allocated for academic teaching preparation and research activities. However, lecturers do not have set office hours or office in which to work in universities. Beside this, as there is a chronic shortage of teaching staff, it is not difficult to find university lecturers who teach more than 30 lessons a week, both for their own universities and in their private teaching. A MOET university survey finds out that almost 50% of academic staff who work in the non-public sector, work as on part-time contracts and they are highly likely to also hold positions in the public sector [43]. Lecturers receive salary for the main course teaching (10 lessons a week); for all other teaching activities they

do, they receive separate wages, which are often much higher than their salary. Most lecturers are overworked, and of course, they lack time necessary for teaching preparation.

Lecturers not only lack time for teaching preparation, but they also lack time necessary to upgrade teaching skills, courses and curricula, and research ability. They also lack time available for students [2]. Many young teachers, especially those who have been trained overseas, are active in initiatives to renovate teaching styles, are keen to try to use technology in class and promote student involvement and participation in class activities. However, many of them, after a period of time, become disheartened and give up. Other reasons have also been forwarded, but the major ones relate to time constraint and the lack of acknowledgement in the system [44]. Updating one's teaching style requires time and preparation. However, as lecturers become busier as they have more and more commitments, they see no reward of different treatments between those who invest effort and innovation into teaching, and the others, who just come to class and 'deliver' the lessons in a very traditional manner. The bland indifference of the authorities means that lecturers receive no acknowledgement, no punishment, no compliment and no criticism - however they go about their teaching. Until now, there is no teacher assessment and evaluation used in the HES in Vietnam [45]. Promotion and salary increases are based on seniority, not merit or performance [2]. So, for most of the time, when teachers are able to use technology and other contemporary teaching methods in class, it is more for their own convenience, that out of concern for the overall quality of teaching [1].

In presenting so many problems related to the time constraints for most university lecturers, many authors in this area blame the

situation on the low salary teaching staff receive, and one of the most frequent suggestions is to increase the salary of academic staff in the HES in Vietnam [30, 33, 39, 46-48]. Clearly, from the above argument, low salary is the direct reason which leads university lecturers to take various extra-work, and limit significant time and effort they should devote for their main teaching in universities. However, looking from Vietnamese cultural thinking perspective, low salary is a problem, but not the only problem. Especially, working in the public sector, which offers low salaries, but stable jobs, has been attracted many families and also young people [49]. For them, job stability is the first priority in selecting workplace after graduation. However, lecturers are attracted by different invitations and offers from the open labour market (e.g. teaching for private universities, working for outside projects). All of these invitations and offers promise to bring them much greater financial benefit. The door is wide open for them without any warning or prohibition from their institutions [42]. As a result, of course, most of the teaching staff just choose to go for it, and then, limit the time and effort as well as their enthusiasm devoted to their main duty in the university.

Clearly, there are other factors, rather than just low salary, leading to the low commitment of university lecturers. Hoang Tuy [51] and Stephen *at al* [2], interestingly, meet each other at providing other factors contributing to the existed situation. These factors are teacher incentives, and teacher-work-time-management. Stephen *at al* seem right when they direct attention to the effort and contribution of individual lecturer, and suggest that if it is not recognized by the system, and if lecturers' salaries are still based just on seniority⁽⁵⁾, the

⁽⁵⁾ Vietnamese university staff's salary is increased one level every three years unless they break university discipline.

enthusiasm of many lecturers will decrease sooner or later. Moreover, Hoang Tuy suggests, under the market-driven mechanism, if there are many opportunities for university lecturers to work outside of their organizations, the scenario of university lecturers spending too little time for their main job in the university is still popular everywhere in the country. So far, the Vietnamese government, as well as each individual institution still have no official tool or device to control staff working time. It is a really difficult task for educational management staff to drive lecturer's focus on their main duty in the universities.

In short, the traditional old fashioned teaching method which is considered the direct reason leading to students' passive and dependent learning style still exists. The main reasons for this are not only because of the limited qualifications of lecturers, or of the low salary they receive, but also because of the weak educational management system which is not strong enough to monitor staff activities [50]. The other reason is that there has not been effective teaching assessment to categorise teaching staff, thus, to apply appropriate encouragement as well as punishment, incentive and warning. If this teaching style remains unchanged, there is no hope that the student learning style can be changed.

6. Concluding remark

The findings of this study obviously contrast with the repeated opinions about the Asian passive and obedient learning style made by Holliday [9], Jone [3], Stephen *et al* [2], and Subramaniam [11]. It also contrasts with the literature which simply attaches the passive learning style of Asian students to the Confucian heritage culture, proposing that Vietnamese student learning style is typically

passive, obedient and reproductive. Statements about Asian and Vietnamese students' passive, obedient, and unquestioning behaviour are made so frequently that everyone thinks that they must be based in some form of reality. Moreover, the label Asian or Confucian heritage culture or Vietnamese as a cultural profile and thus a predictor of pattern of learning is too restricted. It is interesting to consider who is defining the difference and how that understanding is applied. The above findings clearly point out that this kind of assumption is too simplistic and no longer appropriate, and that it is really dangerous if some assumptions are taken for granted and are considered just like unchanged facts over time. Obviously, Vietnamese and other Asian students do not wish to be "spoon-fed" with information from a "fount of knowledge" any longer. They also have the desire to explore knowledge themselves and find their own answers in their own ways.

It has been revealed that the outdated educational management system, heavy learning curriculum, "rote" teaching, learning and testing styles, limited access to other academic resources apart from textbooks and lecturers, family traditional thoughts, the study condition of university students, and common perception of student learning all lead students to be less active in their learning. The Vietnamese educational system in general, its HES in particular do not encourage or even allow students to take up their autonomous learning style, to take responsibility over their own study, regardless they want to adopt it or not. Obviously students could not take full responsibility for their study given the existing situation in the system. Vietnam still needs to work hard to tackle its internal problems in the HES, to innovate a systematic change before expecting any change in the lecturer teaching or student learning style.

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Nguyên nhân sự thụ động trong học tập của sinh viên Việt Nam

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Tóm tắt: Bài viết này đề cập tới thói quen thụ động trong học tập của nhiều sinh viên đại học ở Việt Nam. Thói quen này không những không còn phù hợp mà còn bị coi là sẽ mang đến những ảnh hưởng tiêu cực cho sinh viên trong công việc và cuộc sống sau này. Người ta thường cho rằng sự thụ động của sinh viên bắt nguồn từ các yếu tố văn hóa mang tính Nho giáo ở Việt Nam. Bằng cách nhìn nhận, đánh giá từ nhiều góc độ khác nhau, bài viết này muốn đi sâu hơn, nghiên cứu về các vấn đề tồn tại liên quan tới phương pháp học tập của sinh viên. Các góc độ được đề cập trong bài bao gồm: sinh viên, gia đình của sinh viên, hệ thống quản lý giáo dục, và giảng viên các trường đại học. Bài viết chứng minh rằng, dù các yếu tố văn hóa có ảnh hưởng phần nào tới các phản ứng của sinh viên trên lớp học nhưng chúng không phải là yếu tố quyết định cách học của sinh viên. Các yếu tố có tác động mạnh nhất tới phương pháp học của sinh viên đều xuất phát từ cơ chế và cách vận hành của hệ thống giáo dục. Với những tồn tại hiện nay trong hệ thống giáo dục Việt Nam, dù muốn hay không, sinh viên vẫn sẽ phải chạy theo xu hướng học theo chỉ dẫn và thụ động tiếp thu kiến thức. Giáo dục đại học ở Việt Nam vẫn còn có quá nhiều việc phải làm trước khi hi vọng sinh viên có thể tự chủ và độc lập trong học tập và nghiên cứu.

Từ khóa: Giáo dục đại học, phương pháp học, thụ động, Việt Nam, sinh viên.