

Review of: "An experience of global higher education and university autonomy in Viet Nam: A case study of Ton Duc Thang University in Ho Chi Minh City"

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Review of 'An experience of global higher education and university autonomy in Vietnam: A case study of Ton Duc Thang University in Ho Chi Minh City'

Reviewer: Kevin Laws, The University of Sydney.

The title of the article sets the reader's expectation that two elements will be discussed: an experience of higher global education, and university autonomy. However, the article does not make it clear who is experiencing global education, and there is little discussion of how the autonomous status of the university impacted upon the academic staff or students.

In my review of the article I will offer suggestions for consideration which address the issues I identified above.

To me it seems that the authors are reporting on academic staff experiences, so I suggest that the title be amended to something such as 'The experiences of foreign academic staff at an autonomous university in Vietnam'. I suggest this because apart from a table indicating the growth of foreign student numbers there is little reporting on student experiences. If the suggestion of a more specific title is accepted I recommend that the purpose of the article be specified in the first paragraph.

A major shortcoming which should be addressed is to outline the specific research methodology which was utilised. It appears that the results are based upon interviews but it is not made clear what sort of interview was undertaken. Were the interviews structured, semi-structured or informal, or was the data collected through focus groups? How many 'interviews' were conducted and with whom were they conducted? How were the participants selected and what relationship did they have with the researchers? Which faculties did they come from?

More important is how the interviews were analysed. Were they analysed to identify major themes? If so, these themes could be used to organise the discussion section. There is a lack of information about the analysis procedures. To include this would assist the reader to understand how the points made in the Discussion section link with the data which was collected.

Data take the form of two tables and a number of direct quotations from participants. Table 1 lists the (total?) number of

teaching and research staff in each faculty and also the number of overseas teaching and research staff in each faculty. This is an interesting table and it would be worthwhile to provide an insight into why certain faculties had a larger proportion of overseas faculty members than others. A paragraph placed before or after the table would be very helpful, as would another column indicating the percentage of overseas staff relative to total staff. Further discussion about Table 2 would also be useful.

I found the quotations from the participants very interesting, but I wanted to know something about who was making the statements. I understand that the authors were protecting the identity of participants as is most appropriate in a study such as this, but I wanted to know whether the quotations were coming from a limited number of participants or whether they represented academic staff from a range of faculties or countries of origin. This can be done without allowing readers to identify who made the statements.

I suggest that it would greatly enhance the study if shorter quotations were used. In some cases the quotes contained comments about a number of different themes. It would be useful to link different comments with each theme and to comment upon the significance of each statement. It is not sufficient to simply report what participants said. It is necessary for authors to provide a context for the comments and to suggest why they might have been important to the participants.

I do not think it was appropriate to conclude the article with a lengthy quotation which was not linked back to the main purpose of the study. Provide a conclusion which directly addresses the theme of the whole paper. Summarise the experiences of the participants, link this with global higher education and indicate how the granting of autonomy to the university makes it worthy of a case study.

In conclusion I was left wondering how Covid-19 might have impacted upon foreign academic staff and student numbers given that many campuses were closed and on-line learning replaced face-to-face classes during the years of the pandemic.