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# An Analysis of the Community College Concept in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE CONCEPT  
IN THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM

by

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A DISSERTATION

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Advisory Committee

Dr. Kent Farnsworth, Chairperson

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to discover if core characteristics exist forming a Vietnamese community college model and to determine if the characteristics would explain the model. This study utilized three theoretical orientations while reviewing the existing literature, formulating the research questions, examining the data and drawing conclusions. The exploration of the community college concept in Viet Nam was framed by human capital theory and social capital theory. Aspects of organization theory were considered to examine the community college as an emerging organization designed to increase human and social capital in Viet Nam.

Eleven of the existing 12 community colleges were examined utilizing a multiple qualitative case study approach. During June 2009, field work was conducted in Viet Nam that involved visits to the 11 case study community colleges, to the Vietnam Association of Community Colleges (VACC), and to the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, field notes from observation, document review, and photographs of the physical facilities.

Results of the study indicate that although legislation does not exist to permanently establish the higher education institutions named community colleges, a community college model does exist and is in a state of evolution. The model can be defined by a set of core characteristics which emerged from the data in this study. Five themes were particularly prominent: (a) public higher education institutions with community ownership at the provincial or city level, in conjunction with Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) oversight for academic matters; (b) multi-disciplinary programs designed to meet the unique needs of the community; (c) multi-level

certificates and diplomas are conferred up through the college level (three-year) of higher education and that articulation agreements with universities enable students to earn a university bachelor's degree; (d) domestic and international partnerships actively are sought to develop social capital; and (e) scientific and technological research based on community needs as required in the 2005 Education Law.

Decision makers (e.g. policy makers, provincial leaders, community college administrators), stakeholders (e.g. the people), and domestic and international partners working with Vietnamese community colleges can utilize the findings of this study to analyze how the community college concept will enhance the higher education system without duplicating the functions of other types of colleges. This understanding is essential to the future sustainability and development of these institutions.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

The white paper, *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise*, posits the need to expand higher education systems in developing countries in order to enhance economic, human, and social development by allowing citizens of these countries to fully participate in the global knowledge based economy (Task Force on Higher Education, 2000). For a country, developing or developed, to thrive in the knowledge-based global economy, a sustainable and diversified higher education system is recommended (Task Force on Higher Education and Society, 2000; UNESCO, 2009). Community colleges or their equivalent (e.g. junior colleges, technical colleges, polytechnic colleges, colleges of further education, technical and further education colleges, etc.) are instrumental players in diversified higher education systems which respond to the development needs of many countries such as Australia, Canada, China's Hong Kong, Netherlands, Thailand, and the United States. The Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, herein referred to as Viet Nam, currently has 12 community colleges in its higher education system.

A common statement heard by westerners visiting Viet Nam is "Vietnam is a country, not a war!" Viet Nam is a "developing" country which has demanded the world's attention since beginning the transition from a Soviet style economic system with centrally planned and rigid policies to a country engaged and thriving in the 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge-based global economy. The densely populated country has spent the past 30 years struggling to overcome the loss of Soviet financial support and the aftermath of war (CIA, Economy Overview, 2010). As the average age is 27, the young population

requires a higher education system that is relevant to the knowledge and skills needed for a transitioning workforce (Boudreau, 2009). A crucial element of Viet Nam's development is their higher education system which includes 12 institutions named "community college." The focus of this research was the Vietnamese social construct of the community college that has been developing intermittently since the 1960's (Oliver, 2002; Dang & Nguyen, 2009). Located in Southeast Asia, Viet Nam is a country of 88.5 million people. The Communist Party of Viet Nam (CPV) is "the vanguard of the Vietnam working class" representing the "rights and interests" of the people and the country through the principles established by Ho Chi Minh, Marx and Lenin (Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the United States, 2010 b, para. 1). The National Assembly is the senior legislative body, although its 500 members are not required to hold membership in the CPV. As the chief body of the state, it is responsible for all national policies. As part of the national congress held every five years, the Assembly formalizes and codifies the policies that direct the country. The National Assembly also elects the top two national officials, the President and the Prime Minister.

Ashwill (2005) describes politics and administration in his book, *Vietnam Today: A Guide to a Nation at a Crossroads*. He depicts the unique style the single-party political system has adopted, claiming a lack of both monolithic thinking and blind obedience to the Party. Ashwill (2005) suggests that since the 1980's the Party has demonstrated its willingness to step outside the old socialist model and implement policy that responds to the needs of the global knowledge-based economy through a slow and cautious transition to a free-market economy. He also claims the government tolerates

divergent views and disagreements on a variety of topics from the availability of karaoke bars to how the Party should respond to national needs.

In 1986, the reform process of *Đôì môi*, meaning “renovation,” began transforming Viet Nam. Werner and Belanger (2002) describe *Đôì môi* as the era during which the government opened up the country to outside influences due to the crash caused by the dismantling of the Soviet system which had supported the Vietnamese economy for several decades. Under this renovation policy, the centrally planned, command economy transitioned to what is commonly referred to as a market economy with socialist orientation (Ashwill, 2005; CIA, 2010; Dang, 1997). *Đôì môi* allowed foreign capital into the country and enhanced industrialization, especially in the large cities of Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), formerly known as Saigon.

Western governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) descended on Viet Nam with “aid and advice,” and the pressure to adhere to the “structural adjustments programs” of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) became a part of long-term planning (Werner & Belanger, 2002, p. 24). The developing country of Viet Nam began modernizing and actively pursuing a place in the knowledge-based global economy after the implementation of *Đôì môi*. According to the Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA) *World Factbook* (2010), the government of Viet Nam has focused its efforts on “economic liberalization and international integration” through comprehensive and systemic reforms intended to “modernize the economy and to produce more competitive export-driven industries” in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Economy Overview).

## *Background*

The United Nation's Human Development Index (HDI) classifies Viet Nam as a "developing" country. The HDI measures life expectancy at birth, adult literacy rate with educational enrollment, and Purchase Power Parity (PPP). It is an overall indicator of "well-being" but does not distinguish the level of well-being between various categories of people (e.g., women, minorities, etc.). Viet Nam's HDI is 0.725, ranking 116<sup>th</sup> among the 182 countries with data (United Nations, 2010). In *Glimpses of Viet Nam*, Quang (2003) claims, "Viet Nam has the potential to be one of the success stories in development. Its population has a high educational attainment for a country at this development level" (p. 195). The country's literacy rate is 90.3% and the combined gross enrollment ratio (GER) is 62.3% (CIA, 2010; United Nations, 2010). The GER is a statistical measure utilized to compare country's combined levels of education from kindergarten through post-graduate (United Nations, 2010).

In the 21st century, higher education has become a conduit for economic, social and technological change. International organizations focused on development postulate financially and structurally diverse higher education systems as a tool for enhancing a developing country's level of intellectual capital, economic development, human development, and social development. The World Bank's (1994) *Higher Education: The Lessons of Experience* correlates a country's level of higher education with economic development. According to the report's *Executive Summary*, poverty rates have decreased and labor productivity and sustained economic growth have increased in many developing countries that have invested in higher education, thus the report recommends comprehensive reform for publicly funded higher education systems in developing

countries. Another World Bank publication, *Quality Assurance in Higher Education*, addresses the recent trends, progress, and challenges ahead for higher education in developing countries (El-Khawas, 1998). Noting that developing countries have recognized the imperative for mass higher education to create an educated and skilled population in order to create, share, and use knowledge, El-Khawas (1998) discusses how the World Bank is partnering with governments of developing countries to create quality and higher education systems in their countries that are more accountable.

To satiate Viet Nam's thirst for knowledge, the social institution of education has undergone "renovation" with the implementation of *Đôì môi*. Government Resolution No. 14/2005/NQ-CP, *RESOLUTION on the Fundamental and Comprehensive Reform of Higher Education in Vietnam 2006-2010 (HERA)*, claims that the renovations of *Đôì môi* combined with the reforms of the *Strategy for Education Development in 2001-2010* have led to a more diversified higher education system; however, these changes were not enough. The HERA's overarching objective was to plan and implement a comprehensive and sweeping reform of Viet Nam's higher education system that would address and meet the human capital and economic development needs of the country (Hayden & Lam, 2006). According to the World Bank (2006) report, *The Five Year Socio-Economic Development Plan 2006-2010*, one of the major goals of Viet Nam's National Assembly was to improve the quality of secondary level curricula and renovate higher education, giving priority to vocational training that addresses the needs of industrialization and modernization. The report gave special notice to "targeted people" including women, ethnic minorities, poor, disabled, and the disenfranchised which were designated to receive special attention in the reform efforts of the five year (2006-2010) plan (p. 8).

In countries such as Canada, China's Hong Kong, Thailand and the United States, community colleges are responding to the development needs of local communities by providing higher education institutions that offer two year degree programs designed to transfer to baccalaureate granting universities, career and technical programs, developmental education, and/or vocational training. Three of these countries (Canada, Thailand and the U.S.) have formed national associations comprised of community college institutions whose mission is to provide for the post-secondary needs of their local communities (Raby & Valeau, 2009). In Viet Nam, the idea of developing community colleges began in the late 1960's during the Second Indochina War when the French vocational system and the U.S. community college model were examined to enhance the development needs of South Viet Nam. This resulted in the first community college being established in 1971 followed by three more community colleges based on the U.S. model (Dang & Nguyen, 2009). During the reunification of the two Viet Nams in 1975, western models were eliminated in favor of the socialist model which maintained centralized planning, state owned institutions, and a subsidized higher education system designed to support the needs of the state. Higher education institutions took on a monolithic nature where universities were redesigned to prepare students in a single academic discipline. Universities were nationalized with one preparing engineers while another would educate teachers. The concept of community college disappeared from the Vietnamese higher education system until the 21<sup>st</sup> century when six pilot community colleges began operating in 2001. Yet, the construct of community college is vague and future and survival of the community college as an institution is uncertain (Oliver,, Engel & Scorsone, 2008).



In her doctoral dissertation, Oliver (2002) examines the viability of using the U.S. community college system as a potential model for Viet Nam. Finding that the U.S. community college model “has significant potential for relieving some of the difficult higher education challenges in the Mekong Delta,” Oliver (2002) recommended that additional research was imperative to ascertain “the different models [in use] and compare how well each suits the needs of the Mekong Delta, and perhaps other regions of Vietnam” (p. 184). As Oliver (2002) continues to add to the published knowledge on the Vietnamese community college, she questions the clarity and viability of the community college conceptual model as the first decade of the 21st century comes to a close.

#### *Purpose and Research Questions*

Today, almost a decade after Oliver began researching the U.S. community college model’s appropriateness to fill a void in Viet Nam, there continues to be a gap in the collective understanding of the community college concept both among the Vietnamese and their international partners. An unanswered question in the published literature has been troublesome to practitioners: What is the nature of the community college concept as it currently exists in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam? Therefore, the purpose of this study was to discover if core characteristics exist which form a comprehensive Vietnamese community college model, and to determine if the characteristics explain the model.

This study was guided by four research questions:

1. Do the 12 higher education institutions in Viet Nam with the term “community college” in their official name share common core institutional characteristics?

2. If core characteristics are shared, what are they?
3. If core common characteristics exist, do they suffice to form a community college model?
4. If there are not enough shared core characteristics to form a model, are the shared core characteristics sufficient to start conceptualizing a Vietnamese model?

A defined and articulated model could offer Vietnamese policymakers and practitioners a framework to engage in a comparative analysis of their model to countries that are facing similar economic, social, and human development needs. A model is a social construct that provides an articulated representation of a system. Birnbaum (1988) refers to a model as “an abstraction of reality” which serves as a conceptual lens providing for “perceptual frames” which are used to create order and decide plans of action (p. 83). In short, a model is a tool that allows for comparison, analysis, planning and possibly prediction. It is a typical representation of some phenomena. In his book, *Leadership as Service: A New Model for Higher Education in a New Century*, Farnsworth (2007) refers to a model as a generalized hypothetical description used to analyze or explain a phenomenon. A model therefore describes the characteristics of a system. Birnbaum (1988) explains that a model “focuses our attention on some particular organizational dimensions” (p. 83). He also warns that a model can “filter out” reality and is never a “perfect representation of that system” (p. 83). In summary, an articulated and shared model of the Vietnamese community college concept could serve as a tool for stakeholders and policymakers to utilize as they analyze and plan how to meet the economic, social, and human development needs of their country.

### *Significance*

Without a clearly articulated, commonly shared model for the community colleges of Viet Nam, the community college system might fail or fragment into a collection of loosely related but inefficient educational institutions, thus negatively impacting the future human, social and economic development needs of Viet Nam. This is especially true in the rural areas where 10 of the 12 community colleges are located and access to higher education is extremely limited. Because higher education in Viet Nam is centralized under the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), a model could provide national policy makers, Provincial People's Committees, and the people of Viet Nam with a shared vision of the role of community colleges in their higher education system and with a basis for expecting and anticipating certain results from these institutions. This potential benefit assumes that the higher education system of Viet Nam is purposefully designed for sustainable economic, social, and human development that responds to the changing needs of the knowledge-based global economy.

According to Oliver, Pham, Elsner, Nguyen, and Do (2009), a great deal of confusion exists in Viet Nam concerning the community colleges and how they differ from other tertiary institutions named "college." This confusion exists among national policy makers, ministries, local government officials, administrators, educators, and the general public. It appears that community college administrators have not been able to articulate a clear model or an explanation to the policy makers and local People's Committees, which could infer a lack of clarity on their part as well. This confusion has led to duplication of functions (e.g., redundant offerings) among different types of tertiary institutions within provinces and a spreading, rather than leveraging, of resources that are already stretched.

A well articulated community college model would explain its unique nature and specific contribution to the development needs of the country as well as the education of the students. A defined Vietnamese community college model could also serve as a starting point for the future development of a community college system as a separate and unique category of higher education. If a model exists and can be articulated, the chances for survival and growth of the community college as a unique institution will be enhanced. An articulated community college model would offer the rectors, paid leaders of the colleges, clear direction on the scope and purpose of the institution. It would also assist international partners as they work with the MOET and the Vietnam Association of Community Colleges (VACC) to share ideas and offer possible solutions to development needs that can be fulfilled by the various community college models throughout the globe.

Defining community college models around the globe is not an easy task. Very little research is available on this subject, and Vietnamese scholars are not addressing the issue. Although this researcher recognizes that this study could best be conducted by a Vietnamese scholar who is not burdened by a deficit in cultural understanding and the language barrier, the study substantively addresses a gap in the body of knowledge. The most recently published work on the topic of models, *Community College Models: Globalization and Higher Education Reform* (2009) is a compilation representing 30 countries and their various models which have been designed to meet the rapid changes of the global economy (Raby & Valeau, 2009). The Vietnamese community college construct is discussed in two chapters of this book, but neither chapter clearly defines a Vietnamese model.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to discover if core characteristics exist which form a Vietnamese community college model, and to determine if the characteristics explain the model. Identifying the similarities and differences in the 11 community colleges will offer a foundation for discussion among the Vietnamese stakeholders. Identifying the existing characteristics may assist in the creation of a unique Vietnamese organizational system that adopts certain characteristics of other countries' models in order to meet the human capital needs of Viet Nam.

#### *Delimitations of the Study*

This study focused on discovering if a shared conceptual model of the community college exists in Viet Nam. If a model exists, the study aimed to describe and explain the model. The study was not designed to evaluate the effectiveness or appropriateness of the Vietnamese model if one exists nor would it suggest a model if one does not exist.

#### *Limitations of the Study*

A significant limitation of this study was the researcher's language barrier. She does not speak Vietnamese, so to address this limitation, a qualified interpreter (verbal language) who is also a translator (written language) served as a cultural consultant, traveling with the researcher throughout the field work phase in Viet Nam. The interpreter/translator is a native of Viet Nam, an English teacher at one of the 12 community colleges, and has worked as an interpreter and translator for several multinational groups operating in the country. After returning to the U.S., the researcher hired a translator for documents written in Vietnamese which were obtained from the case study colleges during the field work. Even though the utmost care was utilized to select the interpreter and translator, it is noted that meanings get lost in translation. It is

recognized that under perfect circumstances, this research would be best conducted by a Vietnamese researcher with a broad understanding of the various community college models around the globe, although a Vietnamese researcher may be equally challenged by having only second-hand knowledge of other models and systems. The researcher has worked in U.S. community colleges for the past 12 years and has completed doctoral program course work focused on the U.S. community college model while exploring the models of other nations. This experiential and formal education has afforded the researcher with intellectual capital that is necessary to understand community college models, regardless of the cultural context. Theoretical and experiential knowledge of the U.S. community college model combined with theoretical knowledge of other countries models, including the Canadian model which has been instrumental to the Vietnamese model, presents an opportunity for the researcher, an outsider to the Vietnamese model, to notice characteristics that exist across models.

Outsiders often notice things that are invisible to insiders. Besides being an outsider, the researcher's training as a sociologist has trained her to peel away the many layers of meaning in social interaction and examine the role of historical context and cross-cultural sharing in social phenomena. These skills became important as the overarching research question was answered and the existence and evolution of a Vietnamese community college model emerged from the data. The researcher strove to unravel the insider's or emic perspective by building relationships with informants for two years prior to the research study. After developing these relationships, she spent one month in Viet Nam during the field work phase visiting 11 of the 12 community colleges.

The researcher realizes that as an outsider she never fully achieved an insider's perspective.

Another limitation of this study is the lack of consistent terminology and information in Viet Nam. For example, The Vietnam Association of Community Colleges (VACC) claims there are 13 community colleges. Their official list of community colleges denotes one of these 13 "community colleges" as actually entitled "university." This university was established first as a community college in 2001 and transitioned to a university in 2006. The official name of this higher education institution is "university" not "community college." Also, the term "junior college" appears in some MOET documents and in some of the scholarly documents utilized for the literature review of this study, but the term does not exist in the 2005 Education Law. The MOET informant in this study denied the existence of the term "junior college" in the Vietnamese higher education legal lexicon, but many of the official case study documents refer to "junior college level" academic programs at their institutions. To add to the confusion, the 2005 Higher Education Reform Agenda (HERA) recommends that the country, "complete the community junior college network, integrating them into HEI training process" (Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, 2005, 3 a). HEI refers to Higher Education Institution and is defined in the definition of terms section of this chapter.

Similarly, the scarcity of and openness to sharing official documents is another limitation. Documents that are publicly available are often difficult to locate. Securing official and unofficial documents in Viet Nam is haphazard. This researcher and others have successfully located significant documents through the Internet then returned to retrieve the document and discovered they were "no longer available" or the website was

no longer functioning. Likewise, official documents of the centralized education system of Viet Nam are not readily available to the general public or international researchers. In addition, the articles and books that have been written by Vietnamese scholars and practitioners on the higher education system are often published by the “official” national publishing company and are not readily available outside the country.

The Vietnamese cultural value of maintaining social harmony was a limitation during data collection. Cultural norms defining the rules of social relationships are based on respect for authority, social position and “saving face.” During previous work in Viet Nam, the researcher had learned that a smile and a friendly nod, which appear to a Westerner to mean acceptance and agreement, might only be the use of appropriate Vietnamese decorum. In *Vietnam: The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture*, Murray (2006) claims a direct yes or no should not be taken to have the same meaning as it would in American culture. A yes or no is simply a polite answer given to maintain the harmony of the social interaction. Questioning or disagreeing with an authority figure, in this study the researcher, would violate cultural norms. The desire to please the researcher follows Vietnamese cultural norms. Body language or verbal responses given during the interview did not necessarily reflect the true meaning of the subject’s answer, at least from an American perspective. A smile and nod which an American would read as “yes, I agree” or “yes, I understand” was not always about understanding or agreement, but demonstrated respect. Therefore, the researcher and the cultural assistant held debriefing sessions after each interview to discuss understanding across culture and the cultural context of the answers provided during the interviews.



The final limitation of this study is also culture based. Speaking with others, especially in a formal situation such as an interview, may result in data that is not reality based. During the interviews, this fact was apparent when nervous laughter or silence was the response to an interview question. This was not a result of purposeful deception or an unwillingness to participate in the research. Vietnamese cultural norms require respect for authority and can result in an unwillingness or lack of ability to engage in critical reflection of one's culture, especially one's government. When these silences or nervous laughter happened in the interviews, the researcher moved onto another question usually rephrasing it or requesting assistance such as "help me understand." If a question resulted in a lack of response or nervous laughter it was later addressed in an informal environment such as the sightseeing tours led by faculty and administrators or the informal luncheons or dinners hosted by case colleges. Follow-up discussions with the cultural assistant provided a cultural context to these responses.

#### *Definition of Terms*

To provide clarity of understanding, numerous terms have been defined so the reader can understand the meaning and context of the researcher's perspective.

1. **Access** refers to the level of openness to enrollment of the institution, to the location of the various community colleges (e.g., rural versus urban, north versus south), and to the number of community colleges available to the people (Raby & Valeau, 2009).
2. **Articulation** refers to partnerships between the Vietnamese community colleges and Vietnamese universities or other types of colleges. In this partnership, the student stays at the community college campus and earns a

diploma or degree after taking courses taught by teachers from another higher education institution; either a college or a university. If the student earns a bachelor's degree it is conferred by the university because under the Education Law (2005) universities are the only higher education institutions allowed to legally award baccalaureate degrees.

3. **Characteristic** is a distinct or peculiar quality or feature of an entity (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).
4. **Communist Party of Viet Nam (CPV) - Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam** is the only legal political party in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. It serves as “the faithful representative of the rights and interests of the working class, the toiling people, and the whole country (Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2010 b, para. 1).
5. **Community College** refers to a public formal higher education institution founded by the local (provincial or city) People's Committee and is recognized by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) and the Vietnam Association of Community Colleges (VACC).
6. **Developing country** refers to a sovereign state which is undergoing the process of development in its social institutions, especially the economy and education structure. A developing country is categorized as such based upon the Human Development Index (HDI). This classification system measures life expectancy at birth, adult literacy rate, and standard of living. The HDI ranks the countries of the world into three categories: developed, developing or undeveloped (United Nations, 2009).

7. ***Đôi môi*** refers to a series of economic reforms regarding policies and practice initiated in Viet Nam in 1986 and implemented beginning in 1987. The literal translation means renovation (Quang, 2003).
8. **Flattened world** is utilized to refer to the interconnected nature of the cultures, in particular the economies, of the world in the 21st century. In *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Friedman (2005) argues that the world has ideologically shrunk through this interconnectedness; thus it has become flat. The flattened world requires higher education institutions to inculcate a new set of competencies (e.g., knowledge, skills and values).
9. **Global knowledge –based economy** refers to the interconnected nature of the national economies of the world system. According to the World Bank (2003), “a knowledge-based economy relies primarily on ideas” which supplant physical capital as technology drives innovations that change the way people live and work creating a “model of life-long learning” (p. xvii). This “knowledge” requires constant change in higher education as the knowledge changes and new knowledge, values and skill sets are required.
10. **Higher Education Institutions (HEI)** refers to post-secondary or tertiary institutions that provide non-compulsory education. These institutions charge tuition and have some type of entrance requirement (e.g., knowledge or skills assessment, secondary school diploma or certificate, or an entrance exam requiring a particular numerical score to enter). Most confer certificates, diplomas or academic degrees.

11. **Higher Education Reform Agenda (HERA)** is Decree No.14/2005/NQ-CP which defines the codified reform agenda (2006-2020) of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. The official title is *Resolution on Fundamental and Comprehensive Reform of Higher Education in Vietnam 2006-2020*. (Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, 2005,)
12. **Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC)** became the official name of the former Saigon in 1976 after reunification of the country. HCMC is the most populated city in Viet Nam and considered the economic center of the country.
13. **Human Capital** is a person's ability to perform labor based on his/her level of marketable competence (e.g., knowledge, skills, and values). Human capital can be acquired through investment in formal education and training resulting in enhanced levels of marketable competence (Becker, 1993). Human capital can be acquired at the micro (individual) and macro (entire country) level.
14. **Human Development** is a concept utilized worldwide to discuss opportunity, lifestyle, access to resources including formal education, a decent standard of living, and one's ability to participate fully in community life (United Nations, 2010, para. 2).
15. **Institute of International Education (IIE)** is a nonprofit, independent organization founded in 1919 and headquartered in New York City. IIE-Viet Nam has two offices, one in Ha Noi and one in Ho Chi Minh City, which are responsible for providing comprehensive information on U.S. higher education opportunities. Mark Ashwill was the country director of IIE-Viet

Nam at the time of the study's field work and was interviewed to provide context for the higher education system. He is author of *Vietnam Today: A Guide To A Nation at A Crossroads* (2005).

16. **Intellectual capital** is a country's collective intellectual capacities, skills and global competence. Intellectual capital is a determinant of a country's ability to actively participate in the global knowledge-based economy (Stewart, 2001).
17. **Junior College** in Vietnamese is *Trường Cao Đẳng*. These colleges "offer short term programs of three years and are mostly for training primary and middle school teachers, although some offer professional training, such as accounting, civil engineering, and agriculture" (Doan, 2000, p. 15).
18. **Literacy Rate** refers to a person's ability to read and write at a level that is adequate to understand and communicate the ideas necessary to survive in a literate society (UNESCO, 2009)
19. **Ministry of Education and Training (MOET)** is responsible for the governance and regulation of education and training in Viet Nam. The Organization Chart of MOET is provided as Appendix A.
20. **Model** refers to a representation of a concept. A model provides a lens that can help to analyze, describe, and/or explain the characteristics of the concept and demonstrates how the system's components are interrelated. A model provides a generalized standard which allows for comparison. It provides a common or shared understanding of a concept that hypothetically describes the typical form of a particular phenomenon (Birnbbaum, 1988).

21. **National Assembly** is the national governance body in Viet Nam. It represents the people and is the “highest representative organ” of State power (Embassy of Viet Nam, 2010a, para. 4). Constitutional and legislative powers lie with the Assembly. It is responsible for implementing policies of socio-economic development including the Education Law (2005).
22. **People’s Committee or People’s Council** is the local administrative unit of the Communist Party of Viet Nam (CPV) representing 64 provinces (see Appendix B). These committees or councils are the mechanism by which the CPV’s policies are communicated to the people and the people share their concerns and needs with the Party (Ashwill, 2005). The local People’s Committee is responsible for requesting and supporting a community college, after they have obtained approval from MOET. Leaders of the local People’s Committee serve on the managing board of the community college.
23. **Rector** is the title bestowed to the top professional at a Vietnamese community college and is the equivalent to the U.S. community college title of “president.” The title “Headmaster” is utilized instead of rector in the VACC college map (see Appendix C).
24. **Second Indochina War** refers to the second of three “nationalist” wars the Vietnamese fought against countries (France, U.S. and China) who sent forces into Southeast Asia (Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia). The war began in the late 1950s and lasted until 1975 when U.S. forces were withdrawn from Viet Nam. The West referred to U.S. involvement in this war as the “Vietnam War” and the Vietnamese referred to this as the “American War.”

25. **Social Development** refers to a process of transformation in a society. It is assumed that the process will be progressive and benefit the individual members of the society. The standard of living and social conditions will be improved as a result of social development. It is also recognized that one of the consequences of social development is loss of tradition and historical cultural norms. According to the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD, 2009), “the goal of social policy is to promote universal social protection and equity.... that aim to protect citizens from social contingencies and poverty, and ultimately to enable them to strive for their own life goals” (para. 1).
26. **Tertiary education** refers to formal education which is non-compulsory and follows the completion of secondary education. This term is used in many developing countries and usually refers to formal education opportunities available to 17 to 22 year olds.
27. **Viet Nam** is the preferred short form name utilized by the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam and the United Nations. Westerners typically use “Vietnam” while the Vietnamese use the official “Viet Nam.” As the community colleges in Viet Nam move to provide more of their documents in English, the use of “Vietnam” is becoming the norm. Out of respect for cultural acknowledgement, the researcher has purposefully chosen to utilize “Viet Nam” unless a document from which data is obtained utilizes “Vietnam.”
28. **Vietnam Association of Community Colleges (VACC)** is a “social-vocational organization representing the common voice of universities,

colleges and other training institutes following community college model”  
(Vietnam Association of Community Colleges, n.d.a., para. 1).

### *Theoretical Framework*

Community colleges are organizations socially constructed by the people who are invested in the organization. Bolman and Deal (2003) offer four “frames” (structural, human resource, political and symbolic) that were utilized for analyzing the organizational behavior of the Vietnamese community colleges. Additional perspectives in the organizational theoretical paradigm were also applied, as were aspects of human capital theory and social capital theory. These perspectives guided the researcher as she collected and analyzed the data and drew conclusions. These various lenses were drawn upon to frame the current social conditions, political forces, global forces, and economic conditions which shape the community college in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.

### *Methodology*

This qualitative research inquiry utilizes the case study method which seeks not only to describe but also to understand the phenomena by examining the context in which the phenomena is located (Merriam, 1998). Weick (1995) claims the case study approach allows the researcher to make sense of the phenomenon under study. The case study method informs theory by presenting the deepest level of understanding of phenomena when it describes and explains in the spirit of Geertz’s (1973) “thick description.” Eleven cases have been selected to ascertain if a community college model, the phenomena of interest in this study, exists in Viet Nam.



### *Summary*

This research study examined 11 of the 12 higher education institutions in Viet Nam named “community college”. Data collected from June 1-23, 2009, included interviews, photography of the campuses, documents collected from the informants, MOET and VACC and field notes from observation. Collected data were analyzed to answer this overarching research question: What is the nature of the community college concept in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam? The purpose of the study was to discover if core characteristics existed to form a comprehensive Vietnamese community college model, and to determine if the characteristics explain the model. The study developed a list of recommendations for future research.

### *Organization of the Study*

Chapter 1 introduces the study by providing background and describing the purpose. It also addresses the significance, delimitations, and limitations of the study and defines the terms utilized in the study. Chapter 2 reviews the published literature to demonstrate the need for the study and to provide a theoretical framework for its analysis. Chapter 3 describes the research design utilized to collect and analyze data in order to answer the research questions. Chapter 4 explains and describes the analysis of the data. Chapter 5 discusses the conclusions reached in the study, and draws parallels between these conclusions and the context of other scholarly writing regarding this subject. This chapter also provides recommendations for future studies.

## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review

#### *Introduction*

Education is a social institution, and institutions are social constructions. A country's higher education system is shaped by the cultural context of the society, and in the 21st century, the process of globalization influences culture. Friedman (2005) claims that in our flattened world the accelerated pace of social change and the crossing of cultures requires societies and their institutions to constantly adapt in order to maintain some sense of stability. The rapid change of the flat world requires a society to consider not only its own culture when socially constructing its institutions, but to also take into account the demands of the global knowledge-based economy. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature to explain the national and global influences impacting the development of the Vietnamese community college construct and demonstrate that the published literature does not identify a model, thus the need for the study.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part discusses the concept of community college as it appears throughout the globe. Part two provides an overview of the social institution of education, in particular higher education, in Viet Nam. The third part summarizes the theoretical paradigms of organization theory, human capital theory and social capital theory which serve as a theoretical framework for this research study. This chapter serves to establish that although an institution referred to as "the community college" has emerged in Viet Nam, its characteristics and commonalities have not been studied. This important shortcoming will be demonstrated in the literature review.

### *The Community College Concept*

What is a community college? On the surface, the answer to this question appears simple. It is a post-secondary, non-compulsory, accredited higher education institution that meets the needs of the community in which it is situated (Elsner, Boggs & Irwin, 2008). Below the surface, the definition is more complex. Even in the U.S. where the term community college was invented, defining what constitutes a community college is complicated (American Association of Community Colleges, 2009). If defining the concept is difficult, constructing a model becomes even more difficult. Raby and Valeau (2009) claim, “A cohesive definition of community college models fails to exist because these institutions are unique to their local environment” (p. 1). “Unique” appears to be a shared characteristic of community colleges throughout the world according to the published literature (Raby, & Valeau, 2009; Elsner, Boggs, & Irwin, 2008; Levin, 2001).

Writing about the U.S. community college, Cohen and Brawer (2003) define it as “any institution regionally accredited to award the associate in arts or the associate in sciences as its highest degree” (p. 5). This definition seems to ignore the other components of the U.S. model which include the vocational or career technical, developmental, and community functions found in these institutions. Cohen and Brawer (2003) argue that the U.S. model is the most comprehensive of all models. Most community college scholars agree that the U.S. model serves as the cornerstone for many other countries’ community college models (Raby & Valeau, 2009). The U.S. model is a flexible one, with characteristics shared by the thousand-plus community colleges in the U.S. including:

1. Designed to meet local needs.

2. Open access meaning a person does not need to earn a particular score on a standardized examination to enter the college.
3. Institutional flexibility.
4. Serves the under- or un-served.
5. Non-compulsory.
6. Lower tuition than universities.
7. Awarding of certificates or degrees.
8. Partnerships with local business and industry to meet their training needs (Elsner, Boggs, & Irwin, 2008).

Other models around the globe share some of the above characteristics, but flexibility of the curriculum is the hallmark feature allowing the college to respond to the unique needs of the community it serves (Raby, 2009). The curriculum is designed to meet the changing economic, social, and technological needs of the local population which are impacted by the flattened world. Characteristics shared by various models include: (a) non-compulsory; (b) diversity; (c) defined by local needs; (d) serve a societal void, for example, those ineligible for or unable to afford university education while also open to the privileged members of the society; (e) increased enrollments especially during times of economic strain or economic development; (f) lower conferred institutional status in the post-secondary system; and (g) chronic underfunding (Raby, 2009). Another characteristic shared by the various models is uniqueness. The local and global shifts resulting from the process of globalization require each model to adapt to the social and economic context of the society in which it is located. The traits of flexibility and uniqueness allow the community college to respond to local needs far more rapidly

than any other post-secondary institution. Regardless of its unique nature, the community college provides an “alternative pathway” for the marginalized members of society who are not allowed to enter the “ivory tower” and for non-traditional students seeking a “second chance” (Raby & Valeau, 2009, p. 1).

The process of globalization has created an interconnected and interdependent reality for national economies. This digital world with global commerce requires a workforce that is trained and skilled to the ever-changing needs of the global knowledge-based economy. Cross-cultural knowledge, technological skills, especially Internet competencies, and an attitude that embraces change, are requirements for access to and success in the competitive knowledge-based economy. Intellectual capital, knowledge acquisition, and global competence are imperative to successful participation in the flat world. The perpetual economic shifts caused by globalization place extraordinary pressure on post-secondary education decision makers to adjust the way education is delivered and to whom access is granted (Elsner, Boggs, & Irwin, 2008). Flexibility and uniqueness are strengths in the globally integrated society. Social capital, bridging and bonding with others in mutually successful relationships, is crucial to prospering in the flat world. Community college models which adapt to a country’s unique human, intellectual and social capital needs are necessary to fill the void in post-secondary education and training. Elsner, Boggs, and Irwin (2008) claim these needs have inspired or possibly forced a movement in post-secondary education which offers an alternative to the traditional models of higher education.

Globally, the concept of community college is referred to by many different names. Raby (2009) provides a comprehensive list of names in *Community College*

*Models: Globalization and Higher Education Reform* (pp. 4-5). Examples of labels bestowed on community colleges include but are not limited to: junior college, institute of technology, institute of vocational training, folkhighschool, polytechnic, regional colleges, technical and further education colleges (TAFEs), volkshochschule, and worker's college. Regardless of their title, these institutions are distinct from other post-secondary institutions.

Historically, the community college model evolved from four different types of post-secondary, non-compulsory institutions. Raby (2009) describes the four distinct institutions on which the community college model was built.

1. The Scandinavian Folk High School offered non-formal adult education for local community interests.
2. The German *Volkhochschulen* defined formalized postsecondary, pre-university institutions throughout Europe, Canada, and the United States.
3. The European Polytechnic and Institute of Technology offered alternatives to university academics.
4. The United States Junior College targeted nontraditional students on an academic course of study. Some junior colleges became multifunction institutions with a range of missions, including the ability to transfer credits and finish education at a four-year institution.

(Raby, 2009, pp. 5-6)

These four cornerstones for community college models were multiplied and adapted to meet the unique needs of individual countries beginning in the 1950's. The

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) held the first international meeting to discuss the concept of community colleges in 1971. Over the next two decades, three countries (Suriname, Taiwan, and Thailand) eventually adapted the U.S. model to fit their country's unique needs. By the 1990's, over 90 countries had developed institutions of higher education that fit the concept of the community college (Raby, 2009). Regardless of the model, these institutions serve the communities in which they are situated and fill a void in higher education (Levin, 2001).

### *The Social Institution of Education in Vietnam*

The political institution shapes the social institution of education. Due to its rich history, the Vietnamese educational system has been and continues to be influenced by many forces as it responds to the needs of the flattened world. The national education system is comprised of four levels:

1. Early childhood education with crèches and kindergartens (ages 3 months to 6 years).
2. General education with primary education, lower secondary education and upper secondary education (ages 6 – 18).
3. Professional education with professional secondary education and vocational training (ages 15-18).
4. Higher education with undergraduate and postgraduate (ages 18 and older).  
(Nguyen, 2006; National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, 2005)

Prior to *Đổi mới* (renovation) in 1986, three government bodies shared responsibility for education: (a) the Ministry of Education, (b) the Ministry of Higher and

Secondary Technical Education, and (c) the General Department of Vocational Training (Ngo, 2005). The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) was formed in 1990 when the ministries merged (Ngo, 2005). Located in Ha Noi, the political center of Viet Nam, MOET is the current government organization responsible for the centralized education system. The following facts about MOET are instrumental to an understanding of the relationship between MOET and the Vietnamese community colleges.

1. MOET is assigned responsibility for policy making, guidance, and supervision of all national education programs including higher education.
2. MOET establishes criteria for teachers, determines staffing and controls salaries.
3. MOET determines national training fields, approves courses, curricula, and education programs; overall monitors the quality of education.
4. MOET develops examinations (e.g., entrance and final) and determines scoring levels to certify graduates.
5. MOET regulates diplomas and certificates which are printed and issued by the college.
6. MOET stipulates the content of textbooks in accordance with the Publishing Law. (Nguyen, 2007).

The 1988 Education Law established optional early childhood education (ECE) for children 3 months to 6 years which includes crèches (day nursery) and kindergartens. According to the MOET website “the goal of ECE is to improve children’s well-being physically, morally, intellectually and aesthetically, to lay the foundation for their personality, and to help them to go on to primary education” (Ministry of Education and



Training, n.d.a.). At the age of six, Vietnamese children formally enter the education system when they begin primary school. The focus at this level is language development, math, and civics (Ashwill, 2005). Compulsory education lasts for the next five years (Ministry of Education and Training, n.d.b.).

According to Nguyen (2006), the second sector, general education, “ is divided into: (a) primary education for ages 6-11 lasts five years, (b) lower secondary education for ages 11 – 15 lasts four years, and (c) upper secondary education for ages 15-18 lasts three years” (p. 8). In grades six through nine, referred to as lower secondary, the curriculum is standardized with high-priority subjects including a foreign language, math, literature and the national language of Vietnamese (Ashwill, 2005). Upon completion of lower secondary education the student takes one of two possible paths. One possibility is to enter sector three of the Vietnamese educational system which is professional education. This includes vocational training lasting one to two years and professional secondary education lasting three to four years. The second path is upper secondary education lasting three years (Nguyen, 2006). In order to graduate and move on to upper secondary education (15 to 18 year olds, lasting three years), students must pass the nationally standardized Intermediate Graduation Examination (IGE) which is given by the local Department of Education and Training. At the completion of upper secondary education, students take the nationally standardized Secondary Graduation Examination which determines their ability to graduate from high school.

Upon finishing upper secondary education, some students enter higher education, the fourth sector of the Vietnamese educational system. Vietnam National University (VNU) Ha Noi, founded in 1906, is “the country’s oldest and most prestigious institution

of higher learning” (Ashwill, 2005, p. 153). VNU Ho Chi Minh City was established in 1995. Unfortunately most students do not make it to either VNU Ha Noi, VNU Ho Chi Minh City or equivalent universities because students wishing to continue their education at the university level must score high on the University Entrance Examination (UEE). Nearly one million students take the UEE, but 600,000 students fail the exam meaning they do not earn above the cut score (Vietnam Review, 2009). Failure on the exam prohibits the student from entering a university. Ashwill (2005) proclaims, “entering an institution of higher education is exceedingly difficult and stressful for most high school students and virtually impossible for ethnic-minority students and those from rural areas” (p. 64). Ngo (2005) argues university access is influenced by many factors including the family’s level of income, social status, ethnic background and region of residence (p. 22). Under *Đổi mới*, increasing access to higher education became a priority. For example, ethnic minorities from the mountainous regions are often admitted to some but not all “higher education institutions without taking entrance examinations” (Ngo, 2005, p. 23). In 1994, a student loan program began which was enhanced in 1998 by the Prime Minister (Ngo, 2005). Access to higher education continues to be an issue in Viet Nam even though the HERA and the Education Law (2005) stipulate greater access. Historically, access has not been a cornerstone of higher education in the Vietnamese education system.

In his book *East Asian Higher Education: Traditions and Transformation*, Yee (1995) traces the historical development of tertiary education in Viet Nam. From 111 B.C.E. to C.E. 939, the Chinese held authority over Viet Nam, influencing Vietnamese culture with the philosophical traditions of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism,

especially Confucianism. Curriculum was influenced by stressing “philosophy, ethics, poetry, rhetoric, history, and political science. . . until the 15<sup>th</sup> century” when mathematics and other practical subjects” were added (Yee, 1995, p. 136). Memorizing history and literary and philosophical works was the preferred training method. The development of critical thinking skills was not encouraged in the formal education system (Yee, 1995). Chinese culture influenced the higher education system which was designed to develop mandarins, public officials. The lower levels of education were left to the private sector (Yee, 1995). The goal was to create the cultured “gentleman (*kiun-tseu*)” and remove the “vulgar man (*siao-jen*)” from the selected students in order to develop the future “fathers” of the people (Yee, 1995, p. 136).

This Confucian model has shaped Vietnamese higher education, including access, for centuries but has not kept pace with the changing economic, social, and technological changes of the 21st century. In addition, it has shaped a rigidly structured society, in which key Confucian relationships continue to dominate official and interpersonal interactions, discouraging independent thought, innovation and upward mobility. Viet Nam’s transition from a tightly controlled, centralized economy to an open market, globally connected knowledge-based economy requires a new type of worker. Employees of the new economy must possess a specific skill set, including fluency in the English language, and knowledge (e.g. Internet usage) and values favoring the global knowledge-based economy. In addition, economic trade between former enemies has fostered new relationships between the U.S. and Viet Nam. In 1994, the “American-led embargo on Viet Nam was terminated,” and in 1995, “diplomatic relations between the

U.S. and S.R.V. [Socialist Republic of Vietnam] were established” (McLeod & Nguyen, 2001, p. xix).

In 2001, the U.S and Viet Nam signed a trade agreement which thrust Viet Nam further into the global knowledge-based economy creating an even greater need for tertiary education. Ashwill (2005) discusses the “explosion of demand” for higher education “since the early 1990’s” that neither the national education system nor the “people-founded (private) institutions can realistically hope to meet” (p. 65). The doubling of university students between 1992 and 1995 and then again between 1995 and 1997 oversaturated the “about 150 universities and colleges in Vietnam, serving nearly a million students” (Ashwill, 2005, p. 65). Too many students and too few institutions combined with underpaid faculty receiving salaries so low they must take second jobs, curriculum that did not meet the demands of the transitioning economy, and collapsing infrastructure resulted in ill-prepared students and limited employment opportunities (Ashwill, 2005; Ngo, 2005). Dang (1997) postulates the Vietnamese higher education system required three changes:

1. Increase in the “intellectual level” of the people.
2. The development of skilled and competent people.
3. Workforce development (p. 369).

These three needs continue to influence higher education in Viet Nam.

#### *Transitional Higher Education in Viet Nam*

Tightly controlled access to a university education in Viet Nam created a gap between two social classes; the professional class comprised of university educated people employed in the government sector and the class of laborers who work for low

wages and often live in poverty. Since access to higher education has been limited, the development of a middle class has not existed until recently. As the economy of Viet Nam has shifted away from agricultural labor toward intellectual and knowledge capital, alternatives to a university education have become imperative to economic growth and survival in the global economy (Oliver, Pham, Elsner, Nguyen, & Do, 2009).

Alternatives to a university education have existed in various forms in Viet Nam since the 1960's. These alternatives have been transitional in the sense that they have appeared, often disappeared, and later reappeared. One type of transitional education is referred to as non-formal education. Nguyen (2006) explains non-formal education as open access to all people and "aimed at perfecting their personality, broadening their knowledge, elevating their cultural specialization and professional standard in order to improve the quality of life, find a job and adapt to social life" (p. 7). Non-formal education is also carried out at "permanent education centers" and at "general education and vocational secondary schools, job training centers, colleges and universities, and through the mass media" (Nguyen, 2006, p. 7).

The concept of the community college as an alternative to traditional university education has been developing intermittently since the 1960s when the U.S. and South Viet Nam were considering options for expanding higher education (Oliver, 2005). From the beginning, the U.S. was not the only influence on the Vietnamese community college concept. Yee (1995) describes the impact of French colonization along with the American military presence in the South on the development of a higher education system which included community colleges where the local community's economic and social development needs were met through these institutions. Oliver (2005) explains the

impact of the August 1971 presidential (South Vietnam) decree which created a plan to convert military installations soon to be vacated and underutilized education facilities into community colleges. This plan resulted in the establishment of the first two community colleges, Tien Giang College in My Tho (the Mekong Delta) and Duyen Hai (Costal) College in Nha Trang (the Central Region) (Oliver, 2005).

This concept of the community college was eliminated under the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam when the Soviet model of higher education was adopted under reunification in 1975 (Yee, 1995; Oliver, 2005). The Soviet model focused on a mono-disciplinary curriculum purposefully designed for a centrally controlled and planned economy (Ngo, 2005). The elite were often sent to the Soviet Union to obtain higher education that prepared them to become members of the Party and join the management structure of the country. The overall goal was to train future government workers for the State. According to Yee (1995), socialism made exaggerated promises which have been few and slow to develop, leaving the current Vietnamese higher education system a “mere shadow of its former self” (p. 19).

The 1986 renovation program, *Đổi mới*, and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 began reshaping the existing Soviet model. In the late 1990's provincial officials began recognizing a need for workforce development that was not being met by the current higher education system, and they eventually implemented the junior college concept. *Trường Cao Đẳng* refers to colleges that accept tertiary students who score too low on the university entrance exam to be accepted at the undergraduate university level (Doan, 2000). These junior colleges offer shorter term programs (approximately three-years) which train primary and middle school teachers, accountants, civil engineers, and

agricultural professionals. Each college is under the direction of a rector and vice rector who are selected by the People's Committee. Dang (1997) found that some provinces administered junior colleges in order to meet their particular economic and workforce development needs. These colleges offered diploma programs (about three years) which were aimed at workforce development in specific geographic areas. The academic affairs of the junior colleges are under the authority of MOET (Oliver, 2002). MOET's website (<http://en.moet.gov.vn>) does not list community colleges but refers to "junior colleges" as three year institutions at the higher education level. The Education Law (2005), the official and most recent legislation regulating formal education, refers to "college" rather than "community college" or "junior college" as a three-year higher education institution. The literature provided inconsistent information on the legal basis of and government recognition of the community college concept in Viet Nam.

In 1993, an assessment of Vietnamese education and training conducted by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) provided further impetus for renovation of the existing higher education system. Reporting "poor coordination and lack of linkage" between the various tertiary educational institutions, the findings produced a change in ideology leading to the creation of a community college system (Oliver, 2005, p. 3). After diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Vietnam were restored in 1995 and trade relationships were formalized in 2001, MOET began actively discussing the community college concept.

The task of obtaining accurate information on the exact number of community colleges, their locations and the lexicon utilized (e.g., community college or technical college) is an onerous one. Harvey (2005) claimed community colleges were introduced

in Viet Nam in 1994 and nine community colleges existed in Viet Nam at the time of his research (master's degree thesis), but he did not list those colleges. Oliver (2002), Harvey (2005), and Farnsworth and Cissell (2006) discovered that published research on higher education in Viet Nam was sparse and identified a need for more scholarly research in this area. According to Oliver (2002), "published works in English concerning higher education in Vietnam after 1995 are very difficult to find...The U.S. community college model is not well understood in Vietnam" (p. 113).

Oliver (2002, 2005) continues to ponder the existence of a Vietnamese community college model, at least one that is clearly defined and understood by the stakeholders. Although Yee (1995), Ngo (2005), Doan (2000) and Dang, (1997) discuss higher education in Viet Nam, community colleges are not referred to and junior colleges are only briefly mentioned in these publications. MOET's website does not present any information about community colleges. The Education Law (2005) does not address community colleges. VACC's website explains the purpose of the Association but does not lay claim to a Vietnamese community college model.

#### *Outside Influences on Viet Nam's Community Colleges*

The Canadian and U.S. community college models have influenced the concept of the community college in Viet Nam. According to Oliver (2005), three important events involving social capital took place which influenced Vietnamese community college development. First, the president of Lansing Community College (U.S.) and the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) were separately invited to MOET to discuss developing a system of community colleges as a part of the national higher education system. MOET and ACCC agreed "to develop a joint proposal concerning the



development of community colleges for submission to the Vietnamese government and CIDA [Canadian International Development Agency]” (Oliver, 2005, p. 7). A memorandum of understanding was signed with Lansing Community College to establish five community colleges in rural areas, but MOET discontinued this project when the Minister left (Oliver, 2005).

The second event influencing community college development in Viet Nam occurred in 1995 when MOET sought funding from the government of the Netherlands to establish core programs for the development of six community colleges. Established in August 2000, these six colleges began operating in 2001 serving the training needs of the communities they were located in. Ultimately, the six community colleges intended to offer the U.S. and Canadian style transfer programs (two-year degree that transferred to a university and counted toward a university bachelor’s degree), but in 2003 the Netherlands withdrew their funding (Oliver, 2005). Four of these six community colleges are currently operating but none offer the transfer option.

The third influential event on community college development in Viet Nam happened in 1996 when the Vietnam National University – HCMC (VNU) in its inaugural year “developed a pilot program placing community colleges in three provinces” (Oliver, 2005, p. 7). In 1998, these three colleges were closed when MOET would not certify them and was unwilling to provide any additional operating funds (Oliver, 2005).

In May 2001, Tra Vinh Community College was established in one of the lowest-income areas of southern Viet Nam through MOET approval and assistance from several Canadian agencies and the sponsorship of Can Tho University (CTU) (Oliver, Engel &

Scorsone, 2008). Tra Vinh Community College offered short-term trade certificate programs, long-term technician diploma programs, three-year college diplomas, and applied research and technology (Oliver, 2005). Tra Vinh transitioned to a university in 2006. Although it is officially a university, it maintains a membership in the Vietnam Association of Community Colleges and the rector of Tra Vinh University is the president of VACC.

Gathering representatives from the 12 provinces, Can Tho Univeristy (CTU) encouraged the development of a community college in each province (Oliver, 2005). This led to the establishment of two more community colleges, Kien Giang and Vinh Long in April 2002 (Oliver, 2005). Through a relationship between Can Tho University (Viet Nam), Texas Tech University (U.S.), and a Fulbright visiting scholar, Kien Giang Community College developed a strong, interactive relationship with a U.S. consortium comprised of the Mohawk Valley Community College in New York, Texas Tech University, Richland College in Texas, and the Kentucky Community and Technical System (Oliver, 2005).

In November 2005, the first international community college conference took place with the intention of “drafting a permanent regulation for the operation of community colleges” (Oliver, 2005, p. 11). Representatives from Canada, Thailand, and the U.S. presented papers at this conference sponsored by MOET and the local People’s Committee. On March 28 and 29, 2007, the *On Expanding Capabilities of American-Vietnamese Community College Conference* was held at Kien Giang Community College in Rach Gia, Viet Nam. An American delegation comprised of representatives from Mohawk Valley Community College, St. Louis Community College, Tom Ball

Community College and Richland Community College both located in Texas, the Kentucky Community and Technical System, Texas Tech University and the University of Missouri-St. Louis, presented papers and enriched their relationships with the rectors, vice rectors and teachers of the Vietnamese community colleges, MOET officials, the Kien Giang People's Committee, and representatives from the U.S. Embassy. In April 2008, another conference, *American-Vietnamese Community College Conference: Case Studies and Partnerships*, was held in Rach Gia, Viet Nam, with international partners including the American delegation and representatives from Singapore. Epperson (2008) presented a paper on building human capital through the community college model. The Fulbright relationship with Kien Giang Community College and the international conferences from 2005 through 2008 have built social capital in Viet Nam that have influenced the Vietnamese concept of the community college.

Beyond sharing new knowledge with peers in a conference setting, other opportunities for developing relationships exist. One possible opportunity these relationships offer is professional development for the staff of the Vietnamese community colleges. Oliver's (2002) research confirmed the *Task Force on Higher Education's* (2000) conclusion that higher education systems in developing countries face many challenges including low levels of teacher motivation due to salaries so low multiple jobs are necessary. Dang (1997) also identified low teacher salaries which required second jobs that reduced the quality of their work, decreased their level of dedication to teaching and the amount of time they dedicated to students "outside normal university hours" (p. 370). Community college models in developed countries (e.g., Canada, Australia and the United States) recognize the need to pay faculty wages that

allow them to live a middle-class lifestyle and devote their professional energy to their teaching positions.

Low pay, low levels of motivation among faculty, and a lack of faculty development are not the only concerns affecting community college development in Viet Nam. Studying innovative practices at Tra Vinh Community College (prior to the transition to a university), Harvey (2005) recommended the implementation of policy changes in governance, program relevance, and lifelong learning strategies. As the Vietnamese community colleges are building social capital through international partnerships, one possible outcome of these relationships is policy change in terms of governance, including greater autonomy, and programs offered. The Education Law (2005) and the HERA (2005) both address the expectation of reform in: (a) governance; (b) program relevance; (c) technological and scientific development; and (d) international partnerships that bridge the HEIs to countries that have demonstrated success in the global knowledge-based economy. The overall community college model has proven successful in many countries calling for reform in their higher education systems. The reforms required by the Education Law (2005) and the HERA (2005) might be addressed through a community college system strategically designed to address reform measures, but the literature does not provide a coherent description of the scope, mission, role and focus of the institutions named “community college,” therefore this study is critically needed.

### *Theoretical Perspectives and Paradigms*

The heart of sociology is the human group and the organizations which shape human existence (Berger, 1963). Institutions, including education, are socially

constructed by individuals who share a similar need. The shared need met by the social institution of education is the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies which prepare individuals for full participation in society and the social institution of the economy. In a flat world, the economies of the world are connected and global competence is necessary for active participation. Three theoretical perspectives: (a) organization theory; (b) human capital theory; and (c) social capital theory frame this research study as it examines the community college concept in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam and how this higher education institution is shaped by the flat world reality. These three perspectives functioned as tools as the research questions were developed and examined through the various stages of the study.

### *Organization Theory*

A community college is an organization designed by humans to meet various needs, in particular education and training. Theories are perspectives designed to explain, predict, and sometimes control phenomena. Organization theory, also referred to as organizational studies, is the systematic study of human behavior in organizations. The theory analyzes human behavior from multiple perspectives and on many different levels. Hatch (2006) divides organization theory into modern, symbolic, and postmodern. Organization theories examine how people interact with the organizational structure. These theories are often traced to German sociologist Max Weber (1786-1826) who studied leadership and bureaucracy in modern formal organizations which he claimed shaped daily human existence in a rational manner. Frederick W. Taylor's (1856 – 1915) examination of organizations focused on employee motivation through goal setting and rewards and applied the “scientific” method to the examination and evaluation

of work practices. American social worker Mary Parker Follett (1868 – 1933), shifted emphasis to the role of the worker in the decision making process, and proposed that organizations adopt her “power-with” rather than the traditional business model of “power over” (Tonn, 2003). She argued that negotiation, employee participation, and building a sense of shared power in a community atmosphere resulted in greater productivity and healthier individuals and organizations. Follett proposed that organizational conflict could lead to healthy outcomes as individuals used their creative side to negotiate change (Tonn, 2003). Sociologists share Follett’s perspective that conflict has a healthy side which is the implementation of both micro and macro levels of social change.

The experiments conducted by Elton Mayo and associates at the Western Electric plant in the late 1920’s and 1930’s applied emerging behavioral theory to organization theory to understand how physical structure impacts workers’ behavior. Conducting an experiment to ascertain the impact of physical conditions of the working environment on the productivity of the factory workers, Mayo and associates found a spurious relationship. They concluded that the workers improved their productivity simply because they were the subjects of an experiment. They had hypothesized that improved physical conditions, in particular better lighting, would enhance worker productivity. Thus social influences not physical conditions improved organizational behavioral. According to Hatch (2006), the Hawthorne experiments often receive credit for sparking the interest in studying the behavior of organizations. In 1950, George Homas re-examined the Hawthorne experiments and concluded that a change in an organization’s physical structure can significantly influence worker productivity. In *The Human Group*,

Homas (1950) posits that when an organization's leaders implement changes in the physical environment, workers may interpret this as a symbol of concern by management.

Organization theory was further developed through quantitative studies in the 1960s and 1970s. Qualitative research in anthropology, sociology and psychology further developed the field in the 1980s. American social psychologist, Karl Weick contributed to the field in 1979 with his book, *The Social Psychology of Organizing*, where he introduced the term "enactment" which referred to the process of "sensemaking" that individuals in an organization go through in both real time and in retrospect as they socially construct the reality of the organization (Hatch, 2006, p. 45).

Today, organization theory influences the academic disciplines of business, psychology, education and sociology. Departments of Organization Studies are generally found in industrial psychology and business schools. Popular authors such as Drucker (1992), Collins (2001), Covey (2005) and Kotter (2008) apply research in organization theory to business practices. Bolman and Deal (2003) systematically present the spectrum of organization theorists in four "frames" (structural, human resource, political and symbolic) which encompass the objective of their book, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*. These frames provide multiple perspectives through which a problem or issue can be examined and serve as tools for those in decision making positions. Bolman and Deal's (2003) frames can be applied globally offering practitioners "generic application" (p. xvii). In fact, Bolman and Deal (2003) have utilized the frames with organizations throughout the world demonstrating their relevancy regardless of cultural norms. Therefore, the frames are applicable when examining organizations in other cultures including the community college concept in Viet Nam.

Organizational life is complicated, ambiguous, complex, unpredictable, frustrating, turbulent, etc. regardless of the society in which the organization is located. Like humans, organizations can take on a darker side. Bolman and Deal's (2003) frames offer "maps that aid navigation" of organizational problems and can serve as "tools for solving problems and getting things done" (p. 18). These frames are utilized in this research to examine the concept of community college in Viet Nam.

The structural frame focuses on the architecture of an organization. The "cornerstone" of this frame is the division of labor (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 49). The frame also examines the hierarchy, written and unwritten rules, the mission statement, policies and procedures, manuals, etc. that define the operation of the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2003). This frame examines the linear and rational side of the organization offering a tool to examine the community college system in Viet Nam from a macro perspective and seeks answers to the following questions. How does each college fit into the "design" of this developing country? What is the role of a community college in the context of development needs? What role does the government seek for the community college? How is the scope of the community college different from other institutions referred to as "college?" How "vocational" is the community college? This frame was especially useful when examining documents, policies, and decrees (legislation) to understand the role of the community college in Viet Nam's higher education system.

The human resource frame is focused on the relationship between the people and the organization, centering "on how characteristics of organizations and people shape what they do for one another" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 111). This frame was utilized to



examine several questions. How do the needs of the individuals compliment or conflict with the organizations? What develops if the organization is not meeting the needs of the people? How does the organization fit the needs of the Communist Party of Vietnam? How does the organization enhance the political desires of an individual? How does a person become a rector? How much authority does the rector have to shape the mission and scope of an individual college? What is the relationship between the rectors of VACC? What is the relationship between VACC and MOET? What is the role of the Communist Party of Vietnam in each province with a community college? Are community colleges viewed as investments in human capital or as a means to access university education? In general, this frame offers a tool to examine how the Vietnamese community colleges have been designed to “serve human needs rather than the reverse” and if “a good fit benefits both” (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 115).

The political frame is focused on how decisions are made in organizations. This frame was instrumental while examining the fit between a centralized national higher education system and the community college’s ability to meet local training and education needs. Assumptions of the political frame include: resources are always limited and consensus regarding allocation of resources should not be expected (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Organizations are viewed as “coalitions” of competing interests groups (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 187). Conflict and competition are assumed to be normal in the culture of any organization, even healthy ones. This frame was utilized to examine perceptions on decision making, resource allocation, available resources and people’s perceptions about what resources are available, how the various stakeholders believe the

resources should be allocated, what coalitions exist and who belongs to which coalition, and how the various coalitions bargain and negotiate for the scarce resources.

The symbolic frame is focused on the culture of the organization. This frame examines norms, beliefs, values, traditions, symbols, and shared meanings of the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2003). A basic assumption of the symbolic frame is that what happens in an organization is less important than what it means to those who comprise the organization. The symbolic frame was useful in discovering what the term “community college” symbolized in Viet Nam. What does VACC symbolize to its various partners (e.g., employees, rectors of the community colleges, faculty of those colleges, students and MOET)? Do the various constituents of the community college assign different meaning to it? Does a community college education symbolize a meaningful and utilitarian credential that leads to a job with a sustainable standard of living? Does working for community college symbolize a sustainable career choice? How do the leaders of the provincial or city CPV define the community college? What value do the leaders assign to a community college? Is the development of a community college in a province a means to the end of the college’s eventual evolution to a university?

Although each frame brings its own value to the examination, Bolman and Deal (2003) assume decision makers will utilize all four frames to appraise organizational problems, how the problems are perceived, and the possible options for solving problems if they really exist. Therefore all four frames were utilized to investigate the overarching research question: Does a Vietnamese community college model exist?

### *Human Capital Theory*

Human capital refers to the collective knowledge, skills, talents and abilities of a person or a country. Paulsen (2001) refers to human capital as “the productive capacities – knowledge, understandings, talents, and skills—possessed by an individual or society” (p. 56). Human capital theory is most often associated with the academic discipline of economics. The theory originated from the scholarship of Adam Smith (1776) who delineated four types of capital. To Smith, capital that was “human” referred to an individual’s talents acquired through formal education or on the job training.

University of Chicago economist, Gary Becker, received the 1991 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Science for his research on human capital. His 1964 book, *Human capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis With Special Reference to Education*, is considered the seminal work of human capital theory. Becker (1993) credits “Ted Schultz, Jacob Mincer, Milton Friedman, Sherwin Rosen, and several others associated with the University of Chicago” with pioneering the theory (p. 15). Becker’s (1964) central proposition is - investment in education and training increases human capital. The higher a person’s level of education or training, the more human capital he/she accumulates. High levels of human capital bring about higher earnings, better health, greater productivity, a longer life, higher levels of civic engagement, less likelihood of criminal activity, etc. Education and training augment human capital “specifically” by enhancing job-related skills and knowledge and “generally” by increasing cognitive capacities (Becker, 1964). Specific human capital can lose its value if the individual changes jobs because the capital is not necessarily transferable. General human capital can be transferred to new environments and employment positions and can

be shared with others. This sharing and transferring can lower the value of the capital as the knowledge is spread and is no longer a scarce commodity.

Acquiring human capital is an investment which is attractive at both the micro (individual) and macro (collective, such as a country) levels. One argument made by human capital scholars (e.g., Becker, 1993) is that decisions to engage in higher education are made by weighing the costs and the benefits of the acquisition of the credential and the knowledge or skill obtained through the education. Therefore human capital is a rational decision making process which assists in the understanding of the process students go through when making their choice about which college to attend (Paulsen, 2001). Regardless of which factors influence a person's decision to go to college, Becker (1993) argues that ability and family background are critical components of human capital acquisition. Therefore, obtaining higher levels of formal education is influenced by factors such as: (a) Is education available to me?; (b) Does my family encourage me to attend?; and (c) Do I have the financial resources needed or the knowledge necessary to obtain the finances?

In the *Miller McCune* article, "Does Education Really Make You Smarter?," Nie and Golde (2008) claim "costly expansions of education may not always bring the promised social results. In some cases, those expansions may do little but sort people according to their native ability" (para. 1). Nie and Golde (2008) question the validity of human capital theory based on their findings that "investments in expanding education have not resulted in improvement in American adults' verbal abilities....and much more research is needed before enormous resources are committed to two additional years of general education that may not ...deliver the social goods promised"

(para. 8). Their research at the Stanford Institute for the Quantitative Study of Society has shown that as more Americans acquire higher education “each outcome declines over time for every level of education” (Nie & Golde, 2008, para. 32). These findings support the idea that the value of general capital (knowledge) decreases as more people acquire it. Nie and Golde’s (2008) findings would be less valid in a society where access to higher education is severely limited and where merit is not the deciding determinant of access for the majority of the population.

In *The Economics of Human Capital of Investment in Higher Education*, Paulsen (2001) reports, “the average student attending a community college, without completing a degree or certificate, and never having attended a four-year institution, earned between 9 and 13 percent more than high school graduates with similar background characteristics” (p. 67). Paulsen (2001) found that even when the “sheepskin or credential” effect is accounted for, community college attendance results in higher earnings and those earnings were greatest for two groups: women and low income students. In Viet Nam, the community colleges, as they currently exist, are serving an underserved population including low income students. This study examined the Vietnamese community college’s ability to increase human capital and enhance the country’s competition in the worldwide flow of information in the knowledge based global economy.

### *Social Capital Theory*

While human capital is built through education and training, “social capital” is built through relationships with others. Social capital is acquired through one’s social networks. Putnam (2000) states, “human capital refers to properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of

reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (p. 19). Like human capital, social capital can enhance productivity and is associated with improved living conditions and life chances. The concept of social capital has been credited to many including French sociologist David Emile Durkheim (1892), John Dewey (1899), Alexis de Tocqueville (1835), political scientist Robert Salisbury (1969), sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1972), sociologist James Coleman (1988), and Barry Wellman and Scot Wortley (1990) (Analytic Technologies, 2009; Garson, 2006; Portes, 1998; Putnam, 2000; York University, 2009).

Putnam’s *Bowling Alone* (2000) popularizes the term, social capital, as he discusses how the sense of community has gone through stages of collapse and revival in the U.S. Putnam (2000) distinguishes between “bonding social capital” – within group social connections which are exclusive and “bridging social capital” – across group social connections which are inclusive (p. 22). Putnam claims “of all the dimensions along which forms of social capital vary, perhaps the most important is the distinction between *bridging* (or inclusive) and *bonding* (or exclusive)” (p. 23). These categories of social networks are not “either-or;” they are “more or less dimensions” allowing for comparison of “different forms of social capital” (Putnam, 2000, p. 23).

Putnam (2000) warns that social capital “can be directed toward malevolent, anti-social purposes” or it can result in positive social consequences such as “mutual support, cooperation, trust, institutional effectiveness” (p. 22). Viet Nam has experienced the dangerous side of “bonding” social capital through its exclusive connection to the Soviet model of higher education between 1976 and the late 1980s when the U.S.S.R. crumbled. The loss of Soviet funding and the unproductive nature of the Soviet model in the 21st

century knowledge-based global economy left Viet Nam with a deficit in higher education participation. According to Runckel (2010), only about two percent of college and university age students are currently enrolled at some type of higher education institution. Access to higher education continues to be an issue in Viet Nam and is often associated with the long-term impact of the Soviet model which denied access to most and resulted in a disconnect between the market's needs and the expected educational outcomes of higher education for those who were fortunate enough to participate (Ashwill, 2005).

In recent years, the Vietnamese community colleges have developed a series of “bridging” international partnerships with Canada, the Netherlands, the U.S. and other countries that show promise for building social capital that will enhance the institutional effectiveness and productivity of the Vietnamese community colleges. The principles of social capital theory were useful in this study as the researcher sorted through the various domestic and international partnerships the Vietnamese community colleges have formed to ascertain the impact of these relationships on the Vietnamese community college model.

### *Summary*

Chapter 2 has imparted an overview of the social institution of education and outlined social conditions, historical markers and cultural ideology which have influenced education in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. This information identifies the context in which the concept of community college has been shaped and is transitioning. The review of the literature has pointed to the deficit of a defined Vietnamese community college model demonstrating the need for this research study. The theoretical paradigms of organization theory, human capital theory, and social capital

theory have been summarized to provide the researcher's frame for the study. These paradigms impacted the findings of the researchers' analysis of the community college concept in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.



## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology

#### *Introduction*

Community college systems around the globe (e.g., Canada, China's Hong Kong, Thailand, Australia, Netherlands and the U.S.) build human and intellectual capital and enhance economic, human, and social development. These "systems" are known by many names such as: community colleges and further education in Canada, vocational and continuing higher education in China, community colleges in Thailand, the United States and Viet Nam, vocational education and training sector in Australia and the Netherlands, and further education in Denmark, New Zealand and Ireland (Elsner, Boggs, and Irwin, 2008). Regardless of the name given to these educational institutions, their purpose is to train future and current workers and provide the public with continuing education at many different levels. In order to effectively and efficiently contribute to the economic and social development of a country, the community college system must share a clearly defined model to ensure a collective understanding of its *raison d'être*. The model should describe and explain the characteristics of the system to provide clarity to the stakeholders (e.g. public, employees of these institutions, governing boards, funding sources, government, and domestic and international partners).

In Viet Nam, the idea of the community college began to develop in South Viet Nam during the late 1960's and the Second Indochina War. Since that time an intermittent development of the concept of community college has led to the creation of 12 higher education institutions with "community college" in their name. Four of these institutions are located in the northern region of Viet Nam, seven in the south and one in

the central region (see map provided in Appendix C). The 12 colleges are members of the Vietnam Association of Community Colleges (VACC) a “social-vocational organization” designed to represent the “common voice” of those higher education institutions who “follow the community college model in Vietnam,” but the model is not defined in the website (VACC, n.d.a.).

There is little agreement among the stakeholders, national officials, administrators, faculty, students and the general public on what constitutes a community college in Viet Nam. International partners and researchers have been unable to describe the Vietnamese community college model and have questioned if a model even exists (Harvey, 2005; Oliver, 2002; Oliver et al., 2009). A review of the literature demonstrated that at least to the degree it can be identified in the existing literature, a shared construct of the community college is not readily apparent; thus the scope of this research study was to discover if the 12 Vietnamese community colleges shared core characteristics. One of two possible outcomes was desired. If the data revealed that a model of shared core characteristics did exist, the study would describe and explain this model. If the data concluded that core characteristics that define a model did not exist in Viet Nam, the study would describe the similarities and differences between the 12 institutions. Thus the second potential outcome could serve as a starting point for the development of a Vietnamese community college model.

### *Research Design*

#### *Approach*

Merriam (1998) posits, “Qualitative research is designed to inductively build rather than to test concepts, hypotheses, and theories (p. 45). The case study design is

most often an inductive approach associated with theory building instead of a deductive approach associated with theory testing (Berg, 2007, p. 284). Weick (1995), a scholar in both qualitative research and organization theory, claims case studies allow the researcher to make sense of the organization under study. The researcher designed this study as a qualitative research inquiry purposefully selecting multiple (11 of the 12 existing) community colleges in Viet Nam, which were studied individually and then compared to ascertain if shared core institutional characteristics existed among them. The emergent nature of the qualitative design allowed for flexibility as the researcher discovered answers to the research questions through “hunches, working hypotheses and educated guesses that direct[ed]” her attention (Merriam, 1998, p. 155).

The researcher’s interest in the topic developed out of her two visits to Viet Nam (2007 and 2008) to attend international conferences on community college development and international partnerships. While trying to understand the concept of community college, the researcher diligently perused published and unpublished materials on the community college in Viet Nam to gain a deeper understanding of the institution. The literature review indicated a major gap in understanding the community college concept in Viet Nam. The researchers and practitioners were asking, “Does a model exist?”

Models are social constructions people use to understand, describe, compare and sometimes predict phenomena (Birnbaum, 1988). The case study design is an empirical study of socially constructed phenomena and the design “follows disciplined practices of analysis and triangulation to tease out what deserves to be called experiential knowledge from what is opinion and preference” (Stake, 2005, p. 455). This multiple-case study engaged in sense making to ascertain if a Vietnamese community college model existed.

The research design needed to focus on meaning and description in a holistic and contextual manner. A qualitative approach was selected so the subjects could tell their own story of the community college concept in Viet Nam and the researcher or reader could interpret the findings within the context of Vietnamese culture (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, vii).

The case study approach defines the theoretical orientation of this study which is to gain a holistic understanding of the concept of the community college in Viet Nam. The researcher selected the case study approach because it affords a comprehensive review of the community colleges in Viet Nam through an intensive, holistic and descriptive analysis of a bounded system. The community colleges in Viet Nam were studied and analyzed at the deepest level providing not only description of the model but also an understanding of the community college model through an examination of the context of Vietnamese culture and history (Merriam, 1998). The Vietnamese community college model was examined from what Merriam (1998) refers to as the three angles of the case study approach; the particular, the heuristic and the descriptive. The particularistic angle of the study was to discover how the community college concept in Viet Nam has been socially constructed and shared by the stakeholders to tackle the national problem of addressing training needs through the higher education system (Shaw, 1978). The heuristic nature of the case study allowed the researcher to discover the answer to the problem stated in the literature which identified a lack of clarity about the community college in both theory and practice in Viet Nam. The knowledge obtained from this case study was contextualized to provide a thick description of the Vietnamese community college concept (Geertz, 1973). The reader of this study will be able to place

himself/herself in the context of the situation and develop a profound understanding of the phenomenon (Stake, 1995).

Case studies are defined by their “bounded” nature (Berg, 2007; Stake, 1995, 2005; Merriam, 1998). In order to understand the shared characteristics of the Vietnamese community college, if they exist, this study was bounded to a particular set of instrumental cases which were compared and contrasted. Stake (1995) refers to this particular set of cases as “collective case studies” which are also known as multiple-case studies, comparative case studies, and contrasting case studies. Yin (2003) asserts that multiple case studies are more compelling and robust than a single case study. The researcher’s goal is to build “a general explanation that fits each of the individual cases, even though the cases will vary in details” (Yin, 1994, p. 112). This case study allowed the researcher to examine what is typical in a case and then compare the typicality between the cases (Stake, 2005). Miles and Huberman (1994) claim the examination of multiple cases which are similar but contrasting allows the researcher to develop a deeper comprehension of the single case finding by grounding the findings in the data and enhancing the trustworthiness of the conclusions. Therefore the multiple-case study design was purposefully selected to gather the richest source of data from those who best understand the community college concept as it is currently constructed and shared in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.

### *Population*

The bounded system for this multiple case study was confined to the 12 higher education institutions in Viet Nam with the name “community college” in their title. Determining these 12 higher education institutions was more difficult than expected and

added to the lack of clarity. An updated membership list provided by VACC in December 2009 included 24 member institutions (personal communication, December 30, 2009). Only 12 members had the term “community college” in their official name. The 12 member organizations of VACC who were not selected as cases in this study, include various types of colleges (e.g., economic-technical, engineering and pedagogy), a law firm, a university which had transitioned from a community college, and an association of human resources development. For the purpose of this study, these member institutions of the VACC are excluded because “community college” does not appear in their name and therefore they may not claim to be a “community college.” Out of the remaining 12 higher education institutions in Viet Nam with “community college” in their official name, 11 were selected for the sample and analyzed, first “with-in case” and then with “cross-case” analysis so abstractions across cases could be constructed (Merriam, 1998, p. 185). The 12th community college was not included due to its remote location near the Viet Nam and China border, difficulty of the travel, and the researcher’s time constraints for the field work phase.

#### *Purposeful Sample and Participants*

A nonprobabilistic sampling strategy was implemented to discover what occurs within the bounded system and the implications of the linked occurrences within the related cases (Honigmann, 1982). Through this instrumental multiple-case study, the researcher sought to discover the typical in the Vietnamese community college by comparing and contrasting the shared characteristics of the institutions bearing this name in Viet Nam (Stake, 2005). A purposeful sample of 11 cases was chosen to assess the interaction between the cases, to provide clarity of the model if one existed, and to verify

the duplication of characteristics across the cases (Stake, 2005; Flick, 1998). Morse (1991) argues a purposeful (which is also theoretical) sample is utilized when “informants with a broad general knowledge of the topic or those who have undergone the experience and whose experience is considered typical” are selected (p. 129). Therefore, those higher education institutions in Viet Nam with the name community college have been selected as “typical” cases in this purposeful sample (See Table 1).

Table 1

*Community Colleges in Viet Nam*

Region	Community College Name
Central Viet Nam	Binh Thuan Community College
Northern Viet Nam	Ha Noi Community College Hai Phong Community College Hay Tay Community College Lai Chau Community College
Southern Viet Nam	Ba Ria-Vung Tau Community College Ca Mau Community College Dong Thap Community College Hau Giang Community College Kien Giang Community College Soc Trang Community College Vinh Long Community College

The selection criteria utilized to choose the cases for the study were: (a) community college in the institution’s official name; (b) membership in the Vietnam Association of Community Colleges; (c) recognition by the Ministry of Education and Training as a community college; and (d) accessible to the researcher. There are 12 community colleges in Viet Nam that qualified under the selection criteria. Eleven of the 12 community colleges were chosen as the purposeful sample. The typical informants in

these institutions are the rectors of the colleges who served as gatekeepers and opened the door to the researcher (Morse, 1991). The names and locations of the 12 community colleges are public information; however, to protect confidentiality, the rector's names are not provided.

Eleven of the 12 colleges comprising the population were selected as the purposeful sample and were visited during the field work phase. As noted previously, the 12th college was deemed inaccessible to the researcher. Within this purposeful sample of 11 cases, "experts" who were best informed to tell the story of the Vietnamese community college were selected, with the rectors chosen to fill this role because they represent the informants who have the experience that is typical (Morse, 1991).

Following the recommendation of Stake (1995), two non-case experts were included in the study, an official in MOET who works directly with the community colleges and a staff member of the VACC. The MOET and VACC informants were included because collaboration with these two organizations is requisite for the individual case colleges. Therefore, the site visits to MOET and VACC were instrumental to a comprehensive understanding of the community college model in Viet Nam. Because data collection and analysis are simultaneous in qualitative research, theoretical or ongoing sampling within the cases was employed while visiting the sites (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). On occasion the "experts" referred the researcher to additional informants.

### *Procedures*

Hartley (2004) describes the case study as "heterogeneous" because of the variety of techniques (e.g., interviews, observation, documents) and methods (qualitative, quantitative or mixed) that may be utilized (p. 332). The techniques employed to collect



the data for this study began with approval by the researcher's University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Informed consent is not a familiar term in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam; therefore, the researcher worked through VACC to gain access to the subjects at the 11 case colleges to insure that the nature of the study was thoroughly understood. In April 2009, the president of the VACC emailed the rector (top administrator) of each case college to explain the research project and encourage him/her to invite the researcher to visit the college to conduct field work during June 2009 (see Appendix D). The email explained the overarching research question and requested a site visit by the researcher to conduct a recorded interview with the rector and photograph the campus and people at the college as selected by the rector. The email also briefly described the institutional review process and the U.S. requirement of informed consent (see Appendix E). The email invitation and subsequent approval from each case college were logged and tracked through the researcher's Data Collection Log.

While the invitation process for each case college was underway, the informed consent letter was translated into Vietnamese so a copy in both English and Vietnamese could be provided to each rector, or in one case, his/her designee. The informed consent was emailed to each college representative prior to the interview and a paper copy was provided at the beginning of each interview. Appendix E includes the Informed Consent in both English and Vietnamese. When the researcher received each rector's emailed invitation inviting her to conduct field work at the college, she emailed the Informed Consent in both languages so it could be reviewed prior to the site visit. The Informed Consent was also reviewed before beginning the interview during the field work.

Traveling to Viet Nam required preparation beyond the normal travel preparations such as planning supplies and packing the correct items needed for the stay. Since the study required a business visa, the process required a letter of invitation which was obtained through VACC (see Appendix F). The Association served as the “formal coordinator” and gatekeeper opening the door to conduct the research in Viet Nam (Hagan, 2006). Once the VACC letter of invitation was received, the researcher completed the process through the Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam in the United States by purchasing a business visa that allowed for a one month stay in Viet Nam. In addition to serving as the coordinator and providing a plethora of documents for data analysis, VACC also arranged the travel schedule and transportation from one site to another during the field work phase.

#### *Data Collection Strategies and Instruments*

The in-country portion of the data collection process was encompassed in a field experience beginning May 29, 2009, and ending June 23, 2009, in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. The techniques utilized to collect data in the field included: (a) semi-structured interviews; (b) photography of the college campuses and when appropriate, people; (c) observation with resulting field notes; and (d) gathering pertinent documents. These same techniques were utilized at two non-case sites; a university and the MOET. The university is a former community college which was founded in 2001 and transitioned to a university in 2006. In 2001, six community colleges began operating in the southern region of Viet Nam with funding and training for core programs provided by the Netherlands. Although the current university was not one of the six and received extensive assistance from Canada, its establishment one year later along with its location

in the same region and the transition to a provincial university provides additional understanding to the concept of community college. Located in southern Viet Nam, the university campus houses the southern office of VACC (the main office is located in the north), and the president of VACC serves as the rector of the university. He was the rector of the institution when it was a community college and was able to provide historical context to community college development in Viet Nam. MOET is the branch of government with administrative authority over the national, centralized education system and is responsible for all levels of education in Viet Nam including higher education. A community college cannot be established without the approval of MOET, and this ministry directs all academic matters of the college.

Additional interviews were conducted with Vietnamese higher education system personnel, both Americans and Vietnamese who live in Ho Chi Minh City and Ha Noi, the two largest metropolitan areas. Americans working in the U.S. Consulate and the Institute of International Education (IIE) were also interviewed. These informants provided the researcher with ideas about context based on their experience as Americans living and working in the Vietnamese culture.

As the “primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data” (Merriam, 1998, p. 20), the researcher conducted the site visits and interviews and was responsible for field notes to record what she observed. The researcher was also responsible for photographs taken during each campus tour and interview, and for collecting the artifacts gathered from each college. As the researcher was seeking meaning and understanding in a foreign culture, a cultural consultant was hired and traveled with the researcher during the field work in Viet Nam. The consultant played many roles including interpreter (verbal

language), translator (written language) and cultural guide. At times, she provided a sounding board when the researcher was thinking out loud and contemplating the cultural context of information which emerged from the site visits. This thinking led to adjusted or new questions for the Interview Guide (see Appendix G). The consultant, a native of southern Vietnam and community college instructor of English at one of the 11 case colleges, had demonstrated her competence as an interpreter and translator by her many contracts with multi-national groups. During the 2007-2008 academic year, the cultural consultant lived in the Midwest region of the U.S. where she earned a community college certificate to enhance her bachelor's degree credential earned in Viet Nam. This experience not only provided her with a valuable credential for her native society but also offered the opportunity to experience, first hand, the U.S. community college and enhance her English speaking skills. Therefore, her experience in both U.S. and Vietnamese culture and each society's community college was an asset to the research project. The cultural assistant's credentials are included as Appendix H. Both the researcher and the cultural assistant recognized the need to remain flexible as the data were collected so they could recognize unexpected opportunities when they arose.

*Data Collection Strategy 1: Interview.*

The first strategy employed to collect data from the 11 case study colleges was a semi-structured interview aimed at collecting information from the rector (top administrator) of the college. The rector was purposefully selected as the guide to ensure that others present during the interview were convinced the study was worthwhile. As the key informant, the rector granted access to his/her institution and assured additional informants that it was safe to participate in the study (Berg, 2007). Utilizing the snowball

technique, the rector was also able to obtain additional informants (e.g., director of international department, teaching staff and coordinators of various departments or centers) for not only the interview but also for the campus tour and informal discussions over lunch and/or dinner. These discussions allowed the researcher to clarify meaning and resulted in a more comprehensive examination of the community college concept. Sightseeing excursions were arranged by some of the case colleges following their campus visit. These informal outings, led by faculty and administrators of the college, also offered the researcher an opportunity to clarify the meaning of the specific data collected during the formal interview.

The cornerstone of each case college visit was the interview. Each face-to-face interview was held on the college campus in the administrative conference room. The researcher explained U.S. research protocol, by taking subjects through the various components such as informed consent, confidentiality, purpose of utilizing two digital voice-recorders, storage and protection of the data, and summarizing the purpose of the study. Once the Informed Consent was signed, the interview began with introductions. The researcher asked each subject present in the interview to provide his/her name, title and email address in the researcher's interview log-book. This book's value was apparent during the transcription of the interviews as the researcher needed to recall who was speaking.

An Interview Guide was prepared prior to the field-work phase. The initial Guide included "essential questions," "extra questions," "throwaway questions," and "probing questions" which were impacted by the tenets of human and social capital theories (Berg, 2007, pp. 100-101). Throwaway questions were utilized at the beginning of an interview

especially if previous contact had not been established between the researcher and the informants or if it was apparent that the line of questioning needed to shift as the interview progressed. Examples of essential questions asked during the interviews include:

1. “What is the purpose of the community college in Viet Nam?”
2. “What needs in your community are being met by the college?”
3. “What needs in your community are not being met?”

The extra questions were included as reliability checks on the essential questions.

For example, subjects were asked,

1. “What is the mission of the community college?”
2. “What socio-economic needs does the community college meet?”

Probing questions included:

1. “Can you tell me more about...?”
2. “Can you help me understand...?”

The probing questions were utilized more frequently as the interview schedule progressed and the researcher had collected data from other case colleges. Because qualitative research is emergent, the researcher depended less on the Interview Guide as the number of completed interviews increased. The questions asked during the later interviews continued to include probing and essential questions along with “hypothetical questions” (Merriam, 1998, p. 77). One example is, “Suppose MOET rejects the request of a Provincial People’s Committee to establish a community college, what are the Committee’s options?” As the interviews progressed the researcher would ask, “Suppose I am a student at your college and I don’t know what field I want to earn a

diploma in; What are my options in terms of courses?” Ideal position questions were asked such as “If you had the power to design the community college, what would the model be?” (Merriam, 1998). These types of questions were reserved for use in the interviews where rapport was open and a comfortable atmosphere existed. A form of “Devil’s advocate” question was utilized when the researcher asked two informants with whom she had a previous professional relationship, “In another interview, I was told that some rectors went to Harvard University to study community colleges in the U.S. Do you know why they would go to Harvard to study the U.S. model?” This question was asked because the researcher was not sure why Harvard would be the best choice to study the U.S. community college model and suspected the visit was more about status than about comprehension of the U.S. model.

Based on the emergent nature of qualitative study the researcher anticipated that additional questions would be needed in the Interview Guide, current questions would need revision, and some of those listed would not be necessary. This anticipation became reality during the field work. Although the original Interview Guide was utilized less as the interview schedule progressed, the spirit of the questions was maintained as the data gathered in each interview led to an evolution of the question set. Regardless of whether the researcher utilized the Interview Guide verbatim, the questions asked in all the interviews were semi-structured and open-ended. Yet, the final two case college interviews took on more of an unstructured nature because the data gathered up until that point had reached saturation. In the final two case study interviews, the researcher was seeking to validate her understanding of the community college concept in Viet Nam (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The non-case study interviews with MOET, VACC and

Americans and Vietnamese working in Viet Nam were all unstructured although Interview Guides had been prepared for each one prior to the field work phase. These non-case interviews were conducted following two weeks of continuous case study interviews, so the researcher was comfortable with the unstructured format and the Interview Guides prepared months earlier in the U.S. were less pertinent to the situation.

Additional questions were critical to understanding the model, but these questions were deemed inappropriate for a face-to-face interview where the rector had invited many of his/her subordinates. Therefore, a Rector Survey was created to gather this information (see Appendix I). The survey included questions designed to gather data on the qualifications of a community college rector (e.g., highest level of education, years of service, party membership, reporting responsibilities, etc.) and on the rector's perception of the Vietnamese community college model. This two-page paper instrument in both English and Vietnamese was emailed to each rector prior to the interview. It was also provided at the beginning of each interview after the Informed Consent form was reviewed. Ten of the 11 Rector Surveys were completed and returned at the end of the interview. The eleventh completed survey was requested on numerous occasions but to no avail and was therefore not included in the analysis.

*Data Collection Strategy 2: Photography.*

The second data collection technique employed in this study was photography. At the conclusion of each interview, the researcher was given a tour of the college campus where she took photographs to gather a visual record of the campus facilities. On each campus the classrooms, physical and bio-chemical laboratories, agricultural arboretums, departments, computer labs, libraries, learning resource center, dormitories,



administrative areas, canteen and vocational shop areas were recorded using a digital camera. These “researcher-generated” documents provided the researcher with a “means of remembering and studying detail that might be overlooked if a photographic image were not available for reflection” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 143).

#### *Data Collection Strategy 3: Observation*

The third data collection strategy employed in this study was observation with field notes. As the researcher does not speak Vietnamese, the cultural assistant interpreted during the data collection phase. While she was interpreting, the researcher was free to observe non-verbal language and interaction between participants and observers in the interviews. Trained as a sociologist, the researcher has many years of experience observing social interaction looking for non-verbal cues which correspond to or are at odds with the words being spoken. Through observation, the researcher was able to add to her level of understanding. “Creative insights” were possible during the campus visits because the researcher placed herself directly in the setting and recorded her observations through field notes (Patton, 2002, p. 302). The field notes were written from the jottings made during the interviews and as soon as possible after the conclusion of the site visit. Memos were also handwritten or typed as theoretical sampling produced concepts that were possible precursors to the categories that would eventually emerge from the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

#### *Data Collection Strategy 4: Documents.*

The fourth data collection technique employed in this study was the garnering of documents relevant to the knowledge sought to answer the research questions. These documents included brochures of the colleges, college reports to VACC, founding project

reports from some of the colleges, expansion plan reports from some of the colleges, presentations given by the rectors at conferences, PowerPoint presentations given during the formal interviews, the Education Law (2005), the HERA (2005), unpublished articles, and reporting forms. MOET and VACC made numerous documents available which provided historical, legal and cultural context. These documents are not published nor are they available to a researcher perusing the World Wide Web or academic electronic databases. Without these documents, answering the research question would have been impossible.

Copious amounts of data were collected during the field work. Over 24 hours of interview data were collected amounting to hundreds of pages of typed verbatim transcripts. Lofland and Lofland's (1984) recommendation for a data filing system was utilized to organize the collected data. This system was maintained through a combination of file boxes, large three-ring binders, and an electronic filing system. During the field work the data were organized electronically. Two external hard drives, one traveling with the researcher and the other kept in the researcher's home so her husband could save emailed files of data, stored the records. The researcher's laptop and external hard drives served as the primary instrument for storing collected data during the field work. Upon return to the U.S., a data management system was developed both virtually and in paper format. Creating two formats also provided security by creating a backup of each source of data collected. Two external hard drives held the virtual data along with the researcher's laptop. Folders were created for each individual case and each non-case site visit, paper documents were scanned, and electronic documents were printed. Large binders were organized by case to store printed copies of each document

and electronic folders were divided into sections by historical documents, legal documents, higher education documents, member check emails, phone conversation notes, and reporting documents as the data were sorted. Analytical and informational memos were written for each case and stored within the electronic case folders or notebook sections.

A case study spreadsheet was created to track each document to each case or each ancillary source. The cases were assigned numbers to protect the confidentiality of the subjects, with each informant assigned a letter code. Digital data was stored in a locked, fire-proof safe where it will be stored for one year following completion of the study at which time it will be destroyed to aid in protecting the anonymity of the subjects.

### *Data Analysis*

#### *Concurrence of Data Collection and Data Analysis*

According to Merriam (1998), making sense of the data is a process that includes “consolidating, reducing and interpreting” the various forms of data collected (p. 178). Miles and Huberman (1994) describe the integrated nature of data management and data analysis, claiming there are no boundaries between the two. In this study, the researcher employed data analysis procedures during the data collection process to demonstrate the rigorous nature of the research (Merriam, 1998). Rigor was also achieved through the use of an audit trail which included the researcher’s journal, data collection log, various types of memos during both the data collection and data analysis phase, a detailed record of the research process, triangulation of the data, and coding consistency. These purposeful procedures enhanced the trustworthiness of the study.

Berg (2007) argues that during data analysis “three concurrent flows of action” are required: reduction, verification and display (p. 47). From the beginning of the data collection phase when email invitations were received from each case college, the researcher logged her tasks in a data collection log that recorded the trail of communication and documented the evidence for how the data collection plan evolved. The researcher maintained an electronic journal that recorded all phases of the research study including the various forms of memos written to record important developments in the data collection phase and analytical notations for the analysis phase.

During the field work (May 29 – June 23, 2009), the researcher began analyzing once a piece of data was collected. At the conclusion of the first site visit (semi-structured interview, campus tour with photographs taken, field notes recorded and documents collected), the researcher examined the research questions to determine the correct fit between the Interview Guide and the resulting data obtained in the interview. The interview strategies were refined as concepts then themes emerged from the data. For example, the in-vivo code, “community university,” emerged in the first interview as the rector answered an Interview Guide question which asked if the community college intended to transition to a university as had occurred with three former community colleges in the region. In the subsequent interview, the researcher inquired about the meaning of a “community university” learning that this code meant a university that transitioned from a community college to meet additional higher education needs of the province. A university can offer four-year baccalaureate degrees as well as the lower-level variety of diplomas and certificates conferred by the community colleges, but the community colleges cannot confer degrees. Therefore, a community college cannot meet

the community need for professionally educated workers at the baccalaureate level. Merriam's (1998) "process of making meaning" (p. 178) was applied to the collected data and carried into the next interview to validate the researcher's level of understanding or discover if she had misunderstood the meaning of the in-vivo code and the importance of it in answering the research questions. The constant comparative method was employed in both the data collection and data analysis phases.

### *Coding*

Grounded theory techniques (e.g., open coding, comparative analysis, axial coding and conceptual saturation) were employed in the coding process which began during the data collection phase (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Open coding and theoretical sampling began with the first interview as the researcher listened for words and phrases that might begin to answer the research questions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These units of data were constantly sought during the data collection phase and at the beginning of the data analysis process when open coding was employed. Units were defined as "the smallest piece" of heuristic stand-alone information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 345). The units of data were sought in each transcript, field note and document, and units were constantly compared to seek patterns which led to the process of grouping the units into concepts. Once the data were coded, axial coding was employed as the researcher pieced the data back together that had been "fractured" during the open coding process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 97).

During the axial coding process, the researcher selected concepts which were compared and contrasted so they could be grouped into categories which were then organized around the research questions. Determining the relationships between

concepts was a key feature of the axial coding process. Striving for richer categories, the researcher searched for conceptual categories that emerged from the data rather than a priori categories mentioned by the informants (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Merriam's (1998) guidelines for category construction (i.e., exhaustive, reflective of the research, mutually exclusive, manageable in number, and conceptually congruent) were followed throughout the various steps of the coding process. Properties and dimensions of each concept and then each category were discovered in the evidence, to elaborate and seek variation between concepts, and then between categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The researcher sought to keep the number of categories manageable so the story of the community college model could be communicated clearly as the study's findings were described (Merriam, 1998).

After each interview, the researcher examined the recorded field notes, including "identifying notations" and "observer comments" in memos and in the margins of the field notes (Merriam, 1998, pp. 164-165). These notations served as guides and reminders as the researcher typed the interview transcripts verbatim. The field notes also guided the next site visit strategy as decisions were made regarding interview questions, necessary photographs to take, and specific interactions to observe. The researcher developed reflective memos which included her task list, hunches and thoughts about which specific leads to pursue in the next interview (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The Interview Guide was adjusted after each interview, but the spirit of the questions was maintained to ensure consistency in the data obtained. The researcher's observation jottings made during the interviews and campus tours resulted in memos once the site visit had been completed.

During the field work, key informants provided meaning and filled in the holes present in the researchers understanding (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Phone calls and emails clarified the researcher's understanding when she was unsure if she understood the story told. Literature exploration that continued during the field work stimulated the researcher's thinking and verified findings especially those pertaining to the Education Law (2005) and the community college models of Canada and the Netherlands which were mentioned often during the interviews as instrumental in conceptualizing the Viet Nam model (Merriam, 1998). The researcher's photos, taken during the campus tours, served as visual devices which stimulated thinking and assisted her memory especially during the analysis that continued when she returned to the U.S. and Viet Nam became a distant memory (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

As the study progressed and more data were collected, the intensity of the analysis increased (Merriam, 1998). Concrete analysis progressed to the abstract as the researcher asked, "What does this mean?" and "Do these words and phrases identify characteristics which form a Vietnamese community college model?" The researcher created a chart of tentative conceptual categories to match with the research questions and examined this chart during the axial coding phase to compare findings from the open coding phase (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The researcher transcribed interviews verbatim. Although this process was onerous beyond her expectation, the process of listening, typing, re-listening then typing more, and finally listening again to verify the written word to the spoken word, offered an unexpected level of analysis. Open coding began with transcription of the first interview to seek words and phrases deemed likely to be related to the research questions. The

patterns among the words and phrases led to grouping into concepts. Open coding moved to analytical coding as the concrete moved to the abstract and the concepts were grouped to form conceptual categories. The inductive process of category construction captured the persistent patterns appearing in the preponderance of the data (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Three sources provided names for the categories: the researcher, the words of the participants, and the literature, with the names reflecting the data (Merriam, 1998).

Following the suggestion of Merriam (1998), the researcher recorded the frequency and variety of each message found in the data analysis through reflective memos which she compared and contrasted to the memos written during the data collection phase. This coding process was repeated for all of the documents and the field notes for each individual case. Open coding progressed to axial coding with-in each case and then between the cases as the researcher utilized Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparative method of analysis to seek patterns while grouping words and phrases, then concepts, and then categories resulting in five themes which answered the first two research questions which asked : What are the shared core characteristics of the Vietnamese community colleges? The researcher sought properties and dimensions of each category and negative cases while employing constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Borg & Gall, 1989). It was not necessary for the researcher to reformulate the categories due to negative cases since none were found (Merriam, 1998).

#### *Conceptual Saturation*

After the field work was completed and during the intensive data analysis process, documents continued to be collected through email correspondence as the researcher



realized she needed further clarification and validation of the categories which emerged during the coding process to answer the research questions (Merriam, 1998). After coding and analyzing 13 interview transcripts and with corresponding field notes, plus over 35 additional documents, the researcher reached the point of conceptual saturation when the information in the documents repeated what had already emerged from the data and yielded nothing new (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Following the lead of Lincoln and Guba (1985), the researcher concluded that a state of over extension was reached when the categories were saturated by regularities in the data and the sources had been exhausted.

### *Bracketing*

The VACC arranged the site visits and opened the gate to MOET. The researcher developed a professional relationship with the president and vice president of VACC over the past three years starting with her attendance at the VACC and MOET sponsored 2007 international community college conference held in Rach Gia, Viet Nam. In her state of residence, the researcher served as the president of the community college association and in this position, she arranged an honorary reciprocal membership between VACC and her statewide association. The researcher developed and coordinates a joint project between the two associations designed to offer professional development to U.S. community college faculty and staff who desire to live in Viet Nam for one month or longer in order to assist a Vietnamese community college English instructor with conversational English. The researcher also has a close professional relationship with one of the case study rectors who visited her home town and college of employment in February 2008. On the positive side, these relationships allowed the researcher to

conduct a study that would not have been possible without them because Vietnamese culture demands relationship building before work can be conducted. On the other hand, these relationships might have impacted the study due to previous affiliations between researcher and the subjects.

In addition to these personal relationships, the researcher has been employed as a faculty member in two U.S. community colleges for more than a decade. Her doctoral coursework has focused on the U.S. community college model although the models of other nations (e.g., Canada and Thailand) have been studied. Both of the U.S. and Canadian community college models have been instrumental to the Vietnamese community college construct. Therefore, the researcher's knowledge of these two models has been useful when examining the research questions and the analyzing the data. But, throughout the study, the researcher has had to recognize that her experiential and academic education in the U.S. community college model shapes her perspective. Therefore, she has had to step back and ask, "Is my knowledge of and experience in the U.S. model influencing my research?"

#### *Ethics*

Common research protocols were utilized to protect the informants. Because the names and locations of the 12 community colleges are public knowledge, this information has been listed in this chapter but the with-in case data have been kept anonymous to protect each participant. The subjects were randomly assigned a capital letter (A – Z), and are identified by this letter. The tapes and transcriptions have been stored in a locked file in the researcher's home office and will be destroyed one year after the University's approval of the dissertation.

It is recognized that cultural norms and language barriers presented an ethical concern in terms of consent. Oliver (2002) described issues with the conflict between Vietnamese cultural norms and her use of written consent for interviews. After the 1975 reunification of South and North Vietnam, a general sense of distrust evolved toward “officials” or any official process, especially among individuals living in southern Vietnam where the majority of the community colleges are currently located. Informed consent is a foreign concept in Viet Nam, and the researcher assumed it would be viewed as a legal deposition.

To address this concern, the researcher consulted with VACC and the VACC president agreed to send an email letter to each of the rectors and the MOET official explaining the study and its importance to the community colleges of Viet Nam. His email sought written confirmation from the subject stating the researcher had permission to visit the campus, interview the rector and anyone else he/she recommends, take photos while touring the campus and collect documents. The Informed Consent was transcribed into Vietnamese and sent by email to each rector prior to the interview. This document was also taken in paper format (both Vietnamese and English) to each interview and discussed before the interview began. The researcher was sensitive to the fact that a document which promises confidentiality may be viewed with suspicion. Therefore, she discussed how Americans were legally conscious and form laden which resulted in the requirement of the Informed Consent, a necessary requirement for all university research conducted by U.S. institutions. The researcher and her interpreter explained that the intent of the document was to protect the participants and that each individual’s name

would not be associated with any answer he/she provided and that codes would be created to maintain confidentiality.

### *Trustworthiness*

As Stake (1995, 2004) informs, the researcher passes her findings to the reader offering many opportunities for the validity of the study to be undermined or even invalidated. Therefore, this study has employed calculated measures to enhance the truthfulness of the findings. Merriam (1998) points out; “the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing” (p. 202).

With this view of reality in mind, the researcher designed a rigorous research procedure to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. These thorough procedures have been described throughout this chapter and will be demonstrated in Chapter 4 where the findings are explained. The ethical procedures, a key to trustworthiness, were described in the previous section of this chapter. Firestone (1987) claims, “The qualitative study provides the reader with a depiction in enough detail to show that the author’s conclusion makes sense” (p. 19). Chapter 4’s detailed presentation of the findings allows the reader to place himself/herself in the research and gain a deeper understanding of the community college concept in Viet Nam.

The literature identified a need for this study and offered the reader the primary reason for the research (Merriam, 1998). As the primary instrument for designing the study, collecting the data, and analyzing the data collected, the researcher’s presence was critical and enhanced the validity of the findings (As cited in Merriam (1998), Kemmis,1983). Guba and Lincoln (1981) ask researchers to consider, “Were the

interviews reliably and validly constructed; was the content of the documents properly analyzed; do the conclusions of the case study rest upon data?" (p. 378). To validate the study's findings, the researcher triangulated the data, consistently coded the information and maintained an audit trail throughout all phases of the study. Member checks were conducted beginning in the data collection phase and throughout the analysis process. An executive summary report was sent to each participating rector and the VACC and MOET informants. This report summarized the researcher's findings and sought the informant's confirmation or correction of the findings. A 70% return rate was obtained with the executive summary. The constant member checks, the detailed record keeping, the coding procedures employed, and the triangulation of the data and research techniques combined to make this a trustworthy study.

Merriam (1998) poses eight questions to challenge the trustworthiness of qualitative research (p. 202). The researcher considered each of these questions as she designed the study, gathered the data, analyzed the data, and then drew the conclusions. Measures (such as consulting scholars and practitioners in the research design, checking "essential" questions with "extra" questions, triangulating the data collection strategies, etc.) to protect against these challenges were employed to enhance the validity of the study.

### *Summary*

To summarize this research study's methodology, the instrumental, multiple-case study design was purposefully selected to analyze the community college model in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. The sample contained 11 cases out of the 12 available in the population. The techniques employed to gather the data included: semi-structured

interviews, photography of people and the college campuses, review of official documents, and field notes written from the participant observation during the site visits to the college campuses. The data were analyzed using many techniques of grounded theory including open coding, axial coding and constant comparative analysis. Cross-case analysis followed with-in case analysis and data collection techniques were triangulated to enhance trustworthiness of the study and provide a thick description of the findings.

## CHAPTER 4

### Analysis of the Multiple Cases

#### *Introduction to the Individual Cases and the Study*

Scholars, practitioners, international partners and the general public working with the 12 higher education institutions named “community college” have been unable to clearly define the nature of the community college concept as it currently exists in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. This deficit in the collective knowledge shaped the purpose of this research study which was to discover if core characteristics exist which form a Vietnamese community college model, and to determine if the characteristics explain the model. Four research questions guided the study:

1. Do the 12 higher education institutions in Viet Nam with the term “community college” in their official name share common core institutional characteristics?
2. If core characteristics are shared, what are they?
3. If core common characteristics exist, do they suffice to form a community college model?
4. If there are not enough shared core characteristics to form a model, are the shared core characteristics sufficient to start conceptualizing a Vietnamese model?

This study utilized three theoretical orientations while reviewing the existing literature, formulating the research questions, analyzing the data and drawing conclusions. Exploration of the community college concept in Viet Nam was framed by human capital theory and social capital theory. Aspects of organization theory were

considered to examine the community college as an emerging organization in the national higher education system. The study examined 11 of the 12 community colleges utilizing a qualitative multiple case study approach to ascertain if the colleges share core characteristics that define a Vietnamese community college model.

This study found that the community college was purposefully designed to increase Viet Nam's human capital in order to enhance Viet Nam's position in the global knowledge-based economy. The task of the community college is to provide training at the higher education level. The development of social capital, in particular through international partnerships, has been a critical component of the Vietnamese community college model especially in the flat world era. The term "community college" appears in each college's legally registered name, but "community college" per se does not exist in the context of the 2005 Education Law. Therefore, community colleges fall within the purview of "college" in the Education Law (2005). In the Vietnamese language, community college is referred to as *trường cao đẳng công đồng* which is translated in English as school (*trường*), college (*cao đẳng*), community (*công đồng*).

Understanding the Vietnamese community college requires a familiarity with the language of the 2005 Education Law which established the legal precedent for all types of public education. The Education Law (2005) states, "the national education system consists of formal education and continuing education" (Article 4). The goal of continuing education is for people "to learn while in-service to learn continuously and for lifelong for refinement of their personality, broadening their understanding, and for educational, professional, operational enhancement with a view to improving their quality of life, employability, self-employability and adaptation to social life" (Article 44).



Within the main divisions of “formal” and “continuing education,” the Education Law (2005) further subdivides education into four national levels:

Level 1: Early childhood education with crèches and kindergartens;

Level 2: General education with primary education, lower secondary education, and upper secondary education;

Level 3: Professional education with professional secondary education and vocational training;

Level 4: Undergraduate and postgraduate education (hereinafter referred to as higher education) with college, undergraduate, master and doctoral degrees (Article 4: 2 a. b. c. d.).

#### *Levels of Training in the Vietnamese Community College*

Three levels of education are offered within the Vietnamese community colleges: (a) professional education, (b) college, and (c) university through an articulation agreement. Professional education is included in the third level of the national education system. This level of education has two sub-categories: (a) professional secondary; and (b) vocational. Both subcategories are offered by the community colleges and can, according to the Law (2005), be offered by the universities. Professional upper secondary education is defined in the Law (2005) as: “education directed towards the training of working people with basic knowledge and practical skills of a profession, having ability to work independently and creatively as well as to apply technology into work” (Article 33). By law, vocational training can be offered at two levels: professional education and higher education. It is defined in the Education Law (2005) as, “training of technical workers directly participating in production and service to have the practical

ability to a profession adequate to the relevant training qualification” (Article 33). At the professional education level diplomas rather than degrees are conferred.

College education falls within the purview of the national level four, Higher Education Level, defined by the Education law (2005). College education is conducted for one-and-a-half to three years depending on if the student has a diploma in upper secondary education or professional secondary education. In the Education Law (2005), the objective of college education is to “equip students with professional knowledge and basic practical skills in one profession with the ability to solve common problems in the field of study” (Article 39:1).

University education is also a subcategory of the Higher Education Level, national level four. It lasts from one-and-one-half years to six years depending on the type of diploma previously earned (Education Law, 2005, Article 38:1). The purpose of university education is to “acquire in-depth professional knowledge and fluently practical skills in one profession with the ability to work independently and creatively as well as to solve problems in the field of study” (Education Law, 2005, Article 39:3). University education results in the awarding of a degree, rather than a diploma as conferred to those completing the “college” level. A community college student earning a university baccalaureate degree will receive his/her degree from the university rather than the college since “colleges” cannot confer degrees. This partnership between the community college and the university was commonly referred to in the data as “articulation.” Table 2 denotes various demographics for each case study, including levels of education. The case number has not been provided to protect the confidentiality of the subjects.

Table 2

*Demographics of the 11 Case Colleges*

Geographic Region	Date Established	Number of Students	Staff Including Teachers	Number of Campuses	Levels of Educational Training
South	April 1, 2002	3,266	112	1	Professional College University (Articulation)
South	August 1, 2005	4,755	82	2	Professional College University (Articulation)
South	June 8, 2006	3,793	117	1	Professional College University (Articulation)
South	April 1, 2002	4,874	141	1	Professional College University (Articulation)
South	September 20, 2007	7,765	72	1	Professional College University (Articulation)
South	August 30, 2000	4,400	140	1	Professional College University (Articulation)
South	August 30, 2000	706	111	1	Professional College University (Articulation)
Central	August 30, 2007	11,082	187	3	Professional College University (Articulation)
North	December 19, 2005	7,398	174	1	Professional College University (Articulation)
North	October 3, 2003	3,099	175	1	Professional College University (Articulation)
North	August 30, 2000	5,500	175	2	Professional College University (Articulation)

The researcher conducted field work in Viet Nam during June 2009. Visits to the 11 case study community colleges, the Viet Nam Association of Community Colleges (VACC), and the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) were conducted. Data collection strategies included semi-structured interviews, field notes from observations, documents, and photographs of each college. Results of the study indicate that although

legislation does not exist to permanently establish the higher education institutions named community colleges, a community college model does exist and is in a state of evolution. The model can be defined by a set of core characteristics which emerged from the data in this study. This chapter will discuss the answers to the foundational question of the study: “What is the nature of the community college concept in Viet Nam?” and explain the findings for research questions 1, 2, and 3. Research question 4 will not be discussed since the data confirm the existence of a Vietnamese community college model, thereby nullifying question 4.

The first section of chapter 4 will describe the data collection phase of the study so the reader can place him/herself in the context of the study. Section two will focus on the individual cases, providing an overview of each community college and laying the foundation for the comparative analysis of the individual cases. The third section of this chapter will address Research Questions 1 and 2 by describing and explaining the five core characteristics of the Vietnamese community college. Five themes emerged as the data were first analyzed case-by-case (with-in case) and then by comparing the cases (cross-case) to ascertain the patterns between the 11 colleges (Merriam, 1998). This section will present information which was discovered to exist in all 11 cases. The final section of the chapter will address Research Question 3 arguing that the five characteristics which emerged from the data suffice to form a community college model.

#### *Data Collection*

In order to ascertain if a community college model existed in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam at the time this study was conducted, 11 of the 12 higher education institutions with “community college” in their official name were examined utilizing a

qualitative comparative case study approach. This approach was selected to engage in an intensive and holistic analysis of a bounded system. The 12th community college which had existed for 19 months at the time of the field work was not included as a case due to its remote location and the researcher's tight field work schedule. Following the field work phase, MOET and VACC provided documents on the non-case college which demonstrate that this college fits within the confines of the model which emerged from the data in the 11 case studies.

The findings from the data obtained and analyzed from the 11 cases answered Research Question 1: Do the 12 higher education institutions in Viet Nam with the term "community college" in their official name share common core institutional characteristics? The simple answer to this question is "yes." This leads to Research Question 2: If core characteristics are shared, what are they? Five themes emerged from the data and define the five commonly shared core institutional characteristics of the Vietnamese community college model.

Data for answering Research Questions 1 and 2 were obtained during the field work conducted in Viet Nam from May 29 through June 23, 2009, when each of the 11 cases study institutions was visited. During each case visit the researcher conducted a formal interview with the rector and his/her selected staff members at the college campus. These semi-structured interviews were enhanced by the collection of documents at each college, field notes to document the researcher's observations, a tour of the campus with photos taken and logged by the researcher, and a dinner the night before the interview and/or a lunch following the interview in which data were gathered informally. Following the field work, additional documents were collected through VACC and

MOET to provide clarity or missing pieces in the data collected during the fieldwork. Member checks, conducted through email exchanges with rectors of the colleges and staff at VACC and MOET, provided additional layers of understanding as the data were analyzed.

To conduct the field work phase of the study, the researcher arrived in Viet Nam on May 29, 2009, spending three days in a large metropolitan area acclimating to the time difference and visiting with higher education faculty at a “people-founded” (private) university who were familiar with community colleges in Viet Nam. The researcher discussed the research design with the faculty to elicit feedback on aspects she may have missed, especially in light of cultural differences. Questions from the Interview Guides were reviewed with these cultural assistants to ascertain if essential questions were missing. Because these individuals were knowledgeable about the Vietnamese community college but not entrenched in the current system through employment or as members of the college managing board, the researcher utilized their perspectives to enhance her data collection plan.

Beginning June 1, 2009, the researcher visited a provincial university which had transitioned from a community college in 2006. Although this university did not serve as an individual case in the study, it was deemed critical to an understanding of the history of community college development in Viet Nam and provided a deeper level of understanding of the model’s foundation. The rector of the university currently serves as the president of VACC and has been an active stakeholder in the development of a community college model in the country. The rector was interviewed and as he led the campus tour the researcher took photos to record the expansion of the facilities following

the transition from a community college to a provincial university. This field visit contributed to the understanding of two core characteristics of the model: (a) various certificates and diplomas conferred up through the college (three-year) level, but also partnerships with universities so students can earn a university bachelor's degree through an "articulation agreement"; and (b) domestic and international partnerships actively are sought to develop social capital. These two characteristics will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

On June 2, the researcher began field work at the first of the 11 case study community colleges with a visit to Case 1 College. The visits concluded on June 19 with a visit to the Case 11 College campus. Three additional days were spent in Viet Nam at the conclusion of the site visits to organize data and gather missing information from available informants. At each of the 11 case study colleges the first set of case data was gathered through face-to-face, semi-structured interviews which were recorded on two digital voice recorders. The interviews were held in the main conference room at each college. Commonalities in each conference room included a statue of Ho Chi Minh, a large Vietnamese flag, a tabletop flag for Viet Nam and one for the U.S. and usually a welcome banner for the researcher. Vietnamese hospitality offered the sharing of a variety of fresh fruit, bottled water, and a bouquet of flowers and/or a gift formally presented to the researcher before the start of each interview.

The interviews for Cases 1 and 2 were highly influenced by the Interview Guide designed at the conclusion of the literature review phase of the study. Both human and social capital theories were instrumental in the design of the Interview Guide questions. Following the site visit for Case 2 College, the rector's Interview Guide evolved after

reflecting on the knowledge gained from the first two cases and considering the tenets of human and social capital theories. Interview questions in Cases 3-11 took on an interpretive nature as described by Strauss, Schatzman, Bucher, and Sabshin (1981) and a probing nature as discussed in Glesne and Peshkin (1992). The probe, “Can you help me understand ...?” became a primary question in the interviews conducted for Cases 3 – 11. The interpretive question, “Would you say the community college model in Viet Nam is...?” was also utilized in Cases 3 -11. The researcher became less dependent on the Interview Guide after the first 4 cases and was able to “unhook” herself from the guide as suggested by Merriam (1998).

The rector of the college was the primary informant in the interview, but at each college other staff members were present during the interview. During the pre-field work design phase, the researcher had worked with the president of VACC to create an email sent to each rector from the president. That email explained the research and requested an open door policy for the researcher. Two weeks later, the researcher sent a follow-up email to each rector requesting a site visit including an interview with him/her and anyone s/he deemed appropriate to the conversation. The email also requested key documents about the college and a tour of the facility to see students in their learning environments and photograph the campus and people.

During the actual interviews, a group process, referred to by Dexter (1970) as a “conversation with a purpose” was the norm, but the rector was the primary informant (p. 136). Voice recorded face-to-face interviews were chosen as the primary mode of data collection but were combined with observation recorded through the researcher’s photos and field notes written from jottings during the site visit. In addition, document collection



from each case provided a deeper level of understanding and enhanced the validity of the findings through triangulation of the methods (Merriam, 1998, p. 72). Each interview began with the researcher describing the purpose of the study and explaining how it had been designed to protect the confidentiality of the subjects. An informed consent, both in Vietnamese and English, was emailed to each rector or designee prior to the interview. This form was reviewed at the beginning of each interview allowing time for the participants to ask questions before it was signed by the rector or in one case his primary informant. In one case, the rector was called away to a meeting with his superiors, the People's Committee; therefore, the vice rector (second in command at the community college) served as the primary informant. In the other 10 cases, the rector was the primary informant.

Jottings for the purpose of field notes began during the interviews and were continued until the end of the site visit. These jottings recorded key pieces of information including the location of the participants during the interview, non-verbal language, setting, key dates, clarification points for later conversations or interviews, etc. The field notes were completed within a few hours of the conclusion of the site visit. Field notes also recorded the researcher's observations not only during the interviews but also during the campus tour. The tour provided the researcher with experiential understanding of the facility and how community college students learn in Viet Nam. The researcher visited many classrooms and was allowed to observe classes, in session, for many subjects. Dormitories along with laboratories, computer labs, libraries, language labs and vocational workshops were visited where students provided demonstrations of their

studies. The campus tour allowed the researcher to observe students being students at a Vietnamese community college.

In addition to the interview, each rector had been asked to complete a two page Rector Survey (Appendix I) which had been designed at the conclusion of the literature review phase. The rector, as the top administrator of the community college, was purposefully selected due to his/her experience and based on the assumption that she/he would have the most to contribute to the researcher's understanding of the community college model (Merriam, 1998). The survey was designed to ascertain the ideal qualifications necessary to hold a rector position and determine the difference between practice and ideology. Rectors were also asked how the community college was different from and the same as other types of colleges in Viet Nam. This was deemed critical to the study because community colleges are not specifically recognized as a separate institution under the Education Law (2005). "College" is the only designation in current legislation. One problem established in the literature review was the lack of clarity as to how a community college differs from other "college" classifications.

The final method of data collection was photography of the facilities and people by the researcher during a campus tour and before and after the interview. These photos were especially useful during the data analysis phase as the researcher could refer to the photos to recall the context of the interview and examine areas discussed in the interview. When comparing and contrasting the case colleges through the photo documentation, it became clear that the facilities were similar in layout, design and utilized space. The rectors granted permission for the researcher to share pictures of both the facilities and the people in the study. Photos appear throughout this chapter.

Once the data were gathered, the researcher's questions were answered by analyzing the individual cases (with-in cases) and then comparing the 11 case colleges (cross-case) so that generalizations could be made by the researcher and then by others who read the study (Merriam, 1998). Generalizations to other community college models around the globe may be possible.

*Description of the Case Community Colleges and Other Sources in Viet Nam*

*Case 1 Community College*

Case 1 Community College is located in the south of Viet Nam and was established as a community college in 2002. Prior to 2002, the facility was a Continuing Education Center. The college serves the entire province. This campus employs 112 staff of which 62 are "teachers" and serves 3,266 students. "Staff" is the common term utilized by the community colleges to refer to anyone employed by the college. Teachers and rectors are both referred to as "staff." The term professor is reserved for university education and the term faculty is reserved for the title of a department. Three levels of education are offered and include professional (one - two years and often referred to as "vocational"), college (three years) and university baccalaureate degree (four years) through articulation. The Introduction of this chapter explained the various levels. Each of the three levels of education is offered as both "formal education" and "continuing education." Formal education indicates that the student is engaged in the student role full-time. Continuing education refers to students who are enrolled in the community college as a part-time student and were described by Informant A in the formal interview as "mostly workers and officers who work full-time and study part-time" (Interview Transcript, Line 632).

The academic fields offered within each level are based on the unique socio-economic needs of the province. This province is defined as rural. A wide range of fields of training are offered including informatics, accounting, veterinarian science, accounting, land management, food technology, aquaculture, office administration, business administration, liquid chemical feed technology, farming, botanical protection, office management and water supplying. One example of how the college meets the unique needs of the community is demonstrated by the college's plan to implement a "pet center" which will allow residents of the province to bring their pets to the center to be treated by the students studying in the field of veterinarian services which is offered at both the professional secondary (two-year) and college (three-year) levels. The water supplying program, slated to begin in July 2009, will supply bottled water to the province. Students will meet a community need while engaging in scientific research designed to solve a local problem, lack of safe, clean water. The program is offered at the college level, and several of the community colleges in the south and at a nearby university offer the water-supplying program at the college level.

Besides offering programs at the professional and college level, articulation agreements with eight public universities allow students to complete university level courses at the community college campus which are taught by visiting professors from one of the eight universities. At the conclusion of his/her course work, the student who passes the national exam will be granted a bachelor's "degree" by the university.

Scientific research, a common characteristic of the community colleges, exists in four areas at this college: (a) comparing economic effects on productivity of black cricket and rice cricket; (b) surveying the growth of the Ri Voi snake fed Tra fish and Trash fish,

(c) surveying the effect of feed amount on the growth and quality of blue worm and vermicompost, and (d) surveying the micro-organism infection on pork (which is sold in the central market in the major city in the province) at a centralized slaughter house in a local district where it is processed.

International cooperation includes a group of volunteers from France and a Fulbright Scholar. The college is actively seeking additional international partners. The Development Plan includes the establishment of Wi-Fi throughout the campus, the building of a new library in 2010 with electronic resources and the expansion of the dormitories which currently house 1,000 students.

### *Case 2 Community College*

Case 2 Community College is located in the south and evolved from a Provincial Center for Continuing Education in 2005. Eighty-two staff serve 4,755 students in both full-time and part-time training programs at three levels: professional, college and university. During the interview, the rector referred to the college as a “public multi-level and multi-major school built from local funds and offering college-level and lower-level training programs, scientific research and technology transfer” (Interview Transcript, lines 152 – 158). Programs of study include applied accounting, office management, veterinary services, pedagogy for three year programs such as elementary and secondary education, business administration, finance-banking, applied computing, land management, tourism, kindergarten education (two- year program), music pedagogy, English, industry construction and civil usage, agro-forestry and fishery, public care and enterprise management. Two scientific research projects were active at the time of this study. One focused on training human resources for the province and the other focused

on folk literature. International collaboration exists with community college level institutions in Canada. A second campus is under construction on a 49 hectare parcel located in the province. The existing campus sits on 0.5 hectares.

### *Case 3 Community College*

Case 3 Community College was established in 2006 when it transitioned from a Continuing Education Center which had existed since 1997. Located in the southern region of Viet Nam, the one-campus provincial community college serves 3,793 students enrolled at three levels: professional, college and university through articulation. The 117 staff provide full-time and part-time training in the fields of cultivation, animal raising, veterinary services, aquaculture, agricultural product and seafood processing, engineering, electrical and electronic engineering, construction, environmental technology, information and technology, finance and accounting, business administration, and English. The “Building Investment Project 2010-2015” (n.d.) outlines the development plan for a new campus which will be located on the grounds of a 100 hectare Education Center. The Investment Project’s objective is “upgrading and standardizing the school’s curriculum as well as developing the staff and faculty” and “building up” the facility (Development Orientation of XX Community College Report to VACC, p..3). The new campus will include a learning resource center, physical laboratory, bio-chemical laboratory, multi-media systems for lecture halls and classrooms, campus-wide Wi-Fi, workshops for the faculty of Engineering and Technology and the faculty of Agriculture-Aquaculture and Rural Development and on-line learning rooms.

The college currently collaborates with local and international partners including colleges, universities and organizations to “seek for human and financial resources for the college development” (Interview transcript, line 57). Scientific research is conducted in collaboration with international partners and is focused on research and development for farmers.

#### *Case 4 Community College*

Case 4 Community College, located in the south, transitioned from a Continuing Education Center in 2002. Three levels of training (professional, college, and university through articulation) accommodate the needs of 4,874 students on one campus. The college collaborates with four universities to offer training at the baccalaureate level. At the time of the field visit, a new campus was under construction approximately 10 kilometers from the existing campus which is located in the middle of the city. The new campus is located outside the city limits and near the industrial zone of the province. The Provincial People’s Committee designated 100 hectares for the new Education Center (new campus) of which 41 are reserved for a second campus for this community college. The additional 59 hectares are reserved for a future university whose estimated completion date is 2015 and a nursing university whose date of establishment was unknown at the time of this research. A visit to the new campus revealed a modern looking facility. This future Education Center is a trend among many of the community colleges in Viet Nam.

The current community college campus employs 141 staff of whom 95 are teachers. Fields of study include informatics (a term utilized in the verbal and written college materials), agro-forestry, land management, veterinary medicine, finance and

accounting, construction and construction management, transportation, trade and tourism, and fishery (marine product exploitation). Scientific research is focused on agro-forestry and marine product exploitation. International collaboration includes two visiting English teachers from the U.S., a software training partnership and a network training partnership.

#### *Case 5 Community College*

Case 5 Community College was established in 2007 in the southern region of Viet Nam. The current college facility was a Continuing Education Center prior to its legal establishment as a college. The college rector was the director of the Continuing Education Center and made the transition to the college. This campus employs 72 staff serving 7,765 students in three levels of training: professional, college and university through articulation. Full-time and part-time college level fields of study include accounting, information technology/computering, and English. Partnerships with other domestic colleges and universities provide in-service training and distance learning programs in 37 fields. Local business and international partnerships are limited due to the short-term history of the college, but the college is seeking native speaking English teachers and partnerships with “foreign organizations.” At the time of the field work, construction of new buildings was active on the current campus but no plan existed for building a new campus. Scientific research focused on agriculture and aquaculture.

#### *Case 6 Community College*

Case 6 Community College, also located in southern Viet Nam, was established in 2000. During the rector’s PowerPoint presentation given for the researcher, the rector claimed the vision of the college was; “To build a qualitative and prestigious training



center which provides opportunities to meet the demands of human resource training” (Slide 10). Three levels of training (professional, college and university through articulation) are offered in the fields of food processing technology, accounting, informatics, aquaculture, veterinary services, business administration, botanical protecting, accounting, civil construction, social labor, administrative management, and animal husbandry. One hundred forty staff including 77 teachers serve the 4,400 full- and part-time students. International partners are located in France, England, Netherlands and four states in the U.S. Scientific research and technology transfer is focused on “meeting the demands of agricultural & rural development and professional training for farmers” (Interview Transcript, Lines 128 – 129).

#### *Case 7 Community College*

Case 7 Community College was established in 2000 in southern Viet Nam. The school is the first college level public vocational training institute in the province. The 111 staff, 66 of whom are teachers, provide three levels of training: professional, college and university with articulation. Formal and informal training are offered in the fields of mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, electronic engineering, information technology, computer science, accounting, business administration, tailoring technology, domestic science technique, dynamic mechanics, food processing technology, English, mechanical electronic technology, automotive engineering, industrial electronic engineering, electrical refrigeration, automobile technology, civil electrical engineering, computer network management, office secretarial work, database management, metal cutting, welding, machinery manufacturing engineering, and electronic telecommunications.

The college is located on 12 hectares. The first of two building phases has been completed and most of the buildings, including classrooms, are new. The second phase should be completed by the end of 2010. Student dormitories house 300 students. A Department of Scientific Research and International Relations was established in 2009 to carry out the scientific and technology mandate of the Education Law (2005) and develop international partnerships, also mandated by the Education Law.

#### *Case 8 Community College*

Case 8 Community College was established in 2007 when three educational institutions (Continuing Education Center, Economic and Technical Secondary School, and Teacher Training College) merged. It is located in the central region of the country and serves 11,082 students mainly from ethnic minority groups. A total of 187 staff deliver full-and part-time training at three levels: professional, college and university through articulation. Fields of study include: pedagogy (at the preschool, primary and secondary school levels), tourism, office administration, library information, business administration, accounting, informatics, post-harvest technology, English, land management, office clerk, cultural management, technology-electric technique, botanical protection, construction, agriculture, forestry, and Vietnamese studies.

International partners are located in the United Kingdom and Canada. Development Plan 2020 is focused on transitioning the college to a university which will be located on a 50 hectare campus. The new facility will serve as the “cultural and science center” of the province by partnering with many international education and social institutions (Interview Transcript, Line 201). Scientific research is focused on agriculture and aquaculture.

### *Case 9 Community College*

Case 9 Community College evolved from a technical high school of civil engineering. Prior to its existence as the community college, the high school had advanced from four secondary schools focused on the construction trade which had been combined to create one high school. Established as a community college in 2005, the 174 staff serve 7,898 students in the northern region of Viet Nam. Three levels of training (professional, college, and university through articulation) “train specialists and workers-technicians for human resources in Viet Nam and for manpower export” (College brochure, para. 3). Students can study full-or part-time in many fields including civil engineering, technology of building materials, electromechanics, electrification, information technology, accountancy, business administration, and many fields of “skilled worker” (e.g., bricklayer in finishing work, carver) training. The single campus offers dormitories for full-time students.

The college’s domestic partners include centers and companies seeking skilled “workers for manpower export” (Schoolyear 2008-2009 Survey, p. 6). International partnerships have been formed with institutions in France, China, South Korea, Canada and the U.S. Staff and students are engaged in scientific research at the “ministerial, municipal, and branch levels” in the fields of “management, teaching and modern technologies” (Schoolyear 2008-2009 Survey, pp. 4-5).

### *Case 10 Community College*

Case 10 Community College, located in northern Viet Nam, was established in 2003 when it transitioned from a technical college. Three training levels (professional, college and university through articulation) meet the educational needs of 3,099 enrolled

students in 19 fields. These training fields are organized in five areas: agriculture, economics, technology-engineering, natural resources-environment, and tourism trade services. Examples of disciplines include foreign language, hotel and tourism, land management, environmental engineering technology, plant protection, forestry, accounting, information technology and heat and refrigeration technology. One 68 hectare campus houses 175 staff of which 116 are “lecturers.” Several new buildings were under construction when the researcher conducted the campus visit.

The college partners with institutions and organizations in Australia, China, Canada, Israel and the U.S. “Enterprises” or businesses in the province comprise the domestic partnerships. According to Informant R, the college “carries on scientific research works to serve the socio-economic development targets of its region and neighboring areas” (Interview transcript, Line 17).

#### *Case 11 Community College*

Case 11 Community College, located in Northern Viet Nam, was founded in 2000 when two “junior” colleges merged. The term “junior college” was utilized by many informants in both the interviews and written documents provided by the case colleges. Oliver (2002, 2005) and Dang and Nguyen (2009) refer to junior colleges, but this title is not recognized in the Education Law (2005). The term “junior college” does appear once in the HERA (2005); “complete the community junior college network, integrating them into HEI training process, and reinforce open universities, in order to expand the scope of these two types of HEIs” (3a). While conducting member checks, Informant X of MOET responded to the researcher’s inquiry about junior colleges, “We understand that community college like all other types of the vocational colleges, professional colleges,

... all of them are 'Junior Colleges'. If some where we use the term 'College' it means it's difference from university education" (personal email correspondence January 23, 2010). Thus, the term "junior college" is utilized by the practitioners, but is not formally recognized in the legal code.

Three levels of training (professional, college and university through articulation) are offered in the "programs" of economics, engineering technology, agriculture and rural development, enterprise business administration, accounting, information technology, and tourism. Courses are delivered by 106 "lecturers." A total of 175 staff (lecturers included) coordinates the work of the two campus college.

International partners include higher education institutions in China and Canada. These partnerships are managed by the college's Science, Management and International Cooperation Department. Scientific research is coordinated through the college's Center for Technology Application and Research.

#### *Non-Case Data That Completes the Story and Verifies the Findings*

In addition to the 11 cases, site visits, face-to-face interviews, document and photograph collection were conducted during the field work at two organizations considered critical to a deeper and richer level of understanding of the community college model in Viet Nam. These two organizations are MOET and VACC, which is a voluntary membership consortium of colleges, not all named "community college." Both organizations are located in Ha Noi, the capital city of the country. Each organization was able to add to the story of the community college by providing data on the cultural, historical and political context of the Vietnam. The data were analyzed to enhance the validity of the findings. In addition, documents provided by the VCCA on the 12th

community college (not included as a case for reasons listed earlier in this chapter) were analyzed to seek supportive or contradictory case characteristics.

*The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET).*

MOET is located in Ha Noi. In 1990, two ministries, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education, were combined to create the MOET which has full responsibility for the centralized education system from primary to higher education. Decree No: 32/2008/NĐ-CP, *Regulations on the Functions, Mission, Authority, and Organization of the Ministry of Education and Training*, created 19 departments managing every level of national education. A brief description of 15 of the 19 departments is provided in MOET's website at <http://en.moet.gov.vn/?page=2.2>. The departments most pertinent to the community colleges include: the Office of Ministry, the Legislation Department, General Department for Testing and Education Quality Accreditation, International Cooperation Department, Continuing Education Department and Higher Education Department. In addition to the important tasks of sanctioning the establishment of a community college and approving and overseeing all academic matters of the colleges (e.g., enrollment quotas, curriculum, teachers' qualifications and salary scales), MOET's Education Publishing House (EPH) creates and distributes all printed material utilized in the curriculum. EPH is charged with: "the compilation, edition, publishing, printing and distribution of textbooks, reference books, magazines, photos, pictures, maps, video and audio tapes, CD-ROM, electronic books serving for teaching and learning in all education branches and levels in the national education system" (MOET, n.d.c., para.11). MOET must also sanction college expansion plans before the managing board (typically the chair and other members of the People's Committee, the

Rector and Vice Rectors) can implement the plans they have created and submitted.

Moreover, international partnerships formed with a college must be approved by MOET.

On November 2, 2005, Decree No: 14/2005/NQ-CP, officially entitled, *Resolution on the Fundamental and Comprehensive Reform of Higher Education in Viet Nam 2006-2020*, and commonly referred to as the Higher Education Reform Agenda (HERA), proposed that by 2020 the higher education system would meet international standards. The ideology of reform created an expectation for an improved higher education system that would enhance the country's competitiveness in the flat world by: (a) increasing enrollment in HEIs, (b) implementing a national network of HEIs, (c) enhance credentialing of HEI instructors/professors, (d) increasing the revenue stream through scientific and technological research, and (e) enhance the accountability of the managing boards at the local level with MOET oversight rather than control. From the perspective of those working in and with community colleges, one expected outcome of the HERA, is a loosening of the reigns by MOET, giving the colleges more autonomy so they can effectively meet the needs of their local communities. The overall aim of the HERA is to link the HEIs to "the socio-economy development strategies . . . as well as the national demand for highly qualified labor source and development needs" (Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, 2005, p. 1). Understanding the community college model in Viet Nam requires an intimacy with both the HERA (2005) and the Education Law (2005) because in practice the community colleges, not specifically defined in either document, have been socially constructed within the confines of the legal context created through these two documents.

*The Vietnam Association of Community Colleges (VACC).*

The VACC was established on September 14, 2006, by Decision No: 1225/QD/BNV of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Oliver, Pham, Elsner, Nguyen & Do, 2009; Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2006). The purpose of VACC is to coordinate the efforts of the community colleges and other types of colleges who meet the membership requirements. The *Regulations* governing VACC were approved by the Ministry of Home Affairs on November 2, 2006, under Decision No: 1377/Q§-BN. According to the VACC website and the *Regulations*, the Association “is a social-vocational organization representing the common voice of universities, colleges and other training institutes following community college model” (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2006; VACC, n.d.a.). Membership in VACC is voluntary and requires an annual fee. The organization has offices in Ha Noi (north) and the southern province of Tra Vinh.

The foundation of VACC is the development of a Vietnamese community college model (as mentioned earlier the model is not defined by VACC) designed to meet the human capital needs of the country through two forms of social capital: (a) bridging (inclusive) and (b) bonding (exclusive). The Case 1 College document, *SCHOOL-YEAR 2008-2009 SURVEY*, reports, “[Case College 1] is a member of VACC, the organization acts as a bridge for its member institutions and foreign community colleges” (p. 3). In a 2009 conference presentation, the president of VACC stated, “VACC was established [to] facilitate national community colleges in national and international collaboration” and to consult with “MOET and other national department in policy making” (Vietnam Association of Community Colleges, 2009). As a legally recognized organization, VACC works directly with MOET but has a level of autonomy that allows the rectors to



meet and share resources. Prior to the existence of VACC, community college rectors could meet only when MOET required a gathering. In addition to VACC's bridging function between the 12 community colleges, international cooperation is a mission of VACC and a potential benefit to the members. The role of MOET and VACC in the Vietnamese community college model will be discussed throughout the remainder of this chapter.

*The Twelfth Community College.*

The population for this study included 12 institutions of higher education with "community college" in their name. Eleven of the 12 colleges served as cases. Documents from the non-case community college were coded to ascertain the possibility of a negative case. The newest of the community colleges, the 12th college, is aspiring to follow the development of the other 11 case community colleges. At the end of 2009, the college enrolled 258 students in part-time or informal training, but expansion of training levels will soon be a reality. The number of departments and the physical facility are much smaller than the other 11 case community colleges, but plans for expansion will most likely bring the 12th college up to par with the others in the near future. Therefore, this non-case, which completes the population of community colleges in Viet Nam, does not nullify the findings of the study.

*Other Sources.*

Face-to-face interviews and documents were collected from other resources deemed important to the historical, political and cultural context of the community college in Viet Nam. Americans living in Viet Nam and working in higher education or for the U.S. Embassy, and Vietnamese working at universities but involved with the

community colleges were interviewed. The data gathered from these non-case subjects was utilized to validate the with-in and cross-case findings.

#### *Five Core Characteristics of the 11 Case Community Colleges*

Results of the study indicate that although Vietnamese legislation does not exist to permanently establish community colleges, a community college model does exist and is in a state of evolution. *Figure 1: Vietnamese Community College Model* illustrates a set of core characteristics that emerged from the data in this study. Five themes were particularly prominent.

1. Public higher education institutions with community ownership at the provincial or city level in conjunction with MOET oversight for academic matters.
2. Multi-disciplinary programs designed to meet the unique needs of the community.
3. Multi-levels of certificates and diplomas conferred up through the college (three year) level of higher education, but also partnerships with universities so students can earn a university bachelor's degree through an articulation agreement.
4. Domestic and international partnerships actively sought to develop social capital.
5. Scientific and technological research based on community needs as required in the Education Law (2005).

Before discussing each of the themes, which answer research questions 1, 2 and 3, and serve as the five characteristics of the community college model, the cornerstone of

the model must be described. The foundational core of the community college model in Viet Nam is socio-economic development. The community colleges are public, higher



Figure 1: Vietnamese Community College Model.

education training institutions socially constructed within the confines of the Education Law (2005) and the HERA (2005) to enhance socio-economic development at both the micro (local) and macro levels (national). Understanding the vernacular of community college staff and leaders is critical to comprehension of the model. Training institute, an in-vivo code, emerged from the data. The report, *The Introduction of [Case 2] Community College* (2009), refers to the college as “a training institute under the management of the Peoples’ Committee of [Case 2] Province and the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET)” (section 3). The *Overview* of the Vietnam Association of Community Colleges (n.d.a) states that the role of VACC is to inform the “community about the role of community colleges in the field of human resources and socio-economic development of the nation” (para. 2). The in-vivo codes, “human resources” and “socio-economic development,” appeared in the majority of the documents and interviews.

Common statements made during the case interviews and on the Rector Surveys were that they are “building the human resources” and “serving the socio-economic development” of the province (Case 2 - 11). All three in-vivo codes are demonstrated in the 2009 report, *Development Orientation of [Case 3] Community College 2011-2015* which states that the colleges, “design training programs based upon the assessments of the local labor demands; closely follow the social-economy development strategies of the province to design the training programs to meet human resource needs” (para. 2). The report, *[Case 4] Community College Founding Project* (2001) demonstrates a theme running throughout the data for the 11 cases: the purpose of the college is “implementation of initiatives and policy given by Party and State on developing human resource and upgrading people’s knowledge to successfully fulfill industrialization,

modernization – orient socio-economic goals to the year 2010-2020” (para. 1). In summary, the community college in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam is a public higher education institution designed to train “human resource” for “local development,” which enhances not only the local but also the national level of human capital. The model is demonstrated in Figure 1. In the following section, the characteristics of the model will be described in the words of the participants. Appendix K articulates the Vietnamese community college model through photos taken during the field work phase.

### *Characteristic One*

The first characteristic of the model is that community colleges in Viet Nam are public higher education institutions with community ownership at the provincial or city level in conjunction with MOET oversight for academic matters. Until recently the higher education system in Viet Nam was strictly a public system. Under the influence of *Đôì môi* and the attention of the World Bank, the CPV opened the higher education system to “people founded” or private institutions. The concept “belongs to the people” was a common theme in the data from the 11 case colleges. When coding the non-case data, the researcher discovered the “people-founded” concept and needed to verify that “people-founded” was different from “belongs to the people.” To confirm the difference between “public” and “people founded” higher education institutions the researcher emailed MOET and received a reply on January 23, 2010, explaining the difference. According to Informant X at MOET (note: interview transcripts and personal communication are presented verbatim, therefore spelling may appear incorrect or wording may sound unfamiliar):

All Vietnamese community colleges are public. It means that these colleges are belonging to the local government authority's management and they receive the annual budget from local government. They are not "People founded" schools. The term: "People founded" school firstly been used in Vietnamese H.E. community in the 90's year of the last decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century when our Government firstly would like to do privatization of Higher Education in particular and education & Training in general. Now, in Vietnam we changed the term: "People founded school" into "Private school", and certainly the regulation of this changing process is legally established in the legal documents. But generally speaking the private schools/people founded school are belonging to the one or group of the people who put their own investment into establishing of the school. All private school are not receiving annual budget from both local and central governments.

The community colleges are "public" schools that in the words of the informants "belong to the people." The institutions are designed to meet the needs of the local people within the city or province. The colleges are founded by the local People's Committee with approval from MOET to serve the needs of the people within the Committee's jurisdiction. The People's Committee exists at many levels as described by an informant in Case 6 College:

Within each of the 63 provinces are districts with cities or towns [urban areas] or villages [rural areas]. Urban districts are divided into wards while rural districts are divided into villages. Each division has a People's

Committee. The Provincial or City People's Committee has the most power and decides if a community college should be established in the province or city. In Viet Nam, land is owned by the people, so people have the right to use it but they don't really own it. So if people need education, the people [living on land a People's Committee wants to designate for a college] can be forced to move so institution can be built.

(Dinner field notes, p. 3)

The People's Committee is responsible for establishing a community college and MOET approves this establishment. The Committee presents a *Founding Project* plan to MOET who decides if it will or will not be approved. In the plan, the People's Committee must describe how they will provide the land and the majority of the funding. In several interviews, the researcher confirmed that when government funding was mentioned, this meant the People's Committee, not MOET, funded the school. The Committee also hires and manages the top administrator of the college, the rector. Informant I of Case 5 College reports: "The People's Committee of the Province is responsible to appoint the Rector for its Community College with an agreement from MOET, but the main authority is the People's Committee of the Province" (Appendix I, Rector Survey, question 5). The rector reports to "the People's Committee of the city or province and the Department of Education and Training" which means MOET (Appendix I, Rector Survey, question 6). According to the data obtained from all of the 10 Rector's Surveys, the rector must hold at least a master's degree and be a member of the Communist Party of Viet Nam (CPV). Each college has a managing board comprised of the chair and other members of the local People's Committee, the rector, and the vice

rectors. Each college has at least one vice rector but most have two. The vice rector(s) must be member(s) of the Communist Party of Viet Nam.

The rector and the local People's Committee work in tandem. Informant Q of Case 9 College answered question 7 (rector's responsibility to the People's Committee) of the Rector Survey with the following items:

- To develop a plan to improve school.
- To develop a strategy for education and training by year 2020.
- To study levels of education and develop the training programs.
- To study the social political situation and develop the right direction for training.
- To manage school committee and activities.
- To implement the decisions from the People's Committee of the Province as objectives, goals of training and associate training.

The Provincial People's Committee or People's Committee of the City has a great deal of responsibility for the community colleges but not full authority over the college. MOET sanctions the establishment of and authorizes most aspects of the college. Article 41 of the Education Law (2005) explains the role of MOET in all higher education institutions and specifically states:

The Minister of Education and Training, based on the review of the Sector Review National Council for Programme of Higher Education, shall define the core programme for each field of education for college and university education, including content structure of all subjects, duration of education, proportion of education duration among different subjects, of



theory and practice, internship. Colleges and universities shall design their own programmes based on the core programme. (Article 41)

Two questions on the Rector's Survey were designed to understand the role of the local People's Committee and MOET in the community college model. Question 7 asked, "What are your responsibilities to the local People's Committee in your province"? Question 8 asked the rector; "What are your responsibilities to the Ministry of Education and Training"? Informant O of Case 8 College answered question 7 (People's Committee responsibility): "Train a qualified human resource for the province" and "plan for the college's development." The MOET question was answered, "Follow regulations on organization and operation of a community college." Informant I of Case 5 College explained the rector's responsibility to MOET as:

- Manage the community college and execute the regulations that were promulgated from MOET on management and specialty.
- Participate in discussion of suggestions and ask Minister's opinions prior to promulgating.
- Report and suggest the training programs that need to be improved such as: contents, method, management, etc. (Appendix I, Rector Survey, question 8).

Although the community colleges have been granted some autonomy in developing their curriculum; "The Minister of Education and Training shall be responsible for the compilation and approval of syllabi for common use by colleges and universities" (Education Law, 2005, Article 41:2). During the Case 10 College interview, the informant explained; "Actually, uh like it is standard, the curriculum, the from MOET

and one third of it is compulsory, but two-third is customized by college and community” (lines 211-212). When asked to further explain, the informant replied; “And uh, the two-third the college and community customize; they customize in order to meet their like their local areas that need” (lines 218 and 219). When asked if the two-thirds of the curriculum customized by the college had to be approved by MOET, the answer was “yes.” The researcher than asked, “Would you say this is true, this model, for all the community colleges in Viet Nam?” The respondent answered; “Yes” (line 226).

In summary, the first characteristic of the Vietnamese model is: the community colleges are public higher education institutions founded and managed by the local People’s Committee who must work within the confines of the Education Law (2005) which gives MOET oversight for academic matters and a significant level of control over the colleges. The local People’s Committee plans and provides while MOET regulates the training provided by the community college.

#### *Characteristic Two*

The second characteristic of the Vietnamese community college is that the college offers multi-disciplinary programs designed to meet the unique needs of the community it serves. The leaders of the community colleges continually referred to their institutions as “training” institutes which serve the unique “socio-economic” or “human resources” needs of the community they served. Informant A of Case 1 College described the difference between community colleges and other three-year colleges as; “the community college is multi-major training and other colleges are one-major training” (Appendix I, Rector Survey, question 15). In *Development Orientation of [Case College 3] Community College 2011-2011* (2009), the college reports a “weak workforce; especially

the high-tech workers” resulting in the establishment of the community college “aiming at forming a place providing training for the local workforce” (p. 1). The report also claims: “The college has frequently adjusted and diversified the training programs to respond to the needs of learners around the community” (p. 1). The programs are decided by the managing board of the college to meet the unique needs of the area served by the college.

When asked to describe the community college in Viet Nam, Informant R of Case 10 College replied, “Community college has the concept of community, means for people, it belongs to the people, the reasons it exists” (Interview transcript, lines 114 and 115). This particular college is located in one of the largest cities in the country. Unlike the provincial community colleges, this college serves an urban population. Therefore, some of the programs of the Case 10 College are very different from those offered at Cases 1 – 9 which are located in rural areas. *The Introduction of [Case 10] Community College* (2009) report explains, the college “is responsible for training technical professional and management staffs at college level and lower, carrying on scientific research works to serve the socio-economic development targets of its region and neighboring areas” (p. 1). Although some agricultural related programs are offered at Case 10 College, the majority of programs are not because training in agriculture is not the exclusive need of this community. Twelve of the 19 branches of training are within four areas: (a) economics, (b) technology engineering, (c) natural-resources environment, and (d) tourism trade and services. Examples of programs include land management, hotel and tourism, business administration, English, heat and refrigeration engineering technology, and food technology.

During dinner the night before the interview, Informants U and V of Case 11 College explained “there are too many multi-level colleges” in our province (Field notes, line 15). This saturation of colleges results in resources being spread too thin and in the local People’s Committee not “paying them any special attention” (Field notes, line 18). In the interview the following day, the researcher extended this conversation:

Researcher: Yes, he mentioned that last night.

Informant U (through interpreter): Beside uh the community, [Case 11 Community College], there are like vocational college, something like technical college that they also train at multi-level, multi-range.

Researcher: Okay, so there’s vocational and technical?

Informant U: Yeah. And, uh, therefore there haven’t been any real difference between community college here and other college.

Researcher: Okay (pause). Can you remind me of the numbers you told me last night in terms of universities? Is it 5?

Informant U: 4 universities.

Researcher: How many colleges?

Informant U: So both, they have 25 colleges, both vocational and professional.

Researcher: Okay. That’s a lot of competition.

Informant U: Right. And they also have 30 more than 30 school, vocational school of secondary school. And that’s not have been mentioned like uh centers all the centers that they train in vocational.

Researcher: Okay, does MOET see this as a problem; that there is so much competition between the colleges?

Informant U: Umh yeah and MOET is now working on like get it more distribute, seems more organized.

Researcher: And how about the People's Committee; do they see the competition as a problem?

Informant U: So uh, the People's Committee still like, like take care of them but just the same way as other colleges. Not get any special priorities. So, the thing is that most of the college like stay very focused on the communities. Some colleges, like multi-level, multi-train, like uh train the human resources mostly for the communities and they are thinking of some way like uh uh talking like uh about some of how to distribute uh the college so that like each college can train in specialized, specializations so like right now they have uh they have training multi-branch.

Researcher: So do I understand this right? The People's Committee is talking about making the college more specialized?

Informant U: That is what he suggest. (Interview transcript, lines 151-210)

One of the problems identified in the literature review of this study was a lack of clarity on how the community colleges were different from the other types of colleges (three-year higher education institutions) in Viet Nam. The in-vivo code "priorities" was important in the Case 10 College interview. The informants explained that their college was not receiving "any priorities" from the local People's Committee even though they

had multi-level, multi-discipline programs. Many of the informants referred to their colleges as “priorities” in their communities. In the Education Law (2005) the objective of “college education” is defined as “equip students with professional knowledge and basic practical skills in one profession with the ability to solve common problems in the field of study” (Article 39:2). Following the law, college education has historically been delivered as one program per institution (e.g., College of Pedagogy, College of Engineering, and College of Business) which contributes to the problem mentioned in the above conversation. The community college, characterized by delivering multiple programs rather than one discipline focus, separates the community colleges from the other three-year higher educational institutions. Thus, the researcher was surprised to hear the Rector claiming that he suggested the Case 11 College return to the “college” model and deliver a single program. The researcher learned later that MOET would not approve such a change. MOET views the community college model as one that is multi-level, multi-program and therefore a model that is more likely to meet the range of training needs of “the local.”

Characteristic two of the Vietnamese community college is providing multi-disciplinary programs designed to meet the unique needs of the community served by the college. A single college offering several levels of training, in many academic disciplines, separates the community colleges from the other types of colleges in Viet Nam.

#### *Characteristic Three*

The third characteristic of the Vietnamese community college is that multi-level certificates and diplomas are conferred up through the college level (three-year) of higher

education and that articulation agreements with universities enable students to earn a university bachelor's degree. The *Report on the Operating Results of [Case 7] Community College since Establishment (2009)* refers to the college as "the provinces first public vocational training institution for college level and below" (p. 1). "College level and below" confirms the community college model as a multi-level higher education institution. During the Case 9 College interview, Informant Q reminded the researcher:

So, in order to understand for community colleges in Viet Nam umh you should umh refer to the education system in Viet Nam so that you can know like how community college relate to other levels education and how functions and how its grown to the other colleges in the system.

(Interview transcript, lines 98-100).

The Education Law (2005) states, "the national education system consists of formal education and continuing education" (article 4). The goal of continuing education is for people "to learn while in-service to learn continuously and for lifelong for refinement of their personality, broadening their understanding, and for educational, professional, operational enhancement with a view to improving their quality of life, employability, self-employability and adaptation to social life" (Article 44). During the field work, the practitioners and bureaucrats charged with oversight for the colleges consistently discussed both "formal" and "informal" training.

Formal training includes any program or level of training that a student participates in full-time. In other words, the student is a college student first and foremost. These students are in the traditional age range of 18-24 years old as shown in

the *Education Landscape* (Appendix J). Informal education refers to students who attend classes part-time while working full-time. These courses are usually offered in the evenings and on weekends. Informal education also includes short-term courses (e.g., a certificate to update workplace skills) and remedial education designed to increase literacy rates among the people. Informant L of Case 6 College described informal education as, “informal student is part-time; works and goes to school. Also called in-service training. Usually means older student earning a certificate. Usually formal means student 18-25” (Field notes, lines 19 - 20). When asked if there was a difference in status between formal and informal training the informant replied, “The Ed Law says you can’t distinguish between formal and informal. MOET wants to make the training equal for formal and informal. In practice, the employer will hire the formal graduate first” (Field notes, lines 22-24).

Within the main divisions of “formal” and “continuing education” (referred to as “informal” by the informants), the Education Law (2005) further subdivides national education into four levels:

*Level 1:* Early childhood education with crèches and kindergartens;

*Level 2:* General education with primary education, lower secondary education, and upper secondary education;

*Level 3:* Professional education with professional secondary education and vocational training;

*Level 4:* Undergraduate and postgraduate education (hereinafter referred to as higher education) with college, undergraduate, master and doctoral degrees (Article 4: 2 a. b. c. d.).



The first section of this chapter defines the three levels of training offered in the Vietnamese community college model: (a) professional, (b) college, and (c) university through articulation. Table 2 presents demographic data for each case, including the levels of training provided by the college. The first level of training offered at the community colleges is “professional education.” This level includes two sub-levels: (a) professional secondary education and (b) vocational training (Education Law, 2005, Article 4). By law, professional education “must focus on the training of vocational abilities” and “must combine practical skill drilling and theoretical teaching, enabling learners to practice and to develop profession as required by each profession” (Article 34:1 and 2). “Vocational training” can fall within the purview of two levels in the national system: (a) professional education, and (b) higher education. The Law (2005) states; “vocational training is directed towards the training of technical workers directly participating in production and service to have the practical ability of a profession adequate to the relevant training qualification” (Article 33). Over dinner, Informant L at Case 6 College explained vocational education, regardless of whether it was offered at the professional education or college level, as the following:

Professional vocational school is offered at the level of professional education and lasts two years. Twenty-five percent in the classroom and 75% practice. Vocational college is offered at the college level and lasts three years. It require a fifty/fifty split between classroom and practice of the vocation. Fifty percent is hands on and the rest is academic. Requirement to enroll is higher and outcome is a higher chance to be a manager or supervisor; more prestigious; every community college has

this distinction. Vocational college is a terminal degree and can't transfer to another college or university. (Field notes, lines 11 - 16).

According to the Law (2005), vocational training can be offered at various institutions: (a) vocational training colleges, (b) vocational upper secondary schools, and (c) vocational training centers (Article 33). By law, colleges can offer programs at the college level and below, so the community college model includes vocational training at three levels: (a) professional secondary (Level 3 of the national education system), (b) professional vocational (Level 3 of the national education system), and (c) college vocational (Level 4 of the national education system).

While the researcher was trying to understand the “levels” of training offered in the model, Informant Q of Case 9 College explained during the interview; “they [the community college] have university level, college level and professional secondary level” training (line 132). The researcher asked; “So that’s community college level?” to which Informant Q replied; “No, community college is college level” (lines 133 and 134). This was confirmed by Informant X at MOET through email correspondence when the researcher asked; “Where can I find the community college regulations”? The informant responded; “In the Education Law 2005 there is no statement/ definition of the term ‘Community college’. From 2004 the Government of Vietnam has allow to do pilot program in establishing of community colleges only” (personal communication, June 10, 2009). In another email exchange, Informant X at MOET stated; “According to Article 38, “Undergraduate education includes: 1) College education/program (2-3 year); and university education program (4-6 years). Article 42: College offers college program, but university can offer both college education program and university program” (personal

communication, January 24, 2010). Informant W at VACC confirmed this in an email, “The duration of the occupational secondary-level training [professional education] is usually two years, and that of the college program is 3 years for students who have graduated from high school” (personal communication, February 10, 2010).

Regardless of the level of training, certificates and diplomas are conferred to individuals who complete the coursework and pass the national test. Article 8 of the Education Law (2005) describes the types of credentials available in the national education system as the following:

Degrees/diplomas of the national educational system consist of the following: lower secondary diploma, upper secondary diploma, professional secondary education diploma, college diploma, university degree, master degree and doctoral degree. Certificates of the national educational system are granted to learners to acknowledge their learning results upon successful completion of courses for knowledge or professional upgrading. (Article 8)

The community colleges can confer certificates and diplomas. The diploma levels are: (a) professional secondary, and (b) college. This understanding was confirmed during a member check when Informant X at MOET stated; “Community colleges grant diplomas and universities grant degrees” (personal communication, November 12, 2009).

The final level of training the community college can offer is a university degree through a partnership referred to as “articulation.” In this agreement, the university must confer the degree according to the law. Therefore, the colleges form partnerships with

Vietnamese universities who send lecturers to the community college campus to teach the courses.

In many interviews, the informants talked about “transfer programs” while others referred to “articulation,” leaving the researcher perplexed. This confusion had also been expressed by scholars and practitioners working with the community colleges.

Articulation and transfer were discussed in the Case 7 College interview and highlighted the following:

Researcher: “One of the things I still don’t understand after conducting many interviews is the difference between articulation and transfer in the Vietnamese community college model.

Informant M (through interpreter): That’s very different uh some variations types at universities here all over the world.

Researcher: Um hum, but in the U.S. we are very clear that articulation means the credits will transfer to a university from a community college and transfer means I earn a degree and then that two year degree, the whole degree, transfers to a university where they accept it.

Informant M: The transfer exactly like the transfer program in Viet Nam. We have the transfer also like that. Get the two year degree here then study at Ho Chi Minh City two more years to get the bachelor’s degree. The same here.

Researcher: But, what I heard in other interviews is that sometimes transfer means that faculty from a 4-year university come to the college, community college, and teach the rest of those last two years.

Informant M: Uh okay. According to Education Law, when you, when when a college uh implement a transfer program, transfer program uh the college have to go to have to go to the university to study. That is according to the Education Law.

Researcher: So theoretically, transfer is the same as it is in the U.S.?

Informant M: Yeah.

Researcher: But, some of the teachers.

Informant M: Some of the teachers (pause as many people are speaking) teach you understand this? (pause) So some of the students can go, can go, uh not take the day off the work, so like they just customize.

Researcher: And you can do that? You can go against the law? You can customize it?

Informant M: Uh, yeah (speaking Vietnamese) yeah. (Interview transcript, lines 327 -339)

Seeking greater clarification later in the same interview, the conversation about transfer continued and Informant M (through interpreter) expressed:

Okay, umh so if most articulation and transfer programs in uh most of these types of programs they need permission or the decisions in the number of student or the like the field from the university in which they have the relations. And uh, the difference between articulation and transfer is that in articulation the teachers can come to the college to teach. [Vietnamese spoken between interpreter and informant.] Okay, umh so they, the transfer program they umh they yeah uh requirements for the

transfer program, the only case where the college can have the class is their district is that umh they have enough facilities to complete the requirements of the university. That's they incorporate, have their program with. (Interview transcript, lines 363-371).

During the Case 10 College interview, the researcher inquired about transfer programs. This conversation provides some clarification to the model.

Researcher: Some of the colleges have talked about a transfer program using the Western model which means the student earns a 2-year degree here and then they physically go to a university, let's say Ha Noi, and all of their credits transfer, so they can do their last two years to earn their bachelors. Is that a practice here?

Informant S (through interpreter): Okay, so they already have an idea of that, but they haven't done it yet.

Researcher: Okay.

Informant S: They still working on finding a partner.

Researcher: Um hum.

Informant S: A university. So uh, but uh the things that they do here is that teachers, students who come here can continue to study by inviting teachers from other universities to come here to study say like informal training. (Interview transcript, lines 245 – 259)

Still unclear about the difference between “transfer” and “articulation” a series of emails were exchanged between the researcher, Informant X at MOET and Informant W at VACC to understand these two terms. From these exchanges, the difference was

clearer. In the Education Law (2005) transfer means that a student can earn a non-terminal diploma or degree at one institution then transfer to another institution to earn a higher level diploma or degree. The student can also transfer within the college; for example earning a certificate in accounting and then transfer into the college level accounting program. Another example is: a community college student can earn a professional education diploma, approximately two-years full-time, for a program that is “transferable” and then “transfer” into the college level of that same program (e.g., aquaculture) earning the college diploma conferred by the community college. In addition, the community college student can earn a three-year college diploma (e.g., accounting) and then “transfer” into the bachelor level accounting program to earn a bachelor’s degree conferred by the university after the student completed the course work at the community college but taught by the university lecturers. The respondents referred to transfer programs as formal education.

Articulation refers to partnerships between the community colleges and universities or other types of colleges. In this partnership, the student stays at the community college campus and earns a diploma or degree after taking courses taught by teachers from another higher education institution. If the student earns a bachelor’s degree it is conferred by the university. Articulation agreements are “customized to make it work for the student” (Case 7 College Interview transcript, line 337). “Transfer” means the student can transfer from the lower level of training into a higher level of training as long as the lower level program is not a terminal program.

To summarize the third characteristic of the Vietnamese community college model, these colleges offer multi-levels of training, both formal and continuing

education, so that students can earn a variety of diplomas and a bachelor's degree through an articulation agreement with Vietnamese universities. Informant I at Case 5 College succinctly articulated the first three characteristics of the community college model in Viet Nam: "Multi-disciplinary programs, multi-levels, flexible training programs to satisfy the needs of students and the demands from a local region" (Appendix I, Rector Survey, question 15).

#### *Characteristic Four*

The fourth characteristic of the Vietnamese community college model is domestic and international partnerships actively are sought to develop social capital. Putnam (2000) claims social capital, built by forming relationships with others, enhances productivity and "institutional effectiveness" (p. 22). A theme that emerged from the data was that community colleges were actively forming bridging and bonding partnerships (social capital) with domestic and international organizations so the community colleges would effectively meet the training needs of Vietnamese workers in a flat world era. Putnam (2000) distinguishes between "bonding social capital" (within group social connections which are exclusive) and "bridging social capital" (across group social connections which are inclusive) (p. 22). In short, social capital is purposeful and strategic networking with partners who have at least one resource considered valuable to the recipient institution. But these partnerships are more than utilitarian; they are reciprocal and mutually beneficial to both donor and host institutions.

Since the implementation of *Đôì môi* in 1987, Viet Nam has been modernizing in order to actively participate in the global knowledge-based economy. The HERA (2005), strongly suggests that the HEIs build social capital stating, "Focus investment, mobilize



local and international consultants, and adopt appropriate measures to develop HEIs to international standards” (3 a). The renovation strategies include; “Upgrade training methodologies . . . promote the use of open and online education materials; select and apply advanced curriculum from other countries” (Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2005, 3 b).

In the literature review, Ashwill (2005) discussed “people-founded” or private higher education institutions and their low number in Viet Nam. The HERA (2005) stipulates higher education institutions will seek and secure international partners to enhance their delivery of flat world oriented training. For example, the HERA (2005) stresses, “Develop a strategy for international integration; improve the cooperation capacity and competitiveness of Vietnam HE; enter into international agreements and commitments . . . promote joint high-quality training programs and teaching staff exchange with foreign HEIs” (3 f). The HERA (2005) also recommends “attracting international investors” who will “establish campuses in Vietnam and/or to enter into training cooperation with Vietnam HEIs” (3 f).

The HERA (2005) was designed to reform the higher education system (Level 4 of training in the Education Law) by the year 2020. Following the premise of the 1986 *Đôi môi* restructuring, MOET encourages the community colleges to develop international partnerships, especially with HEIs. VACC, whose purpose is to network with domestic and specifically international partners, serves as a conduit for the community colleges institutional members to build bridging social capital. VACC bonds the community colleges to each other, seeking power through numbers and bonding social capital.

The VACC website (n.d.b.) describes the mission of its membership organization stating that it “runs for the mutual interest and power of the whole association and of each member” demonstrating bonding social capital. Informant W of VACC explained in a member check email, “The search for international partners plays a very important role in the development of social capital (including the development of facilities and the training of the human resources)” (personal communication, February 10, 2010). Explaining how the Canadian community college model is influencing the Vietnamese model, Informant W discussed ways in which the Vietnamese model is seeking links with local enterprises by; “Develop[ing] programs based on the needs of employers . . . invite experienced and trained staff from enterprises to instruct some specific subjects” and “Develop the training programs under the orders of enterprises and organizations and cooperative training programs” (personal communication, February 10, 2010). The VACC and Canadian partnership is also encouraging the Vietnamese community colleges to give special priorities to “women and minorities” and place greater emphasis on placing students in jobs with local employers upon graduation (personal communication, February 10, 2010). Ashwill (2005) and Ngo (2005) addressed the lack of access to higher education for women and minority group members.

Case 3 College discussed its strategic plan to “Promote the co-operation plans with local and international colleges, universities and organizations to deploy collaboration projects and to seek for human and financial resources for the college development” (*Development Orientation of [Case 3] College (2011-2015)*, 2009, lines 104-106). When asked about the difference between the community college and other types of colleges in Viet Nam, Informant C of Case 2 College answered; "training

together with local enterprises” (Appendix I, Rector Survey, question 15). During the Case 9 interview, Informant Q discussed the importance of social capital to the model by stating, “In some other countries community college it also funded by uh enterprises, businesses, or training center. But, here that is not the case in Viet Nam” (lines 39-40). This statement is elaborated on later when Informant Q states; “So in most other countries there are close relationship between training program and collaborations between uh the college and enterprises...In Viet Nam, this relationship is recent development” (lines 358-365). Funding opportunities are one possible outcome of bridging social capital but Informant Q points out another important benefit during the interview and stated, “Another, so uh this lead to the like uh limiting to the student practicing, like in like real place, the real workplace” (lines 374 and 375). The students can learn the concepts and theory in the classroom and the techniques in the lab but without partnerships with “enterprises” the colleges, whose mission is to train for “human resources” are not able to practice their knowledge and skills in the workplace. Informant Q continues to explain this best: “Because like after teach, after lecturing they just like go to the lab at the college but they don’t go to the real working place” (lines 379 and 380). The report, *Development Orientation of [Case 3] College (2011 – 2015)*, summarizes the role of MOET and VACC is social capital development for the community colleges in Viet Nam: “Court MOET and VACC’s supports as bridges for cooperating with other colleges and universities in Viet Nam and in other countries” (2009, lines 197-198).

Characteristic four of the Vietnamese community college model is that community colleges strategically network with domestic and international partners in

order to enhance productiveness of the training, institutional effectiveness of the colleges and connections in the flat world. The partnerships enhance the productivity of the colleges as they fulfill their mission to meet the socio-economic development training needs of the provinces and cities in which they are situated.

#### *Characteristic Five*

The fifth characteristic of the Vietnamese community college model is scientific and technological research based on community needs as required in the 2005 Education Law. According to the Education Law (2005):

Educational development must be linked with the requirements of socio-economic development, to the scientific-technological advances, and to the consolidation of

national defence and security (Article 9). The State shall facilitate schools and other education institutions in organising scientific-technological research, application, and dissemination; in combining education with research and production so as to improve educational quality, gradually implementing the role of a cultural, scientific and technological centre for the locality or the whole country (Article 18:1)

The community colleges are fulfilling the stipulations of scientific-technological research for socio-economic development of the “locality or the whole” country at each of the 11 case college campuses. All of the case colleges have a department designated to implement the scientific-technological stipulation of the law. Case 11 College has a Department of Scientific Research Management – Educational Testing and Quality Assessment in addition to a Center for Technology and Application Transfer. Case 10

College has a Scientific and Foreign Affairs Department, while Case 7 College has a Department of Scientific Research and International Relations.

The report, *The Introduction of [Case 6] Community College* (2009), demonstrates this fifth characteristic of the model stating, the college “focuses on providing human resources, scientific research, technology transfer for the sustainable agriculture and rural development contributing to reduce poorness and protect environment” (p. 1). This same college cooperates with the provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to provide a community workshop entitled, “Training Human Resources to meet the demands of Agricultural and Rural Development and Professional Training for Farmers” (Interview transcript, lines 126 – 127). This partnership builds social capital while fulfilling the national reform agenda (HERA) for HEIs.

Case 8 College refers to characteristic five as “science and technology transferring” (College brochure, p. 10). The college’s organizational structure includes “chambers” that report directly to the managing board of the college. The Chamber of Science Research – International Relations oversees the science and technology transfer at all three campuses of the college. The science and technology transfer focuses on three categories of socio-economic development: (a) agriculture, (b) aquaculture, and (c) the newest area, tourism. The People’s Committee has directed this recently established community college (2007) to “serve the community, serve the ethnic groups, serve the minority groups” (Interview transcript, line 119). Twenty-seven ethnic minority groups reside in this province, many in remote areas. These groups mainly survive by working in agriculture and aquaculture, but tourism is beginning to thrive due to the many miles of

coastline in the province. Migration is a common result of modernization as new technologies impact the economy with new types of work. Tourism is bringing modernization and service sector jobs to the province. For many generations, the ethnic minorities have worked in agriculture and aquaculture, therefore the people need formal training in the province's newest economic sector, especially in tourism and construction. Vocational, short-term programs include; "bakery, driver, housekeeping, restaurant, accounting and construction" (Interview transcript, lines 426 – 470). College level and professional level programs include tourism, education (elementary), and management (Field notes, lines 62 – 73). As modernization reshapes the population of the province and the way people live and work, science and technology transfer go hand-in-hand with the mission of the college which is, "re-training for labours, who want to change career, enhance standard in background of economic structure transfer and integrate international economy" (Case 8 college brochure, p. 1).

In summary, the fifth characteristic of the Vietnamese community college model is that the 11 case colleges engage in scientific research that allows the province or city to transfer the technology discovered or adapted by the students and teacher's research to the local community's needs. In the southern region of the country, a large portion of the scientific research is focused on agriculture and aquaculture. Students and their instructors are discovering new ways to grow traditional crops or new crops that are marketable and lead to socio-economic development. In those provinces that have incorporated tourism in their modernization plan, scientific research includes bottling of water, hospitality management (usually referred to as bakery, culture or tourism), and construction not only of buildings and resorts but also of beaches and parks. While

explaining the “vision” of Case 8 College, informant L discussed the final characteristic of the Vietnamese community college model and how it is integrated into the training function of the college by stating:

First we have the vision. The vision is that of build a prestigious training center in the Mekong Delta at [Case 8 Community College]. We also try to provide opportunities to meet the demands of uh human resource training. We also try to be science and technology for the requirements of social and economic development. Our mission, okay is teaching, learning, scientific research, human resource training, science and technology for the development of community. (Interview transcript, lines 95 – 101)

*Summary of the Vietnamese Community College Model*

Overall, the community college as a higher education institution in Viet Nam has been designed to build human and intellectual capital as demonstrated in the current Education Law (2005) which states, “Educational development must be linked with the requirements of socio-economic development [and] to the scientific-technological advances” (Article 9). The model is focused on training a diversified workforce prepared for the demands of the global knowledge-based economy. The 2009 report, *The Introduction of [Case 2] Community College*, explains the model best:

It is a public multi-level and multi-major school built from the source of local funds. The school offers college-level and lower level training programs, scientific research and technology transfer in compliance with

regulations of law on Science and Technology, law on Education and others, serving the socio-economic development of the province (p. 2).

This model allows the local community (province or city) to determine its own socio-economic needs and with some autonomy create and support a higher education institution that can offer community members three types of credentials (certificates, diplomas and degrees) and transfer technological research as it is applied to community needs.

The Vietnamese community college model is relatively new. As stated by Informant A of Case 1 College, “This model is quite new so only a handful” of community colleges exist and it is “a new model being developed” (Interview transcript, lines 529 – 535). Informant U of Case 11 College also considers the model to be new: “However it is a very new model in Viet Nam umh so also the people and even like the leaders in government haven’t got enough understanding of it (Interview transcript, lines 101-105). As with any conceptual model, when the model is new, it is not fully understood by those who utilize the model. The model is a tool which is socially constructed to guide and direct the evolution of the organization. The model therefore evolves over time which is the case with the Vietnamese community college model. This evolution will be addressed in Chapter 5 as the researcher discusses her perspective on the study’s findings.



## CHAPTER 5

### Discussion and Conclusions

#### *Introduction*

This study was undertaken to address a gap in the collective understanding of the community college concept in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. The published literature could not answer the question: What is the nature of the community concept as it currently exists in Viet Nam? Stakeholders and scholars interested in the community college as a credentialing higher education institution constructed to enhance the human capital and social development of the country, expressed puzzlement when asked: “Is there a Vietnamese community college model?” While designing the research and conducting the field work, the researcher discovered that the term “community college” was not well understood by many people outside the institution itself. Many of the individuals interviewed outside the 11 cases (e.g. Americans living and working in Viet Nam’s higher education sector, government officials and university faculty in Viet Nam) were limited in their understanding of Vietnamese community colleges. Some knew the institutions existed, but most could not explain their mission, structure, scope or relationship to other institutions in the national education system. Therefore, the lack of knowledge discovered in the literature review existed in general practice.

A qualitative multiple case study approach was utilized to examine 11 of the 12 Vietnamese community colleges to ascertain if the colleges shared core characteristics that defined a Vietnamese community college model. The comparative case study method was selected to provide a holistic, intensive and descriptive study of the community college concept in Viet Nam (Merriam, 1998). The 11 cases were examined

to understand what was typical in each case (with-in case) and then compared to identify the similar and contrasting characteristics across the cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The researcher's training and experience as a sociologist, her most recent acquisition of knowledge while in the Higher Education Leadership and Policy Studies doctoral program and an opportunity to attend two international conferences sponsored by the VACC shaped the study. American sociologist, Berger (1963) posits that, "things are not what they seem," suggesting that "social reality turns out to have many layers of meaning" and persuades others to dig deeper because "the discovery of each new layer changes the perception of the whole" (p. 4). This systematic examination of the community college concept in Viet Nam guided by Berger's (1963) "Invitation to Sociology," involved peeling away many layers of social reality to uncover the community college model. The researcher's doctoral course work provided a comprehensive understanding of higher education systems and the typology of institutions within these systems. The researcher's attendance at two VACC sponsored international conferences in 2007 and 2008 suggested that the definition of community college in Viet Nam was at best ambiguous and at worst non-existent.

The study's analytical framework comprised of (a) human capital theory, (b) social capital theory, and (c) organization theory were combined with the researcher's sociological understanding of how people construct social institutions, in this case education, to meet their shared needs. The researcher employed four data collection techniques to examine the bounded system: (a) semi-structured interviews, (b) observation with field notes, (c) document review, and (d) photography. Data collection, data management and data analysis were integrated as data were reduced, compared,

contrasted, and verified (Berg, 2007). Grounded theory techniques (i.e. theoretical sampling, open coding, axial coding, comparative analysis and conceptual saturation) guided the analysis of the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) so the researcher could draw conclusions.

### *The Vietnamese Community College Model*

The researcher examined the mission, purpose, goals, objectives, role and scope of each of the 11 case community colleges to determine if a shared concept existed in order to define a model. Results of the study indicated that although Vietnamese legislation does not exist to permanently establish community colleges, a community college model does exist, the model is relatively new and in a state of evolution. The Vietnamese community college model is defined by a set of core characteristics which emerged from the data in this study. Five themes were particularly prominent:

1. Public higher education institutions with community ownership at the provincial or city level, in conjunction with Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) oversight for academic matters;
2. Multi-disciplinary programs designed to meet the unique needs of the community;
3. Multi-level certificates and diplomas are conferred up through the college level (three-year) of higher education and that articulation agreements with universities enable students to earn a university bachelor's degree;
4. Domestic and international partnerships actively are sought to develop social capital; and

5. Scientific and technological research based on community needs as required in the 2005 Education Law.

Appendix K articulates the Vietnamese community college model through photos taken by the researcher during the field work phase of this research study.

### *Cultural Context of the Model*

Overall, the Vietnamese community college is a higher education organization designed to build human capital (skills, knowledge and values) by training people to enter a rapidly evolving workforce prepared to meet the demands of the flat world. The most recent Education Law (2005) states, “Educational development must be linked with the requirements of socio-economic development [and] to the scientific-technological advances” (Article 9). The institution “community college” is not specifically addressed in the Law (2005), but community colleges fall within the fourth and highest level of the national education system, “undergraduate and postgraduate education (hereinafter referred to as higher education)” (Article 4d). The community colleges can also offer programs at the third level of the national education system which is defined by the Law (2005) as, “Professional education with professional secondary education and vocational training” (Article 4c). Training for socio-economic development is the cornerstone of the community college model. The model offers community college students credentials (certificates, diplomas and baccalaureate degrees through articulation) in both formal and continuing education. These credentials demonstrate a particular level of competence (knowledge, skills and values).

Human capital is marketable competence (Becker, 1964). Viet Nam, classified as a developing country, is striving toward a greater level of competitiveness in the flat

world's global knowledge-based economy. This competitiveness requires a trained populace that has acquired not only higher education credentials but also global competence. This competence demands a particular set of knowledge and skills but also a set of values that recognize the connected nature of the world, while preserving traditional values. The 1975 reunification of Viet Nam resulted in a broadened bonding relationship with the Soviet Union and isolationist policy and practice from the non-Soviet block. The 1986 *Đôì môi* renovation policy combined with the break-up of the Soviet Union in the late 1980's opened Viet Nam to outside influences. A series of World Bank reports in the 1990s (El-Khawas, 1998; World Bank, 1994 May) encouraged the governments of developing countries to invest in diversification of their higher education systems with the aim of both conferring higher education credentials and also providing greater access to those who had been denied higher education opportunities. These reports argued that access and the acquisition of credentials, knowledge, skills and values, would create a more level playing field in the global knowledge-based economy at two levels: (a) micro (individual citizens) and (b) macro (entire country).

The recommendations of many Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), combined with the *Đôì môi* spirit of economic openness, led the Vietnamese government to implement a number of changes in the social institution of education. The 2005 *Higher Education Reform Agenda (HERA)* stipulated a sweeping reform of Viet Nam's higher education system to meet the human capital and economic development needs of the country in the flat world era. One vision of the Agenda was to complete a national network of HEIs. Objective 3a of the HERA (2005) stipulated "complete the community junior college network, integrating them into HEI training process, and reinforce open universities, in order to expand the scope of these two types of HEI" (para. 3). The

HERA (2005) also recommended: (a) new curriculum designed to meet the flat world reality; (b) quality assurance; (c) accreditation to meet international standards; (d) increased enrollments; (e) higher level credentials for instructors; and (f) an increase in science and technology transfer (Nguyen, 2008).

Another change recommended in the HERA (2005) states, “Develop a Higher Education Law” (Objective 3e, para. 4). The Education Law (2005) referred to throughout this study was codified on June 14, 2005, and the HERA was codified November 2005. Therefore, five months after passing the Education Law (2005) the HERA recommended the development of a separate law codifying higher education. This political context shaping the Vietnamese community college continues to add more layers of meaning. Many of the informants and the researcher are hopeful that a separate higher education law will specifically name community colleges, giving legal status to these institutions. One recommendation from this study is that, when created, the higher education law will clarify the title for community colleges so that the lexicon is clear for the stakeholders, scholars, and international partners, all instrumental players in the model. As stated in Chapter 4, Informant X of the Ministry of Education and Training claimed that junior colleges do not exist in Viet Nam, but the MOET website used the term “junior college” in several places, and the term was utilized in several case college interviews and by the HERA (2005). The model would be more transparent if the lexicon were consistent.

An additional component of the historical context of the model includes the World Bank’s July 2006 report, *The Resolution on the Five Year Socio-economic Development Plan 2006-2010*. This report discusses the National Assembly’s mandate

to renovate the higher education system, giving priority to vocational training that addressed the needs of industrialization and modernization. A year after passing the Education Law (2005) and less than a year after releasing the HERA (2005), the report also addresses further need for Viet Nam to reform in order to improve.

Boost the economic growth rate, achieving rapid and sustainable development, quickly bringing our country out of the low development state. Significantly improve people's material, cultural, and spiritual life. Boost the industrialization and modernization process and gradually develop the knowledge-based economy, creating foundations to make our country basically become a modern industrial country by 2020. (p. a).

Nguyen Thi Li Huong, a deputy director general of the Higher Education Department of MOET, is considered an expert on higher education in Viet Nam. She addresses the reform claiming, "significant progress in general education and higher education" has occurred including greater access to higher education, but maintains that "the educational scale is not sufficient for the country's industrialization and modernization; and neither imbalanced between supply and demand" (Nguyen, 2008, para. 1). Although access to higher education has increased, Nguyen (2008) claims that the country's high level of poverty "is still a barrier to the access to higher education" (p. 2).

Chapter 1 of this study discussed Viet Nam's Human Development Index (HDI) score of 0.725, ranking it 116<sup>th</sup> out of 182 countries for which data is provided (United Nations, 2010). The *World Factbook* lists Viet Nam's unemployment rate at 6.5%, ranking it 63 in the country comparison, and the poverty rate at 14.8% in 2009 (CIA, 2010). This same resource lists the 2009 United States unemployment rate at 9.4% and

the poverty rate at 12%, and Canada's unemployment rate at 8.5% or 93 in the country ranking, and the poverty rate at 10.8% (CIA, 2010). The U.S. and Canada were selected for comparative purpose because these two countries were most often mentioned as "models" for the Vietnamese community colleges during the case college site visits. These comparative statistics might leave one to believe that Viet Nam is at the same level of development as the U.S. and Canada on the flat world playing field, but as Berger (1963) reminds us "things are not what they seem" (p. 4).

Viet Nam is a developing country, although its literacy rate is high (90.3%) and the poverty and unemployment rates are typically in-line with many developed countries. Viet Nam's decade of isolation left it behind in the flat world era. Poverty, literacy and unemployment rates fail to offer the full story. The micro and macro levels of human capital needed to successfully compete in the global knowledge-based economy do not exist in Viet Nam. Technology that provides access to information lags significantly behind that of developed countries and the infrastructure necessary for mutually rewarding social capital is missing. The HERA (2005), the Education Law (2005) and The Five Year Socio-Economic Development Plan, 2006-2010 (2006) all recognize these facts. Nguyen (2008) claims, "Quality and relevance of graduates' qualifications are a paramount issue. Graduates lack of labor skills needed, so that the employers are facing with difficulties in employing adequate and capable labors" (p. 2). The socio-economic development of Viet Nam depends on the country's ability to reform their education system, in particular the higher education system in which the community colleges operate.

Development means change. The socio-economic needs of the developing country of Viet Nam are rapidly changing; thus, the community college model must



continue to evolve and keep pace. The model is new and not well understood beyond those who lead the community colleges. As stated by Informant A of Case 1 College, “This model is quite new so only a handful” of community colleges exist and it is “a new model being developed” (Interview transcript, lines 529 – 535). Informant U of Case 11 College also considered the model to be new and stated, “However it is a very new model in Viet Nam umh so also the people and even like the leaders in government haven’t got enough understanding of it” (Interview transcript, lines 101-105). As with any conceptual model, when the model is new it is not fully understood by those who utilize it to guide and direct the evolution of their institutions. The findings of this study offer an overview of the model and invite other scholars to examine the findings and seek additional layers of meaning.

#### *Historical Context of the Model*

The published literature and official documents obtained by the researcher agree that over the past decade, 15 higher education institutions with community college in their official name have been established in Viet Nam. According to Oliver et al. (2009), the first six community colleges established in the twenty-first century (August 2000) were: (a) Ba Ria-Vung Tau Community College; (b) Dong Thap Community College; (c) Ha Tay Community College; (d) Hai Phong Community College; (e) Tien Giang Community College; and (f) Quang Ngai Community College. These six colleges were partially funded by a project sponsored by the Netherlands. Oliver’s (2009) research was conducted with three Vietnamese associates highly vested in the Vietnamese community colleges and is considered sound research. However, the documents provided by the VACC, MOET and the case college rectors tell a different story on the establishment of

community colleges in Viet Nam. The VACC, MOET and case college documents claim Ha Tay Community College was established on October 3, 2003, under Decision No. 5345/QĐ-BGD&ĐT-TCCB, not in August 2000 as claimed by Oliver et al. (2009). This study considers the 2003 date of establishment to be correct since the college rector, VACC, and MOET confirmed the date. Again, many layers of understanding are necessary to get the story straight when studying Viet Nam.

The published research on Vietnamese community colleges suggest that two of the community colleges established in 2000 transitioned to universities; Tien Giang in 2005 and Quang Ngai in 2007. Tra Vinh Community College was established in August 2001 in one of the poorest provinces in the country as a Canadian sponsored project. Tra Vinh transitioned to a university in 2006. Since April 2002, nine additional colleges have been established. They are:

1. Vinh Long (2002)
2. Kien Giang (2002)
3. Ha Tay (2003)
4. Hau Giang (2005)
5. Ha Noi (2005)
6. Soc Trang (2006)
7. Ca Mau (2007)
8. Binh Thuan (2007)
9. Lai Chau (2007)

According to Informant X at MOET, another community college should be established in the Northwest mountain region by the end of 2010, Bac Kan Community

College. According to Oliver et al. (2009), Dac Nong Community College in the central region of the country was “pending approval from MOET” (p. 201). This is another example of how “things are not what they seem” and research in Viet Nam, especially by outsiders, is complicated.

Because community college development in Viet Nam has been somewhat tenuous, the researcher has had to dig through many layers of understanding to grasp why three community colleges established in the last decade chose to transition to a university. The rector of Tra Vinh University is also the president of VACC. The university continues to be listed as member of VACC while Tien Giang and Quang Ngai are not members. The rector of Tra Vinh was interviewed to gather data that might peel away the layers of confusion expressed about this transition. During the interview, the rector constantly talked about his “community university.” In many of the case college interviews, Tra Vinh was mentioned as the model for a community college wishing to transition to a university. Approximately half of the case colleges expressed a desire to eventually become a community university. This in-vivo code meant the community college managing board desired the transition to a university so the institution could meet additional higher education needs of the province.

In the Education Law (2005), a university can offer four-year baccalaureate degrees as well as the lower-level variety of diplomas and certificates currently conferred by the community colleges, but the community colleges cannot confer baccalaureate degrees. Therefore, a community college cannot meet the community need for professionally educated workers at the baccalaureate level at this point in time. Since the community college is designed to meet the socio-economic needs of the community it

serves, many of those working in the colleges felt the law prohibited them from fulfilling their mission. In these cases it appeared that the formation of a community college was viewed as an important transitional step to formation of a “community university.”

Interestingly, the rectors who did not express a desire to transition their college to a “community university” had a higher level of comprehension regarding the western concept of articulation through transfer degree (two-year) programs. One rector also expressed his opinion that the model was so new in Viet Nam that the western concept of transferring a two-year general education degree to a university was not understood. In addition, the same rector expressed his opinion that the needed human resources (e.g., qualified teachers) did not exist in the province to meet the requirements of a university.

#### *Relation of the Canadian and U.S. Models to the Vietnamese Model (Social Capital)*

Although the Netherlands sponsored core programs that enabled the development of five or six (depending on who is telling the story) Vietnamese community colleges in August 2000, the Vietnamese community college model has greater connections to the Canadian and U.S. models. The acquisition of social capital from the Canadians and Americans has shaped the Vietnamese model, but the model is unique to Viet Nam and is shaped by the country’s historical, political and cultural context. In email correspondence with Informant X at MOET, this uniqueness was emphasized when the informant shared his experience at a U.S. Embassy-sponsored higher education conference held in January 2010 in Ha Noi:

What international university model for Vietnam, I have spoke with about 10 minute's speech to confirm that there is not any available international university model anywhere in the world which is suitable to Vietnam.

Vietnamese people should learn the beautiful traits of H.E. tradition from USA, from other countries for establishing their own model of university/college in the Vietnam context now. Among these models, the North America model of community college is most suitable for us to considering to apply into Vietnamese reality now for our needs in the social-economical development. We have great need in highly skilled labor force but most of them are the skill workforce at middle level (technicians, practical engineers, but not so much PhD, MBA.). All of the participants in the Section (full large conference room) agree with my speech. (personal communication, January 24, 2010).

Most of the social capital acquired by the Vietnamese community colleges is obtained through VACC, known in Viet Nam as TỔNG QUAN VỀ HIỆP HỘI CAO ĐẲNG CỘNG ĐỒNG VIỆT NAM. The Vietnamese model is evolving as relationships are formed and the knowledge acquired from the international partners is evaluated to ascertain how effective it is for the Vietnamese. Established in 2006 by the Ministry of Interior, VACC is the voice of the community colleges. MOET seeks advice from VACC as it approves or disapproves the individual community college's requests. Although the relationship between MOET and VACC is bonding social capital, the establishment of VACC has given the colleges a greater level of autonomy from MOET. Increased autonomy for HEIs is one of the recommended "reforms" discussed earlier in this chapter.

Informant W at VACC described the importance of the Canadian community college to the Vietnamese model while discussing Tra Vinh University, which was

established as a community college in 2001 and transitioned to a university in 2006. The dialogue included the following:

Informant W: Canada had many community college and university college in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, New Foundland and in Quebec have university college. We had a good model but here the law had only college. Many inside temporarily, law not yet perfect. We had secondary to vocational, to college to university level. Also inside community college one can transfer to vocational to college level.

Researcher: Um hum, to transfer?

Informant W: Yeah, yeah. We study a lot of the British of Columbia District in Canada and they had a good model of university college with vocational level, college level, and university level and you can transfer.

Researcher: You can move right up?

Informant W: Yes, easy for people to move up to many level. If not money they can study at many levels. They can study up to university level. But if the not have enough money they can uh study vocational level and after that, after that they can transfer to university level easy easy after that in university college. That reason we focus on university college model. Uh, you know in our country at that time transfer from college level to university level very difficult. Only some university. They had community college can transfer to university level. And, also also inside community college very difficult to transfer from vocational to college

level. If they have money, they can move up to many level. (Interview transcript, lines 156 – 175).

The Vietnamese community colleges continue to acquire social capital with Canadian institutions by forming and fostering partnerships. The *VietNamNet Bridge* (2008) reported, “The Vietnam Association of Community Colleges (VACC) in coordination with the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) held a seminar entitled Vietnam-Canada cooperation on vocational training and technical education” in Hanoi on June 10, 2008 (para. 1). This on-line news article claimed that Canada is “one of the 10 world’s leading countries in the development of community college systems. It has nearly 500 community colleges and 93 percent of their trainees get jobs within 6 months after finishing training” (para. 2). The article continues to explain how the Vietnamese community college model is influenced by the Canadian higher education system:

At the seminar deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education and Training Nguyen Thien Nhan said that he hopes the seminar will help Vietnamese lawmakers to gain a better understanding of the Canadian training model in order to apply it in Vietnam, especially since the country is promoting “training based on society and meeting businesses’ demands”. Paul Brennan, ACCC vice president said that to develop a healthy economy, in addition to expanding the university system, countries should establish a vocational college system to meet the needs of society and businesses. Participants proposed implementing the community college training model in Vietnam and strengthening co-

operation between Vietnam and Canada in training skillful technical workers. (Viet Nam Bridge, 2008, para. 4, 5, 6)

The ACCC website informs that although the Canadian colleges, technology institutes, and university member institutions of ACCC are “broadly known as community colleges,” the institutions vary dramatically based on “provincial and territorial needs” (n.d. para 1). Skolnik (2008) claims, “five colleges use the term community college in their name” and the “term institute appears in the names of dozens of college-type institutions” (p. 42). According to the ACCC website, the colleges, “share the primary functions of responding to the training needs of business, industry, the public service sectors, and the educational needs of vocationally oriented secondary school graduates” (ACCC, n.d., para 2). Skolnik (2008) describes the characteristics of the Canadian community college model which include: (a) commitment to serving those who are disadvantaged economically and academically; (b) traditionally designed to provide career education to train skilled workers; (c) partnerships with businesses and industries in the province to allow faculty to engage in applied research and train with new technology; (d) improve communities as people are afforded opportunities to improve their lives; and (e) adaptation to the revolutionary changes of globalization. The Canadian community college model has been designed to meet the needs of the local community and serve society. The Vietnamese model, in its current form, incorporates the idea of the five characteristics of the Canadian community college model.

In Canada, Skolnik (2008) delineates that education falls within provincial jurisdiction; no national education legislation exists; there is not a department of education at the federal level; and provincial governments regulate and direct colleges.



The Vietnamese community colleges are not as free from national bureaucratic policy and practices as the Canadian system is. The Canadian colleges and institutes confer college-level diplomas and certificates, but some are moving toward conferring baccalaureate degrees (ACCC, n.d., para 3). Skolnik (2008) reports collaboration between Canadian colleges and institutes and universities to provide “joint baccalaureate programs that combine courses from both institutions” because the perception is that in the global market the “baccalaureate will be a more desirable credential than a college diploma” (pp. 47 and 48).

The Deputy Prime Minister of MOET, Nguyen Thien Nhan, reported high expectations from bridging social capital between Canada and Viet Nam. He expected the Canadian community college model would be useful to Vietnamese law makers as they considered legislation to support a community college model which would meet the training needs of local businesses and society (*VietNamNews Bridge*, 2008). Thus, the Canadian college and institute model has offered Viet Nam expert assistance in the development and evolution of higher education institutions which build human capital based on the vocational and technical needs of the local communities they serve.

A review of several Canadian community colleges websites did not result in a description of the community university concept that was mentioned so often by the informants as they reflected on the importance of the Canadian model to the Vietnamese model. The websites did consistently discuss the role and scope of the Canadian model which is to provide industry recognized certificate programs. Both part- and full-time students can attend classes in the day and evening, during the week, or on the weekend.

Flexibility was clearly marketed as a hallmark of the model. English was described as the global language taught in the colleges.

In this study, approximately one-half of the informants referred to their desire to transition to a community university. The researcher eventually learned that community university was a term adapted from the Canadian community college model, hence her attempt to find “community university” in the Canadian community college literature. Based on the information available to the researcher, she has concluded that community university is a concept that refers to a higher education institution that has oriented its mission to the local community’s workforce needs realizing that “workforce” is embedded in a global market where skills, knowledge, values and language are constantly changing and influenced across cultures.

In addition to the Canadian model, the U.S. community college model is shaping the Vietnamese model. During the case college interviews, four of the 11 rectors shared their travel experience to the U.S. to study the American model. One of the rectors had made numerous trips to U.S. community colleges. VACC has built bridging social capital through its honorary and reciprocal memberships in the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and the Missouri Community College Association (MCCA). In November 2007 at their Annual Convention, MCCA officially recognized VACC as an honorary member in Lake Ozark, Missouri. In February 2008, VACC held an official ceremony in Ha Noi to recognize MCCA as an honorary VACC member. MCCA is a membership organization representing all 12 community college districts in the State of Missouri. As of March 1, 2010, three faculty from two MCCA community colleges have traveled to

Viet Nam to live for at least one month and assist the English Language Instructors at the Vietnamese community college with conversational English. One Vietnamese English teacher from Kien Giang Community College also spent a year studying at a community college within the MCCA system. In addition, some of the individual community colleges in Viet Nam have formed or are forming international partnerships with U.S. community colleges (e.g., Kien Giang Community College and Mohawk Valley Community College – New York).

The U.S. model offers knowledge and experience in the western concepts of program evaluation, curriculum development and the transfer function. In chapter 4, Informant W of VACC defined “transfer” as movement within or across higher education institutions from one level of training to the next. The U.S. defines transfer as a student’s ability to transfer the credits he/she acquired at a community college to a university in order to apply those credit hours to a baccalaureate degree. The community college rector, who had traveled the most to the U.S. to visit various community colleges, had a greater understanding of the U.S. definition of transfer and recognized the confusion in Viet Nam concerning the U.S. definition of the term.

Researcher: And, I understand that two community colleges have a transfer program where your students, after two years, can transfer to a university.

Informant G (Informant speaks some English): Yeah.

Researcher: And, that’s different than the other colleges who talk about an articulation program? Is that correct?

Informant G (through interpreter): Yeah, yeah we do we have like uh a transfer program where student who do two years here and the two year program, two years at a university and also in Tra Vinh University.

Researcher: Okay, so two years here and then two years at

Informant G (through interpreter): Yes at eight fields that we train, we train students in transfer program.

Researcher: Eight fields?

Informant: Right.

Researcher: So, if this model works and transfer, you can transfer, why does for example college \_\_\_\_\_ want to become a university?

Informant G (through interpreter): On to psychologies of uh uh like the awareness of the people. Most of the leaders of the province want to have at least one university in the province.

Researcher: Um hum.

Informant G (through interpreter): He wish to say that when people have the right uh awareness of what uh community college model is they wouldn't care about having a university. [Vietnamese spoken]. Uh, uh the people many other people in other provinces don't really understand.

Researcher: Understand?

Informant G (through interpreter): Ur, the model of of community and the use of the the of community college and they uh just want to have their people to be able to train people at a higher level.

Researcher: Um hum.

Informant G (through interpreter): And to them high level means

Researcher: Bachelor's degree?

Informant G (through interpreter): Yeah. [pause]. Although he tried to explain the function and importance of the community college model, he know that

Researcher: They don't get it.

Informant G (through interpreter): Yeah. (Interview transcript, lines 100 – 144)

This interview offers an optimistic view of cultural transfer of community college models from donor to recipient. The Vietnamese community college model can incorporate aspects (not all aspects) of other country's models that will meet Viet Nam's unique needs. As Raby (2009) points out, it is an omnipresent challenge to "examine the need to define standards that are acceptable to both donor and host countries which may not always result in equitable solutions" (p. x).

In addition to the transfer function, some rectors expressed interest in the quality control and assessment aspect of the U.S. model. One benefit of bridging social capital is a comprehension of international standards of quality control in the flat world. Stated goals of international partnerships that bridge the Vietnamese community colleges to community colleges in other countries are to "train technology staff to reach the international standards at some key branches, to serve global integration and to support community labor export programs" (Do, 2008, slide 18). Because the Vietnamese community college model's foundation is training for socio-economic development,

assessing the quality of the training provided is a dominant factor in the college's existence and development. According to Informant F at Case 3 College:

Training quality is assured only if the college can recruit high quality lecturers and management staff as well as offer advanced curriculums and modern learning facilities. Along with these focused solutions, we will also have to complete other tasks such as speeding up scientific research, promoting foreign relations and co-operations, improving the quality assurance activities as well as making policies to benefit the learners.

(Interview transcript, lines 158- 163)

Regardless of which donor country is providing the bridging social capital, the benefits of these relationships include:

1. Exchanges of knowledge between the stakeholders (e.g., faculty, administrators, governing boards).
2. Faculty exchanges to share culture across borders and enhance global competence at both the donor and host country's institutions.
3. Curricular sharing and training that meets international standards.
4. Technology transfer.
5. Global integration.
6. The export and import of labor.
7. Resource acquisition. (World Bank, 1994; World Bank, 2003; Task Force on Higher Education and Society, 2000; Raby 2009)

In chapter 1, the researcher promised not to judge the Vietnamese community college model if the data conclude that one existed. This study would not be complete if

it did not address, while not judging, concerns that emerged consistently from the data.

Seven concerns emerged in the stories told by the informants. These concerns include:

1. Lack of autonomy, although the level of autonomy has slightly improved through the various reform measures. This issue of a lack of autonomy appears in the literature as far back as Dang (1997, 2003) and as recently as Oliver et al. (2009).
2. Outdated curriculum that does not address the needs of the global knowledge-based economy. Concerns One and Two derive from the fact that MOET commands a substantial portion of the curriculum and approves the small proportion of discretionary curriculum designed by the college.
3. Lack of professional development, training, and credentialing of the instructors. This category was referred to most often as “human resources” by the informants who claimed their colleges lacked the necessary human resources to meet the training needs of the communities served.
4. One problem identified by the informants was inadequate acquisition of spoken English by staff, especially those in teaching positions. Many of the community college teachers have received English instruction from faculty who were not exposed to native English speakers; therefore, they do not have strong pronunciation skills. Their spoken English is not always useful in the global knowledge-based economy. A Case College 5 Report to VACC submitted on August 20, 2009, expresses this concern: “Provincial policies on international relation is not very flexible. Therefore, our college has not yet had foreign lecturers, especially native English teachers to teach English, one

of the languages cannot be ignored in the period of the world economy integration” (p. 4).

5. Lack of assessment and quality control in the institutions and their various programs.
6. Lack of codification in a higher education law that specifically recognizes community colleges as higher education institutions and separates them from other types of colleges (three-year institutions).
7. Need for a multi-level analysis and consideration of the appropriateness of a credit system and articulation among the various higher education institutions.

One additional concern not specifically mentioned by the informants pertains to teacher pay in the community colleges. The literature review delineated salaries levels so low in higher education that university faculty were required to take on second jobs. Low pay among community college staff was confirmed during this study when the researcher learned from many sources that the average pay of a community college teacher is \$100/month. University lecturer salaries are barely higher. When the researcher asked several different Vietnamese and a U.S. university faculty living in Viet Nam and working at a private university, “Is it possible to live on this salary?” a representative reply was “If you are single, live with your parents, and don’t want to purchase anything extra such as a motor bike.” Most informants in this study agreed that a \$300/month salary allowed the employee to live a middle class lifestyle. Therefore, the \$100/month salary is too low for most people’s expectations and might result in negative outcomes for the community colleges.



The seven concerns addressed by the informants should be comprehensively examined from the perspective of all the stakeholders at every level of the community college to ascertain if they offer suggestions for the evolving model. The principles of organization theory, in particular Bolman and Deal's (2003) structural and political frames, would be instrumental to an examination of these seven concerns. These two frames provide strategies for reframing organizations. Bolman and Deal (2003) claim, "A good frame makes it easier to know what you are up against and what you can do about it" (p. 13). The result of reframing might be more effective building of human capital, the ultimate goal of the Vietnamese community college model, and a healthier functioning organization.

Bolman and Deal's (2003) structural frame focuses on the architecture of an organization and the systems in which organizations are encased. The first concern which emerged in from this study, lack of autonomy, and concern number seven, development of a credit system and articulation among institutions in the system could be analyzed from the structural frame. Bolman and Deal's (2003) political frame might be instrumental in unraveling the mystery of codifying the proposed VACC community college regulations which would legally recognize community colleges as separate higher education institutions. The political frame focuses on how decisions are made and in particular how limited resources are distributed among the various coalitions within the system. The human resources frame would be useful in an analysis of how the community college "serves human needs rather than the reverse" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 115). Concern number two, outdated curriculum, concern number four, the benefit of

English in the global knowledge-based economy, and concern number three, teacher credentialing and training, should benefit from the human resource frame.

*Summary of the Vietnamese Community College Model*

The community college concept in Viet Nam is multidimensional and the form it takes depends on the perspective and knowledge of the person who is telling the story. The model is ever-changing due to the realities of the flat world discussed in the literature review, and Viet Nam's race to be competitive in this reality of ever pressing global connectedness. Raby (2009) places the Vietnamese community college model in a "binary" higher educational system, which has "a noted distinction between the traditional university and the community college model, with both typically publicly supported" (p. 9). This research would agree with Raby's classification, but with one addition. Raby (2009) describes a university college as "offering a combination of associate, baccalaureate, and master's degree" as a "unitary system" (p. 10). The current Vietnamese community college model is a combination of both binary and unitary systems depending on who is describing the model. For example Tra Vinh University, a member of the VACC but officially named university, confers two-year and three-year diplomas in addition to the baccalaureate and masters degree. Tra Vinh University describes itself to be a "community university" and is considered the model for many of the community colleges planning to transition to a university. In Raby's (2009) classification system, Tra Vinh University would be a unitary system. This study would suggest that based on the socio-economic needs of the country and training as the foundation of the community college model, a unitary system approach might benefit the stakeholders. Raby (2009) suggests that transitioning from a binary to unitary systems

might be more successful in the reality of the flat world because the system offers more options for building human capital.

### *Reliability of the Research Design*

One of the main tenets of qualitative research is describing the research design so clearly that others could replicate the design. When the researcher made her first visit to Viet Nam in 2007 and her second visit in April 2008, she was able to acquire only a few resources on community colleges in Viet Nam. Numerous searches of electronic databases and the Internet resulted in very little information readily available to a researcher. Thus, the researcher had to develop relationships with individuals, both inside and outside of Viet Nam who could provide unpublished information. Two years later during the field work phase of the study (June 2009), accessing necessary information on-line remained difficult. At that time, the Education Law (2005) was not available in English on the MOET website. The researcher was able to find a copy of the Law (2005) in bookstores in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City, but English translations were not available. Even if the researcher had been able to read Vietnamese, this book was not available for purchase through Internet resources; therefore, one had to be in Viet Nam to obtain it. After establishing a relationship with MOET near the end of the field work phase, an electronic copy of the Law was provided in English.

In May 2009, the researcher had requested a sign-in name and password for MOET's website so she could conduct research by having greater access to government documents and the law. In an email, the researcher was informed by a MOET official, "you don't need sign up for reading all information" although the researcher continued to

be unable to access many documents, including the Education Law (2005), without a password (Personnel correspondence, May 3, 2009).

This research study required a high level of patience, tenacity, and most importantly, on-going nurturing of the developing relationship. Examining social capital theory during the literature review phase of the study was instrumental to the researcher's understanding of the need for relationship building prior to conducting research in Viet Nam. Once the relationships were established and nourished, the hospitable nature of Vietnamese culture was apparent. A researcher must be able to find the gatekeepers who will introduce him/her and establish a level of trust with informants to conduct research in Viet Nam. This act requires a significant investment of time and commitment to a long-term research study.

Viet Nam is a collective culture. Investing in relationships is critical to one's success regardless of the endeavor undertaken. Most of the researcher's official documents have been obtained through a three-year process of developing relationships with community college practitioners in Viet Nam and U.S. scholars studying this concept. The relationship building began in 2007 when the researcher attended the international community college conference in Rach Gia, Viet Nam, to meet administrators and staff at the colleges. These relationships were nurtured through email and Skype until the researcher returned to Viet Nam in April 2008 to present at and participate in the *American-Vietnamese Case Studies and Partnerships Conference*. After the 2008 conference, existing relationships were nurtured and new ones were developed. After returning from the field work in late June 2009 (her third trip to Viet Nam), the researcher has been able to obtain official documents and publications from the

case colleges and especially from MOET and VACC. Although the researcher has been able to collect copious amounts of documents, many of these documents would not be available to other researchers who had not developed the same long-term, trust based relationship with the Vietnamese. Other researchers might be unable or unwilling to invest three years in relationship building in order to conduct the research. The field work required an investment in social capital that demonstrated a level of trust, accountability and friendship. During the data analysis and writing phases of the study, these relationships were necessary to “check” the researchers understanding of the model, wade through the confusion in the published material, and peel away the layers of meaning.

Reliability of the research design could be enhanced by stepping outside the confines of the American Psychological Association (APA) writing-style guidelines. Many of the authors cited in this study are difficult to locate through traditional research methods, in particular when only first initials are provided in the references list. In Vietnamese culture, four names are the norm rather than three names. Surnames such as Nguyen are so common that providing only a first initial makes locating scholars very difficult. Providing the Vietnamese authors first, middle and surname would provide clarity and assist future researchers who wish to utilize the resource. In this study, university protocol demands the use traditional APA guidelines but they do not lend themselves easily to this writing or provide direction for future researchers.

#### *Suggestions for Future Research*

The researcher has described and explained the current community college model in Viet Nam by delineating and analyzing its shared characteristics within the historical,

political and cultural context of the country. It is hoped that this study has provided some level of clarification to the identity problem found in the literature review: What is the nature of the community college concept in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam? Decision makers (e.g. policy makers, provincial leaders, community college administrators), stakeholders (e.g. the people, students), and domestic and international partners working with Vietnamese community colleges can utilize the findings of this study to analyze how the community college concept will enhance the higher education system without duplicating the functions of other types of colleges. This understanding is essential to the future sustainability and development of these institutions. Four areas for future research are suggested.

The first recommendation for future research is to examine the Vietnamese institutions named “college” which confer “college diplomas” in order to ascertain the demarcation line between “college” and community colleges. The principles of organization theory might provide a deeper understanding of the difference between these two types of social institutions. Understanding the differences and similarities between the two types of higher education institutions will allow the community college holders to enhance the higher education system without duplicating the functions of other types of colleges. This understanding is essential to the future sustainability and development of these institutions.

The second recommendation for future research is an examination of the process and probability of how a community college transitions to a university, following the model of Tra Vinh University which was described by the informants in this study as a community university. Three community colleges have transitioned to a university, and

these three cases could be studied to ascertain if a community university model exists. This study would be important because almost one half of the case community colleges expressed a plan to transition to a university in the near future. Earlier in this chapter, a rector of one of the case colleges expressed his view that those who want to transition to a university do not fully understand the community college model; and, if they did understand, they would not want to transition. This researcher suspects that the transition situation is another example of “things are not what they seem” and that the layers of understanding of the desire to transition to a university are deep enough to support a research study (Berger, 1963, p. 4). In this study, Informant X of MOET expressed a lack of support for transitioning community colleges to universities. Since MOET must approve institutional transitions in the higher education system, those community colleges wishing to transition might be expending energy and resources that are already stretched thin.

Raby’s (2009) unitary system deserves a deeper look when examining transitions as does the idea of a community university which was never clearly defined in the literature review or by the informants but is briefly discussed by Raby. Organization theory, in particular Bolman and Deal’s (2003) frames, could offer tools for examining the viability of a number of transitions to universities. Social capital theory, which is focused on relationships, may offer other researcher’s ideas for understanding the value of the connection between the Canadian and Vietnamese community college models since the Canadian model was often mentioned by the informants as the model for a community university.

The third recommendation for future research is to understand why the regulations to legally establish community colleges have not been codified. On March 27 and 28, 2007, the rectors of the community colleges, VACC, and MOET gathered in Ha Noi and created the *Status for the Organization and Operations of the Community Colleges*. Nearly three years later, community colleges are still not legally recognized. Informants in this study agreed that the reason the draft regulations had not been codified were political. This begs for a deeper level of comprehension and understanding. Organization theory, in particular Bolman and Deal's (2003) political frame, might offer many possible avenues for understanding the delay in action. This research should seek to discover if and when these regulations will be codified and if they might be supported by the HERA (2005) recommendation for a higher education law.

The fourth and final recommendation for future research is to examine the role of what Raby (2001) refers to as the "vocational school fallacy" and its practicality for the Vietnamese community college model (p. 1). The vocational school fallacy claims that the vocational model, post-secondary formal education which typically results in a certificate, diploma or degree that is of an applied nature rather than a based on the general education foundation, might "victimize" community college models in developing countries (Raby, 2001, p. 1). Raby (2001) argues that community college models in developing nations should assess the feasibility of the vocational school model to meet their worker's needs. Nie and Golde's (2008) findings regarding education's ability to enhance human capital should be combined with the Raby's (2001) research on the vocational school fallacy. Nie and Golde (2008) claim "costly expansions of education may not always bring the promised social results. In some cases, those



expansions may do little but sort people according to their native ability” (para. 1). Nie and Golde (2008) question the validity of human capital theory based on their findings that “investments in expanding education have not resulted in improvement in American adults’ verbal abilities....and much more research is needed before enormous resources are committed to two additional years of general education that may not ...deliver the social goods promised” (para. 8). Future research on the Vietnamese community college model should ask; are Nie and Golde’s (2008) findings validated by additional studies and if so can the findings be generalized to the global workforce employed in the knowledge-based economy? Does the vocational school model offer a valued credential in the global knowledge-based economy?

Raby (2001) discusses the characteristics shared by community college models around the world, one being low status among all levels of the stakeholders and the general public. Part of this perception is based on the fact that most models, at their core, are training institutions which prepare workers. Research that applies the vocational school fallacy to the context of Viet Nam and the evolution of their community colleges might provide unexpected levels of understanding particularly to the expressed desire to evolve toward university status. As there is so little information published on the community college model in Viet Nam, the researcher hopes others, especially the Vietnamese, will continue to tell the story.

### *Conclusion*

Raby (2009) states, “Economic reforms remain at the core of the adoption of community models . . . to facilitate economic and industrial growth” (p. x). The Vietnamese community college model’s core is training for socio-economic development

in the flat world reality. The community colleges are higher education institutions striving to meet the training needs of the communities they serve. The model is evolving, a positive trait in an ever-changing knowledge-based global economy.

In Chapter 1, the researcher quoted a common Vietnamese statement made to Americans visiting Viet Nam, “Viet Nam is a country not a war!” to make the point that Viet Nam should be examined by scholars in the United States as a country seeking to find a sustainable and thriving future in the flat world. It is true that war and colonization have shaped Viet Nam in both ethos and realities such as the country’s level of modernization and its place in the global knowledge-based economy. Examining the Vietnamese community college model has been a journey, usually exciting and occasionally frustrating. It is similar to putting together a 5,000 piece 3-D puzzle over a significant period of time. There are prized moments when one discovers the location of a puzzle piece that had been set aside earlier in frustration. There are times when a piece appears to fit perfectly and then it is realized that the fit just is not right; the fit is correct but the colors do not match. There are memorable moments as the layers fit together and the message of the puzzle becomes clear. Finally, there is a sense of accomplishment when the puzzle is complete and is shared with others so they might examine the puzzle’s story and question the process of joining the pieces. The researcher has systematically pieced the data together and drawn conclusions based on the protocols of qualitative research to present the picture of the community college model in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. The research study accomplished its purpose in unveiling a Vietnamese community college model framed by five characteristics.

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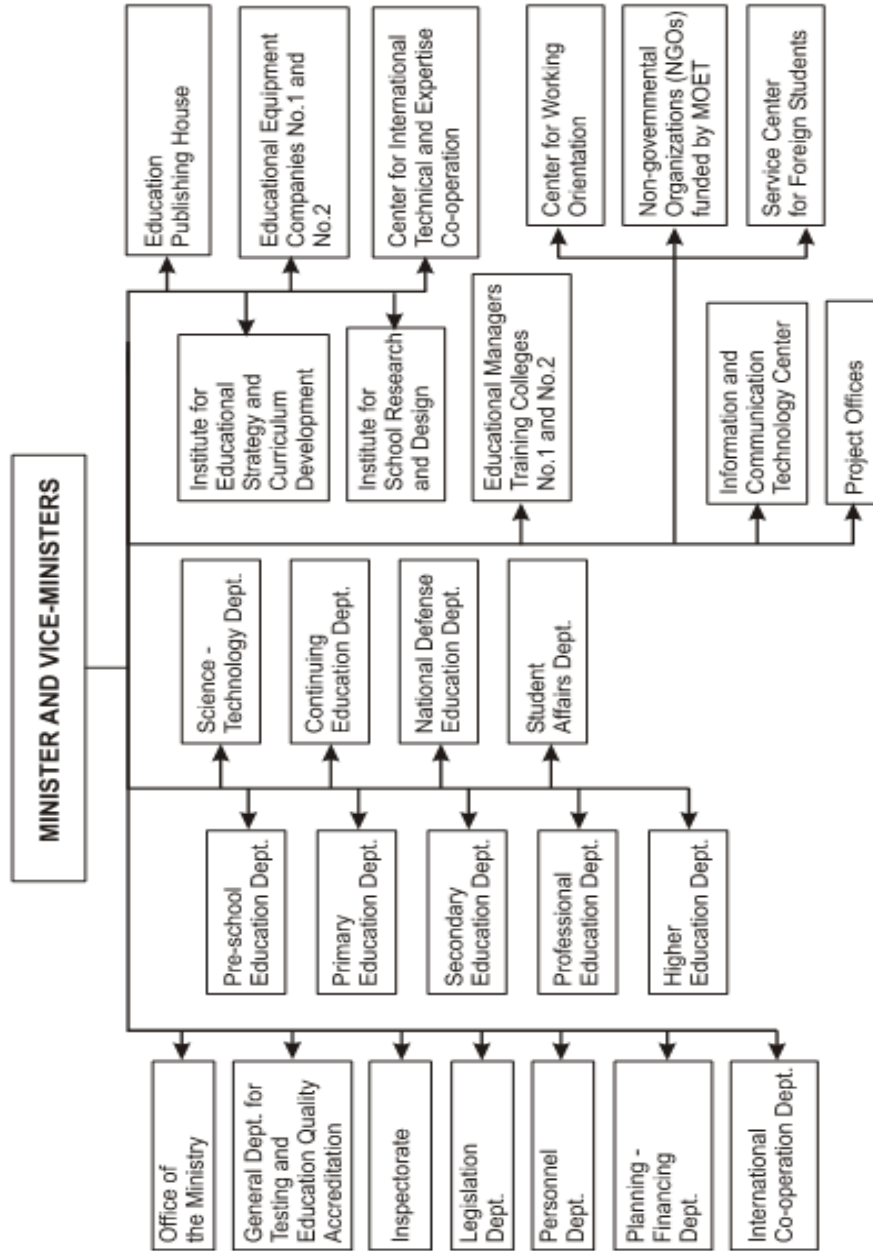
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APPENDIX A

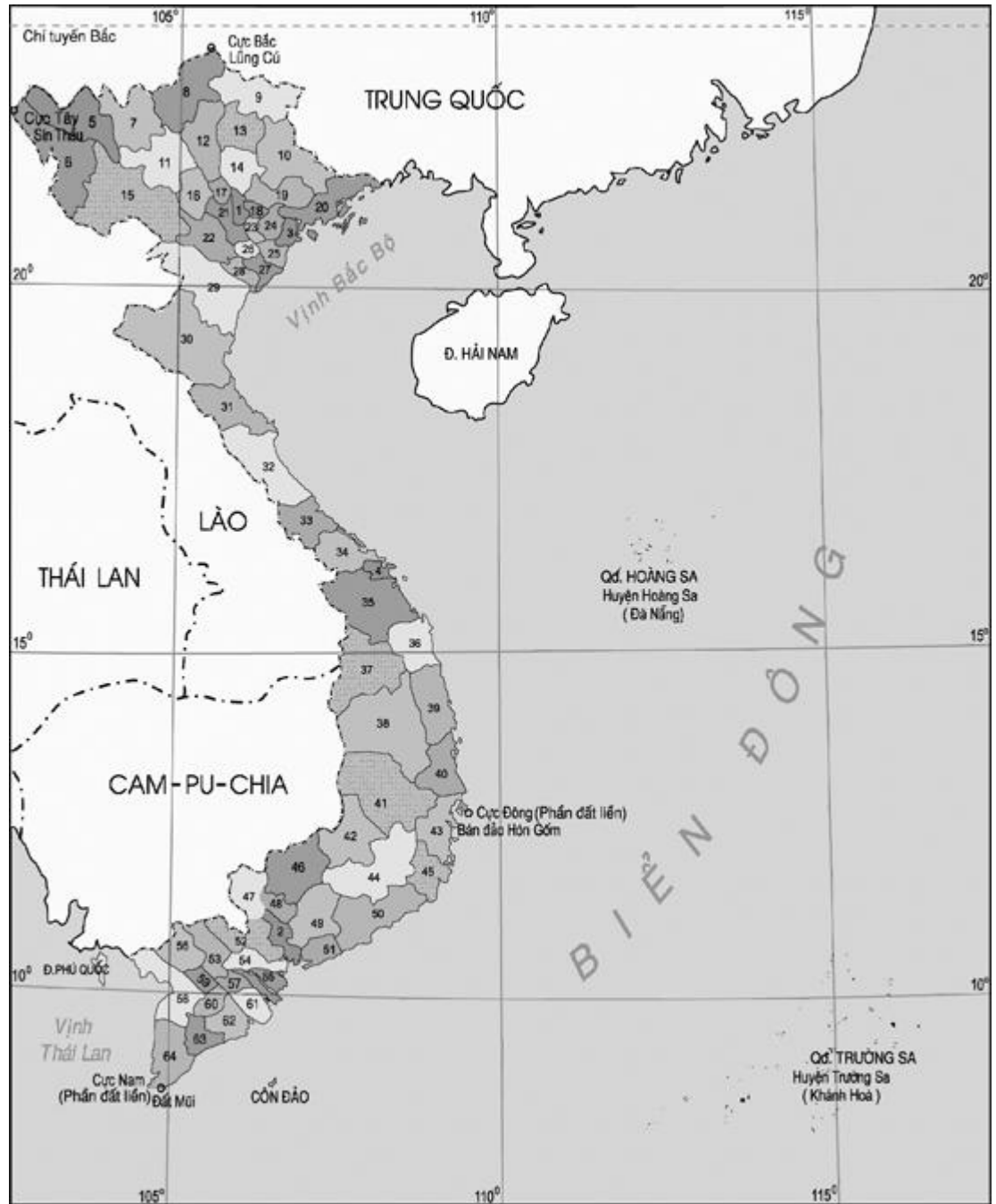
MOET Organizational Chart






APPENDIX B

MOET Map of Provinces



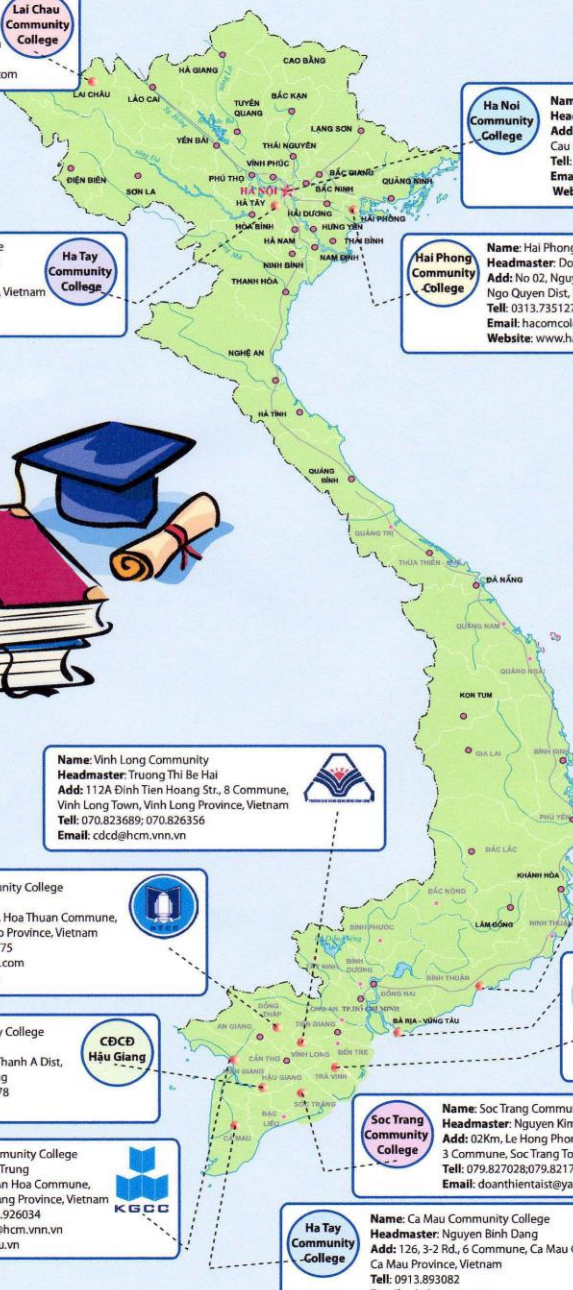
## APPENDIX C



# VACC VIETNAM ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Consultant Assistant Centre of Community Human Resource Training and Development  
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*(Apply Canada Community Colleges System in Vietnam)*

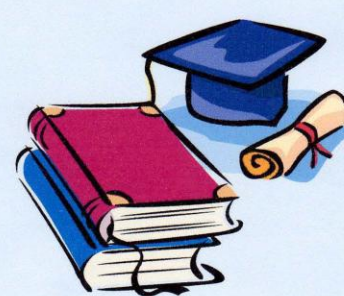
**Name:** Soc Trang Community College  
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**Headmaster:** Hà Hồng Văn  
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**Email:** tuyensinh-ckg@hcm.vnn.vn  
**Website:** www.kgccc.edu.vn



VACC <http://www.vacc.org.vn> VACC <http://www.vacc.org.vn> VACC <http://www.vacc.org.vn>

## APPENDIX D

### VACC Email to Rectors

Dear Rector XXXXX:

As you are aware, Cindy Epperson of the University of Missouri St. Louis (U.S.A.) is conducting research for her dissertation on the Vietnamese community college. You may remember Ms. Cindy from our April 2008 conference where she made a presentation on Human Capital Theory. Cindy's dissertation question is: **“What is the nature of the community college concept as it currently exists in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam?”**

Ms. Cindy, will be traveling throughout Viet Nam from June 1 – June 24 to conduct interviews at each of our community colleges to identify common characteristics of our community colleges. While Ms. Cindy is at your college, she is requesting permission to interview you and anyone else you would like her to talk with including a member of your local People's Committee. Ms. Cindy would like to use an audio tape recorder during the interviews because she will be interviewing over 30 people and needs to be able to remember each interview when she returns to the U.S. and begins analyzing her data. She would also like to take pictures of your college including the campus, classrooms, labs, and people.

In the U.S. university system, doctoral students must go through a research approval process at their institution before they conduct their dissertation research. Ms. Cindy is engaged in this process currently and needs our assistance. Her university requires written permission from you which states:

(Name of your college) has invited Ms. Cindy Epperson to conduct her dissertation research at our college during the month of June 2009. We grant her permission to conduct interviews which we understand will be recorded by an audio tape recorder and to take photographs of our college facilities and people.

Ms. Cindy needs to get approval from the Institutional Research Board at the University of Missouri St. Louis this month in order to visit Viet Nam in June. Will you please send me an email by 30, April, 2009, which grants her permission, as stated in the previous paragraph? If you wish, you may simply copy the paragraph and return it with your approval.

VACC appreciates your assistance.

Dr. Khanh, President  
Vietnam Association of Community Colleges

APPENDIX E



University of Missouri - St. Louis

<http://www.umsl.edu>

**Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities  
Dissertation Research Study of Cindy Epperson**

**An Analysis of the Community College Concept in the Socialist Republic of  
Vietnam**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of College: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

You are being asked to participate in the doctoral (PhD) dissertation study of Ms. Cindy Epperson at the University of Missouri St. Louis. Ms. Cindy is analyzing the community college concept as it exists in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Although Ms. Cindy has already received your email consent through the Vietnam Association of Community Colleges (VACC), she wants to make the research process as clear as possible. The U.S. University system requires written and signed consent of all participants in a research study.

Ms. Cindy will spend 30 minutes to 1 hour with you asking many questions about your organization and how it serves the people of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. She will take notes during your interview.

Ms. Diem My Nguyen will interpret for Ms. Cindy, so please ask her to explain anything that is not clear.

Ms. Cindy will use a digital tape recorder to keep a record of your conversation since she will be conducting up to 50 interviews and will need to keep them straight when she returns to the U.S. The recordings will be used to transcribe the interviews into a written text. For a year following completion of the dissertation, the digital voice recording will be kept in a locked file in Ms. Cindy's office in case the files need to be referenced for follow up purposes. At the end of the aforementioned year, the digital voice recordings will be deleted. The transcribed interview text will not be shared with anyone but Ms. Cindy's dissertation committee members.

Ms. Cindy will ask you if you have anyone else you would like her to interview while she is visiting your college.

Ms. Cindy would like a tour of your college campus and take digital photos of your facilities and any people you wish to have photographed. Ms. Cindy will take notes for each photo to keep the photos straight.

Ms. Cindy will keep these photographs on her camera card until she can move them to storage in her external hard drive. The photos will be stored until her dissertation is complete and has been approved by the University of Missouri St. Louis process (no later than June 1, 2010).

If you are willing to have Ms. Cindy include pictures of your campus in her written work, please sign here and date with today's date.

I give Ms. Cindy Epperson permission to include pictures of my campus and the people of my college in her writing and presentations:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_. I realize this means Ms. Cindy will store the pictures of my campus and people indefinitely and will not destroy them at the end of her dissertation research.

I (check one) am \_\_\_\_\_ or am not \_\_\_\_\_ providing Ms. Cindy with documents about my organization and give her \_\_\_\_\_ or do not give her \_\_\_\_\_ permission to use these in her research.

I understand that Ms. Cindy will keep my individual comments protected by using a pseudonym when she writes and presents her findings.

I understand that Ms. Cindy will be traveling in Viet Nam from May 30 – June 23, 2009.

If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Cindy Epperson at [cke3de@umsl.edu](mailto:cke3de@umsl.edu) or her doctoral advisor, Dr. Kent Farnsworth at [farnsworthk@umsl.edu](mailto:farnsworthk@umsl.edu).

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Participant's Signature

Date

Participant's Printed Name

---

Researcher's Signature

Date

---

Interpreter's Signature

Date



**Trường Đại học Missouri - St. Louis**

<http://www.umsl.edu>

**Thỏa thuận về việc tham gia vào hoạt động nghiên cứu  
Luận án tiến sĩ của Cindy Epperson**

**Phân tích về khái niệm Cao đẳng Cộng đồng ở nước Cộng Hòa Xã Hội Chủ  
Nghĩa Việt Nam**

Tên: \_\_\_\_\_ Chức vụ \_\_\_\_\_

Tên trường: \_\_\_\_\_ Ngày tháng: \_\_\_\_\_

Ông (bà) được mời tham gia vào bài nghiên cứu luận án tiến sĩ của cô Cindy Epperson học tại trường Đại học Missouri St. Louis. Cô Cindy đang thực hiện phân tích khái niệm cao đẳng cộng đồng trong sự hiện hữu của hệ thống này ở nước Cộng hòa Xã hội Chủ nghĩa Việt Nam.

Tuy đã nhận được sự cho phép qua email từ Hiệp hội Cao đẳng Cộng đồng Việt Nam, cô Cindy muốn làm quá trình nghiên cứu càng rõ càng tốt. Hệ thống các trường đại học ở Hoa Kỳ yêu cầu phải có sự thỏa hiệp trên giấy tờ và chứng thực của tất cả mọi thành viên tham gia vào bài nghiên cứu.

Cô Cindy sẽ có từ 30 phút đến 1 giờ với quý ông (bà) để đưa ra câu hỏi về tổ chức của quý ông (bà) và tổ chức phục vụ con người của nước Cộng hòa Xã hội Chủ nghĩa Việt Nam như thế nào. Cô ta sẽ ghi chú lại trong suốt buổi phỏng vấn này.

Cô Nguyễn Trần Diễm My sẽ thông dịch cho cô Cindy, vì thế nếu có điều gì không rõ xin quý ông (bà) cứ yêu cầu cô Diễm My giải thích thêm.

Cô Cindy sẽ dùng máy thu âm kỹ thuật số để thu lại đoạn đàm thoại vì cô sẽ phải thực hiện đến 50 cuộc phỏng vấn và cần phải giữ chúng nguyên vẹn, trung thực khi cô trở về Hoa Kỳ. Việc ghi âm này nhằm chuyển các cuộc phỏng vấn thành các bài viết. Trong một năm sau khi hoàn thành luận án, các cuộc ghi âm này vẫn sẽ được cất giữ trong một tập tin được khóa lại trong văn phòng cô Cindy nhằm tham khảo khi cần thiết. Các bài viết ra từ buổi phỏng vấn sẽ không chia sẻ cùng ai ngoài thành viên trong Ban chấm Luận án của cô Cindy.

Cô Cindy sẽ hỏi xem quý ông (bà) có gợi ý cô phỏng vấn thêm ai khác trong thời gian cô thăm viếng trường không.

Cô Cindy muốn đi tham quan vòng quanh trường và chụp ảnh các cơ sở vật chất, nhân viên mà quý ông (bà) cho phép. Cô Cindy sẽ ghi chú vào mỗi bức ảnh để giữ chúng trung thực.

Cô Cindy sẽ giữ những bức hình này trên thẻ nhớ máy ảnh đến khi cô chuyển chúng qua ổ cứng ngoài. Các bức ảnh sẽ được lưu lại đến khi luận án tiến sĩ của cô được hoàn thành và duyệt bởi trường đại học Missouri St. Louis (không trễ hơn ngày 01/06/2010).

Nếu quý ông (bà) sẵn lòng cho cô Cindy bao gồm các bức ảnh của trường trong bài viết, xin vui lòng ký ở đây và ghi ngày tháng hôm nay.

Tôi cho phép cô Cindy đưa những bức ảnh của khuôn viên và con người trong trường vào bài viết và thuyết trình của cô.

Tên: \_\_\_\_\_ Ngày tháng: \_\_\_\_\_. Tôi biết điều này có nghĩa là cô Cindy sẽ lưu giữ các bức ảnh của trường vô thời hạn và sẽ không hủy chúng sau khi hoàn thành luận án.

Tôi (đánh dấu một lựa chọn) đồng ý \_\_\_\_\_ hoặc không đồng ý \_\_\_\_\_ cung cấp cho cô Cindy tài liệu về tổ chức mình và cho phép \_\_\_\_\_ hoặc không cho phép \_\_\_\_\_ cô sử dụng chúng trong nghiên cứu của cô.

Tôi hiểu rằng cô Cindy sẽ giữ các lời bình luận của tôi bí mật bằng cách sử dụng một bút danh khi cô viết và trình bày các điều nghiên cứu.

Tôi biết rằng cô Cindy sẽ lưu lại Việt Nam từ 30/05/2009 đến 23/06/2009

Nếu có bất kỳ thắc mắc nào, xin liên hệ Cô Cindy Epperson tại địa chỉ email [cke3de@umsl.edu](mailto:cke3de@umsl.edu) hoặc giáo sư hướng dẫn cô, T.S. Kent Farnsworth qua địa chỉ [farnsworthk@umsl.edu](mailto:farnsworthk@umsl.edu).

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Chữ ký người tham gia	Ngày tháng	Tên in hoa của người tham gia
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Chữ ký người nghiên cứu	Ngày tháng
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Chữ ký người thông dịch	Ngày tháng
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APPENDIX F



Tra Vinh University  
126 Tranh Street, Highway No 53, Tra Vinh Town, Tra Vinh  
Province

Tel: 074 855 246; Fax: 074 855 217

Website: [www.tvu.edu.vn](http://www.tvu.edu.vn)

Tra Vinh, March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009

**LETTER OF INVITATION**

Dear Ms. Cindy Epperson,

It's so nice to hear you are going to visit Viet Nam in late May and stay through the middle of June, especially you would like to describe and explain Vietnamese community college system and the role of Vietnam Association Community Colleges (VACC) via this travel. On behalf of Tra Vinh University (TVU), one of VACC's official members, as well as VACC, I am so honored to invite you to visit TVU and VACC's other member colleges so that we can provide you some information you need and we can tighten our friendship and co-operation in this opportunity.

We are looking forward to welcoming you at TVU and VACC's member colleges.

Sincerely,

**PHAM TIET KHANH**

**Rector of TVU**

**President of VACC**



APPENDIX G

**Interview Guide for Rectors  
An Analysis of the Community College Concept in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam**

**Cindy K. Epperson  
June 2009 Field Research**

**Interview Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Subject:**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Subject's employer and position:**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Date of the Interview:**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Start time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**End time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Context notes:**

--	--

**Purpose of the study:** Discover if core characteristics exist which can identify the Vietnamese community college model, and to determine if the characteristics explain the model.

If core characteristics that define a model do not exist, then this study will ascertain if the data collected can serve as a starting point for the development of a Vietnamese community college model.

**Characteristic** refers to a distinct or peculiar quality or feature.

**Interview Questions:**

1. How long have you been the rector of the college?
2. What is the purpose of the community college in Vietnam?
3. What certificates or degrees are offered by your college?
4. What needs in your community are being met by the college?
5. What needs in your community are not being met?
6. Explain the mission of your community college?
7. What are the vocational goals of your college?
8. How is your college structured in terms of administration?
9. How is your community college different from other community colleges in Vietnam?
10. What types of students attend your college?
11. Where do your students come from?
12. What must a student do to gain access to your college?
13. Once a student graduates from your college, what kind of job is he/she prepared for?
14. When students graduate from your college are they more likely to move away from the province or stay in this region of Vietnam?
15. Does your college prepare students to go to a university?
16. What type of university?
17. Is there a connection between the community college and any university?
18. Does your college compete with other higher education institutions?
19. When did you become a member of VACC?
20. What are the benefits of VACC membership to your college?
21. Does your college plan to transition into a university?
22. As the rector, who do you report to?
23. What qualifications do you require of your faculty?
24. How is your curriculum managed?
25. How is your college funded?
26. If you had unlimited financial resources, how would you change your college?
27. Does your college partner with any community colleges or universities in another country? Which ones?
28. If a province wants to start a community college, what is the process that must be followed?

APPENDIX H

**Kiên Giang Community College**

217 Chu Van An, Rach Gia City

Rach Gia City, April 09<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Dear Professor Epperson:

Thank you for inviting me to serve as your translator for your research trip to Viet Nam to study the Vietnamese community college model. It's my pleasure to work with you. I am available to travel with you from June 1 – June 15. I will meet you in Rach Gia on June 1, 2009, and travel with you from this location.

I have attached a copy of my bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching from Can Tho university. I have been working as the English instructor at Kien Giang Community College in Rach Gia, Viet Nam since 2005.

Best Regards,

Diem My

Identity Picture

Degree code:

C 640174

Record code:

1691/CQ05

Signature of the student granted the degree

THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM  
Independence – Freedom – Happiness

Basing on the statute about university diploma issued according to the decision 1994/QĐ-ĐH on the 23 of November, 1990 of the Minister of Education and Training, the head of CAN THO University grants:

## **THE BACHELOR DEGREE**

Type of training: FORMAL

Major: ENGLISH OF LANGUAGE TEACHING

Grade rank: Excellent      Year of graduation: 2005

and admits the title: Bachelor of Science

to **Nguyen Tran Diem My**

born on 24<sup>th</sup> June, 1983      in Kien Giang

Can Tho, 30<sup>th</sup> August 2005

Head of the School of Education: Signed, sealed and full name: LE

QUANG MINH

Head of Can Tho University: Signed and full name: LE PHUOC LOC

APPENDIX I



University of Missouri - St. Louis

<http://www.umsl.edu>

**Survey for Rectors of Vietnamese Community College  
Dissertation Research Study of Cindy Epperson**

**An Analysis of the Community College Concept in Viet Nam**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of College: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How many years have you been a rector at the College? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your highest level of education? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Are you a member of the Communist Party of Vietnam?
4. What qualifications are required to become a rector of a community college in Viet Nam?
5. Who is responsible for selecting the rector of a community college?
6. As the rector, whom do you report to?
7. What are your responsibilities to the People's Committee in your province?
8. What are your responsibilities to the Ministry of Education and Training?
9. What type of paperwork and information do you submit to MOET?
10. At your college, what positions report directly to you?
11. Are you, as the rector, responsible for hiring the teachers at your college?

12. If you do not hire the teachers for your college, which position hires the teachers?
13. What educational credentials are required of classroom teachers in your various programs?
14. How many part-time teachers do you employ at your college and how many full-time teachers do you employ?
15. What primary characteristics make your community college different from other 3-year colleges in Viet Nam?
16. What primary characteristics make your community college similar to other 3-year colleges in Viet Nam?



**Trường Đại học Missouri - St. Louis**

<http://www.umsl.edu>

**Tìm hiểu thông tin về Hiệu trưởng của các trường  
Cao đẳng Cộng đồng Việt Nam  
Bài nghiên cứu luận án của Cindy Epperson**

**Phân tích khái niệm Cao đẳng cộng đồng ở Việt Nam**

Tên: \_\_\_\_\_ Chức vụ: \_\_\_\_\_

Tên trường: \_\_\_\_\_ Ngày tháng: \_\_\_\_\_

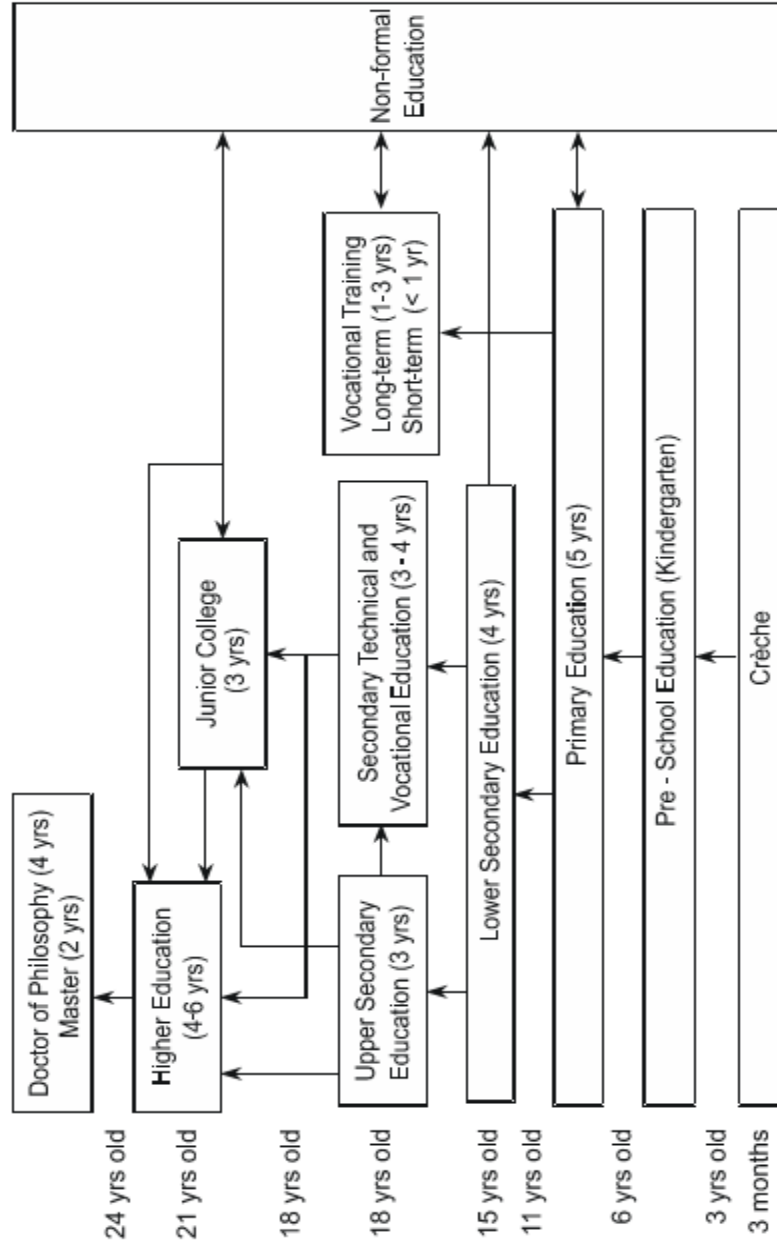
1. Quý ông (bà) đã giữ chức hiệu trưởng tại trường được bao lâu? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Trình độ học vấn cao nhất của ông (bà)? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Quý ông (bà) có phải là Đảng viên không? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Cần có trình độ học vấn như thế nào để trở thành Hiệu trưởng của một trường Cao đẳng cộng đồng ở Việt Nam?
5. Ai có trách nhiệm chọn một hiệu trưởng của trường cao đẳng cộng đồng?
6. Là hiệu trưởng, ông (bà) báo cáo cho ai?
7. Trách nhiệm của ông (bà) đối với Ủy ban nhân dân tỉnh là gì?
8. Trách nhiệm của ông (bà) đối với Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo?
9. Ông (bà) phải trình lên Bộ Giáo dục những giấy tờ và thông tin gì?
10. Cán bộ ở vị trí nào trong trường báo cáo trực tiếp với ông (bà)?
11. Là hiệu trưởng, ông (bà) có chịu trách nhiệm về việc tuyển chọn người dạy trong trường không?

12. Nếu ông (bà) không phải là người tuyển người dạy trong trường thì cán bộ ở vị trí nào thực hiện việc này?
  
13. Những phẩm chất giáo dục nào cần thiết cho người dạy trong các chương trình khác nhau của trường quý ông (bà)?
  
14. Có bao nhiêu giáo viên hợp đồng và bao nhiêu giáo viên cơ hữu trong trường của quý ông (bà)?
  
15. Các đặc điểm chính nào phân biệt trường cao đẳng cộng đồng của quý ông (bà) với các trường cao đẳng khác ở Việt Nam?
  
16. Trường cao đẳng cộng đồng của quý ông (bà) có đặc điểm gì giống với các trường cao đẳng khác ở Việt Nam?



APPENDIX J

MOET Educational Landscape



## APPENDIX K

### Photo Articulation of Model Characteristics

Characteristic One: Public Higher Education with Community Ownership and MOET Oversight.



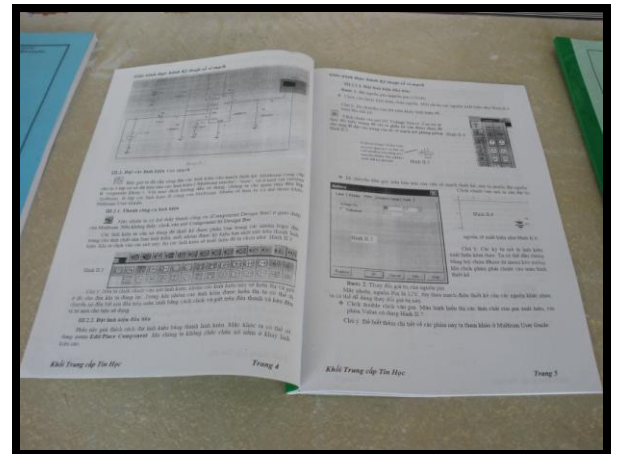
Café directly across the street from a community college entrance. “Cộng Đồng” means community



Ministry of Education and Training Located in Ha Noi



Each community college campus has a “Can Tin” (canteen) where men and women from the community prepare and serve meals for the students



Curriculum is controlled by MOET and books are published through the state-owned, national publishing company

Characteristic Two: Multi-disciplinary Programs Designed to Meet Local Needs.



Food processing laboratory



Water purifying and bottling program



Food technology program students



Industrial technology program

Characteristic Three: Multi-level Certificates and Diplomas Conferred Up Through the College Level, and Articulation Agreements with Universities That Confer a Baccalaureate Degree.



Water-supplying degree at the university level



University With Articulation



Construction program offered at various levels



Posting of courses available at various levels

Characteristic Four: Domestic and International Partnerships actively sought to enhance social capital.



International partnerships office



NIIT international program



CISCO Networking Academy



New campus under construction on 100 hectares. Eventually this area will become a higher education center with a community college, a university, and a single-discipline college co-existing and serving the entire province.

Characteristic Five: Scientific and Technological Research as Stipulated in the Education Law (2005).



Workshop designated to meet the scientific and technological requirement of the Education Law (2005)



Program to grow a new type of mushroom in the province which will improve agricultural production in the region



Scientific lab for a food technology program which engages in scientific research for improvement in food production and processing



New tourist area in which the provincial community college has developed many programs in construction, hospitality management and tourism to meet the local economic development needs. The community college engages in scientific research and technology transfer to meet the development advancements of this province.