A Reflection on the Relation between International Education and Development Co-operation[1]

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This paper explores and comments upon the biography of a young woman who grew up in a remote village in the Mekong Delta, and became a top international graduate student in mathematics. She was the only girl from her class to make it to university and the only student of her class to go abroad. When Thi goes back to Vietnam she will probably 'make' it in the educational establishment of her country, but will she become an agent of development by setting new practices to promote education for all girls and boys? Or will she feel pressured to choose an academic career abroad following a trend actively stimulated by recent internationalisation policies in western universities?

Specific cultural circumstances will differ for different people from different parts of the world, but Thi's story of talent and the tribulation it brings is both unique and universal. It represents the dilemma between the interest of the individual interest and the impersonal aims of social and economic development. Increasingly, under the pressures of globalisation, it will be difficult for an individual person to make changes all by one self. Yet, this is the 'task' set out for individual students who are involved in human resource development programmes in the context of development co-operation.

In spite of all its confusing messages, international education remains a wonderful experience for young talented people from developing countries. It offers an opportunity that must remain an important element of development programmes although its results are difficult to 'measure' in terms of macro-economic development. Also, enormous pressure is put on the individual; a pressure that is often ignored in the debate. New questions must be asked, under the current market-oriented conditions in international education, about how human resources development relates directly and effectively to the improvement of living conditions for society at large in countries in the South. In addition, more attention is needed for the specific problems encountered by returning graduates.

I argue that objectives of development and economic interests in international education contain mixed messages that confuse personal interest, institutional marketing strategies and policies regarding development co-operation.

I sincerely thank Thi for her story and friendship and for sharing the insights that made writing this paper possible. For reasons of privacy I have used the name 'Thi,' a prefix indicating that the name refers to a woman. It also symbolises the general characteristics of Thi's experiences as an international student from a developing country at a western university.

Introduction

On a Sunday afternoon, I arrived in the small community where Thi's parents live. I came to know Thi when she was an exchange student in the Netherlands. She wanted to introduce me to her parents, and to show me where she came from. The journey, by car and boat, had brought us to a remote district of the Mekong Delta, in the most southern part of Vietnam. The last steps went over a so-called 'monkey bridge,' made of the narrow trunk of a palm tree with a little support of a bamboo hand rail to prevent you from tumbling right into the creek. I felt proud of myself for having arrived, and was intrigued and curious. How had Thi managed to become an international student?

[1] This paper is a minor adaptation of "Thi's story: Growing up in the Mekong Delta and Studying Abroad: a Reflection on International Education and Development Co-operation" in Walter Grönzweig, Nana Rinehart (Eds), *Rockin' in Red Square, Critical Approaches to International Education in the Age of Cyberculture., Lit Verlag Mönster, 2002.*

After a wonderful meal, Thi's mother took us in their boat. Rowing with great elegance, in the standing manner customary in this part of the country and seemingly without effort, she took us along the creeks of the community. People, mostly women and children, were standing and sitting in front of their little houses. Some of the small children were looking at me in great surprise, and ran away screaming. Thi explained that they probably had never seen a white person before, except on television. Thi herself was in her teens when she first saw a foreigner while visiting a nearby town. Some girls waved enthusiastically; old classmates. In this small community, everybody knew everybody else. She pointed to her school. The sun was setting and the sky turned into a bright palette of reds and pinks. The colours, the tranquillity and the beauty of the tropical vegetation all around us filled me with admiration and awe. Thi's mother said: 'This is a sad village.'

It was time to leave. We exchanged good wishes of farewell. Thi's father asked me what the chances were that Thi could go back to the Netherlands to continue her studies. What could we do? Thi and her family were not at all taken aback by the paperwork and hassle that come along with applying for an international scholarship, and seemed very confident about the prospects. 'Won't you miss your daughter when she goes abroad?' I asked. 'Yes, of course,' said Thi's father, but he added with a great smile, 'I will sign with both my hands when I must give my permission for her to go!' A few months later, Thi arrived. She is a now top graduate student in mathematics.

Thi's story raises many questions, and reflection on her biography highlights the problematic aspects of international education and development co-operation. Is Thi aware of her position as a pawn in the complicated interplay of (international) education and development? Macro politics and individual action do not easily come together. Thi's performance will undoubtedly be evaluated as an indicator of the success of the programme she took part in, especially because the field of mathematics is one that by western notions is not female-friendly. But how will her experience relate to her personally and professionally, and will she herself be the primary beneficiary of her education as a member of a highly selective minority, or will she become an agent of change, taking pro-active measures to improve access to education for all young people in her country? Will she go back to the Mekong Delta?

I have spent time with Thi on many occasions under very different circumstances, both in Vietnam and the Netherlands. I have never been her teacher in a formal educational setting, and I have not been instrumental in the process of awarding her scholarship. When she first came to the Netherlands as an exchange student in early 1998, I was her counsellor. This situation lasted only for a few weeks due to a change in my job. Subsequent contacts were private, often taking place during meetings with a group of former colleagues and other Vietnamese students, but Thi has also come to my house. When I asked Thi if I could interview her for this article, she said, 'That would be nice.' She never asked 'why?' as one of her friends did when I made the same request. Thi, a brilliant student of mathematics, speaks with great respect about her family and teachers. 'She is a difficult girl and does not understand about life,' commented her friend, half-amused and half-serious.

Context

Thi grew up in the Mekong Delta in the socialist republic of Vietnam, a nation of young people, where more than half of the population is under twenty-five years of age. It is one of the poorest countries in the world, with moderate growth after a decade of rapid economic expansion following the introduction in 1986 of the *doi moi* policy (controlled transition to a market economy). This development has created a new class of rich people - often extremely rich - and a rapidly growing under-class of urban poor, adding new social problems to the more traditional issues of subsistence farming, illiteracy and poor health. On the whole, 44% of children under the age of five are suffering from protein deficiencies in their diet, the

main contributor to childhood disability and mental retardation, especially among girls in remote areas like the Mekong Delta (UNICEF, 1997, p.19). Nevertheless, the Human Development Index and the Gender Development Index are more favourable than the per capita GNP (presently $200 per year) would suggest, due to the relatively favourable situation of public services (in particular education), life expectancy and gender equity (United Nations, 1999).

Learning is the right and obligation of every citizen (Article 9 of the Law of Education 1999, p.24). There is a long tradition of teaching and learning in higher education. The first Royal College was established in 1075. In the beginning, students were members of the royal family and the aristocracy, but soon the school was opened to students who succeeded in regional exams. The system, modelled after the Chinese one, was aimed at educating the *Quan Tu,* or 'perfect man'. It prepared students for a career in the government. The strength of the system was attributed to its moral component, an education in Confucian values and patriotism, through rote learning. But it had severe weak points, which were male dominance, the spirit of submission, and the lack of creativeness (Nguyen Xuan Thu, 1997, p.137). The system lasted until 1918 and has deeply influenced Vietnamese values by its emphasis that education will make you a better person and will provide, at least in theory, the possibility for every one to climb the social ladder. In the new law on education, these notions resurface in many articles, worded in the current political jargon of the party but in fact voicing century-old notions. For instance, Article 35 (p.46) on the objectives of higher education states: 'The objectives of higher education are to train learners in acquiring political and moral qualities, endeavouring to serve the people [and] meeting the needs of building and defending the Fatherland.' The French (when they were in Vietnam) paid little attention to education in the country, but in the struggle for national independence education became of vital interest. It was a priority for the resistance movement and, later, also for the Communist party. According to current law, the state must promote social equity in education and help the poor get educated, ensuring that the best learners will be able to develop their talents (article 9 and 11, p.24). Most families, even from a very poor background, will try to send at least the oldest son to school. Since the introduction of *doi moi,* fees must be paid at all levels of the system. In spite of severe pressures on the state budget, the government continues to increase the expenditure for education every year (Pham Minh Hac, 1998, p.178). The number of children attending school for the full duration of primary school, however, is declining as a result of current economic developments.

The family is at the core of Vietnamese culture. The political report of the Central Committee to the VIIIth National Congress of the Communist Party (1996, p.69) states this goal: 'To build plentiful, equally-based, advanced and happy Vietnamese families, making the family the healthy cell of the society and the really sweet home of each and everyone.' The often harsh reality of family life has been vividly portrayed by Duong Thi Huong (1993) in her internationally acclaimed novel, which in the French translation was titled *Des femmes* (Women) but received the tell-tale title *Blind Paradise* in the English version. The book is more or less forbidden in Vietnam.

A traditional family is made up of at least three generations. The oldest son is responsible for attending to the proper rituals of the ancestor cult and lives with his parents, circumstances that greatly contribute to the ardent wish of having a son. Producing a son is regarded as the 'heavenly function' of women. But all families want to have a girl as the first child, because a daughter has to take on responsibilities in the household at a much earlier age than boys, and will care for the whole family when needed (Le Thi Nham Tuyet, 1995, p.71). So having a girl first and then a son is regarded as the best performance for a mother. Most people are born, live and die in the same place, especially in rural areas, and most women have never travelled beyond the immediate environment of their homes. There is a strong sense of allegiance to one's province and the local community. The ancestral home and soil are places where the dead and living must create the harmony needed to sustain prosperity for future generations. In the rural areas, the dead is buried in the family fields, and every Vietnamese home has an altar to pay tribute to deceased members of the family.

Women play a very important role in Vietnamese society, but their position in the family and in public life is complex and problematic. This situation may well, at least in part, be attributed to the fact that, before the conquest of Vietnam by the Chinese Empire in the third century, Viet society had been marked by matriarchy. As a result, Vietnamese society over the centuries has been left with the ambivalent heritage of two opposing ideologies: matriarchy and a dominating form of patriarchy due to foreign influence. Another result of this dual

tradition is the fact that a Vietnamese woman has to conform to two different sets of ideals: on the one hand she must be the 'holy mother,' strong and dominant, and on the other hand she must be the subordinate wife (Doan Lam, 1999, p.8). In the family the man is supposed to play a decisive role: *nam ton nu ti* ('man dominates and woman is subordinate'), but in reality the family is often dependent upon the labour of the woman, and in fact women play key roles in all social and economic affairs of the public domain. Travelling through the country leaves one with a memory of women working in all possible jobs, and indeed Vietnamese women have actively participated in leadership and management in all areas of social life (Tran Thi Van Anh & Le Ngoc Hung, 1997, p.77). In most families, finance and spending plans are in female hands, and the saying goes that women are ùthe lock and key to the wardrobe' of the family. In addition to housework, the woman as housekeeper has an important role in attending to all family affairs, making decisions about funerals and weddings, and taking responsibility for the education of the children. Socialist policy and century-old notions have blended into a new and confusing role model.

Thi's Story:

I grew up in the countryside in a small district. I have one brother and two sisters. There is first my older sister, then my brother, and then there are my younger sister and I. I lived with my parents, grandmother and sisters and brother. My older sister and brother have had university education. My mother was a primary [school] teacher in the village where I was born; that is where she comes from. My father is from L., also in the Mekong Delta. The mother of my father now stays with my aunt. We support them. We live in the house of my grandparents; we had to take care of my mother's mother. My grandfather died before I was born. We had a cousin living with us, because her parents lived in the countryside, where there was no school. So, every Saturday, she walked home, and then back again on Sunday. It took her six hours and she cried a lot, because she missed her family.

I first went to school when I was six years old. Most of my classmates stayed with me in school till the end of lower secondary school. I think we were about the same number of boys and girls. But not all of them passed the exam, so some had to leave. For me it was never difficult, but for some it was very difficult. They live in the countryside, and their parents are very poor, so they had to help the parents, and they had no time to study. My parents helped me with my schoolwork, because they are teachers. In lower secondary school, I asked my father (he is a mathematics teacher) to help me with mathematics. And they always did everything to support me. They will not have money to give to me, but they always supported me to go to school, so that I can have a job. That is what they did for me.

I think it influenced me that my father is a teacher of mathematics. In lower secondary school I liked mathematics, but I also liked Vietnamese literature. My parents taught me mathematics, and I still benefit from that today. They helped me a lot, too, with the exam for upper secondary high school; during this time, I liked mathematics very much, and I follow that until now. There are many interesting things in mathematics. I liked school. I always respected the teacher; they influenced me very much. I always consulted them, you know, because in Vietnam we respect the teacher very much. Every week, on Saturday, we had a special class, and when you did something wrong the teacher would tell you. In my class, students did not go to private lessons like they do in the city. No, my friends did not do that. It takes a lot of money. And the teachers don't do that; they sometimes take the whole class for an extra hour, but not for money.

Of my class in upper secondary school, I was the only one who went on to university, and I think two boys went to teacher training college. I applied for university in the Delta, because my mother and father had no money to send me to Ho Chi Minh City. Because I had studied in the countryside, my knowledge was insufficient, so I had to study a lot, a lot. My parents sent me to town for a course to prepare for the examination. I passed the first time. I chose mathematics, and was accepted. I chose mathematics because I wanted to become a teacher. I did not want to become something else. I wanted to become a teacher because I respect the teacher. In the past they made the decision for you, but when I came to university, I made the decision myself. When my sister and brother entered university, they were asked what they wanted to study. You write down your first choice, and second choice and after you pass, the university will decide. Now it has changed, but I don't know why. My sister studied medicine; she is a doctor, and she wanted to become a doctor. My brother studied to become an engineer; he did not want to become a teacher. My younger sister studies physics, but she also wants to become a teacher. When I become a teacher, I think it is very important to have knowledge because mathematics is very difficult. When you don't understand you just copy.

In university, I mostly studied by myself, but I made friends. For the first two years I lived in the dormitory and we discussed together, but mostly we worked alone.

When I finished my bachelor's degree, I became a lecturer in the university. They asked the top student of the class to become a lecturer; I was the top student, and I taught beginning from 1994, at my university. In 1998 I received a scholarship to Amsterdam for three months, after which I stayed for another three months. The dean of my faculty had asked me; that's how I knew about the scholarship. I talked with the head of the department of mathematics, and obtained more information from the International Office. When I came back, there was another fund, or something, and I could continue my studies. When I finish my studies, I will teach again in my university. I would like to do a Ph.D. I would like to do it very much, so I can help my students. I prefer to do my Ph.D study here and not in Vietnam because the conditions here are very good, and I can improve my knowledge.

I think I would like to remain a lecturer in my university and not become a dean or vice-dean. I like to teach because as a child I very much respected the teacher, and when I was in lower high school, I decided to become a teacher. My professors here said that I should perhaps do research or write books. That is not so much done in my university, and we do not have journals and magazines. Yes, perhaps I would like to do that. What I would like to change? Yes, that is very difficult to answer. I could perhaps introduce some new subjects in mathematics in my university.

Reflections

Thi's story, especially the details of the long way she had to go to be where she is now, calls for empathy and for exploration of the ambivalence inherent in the notion of development co-operation in education. Thi's biography and the traditional objectives of support policies involve one set of considerations, changing views of the role of higher education in stimulating and sustaining socio-economic growth while the shift in world-wide forces known as globalisation imply other priorities. In the past, for universities in western countries, co-operation in international education meant support-oriented academic activities. More recently, internationalisation has become part of a marketing strategy intended to help finance operating budgets and aimed at establishing contractual agreements, often involving scholarship schemes for bringing in fee-paying students. The fact that development co-operation will also benefit teaching and research may be recognised, but that is only a secondary objective, stated to encourage participation at the institutional level. Within institutions, there are often important differences between the views of university management and individual academics. Many of the latter have been involved in international project work for personal and professional reasons and have, as a result of the co-operation, gained important insights into other cultures and academic traditions, which have greatly influenced their work and thus been of great value to the institution and to students. Individuals with such an experience will usually stress the fact that there is always a two-way impact and that both sides have profited. I speak here from experience and consider myself fortunate to have had the opportunity to work in Vietnam and other countries. Working with students in other countries and meeting people like Thi have opened my eyes in many ways, and made me very critical of the notion of 'assistance' in a university linkage.

Development goals (as formulated for instance by national ministries, UNESCO and the World Bank) that use the instrument of higher education programmes as an agent for socio-economic growth, project a restricted vision of the role of the university. Thi does not study mathematics because she is interested in the macro-economic development of her country. She likes to study mathematics to improve her mind and to better the conditions of her own life; reasons for studying that she shares with most students in most countries. Thi wanted to become a schoolteacher because it seemed, at the time, the best future she could obtain. Moreover it is part of her family tradition. She became a lecturer at her university by invitation, because she was the top student. For the same reason she was asked to apply for the scholarship. She herself had no access to the information about obtaining a scholarship. Power structures and notions of selection were more important than personal choice. In Thi's case, it is fortunate that her own academic merit provided the condition for her selection. In other instances this is not always the case. Family ties and political favouritism are other 'selection' criteria.

It is doubtful whether any model of support programme in international education could harmonise personal ambition and the goals of macro development. How indeed can Thi's international degree contribute to improving the situation in the Mekong Delta? Investing in one individual's advanced degree actually generates problems of its own, poses new questions and confusing choices. Tens, perhaps hundreds, of families in the Mekong Delta could have been supported in sending their children to primary school for the amount of money of this one interna-

tional scholarship. Because of this calculation and because of the disappointment with the 'development university' of the 1970's, which was supposed to have a direct and immediate impact on the development of society, during the last two decades, donor support has been directed towards basic education, which is considered the most important (and effective) instrument to improve education and, through education, contribute to social and economic development. Disappointment with higher education as a direct instrument for development increased, as did scepticism about higher education itself, resulting in a dramatic drop in funds. But support for higher education never stopped and over the years many programmes continued to support scholarship schemes and academic projects in teaching and research with the implicit hope that individual contributions would make a difference. The attitude among western universities participating in this undertaking contained a certain 'missionary' dimension and was motivated by good will, academic interest and not by financial motives.

Over the last decades, the individual student's perception of the role of the university as an institute for learning has probably not changed as much as the visions of higher education in society voiced by politicians and the academic establishment itself (Smith & Webster, 1997). The debate about a redefinition of functions of the post-modern university is closely linked (apart from issues of finance and quality) to the development of information and communication technology (ICT) and the international dimension of higher education. Economic development is increasingly linked to a nation's ability to catch up with the international knowledge society, and support programmes in higher education are judged effective when they help countries to develop their capacities to adopt and disseminate rapid technological advances in response to these new conditions. In reality, coping with these demands at Thi's university requires an almost schizophrenic way of thinking. On the one hand, students and staff function under material conditions that make it difficult to deliver appropriate quality and relevant programmes, while on the other hand (through the internet) they can indeed take part in the global knowledge society. The possibilities offered by the internet have created renewed interest by major stakeholders (like governments and the World Bank) in the role that universities and tertiary education in general can play to shape the future of countries like Vietnam.

The emergence of the knowledge society through ICT has sparked renewed debate on how to relate long-term vision, design and implementation to improve developing societies' human resources development and institution-building in higher education (Court, 2000, p.1). In this debate, the expectations of higher education have less to do with traditional academic outcomes and more with new skills requirements such as critical thinking, the capacity for continuous learning, information technology skills, team work habits, and flexibility (World Bank, 1999). Increasingly, individual scholarship programmes are aimed at long-term benefits for the university in the eligible country by promoting reforms and institution-building, and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. Selection of candidates is based on their potential future professional input. This renewed trust in the role of higher education is encouraging, but the assumptions underlying the current view of higher education as an agent for development (and the programme requirements intended to secure the future contribution of individual participants) both support and limit personal growth in talented students. Thi is sincerely interested in mathematics, and in teaching mathematics, but the expectations of the programme that offered her a scholarship may also confine her to a perception of her future that leaves little room for exploring other options than the teaching position at her university to pay off her scholarship.

Another important issue concerns the cultural context of the application of knowledge. Indeed, how universal is knowledge, and what are the consequences when it is applied in a different local context with a widely different culture? One of the main conclusions of a research report by the Institute of International Education (1996) made clear that relatively little is known about what students actually do, or can do, with their knowledge and credentials after returning home. From my own observation, I conclude that returning graduates often find it extremely difficult to apply at home what they have learned during their study abroad and consequently experience disillusion and frustration. Improved conditions for communicating with the academic world at large as a result of ICT may prove a way to sustain learning and research networks, making it more interesting than in the past for graduates to work in their homelands after returning from abroad. But can we actually expect returning students to simply

act as 'agents of change' and saddle them with the responsibility for 'development'?

In Thi's case, it is assumed that she will go back to join the teaching staff at her university. Her graduate work abroad is supposed to be an important contribution to the further institution-building of that university and the teacher training capacity of her faculty. In this way, her newly acquired knowledge and skills will provide intellectual support to educate the manpower (in Thi's case, teachers for secondary schools) necessary to enable Vietnam to develop and to produce a local cadre to sustain a growing economy. Thi will have studied many aspects of mathematics of which her superiors have hardly any notion. She will be a threat to them professionally, unless she is able to make them interested in change (no small task), by facilitating their access to her newly acquired knowledge, by providing information sources and personal contacts and - most importantly - by paying great attention not to impinge on their status and position as superiors. This complication of study abroad is often overlooked and rarely articulated, for obvious reasons. Contacts with her colleagues will be even more straining for Thi, because they may well be jealous of her foreign degree and feel frustrated about their own lack of expertise. Will Thi fit in at all, both academically and socially? How will she feel?

For the time being, Thi is hesitant about discussing the future. It does not comply with her role of being the model student. Right now she can only show her great ambition in being an excellent and diligent learner. She realises that her position is an exceptional one, but she does not really want to acknowledge it. Outwardly she has to balance the various expectations of the different investors in her education, both in Vietnam and the Netherlands. Thi's role in all of this is more or less implicit. She remains silent about her own agenda, and wisely so. But she acts strategically, drawing on the Vietnamese ideal of the determined and strong woman who projects an image of subordination. Contrary to her friend, I think Thi understands life very well. She wants to continue her studies for a Ph.D., staying well within the accepted context that has worked so far. In taking this approach she pays respect to her family, teachers, colleagues and superiors at the university and acknowledges their contribution to her achievements, which 'entitles' her to her individual position under tight collectivist obligations that are likely to be in everybody's interest.

Considering the strong family ties in Vietnam, Thi is lucky. She is not the oldest son or the first-born daughter in her family. The most important family duties will be taken care of by her older brother and sister, allowing her more personal freedom to pursue a career. The support she has received from her parents has encouraged and stimulated her, but this support is not only in Thi's interest. When she becomes an important academic, she will bring pride (and most likely some financial benefit as well) to her parents and extended family. Not being the oldest daughter makes even her physical presence less necessary. To promote socio-economic advancement, many Vietnamese families live separated lives in their own country and abroad. The professional input of Thi's parents in her education, especially the teaching of mathematics by her father, has compensated for the lack of quality in her local school. If her parents had not been teachers, she would not have been able to receive the additional academic support that helped her pass the exams to enter the university. In fact it is very common in Vietnam to have 'dynasties' of professionals from the same background, and Thi is also an example of this situation, with both her parents being teachers. But to make it at the university or in the world of mathematicians, she will have to join a new interest group. A marriage with a mathematician at the university is the most likely solution if she wants to further pursue her career. Marriages like that are very common; they are arranged and considered to be in the interest of the whole family. Many Vietnamese students I have met were studying the same subject as their parents, and were going to be married to persons with that same background. In collectivist societies, unlike in the West, personal relationships are based less on emotions than on practical considerations and group interest.

If, in the future, Thi becomes an educational manager or influential academic, it will not be easy for her as a woman to take pro-active measures for change by creating new practices in education. She will have to (re) define her own role as a highly educated woman. In doing so, she will have to challenge power structures and deeply engrained values, especially about motherhood. She will be measured by two yardsticks. If she postpones having a family for too long, or if she neglects her family duties after becoming a married wife, she will be viewed as failing her most important obligations. If she takes on a position of power in the educational system, she risks being condemned as too aggressive. But being too 'feminine' will cause criticism as well. Her academic credentials will be questioned, and she

will be judged unfit for a high position. Depending on the position of her husband, she may well be viewed as a threat to his status if she becomes too 'important.' Nevertheless, her international degree does makes her important. She is 'difficult.' Of course these issues are not typical for Vietnam only but to some extent universal for women across all countries and cultures, in developing countries and elsewhere. In the case of Vietnam, however, strong notions of educational merit and the ambivalence of the idealised image of the Vietnamese woman sharpen the dilemma.

Will Thi return to the Mekong Delta? At the moment she voices no other plans, and data on Vietnamese students who studied in other countries show a remarkable lack of 'brain drain'. The Confucian tradition in higher education is one reason. Another explanation is political: the role and power of the Communist Party in all spheres of life, both private and professional, used to prevent students from staying abroad against the will of the government. Moreover, most students studied in countries of the former East Bloc, and were simply sent back after their studies had terminated. But the wish to return home is also strongly related to notions of duty and love for the family. Under the new freedoms of *doi moi* and economic development in general, however, new values are slowly but certainly gaining ground. The nuclear family as an independent unit and increased consumerism will put traditional family duties under pressure, and individual ambition will clash with collectivist demands, both on the national and on the family level. Talented students will become more critically aware of their own capabilities and will seek opportunities in different ways than their predecessors. Thi has a boyfriend. He is a mathematician, but he is not Vietnamese.

As stated earlier, the most important issue relating to student mobility from Vietnam and the developing world in general to Western countries concerns policy developments in the host universities. Education - international higher education in particular - has become a business. Contracts between universities and funding agencies are used to offset budgetary problems, and sustain domestic operations. New mechanisms like the franchising of programmes and courses and other services are aimed at generating extra flows of income. The policy of actively recruiting students is made explicit as 'knowledge export,' and as such it is targeted in the first place at fee-paying students. The fact that scholarship schemes operate differently does not alter the motives of the host universities in attracting talented students. Other issues are at stake as well. Many Western countries are facing shortages in research staff, particularly doctoral students in science, mathematics and information technology. For many top students in Western countries, an academic career offers too few financial incentives, and students tend to leave the university for well-paid jobs in business or industry. So, universities actively recruit students from elsewhere and provide them with possibilities that they do not find in their own country. Given this condition, the notion of brain drain as an involuntary side effect of scholarship programmes is no longer valid. Policies formulate pro-active measures to 'gain brain' in order to sustain the knowledge production in their own institutions. Foreign students provide the host universities with income, highly talented and dedicated researchers and, in the sciences, with the female students that do not come from their own countries but who do come as a result of gender-sensitive selection criteria in development programmes. Whose development is being served?

More debate and research is needed on issues of principles and the financial imbalances in co-operation programmes. So far little attention has been paid to defining an international code of ethics in inter-university activities in development co-operation. Developing such a code would need the striking of a reasonable balance between the interests of the various parties. It would also re-address the role of the university as an educational factor in development, and would challenge notions of mission and market in the internationalisation of higher education (McAllister, 2000).

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