

Psychology in Vietnam

V IETNAM is a Southeast Asian country with an area of 362,000 square km: roughly the size of Germany. It has a population of about 80 million, comprising 54 ethnic groups. In its long history Vietnam has had to conduct many wars for national liberation, and this cause was completed in 1975. In 1945 Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam independent, although it was to take until 1954 for liberation of the northern part of the country. In 1975 we liberated the southern part of the country and achieved national reunification. Since 1986 we have begun a renewal, turning the country from a bureaucratic and subsidised economy into a socialist-oriented market economy to develop our economy, culture and education. We have achieved important successes, opening new prospects for

FURTHER READING

Pham Minh Hac (1999). *Psychology in Vietnam*. Hanoi: Hanoi University Press.

Pham Minh Hac (2002). *Psychology Collections*. Hanoi: Hanoi University Press.

Four journals are currently published in Vietnam: *Psychology* (since 1998), *Human Studies* (since 2001), *Education Research* (since 1964), and *World in My Inner Mind* (1994), publishing psychological theories, experiments and reports of applications by home psychologists.

PHAM MINH HAC and DO LONG with the latest in our international series.

national reconstruction. Education is an important part of the country's renewal, and educational psychology has become central to the practice of psychology in Vietnam.

The prominence of educational psychology now perhaps reflects the origins of psychological research in Vietnam, which was always concerned primarily with children and with teaching. Later on, these activities were extended to the application of psychology to other fields, such as sports, military, security and health. Some research has been oriented toward anthropological psychology. Surprisingly, no research in Vietnam has addressed the effects and legacies of the last war on the troops or on the population generally. A trawl of recent publications in US psychological literature reveals more than 1100 papers and chapters devoted to post-traumatic stress, and other 'veteran' issues. Yet despite the trauma and suffering visited on the local population, the psychological issues within Vietnam remain unaddressed. In part this may be explained by the fact that psychology as a research discipline was poorly developed at the time of the war.

Research in experimental psychology

really began only in 1963. Since then, we have seen a number of research projects of remarkable practical significance in fields such as the assessment of the main activities of pupils in primary schools, and the active social characteristics and professional tendencies of pupils of secondary schools. The Wechsler and Raven tests have been employed for research on the development of the intelligence of Vietnamese students, and research has been carried out on the IQ, EQ and CQ of pupils of different age brackets. Psychologists have addressed the ability and enthusiasm of pupils for learning the mother tongue, and the study of literature, physics and foreign languages by pupils of primary schools. Sex characteristics and sex education have been assessed, and demographic education for pupils. In personality psychology, research has been conducted on students and labourers using the NEO Personality Inventory – Revised, and on study needs in relation to motives for success.

Foreign influences

Prior to 1945, during the 'French' time in Vietnam, psychology was taught in some secondary schools and in colleges, but

using only French textbooks compiled by Foulquie. Starting in 1953, during the period when we had to wage a war of resistance against the French colonialists, we began teaching psychology at some colleges using Soviet textbooks, compiled by A.A. Smirnov and others. Students studying psychology in Vietnam have always had access to books and papers by a number of foreign authors. Though the Russian psychologists L.S. Vygotsky, A.R. Luria, and A.N. Leontyev predominated, books by Freud and Piaget were also widely introduced and influential.

Since 1970 the authors of all psychology textbooks are our colleagues in Vietnam, and we have seen many in the fields of human resources in the service of industrialisation and modernisation, communicative psychology, psychology in economic management and other specialised areas, such as the military and sports.

Where is psychology taught and researched?

In 1958 a Section of Pedagogical Psychology was set up at the Hanoi Teacher Training University, and in 1965 it became the Faculty of Psychology and Pedagogy, specialised for the training of bachelor degree students (four years) of MAs (two years) and PhDs (four years).

Now we have four faculties of psychology: at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities (an affiliate of Hanoi National University), the Ho Chi Minh City Teacher Training University, the Political Institute of the Vietnam People's Army, and the People-founded University Civilization. In addition, there are sections of psychology in all teacher training universities, colleges and schools throughout the country. Psychological subjects are also taught at special universities in such fields as politics, military, public security, administration, law, economics, trade, culture, arts, and the media.

Psychology cannot yet be said to have achieved the status of a popular university subject in Vietnam, though we have approximately 600 undergraduate students in psychological departments, and approximately 100 graduates each year. Vietnam has special government requirements for training professional applied psychologists.

Since the establishment of the Institute of Psychology in Hanoi in 1993 (an

THE VIETNAM ASSOCIATION OF PSYCHO-PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCES

The Vietnam Association of Psycho-Pedagogical Sciences was founded in 1990 and currently has a countrywide organisational system including 5000 members. Criteria for membership are the holding of a bachelor's degree in psychology or pedagogics, or conducting work in psychological practice (in a hospital, or in a centre for street children, for example). There are sections of education, sports, pre-school education, vocational education, health care, military, security police, economy, and business management. In the beginning the Vietnam Association of Psycho-Pedagogical Sciences was a member of the World Psychology Science Association and developed relations with the International Political Psychology Association, the World Mental Health Federation, and the Russian, French, Chinese, Australian and American psychology associations. Vietnam is a national member organisation of the International Union of Psychological Science (see www.iupsys.org).

institute for human studies under the National Center for Social Sciences and Humanities), many major new research projects have been carried out concerning values and their impact on the formation of human personality; peasants' psychology; ethnic psychology; and the psychology of young people and children.

To the future

At present there are around 1700 home-trained bachelors, masters and doctors of psychology. Nationwide we have 13 associate professors and seven professors of psychology. Psychology services are available on a national and a private basis.

Psychology is a fast-developing subject

in Vietnam, and we hope that relations between British psychology and Vietnamese psychology will become defined at the earliest opportunity, and develop successfully.

■ *Professor Dr Sc. Pham Minh Hac is Director of the Human Research Institute, National Center for Social Sciences and Humanities, and President of the Vietnam Association of Psycho-Pedagogical Sciences. E-mail: phamminhhac@yahoo.com.*

■ *Professor Dr Do Long is Director of the Institute of Psychology, National Center for Social Sciences and Humanities, and Vice President of the Vietnam Association of Psycho-Pedagogical Sciences.*



Hanoi Congress commemorating 100 years since the birth of Jean Piaget, reflecting Vietnamese psychology's interest in education