

Democratic Practices in Higher Education in Vietnam: A Case Study of Nghe An University from Ho Chi Minh Thought

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ABSTRACT: Democracy is a fundamental value and a driving force for innovation and improving the quality of higher education in the context of autonomy and international integration. In Vietnam, the practice of democracy in higher education institutions has received attention through various policies and guidelines issued by the Party and the State; however, this research employed a case study approach combined with a mixed-methods design. The research results indicate that the practice of democracy at Nghe An University has undergone positive changes, particularly in enhancing dialogue, promoting student participation in the classroom, and expanding channels for feedback and suggestions within the university's governance. However, democracy in some areas remains largely formal; the participation rights of lecturers and students in the decision-making process are still limited; and psychological and organizational cultural barriers still affect the substantive practice of democracy. Based on Ho Chi Minh's thought on democracy linked with discipline and responsibility, this paper discusses the theoretical and practical significance of the research findings and proposes several policy implications and recommendations to strengthen democratic practices in Vietnamese higher education. The research contributes to providing empirical evidence for studies on democracy in higher education and offers a reference basis for education administrators in the process of policy planning and implementation.

KEYWORDS: Democracy in education; Higher education governance; Ho Chi Minh Thought; University democracy; Vietnam

1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education is undergoing a profound transformation, with democracy as a fundamental value, serving as both a goal and a method for organising and operating modern universities. The trend towards university autonomy and transparent, participatory, and accountable governance is becoming a common standard. Democracy in higher education goes beyond simply expanding the participation of stakeholders in the decision-making process; it also encompasses ensuring students' voices, respecting academic freedom, and promoting dialogue, critical thinking, and innovation in teaching and learning. Numerous international studies have shown that the level of democratic practice in universities is closely linked to the quality of education, student satisfaction, and the effectiveness of governance and sustainable development of higher education institutions (Angyagre, 2025).

In Vietnam, democracy is a consistent value throughout the process of national construction and development, closely tied to the goal of building a socialist democracy. In the field of education, the Party and the State have always affirmed the particularly important role of democracy as a driving force for innovation, creativity, and improving the quality of training. Policies and guidelines on fundamental and comprehensive reform of education and training, on university autonomy, as well as legal regulations related to the implementation of democracy at the grassroots level, have created an important legal framework for expanding and practising democracy in universities. However, in reality, the level and effectiveness of democratic practice vary among higher education institutions; in many places, democracy remains formalistic and has not truly become an intrinsic cultural value in teaching, learning, and university administration (Chankseliani et al., 2025).

In Ho Chi Minh's thought, democracy holds a central position and has special significance for the cause of education. He considered democracy to be "the most precious treasure of the people," while emphasising that democracy must be practised genuinely, linked to discipline, responsibility, and the law (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, Vol. 10). Regarding education, Ho Chi Minh early on affirmed that education is the undertaking of the entire people, for the people, and carried out by the people. Democracy in education is not only about ensuring everyone's right to learn, but also about respecting learners, promoting their role as active participants, encouraging dialogue, listening, and fostering collective intelligence within universities. This ideology possesses both profound theoretical value and lasting practical significance for the current development of Vietnam's education system.

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In recent years, alongside the reform of higher education, many domestic studies have addressed democracy in education and university governance. However, most of these studies focus on theoretical aspects or policy analysis, while empirical research, especially case studies on the practice of democracy in Vietnamese universities, remains relatively limited. In particular, the application of Ho Chi Minh's thought as a theoretical framework for analyzing and evaluating the practice of democracy in Vietnamese higher education has not been systematically explored in international academic publications. This research gap necessitates specific case studies, based on empirical data, to clarify the extent, forms, and issues arising in the practice of democracy in current higher education institutions.

This paper selects Nghe An University as a typical case study. Nghe An University is a multidisciplinary higher education institution undergoing a significant transformation in its organization and governance, particularly after its merger and renaming. This context presents both opportunities and challenges for practicing democracy within the university, requiring consensus, participation, and the active role of administrators, faculty, and students. Studying the practice of democracy at Nghe An University is not only significant for the university itself but also provides policy suggestions and practical experience for other higher education institutions in Vietnam in the context of innovation and integration.

The objective of this paper is to analyze the current state of democratic practice in higher education in Vietnam through the case of Nghe An University, from the perspective of Ho Chi Minh's ideology. Specifically, the paper aims to clarify the understanding and level of democratic practice in teaching and learning, in the administration and management of the university, as well as in the relationships between the stakeholders in the educational process. Based on that, the article discusses the issues raised and proposes some key policy implications to contribute to strengthening democratic practices in Vietnamese universities.

2. THEORETICAL BASIS AND RESEARCH OVERVIEW

2.1. Democracy and Education

In social science and educational research, democracy is often approached as a core value of modern society, linked to the principles of participation, equality, transparency, and accountability. In the field of education, especially higher education, democracy is understood not only as a goal to be achieved but also as a method of organizing and operating the education system (Hoai et al., 2023). International studies suggest that higher education is inherently an open academic space where participating actors – including administrators, faculty, and students – need to be guaranteed the right to participate, the right to academic freedom, and the right to express their opinions within the framework of law and professional standards.

Many studies have shown a positive relationship between the practice of democracy in universities and the quality of education. Democracy in teaching and learning helps to enhance the active participation of students, encourage critical thinking, academic dialogue, and knowledge creation. In university governance, democracy is manifested through expanding stakeholder participation in the decision-making process, ensuring transparency in management and resource allocation, and establishing effective feedback and oversight mechanisms. From this perspective, democracy becomes a crucial factor in promoting good university governance and the sustainable development of higher education institutions.

However, international studies also indicate that the practice of democracy in higher education is strongly influenced by the political, cultural, and development context of each country. In developing countries, democracy in higher education often faces challenges such as hierarchical organizational culture, a reluctance to engage in critical thinking, limitations in mechanisms to protect contributors, and the tension between the need to expand democracy and the need to ensure discipline and effective governance. Therefore, the study of democracy in higher education needs to be placed within specific contexts, rather than mechanically applying universal models.

2.2. Democracy in Higher Education

In Vietnam, democracy is defined as the essence of the socialist regime and an important driving force of development. In the field of education, many domestic studies have approached democracy from the perspectives of political theory, law, and educational management. These works focus on clarifying the concept of socialist democracy, grassroots democracy, as well as the role of democracy in promoting the ownership rights of staff, lecturers, and students in universities.

A noteworthy research direction is the analysis of the implementation of grassroots democracy regulations in public educational institutions, including universities. These studies show that the promulgation and implementation of regulations on democracy have contributed to enhancing transparency in management activities, creating conditions for staff, lecturers, and students to participate and contribute opinions on university issues (Khoa & Huynh, 2023). However, many studies also point out limitations such as: democracy remains largely formal; the participation rights of stakeholders are not truly linked to decision-making power; the mechanisms for receiving and responding to feedback are unclear; and a hesitant and confrontational mindset persists in the higher education environment.

In addition, some studies approach democracy in higher education from the perspective of governance innovation and university autonomy. According to this approach, democracy is considered a crucial condition for the successful implementation of university autonomy, because autonomy is only meaningful when accompanied by broad participation and accountability of stakeholders

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within the institution. However, empirical studies based on surveys at specific universities are still limited, especially those analyzing democracy in the relationship between teaching and learning, governance and administration, and organizational culture.

2.3. Ho Chi Minh's Thought on Democracy in Education

In Ho Chi Minh's thought, democracy is a recurring theme, closely linked to the view that "the people are the foundation" and the goal of human liberation and development (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, Vol. 5). Ho Chi Minh did not approach democracy abstractly, but always emphasized its practical nature. According to him, democracy is not just the right to speak and discuss, but more importantly, the right to participate and to inspect and supervise. Democracy must be implemented in the practical life of society, linked to discipline, law, and the responsibility of each individual.

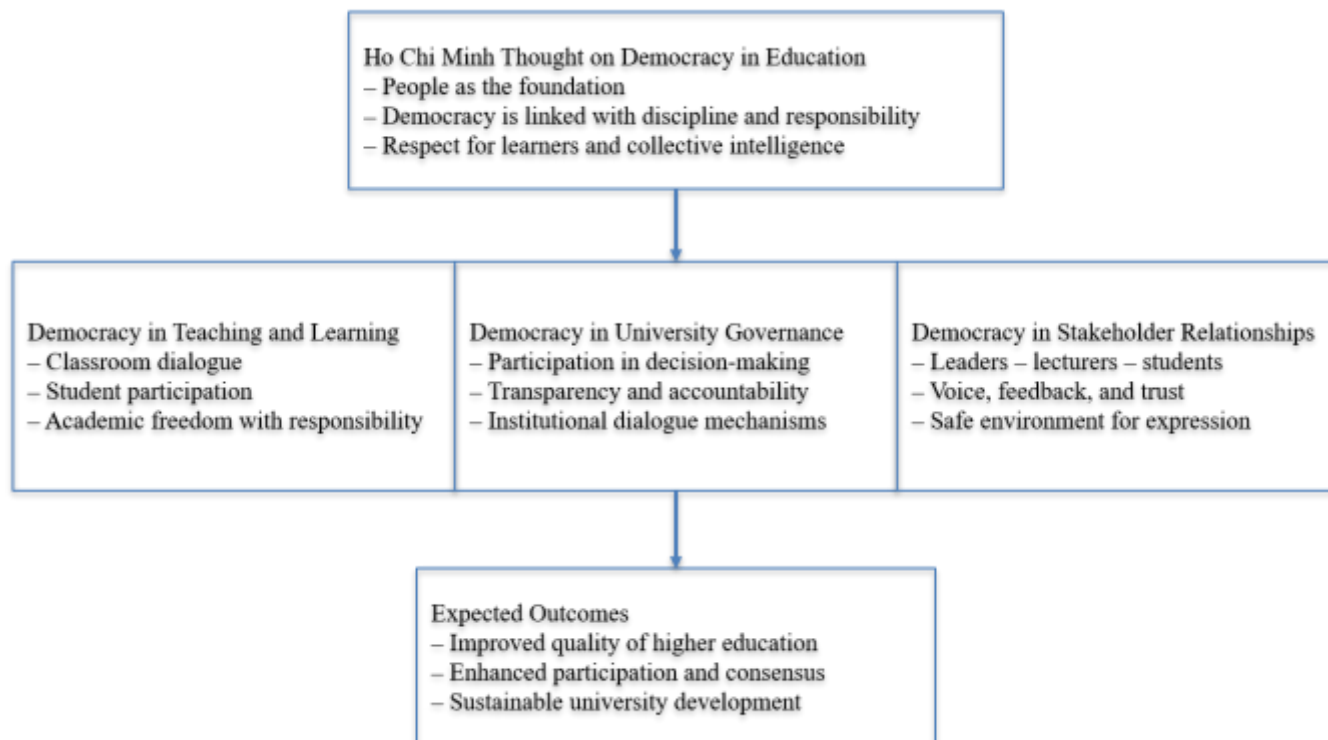
Regarding education, Ho Chi Minh considered it a particularly important area of the revolutionary cause. He believed that a proper education must be an education of the people, by the people, and for the people. Democracy in education is manifested in ensuring everyone's right to education, respecting learners, and promoting initiative, creativity, and self-learning. At the same time, democracy in education is also reflected in the relationship between teachers and students, between administrators and teachers, and between learners, based on respect, dialogue, and cooperation (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, Vol. 4).

A distinctive feature of Ho Chi Minh's thought is the close connection between democracy and discipline. He affirmed that democracy is not opposed to discipline; on the contrary, true democracy can only be ensured when there is strict discipline. In education, this is of great importance because it helps avoid the tendency to understand democracy extremely, detached from the responsibilities, standards, and common goals of the universities.

2.4. Theoretical Framework and Analytical Model of the Study

Based on an overview of domestic and international studies, and Ho Chi Minh's thought on democracy in education, this paper constructs a theoretical framework for analyzing the practice of democracy in higher education based on three main dimensions. First, democracy in teaching and learning is manifested in the level of participation, dialogue, academic freedom, and the active role of learners. Second, democracy in university governance and administration is manifested in participation in the decision-making process, transparency, and accountability of the management apparatus. Third, democracy in the relationships between the subjects of the educational process, including the relationship between leaders, faculty, and students, as well as the feeling of safety and respect when expressing opinions.

This theoretical framework allows for approaching democracy not only as a normative concept, but as a concrete practice in university life. Applying Ho Chi Minh's thought as a theoretical lens helps the article ensure relevance to the Vietnamese context while contributing to a broader academic discussion on democracy in higher education in developing countries.



Figures 1. Analytical framework of democratic practices in higher education from Ho Chi Minh thought

Figure 1 illustrates the analytical framework for democratic practices in higher education, built upon Ho Chi Minh's ideology on democracy. Accordingly, the idea of "the people are the foundation," with democracy linked to discipline and respect for human beings, plays a guiding role throughout. Based on this, democratic practices in higher education are analyzed through three

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dimensions: democracy in teaching and learning, democracy in university governance and administration, and democracy in the relationships between stakeholders. The synchronized operation of these three dimensions aims to improve educational quality, enhance participation, and ensure the sustainable development of the institution.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study is designed as a case study combining mixed methods, in which quantitative and qualitative data are used to complement each other to clarify the current state and characteristics of democratic practices in higher education. This approach allows for in-depth analysis of a specific context while ensuring the reliability and comprehensiveness of the research results.

The chosen research site is Nghe An University, a multidisciplinary higher education institution undergoing a significant organizational and governance transformation. This case study was selected due to the university's typical characteristics in the context of higher education reform, autonomy implementation, and organizational restructuring, thereby facilitating the observation and evaluation of democratic practices in teaching, learning, and university administration.

Research data was collected through two main sources. Firstly, data were collected through a survey questionnaire administered to the university's administrators, faculty, and full-time students. The questionnaire was constructed based on the research's theoretical framework, focusing on three main areas: democracy in teaching and learning; democracy in governance and administration; and the level of participation and voice of stakeholders within the university.

Secondly, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with several administrators and faculty members to further clarify the quantitative survey results, as well as to explore perceptions, experiences, and difficulties in practicing democracy within the university.

Descriptive data reflect trends and levels of democratic practice, while qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The research adheres to ethical research principles, ensuring the voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality of participants.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

Based on data collected from administrators, faculty, and students of Nghe An University, combined with qualitative information from semi-structured interviews, this section presents the main findings on democratic practices in higher education across three dimensions: (i) democracy in teaching and learning; (ii) democracy in university governance and administration; and (iii) the level of participation, voice, and barriers to democratic practice.

4.1. Practicing Democracy in Teaching and Learning

Democracy in teaching and learning at Nghe An University has seen positive changes, especially in the relationship between lecturers and students. The majority of students reported having opportunities to express their opinions in class, participate in discussions, and exchange ideas with lecturers on lesson content. The majority of students rated the classroom environment as "relatively democratic" and "democratic," reflecting a positive shift in teaching methods, from one-way transmission to increased interaction and dialogue.

The majority of lecturers believe that encouraging students to speak up, debate, and critically analyze during class is necessary and appropriate in response to the current demands of higher education reform (Quy et al., 2025). Many lecturers stated that they proactively create open spaces in the classroom, allowing students to present their personal views, including those differing from the lecturer's, as long as they are expressed constructively and respectfully. This shows that the idea of respecting learners and promoting their role as active participants, which is an important content in Ho Chi Minh's thought on education, has begun to be applied in teaching practice.

However, the research results also point out certain limitations. A portion of students still have a hesitant attitude when expressing opinions, especially opinions that are critical or disagree with the lecturer. The main reasons stem from a fear of negative evaluation, a lack of confidence in their ability to express themselves, as well as the influence of traditional university culture that emphasizes the teacher's role. This shows that democracy in teaching and learning, although improved, has not yet truly become a habit and a common standard for all learners.

4.2. Practicing Democracy in University Governance and Administration

Administrators and faculty members have noted that democracy in university governance and administration is demonstrated through various forms, such as staff and faculty conferences; collective opinion-gathering meetings; activities of the trade union and other organizations; as well as channels for feedback and suggestions to the university leadership. The majority of those surveyed believe that the university has made certain efforts in publicly and transparently disclosing policies, plans, and regulations related to training, scientific research, and internal management (Pham & Starkey, 2016).

Many staff and faculty members stated that they have had the opportunity to contribute feedback on documents, regulations, and development plans of the unit, especially through collective meetings and annual conferences. Organizing dialogue between the university leadership and staff, faculty, and students is considered a positive point, contributing to increased understanding, sharing,

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and consensus within the university. This is a concrete manifestation of democratic practice linked to the principles of transparency and listening, consistent with the democratic spirit emphasized by Ho Chi Minh.

However, research results reflect that the level of participation of faculty and staff in the decision-making process remains limited in some areas. Many opinions suggest that participation mainly stops at the level of consultation, while the final decision-making power remains concentrated in the leadership apparatus. Some faculty members expressed a desire to participate more deeply in decisions directly related to their expertise, resource allocation, and performance evaluation. This shows that while democracy in university governance has been expanded in form, its actual level still depends on the mechanism of decentralization and accountability.

4.3. Levels of Participation, Voices, and Barriers to Democratic Practice

When considering the level of participation and voices of stakeholders in the university, the survey results show certain differences between groups. Administrators and faculty generally have higher levels of participation and access to information than students. Meanwhile, students – despite being the central focus of the educational process – face more barriers to practicing democracy, especially in participating in administrative and policy issues of the university.

One of the major barriers mentioned by both faculty and students is the reluctance to express opinions, especially dissenting opinions. Some worry that giving frank feedback might affect working relationships or personal evaluations. In addition, some students stated that they were not fully aware of their rights and obligations in participating in providing feedback and expressing opinions, nor were they familiar with the official channels for exercising their democratic rights.

Interview results showed that organizational culture also significantly influences democratic practices. A culture of "deference" and "avoidance of confrontation" still exists in some units, reducing openness and frankness in opinion exchange. This indicates that democratic practice depends not only on mechanisms and regulations, but also on building a democratic culture within the university – a process requiring time and perseverance.

4.4. General Assessment of the Current State of Democratic Practice at Nghe An University

In summary, the research results show that democratic practice in education at Nghe An University has achieved positive initial results, especially in teaching and learning and in expanding channels for dialogue and feedback. These results reflect a shift in line with the requirements of higher education reform and the democratic spirit in Ho Chi Minh's thought.

The study also points out that democracy in universities still has limitations in terms of its substantive level, equality among different groups, and the connection between democracy and responsibility and discipline. Psychological, cultural, and institutional barriers are factors that need to be further identified and overcome. These results provide an important basis for further discussion of the theoretical and practical significance of practicing democracy in higher education, as well as for proposing appropriate solutions in the following sections of this paper.

5. DISCUSSION

Based on the research findings presented, the discussion focuses on analyzing and explaining the current state of democratic practices in higher education at Nghe An University from the perspective of Ho Chi Minh's thought, while also comparing the research findings with research results both domestically and internationally. This clarifies the theoretical and practical significance of the findings, as well as the issues raised for the process of reforming governance and improving the quality of higher education in Vietnam.

The research results show a certain compatibility between the practice of democracy at Nghe An University and the core contents of Ho Chi Minh's thought on democracy in education. The increasing emphasis on dialogue, listening to the opinions of staff, lecturers, and students; encouraging student participation in discussions and debates in the classroom; and expanding channels for feedback and suggestions in university governance clearly reflect the spirit of "the people are the foundation" and the view that human beings are the center of the educational process. In Ho Chi Minh's thought, democracy is not merely a formal slogan, but a method of organizing social life in which all subjects have the opportunity to participate and develop their abilities. The positive changes observed in the research show that this ideology has been and is being applied, albeit to varying degrees, in current university life.

However, the research also points out that the level of democratic practice is still uneven across different fields and groups of subjects. This raises questions about the substance of democracy in higher education. From Ho Chi Minh's perspective, democracy only truly has meaning when it is coupled with actual ownership rights, not just the ability to "speak" or "offer suggestions." The fact that many staff, lecturers, and students feel that their participation is mainly limited to consultation reveals a certain gap between formal democracy and substantive democracy. This is a common challenge not only at Nghe An University, but also at many other higher education institutions in the context of transitioning to a modern governance model and university autonomy.

When compared with international studies, the results of this paper show many similarities. Studies on democracy in higher education in developing countries often emphasize cultural and institutional barriers, such as a fear of criticism, hierarchical organizational structures, and inadequate mechanisms to protect those who provide feedback (Pham & Le, 2023).

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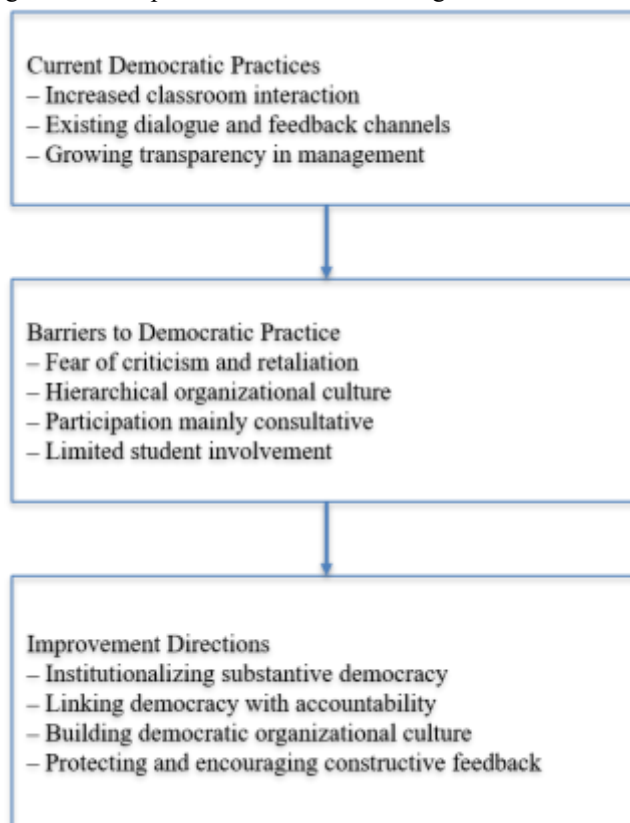
These barriers are also clearly reflected in the case of Nghe An University. This shows that expanding democracy in higher education is not just a matter of enacting regulations or establishing mechanisms, but also a process of changing the organizational culture and behavioral habits of the participating entities.

A noteworthy finding of the study is the difference in the level of participation and voice between different groups, especially between lecturers and students. Although students are identified as the center of the educational process, in reality, they still face more limitations in accessing information and participating in administrative issues. From the perspective of Ho Chi Minh's ideology, this suggests the need to pay more attention to promoting the active role of learners, not only in the classroom but also in university life in general. Empowering and facilitating student participation in university -building activities not only contributes to the practice of democracy but also has profound educational significance, helping learners develop a sense of civic responsibility and the capacity to participate in society.

In addition, the research clarifies the relationship between democracy and discipline in higher education. Some concerns suggest that expanding democracy may reduce management efficiency or lead to a lack of discipline. However, research results show that when democracy is implemented on the basis of dialogue, transparency, and accountability, it does not weaken discipline but, on the contrary, contributes to strengthening consensus and compliance with common regulations. This is consistent with Ho Chi Minh's view on the unity between democracy and discipline, in which democracy is a condition for promoting initiative, while discipline is the basis for ensuring the effectiveness and stability of the organization.

From a university governance perspective, the research findings suggest that the practice of democracy needs to be closely linked to the process of university autonomy. Autonomy, without democracy and accountability, can lead to the concentration of power and widen the gap between leadership and other stakeholders in the university (Ramos et al., 2025). Conversely, genuine democracy will create a social and cultural foundation for the effective implementation of university autonomy. In the case of Nghe An University, the context of organizational restructuring and governance innovation further highlights the role of democracy as a factor in building consensus and stability during the transition process.

Finally, from a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to affirming the value of Ho Chi Minh's thought as a suitable analytical lens for studying contemporary issues of Vietnamese higher education. Applying Ho Chi Minh's thought not only helps explain practical situations in the specific context of Vietnam, but also contributes to broader discussions on democracy in education in developing countries, where Western democratic models need to be adapted to suit specific historical, cultural, and political conditions. The findings and discussions of this paper are therefore significant not only for Nghe An University but also provide important suggestions for promoting democratic practices in Vietnamese higher education in the coming period.



Figures 2. Democratic practices at nghe an university - current status, barriers, and improvement directions

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Figure 2 illustrates the unique model of democratic practice at Nghe An University through three closely linked levels of content. The first level reflects the current situation, identifying positive changes such as increased classroom interaction, the formation of dialogue channels, and a gradual improvement in transparency in management. The second level points out the main barriers, including a hesitant and resistant mindset, a secondary organizational culture, and a level of participation that remains largely consultative. The third level proposes improvements to guide and promote substantive democratic practice, linked to responsible solutions and sustainable development of the university.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

From the research findings and discussions, several important policy implications can be drawn to enhance democratic practices in higher education in Vietnam in general and at Nghe An University in particular, in the context of fundamental and comprehensive educational and training reforms, university autonomy implementation, and international integration. These implications not only focus on improving mechanisms and policies, but also aim to build a sustainable democratic culture within the university, in line with Ho Chi Minh's thought on democracy, coupled with discipline and responsibility.

Firstly, it is necessary to continue improving and concretizing mechanisms for implementing democracy in higher education more substantively and feasibly (Ryu & Nguyen, 2021). Regulations on democracy within the university need to be reviewed and supplemented to clarify the rights, responsibilities, and scope of participation of each entity, especially lecturers and students, in all stages of university governance. Participation in providing feedback needs to be linked to a clear mechanism for receiving, responding to, and explaining feedback, avoiding a situation where democracy is limited to merely "soliciting opinions" without having a practical impact on the final decision. This is a crucial condition for enhancing the trust and motivation of stakeholders within the university to participate.

Secondly, it is necessary to strengthen the practice of democracy in teaching and learning as a core content of the reform of higher education methods. The university needs to encourage and create conditions for lecturers to apply student-centered teaching methods, promoting discussion, critical thinking, and independent thinking among students. At the same time, it is necessary to build pedagogical standards and a safe learning environment that respects differences, so that students feel confident in expressing their views. Practicing democracy in the classroom not only contributes to improving the quality of training but also has long-term educational significance in forming the competencies and qualities of citizens for learners (Mesny et al., 2026).

Thirdly, it is necessary to promote democracy in the governance and administration of the university, linked to the process of university autonomy. In the context of autonomy, decentralization must go hand in hand with accountability and collective oversight. The university should further expand the participation of faculty and representative organizations in the process of strategy development, regulation promulgation, and resource allocation, especially in areas directly related to professional activities (Nguyen et al., 2016). At the same time, it is necessary to maintain and improve the quality of regular dialogue channels between the university leadership and staff, faculty, and students, considering this an important mechanism for listening to and promptly resolving emerging issues and strengthening internal consensus.

Fourth, it is necessary to focus on building and nurturing a democratic culture within the university as a sustainable foundation for democratic practice. A democratic culture is not only created by regulations, but also by the attitudes, behaviors, and habits of the participating entities (Tran et al., 2020). Therefore, the university needs to strengthen its efforts in disseminating information and educating staff, faculty, and students to raise awareness of democracy, rights, and civic responsibilities. Integrating Ho Chi Minh's ideology on democracy into professional activities, training, and extracurricular activities can contribute to forming a correct and unified understanding of democracy in the higher education environment.

Fifth, specific measures are needed to protect and encourage constructive feedback. One of the major obstacles to democratic practice is the fear of being judged or having one's personal interests affected. Therefore, the university needs to establish mechanisms to ensure the safety of those providing feedback, especially students, through transparent, secure, and clearly accountable feedback channels. Recognizing and honoring positive contributions is also an important measure to encourage participation and critical thinking within the university (Thanh & Anh, 2025).

Finally, from a macro-policy perspective, the research suggests that educational management agencies need to continue improving the legal framework for implementing democracy in higher education, ensuring consistency between regulations on democracy, autonomy, and accountability. At the same time, it is necessary to encourage and support empirical research on democracy in higher education to provide a scientific basis for policy planning and adjustment (Zehadi & Jahan, 2025). These implications and recommendations, if implemented synchronously and appropriately to the specific conditions of each educational institution, will contribute to promoting the practice of democracy in a substantive, effective, and sustainable manner in Vietnamese higher education today.

7. CONCLUSION

This article analyzes the current state of democratic practices in higher education in Vietnam through a case study of Nghe An University, viewed from the perspective of Ho Chi Minh's ideology. Based on a combination of data, the study clarifies the main

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manifestations of democracy in teaching and learning, in university administration and management, as well as in the level of participation and voice of relevant stakeholders. The research results show that democratic practices in the university have seen positive changes, particularly in expanding dialogue channels, strengthening classroom interaction, and gradually improving transparency in management.

However, the study also points out that democracy in higher education still has certain limitations. Democracy in many areas has not truly gone into depth, and the participation of lecturers and students in some important aspects of university administration remains more consultative than decision-making. Furthermore, psychological barriers, organizational culture, and mechanisms for protecting those who offer feedback still significantly affect the level of genuine democratic practice. These limitations indicate that the gap between policies and their practical implementation still needs to be narrowed.

Research results affirm that democracy in education is not only a goal but also a method to promote collective intelligence, improve educational quality, and build a healthy and progressive university environment. Linking democracy with discipline, responsibility, and the law is a consistent requirement to ensure that democracy is not formalized or misinterpreted. This is particularly significant in the context of Vietnamese universities promoting autonomy and governance innovation.

This paper contributes to supplementing empirical evidence on the practice of democracy in Vietnamese higher education, while affirming the value of Ho Chi Minh's thought as a suitable theoretical framework for analyzing contemporary educational issues. In practical terms, the research findings and recommendations can be used as a reference for education administrators in developing and implementing policies to enhance democratic practices in university.

The research still has certain limitations, particularly its focus on a specific university. In the future, further studies could expand the scope to include comparisons across different higher education institutions, or incorporate more in-depth analytical methods to further clarify the role of democracy in improving the quality and effectiveness of higher education governance in Vietnam.

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