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Original Research Article

Teaching National Defense and Security Education for Vietnamese Universities' Student: Execution Model and Innovative Solutions

Phong, Nguyen Linh¹*¹⁰

¹Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, Viet Nam

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*Corresponding author: Phong, Nguyen Linh Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, Viet Nam

Abstract

National Defense and Security Education (NDSE) constitutes an essential element in all educational curricula of universities in Vietnam. Its fundamental purpose is to cultivate patriotism, solidarity, and foundational military skills among the populace. This paper's scope includes the design and analytical assessment of a teaching model for NDSE aimed at university students in Vietnam, while also suggesting prospective enhancements to improve its efficacy in the future. The research utilizes both theoretical methodologies and empirical research on the current state. The findings may provide a significant reference for universities globally in the organization and implementation of NDSE for their students.

Keywords: National Defense and Security Education, university students, Vietnam.

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Introduction

Vietnam is a developing nation experiencing a profound and comprehensive overhaul of its educational model. Curricular strategies are progressively transitioning from content-focused instruction to competence-driven and student-centered paradigms. Within this national initiative to cultivate a highly skilled workforce, university students are anticipated not only to excel in their academic fields but also to nurture robust political and civic values. In alignment with this goal, in conjunction with other political theory courses, National Defense and Security Education is mandated as a compulsory subject for all university students in Vietnam. The historical origins of NDSE can be traced back to the necessity of preparing citizens during the resistance war to safeguard the nation from 1954 to 1975. Originally introduced as the "General Military Training Program", it has subsequently developed into the formalized subject recognized today as NDSE within the educational system. Presently, the NDSE curriculum for university students consists of four modules encompassing a total of 165 periods. These modules are categorized into the following four thematic domains: The national defense and security policies established by the Communist Party of Vietnam. Defense and security responsibilities. Fundamental military knowledge. Infantry combat techniques and strategies.

In practice, two organizational models exist in Vietnamese higher educational institutions. Model 1 is that Universities that fulfill specific standards regarding personnel and infrastructure are permitted autonomy to independently conduct the course. Model 2, institutions that do not satisfy these requirements, are obligated to partner with National Defense and Security Education Centers to collaboratively facilitate the instruction. Each model possesses its unique benefits and drawbacks. A thorough assessment of both models, accompanied by suitable recommendations for enhancement, is crucial to improve the quality and effectiveness of NDSE delivery. This is particularly vital in the current environment where multiple external and internal factors influence national defense and public security. The ultimate objective is to contribute to a resilient people-centric national defense and security infrastructure.

This research builds upon earlier studies (as discussed in the literature review section) and seeks to both articulate a detailed model for delivering National Defense and Security Education to university students in Vietnam and suggest targeted enhancements for its efficacy. The methodology encompasses a review of existing literature, an empirical analysis of prevailing NDSE pedagogical practices in Vietnamese higher education institutions, and the amalgamation of qualitative data obtained from interviews with ten lecturers actively engaged in NDSE teaching. The results

may act as a valuable reference point for educating NDSE around the world. To fulfill these aims, the research concentrates on resolving the following two research inquiries:

- (1) What elements constitute the existing teaching model for National Defense and Security Education in Vietnamese universities?
- (2) What modifications are necessary to bolster the efficacy of this teaching model?

Background to the study

The studies researched National Defense and Security Education for the universities' students around the world.

In a thorough examination of global research, over the last decade, scholarly exploration has mainly focused on various aspects of defense and security education, such as early childhood security programs (Hale & Incao, 2002), teaching methods for information security and cybersecurity (Damon et al., 2014; Ku et al., 2009), and how military-related activities impact children's educational performance (Engel et al., 2010). Additionally, few studies have looked into security education, like training for information security education (Caballero, 2017; Nemeth, 2012), or programs related to national security education in the United States (Axel-Lute & Documents Librarian, 1975; Wang, 2021). Nevertheless, I has identified a gap in the literature, as no studies currently exist that evaluate the teaching model for National Defense and Security Education as an independent subject for university-level learners.

The studies researched National Defense and Security Education (NDSE) for the universities' students in Vietnam.

In contrast to the restricted range of international studies, Vietnam has relatively extensive research regarding the instruction of NDSE to university students. These investigations typically pursue two primary research trajectories. The initial trajectory emphasizes the enhancement of NDSE instructional effectiveness. This encompasses research directed at improving discipline and military training (La Duy et al., 2020; Tinh, 2017; Văn & Lê Văn, 2024), promoting political and ideological education alongside patriotism (Tinh et al., 2017; Van Dien & Sang, 2020), incorporating extracurricular engagements to stimulate student involvement (Tinh et al., 2019), and employing active pedagogical strategies (Nghich & Hồng, 2025). The secondary trajectory focuses on refining the organizational and managerial dimensions of NDSE instruction. This includes studies aimed at augmenting

the quality of instructional staff and student affairs personnel (Đông, 2023; Huy, 2022; Trần, 2017), as well as overseeing and advancing the NDSE curriculum (Minh, 2024; Nguyễn, 2024). Despite the wealth of literature available in Vietnam pertaining to this subject, no current research has specifically scrutinized the teaching model for NDSE as executed within higher education institutions.

Although there exists an expanding repository of research on National Defense and Security Education, there has yet to be a study that concentrates on the model of teaching NDSE to university students in Vietnam. Consequently, the analysis of this model and the proposal of enhancements represent a research avenue of both theoretical and practical relevance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research utilizes a theoretical approach, particularly focusing on literature review, synthesis of prior studies, and modeling strategies to develop a suggested instructional framework for National Defense and Security Education aimed at university students in Vietnam. This methodology is further enhanced by interviews with lecturers to gather practical information on the current status of organizing for teaching.

Data Collection Tools

In this research, EndNote 21 software was used to gather and organize all research resources. The materials were mainly sourced from Google Scholar and the ScienceDirect database offered by Elsevier. The teaching model for NDSE was created by the researcher utilizing the MindMup platform (mindmup.com).

Practical data were gathered interviews with lecturers and observations from organizing for teaching activities in all university campuses. Two distinct groups of lecturers was engaged to have semi-structured interview: Group 1 consisted of lecturers from institutions that have autonomous teaching for NDSE. Group 2 included lecturers from affiliated national defense education centers. Alongside the interviews, observations were implemented by non-participant observations and documenting findings in the form of field notes and observation logs.

Participants

10 lecturers were chosen to willingly interview, who have many experiences in teaching and organizing of teaching activities in NDSE.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the interviewed lecturers

Code	Current institution	Academic degree	Has Served in the Military	Years of working
GV1.1	Public autonomous university	Ph.D		16
GV1.2	Public autonomous university	Master	X	12
GV1.3	Public autonomous university	Master		10
GV1.4	Private autonomous university	Master		13
GV1.5	Private autonomous university	Master		7

Code	Current institution	Academic degree	Has Served in the Military	Years of working
GV2.1	Large-scale center	Ph.D	X	16
GV2.2	Large-scale center	Ph.D		16
GV2.3	Medium-scale center	Master		13
GV2.4	Small-scale center	Master	X	11
GV2.5	Small-scale center	Master		13

Table 2: Details of data collection locations

Code	Institution	Model
CQ1.1	Public University	Autonomous teaching
CQ1.2	Private University	Autonomous teaching
CQ2.1	Legally Independent Center	Center
CQ2.2	In-House University Center	Center

Data Analysis

This study analyzed qualitative data collected from interviews and observations by using thematic analysis. An inductive analysis was applied, allowing key themes to naturally emerge from the raw data through iterative review and comparison (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1984).

The analysis process followed the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, the data (including transcripts, field notes, and memos) were thoroughly read to familiarize and note main ideas. Next, the data were systematically coded by assigning phrases that reflected specific perspectives. These codes were grouped into themes, which were reviewed to ensure coherence. Finally, the representative excerpts from the data were selected to illustrate the findings.

FINDINGS

Overview of Teaching National Defense and Security Education to University Students

Internationally, numerous investigations have focused on the curriculum and implementation of defense and security education tailored for various demographic groups. Significant instances include studies on defense education (Knox *et al.*, 2019), higher education during periods of conflict (Milton, 2019), the national security education framework within the Russian Federation (Vodenko, 2019), educational strategies against extremism (Adebayo, 2021), and cybersecurity education (AlDaajeh *et al.*, 2022; Hart *et al.*, 2020).

In alignment with Vietnamese legal stipulations, all educational institutions are organized to teach National Defense and Security Education. The central aim of this discipline is to furnish students with essential insights pertaining to the national defense and

security perspectives and policies of the Communist Party and the State (Tran, 2023). Students are anticipated to grasp the doctrines of comprehensive national defense, public security, an integrated defense framework, enhancement of military forces, civil defense and essential military competencies, thereby equipping students for the execution of military and public security responsibilities, thus aiding in the safeguarding of the nation.

To fulfill these educational aims, the NDSE curriculum is organized into four topics, integrating both theoretical and practical elements. The theoretical segment comprises: viewpoints on warfare and military engagement, national sovereignty and territorial integrity (particularly concerning maritime and island territories), building a comprehensive people's national defense, the development of people's armed forces, and military strategies. The practical segment entails: infantry marksmanship, grenade deployment, and training in fundamental tactical maneuvers.

In actual teaching periods, NDSE lecturers utilize a variety of pedagogical techniques and teaching formats (Bau & Tuan, 2018; Van, 2024). Nonetheless, the most popular teaching models employed are presentational and practical methods, both directly conducted in classroom environments. All 10 lecturers came to an agreement with that teaching model. Group GV1.1, GV1.2, GV1.4, GV2.1, GV2.4 illustrated their perspective:

"Given the limited time period and extensive teaching content, the presentation method is the most optimal one. While lecturers desire to apply more active teaching methodologies, these approaches are often impractical under current constraints".

Autonomous teaching model for National Defense and Security Education

Bureau of National Defense and Security Education,
Ministry of Education and Traning

University/Academy

Faculty/Specialist department

Political Science

Lecturer

Specialist/Administrative officer

This model is applied to universities that have been granted autonomy by the Ministry of Education and Training to organize National Defense and Security Education (NDSE), provided that they meet specific requirements related to human resources and physical infrastructure (Quang et al., 2023). Within these autonomous universities, there typically exists either an develop training production detailed course sy for teaching, and to 2024). However, resulted in som instruction in an universities, there typically exists either an manner, failing to

of structural organization, the faculty is subdivided into specialized subject divisions and operational units. Subject divisions consist of lecturers, while operational units include specialist/administrative officers and managerial staff who are responsible for supporting student management.

This model is evaluated as having both strengths and limitations. According to its advantages, it

allows universities that organize to teach autonomously

National Defense and Security Education regarding practical conditions. The university has the autonomy to

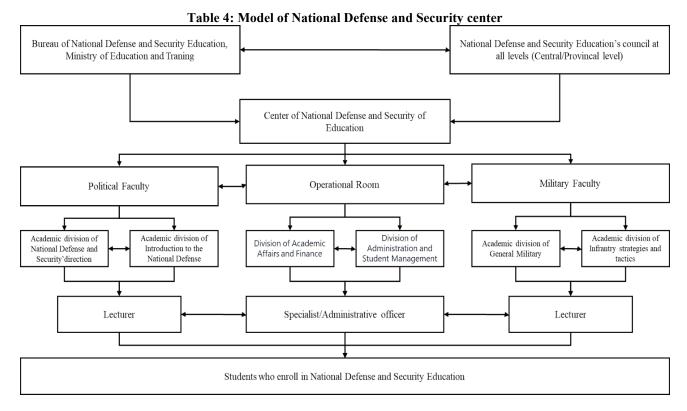
independent faculty of National Defense Education, or a

combined room responsible for the academic and administrative oversight of NDSE for students. In terms

develop training plans, administer examinations, design detailed course syllabi, recruit highly qualified lecturers for teaching, and manage student affairs (Giai & Hong, 2024). However, the delegation of autonomy has often resulted in some universities organizing NDSE instruction in an unsystematic or insufficiently rigorous manner, failing to comply with regulations on students' residential and communal living arrangements during the course period. Additionally, some lecturers still lack military discipline in their teaching practices (Nguyen, 2023; Pham, 2024). More specifically, two participants (GV1.3 and GV1.5) shared the following insights:

"Implementing NDSE within the university grants institutional autonomy in organizing instruction. However, due to limited infrastructure, we sometimes have to combine classes into large groups. In other cases, because of students' health conditions, we must adjust the timetable and reduce certain physical training activities accordingly."

Model that does not have autonomous teaching (affiliated center) National Defense and Security Education



This model is applied for National Defense and Security centers. These centers are established explicitly to provide National Defense and Security Education to students. Universities that fail to satisfy the standards for autonomous NDSE teaching or desire to engage in collaboration with these centers. Such cooperative efforts are implemented by central institutes, then universities and centers are prohibited from association. In contrast to the model of autonomous NDSE instruction (Model 3), the center-focused model (Model 4) functions on a broader scale and with increased autonomy. Regarding organizational configuration, a center, equipped with specialized faculties and operational departments, can be functionally comparable to a university.

Model of the National Defense and Security center is evaluated that has considerable merits. The center operates with a high degree of autonomy in organizing National Defense and Security Education. Notably, it possesses legal status, allowing it to directly engage in legal relationships and maintain independent financial management. Therefore, in addition to academic autonomy similar to that of autonomous universities, the center also holds the authority to invest in and manage the renovation and construction of physical infrastructure for instructional purposes (Đăng et al., 2024). However, the center-based model also exhibits certain limitations. For instance, continuous teaching across multiple university cohorts can lead to overload issues (Huế, 2023). The high teaching frequency often results in stress or demotivation among

faculty and administrative staff. Furthermore, student management remains challenging due to unfamiliarity with incoming student populations (Håi, 2021). According to lecturers GV2.2, GV2.3, and GV2.5:

"There should be short breaks between National Defense and Security Education teaching sessions to allow lecturers time to recover and recharge. In addition, short-term professional development courses should be offered to enhance instructors' expertise, rather than focusing solely on student instruction."

DISCUSSIONS

Based on research findings, observations at four different locations (Table 2), and the synthesis of prior studies conducted both in Vietnam (Báu, 2018; Bùi & Hoàng, 2023; Cong, 2023; Trịnh, 2023) and internationally (Fischer *et al.*, 2019; Schlosser, 2017; Yasin *et al.*, 2018), the following discussion points and proposes solutions are exposed to improve National Defense and Security Education for university students in Vietnam:

As a general and strategic recommendation, both two instructional models for NDSE are suggested to maintain, as this approach aligns well with the realities of Vietnam's education system. Each model has its own strengths and limitations, and both have demonstrated a certain level of effectiveness in practice (Công, 2023).

According to Model 3 (Autonomous NDSE Instruction by Universities): Government regulatory agencies should strengthen inspection and oversight activities, while autonomous institutions must improve internal quality assurance mechanisms (Đỗ & Võ, 2024). Although quality monitoring is already in place, it currently relies mostly on scheduled and routine inspections, then it needs a clear need for the implementation of unannounced inspections. In addition, autonomous universities should ensure that quality assurance spans the entire instructional process, especially from curriculum planning and preparation of teaching conditions to classroom delivery, student assessment, and instructional improvement (Nguyễn & Lê, 2023).

According to Model 4 (University Collaboration with National Defense and Security Education Centers): Both parties involved (universities and centers) must enhance coordination and improve student management during the learning process (V. B. Nguyễn, 2023; V. P. Nguyễn, 2023). Coordination is reflected through processes such as student enrollment, transparent communication of applicable fees, and the implementation of mid-term and annual evaluations. Student management is the responsibility of the NDSE center. However, due to the large number of students and the transition to a new, unfamiliar learning environment, issues such as health concerns and difficulty adapting to communal living arrangements may occasionally arise.

CONCLUSIONS

Through the presented content, a fundamental analysis of two instructional models is provided for teaching the subject National Defense and Security Education to university students in Vietnam. It serves as a foundation for proposing improvements to both models, aiming to enhance the effectiveness of instruction. The continued implementation of these two models offers an effective environment for fostering patriotism, revolutionary spirit, and military skills among students. In the autonomous teaching model, it is essential to promote the role of the academic department directly responsible for professional management. In the joint teaching model conducted at external centers, coordination between the university and the affiliated center must be ensured. Reflecting on these findings, future research should be focused on the effective application of these teaching models to improve the quality of National Defense and Security Education for university students.

Recommendations

As a mandatory academic subject, National Defense and Security Education (NDSE) is tasked with fostering patriotism among students while simultaneously aiding in the cultivation of critical personal attributes. Empirical studies reveal that there exists a paucity of research both internationally and within Vietnam concerning the structuring of NDSE

pedagogy, specifically those that have researched teaching models for this subject area. Consequently, national defense and security researchers are encouraged to prioritize this avenue of research. Furthermore, sustained initiatives should be undertaken to develop and optimize teaching models that underscore reinforced institutional partnerships and improved international cooperation.

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