

# Hanoi Female Intellectuals - Past and Present<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This article introduces the history, development and current role of female intellectuals as an important human resource of Hanoi. Thang Long-Hanoi, a typical feudal city heavily influenced by Confucian thought, in the colonial period was transformed into Hanoi, a Western urban center, and is now the capital of a modern nation. There, female intellectuals have undergone significant increasing equality with men. On the basis of data on the activities of female intellectuals in areas such as education and training, science and technology, medicine, management and leadership, the article aims to clarify the achievements and status of female intellectuals in general activities in Hanoi. However, it also points out that at the same time, the pressures of everyday family life and the remaining feudal-era sexist ideas regarding housework have a heavy impact on the efforts of female intellectuals in their careers. The article is intended to provide some useful information for managers in planning the human resources of Hanoi in the future.

**Keywords:** female intellectuals, intellectuals, human resources, gender equality, family responsibilities

## บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้มุ่งนำเสนอประวัติศาสตร์ พัฒนาการ และบทบาทของปัญญาชนสตรีในกรุงฮานอยยุคปัจจุบัน เนื่องจากปัญญาชนสตรีเป็นทรัพยากรมนุษย์ที่สำคัญของกรุงฮานอย ในยุคการปกครองแบบศักดินานั้นนครหลวงทั้งเมืองหรือฮานอยตกอยู่ภายใต้อิทธิพลของลัทธิขงจื๊ออย่างเข้มข้น หลังจากนั้นได้มีการเปลี่ยนผ่านสู่นครหลวงรูปแบบตะวันตกในยุคที่ตกเป็นเมืองขึ้นของฝรั่งเศส และในเวลาต่อมาได้กลายมาเป็นเมืองหลวงที่ทันสมัยวบจนปัจจุบันนี้ สถานภาพของปัญญาชนสตรีในเมืองหลวงมีการเปลี่ยนแปลงและมีความเท่าเทียมทางเพศมากขึ้น บทความนี้ได้นำข้อมูลที่เกี่ยวข้องกับ

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การเคลื่อนไหวของปัญญาชนสตรีในบางสาขาอาชีพ เช่น การศึกษา วิทยาศาสตร์และเทคโนโลยี การแพทย์ การจัดการและความเป็นผู้นำ มาวิเคราะห์และชี้ให้เห็นถึงความสำเร็จและตำแหน่งทางสังคมของปัญญาชนสตรีในสังคมโดยรวมของกรุงฮานอย บทความนี้ยังได้ชี้ให้เห็นว่า แรงกดดันจากชีวิตประจำวันในครอบครัวและความคิดเชิงกีดกันทางเพศที่ตกค้างมาจากจากยุคศักดินาเกี่ยวกับการแบ่งงานในบ้านได้ส่งผลกระทบเป็นอย่างมากต่อหน้าที่การงานของปัญญาชนสตรี บทความนี้ยังได้ให้ข้อเสนอแนะต่อการวางแผนด้านการพัฒนาทรัพยากรมนุษย์ของกรุงฮานอยในระยะต่อไป

**คำสำคัญ:** สตรีปัญญาชน ปัญญาชน ทรัพยากรมนุษย์ ความเท่าเทียมทางเพศ ความรับผิดชอบต่อครอบครัว

## Introduction

In every age, intellectuals are the foundation of social progress. Intellectuals are an important resource, reflecting the power of a country. This article is concerned with the role of females in the intellectual sector of Vietnam, which, newly named and acknowledged since the August Revolution in 1945, has developed very rapidly in the overall human resources of Hanoi.

In Vietnamese, the word “TRÍ THỨC” (intellectual) is derived from the traditional Chinese Hanyu character, 知識, in which “TRÍ” 知 means science or extensive knowledge and “THỨC” 識 means conscience. Thus “TRÍ THỨC” refers those who are highly educated, highly knowledgeable and able to apply knowledge to serve society. This word is equivalent to “intellectuel” in French and to “intellectual” in English. It became popular in the mid-nineteenth century to describe those who have academic or professional qualifications and perform mental activities, as distinct from physical labor. So far there are about 60 definitions of intellectual, with different approaches under different historical conditions. Basically, however, these definitions all agree on the general nature of an intellectual, as someone who is “highly educated” and “has intellectual work and innovative spirit.” Some definitions have even added the ability to “criticize,” as in some

European countries intellectuals, with their knowledge and ability to argue, have engaged in criticizing the shortcomings of society. However, there has not yet been a consensus of this opinion in Vietnam. Some maintain that there can be no critical thinking without intellectuals, while others believe that the value of intellectual ability depends on the value of intellectual products that result, rather than the role of social criticism. Within the scope of this research, we use the intellectual concept of Pham Tat Dong: “Intellectuals are brain workers who have higher education in certain fields of expertise, and are capable of independent thinking, being creative, spreading and creating spiritual and material value for society” (Pham Tat Dong, 2013:1), in which “higher education” means at least at university level.

Female intellectuals play an indispensable role in the intelligentsia. They have all the qualities of intellectuals who have graduated, with opportunities to receive abundant information, knowledge and the ability to create worthy products and materials. But, female intellectuals, besides having a role in society like male intellectuals, also carry the responsibility of caring for their family, like the majority of other women in Vietnam.

The image of Hanoi women throughout many centuries, as being graceful and elegant, resourceful in housework, and skillful at parenting, has become the symbol for “Trang An,”<sup>2</sup> which is present-day Hanoi. From the early twentieth century to the present, however, Hanoi women, especially those who are part of the intelligentsia, have made drastic changes. Images of females as professors, doctors, deans, directors, etc., defined as “the female intellectuals of the capital city,” have become very familiar, and have gradually become symbols of a civilized, modern and integrated capital.

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<sup>2</sup> Trang An is the former name of the capital during two feudal dynasties that were the most prosperous of ancient China: the Pre-Han Dynasty (206 BCE-8CE) and the Tang Dynasty (618-907). This place name was often used in Vietnam as a noun, meaning of the elegant capital city. Afterwards, Trang An became a symbolic name of Hanoi.

### **The “new women” of the early twentieth century**

During the feudal period (1938-1945) in Vietnam, the term “intellectuals” was almost synonymous with “educated people.” Over thousands of years, under the influence of Confucianism, most of these people tended to strive for higher education with the ultimate aim of taking a high position in the feudal government system. This system, however, forbade the participation of women, the vast majority of whom had no opportunity to engage in education. Names of female poets like Nguyen Thi Lo, Ho Xuan Huong, Ba Huyen Thanh Quan and Doan Thi Diem stand apart in the list of feudal intellectuals who were born or became famous in Thang Long-Hanoi for nearly 900 years, from the 10th century to the end of the 19th century (Vu Thi Phung, 2015: 289).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, together with the profound social differentiation and the formation of Western-style cities, the intelligentsia for the first time was mentioned as the most important part of the bourgeois class. They were mainly officials in the colonial ruling apparatus. Because Hanoi was the place of highest concentration of government offices and specialized management agencies of both Vietnam and all of Indochina, the federal ruling apparatus became bloated, as public service agencies developed, requiring a large number of high-quality officials. According to 1929 statistics, there were about 400,000 intellectuals, most of whom were living and working in Hanoi (Phan Huy Le, 2010: 334). With the rapid improvement of the education system, especially after the reforms taken by Indochina Governors General Albert Sarraut (1917-1919) and Martian Merlin (1923-1925), Hanoi was considered to have the most comprehensive education system in the entire Indochina Federation. Universities and colleges were located only in Hanoi and included the Colleges of Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, Law, Education, Agriculture and Public Works. In 1925 there were 994 graduates, providing intellectual resources for the national ruling apparatus (Phan Huy Le, 2010: 335).

Moreover, the number of freelance intellectuals engaged in mental professions, such as doctors, engineers, lawyers, teachers,

journalists, writers, painters also constantly increased. They played pivotal roles in Hanoi not only in ideological and cultural life through press activities, literature, art, music, but also in the democracy movement. Nevertheless, the intellectual concept in the French colonial period referred exclusively to men. In the list of names of intellectuals in all fields in Hanoi and all of Vietnam, names of females seldom appear, except for a few female artists. Under the “unwritten” rules of society, women mainly became housewives or engaged in small business activities.

The early twentieth century witnessed the first step in preparation for the evolution of the modern female intellectuals. At this time, some managed to step beyond the barriers of feudal ideology to have contact with progressive ideas. The policy of the French authorities initially expanded female education in order to “boost the morale and level of females and increase the appreciation and respect of society towards them” (Dang Thi Van Chi, 2015:26). Trung Vuong primary school in Hanoi and three others in Hue and Saigon were established for female students. After 1917, several primary and secondary schools began to accept female students studying together with male students. However, educated women accounted for only one percent of the population (Dang Thi Van Chi, 2015: 28).

Some females after graduation became teachers, journalists, engineers and doctors. Besides professional activities, a considerable number even participated in and established female associations with activities to spread democratic ideas about women’s rights and roles in society and to introduce progressive female movements in Europe. Although they were a product of the transition period, “this new female generation was becoming educated in the spirit of the West. These women were quick to learn and they used their pens to affirm the new role of women in society. They criticized the way society had been treating women” (Dang Thi Van Chi, 2015: 32).

Thus, under the influence of French culture in the early twentieth century, a trained female workforce, called the “new women,” was formed. They achieved their first results in the struggle for equal

rights. They had to courageously overcome the notion of “traditional women” to become the “new women” with knowledge of civilization, society and the world. However, these women came mainly from wealthy or official families who comprised a very small proportion of the population in a country where at that time 90 percent of the people were farmers. This number was also very small when compared to the majority of women who were doing housework. The scope of their work was very limited. In particular, they were not able to work in state agencies. Consequently, during the French colonial period, the word “intellectual” was only used for men. Although equal rights were mentioned in some women’s newspapers, they were not recognized in society.

### **Female intellectuals’ activities protecting and developing the country**

After the victory of the August Revolution (1945), President Ho Chi Minh at the Declaration of Independence declared the birth of Vietnam and political institutions promoting human rights with the slogan, “All people are born with equal rights.” With this declaration, the position of females reached a turning point. For the first time, Vietnamese women had the right to vote and participate in government. In Vietnam’s first general election on January 6, 1946, for the first time women participated in the vote on an equal status with men. Out of 333 delegates in the National Assembly, the most powerful organization of the country, 10 were female and Mrs. Nguyen Thi Thuc Vien was elected as a regional representative in Hanoi (Phan Huy Le, 2010: 525). Although the percentage of female delegates was still very low, previously attaining this position was unimaginable.

With more than 90 percent of Vietnam’s population illiterate, the government decided to open a campaign against illiteracy. In Hanoi, teachers and students from many universities participated in mass education classes, which lead to 2.5 million people becoming literate, of whom 70 percent were females (Le Mau Han, 2004: 174). In 1948,

the number of young females participating in primary schools accounted for 25 percent of the total (Nguyen Thi Thap, 1981: 141).

Beginning in 1964, the North began the struggle against American imperialism. The roles and positions of women, including those in Hanoi, had never been as evident in all areas of society as at this time. When most men entered the war, women became the main workforce. They continued to do all their usual tasks at home, such as caring for children and elderly parents, while also taking on most activities in society in place of men. Besides the role of females in the fields of industry and agriculture, their activities were most remarkable in three other areas: education, healthcare and the media. Even today the vast majority (90 percent) of teachers at schools in Hanoi are females. Training from compulsory education to the university level was maintained under different forms, ensuring that about 500,000 students could continue to study, preparing the workforce for the future in Hanoi. Females accounted for a significant proportion of doctors and nurses in most hospitals and medical facilities. Many female students in Hanoi, after graduation, went directly to hospitals or military medical stations in the battlefields in the Central Region and the South. Moreover, continuing the tradition of female activities in journalism, many volunteered to go war areas as journalists and writers after graduating from university.

### **Hanoi female intellectuals after renovation**

Hanoi female intellectuals became an important part of the workforce after the country's reunification. Hanoi entered the era of development, especially in 1986, with innovative policies and international integration. The importance of intellectual resources was raised, particularly when the "knowledge economy" was recognized as indispensable in Vietnam. Nowadays the development of Hanoi intellectual females is embodied in the labor structure in some specific areas. Female intellectuals now account for 42 percent of the country's intellectual resources. Their distribution is quite diverse as they are active in almost all areas of

society. They comprise 64 percent of those employed in education and training, 58 percent in social sciences and humanities, 55 percent in life sciences and 46 percent in information, manufacture and processing. There are significant differences, however, when compared to certain other fields. Females in natural sciences, security and defense account for only three percent; in transportation 10.4 percent, in mining and extraction 10.6 percent, in construction and architecture 12 percent (Hoang Ba Thinh, 2010: 327). These differences reflect traditional social perceptions of careers for females as well as the divisions of labor by gender in Vietnamese society.

Hanoi intellectual females comprise an elite segment in Vietnam. The capital has the largest concentration of agencies and organizations, and intellectual female forces are present in most areas, although with their numbers are smaller than those of men. In the section below we will analyze the intellectual female structure in certain areas in both a quantitative and qualitative sense.

### ***The field of education and training***

As the nation's capital, Hanoi is the country's center of education and training, with a high concentration of universities, research institutes, colleges, and vocational training centers. Since 2008, when it was expanded to include not only the old Hanoi province, but also Ha Tay province and some communes of Hoa Binh province, the number of higher educational institutions has grown to include 37 universities, 10 research institutes, and 14 colleges, accounting for one-third of the colleges, universities and research institutes of the country (Nguyen Hai Ke, 2010: 288). In these training institutions, the number of female teachers comprise a significant proportion of the total number of teachers. According to 2012 data, female teachers in universities and colleges accounted for about 40 percent of the total (out of 20,038 university and college teachers, about 8,000 people were women) (Hoang Ba Thinh, 2015: 402). The proportion of female university teachers in the field of social sciences and humanities, pedagogy and language accounted for 55-70 percent. For the number of lecturers in



the fields of science and technology and natural sciences, females comprised up about 30 percent.

Female teachers not only occupy a high proportion of positions, but also the quality of female teachers has increased by qualifications and scientific titles. According to the Committee for the Advancement of Females in Vietnam in 2011, out of every 100 persons with a bachelor's degree, 48 are female; out of every 100 with a master's degree, 34 are female; and out of every 100 with a doctor's degree, 24 are female.

In terms of those holding the titles of professor and associate professor, there has also been an increase in females in the field of education and training, as is evident through data starting from 1984 (preparation of the Renovation) to 2014. In 1976 only 29 scientists had the title of "professor" and none were female. In 1984, names of females appeared on the list for the first time. Until now, according to the State Council for Professor's Titles, the percentage of females with the title of "professor" basically did not change much, but the percentage of females with the title of "associate professor" has increased very significantly, from 3.5 percent in 1984, to 7 percent in 1997, 14.6 percent in 2004, 22 percent in 2011, and 25 percent in 2014.

In addition, among professors and associate professors who were appointed in 2008-2013, 73.7 percent work in universities, research institutes, and agencies that have participated in education and training in Hanoi. Only 10.84 percent are in Ho Chi Minh City and 15.99 percent are distributed throughout the local training facilities of the other provinces and cities. During the period 2013-2014, there were about 3,500 professors and associate professors working in the country.

The number of female teachers in compulsory education is larger. According to the Bureau of Statistics, in 2012, among the nearly 35,000 teachers in Hanoi, about 23,000 were female, of whom primary and junior high school teachers comprised nearly 80 percent, senior high school teachers accounted for more than 50 percent, as well as thousands of kindergarten teachers, 100 percent of whom were women (Hoang Ba Thinh, 2015: 402).

***The field of science and technology***

The highest concentration of centers and research institutes throughout the country is found in Hanoi. In addition to two research centers in Vietnam (the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences and the Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology), there are dozens of specialized research institutes and numerous research centers and institutes at universities, central ministries, government institutions and non-governmental agencies. In these agencies, a large number of intellectuals are engaged in research in the basic sciences, technology and applied sciences to solve the urgent problems of the country and Hanoi.

In the two largest research centers located in Hanoi, the Academy of Natural Sciences and Technology and the Academy of Social Sciences, females comprise an increasingly large proportion of the scientists. According to 2005 data of the Academy of Natural Sciences and Technology of Vietnam, female scientists accounted for 27.2 percent, but in 2014, they accounted for 36.73 percent. In Vietnam's Academy of Social Sciences, on June 6, 2015, the number of female scientists was 1068 out of 1739 officials and employees, accounting for 61.4 percent, a significant increase compared to previous years (49.44 percent in 2000, 51.78 percent in 2005, and 53.62 percent in 2008). Moreover, female staff make up 86.67 percent of one member institute.

In addition to quantity, the role of intellectual females is also reflected in the quality of research activities. Scientific topics are often used as important criteria for scientific and technological activities. In three years (2007-2009) female scientists successfully hosted 42 projects on the state level, 25 independent projects on the state level and 18 international cooperation projects under Protocol (about 12.1 percent) (Vu Minh Giang, 2010: 12). But by 2014, according to data from the Ministry of Science and Technology, the percentage of female scientists chairing state-level projects had increased to 24.80 percent. In social and human science it reached 25.72 percent, in natural sciences and technology it reached 23.88 percent.

According to the guidelines for developing research at universities, the number of lecturers directly involved in research at universities in Hanoi has increased greatly over the past 20 years, as has the participation of women. Many women are assigned to conduct research projects at various levels. Among those groups and individuals that receive the prestigious Kovalevskaya Award for female scientists, virtually no year goes by without representatives from Hanoi. Every year the Techmart Fair features many products made by female scientists, many of which are applied directly to solving urgent problems in Hanoi, such as pollution in many craft villages and dangerous diseases such as hepatitis B, diabetes, cancer, and HIV.

### ***Medicine and public health care***

Medicine and public health care is the area in which women are said to dominate. According to the Ministry of Health, in 2012, Hanoi had 16,040 health care workers, working in 50 public and private hospitals. The number of female employees was 10,683, accounting for 66.7 percent, of whom about 7500 held bachelor's degrees or higher. In leading hospitals, among the highly qualified doctors as professors, associate professors, PhDs and specialists, women accounted for a sizeable proportion in all fields. Moreover, in the tens of thousands of nurses who have gone through training in hospitals of the capital, women made up more than 80 percent. In most hospitals and medical facilities in Hanoi, the presence of female staff as leaders, even in chief positions has become quite common.

### ***Economics***

In the field of economics, the role of females can be seen in the number serving as managers and owners of business enterprises. According to VCCI's 2011 Annual Report, the proportion of female-led businesses accounted for 21 percent. Certain areas had a high percentage of female entrepreneurs; examples are education (56 percent), restaurants (37 percent) and hotel management (47 percent). The majority of businesses under female leadership were mostly in private fields,

accounting for 97 percent, whereas state enterprises accounted for only 5 percent. In small-scale enterprises, female leaders made up approximately 25 percent.

The findings of VCCI (2011) have shown that the labor capacity utilization rate in enterprises led by women leaders is higher than that of male leaders, which has created more employment opportunities for the disabled, recovering addicts and women (49.2 percent as compared to 39.3 percent under male leadership). Thus, in the business sector, although female leaders comprise a lower proportion overall, they are better able to create certain competitive advantages in comparison to males.

According to the Hanoi Women's Business Club, the business network which has more than 700 members, over 95 percent of business establishments with female directors have fulfilled the criteria of economic development, business expansion and ensuring jobs for thousands of workers. In the innovation and development of the capital economy, Hanoi female entrepreneurs have significantly contributed to the city's economic and social growth and stability. Numerous general directors of many banks and corporations are respected for their talents, powers and success.

### ***Management leadership***

With its special position as capital, Hanoi is the site of 22 ministries and ministerial-level agencies, as well as eight governmental agencies and many social and political organizations. Moreover, there are other authorities, including the Hanoi Municipal Party Committee, People's Committee, People's Council and other departments and agencies. These agencies require a large group of officials with highly qualified management and leadership capacity.

Vietnam's Constitutions of 1946, 1992 and 2013 declared that "male and female citizens have equal rights in all aspects of politics, economy, culture, society, and family," which have been specified in several laws, most typical of which is the Gender Equality Law. The number of women currently involved in all these fields accounts for

about 35-40 percent of the total number of officials. In the Political Bureau, for the first time in history two women currently hold the position of vice president of the National Assembly. According to 2013 data many ministries have at least one female staff involved in leadership. This is a huge step forward as compared to the years before 2009, when more than half of the ministries had no women in leadership positions (Tran Thi Van Anh, 2015: 10).

In Hanoi, certain important positions like the People's Council Chairman, Deputy Secretary of the Municipal Party Committee and Deputy City Chairman, and some department heads are women. In the 13th National Congress tenure, eight out of 30 member parliamentary delegates of Hanoi are female. Of 30 districts of Hanoi, five have women holding the highest leadership positions and many districts have women serving as deputies. Compared to many other places in the country, Hanoi has always had the highest proportion of women involved in high leadership positions. According to 2012 statistics, the proportion of women participating in the party executive committee at three levels (city, county/district and ward/village) was 18 percent, and at three levels of the people's council it was about 32 percent. Although this number is still modest compared to the real potential of women, it is an indication of the leaders' deep concerns for women, and more importantly, the effort made by women in demonstrating their ability to undertake the responsibilities assigned.

In addition to these areas, female intellectuals also play key roles in areas such as culture and arts, banking, tourism, and international civic and social organizations. Even in areas such as construction, architecture, diplomacy and defense, the presence of women is no surprise and in professional competency, informatics, foreign languages, and management, the proportion of female leaders and managers is not smaller than that of men. Therefore, we can assert that female intellectual resources cannot be excluded from general intellectual resources in the evolution of the modern capital and integration.

## Intellectual females and family responsibilities

However, there is another aspect of the life of female intellectuals that must be mentioned - looking after the family - which takes considerable time and effort. Studies have shown that in regions where economic conditions and living standards are improving, such as Hanoi, women have more opportunities to engage in health care, education and culture. In family relationships there are also many steps toward getting rid of outdated ideas and feudal practices involving women, especially among the youth. Relationships between family members have become equal, thus expanding development opportunities to women, as well as raising their social status. However, discrimination still exists. It can be seen most clearly in the division of labor and decision-making in the family. According to a survey of married couples conducted by the Committee for the Advancement of Women in Hanoi in 2000, the decisions made by husbands are much different from those made by wives. Important decisions, such as those involving spending, education and the careers of children, are made mainly by the husbands (accounting for 70-80 percent), while those made by the wives are just under 20 percent. Fifteen years later, in 2015, according to a survey involving 1250 respondents (851 women, 399 men) in the Hanoi area (Nguyen Thi Viet Thanh, 2015: 352) the wife's decision-making rights had not increased, but the proportion of couples making decisions jointly had increased, showing a step towards equality in family relationships.

Table: Decision-making in the family (2014)

	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Wives' decision</i>	<i>Husbands' decision</i>	<i>Joint decision</i>
1	In family business	9.7 percent	44.3 percent	44.9 percent
2	In small payments	71 percent	20 percent	7.3 percent
3	In large payments	10.7 percent	49 percent	39.2 percent
4	In children's education	15.5 percent	24.2 percent	58.2 percent
5	In children's career	11.2 percent	48 percent	39.5 percent
6	In entertainment	8.6 percent	46.8 percent	41.9 percent

However, in tasks such as shopping, cleaning, cooking, helping children learn, and taking children to school, despite certain sharing with husbands, especially for young couples under 35, the proportions undertaken by the wives are still very large (shopping: 85 percent, cooking: 79 percent; feeding: 70 percent; cleaning and dishwashing: 75 percent).

Obviously, women are facing many challenges as gender stereotypes and expectations are still widely held in society. Because of current economic and social conditions, female scientists must spend time on housework and childcare. Consequently, many women lack the time to cultivate knowledge and update new scientific information; family responsibilities undermine their motivation to keep moving forward. Moreover, there is the pressure of traditional images connected with women in Vietnam, most prominently, that of “sacrifice” - which actually makes many women cringe.

Therefore, performing the dual roles of social scientist and family caretaker still remains a challenge for female intellectuals. They are faced with devoting time to learning and improving their professional qualifications, exchanging and learning from others while still managing their time to ensure the happiness of the family. It is not easy to solve this problem as it requires great effort from each individual woman in addition to support from the community, society, the authorities and the family.

### **Forecast for development trends of intellectual females in Hanoi**

The social structure of female intellectuals in Hanoi is very diverse. As presented above, this human resource has shown a significant increase over the past 10-15 years. Forecasting its development trend so as to plan and use it reasonably is the task not only of policy makers but also of managers. Analyzing the social structure of female intellectuals in Hanoi also helps managers understand the nature of the work influenced by gender characteristics so that its potential can be realized.

We can imagine the female intellectual resources of Hanoi in the next 10-20 years if we consider the following statistics. First, for the groups aged over 50 and from 40-50, currently the number of males who have bachelor's degrees is twice that of females, the number of males who have master's degrees is 11 times as that of females, and the number of males who have doctoral degrees is 9 times as that of females. But these ratios have changed significantly for younger groups. In the group aged 30-40, the ratio is 1:1 (50 percent male, 50 percent female). In the group under 30, males account for 59.3 percent (Hoang Thu Huong and Dang Hoang Thanh Lan, 2015: 160). Consequently, in about 10 years, when the people who are now over 50 have retired, and those under 30 continue to be added to the intelligentsia, there will be no differences between the percentage of males and females at all levels of education.

Second, Hanoi continues to be supplemented by a powerful female intellectual resource graduating from universities in Vietnam and abroad. In 2009, out of 353,000 students studying at universities and colleges in Hanoi, 49.52 percent were women. In 2013, in Hanoi 174,768 female intellectuals with bachelor degrees joined the workforce in all fields, while less than 20 percent sought employment opportunities in other provinces. Moreover, out of over 120,000 high school graduates annually in Hanoi, evenly divided between men and women, approximately 30 percent will enter universities (public and private); thus intellectual human resources, including female intellectuals, will increase considerably. In addition, the number of students educated in universities abroad with expertise and a high level of foreign language proficiency and computer science ability has also increased markedly in recent years, promising high-quality human resources for Hanoi in the coming years.

Third, the rapid urbanization process in Hanoi also has become an important factor in promoting the increase in human resources in urban areas. In 1989, the percentage of workers in urban areas of Hanoi accounted for only 13.46 percent, while in 2004 it rose to 64.86 percent, and in 2012, it increased to 75.36 percent. This process has resulted in



the phenomenon of labor moving from the suburbs to urban areas. Although the proportion of skilled workers is not as high as that of unskilled workers, they have made a considerable contribution to the increase in the number of Hanoi female intellectuals serving the needs of agencies, especially in non-public sectors such as private universities and international organizations.

### **State policy towards female intellectuals and policy enforcement results**

Despite the progress made by female intellectuals in Hanoi in particular and Vietnam in general in both quantity and quality over the past 30 years, there is still a large gap between female and male intellectuals in professional and social activities. Whereas at the university level the ratio of men and women is equal, at the professional level the percentage of women is smaller. In recent years, the Vietnamese government has issued a number of policies to enhance the role of women and ensure their equal rights in society. The Law on Gender Equality, passed on November 29, 2006 by the National Assembly of Vietnam, was a significant step in that direction. The law consists of six chapters with 44 titles, consisting of essential regulations ensuring equal for women in almost all aspects of society, such as the right to vote and to be elected, equality in professional standards and age when promoted or appointed to the same position and equality in education and training.

However, several policies are still not consistent with reality; policy implementation is not really efficient; hence, it has not been able to motivate, attract, and enhance the working capacity and the creativity of the intelligentsia, particularly female intellectuals. In this regard, three obstacles to the development of women must be mentioned: recruitment, training-retraining and retirement age. Regarding recruitment, while the number of female graduates has increased, their job opportunities are still relatively small compared to those of males. Many recruitment agencies avoid considering women for positions because of the fear that women will take a long time for parturition and raising children. Many companies require women employees to sign an

agreement, saying that they will not get married or have a child for five years, before accepting them.

Although the law stipulates that men and women possess equal opportunities in training and retraining, in reality, the number of women appointed to training courses is lower than that of men. Many training or retraining programs are often accompanied by age limitations which hinder the participation of women under 35 as this is the time of marriage, childbirth and raising young children. Many women do not want to go on for further education because they worry that their husbands will disagree, and both genders still feel that “careers should be reserved for husbands only.” This attitude greatly hampers women’s advancement compared to men’s.

Another major obstacle to the advancement of the women is a five-year gap between men’s and women’s retirement ages. While the retirement age for men is 60, for women it is 55. The provisions related to the age of training, nomination, appointment, etc. are all based on this disparity in retirement age, creating a situation where men always have the advantage. These provisions also make many women reluctant to strive for careers, hence they resign or change to more minor and unimportant work and wait until retirement. From a labor resources perspective, these rules result in a waste of potential for society, cause difficulties for institutions in which women are proportionately larger and limit individuals’ right to work and contribute to society.

In order to overcome these obstacles, the authorities need to strengthen the enforcement of gender equality laws, taking careful consideration to modify inappropriate contents in the policies towards female human resources, supporting working conditions of women during pregnancy and supporting childcare. The sharing of family and society responsibilities is crucial to increasing opportunities for women’s development and achieving gender equality.

## Conclusion

Hanoi, more than anywhere else in Vietnam, with the demands of developing into a modern and civilized city, requires the participation of all social forces, including female intellectuals. Intellectuals should determine their specific responsibilities to society, such as researching to build a scientific foundation for the formulation of guidelines and policies, proposing effective methods based on the specific conditions of Hanoi, helping to train high-quality human resources for the capital now and in the future, creating valuable work in ideology and art, gradually improving science and technology of the country, striving to reach the regional as well as international level and creating more high-quality products which are competitive in domestic and international markets. Regarding the role of women, each is a mother or a sister who is responsible for maintaining family happiness, and as well as the one who holds the important role of nurturing and training the next generation to become good citizens. Support for female intellectuals who play dual roles as professionals and mothers will undoubtedly benefit society.

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