

Teacher Training in Vietnam

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Since the introduction of *Doi Moi*, a number of changes have occurred that exerted an important impact on Vietnam's system of education and training. First, government spending on education and training (E&T) has increased both in absolute terms and as a percentage of overall government spending during the 1990s. Particularly large increases occurred in 1993 and 1994 (46 percent and 33 percent of real spending growth in these years, respectively).

A second important change during the 1990s was the elimination of many regulations restricting or proscribing the private sector's role in E&T. New decrees and resolutions were passed that encourage the private sector to enter the education field. "Semi-public" and "people-founded" institutions, although they account for only a tiny proportion of total enrollments at present, are increasing rapidly in number. Non-public service is especially common in pre-school education, vocational and technical education and training (VOTECH), and at the tertiary level of general education. Non-public institutions cover nearly all of their operating costs from student fees.

A third and related policy change has been to allow public institutions to levy tuition fees, though only within rather strict limits, and to charge for other goods and services sold to the public. Household outlays on E&T at all levels accounted for 43 percent of total (government plus household) E&T spending in 1994. This proportion varies from 48 percent, to 59 percent, to 62 percent in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education respectively.

Between 1989 and 1992, education enrollments tended to fall off in Vietnam. Though

only temporary, the decline was dramatic in the case of both secondary (upper secondary especially) and pre-school education. The explanation for the decline must lie in changes in those factors that influence household decisions to invest, or not to invest, in human capital. Economic liberalization and rapid economic growth, as Vietnam was experiencing during this period, often imply expanded opportunities for high paying work and, therefore, greater incentive to invest in education and other productivity enhancing activities.

Clearly a combination of higher fees and other direct costs, as well as lost earnings due to changing employment situation, discouraged school participation for at least some families in some parts of Vietnam during the early 1990s.

The government's announcement of *Doi Moi* in the late 1980s ushered in a new period in the recent history of E&T. The transition from a centrally-planned to a market economy implied new self-reliance on the part of all Vietnamese. As noted, the government could no longer be relied upon to provide civil service jobs for all who graduate from secondary and tertiary institutions. In response, during this period, secondary enroll-

ments fell off sharply, and tertiary enrollments were nearly static.

But this period lasted only a few years. The “shock” of *Doi Moi* soon wore off, and individuals began to see opportunities in the newly-opened marketplace and believed that education held the key to unlocking these opportunities. The year 1992 began to see a recovery of enrollments in both lower and upper secondary education. Tertiary enrollments rose sharply. They have more than doubled in the years since. Primary enrollments continued their steady rise, about 2.1 percent annually since 1985.

Status quo of teaching staff

Vietnam’s teacher training has the following characteristics:

- ♦ In principle, only teacher training institutions have the right to train teachers. But recently some major universities have been allowed to establish teacher-training departments of their own. This differs from other countries;
- ♦ Teachers are trained for levels of education and subjects they will teach as can be seen in Table I, e.g., at the primary level, a teacher must be able to teach all subjects, at the lower secondary level, a teacher must be able to teach one main subject and one more extra subject, and at the upper secondary level a teacher can teach only one subject;
- ♦ Although the present qualifications of teachers are not very high, there is a tendency to standardize teachers by providing university-level education for teachers of all levels in the not too distant future;
- ♦ Teacher educators in teacher-training universities and colleges are graduates with special distinction or those trained overseas;
- ♦ Due to differences in geographical areas, teacher-training systems also vary to

a certain extent. For instance, areas with difficult conditions adopt 9+3 or 5+3 systems. There is now an effort to eliminate such systems;

- ♦ In-service teacher training is very complicated, especially for the primary and lower secondary education levels. Future program must be based on the standards set by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET).
- ♦ Today, the majority of teachers are using the traditional teaching method such as the chalk-and-talk approach or one-way lecture, and not the new teaching approaches such as learner- or child-centered approach, child-to-child approach, problem-solving approach, teaching with cases, etc. At the same time, they have a poor knowledge of foreign languages and information technology (IT) and so they cannot apply IT well to their teaching activities;
- ♦ The content of training can be composed of three groups of subjects.
 - **Group I :**
consists of shared subjects for all student-teachers such as psychology, philosophy, civic education, pedagogy, information science,
 - **Group II :**
consists of subjects directly related to what must be taught in school by would-be teachers,
 - **Group III:**
consists of professional theory subjects and subject didactic.

Teacher training system

The teacher training system in Vietnam has been reorganized from 200 to 90 teacher training institutions for all levels of education during the last few years. Table 1 provides a summary of the types of teacher training programs currently available.

Type	Quantity	Supplying Teachers for	Level of Management
University Education	10	- Lower and upper secondary schools - Kindergartens	MOET and provincial governments
Teacher Training College	45	- Lower secondary schools (and some primary schools)	Most of them under provincial governments and some under MOET (e.g. Central Music and Painting Teacher Training College)
Educational Training Management College	2	- Provincial and district department of education - General schools	MOET
Primary Teacher Training Institutions (normal schools)	35	- Primary schools	Provinces and cities

The term “training” here embraces initial teacher training, induction training and on-going professional development. So it can be illustrated as a continuum called training continuum as follows:

School pupils → Initial training → Induction period →
Staff development → Appraisal →
Further staff development

- ♦ **Initial training or pre-service training** is a period of training in teacher-training institutions whose duration depends on each level of teacher education.
- ♦ **Induction training** is a statutory probationary period for novice teachers. Schools concerned with effective teaching and quality control will therefore continue to provide a period of induction training for teachers in their first years of teaching.
- ♦ **Staff development** begins on the first day as a teacher and continues to the last day. It encompasses the first-hand experience learned from courses and in-service training attended by the individual, from professional reading, good practice in teaching and management learned from

other colleagues both consciously and unconsciously, as well as individual and team staff development gained in meetings with other teachers to discuss matters of common concern. All these processes serve to increase a teacher’s expertise.

- ♦ **Appraisal** not only provides a statement of a teacher’s effectiveness in delivering the agreed elements of a job description but also helps the appraisee and the appraiser to identify the staff development and training needs of the person being appraised. If it does not lead to further staff development and enhanced performance the appraisal cycle is a meaningless exercise.
- ♦ **Teacher development:** Together with teacher training, teacher development is also a process in which teachers can develop themselves professionally in a way different from teacher training. As commonly understood, development means change and growth. “Teacher development is the process of becoming the best kind of teacher that I personally can be.” (Underhill 1986)

Hereunder is a clear distinction made between teacher training and teacher development:

Teacher Training	Teacher Development
Compulsory	Voluntary
Competency-based	Holistic
Short-term	Long-term
One-off	On-going
Temporary	Continual
External Agenda	Internal agenda
Skill/Technique and knowledge based	Awareness-based, angled towards personal growth and the development of attitudes/insights
Compulsory for entry to the profession	Non-compulsory
Top-down	Bottom-up
Product/Certificate-weighted	Process-weighted
Means to get a job	Means to stay interested in the job
Done with experts	Done with peers
Concerns knowledge of the topic to be taught and of the methodology for teaching it	Concerns the learning atmosphere which is created through the effect of the teacher on the learners and their effect on the teacher

Number of teachers

There have been significant increases in the number of general school and kindergarten teachers year by year with an annual addition of 23,476 from School Year 1999 to School Year 2002 (Table 2). However, severe shortages of teachers at all levels remain.

The proportion of teachers who are women is high in Vietnam in pre-tertiary education. It is highest at the pre-primary level (100 per cent) and at the primary level (77 per cent) and then gets smaller as one moves up the education ladder. But even in upper secondary education, about half of the teachers in School Year 2002-2003 are female (Table 2).

The teacher-class ratios at all levels of education have been slightly increased and have not yet reached the national standard (Table 3). The student-teacher ratio at each level has declined considerably, reaching the national standard (Table 3).

Table 4 shows significant imbalances in the teacher-class ratios among areas and levels of education. These ratios are the lowest in the Central Highlands and the Mekong River Delta (Table 4).

At the primary level, the teacher-class ratios are very low in remote, highland and inacces-

Table 2. Number of teaching staff by school year

<i>Schoolyear</i>	<i>1999-2000</i>	<i>2000-2001</i>	<i>2001-2002</i>	<i>Percentage of female (02-03)</i>
Kindergarten education	96,330	97,576	103,083	100
Primary education	340,871	437,822	353,804	77
Lower Secondary education	208,849	224,728	243,130	69
Upper Secondary education	65,087	74,189	81,549	55
Total	711,136	744,315	78,566	70.2

Source: Educational Management Information Centre, MOET, 2002

	<i>Ratio</i>	<i>1999-2000</i>	<i>2000-2001</i>	<i>2001-2002</i>	<i>Standard</i>
Kindergarten education	Teacher-Class	1.13	1.16	1.19	2.0
	Student-Teacher	21.9	21.66	20.57	
Primary education	Teacher-Class	1.06	1.09	1.12	1.5
	Student-Teacher	29.5	28.03	26.32	
Lower Secondary education	Teacher-Class	1.5	1.55	1.58	1.83
	Student-Teacher	27.6	26.32	25.72	
Upper Secondary education	Teacher-Class	1.63	1.64	1.68	2.1
	Student-Teacher	30.3	29.65	28.61	

Source: Educational Management Information Centre, MOET, 2002

sible areas such as Central Highlands, Mekong River delta, North Central (only 1.02 [1999] and 0.09 [2002]). This ratio is high in areas of the Red River Delta and Southern Delta 1.25 (1999) and 1.14 (2002).

At the lower secondary level, the teacher/class ratio is very low in remote, highland and inaccessible areas such as the Central Highlands and the Mekong River delta (only 1.41 and 1.42) while this ratio is high in urban areas (1.84 and 1.65).

At the upper secondary level, the teacher/class ratio is similar to the lower secondary level such as 2.13 in the Red River Delta, 1.33 in the Mekong River Delta, 1.50 in the Central Highlands, 1.02 in the Southeast.

Teacher qualification

The quality of education is a function of the quality of teaching. The motivation and behavior of teachers are key determinants of

<i>Ref</i>	<i>Area</i>	<i>Kindergarten</i>	<i>Primary</i>	<i>Lower Secondary</i>	<i>Upper Secondary</i>
1	Northern Uplands	1.18	1.10	1.65	1.66
2	Red River Delta	1.29	1.25	1.84	2.13
3	North Central	1.11	1.09	1.46	1.67
4	Central Coast	1.16	1.09	1.55	1.56
5	Central Highlands	1.10	1.02	1.42	1.50
6	Southeast	1.34	1.14	1.57	1.52
7	Mekong River Delta	1.01	1.09	1.41	1.33

Source: Educational Management Information Centre, MOET, 2002

student achievement, and these, in turn, depend on teachers' qualifications and other characteristics.

The definition of what is a "qualified" teacher is specific to every nation and time.

In Vietnam today, a teacher in primary and lower secondary education is expected to have graduated from a college-level teacher training institution, and in the case of an upper secondary school teacher, to have graduated from a university. The rate of standard teachers at the levels of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education was 73.6% in 2000 on average. There are, however, teachers at all levels who do not meet these qualifications.

Today, it is in pre-primary education that the proportion of qualified teachers is at the lowest, about 51.1%, as compared with 77.16% in primary education 82.76% and 94.88% in lower and upper secondary education, respectively. The proportion of qualified teachers tends to be lower in the South than in the rest of the country. An objective of government policy is to increase the proportion of fully qualified teachers in all regions.

Teacher training and additional training

At present, the systems of training programs and teacher training institutions are relatively stable. The type of training is mainly meant to provide intensive regular training in central and local teacher-training institutions under the national unified training programs developed and issued by the MOET to meet the new requirements of teaching the new national curriculum and textbooks and keep pace with the general trends in education across the region and all over the world. Vietnamese education is undergoing major changes in all spheres, especially in curriculums, textbooks, teaching methodologies, management and teacher training.

No educational reform will succeed without a fully competent teaching force. And as said above, in Vietnam the teaching force determines the quality of education in general and of teaching-learning activities in particular. For this reason, teacher training, now more than ever, plays a vital role in producing effective teachers for the on-going educational renovation program.

Vietnam's teacher training systems can be illustrated in the following table:

<i>Level \ Training System</i>	<i>Under standard</i>	<i>Standard</i>	<i>Above Standard</i>
Preprimary		12+2 & 9+3	12+3 & 12+4
Primary	12+2 & 9+3 (for difficult areas)	12+3 (college education)	12+4 (higher education)
Lower Secondary		12+3 (college education)	12+3+1 (higher education)
Upper Secondary		12+4 (higher education)	12+4+2 (Post-graduate education)

Additional training for teachers in Vietnam is mainly self-training or teacher development as other countries often put it in close combination with short-term intensive training courses during the school year or summer vacation with the help of teacher trainers or key teachers, and curriculum writers.

The additional training of general school teachers and kindergarten teachers is done under the following programs :

- ◆ Standard-targeted training
- ◆ Periodic training
- ◆ Training to teach new textbooks
- ◆ Above-standard training.

Standard-targeted training is aimed at enabling those under-standard (under-qualified) teachers to reach the standards as set by the MOET for each level. For example, the standard training level is normal school education for kindergarten and primary school teachers; college education for lower secondary school teachers and higher education for upper secondary teachers.

Periodic training is a kind of training periodically provided to update teachers on new information about educational policies, plans or new knowledge of the curriculum or teaching methodology.

New textbook targeted training is a form of additional training provided for teachers when there are changes in the curriculum, subject matter content, textbooks or teaching methodology. This additional training is mainly given before a new school year to enable teachers to acquire new skills and update their knowledge of a new curriculum, textbooks, teaching methods and pedagogical competencies.

Above-standard training is provided for those teachers who have the need to be upgraded above the standards set by the MOET

and it is mainly aimed at meeting the need of pioneering training for 10-15 years to come.

Human rights content in teacher training

Human rights education content is one of the major contents in the general school curriculum and covers many areas of social life. Its content covers the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Constitution and laws, traditions and values of Vietnam, etc. It is taught not only in the official curriculum at the primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels but also in extra-curricular activities at these three levels.

Some legal documents recently issued by Vietnam and the book *Human Rights Lesson Plans for Southeast Asian Schools* published by the Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center in 2003 were also updated in additional training for teachers in a suitable way last summer (2005) by teacher trainers.

The content of additional training partly depends on the types of training involved. As far as the human rights education content is concerned, it is included in such subjects as civics and moral education. Because this content is not separated from other contents in these subjects, it must be dealt with in the additional training for teachers. In general, the training of this content is included in periodic training and training to teach new textbooks.

The human rights education content is also taught in pre-service teacher education in teacher training institutions but it is not taught separately as a subject. In general, it is included in such contents as legal education, civic education and moral education. Whenever, new contents related to the above issue are included in the new curriculum or textbooks, these contents will be provided for teachers during the summer additional training period every year which often takes place two months before a new school year.

Issues and problems about teachers and teacher education

There are several major problems facing the education system in Vietnam. They relate to the number of teachers, their qualification, and teacher education.

Severe shortages of teachers exist in all levels of education as well as in different subjects, as shown below:

1. By level of education:

- At the pre-primary level: about 80,000 standard teachers
- At the primary level: 15,157 teachers. This situation is likely more serious since nearly 100,000 in the school year 2002-2003 are unqualified to meet the requirements set for teaching the new textbooks of grades 1 and 6
- At the lower secondary level: 15,157 teachers
- At the upper secondary level: 2,297 teachers.

2. By subject (indicating a great imbalance in teacher training):

- Teachers for technical education: 19,000
- Foreign languages teachers: 20,000
- Physical education teachers: 16,000
- Music and painting teachers: 29,000.

These figures show an ever-deepening inequity among areas of the country: a great surplus of well-trained teachers in urban and delta areas (developed areas) and teacher shortages in remote, highland and inaccessible areas (under-developed areas).

The problem of poor qualification of teachers (under-standard teachers) comes in the following forms:

- Poor self-knowledge, subject knowledge and knowledge of students in a multicultural, multi-religious and context
- Low managerial skill
- Poor pedagogical competence

- Lack of reflection and ability to be self-critical, the hallmark of teacher professionalism.

In general the teaching staff are not yet qualified to meet the needs for improving the quality of education.

Teacher education suffers from the following problems:

- Teacher training institutions are poorly equipped with outdated facilities and training methods and lack systematically and scientifically written training materials.
- Great mismatch between the demand for expansion in size and improvements in quality.
- Contradiction between training needs and the existing capacity of the training system.
- Lack of policy for supporting deserving students and a suitable mechanism for the recruitment of high-quality students into the teaching profession.
- Slack management of graduates (who were provided with scholarships during the learning process). Some graduates quit the teaching profession.
- Location of teacher education programs.
- Poor and non-diverse content of teacher education programs.
- Main focus of training programs on theory but not on practical skills.
- Failure to diversify training forms (induction training, school-based in-service training and teacher development).

Major solutions in teacher training

The solutions to the problems of teacher training in Vietnam are based on the country's *Strategy for Educational Development (2001-2010)*. Under this strategy plan, the government is undertaking the following initiatives to improve teacher training:

- ♦ Develop a network of about 90 teacher

training institutions with sufficient number of good teacher educators and modern facilities and equipment.

- ◆ Build two key teacher training universities to train high quality teachers and undertake research in educational and training science.
- ◆ Allot more funds for the strengthening and upgrading of existing teacher training institutions in ethnic and highland areas and make sure that each province or city will have one multi-system teacher-training college with professionally-upgraded lecturers.
- ◆ Continue to study and formulate remuneration systems and policies toward teachers.

The Strategy for Educational Development (2001-2010) stems from the objective of achieving education for all under the *2001-2010 National Strategy for Socio-Economic Development*, a strategy plan for national industrialization and modernization by 2020. *The Strategy for Educational Development (2001-2010)* has the following guiding principles, among others:

- ◆ Education is a top national policy.
- ◆ Develop a Vietnamese popular, national and modern education.
- ◆ Education is the common cause of all the State and people.

It has the following over-all goals and objectives:

- ◆ Give priority to improving the quality of human resource training and development.
- ◆ Accelerate the pace of providing universal lower secondary education.
- ◆ Renovate educational goals, objectives, contents and curriculum: the educational goals, objectives, contents and curriculum must be renewed toward standardization, modernization and reaching the higher levels of other countries in the region and the world. They must meet the requirements of human

resource development in the socio-economic spheres of the whole country, of each area and of each locality. The following principles of education must be implemented: study must go hand in hand with practice; education must be combined with productive work, theory must be linked to reality; school education must be combined with education in the home and society. Teaching and learning equipments, laboratories, etc. must be upgraded.

- ◆ Develop teaching staff and renovate teaching methodology: “the teaching and educational methodology must be renovated and modernized from teaching students to absorb knowledge actively to guiding them to take the initiative to think and teaching them self-learning methods...” The teacher-training program should be renovated with great importance attached to “training them to keep up and improve the moral qualities of the teacher...”

Directions for teaching staff development:
At the preprimary level:

- ◆ Train sufficient number of preprimary teachers to meet the demands of public and non-public nurseries and kindergartens for teachers; move closer to standardizing preprimary teachers.

At the general education level:

- ◆ Readjust the structure of general school teachers; increase the number teachers for such subjects as music and painting (arts), physical education, home economics, career-oriented education with a view to diversifying the learning activity and other activities of students toward learning in two-sessions a day. It means students must learn both in the morning and in the afternoon.
- ◆ Step by step upgrading of primary teachers to college-level teacher education.

- ♦ Strive to help all lower secondary school teachers to have college-level education by 2005 and heads and deputy-heads of disciplinary groups to have university-level teacher education.
- ♦ Upgrade 10% of upper secondary teachers to master's degree education by 2010.
- ♦ Train and retrain a contingent of teaching staff sufficient in quantity and quality and professionally qualified to meet the demands and requirements of the newly-renovated curriculums and textbooks of all levels, especially for remote and inaccessible areas.
- ♦ Start to improve the quality of teaching staff at the initial or pre-service training through some projects of training teachers for both primary and lower secondary education funded by World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.
- ♦ Strengthen and expand the system of teacher-training departments and facilities in localities.
- ♦ Improve the quality of the additional training or in-service training of teachers with a primary focus on some such key topics such as teaching methodology, IT applications, improvement in the quality of teaching practice, and enhanced teachers' capability to apply IT in education.
- ♦ Renovate and modernize teaching methodology with focus on such approaches as learner-centered, problem-solving, cooperative learning in order to develop learners' thinking skill, critical thinking and creativity, as well as with a stronger emphasis on practical skills, experimental skills and problem-solving skills of student teachers in pre-service education.
- ♦ Renew the evaluation and assessment of teacher training by increasing oral examinations, using more tests and constructing databanks of examination questionnaires.

Policies:

- ♦ Complete and perfect the existing remuneration system and policies for teachers to make sure that most teachers can be ensured necessary conditions to teach well, especially towards those in remote, mountainous and inaccessible areas by establishing a system of economic and social incentives to encourage expert teachers to remain in the teaching profession.
- ♦ Formulate new and more appropriate preferential policies for teachers, especially for pre-primary teachers and those in rural, mountainous, remote and inaccessible areas.
- ♦ Develop new selection or enrolment procedures to enter the teaching profession (including provision of scholarships, arrangement of jobs for novice teachers after graduation).

Concluding Remarks

Teacher training in Vietnam is undergoing great changes with new contents and methods. Many new contents such as human rights education, legal education, adolescent reproductive health education are added not only to the teacher-training program but also to the general school curriculum. Vietnam is in the process of regional and international integration and certainly more new contents will be added to teacher training. This is the only way for Vietnamese education in general and teacher education in particular to meet global standards.

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