



The General Education at Tra Vinh Province in the Period of 2016-2022

Lam T Ngo

University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

* Corresponding Author: **Lam T Ngo**

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Abstract

General education, as the foundation of the national education system, always is considered as a key-factor in the socio-economic development for any nations, especially developing countries such as Vietnam. This article not only expresses the development journey of general education at Tra Vinh Province from 2016 to 2022, but also highlights the historical lesson on the combination between national policies and local specificities. The period of 2016-2022 was a significant milestone for the transformation of general education at Tra Vinh Province, a province in the Mekong Delta with a population of approximately one million, of which the Khmer ethnic group accounts for 30 percent. With the support from central and local policies, the province has achieved different positive results from maintaining universal education to enhancing teaching quality and educational infrastructure.

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Introduction

General education, as the foundation of the national education system, always is considered as a key-factor in the socio-economic development for any nations, especially developing countries such as Vietnam. After Doi Moi (1986), Vietnam's education system had already undergone far-reaching reforms in order to improve human resources quality, promote social equity and international integration. At Tra Vinh Province - a locality in the Mekong Delta with a high ethnic minority population (the Khmer ethnic group accounts for 30 percent), the general education not only reflects the nation's overall progress but also expresses the efforts to overcome local challenges such as poverty, climate change and the urban – rural divide. The period of 2016 - 2022 represented a critical transitional stage in the history of Tra Vinh Province's education, during which the province consolidated its previous achievements in universal education (1992 - 2015) as well as confronted with the vast upheavals namely the implementation of 2018 General education programme and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. By the historical perspective, this article will analyze the development of general education at Tra Vinh Province in this period in order to clarify the role of education in preserving and promoting the cultural identity of the Khmer ethnic group while also providing an empirical basis for future policymaking.

The historical significance of general education at Tra Vinh Province must be situated the broader context of educational development in Southern Vietnam after 1975; and especially following the province's re-establishment in 1992 after being separated from Cuu Long Province. After 2016, Tra Vinh Province has reached significant milestones, for example universal primary education in 2018, universal primary education at the appropriate age in 2006, secondary-school education in 2013, and high-school education in 2015. These achievements not only showed the effective results of the national policies such as Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW (2013) on fundamental and comprehensive reform of education and training but also reflected the province's sustained efforts to investing in ethnic minority education.

The socio-economic context of Tra Vinh Province between 2016 and 2022 further underlined the role of general education. With a population of approximately one million, the province relies mainly on agriculture, aquaculture, and tourism. Despite facing significant challenges from climate change - such as salinity intrusion and flooding - Tra Vinh province achieved a remarkable

reduction in poverty, dropping from 10 percent in 2016 to just 4 percent in 2022 (Tra Vinh's Statistic Yearbook 2022). Education contributed significantly to poverty reduction by raising the proportion of trained labor to 69% in 2022. However, the major disruption because of the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2022 has showed obviously the digital divide between urban and rural areas (only 50% of rural students had stable internet access compared to 80% in urban areas). Within this situation, the local policies such as Decision No. 1119/QĐ-UBND (2017) on the planning of the school network to 2030 and Decision No. 1794/QĐ-UBND (2021) on the adjustment of the academic year had the crucial roles. Moreover, to be suitable with the Khmer ethnic minority context, a bilingual education in both Vietnamese and Khmer is strictly necessary. In 2022, the province maintained eight ethnic minority boarding schools serving 2,730 students, thereby contributing to cultural preservation and promoting social integration

The study of general education at Tra Vinh Province in the period 2016-2022 is not only of historical significance but also of contemporary relevance, particularly as Vietnam pursues the goal of becoming a high-income developing country in 2045. According to Law of Education 2019, general education must prioritize the development of comprehensive competencies, life skills, and career orientation, rather than merely imparting knowledge. In Tra Vinh Province, the implementation of 2018 General education programme, introduced to Grade 1 in 2019 and extended to Grade 4 in 2022, achieved different positive changes namely the acceptance full-day teaching for primary school and the integration of the "Happy school" model in order to reduce academic pressure. In 2022, the statistical data indicate that the rate of students enrolled at the appropriate age reached 98.8% for secondary-school and 95.5% for high-school; both rates were higher than the average ones at the Mekong Delta. Besides, the province had 147 schools reached the national standard (36.29% of total) in 2022, compared to 27 schools in 2016 (Annual Report, Tra Vinh's Department of Education and Training, 2022). These indicators demonstrate significant progress but revealed persistent challenges such as shortages of specialized teachers in Information Technology and Arts; as well as limited access to teaching facilities with computers available for only 75% of instructional needs in 2022.

Objective

In recent years, there were various studies about general education at Mekong Delta that addressed different issues such as the quality of general education, the role of education in human resources development, education for the ethnic minority community, and the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on the education sector. However, in-depth research specifically focused on Tra Vinh Province remains limited, in which these existing studies were confined to sectoral reports or fragmented statistical accounts. This study seeks to overcome above limitation throughout providing comprehensive, systematic and in-depth analysis; as well as applying historical and logical perspectives to ensure scientific rigor.

Subjects

The period of 2016-2022 represents a critical transitional stage in the history of education in Tra Vinh Province. This study aims to analyze the development of general education

at Tra Vinh Province in this period; contributes to clarify the role of education in preserving and promoting the cultural identity of the Khmer ethnic community; as well as provides empirical foundation for future policymaking.

Scope of Research

Content: This study not only highlights the development progress of general education at Tra Vinh Province from 2016 to 2022 but also emphasizes the historical lesson on the combination between national policies and local specificities. In the context of Vietnam's confrontation with the Fourth Industrial Revolution and climate change, Tra Vinh's educational experience may play as a model for other provinces with a high ethnic minority population; thereby contribute to the construction of a sustainable learning society.

Timeframe

From 2016 to 2022

Geographical Area

Tra Vinh Province.

General Research Method

The article is based on the methodology of dialectical materialism, historical materialism, and the viewpoints of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Specific Research Methods

A combination of two main methods: historical method and logical method.

Results and Discussion

1. Policies and legal framework for general education at Tra Vinh Province in the period of 2016-2022

Policies and legal framework play as fundamental roles in the orientation for development of general education at Tra Vinh, a province with a high ethnic minority population and an agriculture-based economy. The period of 2016-2022 is the witness for the consistence between national and local policies in order to consolidate universal education, enhance quality and respond to challenge from the COVID-19 pandemic. These policies reflected not only the continuity of Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW (2013) on fundamental reform of education, but also the adaptation with the Law of Education (2019). As a result, the number of general education students in the province increased from 157,936 in 2016 to 179,274 in 2022, with the upper high-school graduation rate reaching 98.97% in 2022.

The People's Committee of Tra Vinh Province issued many Decisions for planning and organizing general education in order to ensure feasibility and sustainability. Among these, Decision No. 1119/QĐ-UBND on 16th June 2017, which approved the planning of the school network to 2020 with a vision toward 2030, was particularly important. This document proposed the expansion of the school network that focused on the rural area and other one with ethnic minorities. That led to the increase from 400 schools in 2016 to 427 in 2022, with the proportion of solid classrooms at 88.16%. The planning emphasized optimizing the facilities, eliminating temporary classrooms and integrating technology according to the province's goal of universal high-school education in 2015. By 2022, there are 147 schools reaching the national standard (36.29%) that proved the effectiveness of this

Decision in improving the quality of educational infrastructure.

Decision No. 08/2022/QĐ-UBND on 6th April 2022 issued function, tasks, power and organizational structure of Tra Vinh's Department of Education and Training was also another important legal document. This reinforced the Department's role in state management, including the supervision of implementation of 2018 General education programme (introduced to Grade 1 in 2019 and extended to Grade 4 in 2022), teacher training and quality assessment. With the rise in number of teachers from 9,514 in 2016 to 10,311 in 2022 (100% reaching the national qualifications standard and 18.22% exceeding it), the Decision supported the training of 30,127 teacher participants that focused on the renovation of teaching methods. In addition, Decision No. 1557/QĐ-UBND (2017) issued the plan for constructing the national standard school from 2017 to 2020, with the orientation toward 2025 that stimulated the investment, contributed to raise the rate of national standard school form 120 in 2016 to 147 in 2022.

The local plan at Tra Vinh Province concentrated on the implementation of Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW, with the Provincial Party Committee's action program in order to reform comprehensively education. The 2023 conference summarizing ten years of implementation highlighted Tra Vinh's achievements such as maintaining universal primary education at level 3, secondary-school education at level 2 and high-school education at level 1. By 2022, 100% of communes at Tra Vinh had achieved the status "Learning community", while student's completion rate covered over 99% at all programmes (98.67% at primary-school education programme - an increase of 0.62% compared to 2016). The plan on improving educational quality of Tra Vinh Province between 2022 and 2025 (issued in 2022) was the significant policy document for setting objectives, task and solutions through 2025, with a vision toward 2030. The plan emphasized to enhance teacher's competences, reform curriculum and support disadvantaged students with the prioritized state budget for ethnic minority education.

Furthermore, Decision No. 1293/QĐ-UBND (2022) on the implementation plan of the project on strengthening information technology application and digital transformation from 2022 to 2025, with a vision toward 2030 had promoted digital education. It led to expanded computer and internet provision, reaching 75% in 2022, that supported the online teaching-learning mode during the pandemic.

With 30 percent of the Khmer ethnic group in the province's population, policies supporting ethnic minority education have been the major focus. By 2022, the system of eight ethnic minority boarding schools were established to serve 2,730 students, especially in remote areas such as Cau Ngang and Tra Cu. Khmer languages instruction was expanded in more than 100 schools, with the rise numbers of students from 15,000 in 2021 to 28,500 in 2022, combined with teaching Vietnamese language in order to promote integration. Besides, 134 in total 143 Khmer pagodas at Tra Vinh organized Khmer language classes for students in the summer holidays, with over 19,000 participants annually. This policy was consistent with Decree No. 05/2011/NĐ-CP on ethnic affairs, contributed to reduce the dropout rate and increase the enrollment rate of Khmer middle-school students at the appropriate age to 95% in 2022. The Khmer intermediate school Pali at Tra Vinh City, the first school at the Mekong Delta trained Khmer Buddhist monks, thereby

playing an important role in cultural preservation.

Educational socialization was promoted by encouraging beyond the state-run investment, with 14 private-sector school in 2022, and by mobilizing community resources through the "Learning family" and the "Learning community" models. By 100% of communes at Tra Vinh achieving the status "Learning community", it was demonstrated clearly local engagement. Resolution No. 16/2022/NQ-HĐND regulated paying levels for providing support to teachers joining to the training on new textbooks curriculum. It contributed to implement the Curriculum 2018, with full-day teaching for primary school and life-skill education.

The COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2022 required rapid policy adjustment. Decision No. 1794/QĐ-UBND on 31st August 2021 issued the framework academic calendar for the 2021-2022 school year, in which changing the start of school to 15th-17th September 2021, beginning the first semester on 20th September 2021 and ending it on 21st January 2022 for pre-school and primary school. This legal document supported the swap to online learning, and helped to limit the learning disruptions, although many challenges emerged because there are only over 80% of rural students had reliable internet access. The rate of high-school graduation reduced to 97% in 2020 but rose again to 98.97% in 2022.

In summary, policies and legal framework at Tra Vinh Province in the period of 2016-2022 had created a solid foundation for general education with a main focus on ethnic minority support and crisis adaptation. These legal documents not only enhanced the educational quality but also reduced poverty, increased number of trained labors to 69% in 2022, and reflected historical lesson on the role of local policies within the broader national context.

2. Infrastructure and school network of general education at Tra Vinh Province in the period of 2016-2022

From 2016 to 2018, the total number of schools remained at 343 schools. However, from 2019 onwards, this figure reduced dramatically to 297 schools in 2019 and stabilized at 288 schools between 2020 and 2022. The rapid decline of over 55 schools (equivalent to 16%) reflects the process of school merging according to the policy on streamlining the system, reducing administrative units and enhancing the efficiency of infrastructure use. The number of primary schools significantly decreased from 213 schools in 2016 to 163 schools in the period of 2020-2022, a reduction of nearly 24%. The main reason is the trend of primary school merging at small-scale areas with low student enrollment. The number of secondary schools declined slightly from 100-101 schools (2016-2018) to 96 schools (2020-2022). The number of high schools remained stable at 29 schools during the period of time indicating relatively consistent scale at this educational level. To opposite with the declined trend in the number of schools, number of nationally standardized schools increased steadily, rising from 120 in 2016 to 147 in 2022, a raise of 22.5%. This demonstrates substantial improvement in school quality, consistent with strategies to upgrade infrastructure and teaching staff, as well as to meet the requirements of general education reform.

In general, the number of classes had a stable remain, fluctuating from 5,452 to 5,606 classes. Although the number of classes reduced slightly in the period of 2016-2019, this figure remained stable at 5,482 from 2020 to 2022, indicating alignment with student enrollment trends. At primary-school

level, the number of classes decreased from 3,330 classes in 2016 to 3,112 classes in the period of 2021-2022. A decline in over 200 classes expressed the downward trend in the number of primary schools and class merging at small-scale schools. At secondary-school level, the number of classes remained stable at around 1,576 – 1,669 classes, reflecting steady student enrollment at this level. This figure of high-school level increased from 607 classes in 2016 to 749 classes between 2021 and 2022, a rise of 23%. This upward trend was consistent with the data about the increase in the number of high-school students as the same period of time that showed a growing demand for higher levels of education. The proportion of permanent classrooms rose dramatically from 85% in 2016 to 100% in 2022. This tremendous achievement indicates that the completion of the classroom consolidation program, ensuring safe, sustainable learning environments that meet long-term educational requirements.

The period of 2016-2022 witnessed significant transformations in the general education system of Tra Vinh Province. Although the total number of schools declined significantly because of merging, the quality of school, infrastructure and the proportion of permanent classrooms were improved markedly. The increase in nationally standardized schools and the successful completion of school consolidation indicated the remarkable achievement in the educational development strategy. Nevertheless, obstacles remain in balancing the school network and further raising the proportion of standardized schools. Hence, it is necessary to implement comprehensive measures for maintaining the management efficiency as well as ensuring the impartial and convenient educational access for all students.

3. Student enrollment scale and general graduation rate

At Tra Vinh Province, the total number of students increased from 157,936 in 2016 to 179,274 in 2022, a rise of 13.5% for seven years. This upward trend proposes both increasing demand for and improved access to general education, reflecting the attempts by expansion of the school network, the universal education policies and demographic growth in the school-age population. Number of primary-school students covers the biggest proportion with about 82,000 – 89,000 students showing the stability at the entry level. Number of secondary-school students fluctuates around 55,000 – 59,000 students, indicating the drop-out situation during the transition from primary school to secondary school. At high-school level, this figure rose dramatically from 20,562 students in 2016 to 30,375 students in 2022, a raise of 47.7%. This positive outcome reflects that more and more students are continuing their studies beyond secondary school rather than drop-out or joining in the labor market at the young age. Such structural shifts underscore the success of policies on supporting students who come from disadvantage backgrounds and the ethnic minority groups; as well as effective campaigns to sustain school participation. The high-school graduation rate from 2016 to 2022 consistently remained high, fluctuating from 95.83% to 99.17%. Especially, from 2017 onwards, these rates were generally above 97% that indicated the improving and stabilizing educational quality. In 2017, it covered the highest rate at 99.17% reflecting the breakthrough in quality management and final-year student preparation. Between 2019 and 2020, in spite of the fluctuation - a minor decline to 96.72%, this proportion recovered rapidly and reached at 99% in 2022. This resilience highlights the adaptability of the

general education system in overcoming challenges, particularly impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The effectiveness of online learning, remedial support programs, and reforms in student assessment contributed significantly to this recovery.

Number of the ethnic minority students rose from 51,064 in 2016 to 62,388 in 2022, equivalent to 22.2%. To be higher than the general increase in whole province (13.5%), this proportion highlighted the determined attempt by mobilizing ethnic minority children to attend school. At Tra Vinh, there were about 29,000 – 34,500 primary-school students covering over 55% in the total number of the ethnic minority students. This figure at secondary-school level increased from 16,798 students to 20,173 students, a growth of 20%. At high-school level, number of the ethnic minority students jumped from 4,627 in 2016 to 7,634 in 2022, a dramatic rise of 65%. In particular, a rapid increase at high-school level demonstrated marked improvements in reducing early school dropout rate and indicated the effectiveness of policies on scholarship programmes, tuition support, and dormitory services for ethnic minority students. Although number of the ethnic minority students grew quickly, the percentage between this figure and total number of provincial students remained stable around 34% - 35%. This persistence underscores the ongoing need for targeted support, given that ethnic minority students often suffer from different greater disadvantages namely economic conditions, language, and geographical distance.

The general education system at Tra Vinh Province in the period of 2016-2022 achieved many notable progresses such as expanding student enrollment, maintaining high and stable graduation rates, and significantly improving participation among ethnic minority students. However, there were remaining challenges in sustaining secondary-school enrollment, narrowing down educational disparities for minority students, and enhancing training quality. Continuing comprehensive implementation of measures on infrastructure, support policy, renovation of teaching methods will be the key to improving the quality of human resource in the coming period.

4. Teaching staff and Educational management personnel in general education at Tra Vinh Province, 2016-2022

The total number of provincial teachers decreased gradually from 10,311 in 2016 to 9,514 between 2021 and 2022, a decline of 7.7% for 7 years. This downward trend is caused by two main reasons: (i) staff streamlining and organizational restructuring aimed at greater efficiency; (ii) changes in the scale of schools and student enrollment, especially as result on school merging.

At primary-school level, number of teachers fell from 5,079 in 2016 to 4,611 in period of 2021-2022, a fall of 9.2%. This is the strongest reduction among three levels of general education, being compatible with the decline in recorded number of primary schools. Number of secondary-school teachers reduced from 3,555 (2016) to 3,315 (2022), equivalent to 6.7%. By contrast, this figure at high-school level remained relatively stable, fluctuating around 1,588 – 1,710 teachers, reflecting the increasing demand at this level as student enrollment expanded.

Between 2016 and 2022, the proportion of teachers meeting the professional standard increased from 95% to 100% that highlighted the province's efforts to improve teacher qualifications in line with Ministry of Education and Training

requirements. In particular, the rate of teachers exceeding the professional standard rose from 10% in 2016 to 18% in 2022, indicating a growth in number of students surpassing the standard (holding higher levels of qualification such as graduate at college, university and postgraduate degree). This major achievement contributed to enhance teaching quality, renovate teaching methods and meet requirements of new general education curriculum.

Number of ethnic minority teachers remained relatively stable, averaging around 2,120 persons and covering 22% of the provincial teaching workforce. In which, the largest proportion (over 60%) worked in primary schools. At secondary-school and high-school level, although both percentages were lower, a small increase was witnessed from 235 in 2016 to 252 in 2022 at high-school level.

The qualification structure of ethnic minority teachers improved in parallel with the provincial average: the share of teachers meeting professional standards increased from 95% in 2016 to 100% in 2022, while those surpassing the standard rose from 10% to 18%. This reflects targeted efforts to enhance the competencies of ethnic minority teachers, enabling them to meet the demands of educational reform and to better support their communities.

Data in the period of 2016-2022 indicated that in both terms of quality and structure, teaching staff and educational management personnel were observed the positive progress

of development. Although there was a downward trend in total number of teachers, the proportion of teacher meeting and surpassing the professional standard increased steadily; that reflected the improvement in competency of educational human resources at Tra Vinh Province. Particularly, the stability and advancement of ethnic minority workforces underscores the effectiveness of policies prioritizing education in ethnic and rural areas. However, challenges remain in terms of workload, professional development, and teacher supply, requiring continued reforms to ensure the balanced and sustainable development in general education.

5. SWOT analysis of general education at Tra Vinh Province in the period of 2016-2022

In the context of globalization and digital transformation, general education is considered as critical foundation for developing the high-quality human resources. In the period of 2016-2022, general education at Tra Vinh Province witnessed significant positive changes that reflected many efforts on implementing national policies such as Resolution 29-NQ/TW, Decision 1557/QD-UBND, Decision 1293/QD-UBND and others. To provide an objective assessment of the current situation, the SWOT Analysis Method is used to clarify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities threats of general education system at Tra Vinh by the statistical data on students, schools, teachers and training quality.

Table 1: SWOT analysis of general education at Tra Vinh from 2016 to 2022

Strengths	Weaknesses
Student enrollment increased by 13.5% (2016-2022), with high-school enrollment rising by nearly 50%.	Number of schools declined from 343 to 288 due to the mergers, causing challenges for students in remote areas.
Rate of high-school graduation remained stable at over 95%, and reached at 98.97% in 2022.	Only 51% of new schools met national standards in 2022, falling short of development targets.
Permanent classrooms rate rose from 85% in 2016 to 100% in 2022.	Small rate of teachers surpassing the professional standard, with 18%, was insufficient to the renovation of general education curriculum.
Number of national standard schools grew from 120 to 147 in period of 2016-2022.	The limitation in information technology and foreign languages of ethnic minority students led to risks of inequality.
100% of teachers meet the professional standard, with 22% coming from ethnic minority groups.	Training quality was inconsistent among urban and rural areas, Kinh and Khmer communities.
Opportunities	Threats
There were many strong supporting policies such as Resolution 29-NQ/TW, Decision 1557/QD-UBND, Decision 1293/QD-UBND.	There is a digital gap between urban and rural areas, especially in terms of internet connectivity and device access.
Digital transformation and online teaching practice introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic open a new direction for education.	It was very difficult to maintain number of national standard schools because many of them faced the risk of "falling below standard".
Expansion of socialized education, mobilizing resources from communities and enterprises.	Socio-economic fluctuation including pandemics, migration, and climate change impacted to student enrollment.
International integration provided opportunities on cooperation, scholarships and individual competences improvement.	Increasing competition for high-quality human resources with larger provinces and metropolitan areas.

5.1. Strengths

Total number of students jumped from 157,936 in 2016 to 179,274 in 2022, a rise of 13.5%. In particular, number of high-school student raised nearly 50% (20,562 – 40,375), demonstrating the growing demand for education and the effectiveness of student retention strategies. Graduation rate remained stable above 95%, and reached at 98.97% in 2022, indicating stable quality aligned with national standards. Increasing from 85% to 100% of permanent classrooms between 2016 and 2022 was the remarkable achievement that facilitated innovation in pedagogy and ICT application. Number of national standard schools increased 120 in 2016 to 147 in 2022, equivalent to the rising from 35% to 51%. This result expressed that education in Tra Vinh focused on the quality improvement instead of quantity expansion. By 2022, all teachers were fully qualified, with advanced

qualification rates improving from 10% to 18%. In which, 22% of ethnic minority teachers also reaching the qualification standard contributed to promoted educational equity for Khmer students.

5.2. Weaknesses

Total number of schools reduced from 343 in 2016 to 288 in 2022 due to the mergers. It led to increasing the distance from house to school impacting to students in remote areas. Despite progress, only 51% of schools met national standards by 2022, meaning nearly a half schools at Tra Vinh were lower than national criterion, especially at disadvantage localities. Limitation on rate of teacher meeting the qualification standard, with only 18% of them owning high qualifications, was insufficient with the requirement for renovation of general education curriculum and international

integration. Although number of ethnic minority students accelerated rapidly from 51,064 to 62,388, they still faced difficulties in language, socio-economic conditions and technological access, leading to risk of educational inequality.

5.3. Opportunities

There were several policy frameworks provided strong legal and institutional foundations such as Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW (2013) emphasized comprehensive educational reform, Decision No. 1557/QĐ-UBND (2017) promoted the development of national standard schools, Decision No. 1293/QĐ-UBND (2022) advanced educational digital transformation. These policies established pathways and resources for sustainable development in Tra Vinh's general education. The COVID-19 pandemic strongly promoted online teaching practice in order to create conditions for information technology application. Decision No. 1293/QĐ-UBND (2022) made an opportunity in educational modernization, digital learning resources, education management by data. Trend on mobilizing social resources, especially from enterprises and Khmer communities, supplied investment budget on educational infrastructure and scholarships for disadvantaged students. The educational cooperation programmes, international scholarships provided opportunities all students and teachers in the province to improve individual competences and adopt advanced teaching methodology.

5.4. Threats

There is a digital gap between urban and rural areas. In spite of universal permanent classrooms, the information technology infrastructure remained uneven, with ethnic minority and rural students facing limited access to devices and internet connectivity. Many of national-standard schools faced the risk of "falling below standard" due to insufficient resources for maintenance, particularly in both terms of student enrollment and teacher quality. High graduation rate may not cover up the entirely inconsistent among urban and rural areas, Kinh and Khmer students. Migration for working, climate changes, pandemics and others posed significant risks to student retention, particularly at the secondary-school level, where early dropout persisted.

Conclusion

The period of 2016-2022 witnessed significant progress of general education at Tra Vinh Province, reflecting collaborative efforts to implement the national policy on fundamental and comprehensive educational reform. At first, in terms of student enrollment, total number of students increased from 157,936 in 2016 to 179,274 in 2022, with 13.5% of rise. In particular, number of high-school students grew up nearly a half, showing impressive results in student retention as well as in encouraging them to continue education beyond secondary-school level. This trend serves as a positive indicator for the development of a qualified local workforce.

Secondly, about educational quality, rate of high-school graduation remained stable at over 95% during the period of time and reached at 98.97% in 2022. This positive outcome emphasized standardizing process and teaching quality improvement while also highlighted the resilience of the educational system in adapting to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Third, in terms of educational infrastructure, permanent classrooms rate rose from 85% in 2016 to 100% in 2022 whereas number of national-standard schools increased from 120 to 147, equivalent to the growth from 35% to 51%. In spite of the reduction (from 343 to 288) in total number of schools due to merging policies, concentrating resources on key institutions has yielded notable improvements in infrastructure and educational outcomes.

Fourth, on teaching workforces, by 2022, all teachers in Tra Vinh met the professional standard, in which rate of teachers surpassing the standard climbed from 10% to 18%. Number of ethnic minority teachers (about 22%) owned the qualification, playing an important role in narrowing educational opportunity gaps between Kinh and Khmer students. This advancement provides a solid foundation for implementing the 2018 General Education Curriculum and for integrating information technology into teaching and learning.

Nevertheless, there were some limitations that should be considered. The proportion of national-standard schools reached 51% in Tra Vinh, remaining below the specified target, particularly in disadvantaged districts. The proportion of teachers exceeding the professional standard remained modest, not being alignment with the requirements of renovation. Inequalities in educational access between urban and rural areas, and between Kinh and Khmer students persisted, particularly regarding learning conditions, foreign language proficiency, and digital literacy. In addition, although school merging policies supported to rational planning, they contributed to increased travel distances for students in remote areas.

In summary, the period of 2016-2022 created a solid foundation for developing continuously general education at Tra Vinh Province toward standardization, modernization and equity. Achievements from student enrollment, educational quality, infrastructures and teaching workforces provide crucial conditions for realizing the province's educational goals for 2025 and 2030. However, for sustainable development, Tra Vinh should concentrate on increasing the proportion of national-standard schools, accelerating teacher professional development beyond minimum requirements, strengthening digital transformation and reducing the inequality among different localities. Only through the integrated implementation of these measures can Tra Vinh's general education system meet the requirements of international integration while contributing to the development of high-quality human resources for the socio-economic growth of the province and the Mekong Delta region.

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