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## Education developing in Vietnam: Current situation and solutions in the context of international integration

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### Abstract

With noble goals and missions, it is the mission of “providing people with a good education”, education and training play an important role in the development of society, because it not only trains people who have knowledge, have good professional qualifications, but also train people who have good spirit, consciousness, moral and physical qualities, serving the socio-economic development. Today, all countries in the world, including Vietnam, consider investment in education and training to be investment in development not only for today’s generation, but also for the next generation, and identify development of education and training as a top national policy. In the context of international integration, Vietnam’s education faces many difficulties and challenges when our education is still too

heavy on transmitting knowledge but not directed to the quality and capacity development of learners; the quality of the contingent of teachers and administrators is not equal; The infrastructure system still has many limitations. The problem is that Vietnam needs appropriate solutions to develop education to meet the requirements posed by citizens in the process of international integration as strongly renovate teaching and learning content, programs and methods at all educational levels, encourage lifelong learning, renovate the state management mechanism of education and training to suit the process of industrialization and modernization in Vietnam, build and develop a contingent of quality teachers and complete the national education system in an open, modern and connected direction

**Keywords:** Education, training, international integration, Vietnam

### Introduction

In today’s era, education and training is the most effective way for people to promptly access the latest information, update, enrich their knowledge and creative capacity; only through education and training can all the resources be trained, developed and promoted effectively. Therefore, from past to present, every country and ethnic group in the development process has highly appreciated the important role of education; and today, people not only consider education and training to be a special social activity, part of the superstructure, but also as a factor holding the fundamental position and the driving force in determining development of socio-economy; investment in education and training is an investment for the future.

Ho Chi Minh pointed out a particularly important role education plays in the formation and development of people, saying: “An ignorant people is a weak people” (Ho Chi Minh, 2011: 7) <sup>[5]</sup>. Imbued with that thought, during the revolution as well as in the comprehensive renovation of the country, the Party and State of Vietnam have always paid attention to the development of education, training and affirmed: “Education and Training is the top national policy, the decisive factor for the successful implementation of the cause of national construction and defense; is the cause of the entire Party and people” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2013: 1) <sup>[1]</sup>. Vietnam also affirmed: “Education is the top national policy. To develop education and training aimed at improving people’s intellectual standards, training human resources and fostering talents. Strongly shifting the educational process, mainly from equipping knowledge to comprehensively developing students’ competencies and qualities; Learning goes hand in hand, reasoning associated with practice. Education development associates with the needs of socio-economic development, national construction and defense, scientific and technological progress, and requirements for human resource development and the labor market” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2016: 114-115) <sup>[2]</sup>. This article analyzes the achievements, challenges and solutions of Vietnam’s education development in the current international integration context.

### The main achievements of Vietnamese education

Firstly, with regard to the Early Childhood Education. According to a report by the Ministry of Education and Training, in the 2013-2014 school year, only 18 provinces and cities were recognized as meeting the standard of universal preschool education

for children 5 years old, by 2017, this figure was 63/63 provinces and cities; The network of schools and preschool classes is growing day by day, the rate of non-public schools and classes has increased rapidly. The rate of mobilization of children exceeds the target at all ages. In August 2018, the Government unanimously agreed on the policy of implementing the policy of free tuition for preschool children 5 years old and supporting the payment of tuition fees for non-public base school for universal children, especially for children in rough villages and communes, areas with ethnic minorities, remote and isolated areas (Nhat Hong, 2020) <sup>[7]</sup>. This policy is deeply reflected in the efforts and determination to raise the intellectual level of the people for all strata of the people and all regions of the country to have access to education, as well as to provide social protection for the disadvantaged to create a development of gratitude, humanity, justice and social progress in the process of industrialization, modernization and international integration in Vietnam today.

Secondly, with regard to the general education. The facilities of high schools are getting more and more attention, since then the scale of education is also expanding. If the 2010-2011 school year, the number of schools is 28,593, by the 2018-2019 school year it will increase to 28,710; the number of teachers increased by nearly 1.2 times (reaching 853 thousand teachers) and the number of students was 18.7 million, of which the number of high school students was over 2.5 million with the graduation rate 97, 94% (school year 2018-2019); the number of vocational secondary and professional high school students in 2018 and 2019 is about 600 thousand people. Thus, in total, over 67% of young people in the age group have attained high school education and equivalent (General Statistics Office, 2019: 717-721) <sup>[6]</sup>. The universalization of primary and lower secondary education has been strongly deployed in localities, creating opportunities and basic conditions for a part of the population to study at higher educational levels according to needs. and the ability to, and attention to, particularly difficult areas (upland, remote, and mountainous areas), subject to ethnic minorities, the poor, and social policy beneficiaries. The country has achieved national standards on illiteracy eradication and primary education universalization (in 2000); by the end of 2010, most of the provinces and cities will reach the lower secondary education standards; the national literacy rate of the population aged 15 and over is 95.1%; 100% of provinces and cities meet the standards of preschool universalization (General Statistics Office, 2019: 120) <sup>[6]</sup>. Basically, our country has achieved equality between men and women in primary education. Social equity in education has been improved, especially for girls, ethnic minorities and children from poor families, and the most disadvantaged groups in society. Education in ethnic minority, remote and isolated areas has seen positive changes, continuing to develop strongly thanks to the effective promulgation and effective implementation of education policies for ethnic minorities.

With the relentless efforts of students and teachers across the country, the education sector has also achieved a lot of success from scientific research, winning many medals from international and regional Olympic competitions. The Vietnamese students' delegations participating in the Asian and international Olympic competitions in cultural subjects achieved high results with 38/38 high school students participating in the regional and international Olympic

competitions. This is the best ever achievement, including the student with the highest scores in the world. Some teams have stable achievements, ranking high in exams such as Math, Physics, and Computer Science. According to the Ministry of Education and Training, in recent years, the achievement of students competing in international and regional competitions next year has been improved compared to the previous year and has left a deep impression on the hearts of international friends in general education as well as about the country and people of Vietnam.

Thirdly, with regard to the scale of education. The scale of education has increased rapidly, especially at university level and vocational training, initially meeting the needs of the society. The number of vocational training schools has increased rapidly. According to the General Statistics Office in 2019, Vietnam has 235 universities and institutes (including 170 public schools, 60 private and private schools, 5 schools with 100% foreign capital), 37 scientific research institutes are assigned the task of training doctoral level, 33 pedagogical colleges and 2 pedagogical intermediate schools. In addition, intermediate training also has an increase from 238 schools in 1996 to 303 schools in the 2017-2018 school year. Along with the increase in the number of schools and classes is an increase in the size of human resources training, the year after is always higher than the previous year. The number of students and graduates increases by 10-12% on average each year.)

Thus, after more than 30 years of renovation, Vietnam's education has obtained many important achievements, a relatively complete, unified and diversified national education system has been formed with a full range of education levels and training levels from preschool to postgraduate; especially, creating learning opportunities and conditions for ethnic minorities, remote and isolated areas, and children from poor families have made remarkable progress. The education system has been initially diversified in terms of both types, modes and resources, gradually integrating with the general trend of world education. From an education system with only public schools and mainly formal ones, up to now there are non-public schools, there are many types of informal schools, there are open schools, with training methods from long-distance, training association mode with foreign countries. Evaluating the achievements in Vietnam's educational development, our Party affirmed: "The scale and network of educational and training institutions continue to be expanded. The education and training system at all levels from foundation to university and vocational training has been reorganized one step. The quality of education and training has improved. Facilities, educational and training equipment have been improved and modernized. The teaching staff and educational administrators have developed both in quantity and quality. Educational socialization has been accelerated" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2016: 113) <sup>[2]</sup>

### **Difficulties and challenges in Vietnamese education**

Firstly, the quality of education and training has not yet met the requirements of development, especially the training of highly qualified human resources is still limited. Although the education sector has seen many development steps in the reforming years, we still too focus on increasing the quantity and scale of training but not really paying attention to the quality. Curriculum, content and teaching methods are the most decisive factor in improving the intellectual level of the

people as well as the quality of human resources. However, the curriculum, content and teaching methods are still backward. We pay too much attention to teaching knowledge but do not pay much attention to teaching skills, manners, culture, ethics ... for employees. Teaching knowledge is mainly inclined to theory; teaching very little practice, usually only in the last few months of the course. Although we have also made many efforts to innovate teaching methods, encourage active, student-centered teaching methods, for many reasons, traditional methods still prevail, new methods have not made any change. All those limitations of the education and training industry are clearly shown on its products, which is the low quality of human resources. Employees still lack industrial style, labor discipline and professional ethics, some of them are slow to adapt to the market mechanism, the organization and discipline are not good, the level of scientific and technical application and poor technology... In general, Vietnamese workers lack many qualities, capacities and skills compared to the requirements of socio-economic development in the current fierce global competition. Compared with other countries in the region, our country's ranking for the quality of human resources is very low. If calculated on a scale of 10, the quality of human resources in Vietnam only reached 3.79 points, while South Korea is 6.91 points; India is 5.76 points; China is 5.73 points; Malaysia is 5.59 points.

Secondly, the school's material facilities and technical foundations are inadequate and out of date. Equipment and laboratories for teaching and learning are in short supply, and teaching in traditional ways is still common. The number of computers is small, in difficult areas, many students do not have enough textbooks. In recent years, the scale of education has grown, the number of colleges and universities has increased sharply, while the conditions of faculty and school facilities have not yet developed but still exist, the schools enroll students again, and then issue diplomas, so unemployment is inevitable. According to statistics from the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs in 2018, more than 100,000 bachelor's are unemployed, still 70,800 people with college degrees are still unemployed, while 41% of enterprises cannot recruit enough workers. high-skilled labor; In the first 3 months of 2018, the number of new job search increased by about 40% over the same period in 2017. This is really a paradox, a "bottleneck" for Vietnam's education development today.

Thirdly, although equity in education and training has been improved, there are still shortcomings. This is reflected in ensuring that minimum education (lower secondary education) has been achieved at the national level, but the proportion of students who have not attended school is still high, especially in mountainous areas, ethnic minorities. According to data from the Ministry of Education and Training, every year about 3.6% of students in the age group cannot go to school. The proportion of students in regions with extremely difficult socio-economic conditions and dropout rates is higher than in key economic regions and urban areas (Red River Delta, dropout rate 2.96%; the Northwest region 6.91%; Central Highlands is 17.16% and the Mekong River Delta is 12.64%. In mountainous areas, the number of illiterate girls in the 10-year-old group is 13.69%; the age group 11-14 is 7.98%; the 15-17 year old group is 9.08%. In terms of ethnic groups, the number of illiterate girls in the Mong is 90%, Ha Nhi 89%, Gia Rai 83%, Bana 82%... Fourthly, the teaching staff is both weak, lacking and

asynchronous. Teachers play a decisive role in the quality of education and training, but in fact, when the size of students rapidly increases, there is a mismatch between the scale of education development with the teachers, especially in Preschool and university level. There is a phenomenon of lack of teachers and redundancy due to lack of uniformity in types. Many localities have enough, or even redundant, teacher staff, but lack the types of teachers such as foreign languages, music, and technology. The shortage of highly qualified teachers in universities is increasing, the average age of teachers is high.

Fifthly, the state management of education and training still has many weaknesses and shortcomings that have not kept pace with the innovation in all fields of the country. Some of the above facts show that the development of education and training in our country over the past time has had undeniable success results. However, Vietnam currently lacks an overall strategy for building, developing and using national human resources. In which, the biggest limitation is that economic development strategies and human resource development strategies do not go hand in hand. Economic strategy-making agencies and social strategic-making agencies have not really come together on the same path, nor are they acutely acumen in advising the Party on newly emerging complex issues, lack of synchronous and reasonable macro-level decisions to promote education development; some education policies are still subjective, willful, far from reality, and lack social consensus. Educational thinking is slowly being reformed, failing to keep up with the requirements of national renewal and development in the context of international integration. Therefore, it leads to redundancy that is lacking in many training areas.

Sixthly, the educational system that is heavy on exams and the moral decline in overcoming education is slowly becoming a social pressing. The exam-heavy education system also puts pressure on candidates and parents, leading to a permanent coping mentality in learners and achievement races of teachers, schools and parents. The disease of achievement and fraud in exams has been rampant in education and society. Education in Vietnam has a long tradition based on the motto "study manners first and then learn to read and write". That is a precious legacy. Each era explains this motto in its own way, but the most common one is still upholding moral values, promoting being human. But unfortunately those values are being eroded, with the phenomenon taking place in the education and teaching public opinion wave over time.

The above phenomena are a wake-up call to Vietnamese education before the current decline in education ethics and need to be promptly rectified in order to build the Vietnamese people both "red" and "expert" effectively serving the construction of socialism today.

The above difficulties and challenges have been clearly pointed out by our Party: "Education and training have not really become the top national policy, a driving force for development. The quality and effectiveness of education and training are still low compared to requirements, especially higher education, vocational education ...; still heavy in theory, lightly practiced. Training lacks link with scientific research, production and business and the needs of the labor market; not paying due attention to the education of morality, lifestyle and working skills" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2016: 113-114) [2].

### Solutions to develop education in Vietnam

Firstly, strongly renovate teaching and learning content, programs and methods at all educational levels, specifically: For preschool, focusing on developing schools and classes in industrial zones, manufacturing area; step up solutions to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of state management of preschool education, reduce child violence and solve the shortage of teachers. For high school level, it is necessary to ensure that all people of school age can go to school, especially in rural and remote areas; focus on intellectual and physical development, quality formation and citizenship, discovering and fostering talents, and career orientations for students in accordance with each development stage of the country. In terms of educational content, first of all, it is necessary to focus on equipping learners with basic knowledge so that students can prepare for life. In terms of methodology, it is necessary to use a common and thorough advanced educational method in the direction of combining modern with tradition, do well in career guidance, and create a close connection between high schools with universities, colleges, intermediate schools and vocational schools in each locality. Improve the quality of exam organization, especially the national high school exam; enhancing ethical education, lifestyle and life skills for students; implementing and renovating management mechanisms in high schools. For vocational education, to rapidly increase the training scale for vocational colleges and vocational secondary schools for industrial parks, driving economic regions and for labor export. Focus on training skills and expertise based on the actual needs of each different locality of the country through forms of self-training, strengthening the linkage of businesses and demand-based training institutions. For higher education, to focus on training qualified workers suitable to the process of economic restructuring, in which, focus on human resources for industries with high technology content and added value. Ensuring high-quality labor demand for occupations that are Vietnam's strength in accordance with the context of international integration, meeting the needs of the society so that the proportion of graduate students with jobs suitable for their majors is increasing.

Link teaching and learning with practice. Education needs to simulate and prepare learners to enter real life as much as possible when technology has made accessibility to knowledge easy, making knowledge no longer mean "insurance" for the learners' future as before. One of the appropriate approaches is to increase science, technology, engineering and math (STEM education) education in schools. Accordingly, students will be equipped with knowledge associated with their applications in practice; experience in technology exploration and discovery in association with knowledge learned in the educational program; are encouraged to create science and techniques in order to improve the development of new technologies. This is an interdisciplinary approach to equip learners with knowledge and skills that they can apply to solve problems in life.

To step by step actively and effectively participate in the regional and international high-tech labor market, first of all 8 occupations (including dentistry, nursing, engineering, construction, accounting, architecture, survey and tourism) freely move within the ASEAN Economic Community. Carry out well forecasting of demand and labor market both in the short and long term. On the basis of the overall strategy for human resource development, it is necessary to review

and perfect the planning and implement the appropriate planning for the network of universities, colleges and vocational training throughout the country.

Secondly, encourage lifelong learning. One of the most important goals of education is to discover and nurture talent, and to encourage the learners' pursuit, passion, and lifelong learning needs. To this end, a major change is to restructure the system of continuing education centers and community learning centers, and change traditional stereotypes to build lifelong learning centers. This is also the basic solution to fundamentally and comprehensively renovate the education "Perfecting the national education system towards an open education system, lifelong learning and building a learning society".

Thirdly, renovate the state management mechanism of education and training to suit the process of industrialization and modernization in Vietnam. Implement stronger decentralization for departments to properly and clearly manage education and training to promote the creativity of organizations in management, administration and implementation of policies and programs, to promote the role of education and training in socio-economic development; at the same time, to define collective responsibility and individual responsibility, especially the personal responsibility regime of the head, promoting the leadership, leadership and role model in the implementation of education and training. Assigning autonomy and accountability to education and training institutions; implementing the supervision of subjects in the school and the society, strengthening the inspection and examination by management agencies at all levels, ensuring democracy, publicity and transparency.

Fourthly, build and develop a contingent of quality teachers. This is the most decisive breakthrough of the quality of education and training in Vietnam today, because the curriculum, textbooks, and equipment are adequate, the study time is reasonable, but the teachers are weak in professional capacity. Poor morality cannot be taught well and there will be no good products. The Ministry of Education and Training should actively develop training plans to foster a contingent of teachers and lecturers to prepare for the next 5 to 10 years ... Toward to achieve different types of qualifications such as university, master pedagogical capacity and profession. Every year, it is necessary to review training plans to soon send training, including overseas training of capable and promising young cadres in teaching and research, to overcome the shortage of local teachers, to improve teachers' ethics.

Fifthly, complete the national education system in an open, modern and connected direction. Complete the national education system in the direction of openness and integration, standardization, modernization, diversification and international integration, meeting the demand for human resources for socio-economic development, in particular attaching importance to training high-quality human resources at all levels. Building a diverse educational system in terms of learning methods, ensuring that all people can learn according to their own wishes and learn for a lifetime in a learning society. Developing an open, modern and interconnected education and training system is the premise for the development of science and technology, exploiting the most and effectively applying the knowledge resources of the nation and people, being a foundation for the industrialization and modernization process as well as for the construction of

a knowledge economy in our country; at the same time, strengthening activities of supervision, inspection and examination of the implementation of the law on education and training to promptly handle problems arising in real life.

### **Conclusion**

In today's era, when humanity is entering the knowledge economy and science becomes a direct productive force, especially in the process of international integration, education and training have more and more role and extremely important position for the development of each country, each nation. But in the current lagging situation of our country compared to the general level of the region and the world, if we want to bring Vietnam's education to the advanced level in the region, to meet the requirements of the industrialization to modernization, international modernization and integration, we must quickly fundamentally reform, comprehensively educate and train, must have a determination to choose methodical ways, according to a certain roadmap; building an educational system that fosters innovation and creativity, which emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning and the long-term developmental ability of learners. Moreover, an efficient budget allocation, coupled with a strong political commitment to education and training, will make a difference to the future of Vietnam's young generation.

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