

## **Vietnamese Schooling in Transition: Industrialization and Modernization**

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### **Abstract**

This paper presents a look at the issues surrounding “Vietnamese schooling of tomorrow.” Using a new approach of social development, the country will move from an agricultural society to an industrial and information society. At present, Viet Nam is developing very rapidly in all aspects of society: economy, science & technology, culture and education. We are fortunate to have many new opportunities, and we will be faced with great changes in the future. In this context, Vietnam’s school system has developed over a number of historical periods. Each period brought changes such as in educational philosophy, political orientations, structure of the educational system, aims and educational content as well as organization and management, and teaching staff. Vietnamese schools of tomorrow are utilizing the innovation process (*Doi Moi*) for the purposes of industrialization, modernization and the building of market economy oriented socialism. This educational model employs a combination of traditional and modern values to address national and international trends. In the Vietnamese schooling scenario of 2020 there are many dimensions which are reflected in the OECD schooling for tomorrow scenarios.

### **Introduction**

Viet Nam is located in South East Asia with a total area of 331,114 square kilometers and a coastal line of approximately 3,200 kilometers stretching from North to South. Vietnam is bordered by China to the North, Lao People’s Democratic Republic to the West and Cambodia to the South West. In 2007, its population was about 85 million, of which women account for 51.2%. It consists of 54 different ethnic groups. The average population growth rate is 1.21% per annum; the number of working age people is about 55 million, accounting for 65% of the total population. Average life expectancy is 73 years. The population density is 250 persons per square kilometer; and the urban population accounts for about 30% percent of the total.

As far as socio-economic development of this country is concerned, with a view to becoming a modern-oriented industrialized country by 2020, the following overall development goals for the period of 2001-2010 have been set (See Table 1).

**Table 1. Indicators on Socio-Economic Development in Viet Nam (2000-2020)**

Fields	Year			
	2000	2005	2010	2020
Industry	36.1%	41%	40%-41%	47%-48%
Agriculture	24.29%	20.5%	16%-17%	8%-9%
Services	39.32%	38.5%	42%-43%	43%-44%
Average growth rate of GDP	7%	7.5%	>8%	>8.5%
GDP per person ( USD )	360	640	>1,100	>3,000
Total Population (thousand)	77,635	83,112	88,316	98,104
Distribution by area:				
+ Agriculture	62.6%	56.7%	50.2%	28.8%
+ Industry	13.1%	17.9%	22.0%	32.7%
+ Services	24.3%	25.4%	27.8%	38.5%

Source: Ministry of Planning and Investing (2006)

## A New System of Vietnamese Education

The Education Law of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam 2005 (Chapter II: The National Education System) stipulates a new education system in Vietnam consisting of the following four sub-systems: early childhood education; general education; professional education and higher education.

Early childhood education refers to the nurturing, caring and educating of children between the ages of 3 months to six years. At the age of six, the child will begin what is termed as General Education which is characterized by the following three stages: primary education; lower secondary education; and upper secondary education.

Primary education begins when the child is six years of age and continues for five years of formal schooling progressing from the first to the fifth grade. A child must complete the primary education program at the age of eleven and will then enter lower secondary education. This consists of four years of schooling from the sixth to the ninth grade. A student who has received a Lower Secondary Education Diploma at the age of fifteen is eligible for upper secondary education which consists of three years of schooling from the tenth to the twelfth grades.

Professional education consists of both professional upper secondary education and vocational training. Vocational training is further divided into three levels beginning with the preliminary vocational program and continuing at the levels of vocational upper secondary and vocational training college.

Higher Education includes both college and university education programs as well as graduate level programs at the Masters and Doctoral level.

Table 2 shows the current number of students at each level of the schooling system and the projected changes through 2020 taking into account educational reforms and the impact upon the system of demographic changes.

**Table 2. The Population in Terms of School Age in Viet Nam (2005-2020)**

Categories \ Year	2005	2010	2015	2020
Total (thousand)	37,982	38,048	37,161	36,129
Group 0-2 Years ( Nursing )	3,881	4,935	4,964	4,582
Group 3-5 Years ( Kindergarten )	3,817	4,517	4,975	4,851
Group 6-10 Years ( Primary school )	7,443	6,377	7,779	8,283
Group 11-14 Years ( Lower Secondary School )	7,570	5,722	5,091	6,454
Group 15-17 Years ( Upper Secondary School )	5,590	5,416	3,949	3,851
Group 18-23 Years ( Higher Education )	9,681	11,081	10,403	8,087

Source: Ministry of Planning and Investing (2006)

### **Toffler's Social Development Model and Educational Development**

The first decade of the 21st century has seen the world changed on many fronts such as: social, economic, cultural, political, scientific and technological. The world is beginning a new age of development and faces many serious issues such as regional conflict, environmental pollution, climate change, energy, terrorism and poverty. In this context, these changes will impact on the development of tomorrow's school system. The school system is part of the socio-economic system. Society and schools are closely related in terms of present and future development. Viet Nam is becoming a modern society and a citizen of the international community. As the country moves from the traditional to the modern, Viet Nam's schools will be basically changed in all aspects: organization and management, facilities, textbooks, teaching-learning process, teaching methods and teaching staff. The changes of schooling in this paper are based on a new approach of social development that moves the country from an agricultural society to a society in the information age

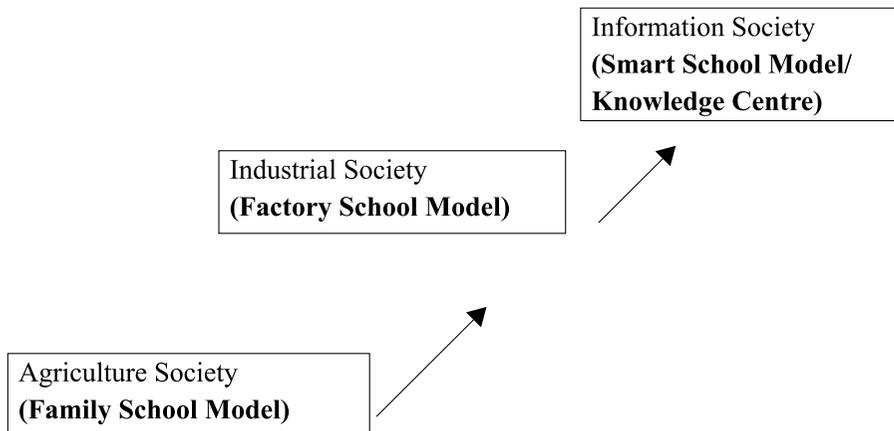
According to Toffler (1992) from a historical perspective society's development has followed three main periods: 1) as an agricultural society; 2) as an industrial society; and 3) as an information society. An agricultural society is one in which the economy is based on agriculture. Production is based on natural conditions and people work by trial and error. The educational system is not developed and hence the number of educated people is small with science and technology at a lower level. The educational institutions are small and based on a family school model within communities, villages and families. The wealth and value system of nations is based on land and population. In Asia (including Viet Nam, China and Korea) this period took place under feudal regime with Confucian-based education.

The Industrial Society began in the 18th century (Germany, France and England) with rapid development of the industrial fields: mechanical, electrical, and chemical. The economy is mainly based on a network of factories with mechanization and electricity. The market

economy and customer trade are developed with the establishment of a labor market. The working capacities become based on goods. The education and training demands for manpower increase. The school system follows a factory model, especially the vocational and technical education system. The wealth and value system of the nation are based mainly on capital resources (money). The people (worker/manpower) are only one component (input) of the production process.

The Information Society started in the latter half of the 20th century (1960) with the rapid development of modern science and technology. The economy is mainly based on knowledge and information networks. The wealth and value system of the nation are based mainly on knowledge and modern technology. The human capital resource is most valuable. Education is the main ingredient for national development. In this period, the school model follows the smart school (create, discover, teaching-learning process based on information networks). This development of society and the schools operating at each stage are presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. The Steps of the Process in Social Development and Schooling Models**



Source: Duc (2004)

In the modern society, known as ‘the flat world’, Friedman (2006) offers the following formula as characteristic of an information based society:  $CQ + PQ > IQ$  where CQ stands for curiosity quotient, PQ stands for passion quotient, and IQ stands for intelligence quotient (Friedman 2006, p.304). Hence, several characteristics of education will change as schools move from a traditional to a modern model including: types of schooling; aim and educational content; teaching and learning methods; evaluation; and school-to-community relations. A further list of these characteristics at each stage of social development is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Some Characteristics of the Schooling in Each Stage of the Social Development**

Categories	Traditional School (Agriculture Society )	Modern School (Industrial Society)	School in future (Information Society)
Aim and goals	- Unclear - General and wide scope of knowledge	- Specialization - Professional - Skills development - Capacity-based Training	- Complex - Individual development - Creativity - Self-development
Organization/ Structure	- Simple - Non-structure - Monotone	- Closed structure (education Levels, grades, course/class) - Diversity/multi-levels	- Flexible structure - Multi- structure - E-learning - Non-levels/grades
Learning Content	- Theory/ideas - Focus on theory - Social theory - Culture values - Practice experiences	- Science and technology - Subjects learning - Specialization to education form - Values education	- Science, technology, culture, common values - Learning options for select - Complex-content - Integration
Teaching and learning methods	- Individual /group training - Reading and writing - Focus on memorization	- Mass training - Active learning - Learning by doing - Interactive - Discussion	- Development multi-intelligent - Discovery -creative - Self-learning
Learning form	- Individual - Self-organ - Face to face	- Class-room - Face-to-face - Working group	- Self-learning - On-line /At home - Learning based on research, discovery
Facilities	- Hand-on - Facilities - Direct communication	- Teaching machines - Laboratories - Video/TV	- Computer - Multi-media - Imagination facilities
Evaluation	- Formal - Quantity - Subjectively done by teachers (based on personal feelings )	- Quantity - Object (by test, by results.) - Combination of internal and external evaluation	- Self-evaluation - Quality and effectiveness - By complex task
Management	- Top-Down - Pressure - Focus on control - Quality control	- Centralization - Mix top-down and bottom-up - Quality assurance - Cooperation	- Decentralization - Self-management
Teachers	- Elite intelligent - Multi-fields	- Specialization by subjects /education areas - Diversities	- Higher qualifications - Multi-capacities

Source: Duc (2004)

## **The Changing Process of the National Policy for Education Development in Viet Nam**

Table 4 compares educational policies and practices before and after the introduction of “innovation” in Viet Nam (which is called *Doi Moi* in Vietnamese). Before the period of “innovation”, education was a part of the cultural and ideological pillar of the socialist system of this country, and thus investment in education was not necessarily that for economic development. All forms of education were entirely under the control of the government and there were no private educational institutions in the national education system. The implementation of the “closed door” policy in education maintained the integrated traditional cultural values of socialism.

More specifically, prior to 1986, education was for fighting illiteracy and primary education was not universal. The education system followed the model of the Soviet Union and education management was conducted on this centralized model. There were low qualification of the teaching staff especially in pre-and primary schools. Teacher training was conducted only in pedagogical institutions and these training programs focused on professional/pedagogical theory. Educational programs were based on the school year system with compulsory subjects. At the higher education level, university education was conducted in a monotone, of low quality and enrolment was limited. Vocational and technical education was also limited with a small number of schools and students.

After *Doi Moi* from 1986 and projected to 2020 education and training are now top-priority policies in Viet Nam. Investment in education is considered as one of the principal investments for development to meet the needs of multi-sectors including a market-oriented economy through the process of industrialization and modernization. There is more diversification in the types of education with the development of semi-public, private, and people-funded schools including international schools. Implementation of the “open door” policy in education allows Viet Nam to meet globalization and common international values as well as maintaining traditional cultural values.

Primary and lower secondary education are now universal. There is increased development of vocational technical education which is becoming universal for younger people. There is also an expanding and diversification of higher education. This rebuilding of the education system follows an international model. The reform also stresses an education management system with new ideas of decentralization, democratization and modernization.

There is also a standardization of qualifications for the teaching staff with teacher training conducted not only in pedagogical institutions but also other higher education institutions. The training programs now focus on professional as well as pedagogical skills and capacities. Furthermore, educational programs are based on a credit system and training modules with compulsory requirements and options.

**Table 4. Compare National Policies on Education before and after Doi Moi in Viet Nam**

Before Doi Moi (1986 )	After Doi Moi (from 1986 up to 2020 )
-Education is a part of the culture and ideological indoctrination and to meet needs of the government especially for manpower training	-Education and training are top-priority policies. -Educational development to meet the needs of multi-sectors, market-oriented economy and process of industrialisation and modernisation
-Investment in education is not investment for development.	-Investment in education is considered as one of the principal investments for development
-All forms of the education belong to the government. There are no private education institutions.	-Diversification of types of education -Development of semi-public, private, and people-funded schools including international schools
-Implementation of the “closed door” policy in education, maintaining integrated traditional cultural values and values of the socialism.	-Implementation of the “open door” policy in education to meet globalization and common international values as well as traditional cultural values
-Fighting illiteracies -Primary education is not universal education. -University education is monotone and the enrolment is limited. Quality is lower. -Vocational and technical education is limited with a small number of schools and students.	-Primary education and lower secondary education are universal education levels. -Developing vocational technical education, becoming universal vocational education for younger people -Expanding and diversifying higher education
-The education system following the Soviet Union Model	-Rebuilding the education system following an international model.
-Education management based on the centralized model	-Reforming the education management system with new ideas of decentralization, democratization and modernization
-Low qualifications of the teaching staff especially in pre- and primary schools	-Standardization of qualifications of the teaching staff
-Teacher training conducted only in pedagogical institutions	-Teacher training conducted not only in pedagogical institutions but also other higher education institutions
-Training programs focusing on professional /pedagogical theory	-Training program focusing on professional as well as pedagogical skills and capacities
-Educational programs based on school year system with compulsory subjects	-Educational programs based on credit system and training modules with compulsory requirements and options

Thus in the process of *Doi Moi* education is given new significant roles for the development of Viet Nam as stipulated in Article 35 of the 1992 Constitution. Education and training are given top-priority policies and the government is responsible for educational development so as to promote people's spiritual development, foster talent, and train manpower. The aim of education is thus to form and nurture the personality, moral qualities, and abilities of the citizen; to train working people and equip them with skills, to imbue them with dynamism and creativeness, national pride, good morality, and the will to strive for national prosperity, so as to meet the need to build and defend the country.

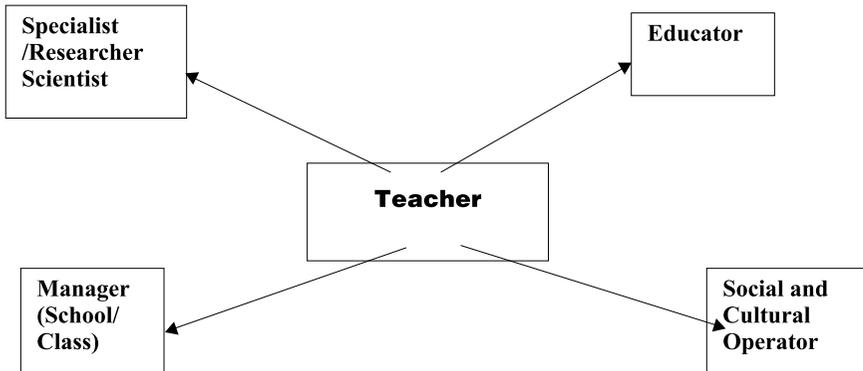
In January 1993 the Resolution on the "Continued Renovation of the Cause of Education and Training" which was approved at the 4th Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Communist Party, highlighted the guidelines and policies on educational development in Viet Nam towards the 21st Century. Education and training are specified as the driving force and basic condition for achieving socio-economic objectives. First priority is given to education and science. Education is considered as one of the principal areas of investment for development.

Secondly, the achievement of educational objectives means improving people's knowledge, training manpower, and nurturing talents. In education, it is necessary at the same time to enhance equity, excellence and efficiency. Thirdly, education should respond to the demands for national development and follow the progressive trends of our time such as permanent education and life-long learning. Finally, the government should have specific policies to provide diversified forms of education and training so as to create favorable conditions for those who are in the government care and poor people to enable them to learn.

The importance of education for the development of Viet Nam is also confirmed in the Education Development Strategic Plan for 2001-2010 which states the following the guiding principles: 1) Education is the foremost National Policy; 2) To build up a popular, national, scientific, modern, socialist oriented education, based on Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's Thoughts; 3) Educational development to be linked with the demands for socio-economic development, and 4) Education as the cause of the Party, the State and the Nation as a whole.

According to Article 70 in the Vietnam's Education Law 2005, "Teachers are persons who carry out teaching duties at schools or other educational institutions". A teacher must possess the following criteria: good moral, mental and ideological qualifications; a standardized level in the profession; good health as required by the profession; and a clear curriculum vitae. Thus, teaching requires a combination of many characteristics: the knowledge and skills of the scientist, educator, manager, cultural and social person. Figure 2, outlines the qualities needed by teachers in this new world of balancing traditional values with forward-looking vision.

**Figure 2. The Total Model of a Teacher in Vietnam’s Modern Education.**



Viet Nam is thus moving forward in social development and national policies support the development of education. This process of change has affected even the definition of “teacher” into a more multi-faceted professional. Looking forward to 2020 and how these national policies may alter the school system, it is advantageous to refer to the Schooling for tomorrow scenarios as outlined by OECD (2001).

### **Comparison of OECD Scenarios and Vietnamese Schooling to 2020**

Table 5 summarizes Vietnamese scenarios of schooling to 2020 compared with OECD scenarios. The scenarios for the future of schooling (OECD 2001) define what education of the future may look like and will now be used to illustrate specifically how Vietnamese schooling may appear in 2020.

Scenario number 1 maintains the status quo and is characterized by school systems which are strong bureaucracies. There is however a potential for change through the use of IT. There is a distinct teaching core and efforts to retain teachers include attention to professional development. In the case of Vietnam this Back to the Future Bureaucratic System would take on concepts of decentralization, democratization and modernization through reforming the education management system. IT would be utilized and provisions made for both top-down as well as bottom-up managerial models in education.

The OECD’s second scenario is characterized by greater diversity in providers of education and demand-driven indicators for accreditation. The scenario is referred to as “The Extended Market Model.” In this scenario, the business environment is influential and teachers are from a variety of backgrounds. In the case of Viet Nam, this scenario would show development of the private sector in the education sector. Development would also be seen in the training market for manpower and labor forces to meet the demands of production from companies and factories. There would also be the importing and exporting of modern training curriculums and educational specialists.

These first two scenarios are classified as “status quo” scenarios as they build upon systems currently in use. However, the following two scenarios are called “re-schooling” scenarios and view education as a new venue for life in the community. In scenario three, the school enjoys high status in the community and functions as a “core social centre.” There is a high level of funding available and the formation of social capital. Teachers are seen as having a high-status profession however there is an extensive role for other professionals as well through complex combinations of teaching and community responsibility.

For Viet Nam, the “School as a Core Social Centre” would be one in which expanding tasks and responsibility for the school system are seen in social and community development. There would be expanding social participation in education and the establishment of non-public education institutions. Furthermore, the development of learning centers in villages through communication networks would be established.

The other “re-schooling” scenario, labels schools as focused learning organizations. As in the third scenario, there is a high level of public funding. This scenario however places a strong emphasis on quality and equity. Teachers are part of a vast network between each other as well as networking with experts outside the teaching field. In Viet Nam this scenario would show innovations in the teaching-learning process as well as teaching methods. There would be an upgrading of teaching capacities for the teacher and facilities for these learning-teaching activities whether using materials, textbooks or computers. This scenario would also show the development of a credit system with quality assurance and accreditation.

A fifth scenario looks at “de-schooling” and envisions learner networks in place of traditional schools. This scenario reflects the “network society” and non-formal learning is characteristic through the use of IT. For Viet Nam the “Learning in Networks” scenario would show the development of learning through networking utilizing e-learning and education on-line. There would be a linkage between the school and society and production bases. Universities would train manpower for companies through contracting. In order to meet these diversified learning modalities there would be formal, non-formal, and informal in-service/pre-service training.

**Table 5. Comparison of OECD Scenarios and Vietnamese Schooling to 2020**

<b>OECD' scenarios Schooling for tomorrow</b>	<b>Vietnam's scenario ( Schooling to 2020)</b>
<b>Back to the Future Bureaucratic System</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Reforming the education management system with concepts of decentralization, democratization and modernization</li> <li>-Mixed top-down and bottom-up it managerial model in education</li> </ul>
<b>Schools as Focused Learning Organizations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Innovating teaching-learning process/teaching methods</li> <li>-Upgrading teaching capacities for teacher</li> <li>-Facilities for learning-teaching activities(material/textbooks /computer</li> <li>-Developing credit system/quality assurance and accreditation</li> </ul>
<b>Schools as Core Social Centers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Expanding tasks and responsible of the school system for social and community development</li> <li>-Expanding social participation to education, establishing non- public education institution.</li> <li>-Developing learning centers in communications/villages</li> </ul>
<b>The Extended Market Model</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Developing private sector in the education sector</li> <li>-Developing training market (manpower, labor forces) to meet demands of production (companies; factories)</li> <li>-Importing and exporting modern training curriculums and educational specialists</li> </ul>
<b>Learning in Networks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Developing learning networking (e-learning, education on-line.)</li> <li>-Linkage between school and society and production bases (universities will train manpower for companies by contracts)</li> <li>-Diversified learning modalities: formal, non-formal, informal, formal, in-service/pre-service</li> </ul>

## Conclusion

In the future Viet Nam will become an accepted member of the international community as an industrial country with a highly developed level of scientific and technological expertise and a progressive society. To meet these conditions, Vietnam's educational system will develop based on a combination of traditional and modern values. This innovative educational philosophy will reform the educational system. The educational system will be developed to meet the diverse needs of the people and to provide highly qualified manpower for the country. In educational institutions, the teaching staff will be highly qualified; learning content will integrate modern science with traditional values and encourage students to be rich in humanity. Teaching and learning methods will change from teacher centered to learner centered in the teaching-learning process. Schools will have modern facilities (computer/multi-media/e-book).The Vietnamese school will become a modern center of culture, science and education for the communities it serves.

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