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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

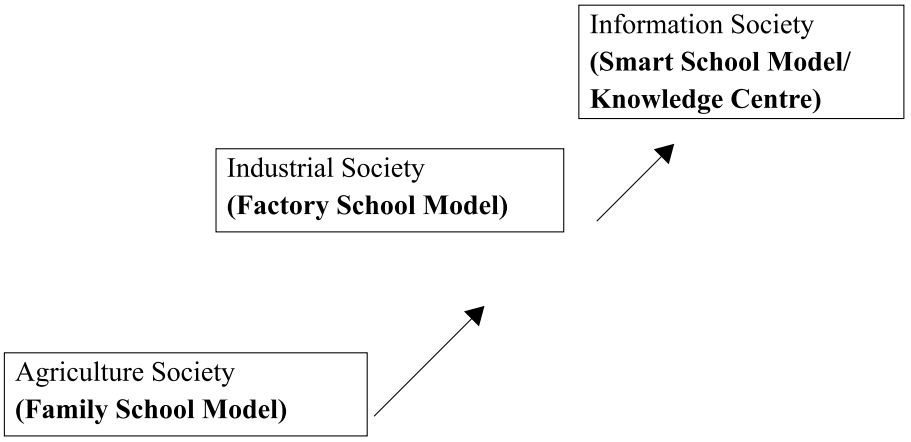
According to Toffler (1992) from a historical perspective society's development has followed three main periods: 1) as an agricultural society; 2) as an industrial society; and 3) as an information society. An agricultural society is one in which the economy is based on agriculture. Production is based 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-leaning 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)