



TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED INNOVATION IN EDUCATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA (TIESEA) DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT REPORT – VIET NAM COUNTRY REPORT MARCH 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Viet Nam's K-12 sector consists of more than 15.8 million students (8 million in primary, 5.3 million in lower secondary, and 2.5 million in upper secondary) General education (grade 1-12) has undergone significant reform in recent years. For instance, a new competency-based curriculum has replaced conventional delivery based on a single set of textbooks, and attempts to integrate STEM/STEAM into the curriculum have put strong emphasis on innovative pedagogy. Gender disparities exist in Viet Nam, but they are shrinking (see Annex 3) currently more girls than boys are enrolling for upper secondary education and the graduation rate for Bachelors degrees has reached gender parity Women, in general, are earning about 10% less than men for equivalent work.

Based on the five pillars of the ADB EdTech Readiness Framework, this report describes the current situation of education in Viet Nam in general, with a specific focus on how EdTech is being implemented to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The five pillars of the framework include infrastructure, government, schools/teachers, parents/students, and EdTech providers. By identifying the existing status of EdTech readiness in Viet Nam using this framework, the report seeks to provide evidence against which decision-makers can identify initiatives likely to make a positive contribution to the quality of the education ecosystem and opportunities for public-private partnerships.

Infrastructure

According to World Bank report as cited in EdTech in SouthEast Asia (2020), 99.4% of total population in Viet Nam have had access to electricity as of 2019.

In January 2021, the Internet penetration in Viet Nam was 70.3%, which was higher than the average ratio of 69% in the South-East Asia region. However, the Internet speeds are slow compared to many of its peers. The average broadband download speed was only 7.02 megabytes per second, 10 times

slower than Singapore at 70.86 Mbps. Though on mobile networks the download speed was 34.51 Mbps¹. The number of mobile connections in Viet Nam in January 2021 was equivalent 157.9% of the total population to 157.9% of the total population, also higher than the average rate of 132% in South-East Asia countries (Kemp, 2021). Nonetheless, there are some severe limitations, Mobile broadband, despite reportedly covering most of the country, is hardly workable in many areas. Many people struggle with unstable communication even in the centre of Hà Nội,². Viet Nam ranked high in terms of internet affordability as it only takes 62 seconds to access the cheapest mobile internet and 184 minutes to access the cheapest broadband internet, the report stated. Viet Nam also ranked 59th in terms of electronic security as data protection laws in Viet Nam are said to be "very low".

The number of smartphone users from 15 years old is 53.5 million, accounting for 84.6% of the total number of phone users aged 15 years upwards.; 66.1% of this group own laptop or desktop computers, 31.9% have tablet devices³.

Before COVID-19 pandemic, the TV or radio broadcasting for education was not really popular. A national education TV channel was officially launched in 2016 to promote the learning spirit in the society. The channel originally focused on additional and supporting information rather than the core content; from early 2020, usage increased dramatically due to the COVID-19 pandemic-related school closure. Students can access either the national / provincial TV stations websites for detailed schedules or their official YouTube channel to join the broadcasting content.

Government

Educational expenditure in Viet Nam is high (ca. 6% of GDP). This accounts for approximately 20 per cent of the total State budgetary expenditure, and will continue to increase. Private and foreign investment in education is also encouraged. The country also encourages private and foreign investment in education. The Government views digital transformation across the broader economy as critical to continued growth and prosperity. At the moment, multiple agencies are charged with supporting and regulating different aspects of the digital economy in Viet Nam. The current regulatory framework consists of commercial regulations and decrees issued by various ministries. Currently, for telecommunications and ICT industry-related issues, the Ministry of Information and Communication is the main agency⁴. Despite the government's clear commitment the definition of EdTech still remains a vague area under the Viet Nameese legal framework since it has not been explicitly specified in legal documents. From 2010s, the Viet Nameese Government's projects to develop EdTech, however have been mainly small scale subject-based projects with limited objectives, mostly in public schools⁵.

Policymakers have strongly focused on renovating education, in the first place as a strategy to respond to the demand of the global knowledge society for qualified human resources. Guidelines from the MOET to provincial DOETs encourage educators to apply ICT in education practice. E-learning and the development and use of e-lessons is put forward as the ultimate outcome of integration of ICT in education.

The MoET is focused on the EMIS - Education Management Information System to improve the data and management. It plans shortly to approve the Circular on Digital Database Management of Education and Training, the final step on completing national EMIS In December 2021.

EdTech integration in training pre-service teachers is still rather limited. The EdTech skills of the trainers and lecturers in pre-service teacher training establishment vary widely and there is, therefore,

¹ Nguyen, 2020

² Thanh Thuy, 2021

³ Kemp, 2021

⁴ Le & Tran, 2020

⁵ Acclime, 2021

a great inconsistency in the application of EdTech pre-service teacher education and training. Although EdTech integration is recognised to be of great value by the educators equipment, infrastructure as well as the low levels of advanced digital literacy combine to reduce its manifestation in practice. Significant investment is required if the aspirations of EdTech integration are to be realized for trainee teachers.

School/teachers

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the training for in-service teachers on improving digital literacy was a low priority for the MoET. Vinh, Le et al (2019) in the Viet Nam country report for UNESCO Bangkok's "Digital Kids Asia Pacific (DKAP)" project for 20 schools in 5 provinces of Viet Nam found that the rate of PreK-12 teachers who can apply ICT to enhance teaching methods in the class is about 76% while only 28% of teachers have the ability to design the e-Learning lecture.

According to MOET's report on the Digital Transformation in Viet Nam Education: Status and Solutions in 2021, there are nearly 1.4 million teachers and education managers, hence, to conduct the digital transformation, it will be an enormous challenge with several issues that need to be solved including consistent systems and changing mindset from leadership to teachers and students.

There are dozens of online platforms and offline EdTech tools available to teachers in Viet Nam. They are summarised here under five key categories, with a few examples of international platforms and available tools provided below. (A full inventory of EdTech providers is available at Annex 1)

Since 2015, the Government of Viet Nam has issued many decisions and circulars guiding distance learning on the online training system⁶. In 2020, in response to COVID-19 pandemic, the Government had immediately issued a national plan for digital transformation⁷. To accompany and support the transformation the MoET issued supporting documents on distance and online learning⁸.

Traditionally, the schools/ teachers have communicated with parents by the "So lien lac" - Communication notebooks. There, teachers will report on single students' situations and reminders weekly. For urgent cases, teachers and parents can phone and set up school-parent meetings. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the news has significantly changed daily including opening-closing schools as well as preparation for stay-at-home learning. Therefore, teachers and parents resorted to social media with Zalo being one of the most popular instant messaging applications.

Home students/parents

In Viet Nam, computer literacy is still an unaffordable luxury for most children, especially in the rural areas. In most schools, there are no computers for students to learn basic computer skills. Yet young people in Viet Nam see digital literacy as important for their future. Child safety online is an issue with cyber bullying a particular risk More than 70% of Viet Nameese children aged 8 to 12 are facing cyber risks. Nonetheless, the transition to online teaching and learning seems inevitable in this day and age,

⁶ Decision 1559/QD-TTg; Decision 117/QD-TTg

⁷ Decision 749/QD- TTg (3 June 2020) Approval on National digital transformation plan till 2025, heading to 2030.

⁸ Circular 09/2021/TT-BGDĐT (30 March 2021) Regulation in management and organizing online classes for K-12 and continuing education centres. This document has officially encouraged blended learning for both face to face and online learning, as well as detailed guidelines to manage the online classes for all K-12 schools.

Decision 4919_QD_BGDĐT (31 December 2020): Approval on the ICT application and development to Digital Government and ensure the information security of MoET in the period from 2021-2025.

Document 4096BGDĐT-CNTT (20 September 2021) Guidelines on ICT application and education management in the school year 2021-2022.

The requirement to move to online education due to the COVID- 19 pandemic has exposed the digital divide in the region, between the children who have access to digital learning opportunities and those who do not. According Online Management Training Company, a recent assessment at 500 preschools in Viet Nam by KidsOnline showed a significant gap in readiness, digital skills, facilities, infrastructure, and learning materials in ethnic minority languages in preschool education.

During the COVID-19 pandemic the MoET and the Ministry of Information and Community officially launched the “Connection and Computer for Students” program. The program focused on: internet for all households, computers for all poor students especially who are living in the COVID-19 affected areas, and reasonable internet prices for those students so “no students will be left behind”. But it is reported that nearly 2 million students lack devices for online learning.

Providers – Companies and Public Private Partnerships

According to the Government's orientation, the digital transformation in education with a vision to 2025 will bring teaching and learning in the digital environment by 50%; forming several online teaching and learning platforms that are domestic products and used by more than 50% of students; forming a national online repository of learning materials to meet the requirements of learning materials for 50% of the contents for the general education program; more than 50% of higher education institutions offer distance learning (degree) programs. Several projects exist with international not-for-profit partners including, for example: The Education Commission; UNICEF; ASEAN and the Secdev Foundation. Elearning systems are dominated by the international players such Google and Microsoft Education and by major national companies such as Classin and Galaxy Education's HOCMAI platform. Content providers include SMAS, Bachkim, Hoola, Edu box, Sunbot and Hương Việt Elearning. School administration systems that support online teaching and integrate with email users' phone numbers are also popular in schools in Viet Nam, such as kidsonline, oneEdu, etc. Construction support tools other lectures such as Adobe presenter, Ispring suite, etc., and other supporting tools such as Test Bank, Azota, etc. New technologies applying AI and VR/AR in Viet Nam's market today are mainly developed by large technology companies that can integrate or support online training systems, including monitoring systems. Online exams with AI proctors like Examus, lab simulation lectures for K12 with VR/AR technology like ScholAR or 3D lab simulators like PhET, Openclassroom, etc.

This Executive Summary presents preliminary findings and an official ADB publication will be produced in due time