

PROJECT INFORMATION DOCUMENT (PID) CONCEPT STAGE

Report No.: PIDC4514

Project Name	Coherent Curriculum & Assessment for Improved Teaching Outcomes (CAITO) (P150058)
Region	EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC
Country	Vietnam
Sector(s)	General education sector (100%)
Theme(s)	Education for the knowledge economy (50%), Education for all (50%)
Lending Instrument	Investment Project Financing
Project ID	P150058
Borrower(s)	Socialist Republic of Vietnam
Implementing Agency	Ministry of Education and Training
Environmental Category	C-Not Required
Date PID Prepared/ Updated	24-Oct-2014
Date PID Approved/ Disclosed	30-Oct-2014
Estimated Date of Appraisal Completion	30-Nov-2014
Estimated Date of Board Approval	31-Mar-2015
Concept Review Decision	Track II - The review did authorize the preparation to continue

I. Introduction and Context

Country Context

In Vietnam, diminishing inflation, strong export growth, and expanding foreign exchange reserves are all contributing to a reasonably stable macroeconomic environment. Overall export growth from 2011-2013 was above 22.8 percent, with high-tech exports growing by a robust 69.4 percent. These positive developments are offset by data from three major indices showing that Vietnam's competitiveness is declining with respect to that of its neighbors and other comparison countries. Vietnam's structural reform agenda is moving relatively slowly, and exports remain dominated by "less sophisticated products with low value added and embodying modest technology." Emphasis on improved competitiveness and greater value added are essential to continuing the country's economic and social progress.

The recent 2011- 2015 Social Economic Development Strategy (SEDS) of the Government of Vietnam (GOV) recognizes the potential impacts, opportunities, and challenges of globalization. In

particular, it acknowledges the importance of countries' mutual dependence, integration, competitiveness, and cooperation, all of which are driven by populations' levels of knowledge and education. One of the three strategic breakthrough measures for socioeconomic development proposed in the SEDS is "quick development of...high quality human resources" for the country's industrialization, modernization, and development of a knowledge-based economy. Improving education quality and outcomes is a key aspect of the SEDS measure and reflects the GOV's desire to invest in education.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

Although Vietnam has succeeded in promoting increased access to education, significant challenges of quality remain. One out of four eight-year-olds is unable to write a basic sentence without errors. The World Bank's 2002 Grade 5 reading assessment confirmed that less than half of the poorest students were able to write at the level expected for their age. Enrollment rates may be high, but it is clear that the quality of primary education, particularly in poor areas, is unsatisfactory.

Most importantly, demand for skills is running far ahead of supply. Despite Vietnamese workers' relatively strong levels of literacy and numeracy, employers report difficulties in hiring new workers with adequate skills. Employers emphasize their need for employees who are equipped not only with technical skills, but also with higher-order cognitive and behavioral skills, such as the ability to think critically, solve problems, and present in a convincing manner to clients and colleagues. Although Vietnam does not suffer from low labor demand, structural unemployment remains a serious challenge. A coherent, high-quality curriculum that promotes advanced skills for all graduates is a critical part of Vietnam's strategy to overcome this scarcity of skills in the labor market. Failure to address this problem will lead to substantial damage to economic productivity and growth.

The Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP) of 2011-2015 lists the following as key to the development of the Vietnamese education sector: renovation of teaching, learning methods, learning outcome assessments for all educational levels, the application of ICT in teaching and learning, the revision of general education curriculum and textbooks, and the promotion of students' creativity. Resolution 29 –NQ/TW of Party Plenum XI (2013) directs that education and training development be required to improve the knowledge, human resource training, and talent fostering of the Vietnamese people. It establishes that the education system must reorient away from one that is content-based, to be more competency-based and quality-based. General education must focus on developing intelligence, physical well-being, forming proper citizenship qualities and competencies, promoting talents, and providing career orientation for students. The education system should develop students' creative competency, self-learning and lifelong learning skills. Graduates should have fundamental general knowledge that prepares them for either post-secondary education or immediate entry into the job market.

In response to Resolution 29, MOET submitted a proposal to the National Assembly entitled "Reform of General Education Curriculum and Textbooks after 2015." The proposal would achieve the aims of Resolution 29 and result in a new general curriculum and new or substantially revised subject-specific curricula, textbooks, teacher guides, and other pedagogical materials. Materials for grades 1, 6, and 9 would be piloted in the 2016-2017 academic year, and materials for other grades in primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary schools would be developed and piloted annually for the four subsequent academic years. The new general education curriculum is expected to develop the key qualities and competencies of 21st century citizens, promoting their harmonized

development of morality, intelligence, physical well-being, as well as providing adequate attention to skills and applications of knowledge. The curriculum development and textbook compilation are expected to overcome the shortcomings from the previous curriculum development attempts, which were considered fragmented and executed in reverse-order.

Relationship to CAS

The proposed project supports the World Bank's overarching goals of reducing poverty and promoting shared prosperity. The new, improved curriculum developed by the proposed project will enable Vietnamese schools to produce better-educated graduates who have the ability to meet the rising skill demands of 21st century employment.

More specifically, the proposed project is directly aligned with the 2012-2016 Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) for Vietnam. The CPS' strategic framework stands upon three "pillars" - competitiveness, sustainability, and opportunity - and the proposed project relates to both competitiveness outcome 1.3 and opportunity outcome 3.2.

Outcome 1.3 seeks to increase Vietnam's "capacity for innovation and value addition." It notes that successfully fostering innovation will depend on strengthening the Vietnamese education system's ability to teach students skills relevant in increasingly sophisticated labor markets. The CPS indicates that future Bank education projects will focus on the education system's capacity to deliver competencies that will be critical for employment and economic growth. By supporting the design and creation of a competency-based curriculum that incorporates 21st century skills into Vietnamese classrooms, the proposed project will contribute significantly to this outcome. Furthermore, the proposed project's commitment to developing high-quality assessments calibrated for use with the new curriculum aligns closely with this CPS's emphasis on measuring student learning.

The proposed operation will also contribute directly to CPS outcome 3.2, which seeks to improve "basic infrastructure and public service delivery and access" by fostering better learning outcomes through increased educational efficiency, more effective teaching, and higher school completion rates. Like outcome 1.3, outcome 3.2 emphasizes the importance of measuring the quality of service delivery. The support for curriculum and assessment enhancements and research included in the proposed project will enable the GOV to perform such student outcome measurements more easily and more precisely. The use of improved data through feedback mechanisms will inform more effective targeting to further improve education quality and learning outcomes.

Finally, the proposed project advances the CPS' goal of maximizing the benefits of the World Bank's "Knowledge Bank" role by stressing the importance of technical assistance in the curriculum design process. This process began under the auspices of the Vietnam Russia Education Aid for Development (READ) Trust Fund, which enabled the Bank to assemble a team of external experts who serve as an International Advisory Board (IAB) for Curriculum and Assessment Reform. The IAB will support the MOET for the remainder of the READ implementation period. Moreover, because the substance of READ activities and activities under the proposed project's potential Project Preparation Technical Assistance Facility (PPTAF) overlap so substantially, the proposed Project is likely to benefit extensively from the IAB's knowledge and guidance. (Appendix 3 lists the IAB members and their principal areas of expertise.) Project preparation will build on the results of READ activities and continue the intensive technical interactions with the

IAB and therein take advantage of the growing knowledge base for assessment and curriculum improvement.

II. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Proposed Development Objective(s) (From PCN)

The Project Development Objective is to assist the Government of Vietnam to: (i) achieve the revision of the curriculum and the restructuring of the assessment system for grades 1-12 and (ii) implement the new curriculum and assessment system in an effective and timely manner.

Achieving this objective will, besides improving pedagogy and teacher effectiveness, contribute to continued increases in learning achievement within Vietnamese primary and secondary schools in the long run.

Key Results (From PCN)

The project will result in:

1. the development of revised general and subject-specific curricula that are better suited to the creation of graduates with strong general knowledge and critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The best available technical knowledge will be used to create curricula for each subject area that:
 - balance appropriately the number of topics covered with the depth of treatment per topic;
 - progress coherently from grade to grade;
 - are complemented by activities explicitly designed to improve reasoning ability, critical thinking, and problem-solving capacities in all students throughout their school careers;
 - facilitate the use of teaching and learning approaches that are appropriately similar or compatible across grade levels and subjects; and
 - retain the numerous virtues of the existing curricula.
2. an expanded national assessment system that will: (i) assess students' capabilities more frequently during their academic careers; (ii) ensure consistency among national-, regional-, district-, school-, and classroom-level assessments; and (iii) promote the consequential analysis and use of assessment data from all levels for the improvement of learning;
3. the creation and distribution of pedagogical materials that follow from the new curriculum;
4. the inclusion of at least one full-time, highly-trained "curriculum champion" in each school and district or provincial DOET; and
5. the continuous production of data and analysis on student learning gains under the new curricula, with special attention to the progress of poor and disadvantaged students.

III. Preliminary Description

Concept Description

The proposed operation will be designed to help the GOV reach its highest goal in education: to produce public school graduates who have strong general knowledge complemented by increased capacities for critical thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving. The revised curriculum will be compatible with the increased use of emerging pedagogical techniques - especially those piloted under the Vietnam Escuela Nueva Project (VNEN) - that decrease the role of simple memorization-based learning in Vietnamese schools.

An expanded national assessment system based on the revised curriculum will conduct valid and

reliable large-scale standardized examinations. The new assessment system will include nationally-representative assessments in primary and lower secondary schools to complement the existing exams in upper secondary schools.

The project will provide both technical assistance and support for outcomes under Disbursement-Linked Indicators (DLIs). The shares of Project resources devoted to direct funding of technical assistance versus support for the achievement of goals under DLI's will be determined during Preparation, along with the specific DLI's and their verification protocols.

IV. Safeguard Policies that might apply

Safeguard Policies Triggered by the Project	Yes	No	TBD
Environmental Assessment OP/BP 4.01	x		
Natural Habitats OP/BP 4.04		x	
Forests OP/BP 4.36		x	
Pest Management OP 4.09		x	
Physical Cultural Resources OP/BP 4.11		x	
Indigenous Peoples OP/BP 4.10	x		
Involuntary Resettlement OP/BP 4.12		x	
Safety of Dams OP/BP 4.37		x	
Projects on International Waterways OP/BP 7.50		x	
Projects in Disputed Areas OP/BP 7.60		x	

V. Financing (in USD Million)

Total Project Cost:	110.00	Total Bank Financing:	100.00
Financing Gap:	0.00		
Financing Source			Amount
BORROWER/RECIPIENT			10.00
International Development Association (IDA)			100.00
Total			110.00

VI. Contact point

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