

**PROJECT INFORMATION DOCUMENT (PID)
APPRAISAL STAGE**

Report No.: PIDA27835

Project Name	Renovation of General Education Project (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	B-Partial Assessment
Date PID Prepared/Updated	03-Jun-2015
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Estimated Date of Appraisal Completion	02-Apr-2015
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Appraisal Review Decision (from Decision Note)	

I. Project Context

Country Context

Vietnam, like the East Asia region as a whole, is recovering from the global economic downturn in a reasonably strong position but with substantial risks. The region is projected to account for two-fifths of global growth and one-third of global trade in the short-term future. 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.

Data on poverty and consumption provide encouraging news: recent consumption growth has favored the poor. The national poverty rate fell from 20.7 percent in 2010 to 17.2 percent in 2013.

Although poverty rates for ethnic minorities and those living in rural areas remain unacceptably high, household expenditures continue to grow overall. Moreover, expenditures in rural areas have risen for households at every level of income along the economic spectrum. The overarching structural transformation of the economy from rural, small-holder agriculture to urban employment tracks the main pathway out of poverty. Investment in the education of Vietnam's children is the cornerstone of this pathway; for this reason, the general populace's demand for education and expectations for improvements in education quality are both rising steadily.

The recent 2011- 2015 Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP) 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, country's industrialization, modernization, and development of a knowledge-based economy. Improving education quality and outcomes is a key aspect of the SEDP measure and reflects the GOV's desire to invest in education. Indeed, this policy goal prompted the GOV to allocate nearly 20 percent of public expenditures to education starting in 2010. This percentage is significantly above the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average of 12.9 percent.

Sectoral and institutional Context

The growth in social demand for education and training reflects both traditional values and the concern in Vietnamese households that children acquire the new skills needed to succeed in a knowledge-based economy. The government has made sustained efforts to meet these demands and to continuously improve education access and quality. Vietnam has achieved universal primary and lower secondary education. In 2012, the net primary education enrollment rate was 98 percent, with 88.5 percent of enrolled children completing primary education. It is now aiming for universal preschool education for 5-year-old children by 2015 and universal upper secondary education enrollment by 2020. Vietnam is expanding education access (particularly for disadvantaged and ethnic minority groups) and ensuring gender equality in education and training.

Vietnam's K-12 education system is large and centrally-managed. In 2013, it consisted of 14.8 million students in primary and secondary schools (7.2 million in primary, 4.9 million in lower secondary, and 2.7 million in upper secondary) and over 850,000 direct teachers (381,000 in primary, 315,000 in lower secondary, and 151,000 in upper secondary). The responsibility for the schools is ultimately in the hands of the national-level Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). However, provincial-level Departments of Education and Training (DOETs) directly oversee upper secondary schools, and district-level DOETs directly oversee primary and lower secondary schools.

The MOET issues learning standards for all school subjects and for all grade levels. MOET also approves the textbooks, pedagogical materials and teachers' guides used by teachers and education administrators to select what to teach and how. These two taken together constitute "the curriculum." The current curriculum was developed under the guidance of National Assembly Resolution No. 40/2000/QH 10. As per the Resolution, the full school curriculum was rolled-out sequentially so that the 1997 cohort was the first to receive the new curriculum for each grade level as it progressed through 12th grade. After 12 years, all twelve grades were operating under a "new" curriculum—although by this point the grade 1 "new" curriculum was twelve years old.

Vietnam participated in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) for the first time in 2012 and its results were very encouraging. The country scored higher than the OECD country

average and outperformed many developed economies. Furthermore, results of the recent Strategic Teaching & Evaluation of Progress (STEP) literacy survey showed that the literacy levels of younger adults from urban areas in Vietnam are comparable to the literacy levels of their peers in many OECD countries (including Austria, Germany, Denmark, Canada, Norway and France).

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 communicate verbally and in writing in a convincing manner to clients and colleagues. 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 significantly hamper economic productivity and growth.

Criticisms of the previous curriculum reform focus on two issues. The strongest criticism is that the principles of the reform were insufficiently clear and inconsistent. Observers have cited vague and contradictory statements from MOET in its guidance to teachers, sometimes in the same official publication. The goals of the reform were to promote variously "active learning" or "student – centered learning" or "discovery learning" or "collaborative learning" or "autonomous learning methods." MOET was criticized for not making the meaning of these terms sufficiently clear, and for not stating clearly and concretely what teachers should do differently in the classrooms under the new curriculum.

The second criticism of the previous curriculum reform is that it was segmented by school sub-system. Those who revised the primary school curriculum were only tangentially involved, if at all, with the revision of the junior secondary school curriculum; idem from junior secondary to senior secondary. No coordinated sense of the direction of the curriculum as a whole could emerge given the changing composition of technical experts and stakeholders throughout the process.

The 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) requires the national education and training system to improve the knowledge, human resource training, and foster the talent of the Vietnamese people. It orients the education system away from being content-based, and toward being more competency- and quality-based. It requires general education to focus on developing intelligence, physical well-being, forming proper citizenship qualities and competencies, promoting talents, and providing career orientation for students. It also stipulates that 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. As any good curriculum does, it starts from a conception of the “ideal graduate” who has harmoniously developed ethically, intellectually, and physically, and who can apply learning to real world challenges.

The Bank has been a key partner for the GOV. The Government-Bank collaboration has addressed virtually all aspects of education coverage and quality, from pre-primary education to the promotion of Science, Technology, and Innovation capacity, and includes the graduate education and research system. The current portfolio of education projects focuses on:

(i) **Readiness to Learn for Young Children: The School Readiness Promotion Project (SRPP - P17393)** seeks to improve early childhood education by promoting school readiness for disadvantaged children through Vietnam's existing Early Childhood Education (ECE) program. In addition to strengthening the ECE program's capacity, the SRPP expands full-day preschool enrollment, improves preschool quality assurance mechanisms, and develops preschool teachers' and education managers' professional expertise.

(ii) **School Coverage and Instructional Time: The School Education Quality Assurance Program (SEQAP - P091747)**, which supports the GOV's full-day schooling reform program by upgrading educational infrastructure and facilities, developing human resources, and reinforcing policy frameworks, aims to improve educational outcomes and completion rates for disadvantaged primary education students.

(iii) **Improved Pedagogy: The Vietnam Global Partnership for Education - Escuela Nueva Project (VNEN - P120867)** introduces new teaching and learning practices that promote active learning and de-emphasize rote memorization. The VNEN is especially notable for inaugurating and advancing this new pedagogical approach.

The advances under the Vietnam Escuela Nueva are particularly relevant to this proposed Project. They have sought to replace traditional memorization-based learning with more active learning methods, more student-centered teaching, and greater emphasis on the ability to apply learning outside the classroom. The revised curriculum is expected to further these advances by providing a more coherent, focused, and rigorous learning program that promotes both the knowledge and the competencies needed for deeper understanding of curriculum content and greater ability to apply knowledge.

The need for high-quality education does not end with secondary school graduation. The government and the Bank also promote the autonomy of universities along with a host of other

policy improvements at the tertiary level such as the aforementioned advancement of science, technology, and innovation capacity.

The Fundamental and Comprehensive Renovation of Education (proposed in Resolution 29 NQ/TW, which was ratified on November 4, 2013 in the 8th Session of the Communist Party Central Steering Committee) aims to produce a “learning society” necessary for Vietnam's continuing industrialization, modernization and international integration. The renovated general education will provide Vietnamese children with the new cognitive and behavioral skills necessary for this vision. A modernized post-secondary education will build on these skills for the new world of work and research. The World Bank will strategically support the Education Renovation through a programmatic approach.

II. Proposed Development Objectives

The Project Development Objective is to raise student learning outcomes by: (i) revising and implementing the curriculum following a competency-based approach; and (ii) improving the effectiveness of instruction by creating and disseminating textbooks aligned with the revised curriculum.

III. Project Description

Component Name

Curriculum Development

Comments (optional)

This component will support the development and implementation of a revised curriculum that is competency-based for all school subjects from grades 1 - 12. More specifically, this component seeks to: (i) develop and pilot a revised curriculum that aims to promote students’ acquisition of both competencies and content knowledge; (ii) deliver online and face-to-face training to educators and administrators on implementing the new curriculum; and (iii) draft materials to guide publishers on developing appropriately aligned textbooks and other pedagogical materials. This work will primarily be undertaken by the Core Technical Committee (CTC) and the Subject-Specific Technical Committees (SSTCs), who will ensure that the new curriculum exhibits coherence, rigor, and focus.

Component Name

Development and Dissemination of Aligned Textbooks

Comments (optional)

This component will support the development a set of textbooks aligned with the new curriculum and the provision of aligned textbooks to schools with high numbers of economically-disadvantaged students. Specifically, this component will focus on: (i) Development of Textbooks Aligned with the New Curriculum; and (ii) Provision of Textbooks to Disadvantaged Schools.

Component Name

Learning Assessment and Analysis for Continuous Improvement of Curriculum and Policy

Comments (optional)

In order to ensure that learning outcomes are measured and analyzed for continuous improvement of curriculum and policy, this component will support: (i) the establishment of the National Center for Sustainable Development of General Education (NCSGDGEQ) and the National Center for Foreign Language Testing (NCFLT); (ii) research and capacity-building in curriculum development and assessment for the Centers’ staff and relevant officials; (iii) expansion of the National Large-Scale

Assessment system (NLSAS); and (iv) consultations/outreach campaigns. A significant focus of this component will be to understand better and narrow the learning achievement gaps that exist within the Vietnamese public education system.

Component Name

Project Management

Comments (optional)

This component will finance the incremental costs associated with project management, including activities designed to ensure efficient program management and early identification of corrective measures to solve any implementation challenges. Monitoring and Evaluation. This component also supports the development and implementation of Project M&E in order to ensure that the determined indicators are achieved and to continuously identify areas of the Project that can be improved.

IV. Financing (in USD Million)

Total Project Cost:	77.00	Total Bank Financing:	77.00
Financing Gap:	0.00		
For Loans/Credits/Others			Amount
BORROWER/RECIPIENT			0.00
International Development Association (IDA)			77.00
Total			77.00

V. Implementation

Project Management. The government will establish a management unit, which will be staffed by MOET employees and consultants to coordinate, manage, and implement project activities (administration, financial and procurement management, accounting, and interpretation/translation, etc.). Once the curriculum, textbooks, and other pedagogical materials have been developed, the management unit will coordinate their printing and dissemination to disadvantaged students, including ethnic minority students, students with disabilities, and those from families of low socio-economic backgrounds.

In order to achieve coherence, focus, rigor, and alignment in the revised curriculum and textbooks, the Project seeks to promote effective and strategic collaboration and coordination among and within working groups. The management unit headed by a Director, will oversee all Project activities, including financial and procurement management. The Chief Technical Officer will head all technical matters. The Core Technical Committee (CTC), Subject-Specific Technical Committee (SSTC), Curriculum Appraisers and Textbook Appraisers, and the staff of the National Center for Sustainable Development of General Education Quality (NCSGDGEQ) will execute the day-to-day work on the revision of the curriculum and textbooks. International experts will be sought to provide technical assistance in areas wherein MOET or national experts lack capacity. Horizontal and vertical membership overlaps are encouraged, except where there might be conflict of interest, in order to strengthen coherence and alignment among various Project activities.

MOET will ensure that Project deliverables are consistent with Government/Ministry policies and the goals of the Project. When this is not the case, the MOET will return them to the CTC for additional revision. When deliverables are of the desired quality, the MOET will officially transmit

them to the Minister of Education for consideration and official adoption.

The World Bank will supervise the Project in accordance with its procedures and regulations. Supervision will be conducted by a Task Team (TT) that communicates regularly with MOET and the management unit. The TT will provide both management and technical support to the management unit. In order to facilitate knowledge-sharing, the World Bank will provide technical assistance from leading experts who can share valuable information and experience with the MOET and its management unit.

The MOET will ensure close coordination and collaboration among all relevant stakeholders, including the management unit, the World Bank and related government agencies (including, inter alia, the Ministry of Planning and Investment and the Ministry of Finance), and other individuals and entities involved with the Project (including, inter alia, national and international consultants and the State Bank of Vietnam).

VI. Safeguard Policies (including public consultation)

Safeguard Policies Triggered by the Project	Yes	No
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

Comments (optional)

VII. Contact point

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