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## SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN VIETNAM: DIAGNOSIS OF CURRENT STATUS AND CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE



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**KEYWORDS:** Education system. School librarian. School libraries. Vietnam

**ABSTRACT:** **Goal/thesis** – to overview the development of school libraries in Vietnam, thereby drawing out the advantages, disadvantages, and challenges they face. **Methodology** – critical literature review and content analysis of source materials. **Findings** – revealed there are the disadvantages of school libraries in Vietnam including shortcomings with the lack of materials, poor infrastructure, the inefficient capacity of the school librarian, and the limited budget. The reasons for these problems are due to the misperception of administrators, policymakers, and society regarding the libraries’ role in the educational activities of schools; the library operating hours are not optimal; the low percentage of students re-

ading books and newspapers (especially printed documents); the small library space; oftentimes the capacity of the librarians is poor, and, most of all, there is not enough budget allocated to libraries. **Conclusions** – recommendations are made toward improving school libraries in Vietnam.

## INTRODUCTION

It is undeniable that for the development of any nation, education is one of the most important factors. In the education system, general education creates the basis for the development of each individual. To ensure the quality of education, many key factors are needed. The school library is one of the most important services to support the teaching and learning processes in schools. Covering an area of 331.210 sq. km, Vietnam is a developing country in Southeast Asia, consisting of 63 provinces and cities with a population of 96,208,984 people (Nguyen, 2019). In parallel with economic development, education in Vietnam has made great strides over the years. Many questions arise about the status and potential development of school libraries in Vietnam. This article will discuss the status of Vietnamese libraries, focusing on evaluating existing problems and suggesting recommendations to the development of the school library system in Vietnam, regarding global trends in school library services.

To explore this topic, the paper begins with a brief description of the methods employed in this study. This is followed by a literature review and the results of this study, presenting the general educational system and the development of school libraries in Vietnam as well as the advantages and challenges for the development. Finally, this paper concludes with recommendations based on the research.

## METHODOLOGY

This work is based on a critical literature review and content analysis of source materials. The former includes texts published mostly in the last 20 years (2000-2020), to refer to current research and development trends in school libraries. The latter focuses on legal regulations or sector reports, strategies, and statistics, presenting the background and indicators for school libraries in Vietnam.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The school library provides learning services, books, and other resources that enable school members to become assertive thinkers and to know how to efficiently utilize different types of information. A school library is

a part of an extensive library and information network, operating in line with the principles of the IFLA and UNESCO's school library manifesto (IFLA/UNESCO, 1999).

The IFLA/UNESCO (1999) recommends that for each country, work needs to be done on establishing the links between the school's goals and its library service. The Manifesto strongly supports the creation of good and productive libraries for schools. Besides, the Manifesto also affirms that the school librarian is a trained staff member responsible for the planning and management of the school library. They can collaborate with all school community members and link with the public library and others.

Lowell A. Martin said, that "in the ideal case, the school library is not only an aid, providing the resources necessary for the education process but also disseminating the learning in its own right – teaching position skills and use the document" (Martin, 1984).

In Vietnam, the duties of a school library are to provide materials to teachers and students, to collect and introduce extensive documentation for teaching, learning, and conducting scientific research. School libraries also encourage teachers and students to participate in library activities, coordinate activities with other libraries, and manage under the library regulations (Vũ, 2009).

According to The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), librarians should work collaboratively with the principal, curriculum leaders, experts in the school, employees, students, members of other library groups, and with members of cultural, linguistic, indigenous, and other unique populations to contribute to the achievement of the academic, cultural, and social goals of the school (IFLA, 2015).

The library professional operation in Vietnam is considered one of five criteria for evaluating school libraries. Accordingly, "all materials in the library must be registered, described, classified, cataloged, arranged according to professional library rules". Every year, librarians "must organize the compilation of 1 to 2 bibliographies for teaching and learning in schools" (MET of Vietnam, 1998). Based on this guide, along with the school library working manual and the school library professional training materials, librarians have been given much guidance in carrying out necessary activities including collecting, registering, cataloging, and classifying library materials (Vũ, 2009) (Từ, Đàm, Nguyễn, & Nguyễn, 2008).

Collaboration between librarians and teachers, students, and parents in organizing library activities is addressed in materials about the school library. In Vietnam, article 10 of the Regulations on School Standards (2003) states, "The library must have a network of collaborators among teachers, students and parents' associations to help the library working group to exploit and develop the movement of reading books, newspapers in schools". Also, librarians need to "coordinate with teachers, especially

classroom teachers and professional organizations to guide students not only in planning but also reading books, taking notes" (MET of Vietnam, 2003b). Moreover, a library should coordinate with literature teachers to organize extracurricular literary activities, launch a movement to recommend books, maintain and organize them for students, and host book introductions at the library (MET of Vietnam, 1998).

The collaboration between librarians and teachers, as well as the teacher's perception of the role of the library in assisting in school teaching and learning, is a topic that receives more research attention from authors like T. H. V. Nguyễn (2016), and Ritchie (2011). However, the most notable author on the topic is Patricia Montiel-Overall (Montiel & Jones, 2011), who has published a lot of research on librarian and teacher collaboration.

According to Lee and Klinger, teachers' knowledge and beliefs also influence the ability of the school library and librarian to support students' learning and the degree of potential collaboration among teachers and the librarian (Lee & Klinger, 2011).

According to IFLA (2015), the support of school administrators plays an important role in the success of the library. Therefore, librarians should proactively report the librarian's activities directly to the principal or authorized person. Moreover, the library is a common address for all members of the school community, such as teachers, students, administrators, and parents. As a result, librarians need good communication skills along with the ability to build cooperative relationships with each group.

Gary Hartzell (2002) stated that the principal's support is a vital factor in establishing and maintaining a quality library communication program. The Prime Minister of Vietnam (2010) said that for library programs to be fully implemented, principals need to establish a culture of cooperation in the school and identify expectations for librarians to implement. However, to do this, the principal requires an understanding of the teaching role of a school's library. Agreeing with this point of view the MOF and the MET of Vietnam (1990) emphasize that the long-term positive impact of school library programs on student achievement cannot be achieved without a partnership between the principal and the librarian.

Besides, library evaluation is another key factor influencing the success of a school library. In 2008, Greenwood, Creaser, and Maynard studied six primary school libraries that were evaluated to be successful in the UK and found that there was a common feature among all of them: they all conducted library assessments (using a self-assessment toolkit or extracting detailed statistical data from library management systems) (Greenwood, Creaser, & Maynard, 2008). Barrett, Eriksson, and Gunnarsson-Contassot (2011) reason that the lack of evaluation of the curriculum and teaching is one of the issues that the school libraries in Sweden have faced. Thus, although evaluation of the school libraries is the responsibility of the

city government, since autumn 2011, the school inspector can evaluate the quality of the school library work (Barrett et al., 2011).

In Vietnam, Nguyen Thi Hong Vui (2016) said that librarians should be welcoming, friendly, and enthusiastic which will encourage students when entering the library. Librarians should also take initiative in developing and proposing programs, plans, and schedules to the board of directors (Nguyễn, 2016).

Cristina Sacco Judge (2012) studied the salaries and positions of librarians in the US and Scotland to learn which factors influence the school library model. Judge found that the difference in wages can lead to career changes (Judge, 2012).

When conducting research surveys on the self-awareness of librarians, Judge discovered that "there is a relation between not having a professional certificate with the feeling of not being seen as a professional librarian" (Judge, 2012). Judge's research shows a big difference in the role of professional associations in the US compared to the UK. Accordingly, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) represents the school library profession in the US. With 64,000 members, the AASL organizes career courses and also partners with librarians in their professional activities. The AASL has advocated for increased salaries for librarians and emphasized the importance of having good quality librarians. In the UK, both the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) and School Library Association (SLA) represent school librarians. Unfortunately, these organizations regularly report conflicting policies and standards. As a result, the school libraries have had difficulty implementing policies.

In Poland, Danuta Brzezińska wrote that there are no standards in terms of library accessibility, employment of librarians, housing matters, equipment, and financing rules (2014). According to Brzezińska, it is currently up to the principal to decide on matters regarding the school library (Brzezińska, 2014). Based on Polish data, Bogumiła Staniów stated that librarians have failed to push through a favorable provision in the Education System Act (1991) regarding school libraries. It is necessary to appoint a team of librarians to develop such documents under the auspices of the Association of Teachers of Polish School Librarians (Staniów, 2004). Furthermore, according to Staniów (Schultz-Jones and Oberg, 2015) the standards for school librarianship (2010) are not actively used, are not followed up by local school authorities, and are not supported by a recommendation. These standards must be updated and re-published.

## THE GENERAL EDUCATION SYSTEM IN VIETNAM

Vietnam's education system is managed by the Ministry of Education and Training (MET). The public education system has four levels: (1) pre-school education (for children aged 3 to 5 years in nursery and kindergarten); (2) general education, including primary education (grades one to five, children aged 6 to 10 years), lower secondary education (grades six to nine, adolescents aged 11 to 14 years), and upper secondary education (grades 10 to 12, adolescents aged 15 to 17 years); (3) vocational education, including general education and higher education (students aged over 18 years); and (4) higher education (Vietnam National Assembly, 2019).

In Vietnam, primary education is compulsory (Vietnam National Assembly, 2019). Lower secondary education is designed to help students consolidate primary school outcomes, and to develop initial knowledge about technology and career paths to either continue to upper secondary school, professional secondary school, vocational training, or begin working. Upper secondary school education aims to help students consolidate their knowledge from lower secondary education, to complete high school education, and to develop common knowledge about technology and career guidance for further higher education (university, college), vocational training, or enter working life (see Figure 1) (Nuffic, 2015).

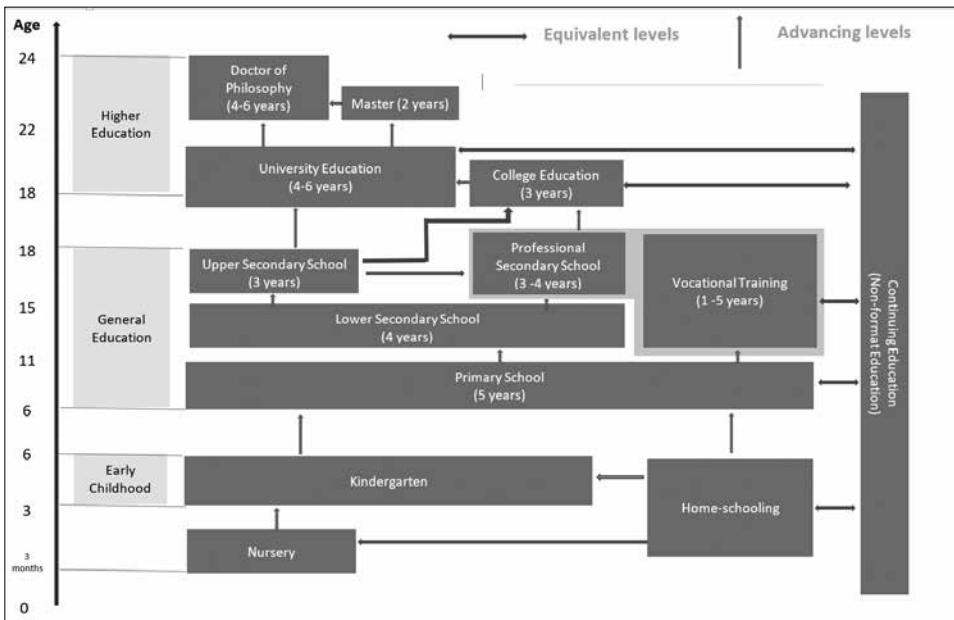


Figure 1. National education system of Vietnam, 2014 (MET of Vietnam, 2015)

Vietnam has 27.975 schools within the general education system, including 14.695 primary schools, 10.887 lower secondary schools, and 2.393 upper secondary schools (MET of Vietnam, 2018b). There are 8.359.000 students in primary schools, 5.603.000 in lower secondary schools, and 2.578.000 in upper secondary schools (see Figure 2). About 91,7% of the school-aged population are currently attending school. The percentage of females attending school is higher than that of males, respectively 92,5% and 90,8%. Over the past 20 years, the proportion of the population in the school-age group who currently do not attend school (never attended or dropped out) has significantly decreased, from 20,9% in 1999 to 16,4% in 2009 and 8,3% in 2019 (Ministry of Labour – Invalids and Social Affairs, 2019).

## THE SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN VIETNAM

A school library is an important and integral part of any school. It is a place to store materials to serve teachers and students in teaching, learning, and scientific research. Detailed characteristics of Vietnamese school libraries' organisation are presented below, including the following aspects: infrastructure, librarians' competencies, budget, and activities.

### INFRASTRUCTURE

The school library's facility has a direct impact on the library's performance. Many departments of education consider upgrading their libraries as one of the important goals to meet. Unfortunately, many schools still have trouble acquiring a room for a library. About 79% of schools use a common library room for both teachers and students, which means students do not have their own space for work or entertainment. About 17% of schools have a separate library room for students and about 4% of schools do not have reading spaces for students (MET of Vietnam, 2018b).

Based on the above criteria, the Ministry of Education (MET of Vietnam, 2019) has statistics that the number of schools meeting the library space's standard reaches 60% of the total school. The number of libraries with spacious reading rooms suitable for reading activities was 22,22%, with reading rooms to ensure safety for readers at 33,33%, reading rooms arranged logically to serve the maximum reading activity at 25,40%. Also, compared to the school library standard (MET of Vietnam, 2003b), the percentage of schools meeting the standards for bookshelves, tables, chairs, and lamps were 43,81%, 35,87%, and 46,98%, respectively (MOCST of Vietnam, 2006). That means more than 50% of all schools have facilities that do not meet the school library standards. Also, according to the above data, each library has 0.3 computers, only 10% of the libraries have

an internet connection, and only 1% of the total libraries take part in a library cooperation network.

Statistics for facilities and specialized equipment for the library are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Facilities and specialized equipment for the school libraries. (MET of Vietnam, 2019)

The facilities and specialized equipment for the library in Vietnam	Level	Number	Calculation Unit	Average per one school	The standard for Vietnamese school libraries (MET of Vietnam, 2003b)
The number of reading rooms and repositories for students	23,166		rooms	0.83	1
	Primary school (PS)	11,823		0.80	
	Lower secondary schools (LSS)	9,453		0.87	
	Upper secondary schools (USS)	1,891		0.79	
Total reading room area and repositories for students	986,818		m <sup>2</sup>	35.3	50
	PS	438,036		29.5	
	LSS	331,576		26.9	
	USS	217,206		87.1	
The number of seats for students	746,398		seats	26.7	25
	PS	409,071		27.8	
	LSS	237,673		21.8	
	USS	88,612		37.0	
The number of reading rooms and repositories for teachers	19,259		rooms	0.7	1
	PS	8,676		0.6	
	LSS	8,518		0.8	
	USS	1,667		0.7	



Total reading room area for teachers	488,436		m <sup>2</sup>	17.5	50
	PS	236,238		15.9	
	LSS	192,289		15.6	
	USS	43,720		17.5	
The number of seats for teachers	226,141			8.1	20
	PS	118,628		8.1	
	LSS	77,735		7.1	
	USS	25,125		10.5	
The number of school libraries connected to the Internet	5,180			0.19	1
	PS	3,067		0.21	
	LSS	1,728		0.16	
	USS	385		0.16	
Bookcases	78,860			2.8	not available
	PS	36,566		2.5	
	LSS	35,409		3.3	
	USS	5,187		2.2	
Shelves	90,070			3.2	
	PS	49,227		3.3	
	LSS	28,530		2.6	
	USS	9,491		4.0	
Tables and chairs	531,511			19.0	
	PS	304,274		20.7	
	LSS	158,208		14.5	
	USS	62,033		25.9	
The number of computers for users in the reading room	23,565			0.84	
	PS	10,238		0.70	
	LSS	9,986		0.92	
	USS	3,341		1.40	

The number of school libraries took part in the library cooperation network	921			0.03	not available
	PS	456		0.03	
	LSS	352		0.03	
	USS	113		0.05	
The total number of electronic materials	2,981,436			106.6	
	PS	1,350,530		91.9	
	LSS	1,312,915		120.6	
	USS	317,991		132.9	
Library software	5,917			0.21	
	PS	3,071		0.21	
	LSS	2,248		0.21	
	USS	598		0.25	

Table 1 shows that the number of schools with reading rooms for students is 83%, of which the number of primary, lower, and upper secondary schools with reading rooms for students is 80%, respectively. 87% and 79%. The reading room area for students is 35.3m<sup>2</sup> for a school, while the standard area is at least 50m<sup>2</sup>. The number of seats for students at the library is 26.7 seats above the standard 25 seats. There is a difference between levels of education, 27.8 seats, 21.8 seats, and 37 seats for primary, lower, and upper secondary schools respectively. The number of reading rooms for teachers is 0.7 rooms per school, not yet the standard is one room per school. The number of seats for teachers at the library is very low, only 8.1 seats per school while the standard is 20 seats per school. The number of school libraries with an internet connection is only 0.19 per school, the standard is that every library must have an internet connection. Besides, the data related to other facilities on average for a school is also very limited at all educational levels such as bookcases 2.8 units, shelves 3.2 units, tables and chairs 19.0 sets, the number of computers for users in the reading room 0.84 sets, the number of school libraries took part in library cooperation network is 3%, the total number of electronic materials 106.6 units, and library having library software is 21%.

#### LIBRARIANS' COMPETENCES

Only 74% of school librarians have any professional training. In the rest of the schools, other staff conduct library services (MET,2018b). The number of librarians with university degrees in LIS is only 20,5% (MET, 2019).

In 2019, 11% of librarians had short-term training, a significant decrease from 2016 when it was 33% (see Table 2). Certainly, people who do not have deep knowledge about library science will face difficulties organizing library activities.

Table 2

The number of school librarians (MET of Vietnam, 2018b)

Area	Total	Dedicated	Concurrent	Short trained in 2016
Northern	14.174	10.175	3.999	5.306
Central	3.784	2.769	798	240
Southern	6.687	5.264	1.371	1.977
Mekong River Delta	3.342	2.596	700	1.572
<b>Nationwide</b>	<b>27.975</b>	<b>19.850</b>	<b>8.040</b>	<b>9.095</b>

Also, according to MET (2019), there are differences between educational levels. By the average of the current total number of school librarians by primary, upper secondary, lower secondary, and multi-level schools, the number of staff with a master's degree in LIS are respectively 0.2%, 0.57%, 0.24%, and 0.29%, with a bachelor's degree in LIS are 16.57%, 17.80%, 27.64%, 21.47%, with a vocational school degree in LIS is 32.63%, 29.75%, 31.73%, 40.29%, with only short-term training in LIS are 14.13%, 10.17%, 12.83%, 10.59%.

#### BUDGET FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIES

According to the MET of Vietnam (2019), total funding for the libraries in the 2018/2019 school year was: 353.030.000.000 VND (equivalent to 15.214.336 USD), including:

- public local authority budget: 120.636.000.000 VND
- state budget: 72.619.000.000 VND
- funding from social contribution: VND 159.775.000.000 VND.

The average budget per elementary school was 14.900.000 VND/year (equivalent to 640 USD); per lower secondary school were 24.700.000 VND/year (equivalent to 1060 USD); per upper secondary school were 33.400.000 VND/year (equivalent to 1430 USD), and per other school types were 15.300.000 VND/year (equivalent to 660 USD).

#### LIBRARY ACTIVITIES

Libraries offer guidelines for teachers, students, and educational administrators to use library materials. They either lend materials to teachers and students or offer onsite services. School libraries organize different

reading promotion actions. These include contests, for example, “Students tell stories by books” or “Good Librarians”, raising public awareness and changing attitudes towards library work in schools. Many schools have developed a “classroom library” in the classroom or corridor to serve the reading needs of students.

In general, school libraries have organized different activities such as book introductions, exhibitions, and competitions to discover more books. Some libraries also join with local communities and hospitals. According to the Ministry of Education, however, primary school library activities are inadequate and ineffective (MET of Vietnam, 2018a). 61,9% of total libraries are open daily, however, 47,2% of them have no library lessons. The number of primary schools that organize library classes per month is 22,2%, 1,59% per week; 50,79% of primary schools do not organize reading activities in schools and 50,79% of schools do not allow students to check out the materials. In short, library activities are just formalistic, not realistic.

## SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN VIETNAM – STRENGTHS, AND WEAKNESSES

Based on the situation of the school libraries presented above, on the one hand, it can be seen that the school library activities in Vietnam have certain advantages. On the other hand, libraries still have many problems that need to be solved. Both issues are described below.

### STRENGTHS

The number of school libraries in Vietnam is large (29.656 library rooms in 27.975 schools) (MET of Vietnam, 2018b). This creates a dense network of school libraries, which can be used for exchange, sharing documents, interlibrary loans, as well as sharing expertise among librarians. Such cooperation can enhance librarians in skills and knowledge.

A library in each school is also a great advantage in supporting children’s education, entertainment, development of information, media, and cultural literacy.

There are also many legal documents related to school libraries, which determine legal foundations for organizing school library activities. New legal documents, such as the Reading Culture Development Project (Prime Minister of Vietnam, 2017), have had a positive impact on the school library system, and on local authorities as well as educational institutions regarding library activities. They adapt global solutions to both Vietnamese and regional/local circumstances. Therefore school libraries can define goals to be reached and consequently implement new solutions.

School library activities are abundant, with many types of services. Many schools hold contests or activities that have increased awareness in the community and education sectors (MET of Vietnam, 2018b). In fact, in many localities, more funds have been contributed by organizations and individuals than from the state-funded budget. This helps schools increase the number of materials and equipment for their library.

## PROBLEMS

Despite the advantages improving the libraries' potential, the following problems have been identified in this study.

### *The shortcomings in the legal document system on school libraries*

Many legal documents still have shortcomings and are not suitable for current conditions. Specifically, policies related to the aspects of school libraries such as finance, personnel, and material standards are no longer appropriate (MET, 2018b).

Currently, a school library works according to Decision-01/BGD (MET of Vietnam, 2003b). This decision includes many points not suitable for each grade and level. Therefore, it limits the development of libraries as well as the implementation of new and advanced library models in educational reform. For example, in the first standard, apart from the prescribed books, magazines, and textbooks, other types of teaching and learning materials that meet the teaching content in schools have not yet been mentioned. Regulations on facilities and equipment for libraries have not been quantified yet. There should be separate requirements for each level of education to fit the current situation.

### *Low budgets for school libraries*

The average budget of about 544 USD (MET of Vietnam, 2019) per year for a school library is too small compared to the operational needs. The budget for renovating and upgrading libraries has also been ignored. As a result, libraries' collections and infrastructure are poor and outdated.

### *The lack of materials*

Library collections are unfortunately limited and consist mostly of old books, with a lack of texts on entertainment, psychology, and life skills suitable for teachers and students.

According to MET (2019), the number of textbooks divided for each student at the primary, lower, and upper secondary schools is 0.5, 0.6, and 0.4 books. Whereas the standard is 1 set of textbooks per student (serving all subjects).

The number of reference books for the primary, lower, and upper secondary school students is 1.4, 1.5, and 1.7 books per student, respectively. Standards of reference books for these levels in the city and delta areas are 2.0, 3.0, and 4.0 books, and in mountainous areas are 0.5, 1, and 2 books respectively.

*The poor infrastructure*

Most schools use classrooms as libraries; however, this situation is far from ideal. The average area for one student is only 0,1 m<sup>2</sup> while the country standard is 0,6 m<sup>2</sup> (MET of Vietnam, 2018b). Most library equipment is old and of poor form and quality and only 10% of school libraries have internet access.

*Competencies of school librarians*

Only 74% of librarians are professionally trained. 23% of school staff work as a part-time librarian. Additionally, many have limited technology and foreign language skills, and many are considered unfriendly (T. D. Nguyễn, 2017). Moreover, their salary is extremely low, which makes it hard for them to be dedicated to their job (MOCST of Vietnam, 2006).

*The ineffective professional operation*

The quality of library management and operations is insufficient (MET of Vietnam, 2019). Many librarians are not good at organizing library activities, such as storytelling contests, reading exams, playing book characters, etc. Many library activities are also not regular nor even for all educational levels and regions (MET of Vietnam, 2019). There is also a low rate of students coming to the library and most students spend a short amount of time using the materials (MET of Vietnam, 2019).

## THE REASONS FOR THESE PROBLEMS

The administrators' misconception about the role of school libraries is one of the biggest factors affecting library activities. For example, the view that a library is just a place for storing books, rather than a knowledge center, negatively affects the mission of a school library. Therefore insufficient attention is paid to facilities, equipment, and library collections. The situation of a school library depends on the principals' perception of the library's role and activities.

Furthermore, inadequate awareness from policymakers and society about the role of libraries is another cause for the problems. For example, the Vietnamese Library Law had not been adopted until 2019, which is further evidence of the public's lack of interest in library activities.

Additionally, many school libraries are mainly used during school breaks, which is not enough time for students to read onsite. Many students choose to sit in the classroom or go to the playground rather than go to the library at that time. Many schools only open libraries for half of the day, which makes it difficult for students to use (MET of Vietnam, 2019).

Most libraries are former classrooms and have unfavorable locations, which negatively affects students' interest in the library. Outdated and poor materials, mainly textbooks and references, with a lack of fiction books or other entertainment is one of the most serious reasons for libra-

ries' weakness. Low budgets for libraries result in schools not having the funds to build a quality library collection, preventing libraries from improving.

Furthermore, many librarians lack professional competencies and knowledge. These issues are due to (1) low-quality training; (2) poor recruitment; (3) very low salary for librarians.

One of the big problems of school libraries is the low budget for operation. The financial issue is a consequence of library policy and inappropriate stakeholder perception about the role of the library. However, it is also the cause of many other problems in school library activities. That makes school libraries incapable of running their services successfully. It is too difficult for school libraries to have a good collection, to have an ideal library space, and to have sufficient infrastructure if they are not adequately funded.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the current status of school libraries as well as the analysis of literature, global recommendations, and strategies for school libraries, we can consider recommendations to improve the quality of school libraries in Vietnam. Specifically:

### COMPREHENSIVE LEGAL DOCUMENTS RELATED TO SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Although there is a specific library law (The National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2019), the issues related to school libraries that are mentioned there are generic. The school library standards (2003) also need to be revised and upgraded. Standards concerning facilities, funding, resources, etc. need to be further improved. The promulgation of new legal documents related to school libraries should be concretized based on the Vietnam Library Law. The development of specific legal documents on school libraries would be very helpful.

### INCREASING BASIC SALARY AND DEVELOPING BETTER REGIMES AND POLICIES FOR THE LIBRARIANS

Although many librarians have a BA or MA degrees in LIS, most of them are very poorly paid (Mỹ Dung, 2015). Librarians also receive hardly any other financial support, such as additional allowances (0,2% of basic salary) stipulated in the legal documents (MOCST of Vietnam, 2006). Therefore, policymakers need to increase salaries and allowances to encourage librarians.

## IMPROVING LIBRARIAN TRAINING

The librarian is the soul of the library. Qualifications and competencies of librarians are a key factor influencing the quality of the library. The MET needs to assess the quantity and quality of school librarians throughout Vietnam. Stakeholders also need to build training and retraining plans for school librarians.

The schools should also improve their recruitment processes to recruit qualified librarians instead of transferring teachers or staff to work as librarians.

Schools offering LIS education should develop an up-to-date training curriculum, which provides aspiring librarians with the necessary knowledge. Currently, there is no specific training program for school librarians in Vietnam. This should also be considered by the MET of Vietnam, as well as universities.

Management institutions such as the MET of Vietnam or Departments of Education in provinces should regularly organize professional training courses for school librarians. This will help school librarians renew their expertise and organize library activities more effectively.

## INCREASING INFRASTRUCTURE AND COLLECTIONS TO IMPROVE LIBRARY QUALITY

The MET of Vietnam should assess the status of school library systems and propose investment policies. In the immediate future, school libraries should mobilize funding sources, materials, and equipment from student's parents, sponsors, and other social organizations. Coordinating with other libraries in the school network or with public libraries is a good way to take advantage of resources that the school does not have.

## FLEXIBLE APPLICATION OF SCHOOL LIBRARY MODELS

The MET of Vietnam should study and invest in developing a typical school library model, adaptable to local or regional needs. That will form the solution for schools to choose the one appropriate to their school.

## CONCLUSIONS

This article gives an overview of the school library practices in Vietnam over the last few years. Issues such as facilities, quantity and quality of librarians, funding for libraries, and library activities were discussed and reviewed. On that basis, the strengths, and weaknesses of school libraries in Vietnam were discussed and evaluated. To improve school library activities in Vietnam, the stakeholders need to carefully analyze the reasons for the library's weakness as well as implement the proposed solutions in



a synchronized manner. It can be concluded that investing in school libraries will immediately change the quality of education for schools and the long-term benefits of the future of society. There is a need to refer to global trends and recommendations (declarations, etc.) in the design and development (or reform) of school libraries in Vietnam. A nationwide study of the condition needs and perspectives of school libraries and librarians seem to be indispensable for developing new regulations and policies in the country.

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## **BIBLIOTEKI SZKOLNE W WIETNAMIE: DIAGNOZA STANU BIEŻĄCEGO, WYZWANIA**

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: System edukacji. Bibliotekarz szkolny. Biblioteki szkolne. Wietnam

ABSTRAKT: **Teza/Cel** – Celem artykułu jest prezentacja rozwoju bibliotek szkolnych w Wietnamie oraz wskazanie wiążących się z nim wad i zalet, a także wyzwania. **Metody badawcze** – Zastosowano analizę krytyczną literatury przedmiotu oraz analizę treści materiałów źródłowych. **Wyniki** – Biblioteki szkolne w Wietnamie borykają się z następującymi problemami: brakiem materiałów, słabą infrastrukturą, niewystarczającymi umiejętnościami bibliotekarzy szkolnych oraz ograniczonym budżetem. Problemy te wynikają z następujących kwestii: błędnego postrzegania roli bibliotek w działalności edukacyjnej szkół przez administrację, decydentów i społeczeństwo; nieoptymalnych godzin otwarcia bibliotek; niskiego odsetka uczniów czytających książki i czasopisma (zwłaszcza w postaci drukowanej); ograniczonej przestrzeni bibliotecznej; nieodpowiednich umiejętności bibliotekarzy szkolnych; niewystarczającego budżetu. **Wnioski** – Autor przedstawia zalecenia dotyczące poprawy sytuacji bibliotek szkolnych w Wietnamie.