

Policies on Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities in Vietnam

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Abstract

This article traces the history of inclusive education policy development, laws that have been promulgated, and the dissemination of policy and legal rights and responsibilities through conferences, seminars and university coursework in Vietnam since 1995 when the responsibility for educating children with disabilities shifted from the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Training. Numerous standards of practice related to roles and responsibilities and recommendations for improvements in policy and practice are shared as well as lessons learned from external evaluation efforts that will be valuable for further development and refinement of policies to forward inclusive education in Vietnam.

Keywords: children with disabilities; human resource development; inclusive education; inclusive education policies; quality; standard.

1. The introduction

In 1991, Viet Nam was the second nation, the first in Asia, to ratify the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child¹.

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¹ The United States is the only member nation of the United Nations that has not yet ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In that same year, Vietnam enacted legislation in keeping with this UN Convention that required compulsory primary education and enacted a second piece of legislation that dealt with the protection and care for children. The seeds of inclusive education in Vietnam were sown nearly 30 years ago with pilot projects in three regions of the country which began at the same time the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified by Vietnam. The responsibility for the education for children with disabilities moved from the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Training four years later in 1995 [1]. In the Vietnamese context, policies on inclusive education have played a key role in promoting and achieving remarkable outcomes resulting in a large scale increase in the number of children with disabilities learning in inclusive schools. How has it happened and what role did the policies, laws, and training play in creating inclusive education for children in Vietnam?

2. The Concepts of Child and Children with Disabilities within Vietnamese Law

The Law on Persons with Disabilities first passed in 2016 and enacted in June 1st, 2017 defines children as persons who are under 16 years of age. This law identifies 14 groups of children in special circumstances, and children with disabilities are one of the 14 groups. By law, children have 25 rights (from article 12 to 36) and 5 obligations (from article 37 to 41). Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) which was signed by Vietnamese Government in 2006 and certified by the Vietnamese Congress in November, 2014 states: *“Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”*. In Vietnam, the definition of children with disabilities was legalized in the Law on Persons with Disabilities and other legal documents. A person with a disability is defined as *“one who is disabled in one or more than one part(s) of the body manifesting in a form of disability which the person meets difficulties in learning, working, and participating in daily life ”*. There are six types of disabilities identified within the law:

- a) children with a movement disability;
- b) children with hearing, speaking disabilities;
- c) children with a visual disability;
- d) children with a mental disability;
- e) children with an intellectual disability; and
- f) children with other disabilities (e.g., children with autism spectrum disorder; children with epilepsy; AD/HD, children with behavior problems).

The Law also classifies three types of persons with disabilities: 1) a person with a profound disability unable to independently fulfill their daily living needs; 2) a person with a severe disability unable to independently fulfill some daily living needs; and 3) a person with a mild disability who does not belong to either category a or b

above, meaning s/he can independently fulfill their daily living needs.

3. Definitions of Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities in Vietnam

International policy statements, access to international experts, and widely accepted definitions of inclusive education have influenced policy and practice in Vietnam. Ministers of Education and heads of delegation from 153 UNESCO Member States at the 48th Session of the International Conference on Education, Geneva (ICE, November 2008) and it was already appeared in the “Open File on Inclusive Education” by UNESCO in [2] confirmed that “*Inclusive quality education is fundamental to achieving human, social and economic development*”. The authors in [3] define that inclusive education as “...offering quality education... while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, and eliminating all forms of discrimination”. Inclusive education is, therefore, a comprehensive process across the education system through which the diverse needs of all learners are addressed and responded to, regardless of social, economic, cultural, linguistic, physical, or other contexts. Richard A. Villa and Jacqueline S. Thousand (2015) long-time consultants and technical assistance providers who have assisted inclusive education implementation in Vietnam for almost 30 years, state that: “*Inclusive education is the vision and practice of welcoming, valuing, empowering, and supporting the diverse academic, social, communication and language learning of all students in shared environments and experiences for the purpose of attaining the goals of education (i.e., belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity)*”. For the first time, in 2019, Vietnam passed a national education law which identifies inclusive education as a mode of education and states that the State shall adopt policies to support the implementation of inclusive education. More specifically, the Vietnamese Law on Persons with Disabilities states: “*Inclusive education is a mode of education for person with a disability with others who are without disability in educational institutions*” (Vietnamese Law on Persons with Disabilities, Article 2. Explanation of terminologies, 2010). Although inclusive education is codified in law as stated above, for practical purposes in Vietnam (e.g., professional literature, books and articles, discussion in Vietnamese schools) inclusive education is considered a form of education for children with special needs with others without a disability, at a school in the community where they are living. The authors in [4] defined inclusive education by the following characteristics: 1) education for all children without differences in educational placement due to gender, ethnicity, religion, economic conditions, or social class; 2) children going to school where they are living; 3) acknowledgment that children are different, individuals having diverse learning profiles; 4) adaptations and accommodation to curriculum, content and materials, methods, and assessments are required to address the individual learning profiles of students with varying abilities and support needs. There is an increased understanding in Vietnam that inclusive education applies to all learners and offers practices and strategies that are beneficial for students with and without identified support needs.

3.1 Research on Policies on Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities in Vietnam

Nationally, limited research on inclusive education policies for children with disabilities in Vietnam has been conducted. Such research would be beneficial as the responsibility for implementation of inclusive education practices shifts from centralized to decentralized management. As a result, research-based evidence to inform inclusive education policy development in Vietnam is lacking. Some efforts of researchers and non-profit

governmental organizations (NGOs), however, have been undertaken in Vietnam and provide theoretical and practical evidence to inform inclusive education policy development and practices.

3.2 Developing a Policy Framework, Criteria of an Inclusive School, and Quality Indicators of Inclusive Education

An initial activity sponsored by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) was the convening of a national symposium on developing inclusive education policies in 2003. Drs. Richard Villa and Jacqueline Thousand, international inclusive education experts from the United States, presented an overview of policies and practices to forward inclusive education. They focused on defining inclusive education within various cultural contexts and identifying inclusive education best practices. Among the areas addressed were the following:

- Understanding what Inclusive Education is and is not
- Redefined Roles and Responsibilities
- Home-School-Community Collaboration
- Collaborative Planning
- Student-Centered Strength-Based Assessment
- Strategies for Facilitating Access to the General Education Curriculum
- Differentiation of Instruction
- Cooperative Group Learning and Peer Tutoring
- Positive Behavioral Supports
- Administrative Practices Supportive of Inclusive Education

After the initial experience of providing training and creating inclusive education models, efforts expanded and focused on making the sustainability of inclusive education a component of a project conducted by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) named “Primary Education for Disadvantaged Children - PEDC”. In 2008, MOET introduced an inclusive education policy framework. An overview of the component parts of the policy appear in Table 1. This policy framework was a great contribution to the government in its development of a policy on inclusive education as well as to the Vietnamese Congress which later enacted the Vietnamese Law on Persons with Disabilities in 2010.

The authors in [5] developed “*Guidelines on the Implementation of School Quality through Self-Assessment and Improving Inclusive Schools*”. The proposed set of guidelines includes 5 standards with 10 criteria and 56 items.

- Standard 1: Environments of school and classrooms (2 criteria with 15 items);
- Standard 2: Social and psychological environments (2 criteria with 12 items);
- Standard 3: Effective and suitable quality of inclusive education for children with disabilities (3 criteria with 18 items);
- Standard 4: School structure and management (1 criteria with 1 item); and
- Standard 5: Cooperation between school, families and communities (2 criteria with 7 items).

Table 1: An Overview of the Component Parts of the 2008 Vietnamese Policy Framework to Forward Inclusive Education

Parts	Contents
Part 1. General context	To answer the question: Why does Vietnam need to develop a policy supportive of inclusive education?
Part 2. Goals	
<i>1. General objective</i>	Develop an overview of a policy framework on inclusive education which ensure that all children, especially disadvantaged children, have access to a high quality education to maximize their capacity to be included in community and equally participate in social activities.
<i>2. Detailed aims</i>	<p>2.1. All children have access to schooling, quality learning, and demonstrate effective learning rates.</p> <p>2.2. Ensure minimal and accordant conditions, especially a service system and governmental budget provided to the implementation of inclusive education in a meaningful and qualified way at all levels of the educational system.</p> <p>2.3. Clarify legal responsibilities of different central sectors which will be carried out in a coordinated multidisciplinary mechanism to forward inclusive education policies.</p>
Part 3. Beneficiaries of the policy	Beneficiaries of the policy will be disadvantaged children under 16 years of age.
Part 4. Terminologies	
Part 5. Scope of the policy	<p>Scope of the policy should include 5 key performance areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All children have rights to access to education including: school registration and attendance; elimination of obstacles to their learning; and provision of necessary supports. 2. Provision of resources, including developing human resources to enable inclusive education; providing inclusive teacher and educational support personnel. 3. Quality assessment of inclusive education. 4. Development of service systems which is supportive of inclusive education. 5. Clarification of responsibilities of different sectors of the community.
Appendix:	An action plan for implementation of inclusive education policies for children with disadvantages in Vietnam.

Consistent with research in the United States of America related to ensuring quality inclusive education for

children with intellectual disabilities – solutions and proposals for inclusive education of children with intellectual disabilities in Vietnam were proposed by Hai (2015). Organizational and instructional variables essential to quality inclusive education were considered resulting in the recommendation that three main factors be addressed: (i.e, quality of resources; quality of activities; quality of outcomes.). Figure 1 provides a diagram illustrating the interrelationship of the components of quality inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities.

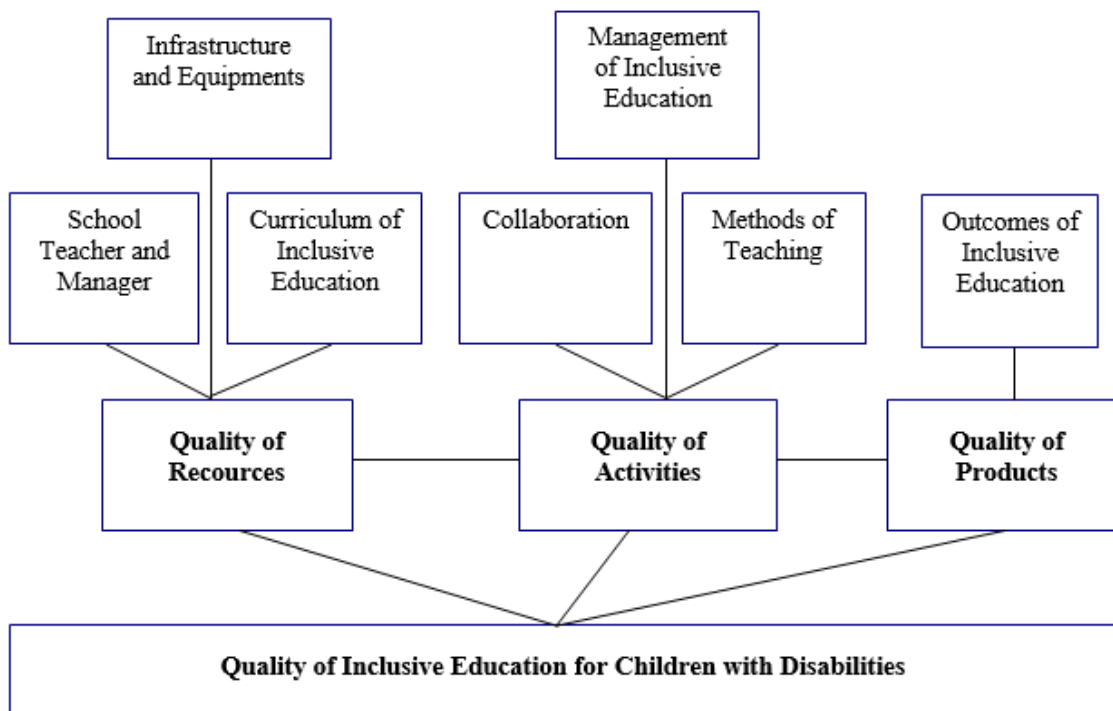


Figure 1: A Schematic Diagram of the Interrelationship of the Components of Quality Inclusive Education for Children with Intellectual Disabilities

4. Development of Standards of Practice

4.1 Recommended Knowledge, Skills, Values, And Relationship Standards For Personnel Providing Early Intervention Education For Children With Disabilities

In the collaboration with colleagues in New South Wales (NSW) State, Australia (i.e., Brian Smyth King, the Director of Disability Programs; Jenny Kneipp, R/ Leader, Planning, Monitoring and Reporting Disability Programs, NSW Education and Communities; Kerry Moran – consultant for early intervention Programs in New South Wales, Le and colleagues in Vietnam a proposed a framework of standards for universities and colleges to follow in preparing early intervention education personnel to work with children with disabilities was developed in 2012 [6]. Figure 2 displays the four standard areas with accompanying performance criteria for each standard.

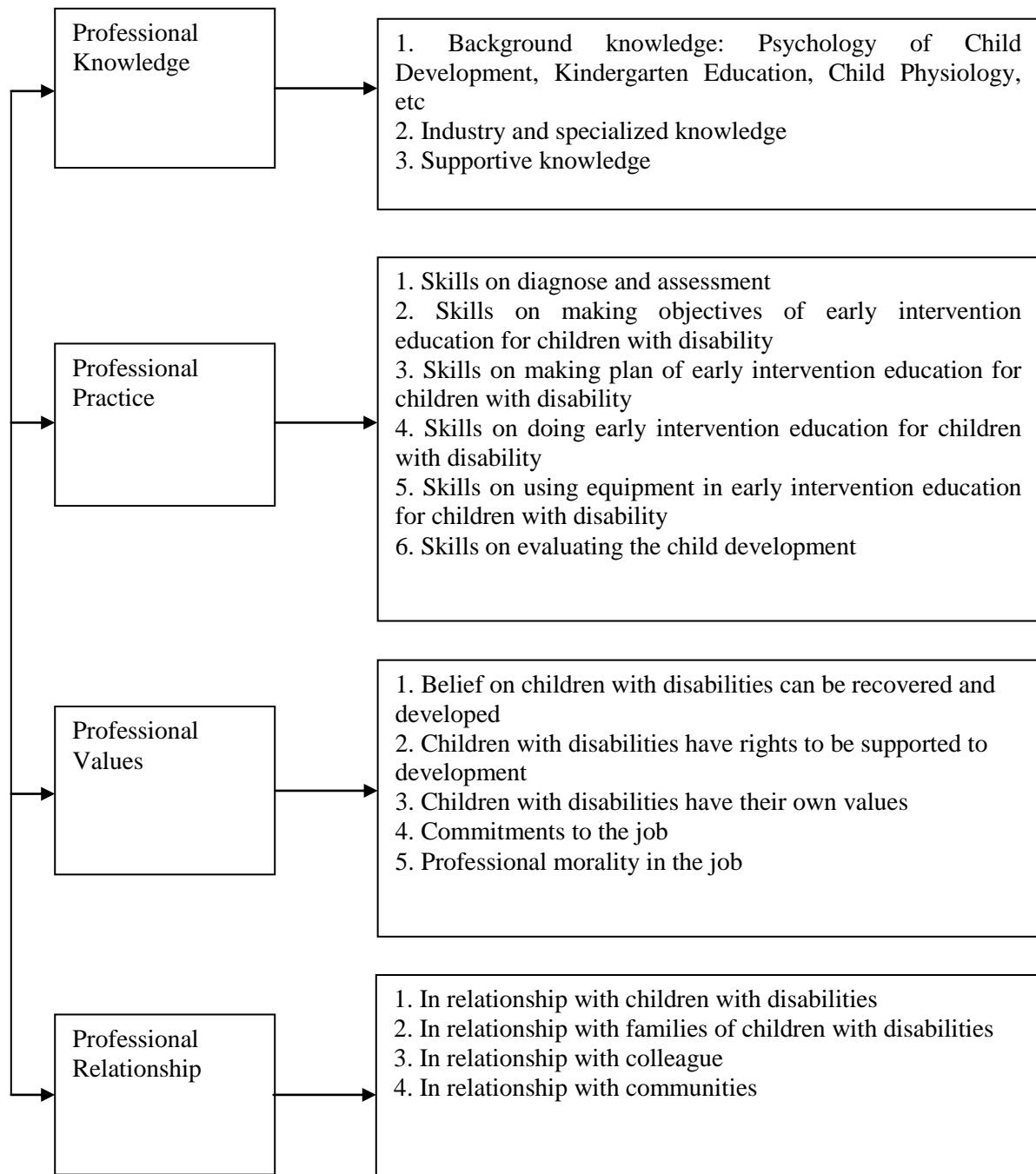


Figure 2: Framework of capacity of human resources on early intervention education for children with disability in Vietnam

4.2 Standards for Assessing Qualifications, Experience, Knowledge, Attitudes, and Skills

Based on the results of a research study, the author in [7] suggested a set of six quality standards for assessing qualifications and experience, knowledge and attitudes, skills to implement inclusive practices, skills to develop curriculum, and ability to access materials and equipment. The seven standards appear in Table 2.

Table 2: Standards for assessing qualifications and experience, knowledge and attitudes, skills to implement inclusive practices, develop curriculum, and access materials and equipment

Standards	Contents
Standard 1. Industry, qualification and experince of school teachers and managers	Contents of this standard reflect an overview on industry, training qualification and experinces in teaching or managing school which is closely related to inclusive education for children with disabilities. So that, the school should have a plan to develop human resources for implmentaion of inclusive education for children with disabilities. The standard composes 04 criteria.
Standard 2. Teacher and manager knowledge of and attitude toward inclusive education for children with disabilities	Contents of this standard focuses on supporting collection of information related to the skonwledge and attitude of school teachers and managers as well as identifying a baseline from which to plan to further knowledge and increase positive and correspondent attitudes to meet the needs of teaching children in an inclusive school. The standard has 07 criteria.
Standard 3. Teacher and manager skill sets to implement inclusive education for children with disabilities	Contents of this standard identify direct requirements for school teachers and managesr to effectively carry out activities required for successful inclusive education to occur in schools. Professional development can be tailored to support the acquisition of any skill not yet acquired or demonstrated by teacehrs nad managers. The standard has 08 criteria.
Standard 4. Knowledge of inclusive education and competency ininclusive education management of school manager	Contents of this standard help school managers to identify the skills they possess and areas of growth for which they need to bolster their ability to foster growth in themselves and others to fulfill their management of inclusive education at their schools. The standard has 03 criteria.
Standard 5. School teacher and mangement knowledge, communication, and consensus building related to inclusive education for children with disabilities	Contents of this standard help school managers build consensus for the vision and practrice of inclusive education (e.g., foster education, develop propangada, explain regulations, carry out legal documents related to inclusive education management at schools). The standard has 03 criteria.
Standard 6. Curriculum development for children with disabilities in an inclusive school	Contents of this standard help schools to annually assess the appropriateness of current curriculum development efforts for children with disabilities. Results should identify future actions and curriculum content. The standard has 04 criteria.
Standard 7. Materials and equipment for inclusive education	Contents of this standard help schoos tol a plan how to utilize and augment infrastucture, materials, and equipment to ensure they effectively implement inclusive education at tehirl school. The standard has 04 criteria.

4.3 Standards for Preparing General Education Teachers to Educate Children with Disabilities

The author in [8] published a monograph to assist university teachers to prepare general education teachers to effectively educate children with and without disabilities in inclusive classrooms was published in 2017. The following six standards and accompanying criteria were addressed in the monograph.

- **Standard 1.** Skills to assess strengths and needs of children with disabilities (5 criteria).
- **Standard 2:** Skills for designing individual education programs (IEP) for children with disabilities (5 criteria).
- **Standard 3:** Skills to plan and carry out activities to educate children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms and schools (4 criteria).
- **Standard 4:** Skills related to teaching activities for educating children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms and schools (6 criteria).
- **Standard 5:** Skills related to using tools, materials and equipment in educating and teaching children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms and schools (4 criteria).
- **Standard 6:** Skills for evaluating children’s development and learning outcomes (4 criteria).

4.4 Special Education Teacher Competency Standards

Hanoi National University of Education, one of the premier universities of education in Vietnam, and the only one whose faculty of special education train special educators at all levels (i.e, bachelor, master and doctoral). This article introduces just the bachelor teacher training program as an example of utilizing a framework of human development which is based on standards of competency. The bachelor teacher training program has been in development since May of 2019 and is expected to be used in the 2020-2021 school year. The core standards with accompanying indicators of a special education teacher’s competency appear in Table 3.

Table 3: Standards of a special teacher’s competency developed by HNUE

Standards	Indicators	Knowledge
Standard 1: Competency in Special Education Science (5 indicators)	1.1. Identify physiological characteristics and other related issues to the development of children with disabilities	1.1.1. Identify physiological characteristics of children, characteristics of sensory neurophysics 1.1.2. Analyze developmental psychological characteristics of children with and without disabilities 1.1.3. Define disorders which combined with disabilities (so it’s called children with multiple disabilities)
	1.2. Define strengths and needs of children with disabilities and factors affecting the development of a child with a disability	1.2.1. Detect and assess strengths and needs of children with disabilities 1.2.2. Analyze results of assessment related to factors affecting the development of a child (education, health, social benefits, etc) 1.2.3. Describe and explain special needs of children with disabilities
	1.3. Arrange educational environments to suitably meet the needs of children with disabilities	1.3.1. Assess educational environments of children with disabilities 1.3.2. Arrange educational environments with some criteria as suitable, friendly, structural, etc to meet the needs and facilitate the participation of children with

		<p>disabilities</p> <p>1.3.3. Adapt environments to support children's access and participation as well as independence</p>
	<p>1.4. Design Individual Education Programs (IEPs) which appropriately use student strengths and address the support needs of children with disabilities</p>	<p>1.4.1. Use formative and informative assessment checklists to diagnose and assess learner strengths, interests, learning styles, and support needs of children with disabilities</p> <p>1.4.2. Synthesize information and data from collaboration with a multi interdisciplinary group</p> <p>1.4.3. Develop suitable observable and measurable intervention objectives</p>
	<p>1.5. Conduct assessments, evaluations and monitoring of the education of children with disabilities.</p>	<p>1.5.1. Gather information and data on the child and the environmental demands</p> <p>1.5.2. Monitor progress of the children with disabilities in different environments in school, at home and in community</p> <p>1.5.3. Write reports chronicalling the child's developmental and educational progress and provide any needed recommendations related to on-going education of the child</p>
<p>Standard 2: Competency in applying general and special education knowledge to implement syllabus for children with disabilities (4 indicators)</p>	<p>2.1. Make overviews to special education programs (educational programs in special schools)</p>	<p>2.1.1 Implement educational programs to assist children with disabilities develop and exhibit accordant behaviors in situations and social relationships.</p> <p>2.1.2. Carry out educational programs related to in the child with a disability's areas of need (e.g., movement and senses, cognition, communication, language, life skills, etc)</p> <p>2.1.3. Analyze special education programs to activities foster caring and relationship development as well educational practices,, experiences and vocational opportunities to facilitate children with disabilities living independently as adults</p>
	<p>2.2 Make overviews inclusive education programs in mainstreaming pre and general schools</p>	<p>2.2.1. Analyze education programs in inclusive preschool and general education classrooms in primary and secondary schools</p> <p>2.2.2. Adapt pre educational programs and general education programs to meet the learning needs of children with disabilities</p> <p>2.2.3. Evaluate the suitability of adapted programs to the strengths and support needs of a child with a disability and peers without disabilities in inclusive classrooms</p>
	<p>2.3. Combine living skills and social skills effectively into other educational contents</p>	<p>2.3.1. Select accordant activities to develop living skills, social skills for children with disabilities</p> <p>2.3.2. Integrate individual objectives into organizing educational activities of the class</p>
	<p>2.4. Apply principles, methods of special education to manage effective lessons</p>	<p>2.4.1. Select methods, equipment and other supports based upon the strengths, needs, interests and learning styles of children with disabilities</p> <p>2.4.2. Use flexible and collaboratively designed educational methods that clearly and concretely, focus on manifesting of new skills by children with disabilities</p> <p>2.4.3. Engaging in collaborative creative problem solving in small and large groups to identify strengths and support needs of children with disabilities, explore mismatches between the facts about the child and the environmental demands, and generate solutions.</p>
<p>Standard 3: Competency in applying general and special</p>	<p>3.1. Explain legal documents and the latest updates of trends related to special education</p>	<p>3.3.1. List and understand key regulations which detail rights of children and families and responsibilities of educators (e.g., Law on Children, Law on Persons with Disabilities, Decrees or Circulars on policies of supporting</p>

<p>education knowledge to develop relationships with families community members and other social forces to educate children with disabilities (3 indicators)</p>		<p>persons with disabilities 3.3.2. List and understand international policies and position papers related to persons with disabilities which the Vietnam Government has committed to implement. 3.3.3. Explain and utilize legal documents in consulting, supporting children with disabilities and their families 3.3.4. Analyze latest trends and issues in the field of educational justice for children with disabilities in the world and in Vietnam</p>
	<p>3.2. Consult and support families to assist the development of children with disabilities</p>	<p>3.2.1. Analyze results of assessments and provide feedback to support parents of children with disabilities 3.2.2. Cooperate with families, teachers in protection and implementation of the rights of the person with disability 3.2.3. Locate and explain to families information related to factors that influence changes in behaviors, emotions and development of children with disabilities</p>
	<p>3.3. Implement and mobilize resources for educating children with disabilities in collaboration with a multi professional group</p>	<p>3.3.1. Understand and analyze documents, assessment reports, health resumes of children with disabilities in order to work effectively with professionals possessing different expertise in the field of special education and child development 3.3.2. Use effective communication styles in collaborative group meetings (e.g., total communication, verbal and non verbal communication, sign language). 3.3.3. Identify available community resources and then connect and mobilize these resources to support the education of children with disabilities</p>
<p>Standard 4: Competency in conducting research on special education science (2 indicators)</p>	<p>4.1. Identify current scientific issues that must be addressed in special education</p>	<p>4.1.1. Identify current issues related to education and teaching of children with disabilities 4.1.2. Propose research proposals to solve these current issues in the education of children with disabilities</p>
	<p>4.2. Carry out and publish research results of special education</p>	<p>4.2.1. Use scientific methods of education and special education to conduct research and offer proposed solutions to address these research issues 4.2.2. Write reports and share scientific information about special education 4.2.3. Publish research results in a variety of forums to meet the educational needs of children with disabilities</p>
<p>Standard 5: Competency in accessing foreign language in professional activities (2 indicators)</p>	<p>5.1. Use foreign language fluently and effectively</p>	<p>5.1.1. Use foreign language in the learning progress at university as requirements dictate 5.1.2. Use foreign language in practical and professional activities</p>
	<p>5.2. Use foreign language effectively in professional activities and apply it in reality of teaching and activities of special education</p>	<p>5.2.1. Make full use of foreign language documents which relate closely to special education and other related areas of expertise for effectively educating children with disabilities in inclusive settings. 5.2.2. Access, analyze and manage foreign language information resources</p>
<p>Standard 6: Competency in using Information Communication Technology (ICT) in professional activities (2 indicators)</p>	<p>6.1. Use popular software in teaching and in special education research</p>	<p>6.1.1. Use basic software to make teaching plans and prepare materials and teaching equipment for children with disabilities 6.1.2. Sort devices, ICT and resources to support children with disabilities and their families</p>
	<p>6.2. Apply ICT to support children with disabilities and their families</p>	<p>6.2.1. Design, adapt suitable ICT in educational interventions for children with disabilities 6.2.2. Apply technological devices and equipment in intervention, support, and teaching creatively and effectively based on strengths and support needs of children with disabilities within the real context (e.g., economics, attention) of the child's family</p>

5. Policy Dissemination Through National and International Conferences

National and international conferences, seminars, and workshops on inclusive education policies in Vietnam have been infrequent over the years. When offered, they have been organized by professional institutions such as the Vietnamese National Institute of Educational Science (NIES), Hanoi National University of Education (HNUE), and Hanoi National College of Education (HNCE). They are extremely well attended by participants from universities and colleges, research institutions, school administrators, school teachers, social workers, psychologists, nurses, and others. Recommendations to forward policies related to the vision and practice of inclusive education, contained in the conference proceedings from these events, are frequently forwarded to policy makers at the Vietnamese National Ministry of Education and Training. The first national workshop on inclusive education policies was conducted in Hanoi, Vietnam in 1995. The conference was sponsored by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Vietnam and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The invited presenters were Dr. Richard A. Villa and Dr. Jacqueline S. Thousand from the United States. The workshop focused on issues directly related to implementing inclusive education in schools and classrooms. Among the topics addressed were the following:

- Creating welcoming inclusive environments in schools and classrooms
- Collaboration with families and community members to facilitate the education of children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms
- Curriculum development to educate children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms
- Assessment of children's strengths, support needs, and achievement in inclusive classrooms.

The next major national conference occurred 10 years later in 2005. This conference was organized by the Vietnamese National Institute of Educational Science (NIES). The conference provided an opportunity to share the results from 10 years of implementation of inclusive education for children with disabilities. Drs. Villa and Thousand were once again invited to chair and present at this national conference. Theirs and other presentations focused on raising stakeholder awareness of policy and practices for educating children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms, encouraging and motivating administrators and teachers to educate all children, including children with disabilities. No specific policy recommendations were forwarded to MOET following this conference. A national workshop examining 20 years of implementation of inclusive education for children with disabilities in Vietnam was presented by National Institute of Educational Sciences (NIES) in 2015. The workshop involved about 300 participants from many organizations in Vietnam and other countries in the world. Among the breakout section topics were the following: inclusive education teaching methods, the state of inclusive education in Vietnam and other countries, policies for children with disabilities, and policies related to teacher role and responsibilities. Some inclusive education policy issues were raised related to enacting policies that would make inclusive education effective and valid in practice, the need to evaluate 5 years of implementation of the Vietnamese Law on Persons with Disabilities, and identifying policy priorities and next steps to forward these policies in Vietnam. A national conference on: "Developing Occupational Therapy in Special Education and Inclusive Education in Vietnam" organized by Hanoi National College of Education (HNCE) was held in 2016. The workshop focused on: 1) Scientific bases of occupational therapy; 2) Approaches and methods of occupational therapy; and 3) Arts and therapy. The conference proceedings

suggested that MOET initiate a new training program at HNCE. It was recommended that HNCE prepare occupational therapists to work at schools and other institutions that serve children with disabilities. A national workshop “Policies of Inclusive Education: Reality and Promoting” organized in Vietnam by HNUE with sponsorship from CBM (Germany) occurred in 2018. Some very important conclusions and recommendations presented. Five of them appear below:

- 1) A need to ensure the participation and responsibilities in developing policies and implementing inclusive education by different stakeholders.
- 2) A need to identify inclusive education policy to ensure that human and other resources techniques, infrastructure, and equipment are allocated and available to meet these priorities to assure their effectiveness and validity.
- 3) Improving the monitoring of policies implemented by governmental agencies at different levels throughout the country and increase involvement of communities, local authorities, mass-organizations, and families of and children with disabilities .
- 4) To consider the economic resources of Vietnam and plan for sustainability of inclusive education policy in Vietnam within that context.
- 5) Future policies on inclusive education should be developed with attention to lessons learned from passed initiatives in Vietnam as well as from other countries similar to Vietnam as well as from wealthier countries.

6. International Conferences on Inclusive Education Policies in Vietnam

Table 4: Select recommendations from the 2015 International Symposium on Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities

N ^o	Recommendations
1.	Continue propagandizing and increasing public awareness of the rights of children with disabilities.
2.	Increase the presence and voice and participation of people with disabilities in social forums, organizations, and inclusive education quality assurance activities.
3.	Formulate and organize activities for inclusive education support centers nationwide. Develop and increase the effectiveness of supportive service systems for children and persons with disabilities such as the connection between health, insurance, welfare, employment, and the use of society’s different functions so as to increase the competency of children with disabilities and the quality of inclusive education for children with disabilities through educational planning on the basis of child rights.
4.	Emphasize capacity building for personnel and the development of human resources to support inclusive education. Inclusive education modules should be taught in teacher preparation programs throughout the country.
5.	Monitor and support the implementation of inclusive education policies to remove any existing barriers that people with disabilities are facing.
6.	Plan for sustainability because Vietnam is becoming a middle income country and thus, international assistance will gradually be reduced. Deploy and effectively utilize national and international inclusive education resources donated by organizations and individuals; promote private public partnerships and initiatives in the field of education.

An International Symposium on Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities was held in Vietnam in 2015. This symposium was conducted by HNUE with the participations of invited guests from many countries in the world. Dr. Richard Villa and Dr. Jacqueline Thousand from the USA were warmly welcomed once again to serve as chairs of the Symposium. Contained in the conference proceedings were recommendations for commitment and action to forward quality inclusive education in Vietnam. Six of the recommendations are listed in table 4.

An International conference, organized by HNUE, on Human Resource Development for Inclusive Education to Support Children with Disabilities was held in Vietnam in 2016. Conference proceeding recommendations for developing human resources to support inclusive education are listed in Table 5.

Table 5: Recommendations from the (2016) Human Resource Development for Inclusive Education to Support Children with Disabilities Conference

N ^o	Recommendations
1.	Inclusive education needs to involve various human resources such as school teachers, resource centre teachers, educational support staff, members of families and other social organizations.
2.	Additional actions to mobilize and promote new policies for recruiting special teachers for kindergartens, primary and secondary schools as well as for resource centre must occur.
3.	Install module of inclusive education into teacher training programs and foster conducting in-service training on inclusive education for school teachers (Note: At the time of this recommendation, there was no placement for special education teachers in public schools in the educational system of Vietnam).
4.	Inclusive education strategies to support individuals with disabilities in different areas of development should be the basis upon which teacher professional standards to be used in teacher training programs and for other human resource development are developed.
5.	Inclusive education will only succeed if there is frequent and effective collaboration between different stakeholders such as school teachers and managers, families of children with/without disabilities, local authorities, community organizations, and mass-organizations (e.g., Red Cross, Women Union, Organization of Veterans, War Invalids Association, etc).

Although much attention and action had occurred to forward inclusive education in Vietnam, autism spectrum disorder was not identified as a disability category prior to the issuance of Circular N01 from the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (2019) which recognized autism spectrum disorder under the categorical area of “other types of disabilities”. Three international conferences focused on the issues of children with developmental disorders were organized over a 2 year period. The “International Symposium on Intervention, Therapy and Inclusive Education for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder” of 2017 was organized by HNUE. Two other International Workshops in 2017 and 2019 sponsored by NIES also focused on Children with Developmental Disorders. Some conclusions and recommendations from these conferences designed to support children with developmental disorders that were provided to stakeholders involved with and /or supporting this group of students appear in Table 6.

Table 6: 2017 and 2019 Conference Proceeding Recommendations Provided to Stakeholders involved with and /or Supporting Children with Developmental Disorders

N ^o	Recommendations
1.	Continue propoganda activities to raise awareness of the rights of children with developmental disorders to receive an education. Include the voice of persons with autism spectrum disorders through their own network, forums, and mass-organizations.
2.	Develop models of support service systems and collaboration between different sectors such as health, education, social works, clubs, etc as well as promote the role of resource centres for children with developmental disorders nationwide.
3.	Standardize training of human resources, including foster training staff, to carry out assessment, intervention, therapy, and inclusive education for these children.
4.	Improve supervisor supports to develop and implement policies for people with disabilities, eliminate obstacles that persons with disabilities, including children with developmental disorders currently encounter.
5.	Effectively mobilize and utilize existing resources (e.g., knowledge, experience and techniques) to support intervention, therapy, and inclusive education for children with developmental disorders.

In 2018, HNUE sponsored the “Developing of Inclusive Education Service Systems for Persons with Disabilities” Conference in Vietnam. The recommendations arising out of this conference that were forwarded to MOET appear in Table 7.

Table 7: 2018 Workshop on Developing of Inclusive Education Service System for Persons with Disabilities in Vietnam

N ^o	Recommendations
1.	Conduct a national survey to identify the current reality of both public and private institutions which are providing inclusive education services and based on the survey findings, the government should develop an improvement plan.
2.	Lay out the legal basis for and the role of MOET in management to develop and organize activities to forward inclusive educational services for people with disabilities. Examples include: a) establishment standards and activities of these institutions (e.g., infrastructure, educational support programs b) guildelines for accessing and using support services to promote inclusive education for people with disabilities and c) monitoring support provided to both public and private institutions.
3.	Develop work place standards for institutions and conduct training programs based upon these standards for school teachers, education support staff, therapists, consultants, etc.
4.	Ensure quality of inclusive educational services in public and private institutions by providing quality assurance for factors such as support programs, qualified staff, policies, infrastructure, equipment, etc.
5.	Improve interdisciplinary professional cooperation between sectors; provide necessary information about support service institutions to families and other stakeholders; moilize resources in the society to promote and support inclusive education.

The most recent international conference was “Sustainable Development of Inclusive Education for Persons with Disabilities in Vietnam” in september of 2019. HNUE sponsored the conference. The following six guiding principles for promoting and sustaining inclusive education in Viet Nam (N. X. Hai, R. A. Villa, Le, J. S. Thousand, P. M. Muc, 2020 [4]) resulted from this conference:

- People with disabilities are the center of sustainable development;
- Policies supportive of inclusive education underpin inclusive practices;
- Human resource development is essential for sustainable development;
- The overall quality of school environments must be examined and improved;
- A system of support services is essential for sustainable development; and
- Collaboration and coordination is needed among internal and external organizations.

7. Positive Outcomes and Issues to Resolve Related to the Implementation of Inclusive Education Policies for Children with Disabilities in Vietnam

As for the commitments with the international community, the Vietnamese Government has passed and enacted many regulations as well as legal guidance documents related to the education of children with disabilities in general education classrooms. Among the positive outcomes of these efforts to date are the following:

- 1) All sectors of society (e.g., social and political organizations, governmental and non-governmental agencies) have been directed to take actions to foster the creation of inclusive educational opportunities for children with disabilities.
- 2) The legal framework for implementing inclusive education for children with disabilities has been established.
- 3) Policy regulations and legal documents related to inclusive education of children with disabilities are reviewed and amended as needed to better address effective implementation of inclusive education.

Despite the significant progress to date, in Vietnam as in all countries, there are issues and challenges that must be addressed to make inclusive education a reality for all Vietnamese children with disabilities.

Table 8: Landmark National Laws, Policies, Regulations, and Circulars Advancing Inclusive Education in Vietnam Since 2006

Nationally Legal Documents	Contents
Decision No. 23 (June 22, 2006)	MOET issues regulations on the responsibilities of teachers and administrators and preschool, elementary and secondary general education institutions on inclusive education for children with disabilities.
Vietnam Law on Disabilities, Chapter IV. Education, Articles 27 -31 (2010)	National legislation mandating staffing for educational support of children with disabilities within Vietnamese schools; the establishment of provincial Support Centers for Inclusive Education; development of resource centers that provide technical assistance and training to schools; the responsibilities of teachers, administrators and educational institutions; and the provision of needed educational materials for students with disabilities (e.g., materials in Braille for students who are blind). Inclusive education is emphasized as the main mode of education for children and youth with disabilities.
Decree No. 28, Article 7, Item 2. (April 10, 2012)	Teachers educating students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms receive 20% additional salary.
Circular No. 58 (December 28, 2012)	MOET and the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs (MOLISA) stipulate the procedures for establishing, operating, and organizing centers for inclusive education that provide technical support to schools.
Circular No. 42 (December 31, 2013)	MOET, MOLISA, and the Ministry of Finance (MIF) articulate policies regarding educational rights of individuals with disabilities including adaptation of curriculum and activities; university studies; and financial support for school supplies, equipment, and scholarships to allow for participation in education.
Circular No. 19 (June 22, 2016)	MOET and Ministry of Homeland Affairs (MOHA) establish a new job code for the training of staff (e.g., teachers) that supports the education of individuals with disabilities in educational institutions.
Circular No. 16 (July 12, 2017)	MOET issues guidelines for jobs and numbers of educators working in public general education establishments, which includes staff to support the education of individuals with disabilities in educational institutions.
Circular No. 3 (January 29, 2018)	MOET issues regulations regarding inclusive education for persons with disabilities, which specifies responsibilities of teachers and administrators to keep information regarding children with disabilities confidential and their responsibilities and rights in implementing competency-based educational reform. This circular also describes establishing within educational settings the resources - materials, specialized equipment, assessment checklists to determine student's abilities, counseling technical assistance personnel - to enable educators to support students with disabilities in their schools and classrooms.
Decision 338 (January 30, 2018)	MOET issues the comprehensive Education Plan for People with Disabilities for the 2018-2020 time period to advance implementation of inclusive education nationwide.
Decision 2913 (August 10, 2018)	MOET issues 5 detailed syllabi and accompanying guidelines for inclusive education modules for preschool, primary, and secondary teacher training programs in Vietnamese colleges and universities.
Decisions 1438 (October 29, 2018)	The Ministry of Government issues goals for the 2018-2020 and 2021-2025 time periods to further advance protection, care, and education of children with disabilities in provincial communities nationwide.
Vietnam Law on Education, Article 15. Inclusive education (2019)	For the first time, national education law identifies inclusive education as a mode of education and states that the State shall adopt policies to support the implementation of inclusive education.

Areas to address so that inclusive education can expand in Vietnam are described below:

- 1) The labelling children and a focus upon the perceived deficits within the child remains a common practice throughout the educational system. Teaching and educating children with disabilities can not

be based upon the disability label and level of support needs. There must be an increased focus on strength-based assessment and the utilization of a child's strengths, interests, and assets in the development of appropriate supports and interventions. Without a strength-based focus, teachers and other school personnel will have limited success in organizing teaching and learning activities to meet the diverse needs of their learners.

- 2) There is a gap between the stated legal rights and responsibilities of families and children with disabilities and actual practices in schools. Further dissemination of the legal rights and responsibilities along with expanded training, performance-based feedback, and monitoring need to occur.
- 3) Some needed support services outside the control of local governments currently are not provided and there is a lack of quality assurance mechanisms.
- 4) The availability of committed sufficiently trained and motivated local authorities, educators, and managers remains a challenge in implementing inclusive education.
- 5) A lack of communication, cooperation, and common conceptual and philosophical frameworks between governmental agencies and branches hinders inclusive education initiatives.

8. Conclusion

For almost 30 years, Vietnam has taken major steps to transform global thinking into local action in the creation of inclusive educational opportunities for children with disabilities through support from the Vietnamese government, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), HNUE, HNC, and non-governmental organizations. Inclusive education was determined to be the key mode of ensuring the rights of children with disabilities to access to education in 2002. Since the Vietnamese Law on Persons with Disabilities was enacted in 2010, many policies in support of an inclusive educational vision and inclusive educational practices have been put into place with impressive speed. While progress has been made, challenges remain. Despite those challenges, Vietnam is regarded as the most inclusive, in terms of the education of children and youth with disabilities, of all the Asian countries.

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