

EdTech in Vietnam: A Rapid Scan

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About EdTech Hub

[EdTech Hub](#) is a global research partnership. Our goal is to empower people by giving them the evidence they need to make decisions about technology in education. Our [evidence library](#) is a repository of our latest research, findings, and wider literature on EdTech.

This publication has been produced by [EdTech Hub](#) as part of the ASEAN-UK Supporting the Advancement of Girls' Education (SAGE) Programme. The ASEAN-UK SAGE programme aims to enhance foundational learning opportunities for all by breaking down barriers that hinder the educational achievements of girls and marginalised learners. The programme is in partnership with the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Office, the British Council, the Australian Council for Educational Research, and EdTech Hub.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CLC	Community Learning Centre
EDSP	Education Development Strategic Plan
ICT	Information and communication technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IT	Information technology
MIC	Ministry of Information and Communications
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training
NSGE	National Strategy on Gender Equality
OER	Open educational resources
OOSCY	Out-of-school children and youth
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDGCW	Sustainable Development Goal Indicators on Children and Women
SEAMEO CELLL	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Center for Lifelong Learning
SEND	Special educational needs and disabilities
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, and maths
TVET	Technical vocational education and training
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VET	Vocational education and training

1. About this scan

EdTech Hub country scans explore factors that enable and hinder the use of technology in education. This includes policies, government leadership, private-sector partnerships, and digital infrastructure for education. The scans are intended to be comprehensive but are by no means exhaustive; nonetheless, we hope they will serve as a useful starting point for more in-depth discussions about opportunities and barriers in EdTech in specific countries and, in this case, Vietnam.

This report was originally written in March 2024. It is based primarily on desk research, with quality assurance provided by Dr Le Thi My Ha, Khau Huu Phuoc, and Nguyen Huyen Trang of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Regional Center for Lifelong Learning (CELLL), and Ms Le Thi Thuy Duong and Tran Thi Thuy Tien of SEAMEO Regional Training Center (RETRAC). Given how rapidly the educational technology landscape is evolving, EdTech Hub plans to provide periodic updates. [Table 1](#) below provides a summary of the status of EdTech in Vietnam.

Table 1. *Overview of EdTech in Vietnam*

Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ↑Decision No. 711/Qd-Ttg, 2012 Approving the 2011–2020 Education Development Strategy ■ ↑Decision No. 630/Qd-Ttg Approving the Vocational Training Development Strategy ■ ↑Decision No. 749/Qd-Ttg, 2020) Introducing Program for National Digital Transformation by 2025 with Orientations Towards 2030 ■ ↑Decision no. 131/qd-ttg, 2022 Approving Scheme ‘Strengthening application of information technology and digital transformation in education and training for the period of 2022–2025 with a vision towards 2030’
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Vietnam has achieved near-universal access to electricity and mobile networks. Over 99% of both rural and urban households are electrified, and 99.8% of the country has access to 3G or 4G mobile networks (↑Statista, 2024a). ■ Mobile devices are more common in households than computers. According to the Viet Nam Sustainable Development Goal Indicators on Children and Women (SDGCW) Survey 2020–2021 results, 96% of households had a mobile phone, compared to 29% of households with a computer (↑General Statistics Office & UNICEF, 2021). ■ Access to the internet is also high. In 2023, 79% of households had home internet either through broadband or mobile networks. However, there is a large gap between rural and urban households; in 2021, 65% of rural households had home internet compared to 85% of urban ones (↑General Statistics Office & UNICEF, 2021).
Partners and initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Digital technology in society and education are prominent themes in recent policy documents. Since 2020, the government has approved multiple schemes that aim to increase the access and use of digital platforms and resources, enhance digital skills, and promote innovation in teaching and learning (see Table 5). ■ EdTech initiatives include online learning platforms, learning apps, online learning

	<p>websites, and YouTube channels. There are several open educational resources (OER) which provide free and open-source teaching and learning materials. However, there is limited research on the reach and use of these EdTech offerings (see Table 14).</p>
<p>Out-of-school children and youth (OOSCY)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The number of out-of-school children aged 5 to 14 has reduced by more than half, from over one million in 2009 (UNICEF Viet Nam, 2018) to 403,400 in 2020–2021 (O’Connell et al., 2022). ■ Boys are more likely to be out of school than girls (General Statistics Office, 2020; see also Table 6). Other vulnerable groups include ethnic minorities and migrants (O’Connell et al., 2022; see also Table 7). ■ Lack of interest is the most prevalent reason students drop out of school. Economic issues are also a significant factor in dropout rates (Duc & Tam, 2013). ■ Community Learning Centres (CLCs) are the primary pathway for non-formal learning opportunities. These centres are present in all areas of the country. The programmes offered vary depending on the needs of the local community but can include foundational literacy and vocational skills (Minh, 2017). ■ The government has approved numerous policies and initiatives which provide cash support, tuition exemption, and food support to encourage families to send their children to school. These policies primarily focus on decreasing the out-of-school rate among ethnic minorities and children in geographically remote locations (see Table 8).
<p>Girls’ education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Girls have exceeded boys’ enrolment in both lower and upper secondary education (General Statistics Office & UNICEF, 2021; see also Table 6). While teenage boys are often pressured to enter the workforce earlier than girls, the latter are often expected to prioritise marriage and childbearing over higher education.

- Girls and women from ethnic minorities lag behind those in the ethnic majority, the Kinh. Girls from ethnic minorities are less likely to be enrolled at the upper secondary level than boys from ethnic minorities.
- According to the 2019 census by the [General Statistics Office \(2020\)](#), ethnic minorities comprise 14.7% of the population, and the remaining 85.3% are in the Kinh majority. Ethnic minority girls and women make up about 15% of the female population in the country.
- 70.9% of Vietnamese working-age women are in the labour force, but gender inequality is still present in the form of gender segregation by field of study and type of employment ([UN Women, 2021a](#)).
- Vietnam is one of four countries found to have gender parity in digital skills ([UNICEF Viet Nam, 2023](#)).
- In Vietnamese society, men and boys are prioritised over women and girls. Gender norms have created imbalances in higher education, and practices like a preference for sons have led to a higher ratio of males to females at birth ([Khuat et al., 2016](#)).

2. Country overview

Vietnam,¹ officially known as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, borders China, Laos, and Cambodia by land, the East Sea² and the Gulf of Thailand. It is the fifteenth most populous country in the world with a population of 99.3 million people, covering 128,000 square miles and including geographic diversity such as mountains, beaches, rainforests, and large swathes of rice paddies ([↑Worldometer, n.d.](#)).

Historical context

The Vietnamese have struggled through many wars with neighbouring civilisations, including those from China, Champa, and the Khmer. In 1862, Vietnam came under France's colonial rule, during which time Vietnam became a source of natural resources such as rice, raw minerals, and rubber. While the French improved the infrastructure, the changes largely benefitted the French. Most of the land was sold off to the landed gentry, creating a class of Vietnamese peasants that worked the land mostly to grow and export rice. Education suffered under colonial rule; it is estimated that in 1939, 80% of the population was illiterate, compared to pre-colonial times, when most of the population had some degree of literacy ([↑Britannica, 2024](#)). Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh succeeded in bringing a communist government to northern Vietnam with the 1954 Geneva peace talks, ending French colonial rule. Fearing the spread of communism, the United States began increasing troops in South Vietnam but ultimately pulled out in 1973, thus making way for a unified Vietnam in 1975 ([↑BBC, 2018](#)).

Demographics

Vietnam is a diverse country, with 54 ethnic groups. The Kinh comprise 85% of the Vietnamese people, followed by the Tay (1.92%), Thai (1.8%), Muong (1.5%), and Khmer (1.37%) ([↑General Statistics Office, 2020](#)). The population's median age is 32.8 years ([↑Worldometer, n.d.](#)). Females make up 50.2% of the population compared to 49.7% of males. Regarding religion, 86.3% identify as non-religious or following traditional practices, with 6.1% identifying as Catholic, 4.8% following Buddhism, and just 3% other religions ([↑General Statistics Office, 2020](#)).

¹ Also known as Việt Nam. In this report we use Vietnam unless quoting sources that use Việt Nam or Viet Nam.

² 'East Sea' is the name used by Vietnam to refer to the South China Sea.

Thirty-four per cent of Vietnam's people live in urban areas, with the rest in rural areas. The largest cities today are Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, and Da Nang, with over 7 million, 3 million, and 988,000 inhabitants, respectively (↑[General Statistics Office, 2020](#)). The percentage of the population living in urban areas is expected to grow to 44.5% by 2030 (↑[UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018](#)).

Between 1990 and 2018, Vietnam saw a 4.8-year increase in life expectancy. As of 2024, Vietnam's average life expectancy stands at 75.91 years (↑[Macrotrends, n.d.](#)), with the average life expectancy in 2021 for women and men at 78 and 69 years, respectively (↑[World Bank, n.d. c](#)). According to the Borgen Project, the increased life expectancy is because of a drop in child mortality and an increasing middle class (↑[Hiday, 2019](#)).

Socio-economic development

Vietnam is a lower-middle-income country with a growing middle class and a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of USD 4,346.80 (↑[World Bank, n.d. c](#)). Vietnam is ranked 67 out of 141 countries on the 2019 Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) (↑[Schwab, 2019](#)). Vietnam has seen significant economic growth over the last 30 years: between 1990 and 2018, Gross National Income (GNI) per capita increased by 354.5% (↑[UNDP, 2019](#)), and economic growth was 8.0% in 2022 compared to 7.1% between 2016 and 2019 (↑[World Bank, 2023](#)). The driving force behind Vietnam's growing economy is its services sector, which comprised 44.6% of its GDP and employed 35.3% of the population in 2019 (↑[World Bank, 2023](#)). Agriculture/forestry is another leading industry, employing 29% of the population and contributing 13% to the GDP in 2021 (↑[World Bank, 2024](#)). The Doi Moi 1986 'Renovation' Policy also contributed to Vietnam's economic development (see [Figure 1](#) below for more information).

Figure 1. *The Doi Moi 1986 'Renovation Policy'*

Doi Moi, commonly translated as 'renovation', is a national Vietnamese reform that started in 1986. The primary outcome of the reforms was moving the country away from a centrally planned system toward a market economy with a socialist orientation. The reform also implemented policies aimed at integrating Vietnam into regional and global trade markets. The objective of the reforms was to "build 'a wealthy nation, a powerful country and to establish an equitable and civilised society'" (↑[Nguyen et al., 2001](#), p. 28). The results have been evident, with Vietnam's GDP increasing 3.6 times between 2020 and 2022 to USD 3,700 per capita. Likewise, the number of people identified as living in poverty has decreased from 14% of the population in 2010 to 3.8% a decade later (↑[World Bank, n.d. c](#)).

With regard to education, the key objectives of the Doi Moi reforms between

1986 and 2010 included ([↑Hanh & Vinh, 2022](#)):

- The socialisation³ of education
- Ensuring comprehensive access to and a high quality of education
- Providing vocational education during the upper secondary level
- Curriculum reform

These reforms have contributed to Vietnam's successes in the education sector, including increasing the length of time people attend school to just over 10 years, trailing only Singapore in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) ([↑World Bank, 2024](#)).

Between 1993 and 2014, Vietnam's poverty rate decreased from 60% to 14%, with an average per capita increase of 5.6% since 2017 ([↑International Monetary Fund \[IMF\], 2018](#)). Today, only 2.9% of the population lives below the poverty line ([↑UNICEF Viet Nam, 2024](#)). Part of this remarkable improvement has been due to improvements in electricity access, which has increased from 14% in 1993 to nearly 100% today ([↑World Bank, 2024](#)).

In 2022, Vietnam's working population reached 50.6 million. A higher percentage of men are in the labour force than women, and unemployment rates are likewise higher for men (see [Table 2](#)).

Table 2. *Sampling of demographic data*

Indicator	Percentage of population	Percentage of men	Percentage of women
Labour force ⁴	69	73	61
Unemployment rate	1.54 ⁵	1.7 ⁶	1.5 ⁷

Political system overview

Vietnam is run by the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV). The national governing body is the National Assembly, which elects the President, selects the Prime Minister and appoints the Chief Justice. The most recent

³ In the context of Doi Moi reforms, the term 'socialisation' refers to the "discourses, policies and practices that help mobilise resources for development activity among a variety of social actors" ([↑Dang, 2020](#), p. 1174).

⁴ Source: [↑Statista, 2024c](#).

⁵ Source: [↑Statista, 2024b](#).

⁶ Source: [↑World Bank, n.d. b](#).

⁷ Source: [↑World Bank, n.d. a](#).

election was held in 2021. The President is the Chairman of the Council of Defence and Security, as well as the Commander-in-Chief ([↑World Bank, n.d.](#) b). They can be elected to no more than three five-year terms. The National Assembly ratifies all initiatives of the president ([↑Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, n.d.](#)).

3. Education system overview

Education structure

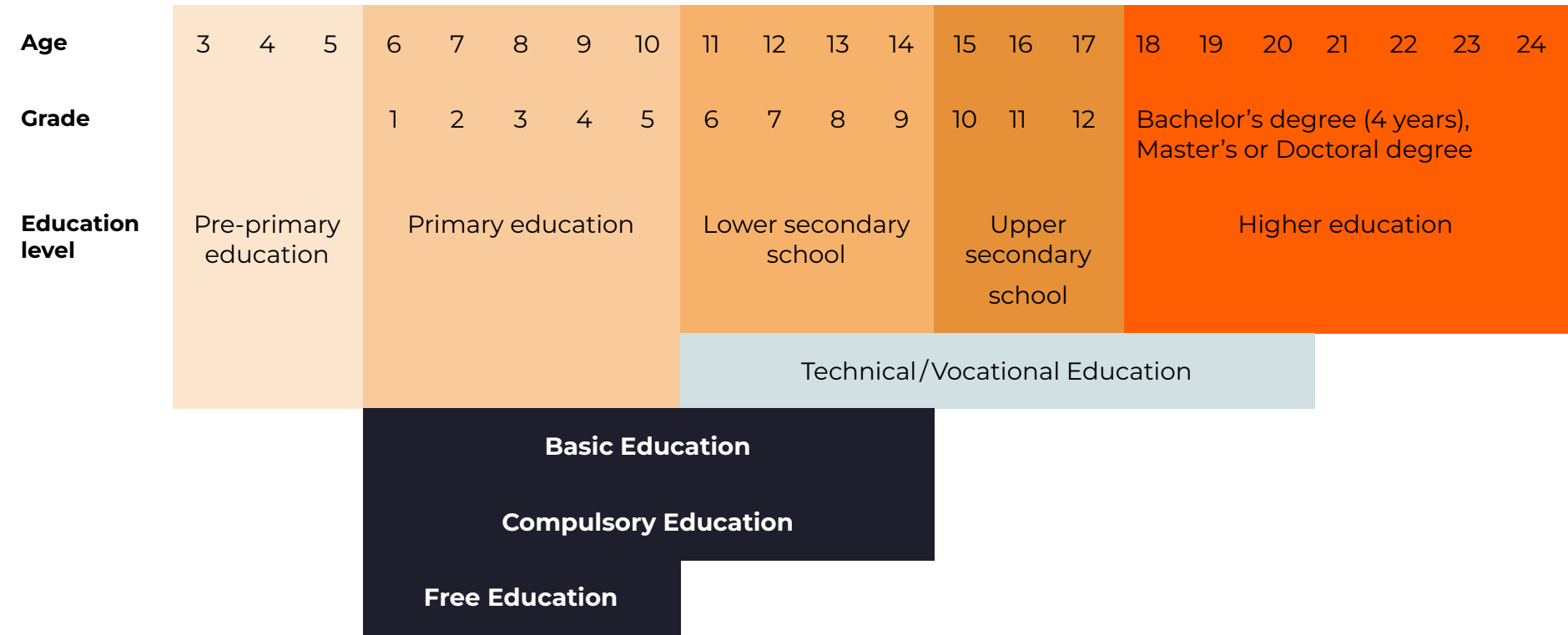
The Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) is responsible for the national education system and determines education policy for pre-primary to higher education. The Ministry of Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA) oversees the technical and vocational education sector ([↑Asian Development Bank \[ADB\], 2020](#)).

There are three main levels to Vietnam's schooling structure: early childhood education, general education, and higher education. Vocational education and training (VET) is an alternative path to secondary and higher education (see [Figure 2](#) below). Families may enrol their children in nurseries as early as three months old or kindergarten starting at three years old. General education consists of primary (Grades 1–5), lower secondary (Grades 6–9), and upper secondary (Grades 10–12). Students may choose to enter the VET system after the primary level. Primary and lower secondary (or VET alternatives) are compulsory.

Tuition for primary school at public institutions is free, but families must pay for early education, lower secondary education, and above.⁸ Families may also need to pay for necessities in addition to tuition, such as textbooks, uniforms, and contributions to the school, regardless of school level. Although tuition exemption is provided for households in difficult socio-economic conditions, school expenses are still among the top reasons for dropout and particularly impact learners from disadvantaged backgrounds (see [Section 4](#)). Entrance into upper secondary school requires passing an exam, and national exams are administered upon completion of Grade 12.

⁸ For the 2022–2023 school year, fees for public schools range from Vietnamese Dong (VND) 50,000 to 650,000 depending on location and level of education ([↑Decree 81/2021/Nd-Cp Policies Financing for Learning Fees in Education and Training Sectors, 2021](#)). US Dollar (USD) 1.00 is approximately VND 25,000 and Pound Sterling (GBP) 1 is approximately VND 31,500 in Quarter 1 of 2024.

Figure 2. *Illustration of Vietnam's education system*



Education statistics

Vietnam reports high levels of success towards the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) targets since 2015, including increased net enrolment rates at all levels, high levels of primary school completion, and increased literacy rates, especially among the rural population. However, there have been dips in 2022 following the pandemic. For instance, primary school enrolment decreased to 95.8% in 2022 from 98.1% in 2020.⁹ Completion was 91.1% compared to 98% reported a year earlier in the Viet Nam SDGCW in 2021 ([↑Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2023](#)).

The mean years of schooling have increased by 4.6 years, from 3.9 years in 1990 ([↑United Nations Development Programme \[UNDP\], 2019](#)) to 8.5 in 2022 ([↑UNDP, 2024](#)).¹⁰ Historically, girls' enrolment has been consistently behind boys by an average of 3%. However, the trends have reversed in more recent years, with more girls enrolled than boys (see [Table 9](#)).

Discrepancies exist between rural and urban areas, with net enrolment and completion rates in rural areas lower than urban ones at the lower and upper secondary levels. The gap between urban and rural learners widens at higher levels of education. Where data is available, dropout rates are also higher among students who live in rural areas (see [Table 3](#)).

⁹ The source for these figures did not include statistics for upper secondary, which is why statistics from 2019 were used to report net enrolment in [Table 3](#).

¹⁰ The Government of Vietnam reports the average years of schooling in 2020 as 9.1 ([↑General Statistics Office, 2021b](#)).

Table 3. Education statistics

Level of Education		Net enrolment (%) (2019) ¹¹	Completion (%) 2021 ¹²	Dropout (%) (2014) ¹³
Primary	Total	98.0	98.0	1.2
	Urban	98.2	98.0	0.97
	Rural	98.0	98.0	1.3
Lower secondary	Total	89.2	87.0	6.95
	Urban	92.0	91.0	4.79
	Rural	88.1	85.0	7.81
Upper secondary	Total	68.2	58.0	<i>Not available</i> ¹⁴
	Urban	76.4	75.0	<i>Not available</i>
	Rural	64.4	46.0	<i>Not available</i>

Education challenges

Although Vietnam has made significant progress towards SDG 4, the country still faces the challenge of closing gaps between ethnic minority groups and the Kinh majority, particularly for groups in geographically remote regions. Table 4 below shows relatively close enrolment rates at the primary level, a gap of nearly ten percentage points at the lower secondary level, and under 50% enrolment at the upper secondary level.

Disaggregation reveals further differences among the ethnic groups.

↑Do et al. (2020) note that some ethnic groups have high enrolment at the primary and lower secondary levels and literacy rates close to SDG 4 targets, while others lag further behind. For instance, the ethnic groups Lo Lo, Brau, and Khmer have primary enrolment rates below 83%, while groups such as Si La, O Du, and Lao have reached 94%.

¹¹ Statistics gathered by the ↑General Statistics Office (2020).

¹² These statistics are retrieved from ↑UNESCO (n.d.)

¹³ Reported by ↑UNICEF Viet Nam (2018). Dropout is based on age of dropout rather than grade level.

¹⁴ Dropout at age 15 is reported as 24.69%; at age 16 as 30.44% and age 17 as 37.39%.

Disaggregated literacy rate data from 2012 further illustrates these discrepancies, with youth and adult literacy rates highest in the Red River Delta and almost 99% and 95% for youth and adults in cities, respectively. In comparison, literacy rates were lowest in geographically remote areas with high ethnic minority populations ([↑MoET, 2015](#)).

Table 4. Education statistics for Kinh and selected ethnic minorities

Level of Education	Length		Net enrolment (%) (2020) ¹⁵
Primary education ^{*16}	5 years	Total	98.1
		Kinh	98.3
		Khmer ¹⁷	93.4
		H'mong	95.2
Lower secondary [*] Elementary technical and vocational education and training TVET ¹⁸	4 years Up to 12 months	Total	93.4
		Kinh	94.7
		Khmer	70.1
		H'mong	82.5
Upper secondary Upper (TVET)	3 years 3–4 years	Total	76.1
		Kinh	81.0
		Khmer	30.0
		H'mong	29.9

*Compulsory education

Vietnamese is the official language of instruction, which can create a language barrier for learners from ethnic minorities, contributing to lower

¹⁵ Statistics from the Vietnam Household Survey Living Standards 2020 report ([↑General Statistics Office, 2021c](#)).

¹⁶ Primary and lower secondary education is compulsory for all Vietnamese.

¹⁷ The 2020 report on living standards ([↑General Statistics Office, 2021c](#)) refers to Khmer as Khơ me in the tables.

¹⁸ More details on TVET are given below in this subsection.

educational outcomes ([↑UNICEF & MoET, 2015](#)). Although instruction in ethnic minority languages is available at some schools, they are often taught as a supplementary subject, and historically, policies that support minority languages have not been applied in practice ([↑Nguyen & Nguyen, 2019](#)). More recently, the MoET programme ‘Action Research on Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual Education’¹⁹ used minority languages as the language of instruction from preschool to Grade 2, then introduced Vietnamese in Grade 3. An evaluation of the programme found that children who participated had higher learning outcomes than the national average ([↑UNICEF & MoET, 2015](#)). In 2021, the MoET decided to expand this programme to eight provinces with high populations of minorities as part of “strengthening Vietnamese language preparation for preschool children and primary school students in ethnic minority areas for the period 2016–2020, with a vision to 2025 based on children’s Mother Tongue” project ([↑Nguyen et al., n.d.](#), paragraph 13).

As discussed further in [Section 4](#) on OOSCY, Vietnam struggles with a relatively large percentage of students who drop out, particularly youth. In 2014, 9.7% of children and youth aged 5 to 17 had dropped out of school, and 1.47% had never attended ([↑UNICEF Viet Nam, 2018](#)).

In an analysis of the secondary education sector, the [↑ADB \(2020a, p. xii\)](#) cautioned that the low completion rate of secondary education means “Vietnam cannot move forward economically and socially”, negatively impacting the labour force. However, the quality of education at the lower and upper secondary levels has also been shown to be inadequate to prepare students for the workforce. The National Institute of Education Sciences determined that “the curriculum did not provide students with the necessary knowledge and skills needed for future careers”, and the returns for education were only 1.2 and 1.5 larger for lower secondary and upper secondary graduates, respectively, compared to primary school graduates. ([↑ADB, 2020a, p. xii](#))

The challenge of relevant education is also evident in the TVET sector. Like the secondary education sector, the TVET sector struggles to provide learners with the relevant technical, cognitive, and behavioural skills that employers require ([↑ADB, 2020b](#)). Among the challenges is the quality of teachers, who do not necessarily have the industry-relevant skills themselves to pass on to learners. Infrastructure and lack of resources prevent TVET students from gaining hands-on experience with machinery or technology. The low quality of education at secondary and TVET levels is evident in the percentage (26.2%) of trained, employed workers aged 15

¹⁹ Supported by UNICEF.

and older—just over a quarter of the workforce ([↑Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2023](#)).

Education progress

Vietnam has made notable progress towards enrolment, particularly at the primary level. Among ethnic minorities, enrolment at all general education levels has increased significantly since 2015. At the primary level, 98.4% of children attend, an increase of 9.6 percentage points; at the lower secondary level, 88.0% attend, an increase of 15.4 percentage points; and at upper secondary, 52.8% attend, an increase of 20.4 percentage points ([↑Hien et al., 2021](#)).

In 2013, girls' enrolment was lower than boys at the primary and lower secondary levels ([↑MoET, 2003](#)). In 2019, girls surpassed boys at all general education levels (see [Table 9](#)). Moreover, changes in attitudes towards girls' education among some ethnic groups, like the H'mong, have shifted, such that families now invest financially and culturally in their daughters' education, although this is generally limited to lower secondary school ([↑Jones et al., 2018](#)).

Vietnam has also been successful in achieving near universal enrolment in early childhood education.²⁰ In the 2021–2022 school year, 99.5% of five-year-old children were enrolled in kindergarten ([↑Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2023](#)).

Vietnam enjoys high educational quality²¹ compared to other developing countries ([↑Sandefur et al., 2022](#)). Vietnamese 15-year-olds have performed well in the 2012, 2015, and 2018 iterations of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Vietnam's high reading, maths, and science ranking, particularly on the 2012 PISA, puts it ahead of several developed countries, such as the US and the UK ([↑Dang et al., 2023](#)).

One explanation for Vietnam students' success in PISA is Vietnam's high-quality schools. In a study using Young Lives data from Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam,²² [↑Glewwe et al. \(2021\)](#) found that Vietnamese teachers have high levels of education, more years of experience, and low reports of

²⁰ SDG Target 4.2: "By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education" ([↑United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.](#)).

²¹ [↑Sandefur et al. \(2022\)](#) define education quality as the literacy of adults with five years of primary school education.

²² The study acknowledges that the sample used for the Young Lives study is not nationally representative of any of the participating countries.

teacher absences. School leaders were found to have more years of experience, and schools were well resourced.²³ Furthermore, the MoET has invested in continuous professional development for teachers; this has reached teachers across the country and has been shown to increase teacher quality²⁴ ([↑Kieu Vo, 2022](#)).

Education priorities, policies, and strategies

Vietnam has heavily emphasised the importance of education in national reforms and legislation since the 1980s. In 2016, Vietnam outlined its vision for 2035 to become a modern, industrialised country ([↑World Bank & Ministry of Planning and Investment of Vietnam, 2016](#)). The country recognises the continued need to invest in high-quality education if it is to achieve the social and economic goals of ensuring equity of opportunity and economic prosperity for all. In recent years, there has been a strong focus on increasing the use of digital technologies in education with the approval of programmes such as ‘Strengthening application of information technology and digital transformation in education and training for the period of 2022–2025 with a vision towards 2030’. The MoET is working with UNESCO and supported by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to develop an Education Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) for 2021–2030. [Table 5](#) below includes a selection of policies and reforms leading up to the EDSP 2021–2023.

²³ School characteristics included access to electricity, presence of a library, computers for student use, and access to the internet.

²⁴ When teachers’ performance was assessed, the ratio of teachers earning a “distinguished” score was increased in 14 out of 15 standards.

Table 5. *Education policies and strategies*

Policy Document	Details
Education For All Action Plan (↑MoET, 2003)	<p>Description</p> <p>The plan outlined targets and strategies Vietnam would undertake to realise the commitments made at the Dakar Forum in 2000. The levels of education addressed in the plan were early childhood, primary, lower secondary, and non-formal levels of education.</p> <p><i>Implementation: 2003–2015</i></p> <hr/> <p>Key objectives</p> <p>The plan establishes five strategic goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Moving from quantity to quality ■ Completing universal primary and lower secondary education ■ Providing lifelong learning opportunities ■ Mobilising full community participation ■ Ensuring effective management and better resource utilisation <p>The objectives listed in the plan include increasing access to education, especially for those from minority and disadvantaged backgrounds; ensuring quality and relevance of learning outcomes; and strengthening management at central, provincial, district, and school levels.</p>

Policy Document	Details
Education Development Strategy 2011–2020 (†Decision No. 711/Qd-Ttg Approving the 2011-2020 Education Development Strategy, 2012)	<p>Description</p> <p>The strategy notes achievements made in the education sector between 2001 and 2010 and acknowledges weaknesses such as low educational quality, low teacher quality, and outdated teaching materials and methods. It sets objectives and defines solutions which are aligned with the Socio-Economic Development Strategy 2011–2020 objectives.²⁵</p> <p><i>Implementation period: 2011–2020</i></p> <p>Key objectives</p> <p>The objectives stated in the document are to renovate the national education system, improve education quality, develop a skilled workforce, and ensure equity in education for all. It further sets out specific objectives for early childhood education, general education, vocational and tertiary education, and continuing education.</p>
Vocational Training Development Strategy (†Decision No. 630/Qd-Ttg Approving the Vocational Training Development Strategy, 2012)	<p>Description</p> <p>The strategy sets targets for vocational education and defines three solutions deemed key to achieving the 2020 objective. The solutions are renovating the management of the vocational system, strengthening the skills and knowledge of teachers and lecturers, and developing a national vocational qualification framework.</p> <p><i>Implementation Period: 2011–2020</i></p> <p>Key objectives</p> <p>The objective stated in the document is to develop a system that provides vocational training that meets labour market demands, is universally available to all labourers, and reaches a standard of quality found in developed countries in the ASEAN region and the world.</p>

²⁵ This strategy sets out a vision and overall objectives to become a modern industrialised country by 2020 and well positioned for higher development in the following period ([†Vietnam Government, 2012](#))

Policy Document	Details
<p>↑Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW fundamental and comprehensive innovation in education in Vietnam (2013)</p>	<p>Description</p> <p>This legislation initiated comprehensive reform of the education system and “put Vietnam’s education system at the top of socioeconomic plans” (↑Le et al., 2022, p. 100).</p> <p><i>Enacted: 2013</i></p> <hr/> <p>Key objectives</p> <p>The document recognises Vietnam’s need to be innovative and transform the quality and effectiveness of education so Vietnamese people can flourish. It sets targets for all levels of education, including continuing education. It proposes several solutions, such as transforming examinations, strengthening higher education and the labour market, and improving outcomes for disadvantaged populations.</p>
<p>↑Decision No. 1019/QĐ-TTg 2012 Approving the scheme for assisting the disabled in the 2012-2020 period in Vietnam, 2012</p>	<p>Description</p> <p>This decision approves the scheme to improve access to health, education, employment, and other social supports for persons with disabilities.</p> <p><i>Implementation period: 2012–2020</i></p> <hr/> <p>Key objectives</p> <p>The document sets targets to increase access to schools to 60% for those with disabilities by 2015 and reach 70% by 2020. It calls for improving the knowledge and skills of school administrators and educators who work with children with disabilities. It also calls for developing technologies to enable information and communication technology (ICT) access and utilisation to produce training and career counselling.</p>

Policy Document	Details
<p>↑Decision no. 131/qd-ttg (2022)</p>	<p>Description</p> <p>This document approved the scheme ‘Strengthening Application of Information Technology and Digital Transformation in Education and Training for the Period of 2022–2025 with a Vision Towards 2030.’</p> <p><i>Implementation Period: 2022–2025</i></p> <hr/> <p>Key objectives</p> <p>The scheme aims to “promote innovation in teaching and learning, improve quality and access to education and effectively manage education.” It sets targets for 2025 and outlines the major tasks that must be undertaken to achieve its targets.</p>
<p>↑Decision No. 749/Qd-Ttg (2020)</p>	<p>Description</p> <p>This document presents the ‘Program for National Digital Transformation by 2025 with Orientations Towards 2030.’ The programme is led by the Ministry of Information and Communications (MIC) and aims to develop and implement digital technology in the government, the economy, and society. It sets targets for 2025 and 2030.</p> <p><i>Enacted: 2020</i></p> <hr/> <p>Key objectives</p> <p>The programme sets objectives to increase science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) education at all levels and provide learners with digital skills. It also aims to increase the access and use of online learning and educational technologies that enable individualised learning.</p>

Policy Document	Details
Decision No. 1373/QD-Ttg ²⁶	Description This decision approves the scheme known as 'Building a Learning Society in the 2021–2030 Period'. <i>Implementation period: 2021–2030</i>
	Key objectives The scheme targets universal education from the pre-primary to upper secondary level. It also encourages formulating policies that enable lifelong learning opportunities for all Vietnamese. There is a strong emphasis on digital technologies and applying them to lifelong learning activities, such as increasing information technology (IT) and digital technologies and developing digital learning materials (↑Vietnam Investment Review, 2021).

²⁶ Policy details provided by reviewer Tran Thi Thuy Tien of SEAMEO Regional Training Center (RETRAC) (11 July 2024). The authors were unable to locate the actual document.

Learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

Three point zero two per cent of Vietnamese children aged 2 to 15 are estimated to have a disability ([↑General Statistics Office, 2018](#)). Vietnam has multiple laws to protect the rights to education for people with a disability, such as the Law on Persons with Disabilities and Decision No.1190/QĐ-TTg ([↑UNDP, 2023](#)). Despite these protections, having a disability poses a significant barrier to education for both boys and girls. Net enrolment at all levels of education is lower for children with disabilities compared to children without. At the upper secondary level, just over one-third of children with disabilities attend school ([↑General Statistics Office, 2018](#)). Schools lack both the infrastructure and teachers trained to work with children with disabilities. The 2016 survey found that less than 10% had accessible sanitation facilities, and three-quarters of schools did not have teachers to teach children with disabilities ([↑General Statistics Office, 2018](#)).

4. Out-of-school children and youth

Vietnam has made significant progress in reducing the number of OOSCY since 2009. Recent results from the 2020–21 Viet Nam SDGCW Survey (↑O’Connell et al., 2022) indicate the total number of OOSCY aged 5 to 14 years old was 403,300; in 2009, it was reported as over one million (↑UNICEF Viet Nam, 2018). However, gaps are still evident between urban and rural regions of the country (see Table 6). Furthermore, male children are more likely to be out of school than female children, a gap which grows with age.

Table 6. *Percentage of out-of-school children by location and gender. Source: ↑General Statistics Office (2020).*

		Out-of-school children (2019) %
Total	Total	8.3%
	Male	9.2%
	Female	7.5%
Urban	Total	5.7%
	Male	6.3%
	Female	5.1%
Rural	Total	9.6%
	Male	10.5%
	Female	8.5%

Children and youth from ethnic minorities are more likely to be out of school than their Kinh peers. Survey data from 2019 shows that the percentage of ethnic minority children out of school is 15.5%, whereas the national average is 8.3%, and the rate for Kinh children is 6.8% (↑UN Women, 2021a). A recent analysis of the 2020–21 Viet Nam SDGCW Surveys reveals large gaps between Kinh and Hoa ethnicities as well as Khmer and Mong groups at the lower and upper secondary levels (see Table 7 below). In addition to poverty and language barriers, distance to school is another challenge for ethnic minorities’ access to education (↑Yen & Hoi, 2023)—the average distance to primary school was 2.2 kilometres, 3.7 km to lower secondary, and 10.9 km to upper secondary school (↑Hien et al., 2021).

Table 7. Percentage of out-of-school children by ethnicity. Source: †O’Connell et al., (2022).

Level of education	Ethnicity	Out-of-school children (2021) %
Primary school	Total	1
	Kinh and Hoa ²⁷	1
	Tay, Thai, Muong, Nung	1
	Khmer	5
	Mong	3
Lower secondary	Total	5
	Kinh and Hoa	4
	Tay, Thai, Muong, Nung	3
	Khmer	23
	Mong	34
Upper secondary	Total	22
	Kinh and Hoa	18
	Tay, Thai, Muong, Nung	22
	Khmer	56
	Mong	93

Another vulnerable population is that of migrant children. Although migration has decreased since its peak in 2009, 7.3% of the population are migrants (†General Statistics Office, 2020). Until recently,²⁸ Vietnam used a household registration system known as *ho khau*, which made school enrolment at public schools more difficult for migrant children who have

²⁷ The groupings in the table were established in the survey instrument.

²⁸ News articles from 2020 announced the government’s decision to end the use of the household registration books and replace them with an online registration system beginning in 2023 (†anon., 2020).

temporary resident status²⁹ compared to children who have permanent resident status ([↑World Bank & Ministry of Planning and Investment of Vietnam, 2016](#)). Migrant children were, therefore, more likely to be in non-public³⁰ schools, where they must pay higher fees and indirect costs ([↑UNICEF Viet Nam, 2018](#)). The out-of-school migrant children population was 1.6 times higher than non-migrant children of primary school age, 1.7 times higher at the lower secondary age, and especially high in urban areas, such as Ho Chi Minh City ([↑UNICEF Viet Nam, 2018](#)).

Reasons for dropout

Among the most common reasons for dropping out of school is lack of interest. This is evident across different surveys and years. Thirty-nine per cent of all children surveyed in 2011 as part of the Young Lives project selected ‘lack of interest’ as a reason for dropping out, including specific reasons such as ‘no longer interested in study and/or did not want to go to school’ as the most important reason for leaving school ([↑Duc & Tam, 2013](#)). The 2018 International Labour Organization (ILO) survey on child labour has similar results; 44.8% of children reported ‘do not like going to school/poor learning ability’ as their reason for not attending school ([↑ILO & Ministry of Labour— Invalids and Social Affairs of Viet Nam 2020](#)).

Research of Young Lives data found poverty and household wealth to be important determinants of dropout ([↑Duc & Tam, 2013](#)). Similarly, [↑UNICEF Viet Nam \(2018\)](#) reports a much larger percentage of OOSCY among poor households compared to the richest—4.5 percentage points higher among primary-school-aged children and 16.2 percentage points higher among lower-secondary-aged children.

Despite government policies which subsidise tuition and textbooks for children of families from disadvantaged backgrounds (see [Table 8](#) below), the cost of education can still be a burden for poor families. Respondents to the Young Lives study frequently gave “fees are too high” or ‘books and/or other supplies are too expensive’ as reasons for leaving school ([↑Duc & Tam, 2013](#)). Their experience is corroborated by the findings of the [↑General Statistics Office \(2016\)](#), where “difficult economic conditions” was the top reason for dropout at the primary school level.

²⁹ Internal migrants and families must register for temporary residence if they reside outside their commune for more than 30 days. The maximum stay is two years, but it can be extended multiple times ([↑Hai, 2020](#)).

³⁰ Private schools and ‘people-founded schools’ (i.e., schools run by social or economic organisations) are referred to as ‘non-public’ in the Vietnamese context ([↑Australian Department of Education and Training, 2018](#)).

A related economic reason given for leaving school is children and youth needing to work to support their families. In 2018, 9.1% of children and youth aged 5 to 17 were working. Although most of these working children also attended school, 35.9% did not, and 1.1% had never attended school ([ILO & Ministry of Labour – Invalids and Social Affairs of Viet Nam, 2020](#)).

Non-formal education opportunities

Non-formal forms of education are recognised in Vietnam's 2003 National Education For All Action Plan 2003–2015. It defines non-formal education as:

“[...]complementary education programmes, continuing education, and life skills development activities aimed at the different learning needs of different categories of youth and adults.” ([MoET, 2003](#), p. xxi)

Community learning centres (CLCs) are a critical component of the non-formal education system. These centres are established by the community but have been under MoET regulation since 2008. CLCs are present in almost all communes and city wards across the country. The centres' activities vary depending on the needs of the local community, but the main activities have been foundational literacy, vocational training, and raising awareness of different social protections ([Minh, 2017](#)). For example, a CLC opened in the mountainous region of Ha Giang City aimed to provide STEM education and mental healthcare.³¹

However, like the formal education system, the effectiveness of the CLCs is hampered by challenges in infrastructure and relevant curricula. Centres may be located in shared communal spaces, lack equipment like computers, or have to borrow materials from other places ([Minh, 2017](#)). Participants surveyed in the [Minh \(2017\)](#) study wanted more relevant curricula and more training courses in science and technology, suggesting dissatisfaction with the current courses available.

Policies and initiatives to support OOSCY

The government has passed numerous decisions and decrees to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly ethnic minorities (see [Table 8](#)). The assistance has included cash support, regulations on

³¹ This was reported in an article on the First Community Learning Center in Ha Giang City ([Dung, 2017](#)).

tuition, and providing resources and construction of schools. [UNICEF Viet Nam's \(2018\)](#) report on out-of-school children noted that policies have reduced the number of OOSCY. However, the report goes on to quote the Ministry of Labour – Invalids and Social Affairs about the “constraints and problems [...] in the implementation of these policies” (p. 137), which include long-term sustainability challenges, lack of decision-making power at the local level, and policy fragmentation. Additionally, the report states that the level of support was insufficient to entice children to go to school, particularly at the lower secondary level.

Table 8. *Policies relevant to reducing OOSCY*³²

Policy	Details
Decision No.62/2005/QD-TTg (2005) (UNICEF Viet Nam & MoET Viet Nam, 2013)	This policy supported universal lower secondary education. It regulated the exemption and reduction of tuition and contribution fees and provided textbooks and learning materials for disadvantaged children.
(Decision 2123/QD-TTg , 2010)	This decision approved the programme ‘Educational Development for very small ethnic minority groups from 2011–2015’. The government provided cash support to very small ethnic minority groups that live in poor households to enable students to attend school. The cash support was provided to families of students at all school levels.
Decision 36/2013/TTg (2013) (UNICEF Viet Nam, 2018)	The decision provides food support to students in difficult socio-economic conditions. The students received 15 kg of rice per month.
(Decree 86/2015/Nd-Cp, 2015) Decree 116/2016/ND-CP (2016) (Dutta, 2022)	Decree 86 provides scholarships, and tuition fee reductions and exemptions for poor children and ethnic minority children and was in effect through 2021. There have been previous iterations of this decree enacted in 2010 and 2013. Decree 116 supports secondary school students and schools in difficult socio-economic conditions, which are predominantly areas with high ethnic minority populations.

³² More policies are listed and described in [UNICEF Viet Nam's \(2018\)](#) report on out-of-school children.

The Vietnamese government committed to the [2016 ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Education for Out-of-School Children and Youth](#).³³

International organisations have also implemented programmes targeting OOSCY. For example, UNESCO is implementing the project ‘Facilitating access to vocational and transferable skills for out-of-school children and youth in Vietnam (2023–2024)’.³⁴ The project aims to “promote and facilitate equitable access to vocational and transferable skills for 300 out-of-school children and youth” and will take place in two provinces (↑[UNESCO, 2024](#), para. 3).

³³ See

<https://asean.org/asean-declaration-on-strengthening-education-for-out-of-school-children-and-youthooscy/>. Retrieved 18 November 2024.

³⁴ The project is funded by the POSCO 1% Foundation, Republic of Korea.

5. Girls' education

Significant progress has been made in achieving gender parity in education. The 2006 Gender Equality Law ([↑Law on Gender Equality, 2006](#)) aimed to promote gender equality and eliminate gender-based discrimination in various aspects of life. Concerning education, it provides regulations on law violations, such as forcing others to drop out of school for gender reasons, gender discrimination in enrolment in training programmes, and the use of gender-biased textbooks ([↑Yen & Hoi, 2023](#)).

As seen in [Table 9](#), gender parity has been achieved at the primary school level and nationally, girls have exceeded boys' enrolment in lower and upper secondary education. While societal expectations often pressure young men to enter the workforce early to support their families, the expectations for women tend to prioritise marriage and childbearing over pursuing higher education. This can be seen at the postgraduate level, where women hold 44.2% of master's degrees and 28% of doctoral degrees, compared to men, who hold 55.8% and 72% of these degrees respectively ([↑General Statistics Office, 2022](#)). The proportion of women holding doctorates has increased by just 9% since 2010 ([↑UN Women, 2021a](#))

Table 9. *Net school enrolment by gender.* Source: [↑General Statistics Office \(2020\)](#).

Education level	Details	Net enrolment rate (2019) (%)
Primary education	Male	98.0
	Female	98.0
Lower secondary education	Male	88.2
	Female	90.2
Upper secondary school	Male	64.4
	Female	72.2

However, the national averages mask the challenges women and girls from ethnic minorities or those with disabilities face when accessing education. Nonetheless, progress has been made in increasing ethnic minority girls' participation in education; for example, [↑Jones et al. \(2018\)](#) note that the combination of national policy, messaging, and strict local enforcement has increased H'mong girls' enrolment as well as families' commitment to their daughters' education. However, enrolment by ethnic

minority girls declines after lower secondary. At the upper secondary school level, 41.29% of girls were enrolled, compared to 52.39% of boys ([↑General Statistics Office, 2022](#)). Ethnic minority girls and women are also less likely to be literate in Vietnamese compared to ethnic minority men or Kinh women([↑Hien et al., 2021](#)).

Girls' employment data

Vietnam can be viewed as a success regarding women's participation in the labour market. In 2018, the IMF reported that Vietnam had one of the highest female participation rates in the world, and it was

"[...] one of the few Asian countries to have succeeded in translating gender parity in educational attainment into gender equality in labour force participation rates." ([↑Banerji et al., 2018](#), p. 32).

Although 70.9% of Vietnamese working-age women are in the labour force, gender inequality is still present in the form of gender segregation in fields of study and type of employment. Women face social expectations to provide family care while men work and provide for the family. Gendered views, such as 'men are better suited to STEM or IT fields', are held by teachers, parents, and students ([↑UN Women, 2021a](#)). Research has shown that even when girls perform as well or better than their male peers in maths, they have less confidence in their ability ([↑Azubuike & Little, 2019](#)). These views can impact the decisions girls make when choosing their fields of study as well as their career trajectories.

Gender segregation can also be seen at the vocational level, where more women train in fields such as garment making, footwear, and tourism and are advised towards careers in the domestic and social sciences and humanities ([↑UN Women, 2021a](#)). These choices are then reflected in the percentage of women employed in the manufacturing and service sectors.³⁵ These sectors, and women's roles within them, tend to be lower paying, contributing to the gender pay gap.³⁶ However, low-paid positions and lack of representation in higher-earning fields do not explain all the reasons behind the gender earning gap, suggesting structural discrimination ([↑UN Women, 2021a](#)).

³⁵ According to 2012 data cited in the [↑UN Women Viet Nam \(2016\)](#) report on making inclusive growth work for women, 18.1% of women work in manufacturing and 32.7% in services.

³⁶ The weighted gender pay gap was 13.7% in 2019 ([↑UN Women, 2021a](#)).

Girls' access to digital technology

Globally, girls lag behind their male peers in access to digital devices and digital skills. However, Vietnam is an exception and is one of four countries³⁷ found to have gender parity in digital skills ([UNICEF Viet Nam, 2023](#)). For instance, 93.3% of girls aged 15–17 reported 'yes' to the question 'Have you ever used the internet from any location and any device?', a rate on par with boys' responses. However, disaggregated data reveals disparities across socio-economic levels, with just 49.7% and 11.8% of economically disadvantaged women reporting positively to the same question on internet and device use, respectively, compared to 97.4% and 76.6% of wealthier women ([General Statistics Office & UNICEF, 2021](#)).

Although gender parity in access has been reached, acquisition of digital skills proficiency remains a challenge, with only 36% of 15–24-year-olds having gained basic digital skills ([UNICEF Viet Nam, 2023](#)). Additionally, Vietnamese youth do not perceive themselves as having high levels of digital literacy, with over 60% of respondents rating themselves between 1 and 3 on a scale of 5 ([UNICEF EAPRO, 2021](#)).³⁸ Furthermore, stereotypes about IT and STEM as male domains impact girls' interest in the field as they get older, even as girls outperform boys in digital domains ([UNICEF EAPRO, 2023](#)).

Enablers and barriers to girls' education

Beliefs that uphold traditional gendered roles remain prevalent throughout the country and are held by both men and women ([Khuat et al., 2016](#)). For instance, the belief that it is a woman's duty to give birth and take care of children is widespread, resulting in girls being more likely to spend time on household chores.

By law, the minimum age for marriage is 18 for women and 20 for men. However, early marriage is still practised, including traditions of early marriage among certain ethnic minority groups ([UN Women, 2021a](#))³⁹—the average age of marriage for ethnic minority girls is 15.8 years ([Hien et al., 2021](#)). Forced marriage is also practised despite laws

³⁷ 54 countries and territories were analysed in the UNICEF analysis.

³⁸ The survey used in this report was administered online and used a convenience sample of youth aged 10–24 years old. For this reason, the report cautions that the survey respondents are not a representative sample of the country.

³⁹ [Yen & Hoi \(2023\)](#) cite a 2019 survey of 53 Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam: 23.1% are married before 18 compared to 9.2% of Kinh people by the [General Statistics Office of Vietnam \(2021a\)](#).

prohibiting it.

Vietnam has implemented policies which promote gender equality education and programmes aimed at removing barriers for girls (several of these policies are discussed in greater detail in [Table 10](#) below). For example, the government and international organisations have implemented programmes to reduce early marriage, particularly among ethnic minority groups.

However, traditions and social norms which value women less than men continue to persist, limiting progress towards gender equality. A recent review of the Gender Equality Law found that activities implemented to promote gender equality did not necessarily challenge gender stereotypes ([↑MOLISA & United Nations Population Fund, 2020](#)). Additionally, national strategies, including those related to the digital transformation of the country, do not always include specific actions to address barriers or stereotypes facing girls or take gender considerations into account ([↑UN Women, 2021a](#), [↑UN Resident Coordinator's Office & UN Women Viet Nam, 2023](#)).

Table 10. *Policies and initiatives relevant to increasing girls' education*

Programmes	Details
↑Law on Gender Equality (2006)	The law aims to promote gender equality and eliminate gender-based discrimination in various aspects of life. It states that men and women have equal rights to access education and training.
↑Law on Vocational Education (2014)	The law regulates the vocational education and training system. It includes provisions to support women's enrolment and participation in TVET courses.
(↑Decision No. 498/QD-TTg (2015))	This policy supported the scheme 'The minimization of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority areas period 2015–2025'. Between 2014 and 2018, the percentage of child marriages fell by 4.7 percentage points but did not reach the targets set for 2020 (↑UN Women Viet Nam, 2020).
National Strategy	This strategy is the successor of the NSGE 2011–2020. ⁴⁰

⁴⁰ A review of the NSGE 2011–2020 was conducted by UN Women and the results helped shape the objectives and targets of the 2021–2030 strategy ([↑UN Women, 2021b](#)).

**on Gender Equality
(NSGE) 2021–2030**

(↑[Resolution No. 28/NQ-CP \(2021\)](#))

The NSGE sets a target to reduce gender gaps in all areas of society. Educational targets are as follows:

- Include training on gender and gender equality in pedagogical education institutions
- Increase the primary and secondary education completion rates of ethnic minority girls and boys
- Increase the percentage of female students in vocational training
- Increase the percentage of women holding master's and doctorate degrees

6. ICT Infrastructure

According to a report on internet resources in Vietnam in 2022, 73.2% of the Vietnamese population had access to the internet, with the majority of users (81.7%) obtaining access via smartphones, as broadband penetration levels are low at just 20.8% ([↑MIC & Viet Nam Internet Network Information Center, 2022](#)). Access is also uneven across urban and rural areas, with rural and ethnic minority areas less likely to have access to the internet, largely due to the cost of infrastructure ([↑Le et al., 2023](#)).

Table 11. *Access to mobile phones, internet, and electricity*

Indicator	Percentage of population in Vietnam
Network coverage	
Population covered by a mobile-cellular network	80% (↑Statista, 2024a)
Population covered by at least a 3/4G mobile network	99.8% (↑Statista, 2024a)
Access to internet⁴¹ at home	
Households with internet access at home 2023	79% (↑Statista, 2024a)
Access to electricity at home	
Households with access to electricity 2022	99.5 (↑Statista, 2024d)
Households with access to electricity, urban 2022	99.6 (↑Statista, 2024d)
Households with access to electricity, rural 2022	99.5 (↑Statista, 2024d)

Device ownership and usage

Data from the 2020-21 Viet Nam SDGCW Survey indicates that television and mobile phone ownership across Vietnam is high, with little difference between urban and rural populations. However, computer ownership is generally low, with just 48% of urban households owning a computer and even lower rural household ownership rates at 19% ([↑General Statistics Office & UNICEF, 2021](#); see also [Table 12](#)). Radio ownership is also rare in Vietnam, with just 7% of households nationally owning this device.

⁴¹ Note that this definition of 'internet' includes smartphones with online access. Broadband access is just 20% ([↑Statista, 2024a](#)).

Importantly, even though device ownership levels may look similar across urban and rural areas, usage may differ, with wealthier households owning more than one device that provides access to the internet, while lower-income households depend on device-sharing, which may limit access to a device for learning and other purposes (↑[Le et al., 2023](#)).

Table 12. *Device ownership in Vietnam.* Source: ↑[General Statistics Office & UNICEF \(2021\)](#).

Device	Households owning device (%)	Urban households owning device (%)	Rural population households device (%)
Television	86	86	85
Mobile phone	96	98	95
Computer	29	48	19
Internet (home)	72	85	65

Barriers

To achieve the educational objectives set out in the Program for National Digital Transformation by 2025 (↑[Decision No. 749/Qd-Ttg, 2020](#)),⁴² Vietnam must address current challenges in infrastructure, online safety, and digital skills. While mobile phone and internet access at home and in schools is high throughout the country, computer access is limited. Furthermore, there is often a significant gap between rural and urban areas, particularly around internet and computer access (see [Table 12](#)). School infrastructure is also a challenge for using technology for learning. According to a survey of teachers for the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) assessment, only 39% of teachers reported having a working computer (↑[UNICEF & SEAMEO, 2022](#)). In 2018, 82% of Vietnamese school principals reported that the shortage or inadequate provision of digital technology hindered quality instruction (↑[OECD, 2019](#)).

More also needs to be done to educate youth on online safety. Research shows that 15-year-olds in Vietnam report that just 9% of their parents and 4.7% of their teachers guide their use online (↑[Shin et al., 2019](#)). While digital safety is an important issue for both boys and girls, this issue is particularly salient for girls as they are 11% more likely to receive friend requests than

⁴² See [Table 5](#) for more details.

boys (86% compared to 75%), to be the recipients of more objectionable content or images, and to be bothered by predators online ([↑UNICEF EAPRO, 2023](#)).

Despite the lack of guidance from adults, young people do take action to protect themselves online. A high proportion of boys and girls report changing their passwords (80%) and adjusting their privacy settings (70%), while a moderate percentage report deleting their site history (62%), blocking spam (55%), and recognising fake messages (45%). Girls are about eight percentage points more likely to block messages than boys, and boys are about five per cent more likely to have multi-level security online ([↑UNICEF EAPRO, 2023](#)).

Finally, the level of digital skills is low among young people. Only 36% of youth aged 15 to 24 are estimated to have acquired basic digital skills ([↑UNICEF Viet Nam, 2023](#)). This could hinder the country's ability to develop a generation of learners prepared for the 21st century. For example, [↑Le et al. \(2023\)](#) report that poor digital competence has affected users' ability to utilise and access open educational resources. Teachers also require digital skills to utilise technology in the classroom. Over 95% of teachers report having had training in ICT and participating in professional development activities, which included 'using ICT for teaching' as a topic ([↑OECD, 2019](#); [↑UNICEF & SEAMEO, 2022](#)). However, teachers also report needing more ICT training for teaching ([↑OECD, 2019](#)).

7. EdTech stakeholders and initiatives

A number of initiatives have led to significant changes in educational technology in recent years. Vietnam has invested in establishing and upgrading the infrastructure needed to provide communities and schools with access to digital technology. These include increasing rural Vietnam's electrification levels to nearly 100% ([↑Baum, 2020](#)) and setting targets to universalise fibre and 5G cables by 2030 ([↑MIC, 2020](#)). Furthermore, the scheme 'Strengthening Application of Information Technology and Digital Transformation in Education and Training for the Period of 2022–2025' ([↑Decision no. 131/qd-ttg, 2022](#)) includes a call for developing online teaching and learning platforms and increasing the use of digital technology among teachers and learners (see [Table 5](#) above).

EdTech stakeholders

The Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) and the Ministry of Information and Communications (MIC) have been the principal drivers of the country's increase in use of digital technology. Both ministries have developed several policies to promote EdTech use and development and collaborated on policy ([↑Le et al., 2023](#)). Vietnam also has several domestic EdTech companies that have gained popularity across the country ([↑Nguyen, 2023](#)), and education has been among the most funded sectors for tech investment between 2018 and 2022 ([↑Vietnam National Innovation Center, 2023](#)). However, there appear to be limited examples of partnerships between the Vietnamese private sector and government or development partners.

Table 13. *EdTech stakeholders*

Ministry / Agency	Role
Ministry of Education and Training (MoET)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The ministry has set out policies to increase the use of online learning and teaching at all levels of education, improve the digital skills of students, teachers, and administrators, and leverage technology for education management. ■ The MoET has collaborated with other ministries, such as the MIC, on initiatives related to technology infrastructure. It has also agreed to work with departments within the

	Ministries of Defense and Public Security on issues of cyber security and online privacy (Le et al., 2023).
Ministry of Information and Communications (MIC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The MIC is leading the 'Program for National Digital Transformation by 2025 with Orientations Towards 2030.' This programme aims to increase e-services data sharing, improve digital commerce, increase broadband access, and develop a digitally skilled workforce (OpenDevelopment Vietnam (2023)).
Non-governmental agencies and development partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Agencies such as UNICEF, the World Bank, and ADB primarily have the role of funders of EdTech initiatives.
Higher Education Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In the scheme 'Strengthening Application of Information Technology and Digital Transformation in Education and Training for the Period of 2022–2025', higher education is identified as a key area for increasing the use of technology. Higher education institutions have partnered with development partners on EdTech initiatives such as an open resource library (see Table 14 below).
Private-sector partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Private companies offer a range of services such as online learning content and platforms and resources for the STEAM curriculum. They do not have formal partnerships with the MoET or development partners.

EdTech Initiatives

A range of EdTech products are gaining popularity in Vietnam, including online learning platforms, learning apps, websites, and YouTube channels. These products cater to the growing demand for flexible and technology-driven learning solutions in Vietnam's education landscape ([Nguyen, 2023](#)). In addition to products from the private sector, the Vietnamese government has increased its investment in open educational resources and the provision of digital devices. A selection of these initiatives is highlighted in [Table 14](#) below. There is limited data on the

impact on educational outcomes or the reach of most of the following initiatives. Additional research is needed to assess the effectiveness of these technologies in education.

Table 14. *Examples of EdTech initiatives*

Initiative	Type of EdTech used	Implementing partners	Details
Teky	Online classes	Teky Alpha JSC	<p>Description This company provides STEM education courses for children aged 4–18. Its curriculum builds skills in 21st-century competencies. It has established partnerships with schools and has plans to expand within the Southeast Asian region. It also has a vision to encourage girls to explore STEAM subjects and careers (↑Nguyen, 2023)</p> <p>Access Unknown</p> <p>Focus on the marginalised learner N/A</p>
Vietnam Quality Improvement of Primary Education for Deaf Children	Online platform	World Bank, Global Partnership for Results-Based Approaches	<p>Description This project developed signs for communication among the Vietnamese deaf community and provided training for caregivers and trainers. It reached nearly 2,000 deaf children in 20 provinces. The test scores of children who participated in the project improved examination rates. The resources for training and a Vietnamese sign language dictionary are available on an online platform, which can be accessed by various digital devices (↑Yarrow et al., 2023).</p>

Initiative	Type of EdTech used	Implementing partners	Details
			<p>Access Free</p> <p>Focus on the marginalised learner Deaf and hearing-impaired</p>
Nhat Hong Center for The Blind and Visually Impaired ⁴³	Various	Nhat Hong Center	<p>Description The centre supports the education of visually impaired children from pre-school to upper secondary. It has developed specialised software to convert Vietnamese textbooks into Braille and suitable formats for learners. It has also developed software to help teachers grade test papers of students with visual impairments.</p> <p>Access Unknown</p> <p>Focus on the marginalised learner Blind and visually impaired</p>
Global Digital Library ⁴⁴	Website	UNICEF, Viet Nam National Institute of Educational Sciences, Global Digital Library	<p>Description The project aims to provide early grade reading books and reading resources in a digital format. Over 3,000 digital content products and ten new books were created through the pilot programme. Materials were produced in eight ethnic minority languages and sign</p>

⁴³ See <https://newhappysun.org/en/home/>. Retrieved 19 November 2024.

⁴⁴ See <https://digitallibrary.io/vi/>. Retrieved 19 November 2024.

Initiative	Type of EdTech used	Implementing partners	Details
			<p>language. Books featured characters from marginalised communities (↑UNICEF Viet Nam & UNICEF Innovation, 2022).</p> <p>Access Free</p> <p>Focus on the marginalised learner Ethnic minorities, SEND</p>
STEAM for Vietnam 2024 ⁴⁵	Online learning platform	UNICEF, STEAM for Vietnam	<p>Description STEAM for Vietnam is a US non-profit organisation providing courses in computational thinking, computer science, and robotics. The partnership with UNICEF aims to provide children in Vietnam with STEAM educational opportunities for free (↑UNICEF, 2021).</p> <p>Access Free</p> <p>Focus on the marginalised learner N/A</p>
KidsEdu ⁴⁶	Various	KidsEdu	<p>Description This innovation provides a STEM curriculum for pre-school-aged children, supports training for teachers, and sponsors STEM labs for kindergartens. The</p>

⁴⁵ See <https://steamforvietnam.org/en>. Retrieved 19 November 2024.

⁴⁶ See <https://kidsedu.vn/>. Retrieved 19 November 2024.

Initiative	Type of EdTech used	Implementing partners	Details
			<p>curriculum focuses on digital literacy and includes activities using technology such as augmented reality (↑HundrEd, 2023).</p> <p>Access Low-cost, USD 3.50 per student per month</p> <p>Focus on the marginalised learner NA</p>
Kho học liệu số ⁴⁷	Open educational resources (OER)	MoET and Vietnamese Digital Knowledge System Project	<p>Description Kho học liệu số is an online platform with 41,000 open educational resources. It enables educational institutions at different levels to connect and share learning materials. The platform has supported teachers from disadvantaged backgrounds by providing access to quality teaching materials (↑Le et al., 2023).</p> <p>Access Free</p> <p>Focus on the marginalised learner Teachers from disadvantaged backgrounds</p>
Digital Pathway ⁴⁸ (Hành trang số)	Website	MoET, Vietnam Education Publishing House	<p>Description Digital library of all textbooks and exercise books from Grades 1 to 12 that are available to students and</p>

⁴⁷ See <http://igiaoduc.vn>. Retrieved 19 November 2024.

⁴⁸ See <https://hanhtrangso.nxbgd.vn/>. Retrieved 19 November 2024.

Initiative	Type of EdTech used	Implementing partners	Details
			<p>teachers.</p> <p>Access Free</p> <p>Focus on the marginalised learner NA</p>
Distance learning through TV broadcasting ⁴⁹	Television	MoET	<p>Description During the Covid-19 pandemic school closures, the MoET worked with local education agencies to broadcast lessons on one national and 27 provincial channels (↑Le et al., 2023)</p> <p>Access Free</p> <p>Focus on the marginalised learner Rural and/or learners from poor communities</p>
Internet Connection and Computers for Students Program (<i>Sóng và máy tính cho em</i>)	Digital devices, internet access	MoET, MIC	<p>Description In response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the shift to online learning, this programme provided students from disadvantaged backgrounds nationwide with computers and internet connectivity. By 2022, over 90,000 devices had been delivered to 21 provinces and cities, and internet connections were installed in 283 localities (↑Le et al., 2023).</p> <p>Access</p>

⁴⁹ See <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/c0b0a211-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/c0b0a211-en>. Retrieved 19 November 2024.

Initiative	Type of EdTech used	Implementing partners	Details
			Free Focus on the marginalised learner Rural and/or learners from poor communities
Developing a shared digitised library for higher education institutions in Vietnam	OER	World Bank, National Economics University	Description This project was part of a more extensive programme to improve the quality of higher education. This open education resource allowed students and professors from various universities access to data on economics and finance issues (↑Le et al., 2023). Access Free Focus on the marginalised learner N/A
VRapeutic	Virtual Reality	UNICEF, National Center for Special Education	Description The programme provided therapy for children aged 6–12 with Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) through games using virtual reality glasses. VRapeutic will also build teacher capacity (↑UNICEF Viet Nam & UNICEF Innovation, 2022). Access Unknown Focus on the marginalised learner SEND

8. Looking forward

Vietnam has high enrolment levels and has performed well in recent large-scale assessments at the primary school level. However, concerns remain around the number of OOSY at the lower and upper secondary levels, as well as equitable access to education for students from ethnic minorities. There are also concerns that the content and quality of education at the lower and upper secondary levels do not adequately prepare learners with the knowledge and skills needed for the 21st-century world of work. There is an opportunity for EdTech to support efforts to reach OOSY and provide relevant skills for life and work.

As evident from the policy documents identified in this scan, leveraging digital technologies for teaching, learning, and management is a priority for the MoET. Vietnam's electricity and internet infrastructure reaches the majority of the population. Therefore, the focus is now on ensuring that people are aware of digital resources, have access to digital devices, and opportunities to build digital literacy skills. In addition to government initiatives, the private sector has invested in EdTech products and services. Looking forward, public-private partnerships could support the development and implementation of digital technologies in education.

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