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SOLUTIONS TO ENHANCE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING SCHOOL EDUCATION PLANS AT THE LOWER SECONDARY LEVEL

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Abstract

In the context of implementing the 2018 General Education Curriculum, the development and implementation of school education plans play a critical role in ensuring educational quality at the lower secondary level. This study aims to examine the current status of developing and implementing school education plans for Grades 6 and 7, while identifying challenges encountered during the process. The study employed document analysis, surveys, and interviews with school administrators and teachers at lower secondary schools. The findings indicate that schools have proactively developed education plans in accordance with the requirements of the 2018 General Education Curriculum. However, challenges remain in organizing integrated teaching, incorporating new educational content, and ensuring flexibility and suitability to local school conditions. Based on the findings, the paper proposes several solutions to enhance the effectiveness of developing and implementing school education plans, thereby contributing to the successful implementation of the 2018 General Education Curriculum at the lower secondary level.

Keywords: General education curriculum 2018, School education plan, Lower secondary education Implementation, Effectiveness.

1. Introduction

In the context of implementing Vietnam's 2018 General Education Curriculum, the school education plan has been identified as a key instrument for translating the curriculum's objectives, content, and approaches to educational organization into practices that are responsive to the specific conditions of localities and individual

schools. The development and implementation of school education plans not only contribute to the effective implementation of the General Education Curriculum but also enable schools to exercise greater autonomy, enhance flexibility in organizing teaching and learning activities, and promote educational practices oriented

toward the development of students' competencies and personal qualities (J Ministry of Education and Training, 2025).

In recent years, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has issued a series of policy documents and implementation guidelines to support schools in developing and implementing school education plans (Ministry of Education and Training, 2019), (Ministry of Education and Training, 2024). Practical evidence indicates that schools have made significant progress in proactively designing education plans that are aligned with their local contexts and institutional conditions. Nevertheless, the implementation process continues to face several challenges, including inadequate facilities, shortages of teachers in certain subject areas, and disparities in teachers' capacity to deliver integrated instruction and develop school-based curricula. Furthermore, the integration of emerging interdisciplinary educational themes associated with contemporary social issues, such as safe migration education and the prevention of human trafficking, has not yet been implemented systematically because of limited teaching and learning resources, insufficient professional guidance, and inadequate opportunities for teacher professional development (Nguyen et al, 2022).

Although a number of studies and evaluation reports have examined the implementation of school education plans, further research is needed to analyze the factors influencing implementation effectiveness and to propose solutions that are aligned with the requirements of the 2018 General Education Curriculum. Building upon the findings of the research project *Current Status of Developing and Implementing School Education Plans at the Lower Secondary Education Level* (Project Code: V2022.13TX) (Vietnam National Institute of Educational Sciences, 2022), together with insights drawn from international experience, this paper examines the current status of developing and implementing school education plans at the lower secondary education level in Vietnam. It identifies the major challenges and influencing factors and proposes several recommendations for improving the effectiveness of developing and implementing school education plans in the current context of educational reform.

2. Research Methods

This study employed a document analysis approach combined with secondary data analysis to examine the current status of the development and implementation of school education plans at the lower secondary education level within the context of implementing Vietnam's 2018 General Education Curriculum. The analyzed materials included legal and regulatory documents, policy guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), and relevant national and international studies on school education planning.

The study also drew upon the findings of the institute-level research project *Current Status of Developing and Implementing School Education Plans at the Lower Secondary Education Level* (Project Code: V2022.13TX) (Vietnam National Institute of Educational Sciences, 2022). The secondary data comprised survey results, interview data, and expert consultation records that had been collected and processed within the framework of the project. These data were synthesized, analyzed, and cross-examined to identify key achievements, challenges, limitations, and the major factors influencing the effectiveness of school education plan implementation.

In addition, a comparative approach was employed to examine the experiences of selected countries in developing and implementing

school education plans. The findings from this comparative analysis provided a basis for proposing recommendations that are appropriate to the Vietnamese educational context.

3. Results

3.1. School Education Plans in the Context of Implementing the 2018 General Education Curriculum

School education plans constitute a fundamental component of the management and organization of educational activities in general education institutions. According to Government Decree No. 24/2021/ND-CP, a school education plan is defined as a plan for organizing a school's educational activities to implement the General Education Curriculum promulgated by the Minister of Education and Training (Government of Vietnam, 2021). Accordingly, the development and implementation of school education plans represent a routine responsibility of schools, enabling them to operationalize the requirements of the national curriculum in ways that are responsive to local conditions and institutional contexts (Vietnam National Institute of Educational Sciences, 2022).

The 2018 General Education Curriculum was developed with a focus on fostering students' competencies and personal qualities while maintaining an open and flexible framework that empowers local authorities and schools to organize curriculum implementation according to their specific contexts (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018). To facilitate this process, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has issued a series of policy documents and implementation guidelines to support schools in developing and implementing school education plans. Among these, Official Dispatch No. 5512/BGDĐT-GDTrH emphasizes that school education plans should be developed in accordance with the availability of teaching staff, school facilities, student characteristics, and local conditions (Ministry of Education and Training, 2020). In addition, the annual guidelines on the implementation of lower secondary education tasks continue to reaffirm the pivotal role of school education plans in ensuring proactive, flexible, and effective teaching and learning practices (Vietnam National Institute of Educational Sciences, 2022).

The development of a school education plan is a process of translating the General Education Curriculum into educational activities that are aligned with students' characteristics, school conditions, and local development needs (Ministry of Education and Training, 2021). This process encompasses planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and continuous revision, with the active participation of school leaders, teachers, and other relevant stakeholders. Through school education plans, schools are able to determine instructional time allocation, select appropriate teaching and learning approaches, integrate educational content that reflects local contexts, and strengthen the roles of teachers and subject departments in curriculum implementation.

In the context of ongoing educational reform, the effectiveness of school education plans depends not only on the quality of plan development but also on the conditions that support their implementation, including teachers' professional capacity, school facilities, teaching and learning resources, school leadership, and collaboration among schools, families, and local communities (Vietnam National Institute of Educational Sciences, 2022). Therefore, assessing the current status of developing and implementing school education plans in general education

institutions is essential for identifying achievements, challenges, limitations, and the key factors influencing implementation effectiveness. Such an assessment provides an evidence base for proposing appropriate strategies to enhance the quality of implementing the 2018 General Education Curriculum at the lower secondary education level.

3.2. Current Status of Developing and Implementing School Education Plans at the Lower Secondary Education Level in Vietnam

The development and implementation of school education plans in Vietnam have their foundation in the country's general education reform process. In 2013, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) issued Guidance No. 791/HD-BGDĐT on the *Pilot Development of School-Based Curricula in General Education Schools* (Ministry of Education and Training, 2013). The guidance was intended to: (a) address the limitations of the existing curriculum and textbooks, thereby improving the quality of teaching and educational activities in pilot schools; (b) strengthen collaboration mechanisms and enhance the role of teacher education institutions, laboratory schools, and other general education schools in pedagogical practice, educational experimentation, and the development of school-based curricula; (c) build the capacity of faculty members in teacher education institutions and teachers in participating schools in educational research and school-based curriculum development; and (d) provide both theoretical and practical foundations for the reform of the general education curriculum and textbooks following 2015.

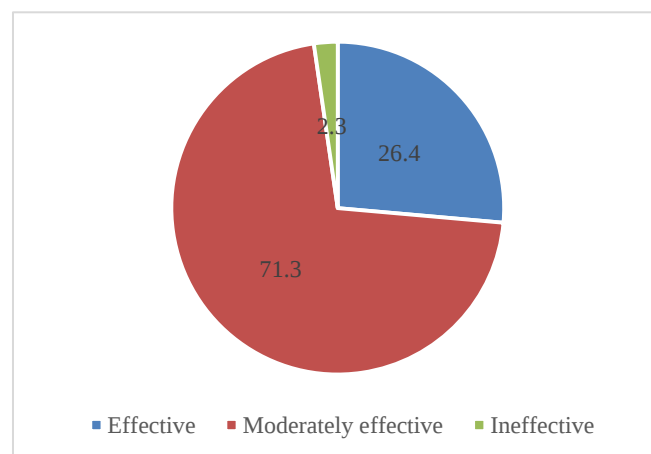
The 2018 General Education Curriculum—*Overall Curriculum* (promulgated together with Circular No. 32/2018/TT-BGDĐT issued by the Minister of Education and Training on December 26, 2018)—was designed as an open curriculum framework that delegates greater authority and responsibility to local authorities and schools in developing and implementing school education plans that are responsive to local contexts (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018). Based on the educational content and instructional time specified in the Overall Curriculum, as well as local conditions, schools are expected to develop feasible school education plans tailored to their specific circumstances. The Overall Curriculum further stipulates that curriculum development is a continuous process involving the evaluation, revision, supplementation, and refinement of the curriculum throughout its implementation. Guided by the curriculum content and the expected learning outcomes prescribed in the General Education Curriculum, schools are encouraged to develop their own school education plans in a flexible manner that reflects local conditions while ensuring the achievement of national educational objectives and quality standards.

Findings from the institute-level research project *Current Status of Developing and Implementing School Education Plans at the Lower Secondary Education Level* (Project Code: V2022.13TX) indicate that the majority of school leaders and teachers clearly recognize the important role of school education plans in implementing the 2018 General Education Curriculum and acknowledge the need to align these plans with the specific conditions of their schools (Vietnam National Institute of Educational Sciences, 2022). The development of school education plans is carried out primarily by school leadership teams, subject departments, and teachers, whereas the participation of parents, local communities, and educational experts remains relatively limited.

3.2.1. Current Status of Developing and Implementing School Education Plans at the Lower Secondary Education Level

The survey findings indicate that the implementation of school education plans at the lower secondary education level has shown positive progress. Approximately 71.3% of teachers rated the implementation of teaching plans and educational activities as moderately effective, while 26.4% considered it effective. Only 2.4% of respondents reported that the implementation was ineffective. From the perspective of school leaders, 68.0% evaluated the implementation as moderately effective, whereas 31.2% considered it effective.

Figure 1. Lower secondary school teachers' evaluation of the effectiveness of implementing school education plans and educational activities during the 2021–2022 academic year.

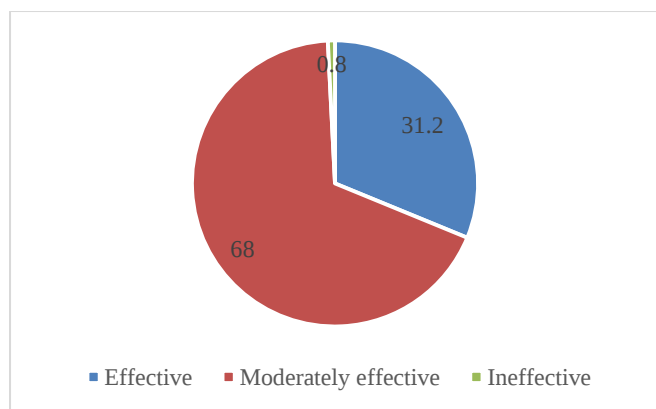


Source: *A Study on the Current Status of Developing and Implementing School Education Plans at the Primary Education Level (Grades 1–3) and the Lower Secondary Education Level (Grades 6–7)*. Institute-level Research Project, Project Code: V2022.13TX

The findings indicate that during the previous academic year, teaching plans and educational activities were implemented moderately effectively in the majority of surveyed schools, while implementation was considered effective in nearly one-third of the schools.

From the perspective of school leaders, 68.0% of lower secondary school administrators reported that the implementation of school education plans during the previous academic year was moderately effective, whereas 31.2% rated it as effective. Only 2.0% indicated that school education plans had been implemented but were not effective.

Figure 2. Lower secondary school administrators' evaluation of the effectiveness of implementing school education plans during the 2021–2022 academic year.



Source: *A Study on the Current Status of Developing and Implementing School Education Plans at the Primary Education Level (Grades 1–3) and the Lower Secondary Education Level (Grades 6–7). Institute-level Research Project, Project Code: V2022.13TX*

The implementation of school education plans has contributed to improving the quality of education, with more than 96% of teachers and 97% of school leaders reporting positive changes. Teachers have become more proactive in designing lesson plans, organizing learning activities, and promoting students' active participation in the learning process. Nevertheless, the implementation process has also revealed several challenges, including overly complex planning documents, excessive administrative paperwork, difficulties in timetable scheduling, large class sizes, and the requirement to complete all instructional procedures within a single lesson, which is often inconsistent with practical teaching conditions (Vietnam National Institute of Educational Sciences, 2022).

A particularly significant challenge concerns teachers' capacity to deliver integrated instruction. Many teachers have not received systematic professional preparation for teaching integrated subjects but are nevertheless required to teach subjects such as Natural Sciences, History and Geography, and Experiential Activities, resulting in less effective implementation.

With regard to the implementation of newly integrated educational content, recent survey findings and expert consultations indicate that the integration of safe migration education and human trafficking prevention education into school education remains challenging. Specifically, 59.12% of respondents reported the absence of official teaching materials, 57.38% indicated that teachers had not received adequate professional training, and 48.92% believed that these topics had not been clearly integrated into the curriculum. These findings highlight the need to strengthen the integration of safe migration education and human trafficking prevention into school education plans while expanding teacher professional development opportunities and developing appropriate instructional resources to support implementation at the school level (Nguyen et al, 2022).

Overall, these findings suggest that although schools have developed concrete plans for implementation, several educational initiatives have not yet achieved the expected outcomes. Addressing these challenges will require stronger commitment and coordinated efforts from both educational institutions and education authorities at all levels.

3.2.2. Essential Conditions for the Effective Development and Implementation of School Education Plans

The effectiveness of developing and implementing school education plans depends not only on the quality of the plans themselves but also on a range of enabling conditions that support their implementation. In the context of the 2018 General Education Curriculum, which emphasizes the development of students' competencies and personal qualities, school education plans have become an important governance tool that enables schools to translate the national curriculum into educational practices tailored to local conditions. Therefore, ensuring the necessary conditions for developing and implementing school education plans is fundamental to improving the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning activities.

First, school leaders and teachers play a central role in this process. The leadership capacity of school administrators, together with teachers' professional competence, capacity for school-based curriculum development, ability to organize competency-based teaching and learning, and effectiveness in collaborating with other educational stakeholders, are critical determinants of both the quality of school education plans and their successful implementation. In addition, adequate school facilities, teaching and learning equipment, information technology infrastructure, and instructional resources constitute essential enabling conditions that allow schools to organize diverse, flexible, and innovative educational activities in accordance with the objectives of educational reform.

In addition to the internal conditions of schools, effective school education planning also depends on the support and guidance provided by education authorities, appropriate decentralization and school autonomy mechanisms, and close collaboration among schools, families, and local communities. Furthermore, continuous professional development for teachers and school leaders, the promotion of digital transformation, and the establishment of effective mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation, and periodic revision of school education plans based on implementation feedback are essential for enhancing the feasibility, flexibility, and overall effectiveness of school education plans. Therefore, a comprehensive assessment of these enabling conditions provides an important basis for identifying strengths, challenges, and appropriate strategies to improve the quality of developing and implementing school education plans in the current phase of educational reform.

According to current regulations, the key conditions required for the effective implementation of school education plans include school facilities and technological infrastructure, the teaching workforce, and educational policy support (Vietnam National Institute of Educational Sciences, 2022). Based on these criteria, the present study examined the extent to which these conditions have been met in practice. The following indicators provide an overview of the current status of these implementation conditions.

Regarding school facilities, the findings indicate that most schools have subject-specific classrooms (74%), sufficient classrooms to organize one full daily school shift (68%), and playgrounds or sports facilities (60%). However, facilities for semi-boarded education, classrooms for elective subjects, and outdoor teaching equipment remain inadequate, limiting schools' capacity to implement diverse educational activities.

Regarding the teaching workforce, approximately 65% of respondents indicated that their schools had sufficient teaching staff to implement school education plans. However, shortages remain in several subject areas, particularly Arts, Natural Sciences, and Experiential Activities. A major challenge is teachers' limited capacity to deliver integrated instruction and to design flexible educational content in accordance with the orientation of the new curriculum.

With respect to the factors influencing implementation effectiveness, approximately 85% of school leaders and teachers identified school facilities as the most significant factor affecting the implementation of school education plans, followed by teachers' professional competence and students' characteristics. Support from education authorities (91%), social and community organizations (62%), and parents (57%) was also regarded as important. Nevertheless, the level of coordination among these stakeholders has not yet been sufficiently consistent or effective.

Overall, the findings suggest that the conditions required for implementing school education plans have not yet been fully met. Although several implementation conditions have improved, a considerable proportion of respondents continued to report inadequacies in key areas. These findings indicate the need for stronger support and more coordinated interventions from education authorities at different administrative levels to enhance the conditions necessary for the effective implementation of school education plans.

3.3. School Education Plans in Selected Countries

To provide an overview of international trends in school education planning (referred to as school-based curricula in some countries), the institute-level research project (Project Code: V2022.13TX) examined the experiences of several countries, including the United Kingdom, South Korea, Finland, Russia, China, Singapore, and Thailand (Vietnam National Institute of Educational Sciences, 2022).

The experiences of these countries demonstrate that the development and implementation of school education plans constitute an important strategy for improving educational quality and addressing the diverse learning needs of students. Despite differences in their education systems, countries such as the United Kingdom, Finland, South Korea, Singapore, China, Thailand, and Russia all emphasize strengthening school autonomy in implementing the curriculum while ensuring compliance with national learning standards and the core requirements of the national curriculum.

A common feature across these education systems is that schools are granted substantial autonomy in selecting curriculum content, teaching methods, and instructional approaches that are appropriate to local conditions and students' needs. Teachers play a central role in the development and implementation of school-level educational programs and are continuously supported through professional development activities and professional learning networks.

In addition, many countries emphasize aligning school education plans with the needs of local communities and regional development priorities. The active involvement of parents, community organizations, and other stakeholders is widely regarded as a key factor in ensuring the feasibility and effectiveness of school education plans. At the same time, regular mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation, and revision are

established to ensure that school education plans remain responsive to students' developmental needs and evolving social contexts (Nguyen et al, 2022).

Drawing on these international experiences, several important lessons can be identified for Vietnam in developing and implementing school education plans. These include: (i) strengthening school autonomy and accountability in curriculum implementation; (ii) enhancing the capacity of school leaders and teachers to develop and implement school education plans; (iii) promoting greater participation of families and local communities in the planning process; and (iv) improving mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation, and continuous revision of school education plans to ensure their flexibility, responsiveness, and effectiveness in practice.

3.4. Recommendations for Enhancing the Effectiveness of Developing and Implementing School Education Plans at the Lower Secondary Education Level

- **Strengthen school governance in the development and implementation of school education plans.** Schools should enhance the governance of teaching and learning activities by integrating the management of human resources, school facilities, teaching equipment, and financial resources into the development and implementation of school education plans. Greater investment should be made in, and more effective use should be made of, existing school facilities to enable schools to organize teaching for more than six sessions per week, thereby ensuring greater flexibility and autonomy in curriculum implementation. In addition, education authorities should establish long-term policies to provide sustained investment in school infrastructure, educational technology, and extracurricular educational activities.
- **Place students' needs at the center of school education planning.** During the development and implementation of school education plans, schools should prioritize students' needs, interests, and developmental characteristics. This requires conducting regular needs assessments and working closely with parents and local communities to ensure that school education plans are responsive to students' learning and developmental needs. Educational activities should support students' holistic development across physical, emotional, intellectual, and aesthetic dimensions, thereby contributing to character formation and lifelong learning. Furthermore, creating a learning environment that encourages creativity, mutual respect, and collaboration will facilitate the effective implementation of school education plans.
- **Strengthen collaboration with key stakeholders.** Schools should actively collaborate with all relevant stakeholders, including teachers, parents, local communities, and educational organizations, to ensure the effective implementation of school education plans. Such collaboration can enhance shared responsibility, mobilize available resources, and create a supportive environment for achieving educational objectives.
- **Regularly monitor, evaluate, and revise school education plans.** School education plans should be reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that they continue to meet the evolving needs of students and

local communities. The evaluation process should incorporate appropriate assessment tools as well as feedback from key stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and students. Based on the evaluation results, schools should revise and improve their education plans whenever necessary to maximize their effectiveness and relevance.

- **Strengthen the professional capacity of school leadership and teachers.** An effective strategy for improving the development and implementation of school education plans is to establish a competent and professional school leadership team. Priority should be given to providing systematic training and professional development for school leaders and teachers on school education planning, together with the development and dissemination of practical guidance materials. In addition, opportunities for inter-school networking, professional exchange, and the sharing of best practices should be expanded to facilitate continuous improvement.
- **Promote digital transformation in educational management and teaching.** Schools should accelerate digital transformation in both teaching and school management while simplifying administrative procedures and reducing unnecessary paperwork. An integrated educational information system should be established to support the real-time monitoring, evaluation, and management of school education plans. Such a system would enable schools to make timely adjustments and continuously improve the implementation of their education plans based on reliable data and evidence.
- **Create a positive and innovative learning environment.** Schools should foster a learning environment that is engaging, inclusive, and conducive to innovation. This includes providing high-quality educational activities that respond to students' diverse learning needs and interests while supporting the development of essential personal competencies, such as communication skills, social and emotional competence, and responsibility. When students feel supported and engaged in a positive learning environment, they are more likely to fully develop their potential and maximize the educational opportunities provided through school education plans.
- **Integrate safe migration education and anti-human trafficking education into school education plans.** Schools should incorporate these topics into their annual education plans from the beginning of each academic year and implement them systematically through subject teaching, experiential learning activities, and life skills education. At the same time, greater emphasis should be placed on providing professional development for teachers and strengthening collaboration with relevant government agencies, community organizations, and other stakeholders to ensure effective implementation.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings indicate that the development and implementation of school education plans at the lower secondary education level have shown significant progress during the implementation of the 2018 General Education Curriculum. Schools have become more proactive in developing education plans that are responsive to local

conditions, thereby improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning activities and promoting the development of students' competencies and personal qualities. Nevertheless, the implementation process continues to face a number of challenges, particularly those related to school facilities, teaching equipment, teachers' professional capacity, and, most notably, their ability to deliver integrated instruction and incorporate emerging educational content into the curriculum.

The study also reveals that the effectiveness of school education plans is influenced by multiple factors, including school leadership and management capacity, teachers' professional competence, the availability of conditions necessary for curriculum implementation, and collaboration among schools, families, and local communities. These findings are consistent with international trends in school-based curriculum development, where school autonomy, teachers' active professional roles, and systematic mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement are widely recognized as key factors in ensuring the quality of curriculum implementation.

Based on these findings, this paper proposes several recommendations to enhance the development and implementation of school education plans at the lower secondary education level. These include strengthening the professional capacity of school leaders and teachers; improving school facilities, teaching equipment, and instructional resources; expanding school autonomy in educational planning; and promoting stronger engagement of families and local communities throughout the implementation process. These recommendations may serve as useful references for lower secondary schools implementing the 2018 General Education Curriculum and contribute to improving educational quality while supporting ongoing educational reform in Vietnam.

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