

A comparative research on the international classification of education (ISCED) 1997-2011 and the new structure of Vietnam education system

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ABSTRACT: *This article reflects a comparative analysis and assessment on structure of the education system of the countries, comparing structure of Vietnam national education system and ISCED 1997-2011(UNESCO), giving some basic orientation on Vietnam national education system appropriate to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011) and the Vietnamese National Qualifications Framework (VQF).*

KEYWORDS: Pre-school; primary education; secondary education; university; college.

→ Received 05/4/2020 → Revised manuscript received 27/5/2020 → Published 25/6/2020.

1. Introduction

Restructuring the national education system plays an important part in the comprehensive renovation process of the education system in Vietnam. Our research on the international standard classification of education (ISCED 97 and 2011) and the application of international experience in restructuring process of the national education system is, therefore, very necessary, contributing to the development of our national education system during the industrialization, modernization and international integration process.

2. A comparative analysis and assessment of the education system of different countries.

2.1. General features

Depending on the national development with their socio-economic, traditional and cultural features, different countries may have different educational structure systems. However, there are four main educational stages in all systems as follows:

- Kindergarten/pre-school
- Primary education
- Secondary education
- Higher education

In some countries such as Malaysia and Singapore, the post – secondary education does exist, in which the students may acquire pre-university education with a two-year junior college or three-year centralised institute course, or enrol in a vocational institution such as a polytechnic or the Institute of Technical Education (ITE), or specialised arts institutions [1].

These are four basic education stages classified basing on ages and characteristics of educational targets and educational contents at different stages. If pre-school is

for the children under 6 years old, which requires special care, nourishment and education of the family and society, the primary education is for the children who need the initial qualification from school, family and society to initiate, open their minds for integration into social life. This is the first popularization on education in all countries, usually called the compulsory education. The secondary education is for juvenile ages between 12 and 18, which includes junior and senior secondary education stages. The primary and junior-secondary education stages together create Basic Education, which often lasts for 9 years and is compulsory for children in many countries.

The Basic Education is a foundation for the learners to decide whether to go further with senior secondary education and secondary technical-vocational education or join the labour market. With these features, the secondary education includes different types of schools and different modes of training. However, in some countries such as England, Singapore, Russia, Korea, etc, the basic general education final grade is 11. Grade 12 is a pre-university education, with which the student can get a certificate for university entrance consideration (England, Singapore) or mainly learns optional subjects (60%) to prepare for post-secondary classification such as in Korea. University education is the highest level in the educational system, which graduates students with diploma, bachelor, master, PhD and post-PhD. This education stage provides 18 to 24-year-old learners with high qualifications in different social, scientific and technological fields.

Most of the education systems are classified with three key criteria: age, number of school years and training characteristics (target, content, types of degrees, etc). The

total number of school years from primary education to university and post-university (master, PhD) are within 20-22 years with the ages from 6 to 28.

2.2. Distinct features

Although the education stages have been basically unified in the education system in different countries under 4 key stages: pre-school, primary education, secondary education and university education, the classification of the education stages in accordance with ages, number of school years and title is different. In most of the countries, students start their primary education at 6 years old and study for six school years (grade 1 - grade 6), however, in some countries such as India, the Primary education includes only 5 years. Especially, the Indian education system contains an upper-primary education with grade 6 and 8, which combines with the primary education to form Elementary Education [2]. In the countries as China and Korea, the occupational education is provided soon after the Primary education [3] [4]. In New Zealand, the students start their primary education at the age of five, and the Primary school covers Years 1 to 8 if it is a 'full' primary school, or Years 1 to 6 if it is a 'contributing' primary school [6]. In Singapore, the Primary education is divided into two phases: 4 years of foundation and 2 years of orientation to meet the distribution demand soon after the Primary education [5]. The Primary education in New Zealand is divided into two phases: Junior 1 and 2, then Standard 1 – 4. In terms of the title, besides the popular term in English as Primary, some countries use another term as Elementary (as in the Philippines, Korea, America, India) with meaning as the compulsorily elementary education.

The Secondary Education presents diversification of the education and training system of the countries. In addition to Lower secondary education and Upper secondary education, the Secondary education includes Middle School and High School (such as in Korea) [7]. After the Lower Secondary School or Middle school, there are different types of education toward technical – occupational orientation besides the Secondary education such as vocational training schools, technical – occupational secondary schools, training centres and so on.

In many countries, the subsystem of post-secondary education does not belong to university education, typically Singapore, Malaysian education systems include many kinds of Post – Secondary Education such as colleges, technical and general technical schools.

The formation of post-secondary education [8] subsystem reflects high popularization and training demand of technicians with college qualification of Singapore – a country with economic, social, scientific,

hi-tech development in ASEAN.

A typical form of transferring between the Secondary education (Junior High School) and the University education in Japan is College of Technology [9] with five-year training and the ages of 15-20. These colleges recruit students from Junior High School or Senior High School and graduate them as technological technician after two to five-year training. It ensures connection and distribution of students towards technology orientation to create technological human resources for industries.

In most countries, the university education includes colleges, universities and post-universities. The intensive training has been developed for Post-Doctor research. However, in some countries, there is a difference between Research University and Professional University/ College. The Research Universities focus on academic orientation, combining the scientific research and hi-quality training, typically in the American education system, there is a segregation and diversification of forms of university education. The duration of university education has been shortened to 3 or 3.5 years for bachelor's degrees and 1-1.5 years for master's degrees.

In addition to the regular full-time education system with different educational stages from primary to university, there are subsystems such as the China's adult education [10], which is called the special education subsystem.

Technical and Further Education (TAFE) system of Australia provides many modes of training, which usually graduates learners with certificates I – IV and diploma. Actually, TAFE courses are structured in such a way that no matter what the learner's previous education level he/she can work the way up to advanced qualifications and even university degrees [11]. The regular education systems such as those in Taiwan and England include from primary education to open universities. Some Catholic and multi-racial countries such as Malaysia, and Indonesia, their education system is divided into general subsystems and the subsystems for ethnic groups and religions at the Primary Level.

3. A structural comparison of Vietnam education system and the ISCED of UNESCO 1997 and 2011

With a difference in history, culture, economics, political - social institution of each country, the education system in the world is diverse. The ISCED 1997 has been developed by UNESCO in 2011 (ISCED 2011) with some changes on structure of education levels and criteria on time, distribution and connection development orientation among levels. The following table shows the comparison between ISCED 97 and ISCED 2011 with structure of Vietnam national education system: [12] and [13].

Table 1: A structural comparison of Vietnam national education system and ISCED 1997 - 2011 (by UNESCO)

Level	ISCED 1997 (UNESCO)	Level	ISCED 2011 (UNESCO)	Vietnam National Education System
Level 0	Pre-school	0.1 0.2	Kindergarten Nursery	Nursery
Level I	Primary education (4 - 6 years)	Level 1	Primary education (4 - 7 years, normally 6 years)	Primary education (5 years)
Level II	Lower high education (second phase of the secondary education)	Level 2	Lower high education (2-5 years, normally 3 years)	Lower General Secondary education (4 years)
Level III	Upper high education	Level 3	Upper high education (2-5 years, normally 3 years)	Upper Secondary General education (3 years) - Professional Middle School (2-3 years)
Level IV	Non - University, Non tertiary education	Level 4	Non University, Non tertiary education Not less than 6 months	Professional Training Centre (0,5-1 years)
		Level 5	Short- term university (2-3 years)	Professional College (1,5-2 years) Pedagogical College (2-3 years)
Level V	First stage of tertiary education - Bachelor	Level 6	University (bachelor) (3-4 years)	University (bachelor) (3,5 - 4 years)
Level VI	Second stage of tertiary education - Master	Level 7	Master (1-3 years)	Master (1-2 years)
		Level 8	Doctor (3 years or more)	Doctor (3 years)

4. A structural comparison of the new educational system in Viet Nam and Vietnamese National Qualifications Framework.

The Vietnamese National Qualifications Framework includes 8 levels: Primary certificates I-II-III; Middle

school diploma: IV; College diploma: V; Higher Education degree: VI; Master’s degree: VII; and Doctorate: VIII [14].

Level 1 requires the minimum academic load of 5 credits. Students who successfully complete the training

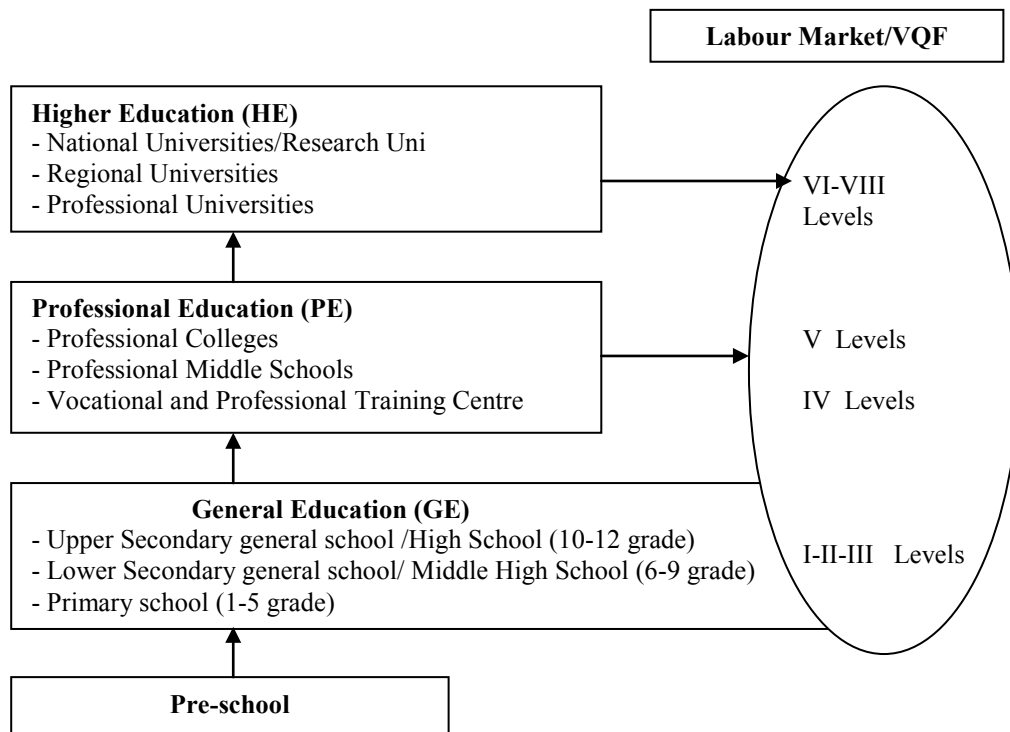


Figure 1: A comparison of the structure of the new educational system in Viet Nam and Vietnamese National Qualifications Framework (VQF). [15]

program and meet the requirements of Level 1 will be granted Primary certificate I.

Level 2 requires the minimum academic load of 15 credits. Students who successfully complete the training program and meet the requirements of Level 1 will be granted Primary certificate II.

Level 3 requires the minimum academic load of 25 credits. Students who successfully complete the training program and meet the requirements of Level 3 will be granted Primary certificate III.

Level 4 requires a minimum of 35 credits for an upper secondary general school diploma, 50 credits for a lower secondary general school diploma. Students who successfully complete the training program and meet the requirements of Level 4 will be granted Middle school diploma.

Level 5 requires the minimum academic load of 60 credits. Students who successfully complete the training program and meet the requirements of Level 5 will be granted College diploma.

Level 6 requires the minimum academic load of 120 credits. Students who successfully complete the training program and meet the requirements of Level 6 will be granted Bachelor's degree (University degree, Higher education degree).

Level 7 requires the minimum academic load of 60 credits for people with a bachelor's degree. Students who

successfully complete the training program and meet the requirements of Level 7 will be granted Master's degree.

Graduates from a university with a minimum of 150 credits, meeting the requirements of Level 7, will be recognized as acquiring the qualification equivalent to Level 7.

Level 8 requires a minimum of 90 additional credits for a holder of master's degree, and 120 credits for a holder of bachelor's degree. Students/ Researchers who successfully complete the training program and meet the requirements of Level 8 will be granted a doctorate.

The graduates from a university with Level 7 equivalent qualification, having completed a specialized training program with a minimum of 90 credits and meeting the requirements of Level 8 are recognized as acquiring the qualification equivalent to Level 8.

5. Conclusion

It is very important to do research on the structure of Vietnam education system. This paper has made a comparison and analysis between the current Vietnam education system and the ISCED 1997-2011 with an aim to propose a more suitable structure to the new Vietnam education system, which should be adaptable to the ISCED 2011 and the Vietnamese National Qualification Framework.

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