

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY AND ASSURANCE OF THE QUALITY OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

The article analyzes the educational situation of students with disabilities in Vietnam. The author reviews legal acts regarding inclusive education. He also presents research aiming to determine the preparation level of preschool and school teachers in four Vietnamese regions to work in inclusive education. The results of the survey were compared with data obtained through direct observation of teachers' work in inclusive settings. It turned out that the declared level of teachers' preparation for inclusive education did not coincide with their real competences. Teachers overstated their degree of preparation to work in inclusion with students with disabilities. The author formulates a number of recommendations that are intended to improve the quality of education for students with special educational needs in Vietnam.

Keywords: persons with disabilities, inclusive education, policy, quality, Vietnam

General education programs tend to focus on the dominant group (Blankenship, Lilly, 1981). This means that there is limited access to appropriate learning opportunities for persons with disabilities (PwD) in general education programs. The results of a survey on children's school non-attendance show that persons with disabilities account for one third of children excluded who do not have access to education.

Currently, Vietnam has about 1.3 million persons with disabilities (excluding the number of persons with developmental disabilities). Since the implementation of the policy of inclusive education in the past, the number of persons with disabilities attending preschools and general education settings has increased and we have been increasingly focusing on ensuring an appropriate quality of learning. As of the end of the school year 2015–2016, there were more than 600,000 students with disabilities, mostly at the primary level (over 400,000 children) and in preschools and junior high schools.

The contents of this article are as follows: (i) inclusive education is to ensure equal and appropriate learning opportunities for persons with disabilities; (ii) policy system and effective assessment of the current educational policy system for persons with disabilities in Vietnam; (iii) effectiveness of inclusive education policies for persons with disabilities in practice – an example of survey research in four districts of Thanh Hoa province, Vietnam, in 2017; (iv) discussion and recommendations to implement the policy of inclusive education effectively, ensuring learning quality for persons with disabilities in Vietnamese schools.

Inclusive education was chosen as the main educational mode to ensure equal and appropriate developmental opportunities for persons with disabilities in Vietnam

In the Law on Persons With Disabilities No. 51/2010/QH12 of June 17, 2010, Article 3 (Paragraphs 4, 5, and 6) mentions three forms of education for persons with disabilities, including: "4. Inclusive education is the main mode of education for persons with disabilities provided in general education settings;" "5. Special education is an educational mode for persons with disabilities provided in special institutions;" and "6. Semi-integrated education is a form of education that combines inclusive education and special education for persons with disabilities in general education settings" (National Assembly..., 2010).

Currently, persons with disabilities receive inclusive education mainly in pre-schools and general education settings and some of them study in special educational institutions.

Analyzing general education and special education, W. Stainback and S. Stainback (1992) stated that the existence of two modes of education easily leads to the phenomenon of separating learners into each education system, creating an imbalance of opportunity, integration, and development for learners because of their dependence on each system, and children are directly influenced by the intrinsic qualities of each mode of education. It is, therefore, necessary to have a functional interaction between the modes of education to ensure that persons with disabilities participate and enjoy equal educational opportunities. Inclusive education for persons with disabilities in general education institutions with individualized education programs that meet the physical, intellectual, and psychological characteristics of each child is an important solution for all children as it allows them to participate in an equal, inclusive, quality, and appropriate education. Implementing inclusive education not only creates the opportunity to benefit persons with disabilities, but first of all, it signifies a change in the approach to education for children with disabilities (Villa, Thousand, 2005; Stainback, Stainback, 1992).

Conducting research into the value of inclusive education and special education, Richard A. Villa and Jacqueline S. Thousand said that special education creates a sense of self-esteem that is not valued, and only fits into a special environment (Villa, Thousand, 2005). N. Kunc, R.A. Villa, and J.S. Thousand argued that there are many risks that children in special education settings face outside the school system, such as feeling embarrassed, alone, different, or inferior... In contrast, inclusive education helps learners in general, and persons with disabilities in particular, feel happy, proud, safe, comfortable, and accepted. They are active, important, and responsible, mature over time, etc. (after Kunc, 2000). S. Stainback and W. Stainback (1996) pointed out that persons with disabilities can participate fully in family and community life if they receive appropriate and effective support programs.

Along the way, Richard A. Villa and Jacqueline S. Thousand (2005) said that each child can learn and succeed, each child has different strengths and needs, and the variety of children will make school become rich. Children can overcome their

barriers and limitations as a participant and learner, collaborating and sharing with other members. The authors also argue that high school should: be willing to accept all students with disabilities; implement educational programs that ensure the balance of cultural and social literacy benefits for children; ensure integrated facilities, services, and support systems for persons with disabilities; and organize all activities involving persons with disabilities (Villa, Thousand, 2005).

Thus, it can be said that inclusive education is a way to provide equal and effective learning opportunities for persons with disabilities. To ensure quality in inclusive education for persons with disabilities, schools need to make sure that educational and supportive conditions meet the needs and engagement of each child.

The current system of educational policies for persons with disabilities and their implementation in Vietnam (Kunc, 2000)

(i) Current education policy system for persons with disabilities

In recent decades, Vietnam has made commitments to implement international treaties on the education of persons with disabilities. These include: the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991); the World Declaration on Education for All (1990); the World Education Forum in Dakar (2000) with the Declaration on Education for All through the adoption of the Dakar Framework for Action; the United Nations Millennium Declaration; the International Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities (signed by the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in 2007 and ratified in November 2014).

On the basis of these commitments, Vietnam issued a series of legal documents on the implementation of education policy for persons with disabilities and directly related to the rights of persons with disabilities - mainly after the Law on Persons With Disabilities (2010) was introduced. The most important documents are: Regulations on Inclusive Education for Persons With Disabilities No. 23/2006/QĐ-Moet; Law on Persons With Disabilities No. 51/2010/QH12; Decree 28/2012/ND-CP adopted by the government relating to details and guidelines for the implementation of the Law on Persons With Disabilities; Inter-Ministerial Circular No. 58/2012/TTLT-Moet-Molisa, which lists conditions and procedures for the establishment, operation, suspension of operation, reorganization, and dissolution of the Centers of Support Development for Inclusive Education; Inter-Ministerial Circular No. 42/2013/TTLT-Moet-Molisa-Mof, which regulates policies for persons with disabilities; Project aiming to support persons with disabilities in the period 2012-2020 No. 1019/QĐ-TTg, launched in 2012; Inter-Ministerial Circular No. 37/2012/TTLT-Molisa-Moh-Moet on determination of severity of disability by the disability determination council; Inter-Ministerial Circular No. 19/TTLT-Moet-Moha, launched in 2016, which provides the code and criteria for the occupational title of Educational Support Worker for persons with disabilities in public educational institutions; Circular No. 03/2018/TT-Moet dated 29th of January 2018 on Inclusive Education; Decision No. 338/QĐ-Moet dated 30th of January 2018 promulgating the plan for educating persons with disabilities for the period 2018-2020; etc.

In particular, the Prime Minister issued Decision No. 1100/QĐ-TTg on June 21st, 2016, ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities.

Educational policy for people with disabilities specifies four areas of action:

- 1) Implementing inclusive education for persons with disabilities; developing curricula, materials, and research; providing materials, equipment, and teaching aids specifically for the education of persons with disabilities;
- 2) Developing training programs and materials and providing professional training for managers, teachers, and educational support workers for persons with disabilities participating in education for persons with disabilities;
- 3) Strengthening the capacity of the Centers of Support Development for Inclusive Education;
- 4) Researching into the development and dissemination of a common sign language to be used throughout the country; continuing to develop and refine the sign language for general education.

The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) is also working to develop a plan for the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities in accordance with the Prime Minister's Decision.

(ii) Assessment of the implementation of education policy for persons with disabilities in Vietnam

The assessment of the implementation of education policy for persons with disabilities is based on the results of the annual support missions of the Steering Committee of Education for children with disabilities and children in disadvantaged areas (MOET) in localities, and refers to research results obtained by units, organizations, and individuals (Ministry of Education and Training..., 2013; Vietnam Association for..., 2016; Vietnamese Encyclopedia, 1995).

The assessment of the implementation of education policy for persons with disabilities recently yielded the following findings:

- a) Positive points in the implementation of legal documents:
 - Some education and training departments have statistics on the number of persons with disabilities at school age (preschool and high school). However, this is the number of persons with disabilities who are provided with intervention and treatment and who attend schools in the area. For instance, according to Thai Nguyen Provincial Department of Education and Training, as of 30/10/2016, the province had 1,654 persons with disabilities, including 1,109 students in primary schools, i.e. 67.05 percent of the total number; Dak Lak Provincial Department of Education and Training annually produces statistics on each type of disability, and the total number of persons with disabilities in the province is 1,746, including preschool – 356 (pre-k: 93, kindergarten: 263) (Vietnam Association for..., 2016).
 - Local departments are trying to implement their policies for persons with disabilities and related beneficiaries in accordance with state regulations. The Ministry of Education and Training is demonstrating its efforts in promoting the development and organization of the Centers of Support Development for Inclusive Education (Inter-Ministerial Circular..., 2012); implementing Article 7, Clause 2 of Decree No. 28/2012/ND-CP dated 10/4/2012; guiding the implementation of school-year tasks for all levels; providing training and professional development for managers and teachers in inclusive education.

- Departments cooperate in implementing activities to support persons with disabilities in general. For example, the Department of Education and Training cooperates with the Department of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs in implementing inclusive education, supporting special schools in cultural activities, recreation, or camps for persons with disabilities in Suoi Tien; it cooperates with the Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism to organize events for persons with disabilities; it also cooperates with the health sector to provide medical check-ups for persons with disabilities; etc. (Vietnam Association for..., 2016). At the same time, the education and training sector is actively taking part in the adjustment and supplementation of Inter-Ministerial Circular No. 37/2012/TTLT-Molisa-Moh-Mof-Moet.
- b) Some challenges to the implementation of legal documents:
 - The Law on Persons With Disabilities stipulates that there are six basic forms of disability; however, there are some forms of developmental disabilities, such as autism spectrum disorders and learning disability, and these new forms of disability are not included in the legal documents. Therefore, people with autism spectrum disorders or with learning disability are not entitled to social and educational support. Local authorities can not provide support to persons with disabilities unless explicitly stated in legal documents.
 - The coordination between departments is not very effective, each department concentrates only on the performance of tasks assigned vertically. In particular, there are differences in the decentralization of management and the organization, direction, and supervision of the implementation of legal documents in the sectors, which leads to difficulties and ineffective coordination. Besides, the understanding levels of commune officials are limited to implementing documents and confirming the disability; they are also unable to understand and determine what intellectual disability or developmental disability is.

Thus, due to the above constraints and challenges, the implementation of education policies for persons with disabilities is not sufficient. Although there are clear regulations on the rights of teachers and persons with disabilities, most of the localities have not yet implemented them, including some that are fit in terms of economic and social conditions to do this. The access to the rights of persons with disabilities has many barriers: a) parents of persons with disabilities are not fully aware of their right to education; b) teachers and schools have not been guided and provided with essential resources and services to support education for persons with disabilities; c) managers and leaders have not yet been guided in setting plans and supporting their implementation; d) the community and social organizations have not really taken the lead in monitoring the implementation of policies and helping to advocate for persons with disabilities and their families.

Effectiveness of inclusive education policies for persons with disabilities in practice – An example of survey research in four districts of Thanh Hoa province, Vietnam

(Nguyen Xuan Hai, Le Thi Thuy Hang, 2017)

A survey on the status of inclusive education for persons with disabilities was conducted from 31/10/2017 to 22/11/2017 in 30 communes of four districts (Tinh Gia, Thach Thanh, Ngoc Lac, and Nga Son) in Thanh Hoa province (each district has two preschools, two primary schools, two secondary schools, and one disability certification board to provide initial assessments of the effectiveness of inclusive education policies for persons with disabilities in practice).

The results of the survey

Regarding the number of persons with disabilities attending and not attending school – all levels

Table 1 shows the number of school-age children who attend and do not attend school in four districts (preschools, primary schools, and secondary schools).

Table 1

The number of people with disabilities (PwD) at preschool and school age in four districts

Level of education	Students with disabilities at preschool and school age		
	Do not attend school	Attend school	The rate of PwD who do not attend school (%)
Preschool	6	26	23.08
Primary school	15	66	22.73
Secondary school	27	48	56.25
Total	48	140	34.29

The results of the survey showed that the proportion of persons with disabilities who do not attend school in the total number of persons with disabilities in 30 communes in the four districts is 34.29 percent, which means 65.71 percent of persons with disabilities go to school. This proportion is similar to the proportion of persons with disabilities in the same age group at school age who are currently enrolled in educational institutions nationwide (about 58%).

The proportion of persons with disabilities who do not attend secondary school is the highest, accounting for 56.25 percent, followed by preschool with 23.08 percent, and primary school with 22.73 percent. The results are consistent with the reality in other schools where more persons with disabilities are unable to continue their education to higher levels. People with intellectual disabilities are the largest group of children with disabilities attending school, 27/140, approximately 19.28 percent. The number of children with hearing and visual impairments attending school is the lowest, no deaf children study in primary or secondary schools.

Teachers' knowledge and skills of inclusive education

Most of the teachers have a general knowledge of inclusive education acquired during general education courses of just a few hours per year; 100.0% of the teachers in the surveyed schools have not received training in inclusive education,

which results in not enough knowledge and basic skills to organize the integration activities of teaching and learning for students with disabilities at school.

Table 2

The number of teachers that have received training in inclusive education (survey information from four districts)

Districts	Certificate (>3 months)		General knowledge of inclusive education		Untrained		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Tinh Gia	0	0.0	729	33.14	1471	66.86	2200
Thach Thanh	0	0.0	0	0.0	1539	100.0	1539
Ngoc Lac	0	0.0	1362	79.98	341	20.02	1703
Nga Son	0	0.0	15	100.0	0	0.0	15
Total	0	0.0	2106	38.59	3351	61.41	5457

Preschool teachers' knowledge and skills of early intervention

We conducted a survey on early intervention knowledge, skills, and education and teaching inclusive education among teachers at the preschool level and teachers at primary and secondary schools. The results are shown in the tables 3 and 4.

Table 3

Early intervention skills of preschool teacher

Types of skills	Numbers of teachers on each level										Total
	Very high		High		Average		Low		Very low		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Identify the type of disability	5	4.95	65	64.36	20	19.8	11	10.89	0	0.0	101
Diagnosis and assessment of persons with disabilities	3	2.97	61	60.4	27	26.73	9	8.91	1	0.99	101
Set up early intervention goals for persons with disabilities	3	2.97	36	35.64	45	44.55	17	16.83	0	0.0	101
Identify early intervention activities	4	3.96	41	40.59	29	28.71	27	26.73	0	0.0	101
Early intervention for persons with disabilities	4	3.96	42	41.58	33	32.67	22	21.78	0	0.0	101
Assess the progress of persons with disabilities	4	3.96	50	49.5	26	25.74	21	20.79	0	0.0	101
Use equipment and early intervention devices for persons with disabilities	4	3.96	35	34.65	34	33.66	15	14.85	13	12.87	101
Family counseling for early intervention	4	3.96	47	46.53	15	14.85	17	16.83	18	17.82	101

Skills in early intervention, care, and education for persons with disabilities in preschool are listed based on the survey.

As many as 101 preschool teachers in 8 preschools were surveyed. The majority of teachers rated themselves at the 'high' level for two skills: the ability to recognize a child's disability (64.36%) and the ability to diagnose and assess disability (60.4%). The lowest item at the 'high' level was the ability to use the equipment for early intervention for persons with disabilities (34.65%). In addition, there were many teachers who self-evaluated their skills as 'low': the highest was the ability to identify early intervention activities for children with disabilities (26.73%), and the diagnosis and assessment of persons with disabilities (8.91%) was the lowest. Only a very small number of teachers evaluated these skills at the 'very high' or 'very low' level.

However, conducting research in preschools, we found out that many teachers were not aware of the concept of early intervention, what the purpose of early intervention is, its content, process, and steps.

Table 4

Integrated teaching and learning skills of primary and secondary school teachers

Types of Skills	Numbers of teachers on each level										Total
	Very high		High		Average		Low		Very low		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Determining the abilities and educational needs of persons with disabilities	1	0.53	42	22.22	72	38.1	65	34.39	9	4.76	189
Developing an individualized education plan	0	0.0	47	24.87	79	41.8	56	29.63	7	3.7	189
Adjusting educational activities and inclusive teaching	0	0.0	49	25.93	70	37.04	64	33.86	6	3.17	189
Organizing educational activities and inclusive teaching	0	0.0	50	26.46	78	41.27	59	31.22	2	1.06	189
Consultation on care and education of persons with disabilities for related subjects	2	1.06	58	30.69	68	35.98	60	31.75	1	0.53	189
Assessing the progress of persons with disabilities	2	1.06	87	46.03	51	26.98	49	25.93	0	0.0	189
Using means and equipment of inclusive teaching	0	0.0	9	4.76	88	46.56	81	42.86	11	5.82	189
Family counseling on education and inclusive teaching	2	1.06	72	38.1	75	39.68	37	19.58	3	1.59	189

In a survey of 202 primary and secondary school teachers into inclusive teaching and education skills, 13 teachers did not answer the questions, so the total number of questionnaires was 189/202.

The results of the survey showed that most of the primary and secondary teachers rated these skills at the 'average' level. Specifically, the ability to use means and equipment of inclusive teaching constituted 46.56 percent of the 'average' level and had the highest ratings compared to other skills. At this level, the ability to assess the progress of persons with disabilities constituted 26.98 percent and had the lowest ratings compared to other skills.

In addition, many teachers self-evaluated their skills at the 'high' level, in which the ability to assess the progress of persons with disabilities had the highest rate – 46.03%. The teachers said that this is their daily routine and also compulsory work within the teacher's teaching process. The ability to use means and equipment of inclusive teaching for primary and secondary school teachers was rated lowest at the 'high' level (4.76%).

The results of the survey assessing skills in teaching and integrating students with disabilities through observation of the teachers in inclusive classrooms show that the teachers' self-evaluation of their skills and the observation results do not match. Most of the teachers are not prepared for work in inclusive classrooms: they do not have knowledge of students with disabilities (do not understand them), they lack skills necessary to teach them, they do not know methodology of inclusive teaching. Persons with disabilities are not well positioned and comfortable in the classroom, so there is less opportunity to participate in learning activities. Most persons with disabilities do not have individual education plans. Teachers do not have inclusive teaching plans. Teachers do not know and do not use methods to adjust teaching content for persons with disabilities. Teachers sometimes pay excessive attention to their students with disabilities and sometimes ignore them. Also, teachers and other children in the class discriminate against persons with disabilities (when a student with disability speaks, the whole class laughs, but the teacher does not react, etc.).

It can be seen that although many persons with disabilities are currently attending the preschools, primary and secondary schools surveyed, the teachers are not prepared to work with them in inclusive settings.

Discussion and concluding suggestions

The results of the study on the effectiveness of inclusive education policies for persons with disabilities in preschools, primary schools, and junior secondary schools in four districts of Thanh Hoa province showed that: (i) most children with disabilities have been mobilized to attend school and are included in all levels of education. There is still a small number of children who do not attend school due to severe disability. The proportion of persons with disabilities who do not attend school at the secondary school level is the highest compared to the primary and preschool levels; (ii) all the schools have implemented inclusive education, but are not ready in terms of staff qualifications, facilities, equipment, and furniture to teach children with disabilities and the educational policies are

still ineffective in practice, etc.; (iii) the teachers and schools have demonstrated professional responsibility, enthusiasm, love, and care for children with disabilities. There is a lack of knowledge and skills in inclusive education; therefore, children with disabilities do not really receive high quality intervention, support, care, and inclusive education that is adapted to their abilities and needs.

In order to ensure high quality education for children with disabilities, inclusive schools need to update legal documents and timely implement the quality education requirements of the Ministry of Education and Training for children with disabilities, according to which schools need to: (i) properly implement the goals of inclusive education; (ii) ensure that all children with disabilities are included in inclusive education in educational institutions; (iii) provide education that meets all the needs and abilities of individuals with disabilities; and (iv) develop support systems for inclusive education for persons with disabilities in and out of schools.

Specific solutions:

- Developing a plan for implementing inclusive education to ensure the achievement of the school's objectives and priorities for inclusive education for children with disabilities. Identifying and focusing on resources for the implementation of priorities relating to inclusive education for children with disabilities for each school year in accordance with the reality of the school and local situation, expressed in specific performance indicators, specifically: (i) identifying the number of school-age children with disabilities; (ii) identifying the educational needs of persons with disabilities, developing individual education plans and organizing intervention and educational support; (iii) identifying the capacity and professional needs of managers and teachers working with people with disabilities, developing plans/programs including persons with disabilities in the education process; (iv) identifying the conditions to ensure the implementation of inclusive education, developing a plan for mobilizing resources for investment in physical facilities, teaching aids, and effective resources for educational support workers for the implementation of inclusive education for persons with disabilities.
- Strengthening the capacity of the staff to meet the educational needs of persons with disabilities: (i) selecting and building a network of key teachers for inclusive education; (ii) organizing professional development for staff who meet the requirements of inclusive education for persons with disabilities; (iii) effectively using the network of professionals trained in inclusive education to re-train and hold consultations with all the staff at schools, they are also nuclear members in education and training for persons with disabilities; (iv) organizing inclusive teaching contests, making and using equipment and inclusive teaching equipment to enhance sharing and learning opportunities among school teachers and being respectful to persons who have enthusiasm and capacity in inclusive education for persons with disabilities.
- Improving the quality of education for persons with disabilities: (i) all students with disabilities are properly included in the education process, their potential is fully understood, individual educational plans are developed and effectively implemented; (ii) teachers who teach in inclusive classrooms focus

on adapting the curriculum and teaching methods so that they are appropriate for persons with disabilities to ensure favorable opportunities and their participation in all activities; (iii) a friendly, barrier-free, and effective work and communication environment is created for persons with disabilities; (iv) equipment, facilities, and toys that are suitable for the learning needs of persons with disabilities are prepared and used; (v) children are assessed based on their individual education plans.

- Paying attention to the development of support for inclusive education for persons with disabilities and the coordination between schools and social services in inclusive education:

In the development of inclusive education support for persons with disabilities, it is necessary to: (i) identify the need for inclusive education for persons with disabilities; (ii) build and develop the operational capacity of the Inclusive Education Support Division at schools; (iii) build an inclusive education support network for persons with disabilities in schools with a professional link to the Centers of Support Development for Inclusive Education at the provincial level.

In the development of coordinated activities between schools and social services in inclusive education for persons with disabilities, it is necessary to: (i) strengthen the organization of inclusive education for persons with disabilities at schools and in the community; (ii) cooperate with local authorities, organizations, society, and community to organize community events and activities involving children and persons with disabilities; (iii) strengthen cooperation with organizations and individuals to mobilize resources in inclusive education for persons with disabilities.

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POLITYKA EDUKACJI WŁĄCZAJĄCEJ A ZAPEWNIENIE JAKOŚCI NAUCZANIA DZIECI NIEPEŁNOSPRAWNYCH

Streszczenie

Artykuł poświęcony jest analizie sytuacji edukacyjnej uczniów niepełnosprawnych w Wietnamie. Autor dokonuje przeglądu aktów prawnych dotyczących edukacji włączającej, a także przedstawia badania, których celem było określenie poziomu przygotowania nauczycieli przedszkolnych oraz szkolnych z czterech regionów kraju do pracy w ramach edukacji inkluzyjnej. Wyniki badań porównano z danymi zgromadzonymi poprzez bezpośrednią obserwację nauczycieli pracujących w placówkach włączających. Okazało się, że deklarowany poziom przygotowania z zakresu edukacji inkluzyjnej nie pokrywa się z rzeczywistymi kompetencjami nauczycieli, którzy zawyżali stopień swojego doświadczenia w pracy inkluzyjnej z uczniami niepełnosprawnymi. Autor formułuje szereg zaleceń, których celem jest poprawa jakości edukacji uczniów ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi w Wietnamie.

Słowa kluczowe: osoby niepełnosprawne, edukacja włączająca, polityka, jakość, Wietnam