

## CONCEPTION OF TEXTBOOK REORIENTATION AND MODERNISATION IN VIETNAM AFTER 2015



**Тран Дук Туан** – доктор педагогічних наук, доцент, директор Науково-дослідного інституту освітніх засобів інформації та підручникотворення, видавництва «Освіта В'єтнаму», Центру досліджень безперервної освіти Ханойського національного педагогічного університету. Фахівець у галузі проблем безперервної освіти, підручникотворення, освітніх засобів інформації, освіти у сфері туризму, безперервної та інноваційної географічної освіти, питань створення підручника з географії, дидактики географії.

In Vietnam textbooks, one of the most important instruments of organizing teaching and learning activities at schools are observed. They serve as a tool and a tutor, a guidebook and a gauge in the school classrooms and play an important role in making the leap from teacher's intentions and plans to the classroom activities, by making lesson content available, organizing it, and setting out learning tasks in a form designed to be appealing to students.

Vietnam is now intensively preparing to undertake a school reform after 2015 and pays great attention to innovate and modernize the school curriculum and textbooks. To design and development new school textbooks with high quality, at the moment educational managers and scientist, textbook writers and publishers are trying the best to reorient and modernize textbooks in Vietnam after 2015 so that new textbooks can effectively support the achievement of the main goals of the school education reform in Vietnam after 2015. In this context, in the paper, the main issues of reorienting and modernizing textbooks in Vietnam after 2015 as well as the key standards and the basic criteria for the new textbook revision and modernization will be focused and presented.

**Key word:** Textbook reorientation and modernization, curriculum & textbook reform in Vietnam, textbook

## 1. Introduction

Textbooks are always a specific type of books for education and study in the comprehensive schools. However, attention to textbooks is spread beyond schools. Not only teachers, educators and students but also the whole society pays attention to textbooks because it is students who need the best textbooks so that today's young generations will become our nation's rightful owners in the twenty-first century.

Nowadays, textbooks are not only vital teaching tools for transferring knowledge which humanity has acquired to young generations but also they are essential educational tools for the sustainable development and the promotion of friendship and understanding among peoples and countries all over the world. Therefore, "Textbooks are one of the most important educational inputs. Textbook contents reflect basic ideas about a national culture and are often the cause of cultural debate and controversy." UNESCO states: "Textbooks are one of the decisive factors affecting educational quality of a nation besides others such as teachers, educational organisation system and educational curriculum system."

Despite great strides in the revision of textbook contents, structures and designs compared with those before 2000, current textbooks in Vietnam have revealed many limitations and shortcomings, failing to meet the new requirements for Vietnam's industrialization, modernization and international integration in the future. Therefore, there a pressing need to revise general education textbooks fundamentally and comprehensively after 2015 exists. With this end in view, two crucial questions arising which need an immediate answer are: From what viewpoints and what visions will post-2015 education textbooks have to be revised and modernised and what basic requirements from post-2015 Vietnam's schools will they have to meet?

## 2. Main trends in curriculum and textbook reorientation and modernization in the world

*First and foremost, reorienting and modernizing curriculums and school textbooks require new, modern educational visions and philosophies.* These days, for many countries in the world, especially the developed ones, visions and philosophies of education for sustainable development, learner-centered education and educational technology are the orientation towards and the factors that control the whole process of reorientation and modernization of curriculums and school textbooks.

South Korean education highlights the student's philosophies and objectives of development, promoting good standards and values, personalities, skills, civic responsibilities and humane thinking, which are essential for them to live independently and for the benefits of their country and humanity. Finnish education is committed to educating people with new visions to build and develop a knowledgeable society. China considers morality enhancement, creativity promotion

and practical competence as major objectives in the education and training for those who have been building socialism.

Top priorities in education in Québec, Canada, are to develop the students' core capabilities (awareness capability, methodical capability, social and personal capability, communication capability...) and the self-control capability to preserve the national identity. With this end in view, teachers are encouraged and supported to use textbooks and other learning materials effectively to apply teaching methods in line with student-centered approach and education for sustainable development, such as reproductions, service projects, group cooperation and interactions, specializations and teaching methods related to everyday life.

Australian new curriculums and textbooks are committed to promoting equity and encouraging educational endeavours to “*support young Australians to develop general capabilities<sup>1</sup> to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens.*” Teaching contents are divided into eight learning zones and three priority modules throughout the zones.

Singapore considers curriculums and textbooks as principal tools for shaping those who are confident, active and responsible with such basic values as having personalities, knowing how to manage their own well-being and society, being able to communicate and cooperate, thinking independently, being innovative and being able to apply their knowledge in practice. Comprehensive education curriculums are designed and implemented with a view to strengthening the integration of different subjects (such as Science and Technology...)

The tendency to design curriculums and produce textbooks towards capability development has been emerging in many countries, especially developed ones, to meet the requirements and challenges of modern society (Roegier, 2008). Current curriculums and textbooks are based on an approach to include contents which focus on the increasing acquisition of basic human scientific knowledge in such separate subjects as Mathematics, Physics, History and Geography and improve students' capability of memorization and revision while new curriculums and textbooks are designed according to an output approach which focuses on the students' application capability, especially their sustainable development. These core capabilities are essential for students, after school graduation, to be able to live sustainably and participate in socio-economic activities actively. Application capability is fundamental in choosing textbook contents for teachers to create educational conditions and organize learning activities. The predominant features of curriculums and textbooks designed and developed on a capability approach are as follows:

– *The top objective of curricula and textbooks is to develop application capability.* Capabilities should be understood as a combination of knowledge,

<sup>1</sup> Seven general capabilities Australian education takes into consideration for development are: literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT), critical and creative thinking, ethical understanding, intercultural understanding and personal and social capability.

skills, methods, values, motivations and behaviours. Both specialized capabilities in each subject and common (trans-subject) capabilities are given equal attention for development;

– *New curriculums and textbooks will create favourable conditions and chances for the students to apply their knowledge and skills effectively with people and environment in daily life with friendly attitudes, motivations and feelings*). Study results rely mainly on students' participation in the learning process, so students have a leading role in their study.

– *Subjects' scientific logic is not the only element to affect the content, structure and design of curriculums and textbooks*. Orienting and organizing learning activities, motivating, getting students' interest and pleasure in their study as well as considering establishing different connections<sup>1</sup> have become important factors which orient and control modern curriculum and textbook development.

Curriculum and textbook production and development based on integration and interdisciplinary viewpoints are also a dynamic growing trend in many countries, especially in developed ones. National curriculum frameworks from Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Finland, Germany, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, the UK... emphasize such general capabilities as literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) as learning tools in all subjects. In many developed countries like the USA, the UK, Germany, Sweden, Australia and some developing countries like Singapore, South Korea..., in their secondary school, there are curriculums and textbooks for such integrated subjects as social study, environment study, natural study or interdisciplinary such as History-Geography or Geography-Politics-Civic Education. In integrated curriculums and textbooks, contents of different subjects are designed in learning zones where contents, structures and presentation of new textbooks are not restricted to the knowledge, skills and modules of each subject, but they are produced to present inter-subject and trans-subject matters and life skills, values and general capabilities... To facilitate the development of teaching integrated subjects and trans-subjects, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, Switzerland, Turkey, the UK and so on, have revised contents, structures and presentation of textbooks to encourage and assist teachers to organize active, cooperative and interactive learning activities and have helped students adopt learning and self-teaching methods as well as assess their own study results at the same time.

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<sup>1</sup> From the viewpoint of Education for sustainable development (ESD), important combinations which have to be formed during the teaching and learning process are spatial combinations (global thinking, local actions), combinations of the past, present and future, combinations of ecology, economics and sociology.

### 3. Conception and new vision of textbooks in Vietnam after 2015

*The reorientation and modernization of textbooks usually originate from the revision of vision and conception of textbooks.* This can be clearly seen in some developed countries like Germany, the UK, France, Sweden, the USA, Canada... and in some developing countries like Singapore and South Korea. Let's take an example of Sweden. According to Prof. Leif Oestman from Uppsala University in Sweden, Swedish textbooks used to be designed and compiled from the merely scientific viewpoints with such academic contents, structures and life values that are presented in a monotonous and uninteresting way, which made it difficult for students to understand.

In recent decades, there have been many basic innovations in the conception of developing curriculums and compiling textbooks in Sweden. New textbooks have been designed from the viewpoints of applied sciences towards education for sustainable development and educational technology in which presentation of knowledge and skills is in line with and related directly to students' daily lives. Moreover, the inclusion of life values in textbooks, the pedagogic, attractive and sustainable features of textbooks... have been specially taken into consideration. As a result, in recent years, Sweden has published many textbooks of high quality, attractive design and profound practical features which are up to teachers, parents and students' expectations.

*One of the most important bases to shape new vision and conception of producing post-2015 textbooks is the key development tendency of Vietnamese education after 2015.* Following the trend towards the acceleration of industrialization and modernization with the orientation to the sustainable development and the promotion of global integration, major development trends of Vietnamese education after 2015 are to enhance student-centered education approach, speed up application of educational technology and promote education for the sustainable development. Therefore, Vietnam should adopt a new vision of post-2015 textbooks which is based on the most important viewpoints of modern education: student-centered education, educational technology and education for the sustainable development. These should be regarded as dominant viewpoints which orientate and control the entire process of textbook production and development in Vietnam after 2015. Therefore, our viewpoints and vision for new textbooks after 2015 are as follows:

- Firstly, new school textbooks shall be an effective tool for employing student-centered approach aiming at increasing the cooperative and the interactive activities in teaching and learning;
- Secondly, new school textbooks shall be a product of educational technology as well as a teaching tool to organize class activities according to the viewpoint of educational technology;
- Thirdly, new school textbooks shall be a useful tool of education for sustainability so as to spread the ideas and values of sustainable development and educate school students according to the viewpoints of education for sustainable development.

On the basis of the above vision and conception of textbooks, 5 standards and 10 basic criteria for textbook revision and modernization have been set. These are used to determine what makes a high quality textbook compiled from the viewpoints of textbook reorientation and modernization (See Figure 1 and Table 1).

Figure 1. Conception, vision and criteria of textbook compilation

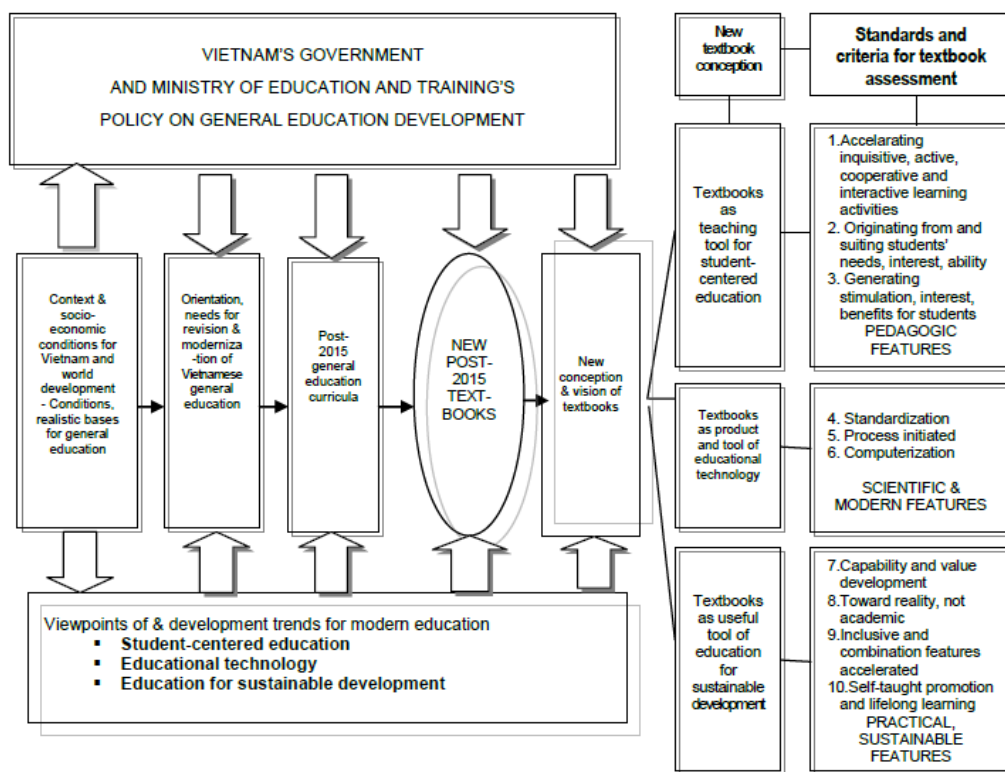


Table 1. Standards and criteria for textbook reorientation and modernization

Standards	Criteria
Pedagogic feature	1. <b>Promoting learning activities:</b> Orientate and facilitate teachers in designing learning activities.
	2. <b>Being suitable for students:</b> Contents and design of textbooks, especially of all units, shall base on and suit students' needs, interest and levels.
	3. <b>Motivating and bringing about benefits:</b> Textbooks, especially all units therein, shall be able to motivate and bring about interest benefits for students in their learning process.



Modern features	4. <b>Standardization:</b> Knowledge, skills, methods and values presented in textbooks must be standardized. Students must acquire them.
	5. <b>Proceduralization:</b> improving the comprehension process from the textbook contents via learning activities, especially in terms of skills and methods.
	6. <b>Computerization:</b> Establishing and strengthening connections between the exploitation of knowledge in textbooks and access to computers, CD-ROM and the Internet.
Practical and sustainable features	7. <b>Developing application capability:</b> Contents, structures and design of new textbooks are to facilitate students' creation, enrichment of knowledge and development of skills as well as attitudes and behaviors.
	8. <b>Being in line with reality:</b> Selecting practical contents, knowledge, skills and values close to students' daily lives , assisting them to put what they learn into practice.
	9. <b>Promoting integration and connection:</b> Incorporating and integrating sustainability contents and values into textbooks, designing units from the viewpoints of education for sustainability and fostering presentation of connections (relating to space, time and other fields...)
	10. <b>Promoting self-teaching and lifelong learning:</b> Producing textbook components to support students in their self-teaching practice and lifelong learning capacity.

### 3. Conclusion

Textbooks have always been a specific type of books attracting the attention of not only teachers, educators and students but also the whole society. As an essential teaching means and a key tool for the sustainable development education, *textbooks are considered as one of the decisive factors affecting educational quality of a nation besides others such as teachers, educational organisation system and educational curriculum system.*

Current textbooks for general education in Vietnam have revealed many shortcomings and failed to meet the new requirements for the process of industrialization, modernization and global integration of Vietnam in the future. Therefore, this arises the need to revise general education textbooks fundamentally and comprehensively after 2015. With this end in view, the most important thing is to revise and modernize post-2015 textbooks from the viewpoints of modern education, such as student-centered approach, educational technology and education for sustainable development.

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### КОНЦЕПЦІЯ ПЕРЕОРІЄНТАЦІЇ ТА МОДЕРНІЗАЦІЇ ПІДРУЧНИКА У В'ЄТНАМІ З 2015 РОКУ

У статті розглядаються найважливіші особливості організації навчальної діяльності, висвітленої у в'єтнамських підручниках, котрі є інструментом навчання та оцінювання роботи в класі. Крім того, посібники відіграють важливу роль у втіленні у життя плану уроку, складеного вчителем, забезпечуючи змістовність занять та надаючи учням можливість виконувати ті завдання, що найбільше відповідають їх потребам.

На сьогодні В'єтнам інтенсивно готується до проведення шкільної реформи у 2015 р., а тому особлива увага приділяється оновленню та модернізації навчального плану та шкільних підручників. З метою розроблення та створення оновлених високоякісних підручників для школи керівники освітніх інституцій та науковці намагаються максимально переорієнтувати й модернізувати підручники, котрі використовуватимуться у В'єтнамі з 2015 р., з метою їх сприяння ефективному досягненню основних цілей шкільної реформи у В'єтнамі. У цьому контексті представлено головні проблеми переорієнтації та модернізації підручників у В'єтнамі, починаючи з 2015 р., а також ключові стандарти та базові критерії перегляду й модернізації навчальних книг.

**Ключові слова:** переорієнтація та модернізація підручника, навчальний план та реформування підручників В'єтнаму.