

Reflecting Socio-Political Needs in Education Policy-Making: An Exploratory Study of Vietnam's Key Education Reforms (1945-2017)

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Abstract : This paper aims to contribute to the understanding of key education reforms in Vietnam from 1945 to 2017, which reflects an evolution of socio-political needs of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam throughout this period. It explores the contextual conditions, motivations and ambitions influencing the formation of the education reforms in Vietnam. It also looks, from an applied practical perspective, at the influence of politics on education policy-making. The research methodology includes a content analysis of curriculum designs proposed by the Ministry of Education and Training, relevant resolutions and executive orders passed by the National Assembly and the Prime Minister, as well as interviews with experts and key stakeholders. The results point to a particular configuration of factors which have been inspiring the shape and substance of these reforms and which have most certainly influenced their implementation. This configuration evolves from the immediate needs to erase illiteracy and cultivate socialist economic model at the beginning of Vietnam's independence in 1945-1975, to a renewed urge to adopt market-oriented economy in 1986 and cautiously communicate with the outside world until 2000s, and to currently a demonstrated desire to fully integrate into the global economy and tackle with rising concerns about national security (the South China Sea Dispute), environmental sustainability, construction of a knowledge economy, and a rule-of-law society. Overall, the paper attempts to map Vietnam's socio-political needs with the changing sets of goals and expected outcomes in teaching and learning methodologies and practices as introduced in Vietnamese key education reforms.

Keywords : curriculum development, knowledge society, national security, politics of education policy-making, Vietnam's education reforms

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