

Scientific Life

TOWARD QUALITY EDUCATION IN VIETNAM

A forum entitled "toward quality education in Vietnam" has been held to seek experts' ideas on how to improve the quality of education.

The forum, jointly organised by the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and the British Council in Hanoi on October 15, drew the participation of a number of Vietnamese policy makers and international donors.

Speaking at the event, MoET Deputy Minister Tran Van Nhung stressed the need to improve the quality of information technology (IT) and English language training and studying.

He said: "Helping students master the use of computers and the English language is key to raising the quality of education."

The forum was organised in the context that Vietnam has embarked on an integration path and has been developing a socialist-oriented market economy but that education quality has failed to meet requirements of national development.

In order to improve training quality, the sector recently introduced new standards of evaluation based on reports from junior to higher education levels and examinations. The new standards are meant to make the evaluation system more systematic and scientific, meeting international standards. Other solutions include textbook, curriculum and methodological reform.

Deputy Minister Nhung said Vietnam's education has been developed steadily in terms of scope and scale. The network of primary schools has been expanded to wards and communes, satisfying demand of the people for education.

With per capita income of just 350 USD a year, all provinces and cities across the country have accomplished primary education universalisation and illiteracy eradication.

VIETNAM PICTORIAL CELEBRATES 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Vietnam Pictorial, a publication of Vietnam News Agency (VNA), held a ceremony in Hanoi on October 15, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of its first issue and to receive the Independence Order, the second class.

Over the past half century, Vietnam Pictorial has brought images of the Vietnamese land and people to over 100 countries in the world through more than 500 issues with

more than 30 million copies in Vietnamese and other languages. The periodical several years ago also launched a web-site on the Internet in six languages.

Addressing the ceremony, VNA General Director Le Quoc Trung and Director of Vietnam Pictorial, said the magazine published its first issue titled "Pictures of Vietnam" on Oct.15, 1954, only five days after the liberation of Hanoi. During the following war, many Vietnam Pictorial photojournalists went to the battlefields to capture the Vietnamese army and people's heroic fighting against foreign aggressors, and many of them never returned home. In the peaceful times, they are present in every corner of the country to reflect the life and work of the people.

On behalf of the Party and State, Vice President Truong My Hoa presented the Vietnam Pictorial with the Independence Order, second class.

Talking to Vietnam Pictorials staff, Deputy Prime Minister Vu Khoan praised their efforts during the past 50 years to create a high-quality publication with rich contents. He asked them to continue improving the publication's content and format, so as to promote Vietnam's images and its achievements in the renovation process, to actively take part in combating hostile forces' attempts to distort Vietnam's situation, and to contribute more to the Party and State's external relations.

He stressed: "With the appearance of numerous modern media means, Vietnam Pictorial is facing many new challenges and fierce competition. To overcome these difficulties, Vietnam Pictorial must have a highly artistic content in addition to its political characteristics. Pictures reflecting the rhythm of life and an "eye-catching" format will help to raise the pictorial's attractiveness."

Delegations from the Prensa Latina news agency of Cuba, led by its Vice President Jacinto Granda de Laserna, and the KPL news agency of Laos, led by its Vice General Director Khamla Soulilath also attended the ceremony.

"THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF VIETNAM" EXHIBITION OPENS

An exhibition of 110 photos on "The land and people of Vietnam" opened in Hanoi on October 14.

The exhibits, selected from more than 3,000 photos by 405 photographers, will be published by Vietnam Pictorial in Vietnamese, English, Spanish and Lao Languages, and on the Internet in Vietnamese, English, Russian, Chinese, French, and Spanish.

The exhibition is being jointly held by the Vietnam Pictorial magazine and the Vietnamese Photographers' Association to mark the 50th anniversary of the first edition by Vietnam Pictorial.

FEMALE SCIENTISTS URGED TO ENGAGE IN RESEARCH

Ha Thi Khiet, President of the Vietnam Women's Union (VWU) and of the Committee for the advancement of Women (CAW) has called on female scientists to actively engage in science and technology research.

The appeal was made at a seminar on female scientists and development in Hanoi on October 14.

Khiet added that female scientists should argue their case on gender issues in order to build a law on gender equality and the role of women in the family and in society and to narrow the development gap between regions.

However, Khiet said, the rate of women taking part in the State-level scientific projects was still low. The VWU and CAW will continue paying attention to and honoring outstanding women, who made great contributions to the country.

Over the past year, the government has introduced new policies to support the development of women, particularly female scientists. These have helped raise the number and quality of female cadres at all levels.

At present, female teachers at college and universities in Hanoi account for 40.13 percent; female professors, associate professors, 14 percent; and doctors, 18 percent.

SEMINAR DISCUSSES SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Seeking effective solutions and proposing detailed programmes to boost scientific and technological education were discussed at a national seminar held in Hanoi on October 14 by UNESCO Vietnam.

Speakers stressed the need to renew educational management and managerial technology, teaching and studying methods, information technology training and application to boost scientific and technological education.

Attention should be paid to Internet management, its use, as well as the training of human resources to ensure its effective use and exploitation.

Speakers also found it necessary to get all social strata involved in scientific education, especially at schools and educational centres. Coordination among schools, and between schools and scientific and technological institutes also plays an important role and it should be encouraged at all levels and forms of education and training.

The Internet was linked to all senior secondary schools in 2003 and half of the junior secondary schools this year, thus facilitating IT application to teaching and studying.

However, scientific and technological education fails to meet student's needs at the practice level.

HISTORICAL MEETING OF HO CHI MINH-NEHRU MARKED

A meeting to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the meeting between the late President Ho Chi Minh and the late Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was held at the Ho Chi Minh Museum in Hanoi on October.

The event were attended by former Vice President Nguyen Thi Binh, President of the Vietnam Fatherland Front Central Committee Pham The Duyet, Foreign Minister Nguyen Dy Nien, and his Indian counterpart K. Natwar Singh, who is on an official visit to Vietnam.

President of the Vietnam-India Friendship Society Hoang Van Phong recalled that PM Nehru was the first foreign leader to come to Hanoi just one week after its liberation.

Over the past 50th years since the historical meeting between President Ho Chi Minh and PM Nehru, the relations between Vietnam and India have constantly been strengthened, Phong said.

He noted that the joint declaration on Vietnam-India comprehensive cooperation in the 21st century, signed during Party General Secretary Nong Duc Manh's visit to India in May, 2003, marked an important milestone in bilateral ties, reflecting the determination and commitments of the leaders and people of the two countries to lift bilateral ties to a new strategic height, realising the wish of the two great leaders 50 years ago.

Addressing the meeting, Indian Foreign Minister Natwar Singh stressed that Vietnam-India relations have dated back centuries and the development of multi-faceted relations has brought many benefits to the late President.

The Indian FM expressed gratitude to the late President Ho and the late PM Nehru, highlighting that cooperation between India and Vietnam covers all areas in diverse forms that reflects the two people's aspiration.

Following the meeting, Indian PM Singh and his wife called on General Vo Nguyen Giap.

General Giap recalled the visit by Prime Minister Nehru and his daughter Indira Gandhi 50 years ago and noted with pleasure the development in the two countries' cooperation.

The Indian PM reaffirmed the lasting solidarity between India and Vietnam and held that the two countries should work to further boost the bilateral ties that were fostered by President Ho Chi Minh and Prime Minister Nehru.

The same day, another meeting took place in Ho Chi Minh City to mark the anniversary. Vietnamese and Indian guests, including Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Bui Ba Bong and Indian Consul General S.K.Mandal, hailed the meeting between President Ho Chi Minh and PM Nehru as laying the firm foundation for the close relationship between Vietnam and India.

VIETNAMESE LITERARY COPYRIGHT CENTRE MAKES DEBUT

A Vietnamese literary copyright centre of the Vietnam Writer's Association made its debut in Hanoi on November 2.

The centre will execute the rights to literary works under contracts signed with its members, protect the members' rights and legitimate interests when infringements occur, and help settle disputes among members.

It will also work with relevant international organisations and other countries to ensure the protection of copyrights in literature.

Some 100 writers have so far signed contracts to have the centre protect the copyrights of their works both inside and outside the country.

The centre has asked the William Joiner Centre in the US to act as an intermediary between the Vietnam Writers' Association and American writers whose books are published by the association's publishing house in Vietnam.

Vietnam has acceded to the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works and signed copyright accords with the US and Switzerland.

The centre's establishment has brought the number of literary-art copyright protection organisations in the country to three; with the other two being the Vietnam Music Copyright Protection Centre and the Vietnam Recording Industry Association.

WORKSHOP ON COLLECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF REPROGRAPHIC RIGHTS

How to strengthen the collective management of reprographic rights is the main topic of a two-day workshop being held in Hanoi by the Copyright Office of the Ministry of Culture and Information of Vietnam in coordination with the International Federation of Reprographic Rights Organisations (IFRRO).

Representatives from centres of copyright management of art-literature works and publishers will focus their discussions on the collective management of copyrights, the legal environment for reproduction rights organisations, the licensing and payment distribution to members, and the cooperation between the reproduction rights organisations of different countries and IFRRO.

Addressing the workshop, held on November 2 and 3, Vu Manh Chu, Head of the Copyright Office, said "In Vietnam, the legal framework for copyrights has been established, providing a safety net for creative activities, publication, distribution of works and protection of copyright and related rights. Most of the provisions made for copyrights are in line with international standards, and are therefore useful to the copyright protection requirements of Vietnam and its international integration."

He continued: "In addition to the establishment of a legal system for copyrights, the enforcement systems have been established and improved step by step. The consulting and service system for copyright was also established and it helps authors, owners of works to implement and protect their rights in accordance with the existing laws and provisions. Not only State enterprises but also private companies are involved in this area."

According to Chu, in recent years, in addition to seminars on copyrights, the Ministry of Culture and Information has also conducted study visits to some countries which have strong copyright protection laws with assistance from the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), the Confederation of Societies of Authors and Composers (CISAC), and the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry.

Chu also suggested some ideas to promote and improve the capacity of the copyright collective management system in Vietnam.

EDUCATION FOR ETHNIC MINORITY CHILDREN PROMOTED

At the on-going sixth session of the 11th National Assembly, deputies have asked for increases in budget allocations for education in mountainous areas to improve the quality of education for ethnic minority children and the training of local teachers.

Head of the Primary Education Department of the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) Trinh Quoc Thai said that the educational sector is trying to complete policies on education, to build programmes to raise the capacity of teachers, to provide material for teaching and studying, and to build and upgrade schools for ethnic minority children. He

elaborated that the sector plans to build nursery schools in every hamlet and more boarding facilities by 2010.

It will also coordinate with provinces and cities to strengthen and increase the quality of boarding schools, and will call on all resources to support people-funded boarding schools. "Vietnam will boost the socialisation of education in ethnic people-inhabited areas with the help of village chiefs while gradually achieving universal junior secondary education in these areas," the official said.

He noted that the educational sector will take measure to assist ethnic minority children in improving their use of the Vietnamese language and will continue teaching ethnic minority groups' languages to maintain and develop their cultures.

Mong Ky Stay, Deputy Director of the MoET's Centre for Research of Education to Ethnic Minorities, spoke highly of achievements in education for ethnic people-inhabited regions over the past 50 years. He said children in remote and isolated areas, especially in areas with special difficulties, have been given free education by the State. Many have become public employees and officials of State agencies.

Regarding pre-school education, Mr. Stay said more than 333,270 children in the pre-school age bracket received education in the 2003-2004 academic year, accounting for 13 percent of the total number of children in this age bracket. Every mountainous commune now has classrooms for five-year old children.

Boarding schools have developed rapidly over recent years. The 2003-2004 academic year saw the existence of 11 ministry-run, 48 province-run, 266 district-run, and 519 commune-run boarding schools. In that year, there were more than 858,300 primary school pupils and 224,510 high school pupils from ethnic minority groups, accounting for 13 percent and 8.6 percent, respectively of the total pupils nationwide, compared with the rate of 13.8 percent of ethnic minorities in the country's population.

More than 1,476,400 children of ethnic minority families went to primary schools last year, accounting for 17.7 percent of the country's primary enrolment. Primary pupils have lessons either at communal schools or classrooms built in hamlets. People-funded schools and trans-communal boarding schools have attracted many fourth and fifth graders. Provinces that have more people-funded boarding schools are the Son La, Bac Can, Lai Chau and Ha Giang in the north and Kon Tum and Gia Lai in the Centre Highlands.

Students have been taught the Vietnamese and ethnic minority languages at the same time with the latter mainly provided to primary pupils. The Khmer ethnic minority language has been taught in all Mekong delta provinces, the Cham in the Mekong delta province of An Giang, the H'mong in the northern provinces of Lao Cai and Yen Bai, the Ede in the Central Highlands province of Dac Lac, and the Chinese in Ho Chi Minh City and the Mekong delta province of Can Tho. The Jrai language has been taught on a trial basis in Central Highlands Gia Lai province, and the Ba Na in Kon Tum and Gia Lai provinces.

However, the development of education in ethnic minority-inhabited areas has faced many challenges due to a shortage of teachers and old fashioned customs, which have hindered children, especially girls, from going to school. In addition, the provision of ethnic-language training for teachers and the compilation of bilingual books (Vietnamese

and ethnic minority languages) was very expensive, resulting in text books only being produced in seven of the 30 languages of ethnic minority groups - the Cham, Chinese, Khmer, Ede, Jrai, Ba Na and H'mong.

LITERARY, ART CIRCLES DELIGHTED AT VIETNAM'S JOINING COPYRIGHT

The majority of the literary and art circles in Vietnam were enthusiastic about the country's joining the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works on Oct. 26, said Vu Manh Chu, Head of the Culture and Information Ministry's Literary-Art Copyright Department.

Director of the Vietnam Music Copyright Protection Centre Pho Duc Phuong, himself a composer, said: "We are really happy at this good news. The Berne Convention protects the right to literary and artistic works, so we think this is an extremely important guarantee for our creativeness."

Nguyen Phan Hach, Director of the Vietnam Writers Association's Publishing House, said that the implementation of the Berne convention will help curb the uncontrolled publication of low-quality translated works and increase the number of translated books of high value.

Vietnam is the 156th member of the Berne Convention, and thus, is obliged to protect the copyright for both domestic and convention member countries' authors and vice versa.

According to Chu, the Berne Convention was translated into Vietnamese in 1995 and its Vietnamese version has been republished many times. Vietnam, with help from the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), has also held numerous training courses and seminars on copyright protection. Vietnamese experts have been sent to Berne member countries to study the implementation of the convention.

Two copyright protection centres have been set up in the country for music and literature and the Vietnam Photography Copyright Centre will make its debut next year.

Chu hoped that other Berne member countries would help Vietnam effectively implement the convention. Many famous authors and a number of international organisations have permitted Vietnam to publish their works, Chu added.

COMPETITION LAW, TURNING POINT FOR VIETNAM'S ECONOMIC LAW

Together with the completion of the Law on Unified Enterprise and the Law on Common Investment the approve of the Law on Competition by the National Assembly scheduled for next week will create an environment for equal competition in accordance with international laws, which is a good news for the business community at home and abroad.

Since the early 1990s when the State introduced a series of policies on economic renovation, eradicating subsidy, and facilitating the development of different economic sectors, the number of businesses has increased rapidly. The country now has about 150,000 enterprises and nearly 3 million family-run businesses. The increase in and expansion of businesses led to severe competition among businesses. Competition hindrance and unhealthy competitive activities have badly affected the business

environment, causing losses for good businesses. The requirement for a legal system to control competitive activities has become a pressing matter.

In addition, Vietnam's further integration into the global economy and its opening market, and signing and joining of many bilateral and multilateral agreements have facilitated the formation of major consortiums and international economic groups in Vietnam. State management is required over the process of trade monopoly forming and market holding, in order to protect small- and medium-sized enterprises, the main part of Vietnam's business community.

The authorities have admitted the discrimination that exists between economic sectors, especially State-run and private businesses, and the over-interference by some State agencies into businesses' operations. This situation has created trade barriers in the domestic market. In addition, the state sector still represents a high proportion of the economy and has a monopoly in many commodities. The Law on Competition will stipulate prohibited actions for State management agencies and provide regulations to control the monopoly abuse by State-owned enterprises.

The drafting of the Law on Competition started in 2000, when opinions were collected from law-making agencies, ministries, and local and foreign experts, particularly from the business circle. Experts from the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme and many other international organisations praised such contribution of opinions, considering it a step forward in the legislative process in Vietnam.

In preparation for the draft law, the compiling board translated and studied the laws on competition from nine other countries and territories and some international organisations. It also organised seminars to get ideas from foreign experts, management agencies and businesses.

The Law on Competition has become one of the main points in the National Assembly's law making programme since its fifth session in April this year. NA delegates have contributed their knowledge and experiences in economic laws in a bid to work out a perfect and feasible draft law.

After NA's approval of the Law on Competition, the Government will issue a decree on its implementation and another decree on multi-level trade supervision - a new concept for Vietnam.

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