

ONLINE TEACHING FOR ETHNIC MINORITY STUDENTS IN VIETNAM DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC - A QUALITATIVE STUDY

ENSEÑANZA EN LÍNEA PARA ESTUDIANTES DE MINORÍAS ÉTNICAS EN VIETNAM DURANTE LA PANDEMIA DE COVID-19: UN ESTUDIO CUALITATIVO

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a comprehensive and profound impact on Vietnamese education. In response to the pandemic, many localities have organized continuous online teaching for a long time. Teaching activities must change from planning, teaching organization, and assessment to adapting to the online teaching environment. The study aims to assess the current status of online teaching of ethnic minority students in Vietnam in aspects from teaching conditions and implementation practices to evaluate the effectiveness of online teaching.

Keywords: Online education; Covid 19; students; ethnic minorities; Vietnam.

RESUMEN

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La pandemia de COVID-19 ha tenido un impacto amplio y profundo en la educación vietnamita. En respuesta a la pandemia, muchas localidades han organizado enseñanza continua en línea desde hace mucho tiempo. Las actividades docentes deben pasar de la planificación, la organización docente y la evaluación a la adaptación al entorno de enseñanza en línea. El estudio tiene como objetivo evaluar el estado actual de la enseñanza en línea de estudiantes de minorías étnicas en Vietnam en aspectos desde las condiciones de enseñanza y las prácticas de implementación para evaluar la efectividad de la enseñanza en línea.

Palabras clave: Educación en línea; COVID-19; estudiantes; minorías étnicas; Vietnam.

INTRODUCTION

Since the outbreak of COVID-19 at the end of December 2019, the acute respiratory infection caused by the new strain of coronavirus (nCoV) (referred to as the COVID-19 Pandemic) has created a turning point and a major change in socio-economic life in most countries around the world, including Vietnam. In particular, education is considered one of the hardest-hit areas. According to UNESCO, since the outbreak of the pandemic to April 8, 2020, nearly 1.6 billion students have been affected worldwide; 188 countries forced the closure of schools nationwide, impacting 91.3% of all students worldwide. Up to now, Vietnam has experienced 4 outbreaks of COVID-19 in most provinces and cities across the country. Like other countries, the COVID-19 pandemic has not only had a strong impact on socio-economic activities, but also greatly affected education in Vietnam. Specifically, around March to April 2020 when the first wave of the epidemic... Vietnam has 54 ethnic groups, of which Kinh ethnic group accounts for the majority with the rate of 85.3% (82,085,729 people), the rest are 53 ethnic minorities with the rate of 14.7% (14,123,255 people). Identifying “education and training as the top national policy”; The right to study is one of the most important human rights, over the years, through guidelines and policies, the Party and State have supported and invested especially in the cause of education and training in ethnic minority areas. (Emilia Goland et al., 2012; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2019). This is

reflected in the Constitution and a series of legal documents, such as the Law on Universal Primary Education, the Law on Child Protection, Care and Education, the Law on Vocational Education, the Law on Education, the Law on Higher Education... Many mechanisms and policies prioritizing investment and development of education and training in ethnic minority areas are promulgated by the State, such as policies on educational contents and programs; policy group develops the network, the scale of specialized schools...

Online learning is one of the advanced and developed learning models in many countries around the world, but the difficulties and barriers of this form are still very present. Because of this, many research works have been carried out to identify adverse factors in order to overcome barriers, towards improving the quality of learning for this form of training. According to Mungania, online learning barriers are obstacles encountered during online learning (at the beginning, during and after completing the training) that can negatively impact the learner’s learning experience. Thus, identifying the difficulties and barriers of students in the process of online learning is extremely necessary. Ethnic minorities often reside in highland and border areas, belonging to communes with difficulty in transportation due to steep slopes, in the rainy season most of these localities are isolated from the surrounding area; lack of infrastructure, health services have not met the health care

needs of fishermen... With the goal of creating conditions for quantitative development and improving the quality of education for children, students and students of ethnic minorities, the Government of Vietnam has adopted policies to prioritize enrollment and learning support for children, students and students of ethnic minorities. Implementing the above policies, school and class facilities in villages and villages where ethnic minority students have been invested and built; the quality of teachers and educational administrators in educational institutions with ethnic minority students has been improved. The rate of mobilization of ethnic minority children and students to school increased, especially the rate of mobilization of ethnic minority preschool children to attend classes; The increase in the rate of mobilization of ethnic minority children and students to school has contributed greatly to the implementation of universal education, consolidating the results of

universal primary education and universal lower secondary education in provinces with ethnic minority students. Ethnic minority students study in schools for 2 lessons/day. (Asia & 2019, n.d.; Walle et al., n.d.) Specific educational contents on national culture, preserving traditional cultural identity.

METHODOLOGY

This article is based on a comprehensive data source on the results of digital transformation in education in the northern midlands and mountainous areas in Vietnam. The results of the case study were conducted with 50 high school students from Nam Pac ethnic boarding school, Dien Bien province of Vietnam. Nam Pac High School with a scale of 350 students is divided into levels 10, 11 and 12. We surveyed online with the following statistical sample: (figure 1)

Number of surveys	Grade 10/12	Grade 11/12	Grade 12/12	Total
Pupil	15	15	20	50
Teacher	3	3	4	10
Total				60

The collection of student information is conducted through zoom online learning software. Questions discussed: Obstacles of online learning for students Causes of difficulties in accessing e-learning services Strategies for students to learn effectively online For teachers, a group discussion was conducted with 10 teachers including school administrators and teachers in-person teaching staff. The discussion questions were focused on: Educational effectiveness of online learning What challenges impact the outcomes of online teaching Teacher actions to implement effective online learning Periodic educational tests are considered as a comparison between online and in-person learning. The score of the test is a necessary tool to evaluate the effectiveness of this form of learning.

EXPERIMENTS AND RESULTS

Adaptation in online learning of students In the context of responding to covid 19, online learning is not only an alternative to face-to-face teaching, to ensure safety in disease prevention, not to interrupt the learning program, but this method also contributes to promoting digital transformation in the education industry, increase the use of information technology, information media and the internet in teaching and learning, develop the capacity of self-study instruction, self-training of teachers and the ability of students to self-study. In Vietnam, there are a total of 316 ethnic boarding schools in 49 provinces/cities with a total of 109,245 boarding students. Ethnic boarding schools have

organized the application of knowledge and skills in management, teaching and education of students acquired through training courses to improve the capacity of managers and teachers of specialized schools of the Ministry of Education and Training. Due to the complicated situation of the Covid-19 epidemic, organizing online teaching and learning for students is considered the optimal plan. However, one of the most difficult problems in online learning is the fact that many students in difficult areas still lack the means and equipment to study..

The school has just remodeled, disinfected classrooms, prepared to welcome students back to school when the local outbreak appeared in the community, social distancing must be implemented throughout the district at the request of the Prime Minister, but online teaching and learning is not feasible. Currently, only about 50% of the school's students have access to this mode of learning, the rest of the students due to family difficulties, cannot buy smartphones or computers with internet subscribers for their children to study. The school hopes that after about 10 days of social distancing, students can go to school normally – Principal

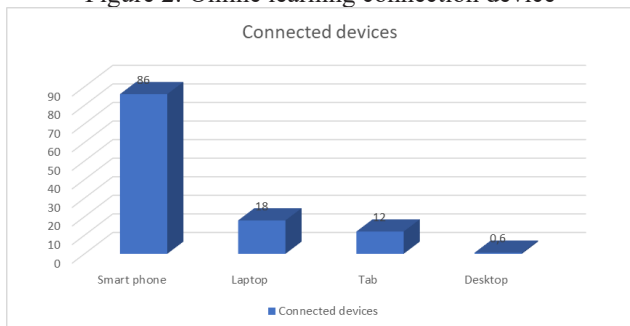
During the period when students were out of school due to COVID-19, the Ministry of Education and Training implemented online teaching. This is an alternative to classroom learning, to ensure that students are both safe at home from the epidemic and do not lose knowledge. However, for online learning to go smoothly, it takes a lot of factors. The most important of which is still to have waves and the internet.

In my school, it is very difficult to teach online. Because students in highland areas have no phone waves, no wifi waves, so they cannot teach. If you teach, only a few of you in town can learn.”

Online teaching, hybrid teaching, online blended and face-to-face teaching are the solutions chosen

by many countries and educational institutions during COVID-19. In particular, online teaching methods are quite effective that teachers and students need to apply in a oriented way to convey knowledge to students flexibly, helping learners follow the lecture circuit to achieve the goals of lessons and subjects... Online teaching has been and will become a trend to be strengthened, consolidated and gradually become an inevitable trend, the main task in the tasks of implementing the school year to adapt to the new situation. The Ministry of Education and Training develops a set of handbooks and video tutorials to support parents to nurture, care for and educate when students are at home. Localities are flexible and creative in organizing and mobilizing the participation of educational administrators, teachers to build support tools, repositories of materials, learning materials. For secondary education (including middle and high school), online teaching via the internet and on television has been implemented in accordance with the actual needs and conditions of the COVID-19 epidemic and in accordance with the conditions of each school, ensuring quality online teaching, ensure under local school year time plan. Schools have been creatively flexible in using software and applications to actively support educational activities such as: Microsoft Teams application to organize online teaching, use Google form to assign assignments to students; specialized teams of schools develop plans, review content, banks to post on the school's website for students to follow lesson research and review. In particular, some localities in mountainous, remote and communal areas have directed schools to copy lessons and transfer them to each village for students who do not have access to online learning. Surveys show that the majority of students at the school use smartphones to study. However, not all students have smartphones to attend online sessions. (figure 2)

Figure 2: Online learning connection device



Learning activities that take place under the direct influence of teachers include: receiving tasks and learning plans set by teachers; perform cognitive learning actions and manipulations to solve learning tasks; self-regulation of one’s cognitive learning activity under the influence of teacher testing; analyze the results of learning activities under the guidance of teachers. The lack of enough learning equipment in online learning is the biggest obstacle for students of the school

“Many families here are very difficult. We strive to guide each student’s family, share their stories of online learning, or work together to support their access to knowledge during the 2021-2022 school year. Here, all households work hard, so only about 25% of families are eligible for their children to study online” - Teacher

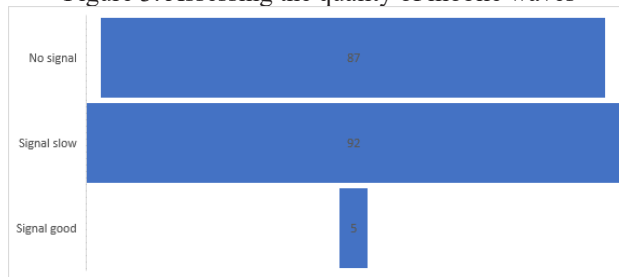
“I cannot continue learning because my family is in remote areas, does not have enough facilities to support learning such as computers or phones like my friends in the city” – students

The amount of knowledge in the process of online learning is also difficult to impart to students. From the point of view of the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam, in the face of the covid 19 epidemic, the fact that students cannot go to school due to social distancing, general training programs will reduce the amount of knowledge compared to the situation before the epidemic. However, the survey shows that the acquisition of knowledge in online learning is quite different from face-to-face learning.

“The most difficult thing about online learning is

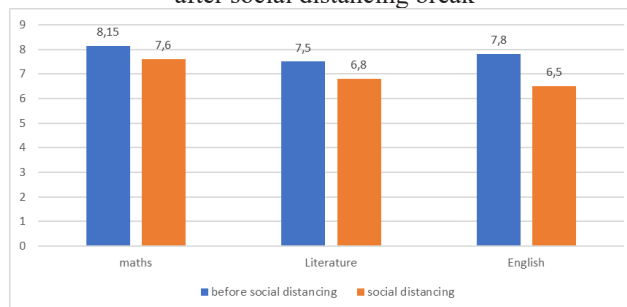
that we don’t have internet or WiFi at home. My brother and I had to walk to the preschool 1km from my house to use WiFi and download documents that teachers sent. Neither my classmates nor near my house have internet at home.” Online teaching here is definitely not possible because the whole village has only 2 houses with television, phone waves at times and absolutely no Internet. Such a situation is very difficult to connect with students to teach online”, School Manager

Figure 3: Assessing the quality of mobile waves



In the 2021-2022 school year, Nam Pac district high school conducted a survey of students about online learning, the results showed that about 20% of students can borrow their parents’ smartphones to study. About 95% of students are minorities, their families are agricultural, low-income and do not have the means to equip vehicles such as smartphones or computers for online learning. Therefore, learning online will be very difficult. In addition, in villages, internet connection is still limited, phone waves are unstable, so knowledge acquisition activities are significantly affected (figure 4)

Figure 4: Comparison of scores of subjects before and after social distancing break



The results showed that the difference in online learning before and after the lockdown was significant. The difficult group with the most

number of responses related to the Internet (there were 45 comments) included the results of: unstable connection during learning, power outages, poor road speed, no wifi to use 3G, so the cost is high. This is the main reason that makes online learning more difficult and also one of the reasons why students lose points because when teachers check in, students lose connection from the classroom. The second reason is about the problem of using the system, receiving information, 49 students' opinions said that this is their difficulty. Problems with assigning assignments, doing assignments, and sending them to teachers for testing. The omission of some grade-based learning activities makes students feel confused during online learning. Due to the unexpected arrival of the epidemic, some instructors still use software mainly zoom or google meet. This makes it difficult for some students to grasp the content of the subject when learning online (there are 47 opinions) and students think that online learning is not effective, not easy to absorb as well as difficult to system knowledge during learning. The cause of this difficulty may be that students have not adapted to new learning methods when there is a sudden change or because students are not used to self-study and self-study through technology devices.

The fourth group of causes is about the lack of interaction with lecturers or inappropriate teaching methods. This is the reason for 45 suggestions from students about finding it difficult to study. Some teachers rarely interact with students through channels, do not answer questions for students in a timely manner, grade lessons in insufficient detail, do not follow the student's learning process, leading to students not keeping up with the lesson. Next, there were 36 students who said that the content of the lecture had some problems such as inappropriate, unattractive, many errors, no specific examples, etc. There are some slides and videos of subjects that do not match in terms of content, making it difficult to synthesize learners' knowledge. The sixth group of reasons, 29 opinions, students did

not keep up with the online learning program due to too much knowledge and exercises; they claim that the amount of homework is greater than in-person learning in class. The eighth group of causes, the sound during... The transition from face-to-face teaching and learning to online teaching and learning has led to many other changes. To arrive at this radical shift from traditional teaching to this new, modern form needs a lot of shifting around it. At school, the school board directs teachers to apply DHTT, forming an active teaching movement. Internet connection in schools is installed. Computer labs with many computers connected to the network are ready to serve dhtt in the new school year. In the special circumstances of applying dhtt simultaneously, the teaching staff has made rapid changes in both mentality and skills.

“When I was struggling with delivering lessons to students, school administrators made effective decisions. The online training course on DHTT software opened me up to interesting teaching methods. I see this as an opportunity to change, adapt to the current situation and be ready for the future... From someone who is very weak in technology, I am diligently learning how to use teaching software. I learn from school professionals, from colleagues, from students and from my children. I realized there was so much appeal from those lessons.”- Teacher

Many teachers realize that teaching is needed not just as one-sided teaching, but as an exchange, discussion, inspiring students, guiding them to work in groups. Teaching is the leadership of students to participate in the knowledge game thanks to teaching software. The dhtt process is also the process of teachers learning, exchanging and supporting each other in teaching. Many teachers show interest and passion for preparing lesson plans and teaching online. A teacher who was previously unfamiliar with IT has now bought herself a computer to get used to teaching and managing students remotely. When mastering technology, teachers are more confident and proactive.

“When dhtt restricts interaction somewhat,

teachers can rely on the available features of the software to design teaching activities. For example, during class, instead of speaking directly, students can rely on the chat window to fill in answers, short answers sent to the teacher. Or they can press the “like” button if they agree with the rules set by the teacher. These operations make them more interested in the lesson than sitting in front of the computer listening to lectures” - teacher

The teacher’s view is that it is online learning that has created positive changes from students. Many students in class are very shy, but when studying online, they are confident and bold. There are students who show the ability to solve learning tasks at home very well. The students are fast-paced with the computer-based assessment test and are excited about taking the test.

“In order for DHTT to maximize its effectiveness, the change in technology is only the top, the change in fundamental thinking is the root part. That is, it is necessary to change from the way of preparing lesson plans, the way of organizing lectures to the assessment test to suit dhtt. Instead of lessons transmitting knowledge in lang classes, lesson plans must be converted into research content to assign specific tasks for learners to learn, grasp and solve learning tasks by themselves. The role of the teacher in the classroom is to capture, orient, answer questions, close knowledge based on the learner’s activities” - Education expert

The results of the study showed that students of the school had an asymptotic or above-average feeling for the online learning experience during the social distancing period in response to the covid 19 epidemic. Students’ difficulties are largely attributed to the lack of learning devices and the quality of internet connections. On the other hand, this is also a difficulty of the group of teachers when they cannot update the program to convert to online learning. As a result, students’ performance assessment scores decreased by 7% compared to in-person learning. Online teaching and learning, especially in the time of the outbreak of the Covid-19 epidemic and complicated developments, not only helps students have conditions to review and not

interrupt knowledge but also strengthens the connection between schools and families in student management, train and improve their self-discipline. In the long run, the trend of online teaching should be encouraged so that teachers can more easily impart knowledge to students. In order for online teaching to achieve results, there should be 3 factors: Reasonable technology solutions; Management organization of the school; The readiness of teachers and students...

In fact, online teaching and learning, especially in ethnic minority areas, has faced many difficulties due to the lack of means, equipment and Internet connection. The percentage of students who do not attend fully is still quite high, there is no funding to pay for online teaching for teachers... In order to organize effective online teaching, it is necessary to focus on solutions: Upgrading information technology infrastructure; Building a digital learning repository in the Education sector; Training for teachers; Improve self-discipline and networking skills for students. Accordingly, there should be regulations on online teaching regime for teachers to feel secure to implement, soon promulgate the Official Regulation on online teaching and learning at the high school level, moving towards standardization for uniform application throughout the country.

DISCUSSION

The COVID-19 pandemic is still complicated with the onslaught of many new strains on countries. Countries are racing against time to ensure fast, effective vaccination and early herd immunity. However, while the vaccine mandate still takes time, children cannot wait too long to have their basic right to education restored and other benefits at school. In fact, international organizations and education experts have mentioned many holistic solutions on a global scale as well as recommendations for each country to ensure children’s right to school and access to school benefits. In his speech on April 16, 2020, the UN Secretary-General called for the protection of children and the protection

of their welfare; urges leaders of countries to prioritise education, food, health and safety for children with the message of “joint protection of children and their welfare”. For ethnic minority children in Viet Nam, in order to ensure equal rights in... The government should prioritize the use of existing technology, including radio and television, telephones, computers, messaging apps or other means to ensure universal education during and after the pandemic. Each country must have a funding and advocacy roadmap for schools in remote, under-resourced areas so that teachers can communicate with students, print and distribute learning materials. Among other forms of distance education, resources should be mobilized to provide internet services to ensure the right to continuous learning, especially for poor and marginalized populations, including seeking to provide free and discounted access to services and computers. To create momentum for education workers, the government also needs to work with teachers, staff, teachers’ associations to come up with a plan to restore lost teaching hours, adjust school schedules and exam schedules and ensure fair compensation for teachers and school staff who are working overtime. Preparation should be made for sending children back to school after the crisis is over, including monitoring each child who does not attend class; provide vouchers or financial assistance to offset school-related costs for children whose families are economically disadvantaged and unable to return to school.

Public awareness campaigns about COVID-19 should include contact information to assist children who are victims of domestic violence who can seek help. Governments should ensure that domestic violence services are not disrupted by COVID-19 and are available to everyone including children and adults who are quarantined or infected. Governments should expand their education and public awareness campaigns about domestic violence and child abuse. At the same time, intensive measures must be taken to protect adolescent girls from child marriage and children at risk of early labor. Many experts recommend

that the government target economic assistance, including cash transfers, to help poor, disabled, vulnerable families meet their basic needs without the use of child labour or child marriage options. The government urgently needs to expand food distribution programs for vulnerable families, including the distribution of free lunches from schools, even if they do not hold classes. Each country also needs to train health, education and service personnel on the risks associated with protecting children from COVID-19, including preventing exploitation, sexual abuse and how to safely report concerns. COVID-19 may persist. Governments not only have a responsibility to take urgent action to protect children during the pandemic, but they must also consider whether their decisions now can best uphold children’s rights after the pandemic is over. Therefore, among the priorities in emergency situations such as epidemics, priority must necessarily be given to ensuring children’s right to education and enjoy uninterrupted social welfare. That requires international efforts, the responsibility of global organizations, the companionship of developed countries with lower conditions, especially the ability to forecast and upgrade infrastructure (especially internet access for learning) of each country.

The study was conducted to assess students’ access to online learning experiences in economically disadvantaged areas of Vietnam. Equality in education is the sustainable development goal that the United Nations adopted in 2015. Online learning is mandatory during the covid-19 prevention period. With 50 students and 10 teachers participating in the response, the results of the study described the inequalities of ethnic minority and urban students when social distancing is practiced. Geographical differences and economic conditions are factors that directly affect the effectiveness of students’ online learning. Much of the economic difficulty prevents families from being able to equip the learning facilities needed to support online learning such as smartphones or laptops. Besides, the quality of internet connection in the

northern mountainous area of Vietnam, where the altitude is about 2000 m- 3000 m above sea level is... In fact, the implementation of online learning is quite passive and urgent due to having to deal with the Covid19 epidemic. The major influencing factors are the unprepared mentality, internet-connected devices and the timely support of teachers and service staff. In addition, the traditional teaching and learning habits of teachers and students have also affected the effectiveness of learning in a fully online environment. Therefore, implementing fully online learning for students requires preparation

not only in terms of systems and technical infrastructure but also investment in readiness for learners and teachers. The Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam also needs to take into account the factors of indigenous culture of ethnic minority groups, natural and economic conditions to design programs to reduce the amount of knowledge appropriately. Accordingly, it is necessary to have financial policies to support connected devices for poor students, minimizing the gap in access to general education services.

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