

Topic card 1: Policy and legislation

Aims of the **Law on Gender Equality 2006, Article 4:**

- eliminate gender-based discrimination.
- establish and strengthen relations between men and women in all aspects of social and family life'.

Contemporary research findings

- Despite the government commitment to gender equality, Vietnamese teachers are still influenced by social and cultural values, which place girls at a disadvantage in schools (**Brundrett and Dung, 2018, p.20**).
- Due to the patriarchal culture of Vietnamese society, women in Vietnam must do paid work alongside completing the majority of domestic tasks at home (Schuler et al. 2006) (**Zharkevich et al 2016, p. 8-9**).
- Gender equality in education has not reached teachers and school leaders (**Dung and Brundrett, 2020, p.402**).

Although the Vietnamese government has been promoting gender equality in education, there is a challenge for schools to understand and put into place gender equality (**Dung and Brundrett, 2020, p.402**).

Discussion points

1. How does this relate to your own experience as a student and a teacher?
2. How successful is your school in supporting gender equality for young people of all genders (boys, girls, non-binary) in the classroom?
3. What else could be done to create more equitable classrooms?

Topic card 2: Social and cultural factors

Contemporary research findings

- Despite the laws and policies on gender equality in Vietnam, women have difficulties to balance and achieve the high standard of too many responsibilities, from traditional roles of housekeepers and childcare to work responsibilities. This is due to the fact that they do not receive sufficient support from a more equal distribution of familial tasks' (**Dinh and Thuy, 2023, p.101**).
- Due to the patriarchal culture of Vietnamese society, education favours boys as it is believed that boys were more able than girls (**Brundrett and Dung, 2018, p.2 and 5**).
- Confucian approaches from China have influenced Vietnamese society for more than a thousand years (**Bui, 2008 as cited in Brundrett and Dung, 2018, p.2 and 5**).
- Confucian beliefs mean that women are encouraged to focus on housework, care of children, and show deference and support for their husband's family (**Jiang, 2009: 234, as cited in Brundrett and Dung, 2018, p.2 and 5**).
- There is a strong tradition that wives should move into the husband's family home, and married women are expected to have sons to continue the paternal surname (**Le, 2008 as cited in Brundrett and Dung, 2018, p.2 and 5**).
- Girls and women in Vietnam remain in an inferior social position when compared to boys and men (**Brundrett and Dung, 2018, p.2 and 5**).
- Social norms, influenced by Communist and Confucian ethics, continue to shape the main ideals of femininity and masculinity as well as gender relations [in Vietnamese society] (**Zharkevich et al, 2016, p. 8**).
- Despite communism, Confucian values remain strong in Vietnamese society; women are seen as 'the bearers of the ideal family' and as submissive partners who uphold harmony in the household (**Rydstrøm 2010 as cited in Zharkevich et al., 2016, p. 8**).
- Teachers in primary schools in Vietnam have low expectations for achievement by girls due to their gender prejudice about girls' capacity (**Dung and Brundrett, 2020, p.400**).
- This does not only affect girls negatively (**Ma 2008**) but also has bad effects on boys (**Dung and Brundrett, 2020, p.400**).

- The bias [against girls] in schools might well be unconscious because the whole country was deeply affected by Chinese Confucianism (**Tran, Hoang, and Do 2006, as cited in Dung and Brundrett, 2020, p.400**).

Discussion point

1. How have ideas about 'Confucianism' had an impact on you as a student and a teacher?

Topic card 3: Gender bias

Contemporary reading findings

- Boys and men take part in more conversations than girls and women in English textbooks (**Vu and Pham, 2021, p.493-494**).
- Males are more likely to be the expert (e.g. sports, science, cultures, family legacy) in English textbooks (**Vu and Pham, 2021, p.493-494**).
- Males are seen as curious and ambitious; they enjoy more life opportunities, aim high, and dare to dream (**Vu and Pham, 2021, p.493-494**).
- Although some boys do help with housework, mothers and girls mostly do the caretaking and other domestic duties, while the father is largely absent (**Vu and Pham, 2021, p.493-494**).
- In Vietnamese society women are less visible and their contribution is not recognised and included in English textbooks (**Vu and Pham, 2021, p.493-494**).
- There are many stereotypes for girls. For example, girls are expected to behave in certain ways; they are depicted as less capable and independent; their choices are more limited, and they receive less development resources than boys (**Vu and Pham, 2021, p.493-494**).
- Gender bias has implications for girls' empowerment and advancement (**Vu and Pham, 2021, p.493-494**).
- Bias against boys and men deprive them of their rights (for example, to learn life skills such as cooking; and to practice fatherhood) (**Vu and Pham, 2021, p.493-494**).
- Bias can negatively influence students' affective and cognitive development (**Lee 2019 as cited in Vu and Pham, 2021, p.493-494**) and contribute to social inequalities (**Kereszty, 2009 as cited in Vu and Pham, 2021, p.493-494**).
- When presented in educational materials, gender bias can lead learners to form or reinforce limited views of particular gender groups, which can lead to stereotyped expectations and even discrimination (**Vu and Pham, 2021, p.493-494**).
- Teachers, regardless of teaching experiences, were not highly sensitive to gender issues. For example, they did not create opportunities for learning and discussions about gender (**Vu and Pham, 2022, p. 20-21**).

- Teachers' perceptions and practices were sometimes influenced by 'tradition' and 'culture' (**Vu and Pham, 2022, p. 20-21**).
- Confucian understandings about the female and male norms and expectations are prevalent in wider Vietnamese society. These norms are reflected in how schools are organised (**Horton, 2015, p. 538**).
- Girls and boys are not treated equally within schools (**Horton, 2015, p. 538**).
- Girls are more likely than boys to be punished for misbehaving in class (**Horton, 2015, p. 538**).

Discussion points

1. In your experience, are boys and girls are treated differently in Vietnamese schools?
2. How confident do you think teachers feel to challenge gender bias in the classroom?
3. How confident are you to challenge gender bias in your classroom?

Topic card 4: Thinking with Intersectionality* (how poverty, sexuality, disability, and ethnicity intersect with gender)

*Please watch the video '[What is Intersectionality?](#)' to learn more about intersectionality.



Contemporary reading findings

1. Ethnicity and gender

- The gender gaps within and between the ethnic minority groups and the Kinh ethnic group are large and have existed for a long time (**Hien et al., 2021**).
- In ethnic minority groups, women and girl children are more disadvantaged than men and boy children in their access to opportunities and resources. Social norms continue to reinforce their subordinate role, prioritising having children and working in the house (**Hien et al., 2021**).
- Ethnic stereotypes have created barriers to the development of ethnic girls and women in Vietnam (**Thi et al., 2023, p. 2143**).
- For many ethnic parents, boys are always given priority to develop over girls (**Thi et al., 2023, p. 2143**).

2. Poverty and disadvantage

- Vietnam has made impressive progress in narrowing gaps in educational achievement between students from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds (**Rolleston et al. 2013 as cited in Zharkevich et al., 2016, p. 7**).
- However, ethnicity remain important for understanding the different education of boys and girls (**Chi 2010, 2011; Huong 2011, 2014; Young Lives 2014a, as cited in Zharkevich et al., 2016, p. 7**).
- The combination of being poor, female, and disabled increases the chances of being affected by the negative impacts of poverty, marginalization, and gender in Vietnamese education (**Rydstrom, 2010, p.90**).

3. Disability and gender

- Like other children from disadvantaged groups, girls with disabilities in Vietnam represent a shame for their families and a 'burden' for the future of the country (Nguyen and Mitchell, 2014, p. 329).

4. Sexual orientation

- Often Vietnamese teachers had insufficient understanding about the LGBTQ+ community and the issues that they face (Tran-Thanh, 2020, p. 12).
- Most of the teachers had never included any queer related materials in their teaching and still required proper training in dealing with those issues (Tran-Thanh, 2020, p. 12).
- However, they all demonstrated a positive and sympathetic attitude to the queer community and realised the importance of establishing a safe environment where all students have the chance to identify themselves (Tran-Thanh, 2020, p. 12).

Discussion points

1. Having watched the video and read the extracts, describe intersectionality in your own words.
2. Do you have any examples from your own experience as a student and a teacher that are similar to those discussed in the above extracts?

Topic card 5: Pedagogy and language in the classroom

- Language and images in school textbooks and social media should be considered with caution **(Nguyen, 2015, p. 153)**.
- The traditional connotation of thể diện đàn ông may need to be introduced with new examples of caring roles in family for men and women and respect for partners **(Nguyen, 2015, p. 153)**.
- This can be done via social forum discussions on webs, television, newspapers, or other discussion platforms **(Nguyen, 2015, p. 153)**.
- Teachers in the study said they did not see gender-sensitive content in the classroom materials/ textbooks they used **(Vu and Pham, 2022, p. 11-13)**.
- Many teachers thought that gender was unconnected to the topics in the books **(Vu and Pham, 2022, p. 11-13)**.
- When asked about why they gave boys more attention, some teachers in the study said they saw boys as better (by which they meant louder, more active) at English than girls, who tend to be shyer, more reserved, and did not raise their hands as often **(Vu and Pham, 2022, p. 11-13)**.
- Data suggests that teachers were neither aware of the gender critical points in the units they were teaching, nor did they open up discussions about gender in class **(Vu and Pham, 2022, p. 11-13)**.
- Teachers talked about how they might change their teaching around gender **(Vu and Pham, 2022, p. 19-21)**.
 - *I didn't think much about gender before. But now I do. I will make some changes when I teach the textbooks. For example, for the dinner picture, I will tell students: This is just an example of one family. But you can imagine pictures of other families [with] other members helping out. It could be Dad; it could be the children (Chi).*
 - *Even if textbooks explicitly challenge gender bias, students will not notice it immediately and change immediately. But the teacher has to be the person who sparks their thinking – they need to ask students what they think. Then the change is possible. (Sa).*
- It is really important teachers to challenge their own biases and assumptions, as these assumptions affect teachers' decisions about how they teach boys and girls **(Vu and Pham, 2022, p. 19-21)**.

Discussion points

1. Reflecting on your own experience as a teacher, are you aware of the ways that genders are represented in textbooks and classroom materials?
2. How do your ideas about boys' and girls' roles and responsibilities in Vietnamese society impact your own teaching?