

# **The development of book reading activity for promoting better life of citizen in Vietnam**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In the setting of development of the nation to be industrial country in the year of 2020 by the Government, we orient to develop the nation with innovative policy engaging with concept of intelligent economy. This concept associates with professional human resource in terms of good knowledge and skillful labor for supplying national development and linking the country to international economy. It is clear that reading activity is very important canal to promote sustainable development of the country. Through long history of the nation, reading culture is established Vietnamese manner to development of the nation. Thus, it is reasonable to say that book reading activity has been providing fundamental knowledge for making new generation of Vietnamese in all aspects of life. In fact, book reading activity is usually a media canal to helping people to gain information and step by step to develop their knowledge in terms of promoting better life and engaging with international economy network.

In the case of opening the gate to Asian region and worldwide we need to make much more efforts to promote not only amount of labor but also quality of such source for supporting current need of higher quality of human resource (UNDP, 2001 and Nguyen Thang, 2002). The strategy for making better use of human resource from Vietnamese government is to establish proper way of learning through reading activity in different citizen classes. This strategy need to accord with their conditions in terms of level education, economic circumstance and others (Vu Duong Thuy Nga, 2011 b).

The Vietnamese Government is aware that promotion of reading culture is very important. Therefore, the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism of Vietnam and especially library branch have been establishing strategy of the development of reading culture for period 2010 to 2020. The Government also confirmed to support reading activity whole country in order to generate new Vietnamese

readers in the future. In this paper, we would like to summarize the reading activity status and to offer appropriate solutions to promote reading culture in Vietnam.

In order to set up state policies on developing reading culture in society, the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism conducted investigations in 12 provinces/cities in 2010 in Vietnam.

## OBJECTIVES

*General objective:* The overall objective of this study to get reader's responses in terms of current need for book reading and which kinds of book may match to each interest group from different citizen class in different zones of the country.

*Special objective:*

- To determine which kind of the book and the magazine that readers would like to learn most from students, their parents and adults (as a mean of non-student reader) especially which kinds of each of such group readers like best
- To know if people use their leisure time for reading book to promote their learning and making their relaxation
- To evaluate the role of parent to pursuit their children to learn from the book and magazine sources for gaining knowledge in different fields of their lives
- To determine the current status of library service in different locations of the country and establish appropriate solutions both short and long terms for development of library systems to offer an opportunity for people to go to library to read books especially in remote areas of the country.
- To establish a new policy for motivating reading activity in our society in order to promote better life of the citizen

## METHODOLOGY

This survey made by Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism of Vietnam to seeks an answer for the following the main research question. The question is that what are major obstacles to increase reading activity in the country and what can be done to help ordinary people better benefit from policy of reading culture promotion. The answer to this main question should be attempted through a survey as a case study. How will each question be achieved? We assuming that the research questions to be addressed by the survey have been clearly identified. On the other hand, the purpose of the methodology section is to show how these questions would be determine in the most rigorous way possible. Achieving the set objectives requires data of high quality and sound methodologies. This survey will therefore plan to collect primary data on the library system in different provinces in the country.

- The survey with questionnaires included 18 concerned issues for asking students, 10 other ones for their parents and 20 ones for getting responses from adults carried out in different provinces of the country. Participatory development communication (PDC) was a powerful tool to facilitate this process. This communication process brings together all readers in a dialogue and exchange of

ideas on their concerned read activity. It was the key used to collect information. To minimise any unwanted biases, agenda had made, in situation according to consensus of participants.

- Traditional data gathering methods such as group representative meetings, semi-structure investigation by library visiting, structured interviews using questionnaires. The issues of these are related to each of objectives.
- Data/information is shared and used immediately at the grass-root levels, and processed systematically for later used in documentation.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The consideration of the role of the reading culture in developing the nation**

Although Vietnamese people has been cultivating the soil and rearing animals for thousands of year for establishing their lives in the country. However, sustainability of the development of the nation especially the poor areas of the country has been threatening by the increasing population pressure and the destructive impacts of the sequence flood and typhoon in the tropical monsoon season both directly and indirectly (World Bank Vietnam. 2002). Vietnam has been consistently pursuing the radical economic reforms known as Doi Moi since 1986 and has consequently achieved impressive economic growth rates and fast poverty reduction (GSO, 2001). The economy grew at an average annual growth rate of about 7.0 percent since the country are the full membership of WTO in the year of 2007. The Vietnam economy changes thanks to the open-door policies coupled with microeconomic reforms, which have radically changed the economic incentives system (World Bank Vietnam.1999). Equally important, economic growth has been broadly shared, resulting in a sharp poverty reduction (World Bank Vietnam. 2001).

The resolution number 5 of the term VIII of Vietnamese Communist Party remarked that “A culture is important spiritual basic to development of society and it is not only motivation of social and economic development but also orientation of each person in the way of approaching higher knowledge and better life”. In fact, the Government has been supporting more projects to conserve Vietnamese culture and remain national and international heritages and traditional festivals located in all provinces of the country.

Concerning to reading activity for adopting technology transfer to farmers whom are consisted about 70 percents of Vietnamese population; the government has much more effort to help them for increasing their incomes. As a result of current policy of Vietnamese government for promoting scientific and technology activities, there are many new techniques and technologies in agricultural sector, which are recommended by all Vietnamese institutions annually. In paradox, such technologies seem to keep in media resources for researchers and students in reading but not so succeed in application especially in poor farmer communities.

We assume that it is necessary to promote reading activity for farmers in order to make better use of current technique and technology sources in village commune. Because, the poor people is not easy to approach to library for using of this resource to increase their income.

In the case of economic blooming worldwide, the nation is associated with new concept of intelligent economy. This mean that it is require much more labours with high knowledge and professional skill. Thus, the development of program of education and professional training is the first priority of our Government and it should pertain to reading promotion not only in the school but also in diversity of reading activity in our society.

In recent years, Vietnamese citizens especially villagers recognize in long term run that *firstly*, they need to learn for the reduction of poverty, free from less educated fate and promotion quality of their life. They are aware that through reading activity they could learn much more about life skills such as how to use electricity in safety way and how to increase their income from their local resources effectively and other useful skills. *Secondly*, no one can decline the fact that the climate change is occurring so quick and it impacts all nations and each family in negative way. So the reading activity provides more powerful canal to enhance aware of people to treat harmony way with nature and biosphere. *Lastly*, in higher level of nation development, each person or/and family could not live alone and so community development programme is one of priority in our policy. The establishment of learning programmes in society need more books and magazines for such strategy and thus the raising of the campaign of book reading is very necessary in the way of achievement of better life for the citizen.

The president Ho Chi Minh said that “one nation has less-educated citizen as a mean that the nation is a weak one” and he also remarked that “learning is a long process, such as learning at school, learning oneself by reading books and learning from others in society as well”.

### **Current status of book reading facility and reading requirement of citizen in Vietnam**

#### ***The reading facility in Vietnam***

There is a library system of from central government to local locations in Vietnam. The system has been servicing for book reading requirement of all citizen on different classes effectively. Some new models of book services have been applied. For instance, the model of rotation of the book has been done for increasing number of commune bookcase in poor regions or the family bookcase has been established in some locations. We also call upon the private library taking their activity in poor areas in order to support reading culture in our society. All such new models of the reading culture have done effectively. According to survey of the Ministry of Culture – Sport – Tourism of the Vietnamese Government in 2010, there were 17,936 public libraries, 300 university libraries, 24,746 school libraries and many specific libraries belonged to different Ministries of the

Government in Vietnam. The national library system consists of national library; province and district ones. Each Ministry of Center Government also has special library to supply information to their working activities. In the village, commune book case system as a mean of public library has been establishing under supporting of the local government to offer an essential book and magazine to farmers especially in remote region of the rural areas. The goal of the development of this commune book is the eradication of poverty through literacy enhancement for poorest people especially minority ethnics. In fact, this small library has been improved the overall reading culture in the locality and to serve as an extension for learning beyond the classroom by offering school textbooks to students who do not have access to them at school and at home. This commune book case system is used effectively and villagers are more participating in book reading activity. Each school/university in Vietnam has their own library and the readers of such consist of mainly students, teachers and other concerned professionals who spend their reading time for improvement of their knowledge and other aspects of live that they could not learn during lecture times.

The publication has been developing both book quantity and book quality. This activity has been engaging with requirement of readers and it is true that through this canal, the educational and training programs of the Government have been approaching to all peoples in our society. Such activity also supports to promote people's cultural standard and to help poor citizens to increase their incomes from adopting appropriate technologies in their business. For enhancement of reading activity of Vietnamese young pioneer, we publish more kinds of book pertained to their psychologies to make proper book environment for developing this generation naturally.

It is interesting that Vietnamese people is aware of the role of book in the way of development of each person well. The citizen would like to select books and magazines with high quality. According to result of the survey, there are 20 percents of Vietnamese family having their own bookcase in total. And there are 25 % of citizens used one hour for reading book.

However, it still remains some weakness of reading activity in the country. For example, we recognize that the development reading culture is very important but we now have just starting to make it proper. The number of book per one citizen is still poor. The villager in remote areas is very difficult to approach to media resources especially library. The school library still poor in book source both amount of book and magazine and quality of book service as well.

### ***The use of leisure time for reading books in the society***

The Vietnamese citizen seems to be very busy in their works event in free times after working hard in the day. However they are ready like to use such time for learning by reading books in different aims. The table 1 shows the use of the free time of students and adults taken their mind to read the books and other concerned from media resources. According to the outcomes of the survey, there were 59 percent of pupils use their leisure time for reading books. The act of



learning by themselves and participating extra class for learning subject are 30 and 42 percents respectively. It seems to be that students would like to learn much more intensive way. The survey results also indicated that there were 56.8 percent of non-pupils (adults) used their free time for reading books. It is true that the current need of book reading of Vietnamese people is high in term of self-learning and entertainment activities. An ordinary people who spend much more times for an earn one's living and they seem to be worn out after working hard during the working day. Therefore, they like to watch TV with more easy and convenient ways for not only getting information and but also doing their relaxing.

*Table 1: The use of the leisure time of pupils and adults for reading books*

Reading activities		Percentage (%)
<i>Responses of pupil's readers</i>		
1	Book reading	59
2	Learning by themselves	30
3	Extra class for learning	42
4	Non-reading activities*	60
<i>Responses of non- pupil's readers (adults)</i>		
5	Book reading	56,8
6	Web watching	35
7	Learning by themselves	20
8	TV and/or video Watching	43
9	Other activities**	68

*Notes: \* House work to helping parent, gaming, TV and/or video watching, club activities, web watching and free doing of some habits*

*\*\* and free doing of some habits, gaming, tourist activity club activities and others*

It is a reasonable to say that TV watching and web searching by chance in some cases give more impression for people than reading books especially poor peoples and hard workers in different citizen classes. The main readers of the big libraries in each province are pupils and students, researchers in different subjects but not so more ordinary ones.

### ***The different requirement of books from different citizen classes***

One of expectation of the survey is that which kinds of books, the pupil and adult like best and it is very essential issues for making better development of library policy and other concerned reading culture one. We assume that reading culture policy depends on current need of reader for books in different citizen classes to offer high quality book for them and to implement appropriate reading extension. We also recognize that pupil are the most educational targets for long term development of the country. It is a tendency that the pupil would like to read more books and magazines associated with knowledge that they learn from different disciplines at school. As can be seen in the table 2, there were 22

percents of pupil reading special book concerned to school subject. Their purposes of reading such books are not only for promoting extended knowledge but also for having better exam. It is clear that in free time, pupils would like to concentrate their minds on reading concerned subjects that they learn at school time for having their better scores of examinations at the end of each semester. On the other hand, about 70 percents of pupils derive from farmer's families and they are poor ones. They are aware that if they graduate with high score they will have good opportunity to be a university student and will find a job in the city later. By this tactic, they can change their lives from very hard village's circumstances. Last, in the campaign of reading activity, we conceive an interest response of citizen that pupils, students and their parents as well need more concerned books associated with knowledge that they gain at school, such as textbook and other concerned book or/and magazine for improvement their basic knowledge. While adults/non-pupil like to read more books and magazines regarded to history, culture, sport and others. It is true that student's parents play more important role to pursuit their children to learn from book and magazine for gaining knowledge in different fields of live.

*Table 2: The requirement of reading books of pupil, pupil's parent and non-pupil reader (adult)*

Kind of books		Percentage %
<i>Responses of pupil's readers</i>		
1	Science introduction	19
2	Special book concerned to school subject	22
3	Old story book	11
4	Love story book	10
5	Spy story book	9
6	Others *	29
<i>Responses of pupil's parents about reading activity of their children</i>		
6	Old story book	28
7	Special book concerned to school subject	20
8	History book	11
9	Science introduction	9
10	Others**	32
<i>Responses of non- pupil's readers (adults)</i>		
11	Book of life manner in family	18
12	Politic and social book	16
13	Book of literature and art	22
14	Text book	10
15	Science introduction	12
16	Others***	22

\* Books consisted of contents of imaged story, spy story, love story, kung fu and famous person

\*\* Books comprised of contents of history, famous person, imaged story and kung fu

\*\*\*Books included contents of science and technology, pioneer sport and economy

The table 2 also indicates that adult would like to read book of book of literature and art, life manner in family, and politic and social books. The percentage of responses of such books was 22, 18 and 16 percents respectively. While there were 12 percents peoples liked to read the science introduction book.

The quality of book and magazine need more improvement both the content and the kind - diversity to meet reader's current need of different citizen classes in different locations for different reader ages. In some cases, it is true that some books and magazines are just satisfied for normal liking of the reader but not so engaging with their deep soul. This fact is a clue for our improvement of the reading culture's strategy to orient reader's manner to approach to better life with full meaning perfect ones. On the other concerned reason to support higher quality of book is that copyright law need to implement more effectively in practice.

### ***The role of parents for stimulating book reading of their children***

Parents play very important power to motivate their children in reading book and it is one of special characteristics of book reading activity in our society.

*Table 3: The care about book reading of pupil from their parents*

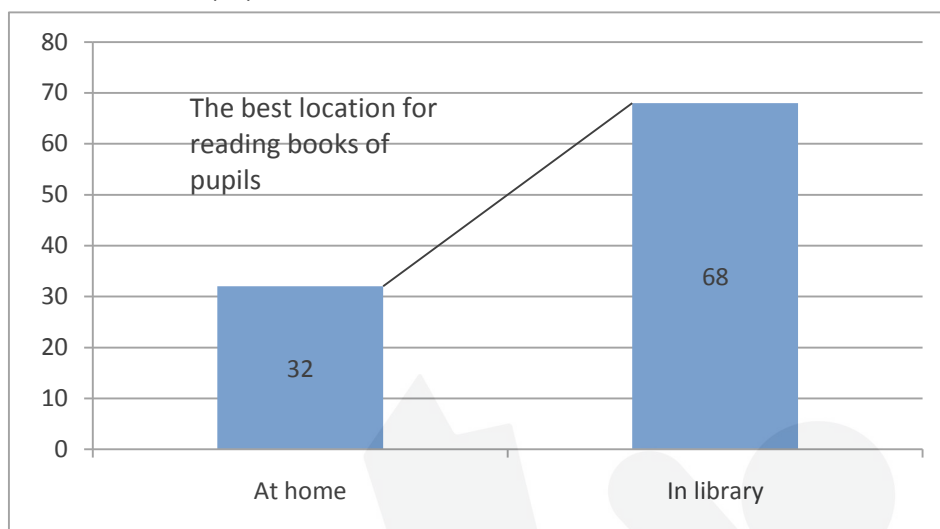
<b>Levels of interest</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Frequent interest	78
Do not care about	6
Sometime do care about	16

The table 3 shows that there were 78 percents of pupil's parents in frequent cared about book reading of their children. It is reasonable to say that parents would like to make more forces to their children to learn with the aim of having highest score if possible. In some cases, parents do not like their children to read a book concerned to other aspects of the life for extending their knowledge. Making much more pressure in learning school disciplines for honor from pupil's parent is mean that they usually give more psychological stress for their children. It seems that some pupils could not have their pioneer lives.

Concerning responses of pupil's parents about reading activity of their children, they confirm that their children were only 20 % in reading special book concerned to school disciplines (table 2). Such data was lower than responded from pupils themselves. The figure 1 indicated that there were 68 percents of pupil's parents would like their children to read books and magazines at the library and just 32 percents of them need their children to read book at home.



**Figure 1: Response from pupil's parents about the best location for reading books of their children (%)**



### ***Some aspects of the library service***

The library service is also play more essential to stimulate reading activity in our society for better life of our citizen. Table 4 shows that there were 43 percent responses from readers that open time of library coincided class time.

**Table 4: Responses from readers about quality of the library service**

Issues		Reasons and/or sub-issues	Percentage %
1	<i>Difficulty of finding books</i>	Open time of library coincides class time	43
2		Do not know how to find a book in the library	27
3		Poor book resources in library	30
4	<i>Methods to find a book in the library</i>	Select from content bill	24
5		Shell-selection in bookcases	44
6		Catalogues	11
7		Select from list content in computer	21
8	<i>Expectation of reader for better service from the library</i>	Book diversity in the library	35
9		Daily open time of the library is longer	29
10		Good assistance from library officers	16
11		Need more guidelines for searching books	16
12		Other responses	4
13	<i>Some</i>	Increase the open time of the	14

	<i>suggestions from readers to make better services from the library</i>	library	
14		Offer more books and magazines to satisfy different kinds of the readers	32
15		Book extension diversity in library service	18
14		Enhancing investment in buying books and magazines for district and commune libraries from local and central Governments	17
15		Call upon private donors or/and private library in supporting and servicing mini-library or and bookcase in the poor locations included given books and magazines, rooms for reading	16
16		Other responses	3

It is most barriers for pupils to go to the library and we need to overcome the problem by adjusting library open time in right way. This table 4 also indicated that there were 30 percents of people to complain that poor book resources in the library.

### ***The role of commune library for promoting reading activity of minority ethnic peoples***

It is true that the farmer and the handed worker classes in the country consist of 80 percent of Vietnamese population in total. The poorest farmer usually lives in upland region of the country. They face extremely difficult condition for the development of resource-related production due to complex topography and frequent natural calamities. In the case of minority ethnics, we assume that cultural barriers to discourage us from the task of introducing reading activity for such ones. There are 53 minorities in the country. The Government has been supporting much more money to help them for reduction of poverty by adopting appropriate technologies. However, generally, cultural barrier should overcome when people in minority communes are step by step to accessing with both local and international media and other rural development projects for reduction of poverty around such part of the country. Therefore, the development of book reading activity for promoting better life of such minorities is the first priority of our policy. On the other hand, it is clear that if you want to make your technology as a means of sustainable technology you had to engage your technology with indigenous knowledge of minority people and reading activity is powerful tool to open the way for adopting technology. So cultural barrier is a component of our thinking when we try to find out solutions for promoting reading activity in all remote areas of the country where minority people live.

Concerning to economic condition, their livelihoods depend on agriculture and forestry in the rural areas. They are a less-educated citizen and they could not make effort to buy a book or/and magazine for their daily reading. Thus, such classes are the main target group for promoting reading activity and establishing other policies concerned to making better development of reading culture for supporting their better lives in the way of approaching prosperous of the country.

The public library is popular in Vietnam especially in rural areas where poor farmers need more books for their reading in order to know about a development opportunity. During the time of survey, we also got some key responses from citizen about how to develop such library well. There were 32 and 14 percents of peoples raised their needs of supplying more kinds of books and magazines for consolidating public library and increasing more hours of opening such library respectively. There were 17 and 18 percents of citizens pressed their needs of sporting more facilities and developing more kinds of flexible services to match farmer's difficulty circumstances respectively. The fact raised from reading practice that public library model need more funding from the Government and NGOs to improvement of reading activity effective.

### ***The reading culture campaign for making book activity proper in the year of 2010-2011***

To make reading culture proper is one of strategies of the Vietnamese Government for improvement of citizen's knowledge and other lived skills for their better lives. A reading culture campaign in all provinces of the country has been doing from 2010 up till now. The overall aim of this campaign stimulates citizen to recognize the role of reading culture for development of each person, commune and national. This activity is also in eradication of poverty in the poor rural commune and better income for middle region and richer economy in some industrial zones. Through out the campaign, librarian, other governmental officers both local Government and Central one and the policy maker have got citizen's current requirement of book and magazine for their reading. And especially which kinds of book may math to each interest group from different citizen classes in different zones of the country.

Other main aim of the campaign has been done that we determine current status of library service systems in different provinces of the country and to establish appropriate solutions both short and long terms for development of library systems to offer an opportunity for people to go to library to read books especially in remote areas of the country. During the time of the campaign, there are many book reading festivals in Ha Noi capital and other cities in Vietnam. The event makes much more opportunity for brings readers, authors, publication houses and governmental officers together in dialoging and exchanging of ideas each other on their concerned read activity (Vu Duong Thuy Nga. 2011 a). Such sharing is useful not only for improvement of library service but also for getting more basic information and documents for providing essential issues to policy maker in order to establish new library's law engaging "Doi Moi" policy of the Government.

### **Appropriate solutions for enhancing book reading activity and library service**

According to the Vietnamese Government policy now, there are more attentions, which should be directed toward finding additional or alternative methods of making better use of reading culture as a key tool to provide knowledge and other labor skills to citizen (Vu Duong Thuy Nga, 2011 c). One of important approaches is to better matching the new reading culture policy to locally existing reading conditions.

We suggest some appropriate solutions are particularly followings:

(i) The development of book reading activity for promoting better life of citizen in Vietnam is recognized most important action of library system of the country and it need more support from the Government both local and central governments and NGOs as well. Therefore, it is necessary to have more appropriate policies to support reading activity and especially in scheming library service and developing library policy for matching available facility to human resource of librarian in order to supply more books and other concerned ones with higher quality to readers in different zones of the country.

(ii) To be aware the role of reading activity in all classes of Vietnamese citizen for promoting quality of life need to focus on public campaign of reading culture not short term aim but also long term run. Local governments in each province and the library department of Ministry of Culture – Sport – Tourism need to support to organize book reading festival annually.

(iii) To educate pupil and student the role of reading considers as a powerful tool for promoting their education and to offers more e-books and other media units to them not only in school but also in other public locations.

(iv) To enhance investment for library facility in all locations and improve quality of information service in different ways of media resources of the country is the first priority of our policy.

(v) To improve quality of book and magazine both content and kind diversity in all publishing in the country should be done for long term development of the reading culture.

(vi) To use informative high technology for delivering information more quick and convenient way is very necessary for the recent readers.

(vii) To encourage investors to establish private library to diversity such service in different zones of the country is one of the priority in our policy.

(iix) To join library system of the country to the global network and to develop international cooperation in all aspects of library service is one of our destinations of the library development.

## Conclusions

- The requirement of the Vietnamese citizen is high in terms of facilities such as of book and magazine both in quantity and quality and good library as well.
- Though the Government has been funding more money to consolidate and develop library system and reading activity to offer good condition for the citizen in different classes for reading books and magazines, much more efforts should be done in improvement of library system both facility and human resource of library service.
- To enhance book reading activity has been providing basic knowledge and essential skills of life for establishing new generation of Vietnamese and the reading culture activity has been supporting for new policy of development of Vietnam from the period of 2011 to 2020 to be come industrial country at the end of the stage.





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