

2020-2021 Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching Research Program for U.S. Teachers (Fulbright DA)

Vietnam Country Profile

Partner organization: Fulbright Program in Vietnam | U.S. Embassy - Hanoi

Eligible program dates: September – December 2020 or January – April 2021

Language requirement: No Vietnamese language skills are required.

Host institution: Grantees are placed at a host university or educational organization, which facilitates grantees' connections to local primary and secondary schools. The Fulbright Program in Vietnam arranges placements for grantees and informs them once finalized. Placements can be in urban or rural settings. When communicating with the host institution, grantees should explicitly discuss what to expect during their grant period.

Dependent Information: An allowance of \$2,000 per eligible dependent will be provided as part of the Fulbright DA grant. Host institutions sponsor visas for all dependents. Host institutions may recommend housing options for the family and school options for the children. International schools are available in the big cities including Hanoi, Hochiminh City, Danang, Hai Phong, etc. School fees range from \$17,000 to \$35,000 per academic year. For primary schools and secondary schools, fees reach up to an average of \$15,000. Bilingual private schools and people-founded schools in Vietnam charge lower fees compared to international institutions.

Country Overview

Vietnam is a country textured by mountains and hills, meeting the borders of China, Laos and Cambodia with a land area comparable to Italy or Japan. Its eastern coastline cradles the Gulf of Tonkin in the north, meets the South China Sea, and juts out to face the Gulf of Thailand in the south. The Red River Delta of the north and the Mekong Delta of the south are notable cultivation areas with rich soil and tried and tested ancient agricultural practices. With its variation in altitudes and latitudes, Vietnam's climate includes monsoons, surprisingly frosty temperatures, dry and hot weather, and steamy humidity. Vietnam's main cities are Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon), Hue, and Danang.



According to World Bank's 2010 data, Vietnam has a population of over 88 million, of which roughly 85% is ethnic-Vietnamese, followed by 3% ethnic Chinese who live mostly in the Cho Lon District of Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC). The remaining 12% is composed of over 50 ethno-linguistic minority groups such as the Khmer, Cham, and Muong.

The lifestyles of the Vietnamese people vary widely, from the agrarian outlook of rural villagers to the pop-culture of urban youth. However, a recently arrived visitor would note that some behavior is typical throughout. For instance, privacy is not as strict of a concept as in many other societies and curious stares and immediate entry through unlocked doors is not uncommon. Due to Buddhist influence, shoes are often removed before entry into homes, temples, and some places of business, and, as in many Asian countries, "saving-face" is an essential ingredient in daily interaction. Although common delays in business can be frustrating, a pleasant demeanor invites a more encouraging response, and showing anger or demanding service can hinder rather than accelerate results.

Vietnam's history is recognizable to most as one of constant efforts to stave off colonialism in search of security for a distinct identity. The country has struggled with a feudal past and most notably Chinese, French and American influences, which to this day can be witnessed in the unique composition of the nation's culture. These relationships can be detected through the architecture, where it is common to see turn-of-the-century French style villas neighboring pagodas and imposing gray block buildings, typical of Communist architecture. Its mixture of religious influences can be construed as a result of these associations as well. By far, Mahayana Buddhism is the predominant tradition, and ancestor worship is a common practice in many households. Theravada Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Catholicism, Islam and Cao Daim, an indigenous fusion of western and eastern religious philosophies, are also practiced.

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) controlled by the Vietnamese Communist Party, led Vietnam into major economic and political reforms in the mid-80s under the banner of *Doi Moi* (renovation). Vietnam continues to adopt and implement reform measures in trade policy, private sector development, banking, public expenditure management, and law. These reforms, combined with a series of trade agreements with other countries such as the Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) with the U.S., are expected to lead to significant economic development and growth.

Educational System Overview

Education is an important part of society in Vietnam. It is a major preoccupation of government and is a highly valued and respected part of life in Vietnamese society. The Vietnam education and training sector is large, present in almost every village, and touches virtually every family. There are almost 18 million students in the education system and over half a million teachers and instructors.



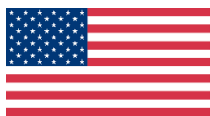
In recent years, the education system has continued to expand and there is a huge educational need for young Vietnamese. Education is perceived as being not only the devotion to study society's core values but also as a chance for advancement. Vietnamese people consider having their children study in a high-quality school as being an investment that ensures they will have a bright future.

Vietnam's national education system has five general levels: early childhood education, general education, vocational training, university education, and continuing education. Early childhood education includes nursery schools (from 3 months to 3 years of age) and kindergartens (ages 3–5); general education includes primary education (grades 1–5); lower secondary education (grades 6–9), and upper secondary education (grades 10–12), with entrance and final exams. There is also a vocational or technical training track as an alternative option to upper secondary education; and higher education with college, undergraduate, master, and doctoral degrees.

Education management for kindergarten, primary, and lower-secondary education is decentralized to the district, and upper-secondary education to the provincial levels. The central Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) sets curriculum, publishes textbooks, and establishes rules on teaching and assessment. Expenses for early childhood education and general education (including primary, lower, and upper secondary schools) come mainly from the state budget. Most of Vietnam's schools are government-operated, although increasingly there has been a burgeoning private education sector.

The higher education administration in Vietnam is centralized. The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has the responsibility for all education and training at the national level. However, there are several higher education institutions in Vietnam that are under other line ministries, government agencies, or provincial peoples' committees. Examples of this are the Hanoi School of Public Health that falls under the Ministry of Health and Hanoi University of Industry under the Ministry of Trade and Industry. In addition, the two National Universities are nominally under MOET, though they operate independently as separate entities and report directly to the Office of the Government of Vietnam.

The Vietnamese education system is undergoing reform with regard to textbooks, curriculum, and teaching methods, although education institutions are not always up to international standards, especially in the case of higher education. There is now a strong drive forward to move away from rote learning in order to better engage students in critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and cooperative learning. While these positive developments signal a willingness to change the education system at all levels, leading by example has been a challenge since borrowing approaches from other contexts can be a slow process. By having direct contact with professionals from other countries who can describe and demonstrate new models, Vietnam's cadre of teachers and professors will be able to accelerate their willingness to change, which will also result in students becoming more prepared for the emerging workforce.





To facilitate education system reform, the Government has policies on open international relations that allow educational institutions to set up relations with foreign institutions to improve teaching and learning quality in Vietnam.

Possible topics of interest to U.S. educators:

- History (Vietnam War)
- Action Research
- Project-based learning
- Using technology in classroom
- Formative assessment
- Media literacy
- Cultural preservation
- Environmental management
- Educational accreditation

