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Journey toward Learning Society: Possibilities and challenges of Viet Nam Libraries

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Abstract

The government of Viet Nam has made a commitment to build a Learning Society by 2020 as a part of ASEAN countries' lifelong learning ambition. A range of related initiatives have been launched by Viet Nam government to encourage reading and raising awareness of its importance for sustainable development of knowledge and skills. Viet Nam aims to implement and develop lifelong learning activities in out-of-school education institutions such as libraries, museums, Community Learning Centres (CLCs) and cultural center clubs to achieve this national and regional goal. The government of Viet Nam currently operates more than 23,000 state funded libraries and 11,900 CLCs throughout the country and is in the process of both renovating and innovating public libraries, CLCs and museums. In addition to the work undertaken by the Viet Nam government, a number of enterprises have also been initiated by non-government and non-profit organisations to promote literacy and lifelong learning using libraries. As the concern authority believes that libraries can be a potential catalyst for Learning Society project, it is also essential to measure the possibilities and challenges of Viet Nam libraries. This analytical study, therefore, investigates some government and non-governmental initiatives focused on libraries, their impact on reading promotion and lifelong learning, and challenges they face. Proposing a way forward, the paper confirms that Viet Nam's libraries play an essential role in promoting reading and building a Learning Society in Viet Nam.

Key words

Learning society; Library; Lifelong learning; Viet Nam, NGO

Introduction

Background of Viet Nam Lifelong Learning Society Project

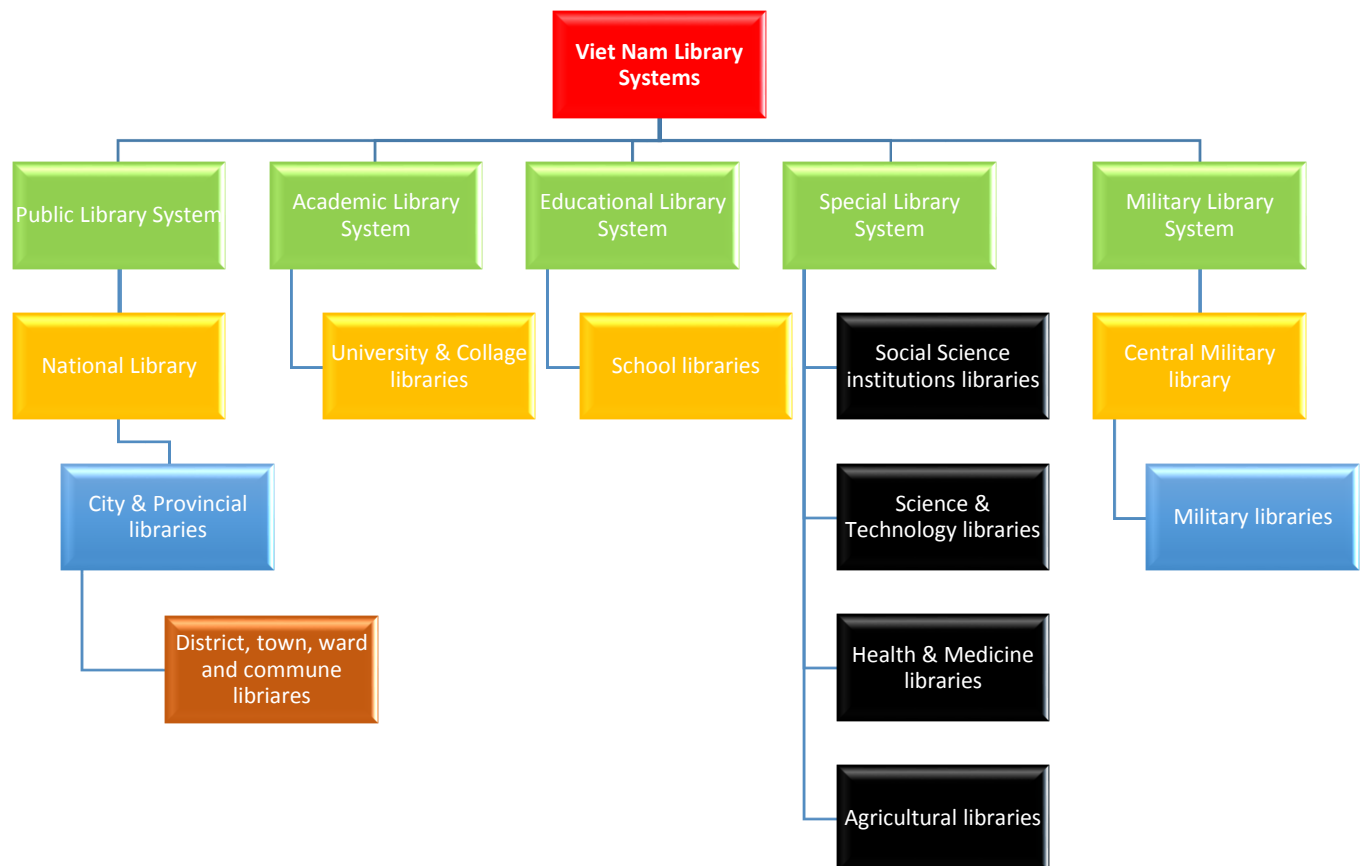
The government of Viet Nam has long recognised the importance of Lifelong Learning (LLL) for the development of individuals, communities and the country as a whole. LLL and non-formal education were enshrined in the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam in 1992 and recognised in National Education Law in 1998 and 2005, Vocational Training Law in 2006, and in many important documents of the Viet Nam Communist Party (MoET 2009). In 2005 Vietnamese Government adopted a strategy for creating a LLL society by 2010. Participating bodies included the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), the Vietnam Association for Learning Promotion (VALP), the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA), the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism (MoCST), and other ministries and agencies. As part of this “LLL project”, between 2005 and 2008 over 163,000 illiterate citizens enrolled in classes and over 123,000 attended advanced training courses. In 2008 alone, more than 5 million families registered to become “Studious Families”, of which more than three million were recognised. Over 50,000 families were awarded the title of “Study Encouragement Families” (VoV 2008). In 2013 the LLL project was extended to 2020 under the new official title of “Lifelong Learning Society”, with clear responsibilities for the ministries and agencies involved. A variety of activities were launched via the media, libraries, museums, community learning centres (CLCs) and cultural centres, with the aim of creating a Lifelong Learning Society in Viet Nam. The target of the extended LLL Society project is that 98% of people aged between 15 and 60 will be able to read and write by 2020. The project also aims to have 70% of rural labourers enroll in courses to improve their education and skills. It will provide secondary school education or equivalent training for 90% of export processing and industrial zone workers, and vocational training for 95%. Officials and public servants will learn a foreign language and receive training in information technologies (IT). Every official and public servant from central to district levels will attend refresher courses, and all commune level officials will take part in courses on leadership and management skills. Around 50% of students in schools and universities will be taught life skills on an annual basis.

Viet Nam Library Systems

Library activities appeared very early in Vietnam. In the 20th century, libraries and archives received considerable attention from the French in Indochina. At the present time, the network of

information agencies and libraries comes under the control of the MoCST. Moreover the MoET, Ministry of Information and Communications (MIC), People's Committees of all levels, Education Publishing House (EPH), Publishing Directorate, Vietnam Publishing Association, Vietnam Library Associations etc. are involved in developing library and information services throughout the country. For a developing country, Vietnam possesses a remarkably sophisticated library systems where more than 23,000 state funded libraries and over 25,000 people are working to provide different kinds of library services (NLV report 2008). Actually, there are five major library systems in Vietnam:

Figure -1: Viet Nam Library System



Public Library System

This system is headed by the *National Library of Vietnam (NLV) and consists of 64 City and Provincial libraries, 626 District libraries, 2016 Commune/ Precinct/ Town libraries, 9,828 Reading Rooms in villages/ hamlets and 46 Private libraries (Uc 2012 and Dung 2014). Public

libraries operate under the general administration of People's Committees of all levels. Besides, the Service of Culture, Sports and Tourism of all levels are responsible for professional activities of those libraries. In addition, while city and provincial libraries receive professional guidance and supports from the NLV; they have the responsibility to support District and Commune libraries in term of collection enhancement and professional activities. Table – 1 shows the number of city/ Provincial, District, Commune/ Precinct/ Town libraries and Reading rooms in villages/ hamlets and their collections, annual memberships, visitors and circulations:

Table-1: Libraries and their collections, annual memberships, visitors and circulations

Types of public libraries	Number of libraries	Memberships (thousand)	Visitors* (thousand)	Collection (Volumes)	Circulation (items)
Library of Vietnam National	01	20,000	310,629 (physical & virtual)	1,500,000	601,072
City & Provincial	64	219,501	9,343,152	9,136,764	33,943,705
Commune/ Precinct/ Town	2016	136,962	11,766,132	2,964,160	25,952,790
District	626	--	--	6,429,646	--
Reading rooms in villages/ hamlets	9,828	--	--	5,134,800	--

*statistics adapted from Uc (2012) and Dung (2014)

*The National Library of Vietnam (NLV) was established on November 21st, 1958 and was actually the successor of the Central Public Library of Indochina founded under the Decree dated on November 29th, 1917 by A. Sarraut, the French Governor-General of Indochina. On February 28, 1935 the Central Public Library of Indochina was renamed into Pierre Pasquier Library and then National Library on October 20th, 1945 when Vietnam just achieved independence from French. In 1945 there was only one library serving the entire country, with a collection of about 2,500 books and other printed material. This is now the National Library of Vietnam (Thomas 2009). Since November 21st, 1958, the library was renamed into National Library of Vietnam (NLV). NLV is independent with other libraries in terms of funding and administration. It operates under the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. The NLV has the

strongest professional influence over the other libraries in the country. It is also Vietnam's biggest library, the national bibliography publisher and the sole national legal depository agency which acquires and houses the most sufficient collection of materials published in Vietnam and Indochina since 1917. NLV has 178 employees and labor contracts, in which there is 1 doctor, 23 masters, 121 bachelors of library and information science and 34 of other majors. The library has a Board of Directors, Science Council and 13 functional Divisions (Dung 2014). According to a 2014 report by Dung, the NLB annually issues over 20,000 membership cards and the total access of readers at the library and online approximately 2,000,000 means average 6,000 visits per day.

Academic Library System

The Academic Library System in Vietnam operates under the Ministry of Education and Training. This System consists of over 1,700 libraries in 369 universities, colleges and Information Centers nationwide (Anh u.d.). They basically are established to serve the demands of officials, teachers and learners within such colleges, universities, and may serve other subjects according to such libraries' regulations. This library system worked quite strong and achieve innovations during the last few years (Uc 2012).

There are two Library Consortiums of this system:

- i. Consortiums of University Libraries in the North Vietnam (NALA)
- ii. Consortiums of University Libraries in the South Vietnam (VILASA)

Educational Library System

School libraries across the country are under this system. There are 24,686 school libraries throughout the country run by each individual primary, secondary and high school. At present, the Ministry of Education and Training is the higher administrative organization looking for the operation of this library system.

Special Library System

This system operates under Ministry of relevant Ministries and other governmental agencies. There are 63 city/provincial Institute for Information and Science Technology throughout the country and about 300 Library and Information Centers (Uc 2012). Special Libraries are established principally to serve the demands of officials, public employees, members of such organizations and units. 60 research libraries run by research institutes and 218 libraries and information centers under ministries and other governmental agencies. In addition, there are about 8,000 Cultural

communal Post Offices (CPOs), under the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, offering more than 10,000 bookshelves of legal documents (Thomas 2009).

Military Library System

Military Library System under the Ministry of Defence. About 1,500 libraries and mobile libraries are existent under this system, of them there are 54 main libraries. Each of them has the collection of from 200,000 to 300,000 volumes under its possession.

Literature Review

Initiatives Launched by the Vietnamese Government to Build a Learning Society

The government of Viet Nam has mobilised institutions such as libraries and museums to provide reading and learning opportunities (Carlsen 2010). These institutions have an atmosphere conducive to the promotion of good reading habits and the nurture of the “Learning Society” model (Hossain 2015). In his report Situation Analysis of Lifelong Learning in Vietnam, Arne Carlsen (2010) writes that “There is a gradual change in thinking of libraries, archives and museums as to how they can open up their spaces and contribute more to LLL. It is evident that they can co-operate with many other sectors to create learning opportunities, e.g. public libraries can act as local information centres on tourism, health, education offers, etc., mobile museum exhibitions can bring interesting ways to school children to learn history, geography, etc. or bring knowledge closer to ordinary people.” Carlsen’s statement is attested by a MoCST survey which found that 68% of pupils’ parents would like their children to read books and magazines at the library (quoted in Vu 2012). The government of Viet Nam sees libraries as key to the construction of a LLL society and continuously strives both to renovate existing city and provincial public libraries and to build new libraries and learning centres. For example, Quang Ninh province’s USD 43 million Library and Museum complex received the 2013 Construction of the Year award from the Vietnam Urban Planning and Development Association. Meanwhile, Da Nang province’s Culture, Sports and Tourism department has begun work on a new municipal library building with a total investment of USD 22 million (Hossain 2016).

The Government of Viet Nam is aware that promotion of reading culture is crucial for building a Learning Society. Therefore, the MoCST Vietnam, especially library branch have been

establishing strategies of the development of reading culture for period 2010 to 2020 (Vu 2012). The government has taken various steps to encourage reading throughout the country in order to generate new Vietnamese readers of the future. In 2014, it established a “Book day” (21 April) along with a “Book Street” and “Book Week” in the central cities and provinces, featuring seminars on books, exchanges between writers and readers, and a book auction. The day will help to highlight the responsibility of functional agencies and social organisations to help build a reading culture in Viet Nam. The MoCST also organises an annual reading festival on 23 April aiming to promote a culture of reading, especially among students. In 2011, a festival was held entitled “Reading for Tomorrow”, featuring activities such as a painting contest, presentations on reading culture and speed-reading techniques, and an exhibition of books (VoV 2011). The 2012 Vietnam International Book Fair attracted 82 book distribution companies and publishing houses from both inside and outside the country, including the Cuban Book Institute, the Asia Pacific Publishing Association and the Southeast Asian Publishing Association. Thirty million books were sold as a result of the event (VoV 2012a).

Creating a reading culture is one of the Vietnamese Government’s strategies for improving citizens’ knowledge and quality of life. A reading culture campaign has been under way in all provinces of the country since 2010. Its aim is to encourage citizens to recognise the importance of reading for personal, communal and national development. Through the campaign, librarians, policy-makers and both local and central government officers work together to supply citizens with books and magazines. A number of book festivals have been organised as part of the campaign, both in the capital Ha Noi and in other cities such as Ho Chi Minh City (HCM City) and Da Nang City. These events create opportunities for dialogue and exchange of ideas between readers, authors, librarians, CLC instructors, publishers and government officers. Such sharing is useful not only for promoting reading, but also for spreading information about the new library and CLC laws and LLL Society policy (Vu 2012). With the support of local government, a communal bookcase system (a basic form of public library) has been established in remote rural areas to offer reading material to farmers. According to Vu (2012), “The goal of the communal book case system is to eradicate poverty by improving the literacy of the poorest people, especially ethnic minorities. These small libraries have improved reading culture in the locality and provided opportunities for learning beyond the classroom”.

Initiatives Launched by the Non-government Organisations to Build a Learning Society

Besides the Viet Nam government, a number of national and international non-government organisations (NGOs) such as Room to Read, The Library Project and Aid for Kids have built and renovated over a thousand school and community libraries throughout the country. Room to Read, an international non-profit organisation, has built and renovated over 667 school libraries and donated more than 1,294,696 books, benefiting over 364,000 children (Hossain 2013). Through the “Smart Libraries” project, the Samsung Vina Electronics Company has built 28 hi-tech libraries, offering more than 40,000 books to 22,000 pupils across the country. The company also introduced a project entitled “Books that changed my life” to encourage reading, especially among young people (VoV 2013). The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has provided 280 computers, 42 printers, 42 cameras and a number of other devices to equip the province’s 18 public libraries and 24 communal post offices. The USD 50 million project, aimed at improving computer use and Internet access in Viet Nam, is being implemented in 400 public libraries and 1,500 communal post offices in 40 disadvantaged provinces across the country (VoV 2012b).

Table-2: Number of libraries established/ renovated by respondents NGOs/*NPOs

Name of NGOs/NPOs	Library establishment/ renovation	Book dotation (est.)	Beneficiary (est.)
Room to Read	862	1,294,696 90 titles pub.	364,000
Global Village Foundation	800	160,000	21,000
Samsung Vina Electronics Company	28 Hi Tech Library	40,000	22,000
The Library Project	25	3,500	
Library of Vietnam Project	22		
Peace Trees Vietnam	12		
Vietnam Fund for Education, Music and Infrastructure	11	2000	
Vietnam Dream for Success	06		

Name of NGOs/NPOs	Library establishment/ renovation	Book dotation (est.)	Beneficiary (est.)
Highland Education Development Organization	03		3,800
HSBC Vietnam's Future First program	01(Audio Books Library)	17,000	
Aid for Kids	03 (1 toy library)	1,500	4,500
Singapore International Foundation for a Better World	01 (mobile library)		
The Library and Education Assistance Foundation for Vietnam (LEAF-VN)		26.697	
The Asia Foundation		400,000	

*Adapted from Hossain (2013); *Non-profit organization*

Finding and discussion

Opportunities

According to a 2009 report by The Asia Foundation (TAF) and the National Library of Vietnam (NLV), provincial and city libraries are paying increasing attention to offering services for children. Although responsibility for meeting children's reading needs used to be devolved to local cultural houses and/or children's clubs, children and youth now account for 70–80% of the total users of Viet Nam's public libraries (TAF and NLV 2009). Public libraries also attract university and college students, pupils from specialised and upper secondary schools, public servants and retired officials, all of whom add to the diversity and vibrancy of their environment. Annually about 30% of patrons, including business managers and staff, farm managers and producers, and small/household business owners, use libraries to access information resources. TAF and NLV (2009) found that Thai Nguyen provincial library has about 5,000 users per month, while Nghe An and Tra Vinh provincial libraries attract 15,000 and 5,500 users per month respectively. District public libraries in Viet Nam attract on average 350–400 users per month, but the most popular have as many as 800 to 1,000. Most users of district public libraries are pupils/students, district

staff, and public servants. Although communication and outreach activities remain limited, rural farmers are increasingly patronising grassroots libraries.

Handicapped and blind people are also making increasing use of public libraries in Viet Nam. Every year Ha Noi Public Library and HCM City General Science Library (GSL) attract thousands of blind and handicapped users. In order to improve access to books and other materials for blind people, a mobile library for the blind has been built, operated by HCM City GSL and funded by Standard Chartered Bank Vietnam and the Force Fund of the Netherlands. A mobile Internet library funded by LG Electronics Corporation and the Amcham United Way Vietnam provides services to army personnel. This mobile library takes the form of a customised coach equipped with eight Internet-connected computers, two TV sets, a number of DVD players and some 1,500 books (Hossain 2014). For outreach purposes, provincial public libraries mainly use the “storytelling competition” model. Other communication and outreach activities, such as thematic discussion groups or book festivals, are rarely used in provincial public libraries due to financial and staff shortages (TAF and NLV 2009).

A NGO called Mobile Library Project by Global Village Foundation (GVF) in Vietnam brings library facilities to rural areas. Each of their Portable Mobile Libraries (PML) is a portable wooden box containing 200 to 250 books; novels, comics, short stories, appropriate for the grade levels of the schools. The estimated beneficiaries, accordingly GVF, are more than 21,000 students (Hossain 2013). Newspaper report by Luong (2015) confirms that Bookshelves and Libraries for Entertainment and Education has established more than 800 libraries and donated 160,000 books for mainly disadvantaged children in mountainous areas in the past 15 years of its existence. The organization also engage veteran teachers to open and manage free bookshelves in their homes, which is surprisingly effective. Each bookshelf consists of about 400 books, classified into 6 book groups including soft skills, literature, history and geographies, comics, health care and horticulture knowledge.

Vietnam Toy Library (VTL) the first community public library began in Hoi An province by Aid for Kid with support from the local government in 2007 and since that time it has offered books and other non-book materials to the area children and the general public. The VTL offers loaning books is a new concept in Vietnam which helps around 4500 area people to access books for

education and enjoyment (Hossain 2013). In the past six years, Vietnam Dream for Success (VDS) in cooperation with the Mission Office of the Archdiocese of Washington, Sr. Cecilia Nguyen and the archdiocese have been able to build and stock the first full-size Lavang Library in the vicinity of Phu Cam Cathedral in Hue in 2001. In 2002, through the same Missionary Cooperation Plan, the second full-size Lavang Library was built in the vicinity of Thanh Duc Parish in Da Nang. In 2003 the third full-size Lavang Library was built in the vicinity of Phat Diem Cathedral. Through individual donors, two Lavang Mission Libraries were established in the Diocese of Da Nang in 2003, and one Lavang Mission Library was established in the Diocese of Hue in 2004. These libraries now provide reading resources to thousands of children, young adults, and adults in North and Central Vietnam.

Highland Education Development Organization (HEDO) built one library for ethnic minority at boarding high school in Yen Bai province that is being used by more than 1500 ethnic students. Another two libraries were established for teacher training colleges in Cao Bang and or Gia Lai provinces where more than 2300 beneficiaries among the teachers can access them (Hossain 2013). HSBC Viet Nam developed over 17,000 copies of cassettes and computer discs to help the visually impaired people to understand the surrounding world and to raise their knowledge through the products of the Audio Books such as the text books of all subjects from primary school to high school, reference books, literature, history and fundamental sciences through a program namely Future First Program. Those copies were distributed to Sight Impaired Associations (SIA) nationwide serving a total 1.2 million people (Hossain 2016). Good Books Educational and Cultural Project (Sach Hay Project) was founded in 2007 by more than 70 of Viet Nam's most prominent intellectuals embodied by leading educators, writers, journalists, entrepreneurs, publishers, and government officials to promote better reading habits and raise the intellectual standards in Viet Nam by creating a virtual meeting point for millions to share world knowledge. With more than 10,000 books shared and recommended by 30,000 readers/members, 200 experts, 60 publishers and 35 news outlets, GoodBooks.vn or SachHay.org is widely recognized as the largest book-sharing forum in Viet Nam (Hossain 2013).

Due to these efforts on the part of both government and non-governmental organisations, reading habits and literacy in Viet Nam are gradually improving. This claim is attested by a 2013 study

conducted by the Publishing and Printing Department of Viet Nam, which reported that in 2013 Vietnamese students read an average of 3.2 books, including textbooks (VNS 2014). This is higher than the figure for Chinese students, who read less than three books in the same year. However, it is far fewer than the 20-plus books read by Japanese students and the 10 books or more that Americans got through (Global Times 2013).

Challenges

The Government of Viet Nam not only recognized that the development of reading culture is vital but also the country has started to make it proper. According to Vu (2012), the number of book per one citizen is still poor. The villager in remote areas is very difficult to approach to media resources especially to libraries. The school library still poor in book source both amount of book and magazine and quality of book service of which also attested by Vu (2012) indicated that there were 30 percent of people to complain that poor book resources in school and public libraries. Thomas (2009) investigated the situation of school libraries and found that only 13,000 (out of 24,686) of which meet national standards and only about 43% of the 26,000 school library custodians in Viet Nam are professional librarians; their knowledge and skills are therefore often out of date.

The library service is also play more essential role to stimulate reading activity in Vietnamese society for better life of our citizen. However, a research conducted by the MoCST found that there were 43 percent responses from readers that open time of library coincided class time (Vu 2012). Another study undertaken by Nhung (2011) shows that in Vietnam, teachers are largely unaware of public library resources and school timetables are too rigid to take advantage of useful library events. According to Viet Nam National University lecturer Tran Huu Ta, Vietnamese children's reluctance to read is due partly to parents' and teachers' failure to nurture good reading habits at an early age, and partly to crowded study schedules and evening classes. It is most barriers for pupils to go to the library and the MoCST and Education department need to overcome the problem by adjusting library open time in right way.

The public library is popular in Viet Nam especially in rural areas where poor farmers need more books for their reading in order to know about a development opportunity. In their investigations, Vu (2012) and Hossain (2014) found some key responses from citizen about how to develop school and public libraries well. There were 32 and 14 percent 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 (Vu 2012). There were 35 percent university lecture and 49 percent high school teacher pressed the needs of improving library activates, facilities and developing more kinds of flexible services to match users difficulty circumstances (Hossain 2014).

According to Nhung (2011), libraries and librarians in Vietnam tend to focus only on those people who specifically request their services, rather than proactively reaching out to the general public. Until now, there has been no unified policy for the development of information and library professionals in Viet Nam, and there lacks a coherent policy for the training of information and library staff, and the employment of these trained staff at the different levels. There is also no policy to encourage this group to use their capacities to the maximum. Last but not least, there is no official standard regulation for the running of libraries; consequently, each library works autonomously (Tam, 2012).

Conclusion and Recommendations

To accomplish the Learning Society ambition, with other stakeholders, libraries in Viet Nam must perform as reading clinic in order to make a literate, peaceful and prosperous Viet Nam. The author would like to suggest some appropriate solutions based on his understanding which are followings:

- (i) **To create a comprehensive public library system in Viet Nam.** To achieve that there is a need of national coordination and standardization in certain fields. Here the NLV should play more strategic role and should have a clear mandate and adequate resources to act as a central resource for library automation, digitization, standardization, coordination and professional training;
- (ii) **To strengthen libraries,** it is important to raise the awareness of the role of libraries and also to improve the library services. Service attitudes and quality of service must be developed. To eliminate the gap among urban, rural and provincial libraries, the MoCST, Viet Nam Library Associations and the NLV should be an important actor to have a breakthrough and become more dynamic to promote library services and to increase the understanding of the role of library and librarians. Investment for library facility in all locations and improve quality of information services in different ways

- of media resources e.g. e-library and digital library of the country should be the first priority of the library development policy;
- (iii) **To increase public awareness through marketing and outreach activities.** A survey by TAF and NLV (2009) found that less than 4% of current and potential library users interviewed said that they knew about their local library through outreach activities, and less than 10% had heard about it through the media. It is, therefore, essential that public libraries in Viet Nam step up their efforts to carry out marketing and outreach activities in different zones of the country;
 - (iv) **To improve librarians' ICT and user advocacy skills** to connect with users wherever they are. This is particularly important as reported by TAF and NLV (2009) show that 70.6% of provincial library staff surveyed rated their IT knowledge as weak or average; 72% gave a similar rating to their client-serving skills;
 - (v) **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. To improve quality of book and magazine both contents and diversity in all publishing in the country should be done for long term development of the reading culture (Vu 2012);
 - (vi) **To build partnerships in multiple dimensions** in order to enhance library services and facilities. For example NGOs can play a significant role by developing library infrastructure, providing books, and training librarians within their corporate social responsibility (Hossain 2013);
 - (vii) **To integrate library system of the country** to the global network and to develop international cooperation in all aspects of library service is one of the destinations of the Viet Nam library development. The VLA would benefit from greater regional and international cooperation, for example with the Congress of Southeast Asian Librarians (CONSAL), the Library Associations of Singapore and Thailand, as well as the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), the American

Library Association (ALA) and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) (Hossain 2014);

- (viii) **To lunch library-based adult and family literacy programmes.** For various reasons, libraries are the perfect place to provide adult and family literacy classes with service oriented opening hours and approachable staff. They have ideally easy access to all the resources needed to run an adult to family literacy program. In Vietnam, for instance over 86,000 students quit school during the September-December (2012) semester, according to a MoET report (Hossain 2014). They can be invited to the public library to enjoy reading and non-reading activities alike, such as lectures, movies or discussion groups to facilitate their first step back into learning;
- (ix) **To development curricula of library and information science schools in Viet Nam** in order for libraries to promote literacy, reading habit, lifelong learners and linkage generations to build Learning Society. Librarians need to be educated to the important role they have as leaders in the profession. In so doing, library schools have a responsibility to develop curricula to promote library literacy and technology literacy (Hossain 2014);
- (x) **To establish collaboration between schools, public libraries and the CLCs.** Literacy activities directed at children rely on a strong relationship between libraries and schools. Public library and school co-operation are therefore at the heart of the “Want to Read” programme. However, most school libraries in Viet Nam are below national standards, and school timetables are too rigid to take advantage of public library events (Nhung 2011). To overcome these difficulties, school libraries need to form towards a lifelong learning society through reading strategic partnerships with local public libraries and/or CLCs. Local government should work to create a collaborative atmosphere among teachers, librarians and CLC instructors.

There are, of course, impressive examples of ambitious services such as the General Sciences Library in HCMC, the National Library, and the brand new Public Library in Hanoi. In essence, journey toward Learning Society requires a continuous process of innovation. Project activities

need to be closely monitored and experiences and results documented so that best practice can be adapted and replicated in new surroundings. As the incumbent providers in the current system, public, schools and university libraries must not only seek to drive innovation but also learn to be “good adopters”.

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