

Situation Analysis of Community Learning Centres (CLCs) in Vietnam

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1. Establishment and expansion of CLCs in Vietnam

Before the establishment of CLCs in the 90s of the last century, Vietnam has been developing and maintaining a number of multi-functional Continuing Education Centres (CECs) at district and provincial levels. These CECs aim to meet diverse learning needs of different groups of learners who could not attend formal schools in education system, and to contribute to the development of human resources in the locality as well as of the nation as a whole (Dao, 2010).

Nevertheless, these CECs encounter certain limitations in meeting increasingly diverse demands of local learners, one of which is that they are distantly located from people who live in the communes, villages, and wards, not at districts' or provinces' central area. Therefore, the introduction and establishment of CLCs at grassroots level – communes, wards, and sub-towns – in the late 90s proved to be timely and necessary.

Since piloted period in 1997-2000, [within a project supported by UNESCO Bangkok and NFUAJ Tokyo Japan](#), to present, CLCs system in Vietnam has rapidly expanded, with 10,696 CLCs nationwide, accounting for over 96% of total communes, wards, and sub-towns of the country. To date, there are 40 out of 63 provinces/cities have established their CLCs, in which 100% of communes, wards, and towns in such provinces/cities have had its CLC (MOET, 2011). To provide a legal framework and facilitate the operation and development of CLC system, there are a number of national policies, strategies, and legal documents at various levels dealing with CLCs.

1.1 National policies and strategies regarding CLCs

The orientation of non-formal education (NFE) development in general, and the development of CLC in particular, has been demonstrated in a number of legal documents, policies and strategies of Vietnam.

- Clause 1, Article 4, Law on Education 2005 affirmed that *"the national education system includes formal education and continuing education"*.
- Article 44, Law on Education 2005 clearly states the task of continuing education is to *help people learn and work at the same time, learn continuously and in lifetime for personal fulfillment, expanding knowledge, improving level of education and profession to increase life quality, finding job, self creating job and adapting to social life. The State has policies to develop continuing education, implementing education for all, and building a learning society.*
- Clause 1, Article 46, Law on Education 2005 affirms that CLCs are continuing education institutions at commune, ward, and town levels.
- The policy and orientation to develop CLCs and CE system have also been highlighted in a number of Communist Party's Resolutions, such as: Resolution of Party Congress IX (4/2001),

Conclusion of Central Conference 6, term IX (7/2002), Central Conference 7, term IX (3/2003), Party Congress X (4/2006), Politburo's Directive No. 11-CT/TU on 13/4/2007, etc.

- Educational Development Strategy 2001 – 2010 states the need to “build a learning society, enabling people of all ages, all backgrounds to learn continuously and in a lifelong basis”.
- Prime Minister's Decision No.112/2005/QĐ-TTg dated 18/5/2005 on approving the National Project on “Building Learning Society for the period 2005 - 2010” stipulates the need to build a learning society at national level so that all the people of all ages and educational backgrounds have access to continuing and lifelong learning. In this direction, continuing education is affirmed to be an important force in the process of developing such learning society.
- Prime Minister's Directive No. 02/2008/CT-TTg dated 8/1/2008 on enhancing learning promotion movement and building a learning society, in which request related ministries, sectors, and localities to study and develop policies and mechanisms for investment and development of continuing education institutions and CLCs.
- MOET Minister enacted the Regulation on organization and operation of CLCs at commune, ward, and sub-town levels according to Decision No.09/2008/QĐ-BGDĐT dated 24/3/2008.
- Ministry of Finance's Circular No.96/2008/TT-BTC dated 27/10/2008 on guidance for financial support from state budget for CLCs.

1.2 Objectives and target groups of CLCs

Objectives of CLCs

CLCs in Vietnam have the following main objectives:

- Creating learning opportunities for all people to improve quality of life and to develop community's human resources;
- Meeting learning needs, “learn what is needed”, and lifelong learning for all;
- Building continuing educational system at grassroots level so that all people can have access to learning and can participate in educational activities in the community.

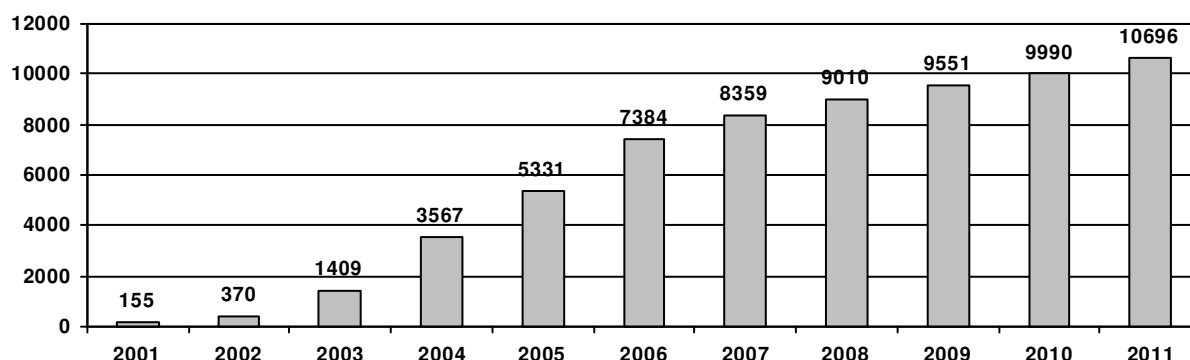
To fulfill these objectives, CLCS are to perform the following tasks:

- Implementing literacy and post-literacy continuing education programs; strengthening quality of basic education; enhancing knowledge provision programs to increase community people's awareness and quality of life; collaborating with other agencies/organizations in implementing programs on agriculture, industry, aquaculture, and others in the locality.
- Organizing cultural and sport activities; providing consultation to community members on education and learning; participating in social problems prevention campaigns.
- Studying community's learning needs to develop contents and forms of learning which are relevant to specific conditions of each target group.
- Managing the Centre's finance, facilities, and equipment in accordance with the law's regulations.

Target groups and beneficiaries of CLCs:

CLCs aim at providing learning and educational opportunities for all people in the community regardless of their ages, races, backgrounds, and social status. However, more attention are paid to groups of people with less opportunities for learning and education, such as pre-school children, out-of-school/street children, women, the elderly, the disabled, and ethnic people, etc.

1.3 Number of CLCs



The development of CLCs in Vietnam, 2001-2011

(Source: Continuing Education Department – MOET Vietnam, 2011)

From a modest number of only 10 piloted CLCs in 1997-2000 period, CLCs have now become an important educational institution in the national education system, which was legally recognized in the Law on Education 2005 and attract attention of various management levels as well as learners in the communities (VNIES, 2010). The table above shows the rapid development of CLCs in the period from 2001 to 2010. As mentioned earlier, currently the total number of CLCs at grassroots level is **10,696**.

The table below shows the expansion of CLCs in comparison with other types of learning institutions.

Types/ Academic year	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
Provincial/District Continuing Edu. Centres	646	668	684	706
Complementary Schools	24	16	8	11
Foreign language/ Informatics Centres	1300	843	1243	2197
CLCs	9010	9551	9990	10696

(Source: Continuing Education Department – MOET Vietnam, 2011)

1.4 Types of activities taking places at CLC

As a multi-functioned meeting point for the community, CLC is a place to organize several types of activity, as briefly described in the table below.

#	Lesson, Training, Activities at CLC	Please tick
1	Literacy	✓
2	Post literacy	✓
3	Non formal Basic Education	✓
4	Technical, Vocational, Income generation	✓
5	Early Childhood Care and Education	✓
6	Equivalency Programme (Primary)	✓

7	Equivalency Programme (Lower/junior secondary)	✓
8	Equivalency Programme (Secondary)	
9	Community dialogue and meeting	✓
10	<i>Others:</i> cultural exchanges; sport activities; learning promotion; prevention of social problems; conducting survey on community's learning needs...	✓
11	Programs to respond to learners' needs, to update knowledge, and transfer technologies	✓

2. Quality Assurance of programme delivery and learning achievements

Quality assurance system and criteria for assessment of CLCs are primary concerns that Vietnam focuses on at this stage. Although having more than 10,000 CLCs nationwide, up to 2011, but the number of effectively-operated CLCs are around or less than 30%, according to an unofficial evaluation (Dao, 2010; VNIES, 2010). In the period from 2007 to 2008, UNESCO Hanoi has supported MOET in LIFERSS project to improve operational capacity of CLCs. Vietnam Learning Promotion Association (VLPA), an active partner in the development and operation of CLCs, also provides support in this area. Most recently, a VLPA conference has been organized in June 2011 to propose to MOET a set of criteria for assessing CLCs in the period 2011-2015. Currently, with assistance from UNESCO Hanoi office, MOET Vietnam and the Research Centre for Nonformal Education (RECENFED) are in the process of developing a framework of national criteria for assessing CLCs' activities and programs – in which both internal and external efficiency of CLCs will be assessed based on self evaluation of each CLC and independent evaluations of concerning organizations in the locality where that CLC is located.

2.1 Quality Assurance System for CLC programme delivery

As stipulated in the Decision No.09/2008/QĐ-BGDĐT and MOET's Regulation on the organization and operation of CLCs, districts' education and training department is the management level that provides guidance and direction regarding professional contents and programs of CLCS. Yet, also according to the above-mentioned legal document, CLCs are also under the direct management and supervision of people's committees at commune level. In addition, Continuing Education Centres (CEC) are also regarded as resource centres and supporting agencies for CLCs, which provide consultancy and assistance to CLCs in terms of programs, delivery, personnel, and learning materials (MOET, 2008; VNIES, 2010)

Based on the range of educational and learning programs/activities as promulgated in the MOET's Regulation on CLCs (2008), Directors of CLCs are to develop learning schedule and concrete timetable for each program/activity (Clause 2, Article 15 of the Regulation).

2.2 Quality Assurance/Certification system to assess learning achievements

In accordance with MOET's Regulation on CLCs (2008), the recognition of learning achievements at CLCS is stipulated as follows:

- (1) By completing literacy program and post-literacy continuing education program as mentioned in Clause 1, Article 4 of this Regulation, if learners meet the conditions as stipulated by MOET Minister, they will be awarded a certificate from the Director of district's Continuing Education Centre.

(2) By completing other learning programs as mentioned in Clause 1, Article 4 of this Regulation, depending on content, duration of the program, learners will have CLCs' Directors' certification of their learning achievements (if required by learners).

3. Decentralization and Management of CLC

Decentralization of CLCs' organization and management has always been encouraged by Vietnamese government to engage and promote active participation of various stakeholders in enhancing quality of CLCs provision and efficient use of available resources.

3.1 Organization chart from the Ministry/district government to CLCs

See *Figure 1* (next page) for the chart of CLC in relationships with other agencies and institutions.

3.2 Decentralization of programme delivery and curriculum development

In various legal documents and related materials dealing with operation and activities of CLCs, this form of learning institution is always regarded as a “for people, by people, of people” establishment (VNIES, 2010). In MOET's Regulation on CLCs (2008), it is also clearly stated that “CLCs are directly managed by the People's Committees of the communes, with professional guidance from district's department of education” (Article 6, Chapter I)

With regard to the delivery of programs in CLCs, facilitators and teachers in CLCs may be secondment teachers/trainers assigned by district's department of education, independent experts/lecturers, or volunteers who work for CLCs on contractual basis (MOET, 2008).

In terms of curriculum development and learning materials of CLCs, MOET's Regulation (2008) specifies that CLCs use the materials developed by related ministries, sectors, and agencies; local materials can also be used with guidance and appraisal from provincial department of education or authorized agencies (Article 16, Chapter III). In fact, CLCs management board and teachers/facilitators are always encouraged to design and implement their own curriculum, training and learning materials based on actual needs of local learners. However, due to limited capacity of personnel and resources, this level of decentralization is still far from reaching its effectiveness.

3.3 Management of CLC

As a community-based establishment, *CLCs are under direct management of the commune's People's Committee* – highest level of local authority at commune level.

According to MOET's Regulation (2008), responsibilities of the commune's People Committee with regard to CLC include:

- Providing consultation to the commune's People's Council in arranging local budget to invest in the construction and development of the CLC, including duty allowance for CLC's managers and teachers.
- Directly managing the organization, personnel, content and work plan of the CLC.
- Facilitating CLC's operation so that it can fulfill the tasks assigned and rights.
- Collaborating with primary, lower secondary schools, learning promotion association at commune level, socio-economic organizations, people's unions, and organizations working

in the field of industry-, agriculture-, forestry-, aquaculture-promotion to support CLC's activities.

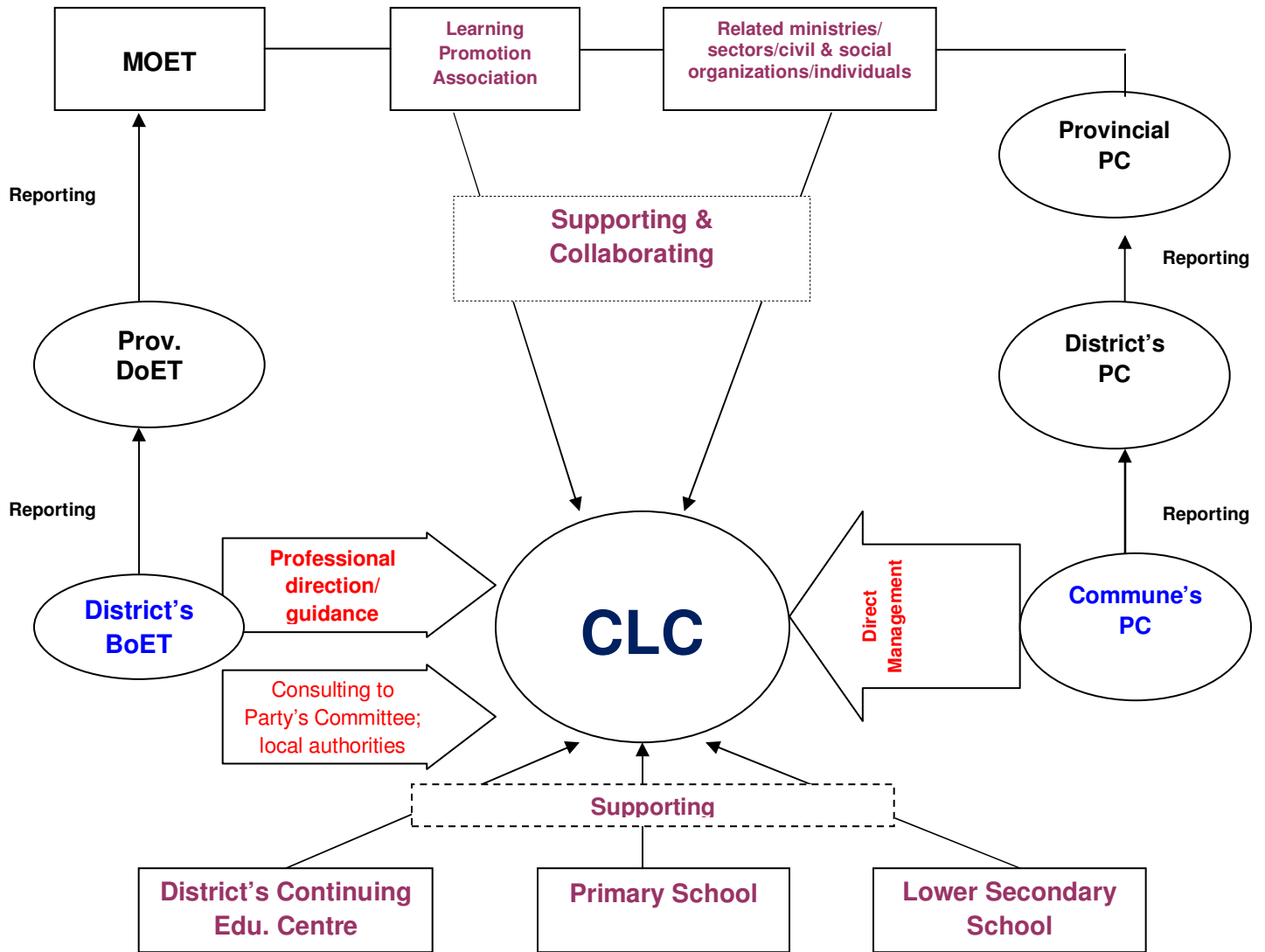


Figure 1: CLC in the relationships with various authorities and organizations

Notes:

- BoET: District's Bureau of Education and Training
- PC: People's Committee
- DoET: Provincial Dept. of Education and Training
- MOET: Minister of Education and Training

In terms of professional management, district's Bureau of Education and Training (BoET) has the following responsibilities in managing CLC's activities:

- Providing consultation to Party's executive committee, local authority at district level on policy, solutions to facilitate CLC's activities;
- Providing guidelines and directions with regard to the forms and contents of CLC's activities;
- Supporting human resource for CLCs;
- Conducting professional training for CLCs' managers and teachers/facilitators;
- Reporting periodically to district's People's Committee and provincial's Department of Education and Training (DoET) on the management and activities of the CLCs located in the area.
- With regard to building management capacity and experience, CLCs also receive assistance and consultancy from related bodies and resource centres such as Continuing Education Centres at district/provincial levels, Learning Promotion Associations, communes' department of education, etc.

4. ICT and CLC

4.1 Use of ICT to improve CLC management, monitoring and its delivery

Use of ICT is always encouraged and promoted in CLCs' management, programs and activities to increase the quality of learning and participation of learners.

With regard to CLCs management, with guidance and supports from Unesco Hanoi, Continuing Education Department (CED) of MOET has been applying the CLC-MIS (CLC Management Informatin System) to help systemize and facilitate management, monitoring of CLCs, as well as connect the network of national CLCs for better cooperation, sharing experience, and exchange. To implement CLC-MIS, initial data will be collected from CLCs' management board, learners, teachers, and community itself. MOET provides necessary tools (tables, questionnaires, surveys) for this data collection process. Collected data will be processed by computer software and uploaded to the CLC-MIS website for public use.

Website <http://clc-mis.moet.gov.vn> of CED has been initiated to provide an information gate for CLCs and interested parties/individuals to explore, exchange, and update all information/data regarding CLCs' operation and activities. However, due to some technical problem and financial shortage, the website is now temporarily ceased. CED has been reviewing the whole website and making necessary adjustments in order to re-operate it as soon as possible.

4.2 Use of ICT to improve learning of learners

Although realizing the importance and necessity of ICT in education today, CLCs nationwide still cope with serious shortage of equipment and facilities in order to better utilize the advance of ICT in teaching and learning. According to a survey in 2006, infrastructure conditions of CLCs are very poor, with only 22% out of 3,480 CLCs surveyed had audio-visual equipment such as TV, video; 81% of CLCs had only one classroom or learning hall for all purposes (Dao, 2010). The situation seems to improve slightly according to a report by CED in 2009-2010 academic year, with more CLCs have had their own head office, and 2,859 out of 9,990 CLCs have sufficient learning equipment. However, the use and application of ICT in CLCs still remain a missing point in the whole picture of CLCs development. More investments in technology,

equipment, and staff capacity building are needed in order to take the full advantages of ICT in CLCs activities as well as to improve the learning of learners.

5. Literacy Survey and Assessment

5.1 Literacy survey and assessment at regular intervals

At national level, literacy survey is conducted every ten years in the Population and Housing Census. In the 1999 and 2009 Censuses, the overall literacy rate of population aged 15 years and over was 90.3% and 94%, respectively (GSO, 2010).

5.2 Literacy survey and assessment at ad-hoc base

With supports from UNESCO Hanoi office and UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) to MOET, Vietnam has been participating in the Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Program (LAMP) of UNESCO, an instrument to assess literacy skills and to enhance the available body of statistical evidence (UNESCO Hanoi, 2011).

By late 2010, the national team for LAMP completed the field test stage, and test instruments were adapted to the Vietnamese context, with the development of country-specific criteria. The test survey was conducted in 650 households, and data was collected and analyzed.

Based on the assessment of the field test, MOET will undertake the LAMP main survey. Preparations for this phase is now undergoing for the works to be carried out in late 2011 and will produce Viet Nam's first set of real-test literacy data (UNESCO Hanoi, 2011).

6. Issues and challenges

In spite of fast and impressive expansion of CLCs in quantity, as well as its increasing popularity in communities as a tool for realizing learning society objectives and lifelong learning strategy, CLCs system in Vietnam still faces several difficulties and challenges:

- Awareness of society, authorities at various levels, and sectors on CLCs is still inadequate, causing difficulties in collaboration and resource mobilization processes.
- Ownership and participation of community and people are still limited
- Capacity of the CLCs managers and teachers/facilitators are far from meeting learners and society's demands.
- Great difficulties in mobilizing resources (including physical, human, and financial resources) for the operation and regular activities of CLCs.
- Collaboration and cooperation among related sectors, agencies, and organizations are yet to be effective and strong.
- Lack of a coordination and reinforcement of existing policies and legal frameworks for a united, harmonized management and supervision of CLCs, resulting in gaps and overlaps among related parties and authorities.
- Lack of criteria for the assessment and accreditation of CLCs
- Shortage of learning materials, books, reference documents and their poor quality, irrelevance to learners' needs, languages, and cultures.

- Locations of some CLCs at communes' centres are not convenient to those people who reside in distant villages/hamlets, especially in remote, mountainous or ethnic areas.
- Difficulties of disadvantaged groups to access of education and learning opportunities.

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