

# Full Day Schooling Performance of Primary Schools in Disadvantaged Areas in Vietnam: A Comparative Case Study

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**Abstract:** To enhance the quality of education in primary schools in Vietnam, the Vietnamese Government decided to implement a full day schooling regime and in 2010 a School Education Quality Assurance Program (SEQAP) was piloted for this purpose. After an implementation period, a case study of nine schools in disadvantaged areas in Vietnam, both the SEQAP support and non-SEQAP support had been carried out from October to December 2013 to identify those factors that facilitate or inhibit the transition by a school from half day to full-day schooling (FDS), the importance of SEQAP's supports and draw lessons for the ongoing implementation of SEQAP and ultimately the national roll-out of FDS. Different findings were found. This article will not analyse all the findings, but focus on discussing FDS implementation and student learning achievement; factors that affected on it. The case study proves that FDS has improved student education quality and for a well FDS performance, a school needs at least minimum physical conditions (e.g. adequacy of classrooms and spaces for school activities, availability of kitchen for lunch, toilets...) but more importance is leadership and teachers' qualification, parents' and community participation and support.

*Keywords:* Full day schooling (FDS), well performing school, student achievement, ethnic minority student, SEQAP.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background

A good education quality of a school is expected that all children regardless differences of gender and backgrounds will learn at least the essential knowledge, concepts and skills needed so that they can be successful at the next level next year. Further, it has been found that when school improvement processes are

implemented, the proportions of students that achieve academic excellence either improves, or at the very least, remains the same (Association of Effective Schools, 1996). In Vietnam, the MOET has promulgated standards of knowledge, skills and ethical attitude for students at different levels and grades as core education quality standards of each school. Quality of primary education is central to the acquisition of core skills (literacy, numeracy, problem solving, behavioural and communication skills) and therefore is a strong determinant of the capacity to acquire higher

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order skills and complete secondary or even higher education, which, in turn, generate high earning and quality of life potential (MOET, 2009). According to Seymour (1993), the outcome of education quality is a result of an interactive complex of input, process and output which can be considered and reflected in three criteria of a good performance school: High leadership & management performance; High instructional performance; Active participation & cooperation of stakeholders with the school. In the result of a high performing school, school will meet five criteria of a good/effective school: (1) High student achievements; (2) Strong leadership; (3) High qualification of teachers and staff; (4) Good school environments & conditions; (5) Positive cooperation with schools' stakeholders (Kirk, Jones, 2004; Association of Effective Schools, 1996). Good education quality will contribute to *decrease poverty and improve social cohesion*. In Vietnam, improved quality for vulnerable groups will therefore help decrease poverty and close the financial and quality of life gap between population groups (MOET, 2009).

Full Day Schooling (FDS) is considered a good model for creating high education quality of a primary school, because FDS is the addition of more time for learning by extending the school day to allow instruction to take place both in the morning and in the afternoon thus having a *full day of instruction* (MOET, 2009). A School Education Quality Assurance Program (SEQAP) has been launched by MOET to help primary education in 36 disadvantaged provinces of Vietnam move from half day schooling (HDS) to full day schooling, in which, students will attend school for both morning and afternoon sessions on several weekdays (SEQAP, 2010). FDS within SEQAP has the following characteristics (SEQAP, 2010):

- Students stay in the school all day and the learning day is extended on the afternoon to enhance student achievements

- Students are offered lunch to meet nutrition needs and enhance health

- Students take part in activities they are interested after lesson activities

- FDS focuses on ethnic minorities students (EMSs)

- FDS needs an active participation and cooperation of stakeholders to support schools in both intellectual and non - intellectual resources to enhance student learning and behavioral achievements

- FDS is operated on decentralization mechanism, is allowed to be flexible in managing school budget and instructional activities.

Education quality can be enhanced only when a schools meets requirements of education quality assurance. These requirements cover all quality inputs (resources and policies), quality processes (management and instructional) and quality outputs (knowledge, skills and ethical values of students).

The longer school day requires more resources for the school to be able to deliver the extended timetable to the students. As well as more time, school staff and managers require improved skills, knowledge and instructional techniques to operate the full-day instruction model; more space and facilities for the longer day; more teacher time; supplementary resources to offset the increased costs of running the school for the greater number of hours; and finally some non-educational costs associated with pupils spending a full day at school (SEQAP, 2010).

There are three variants of FDS implementation in Vietnam: T30, T33 and T35. The T is an abbreviation of week (in Vietnamese) and the number stands for period teaching within a week, C is a number of periods of half day week; C1 is an additional

periods in the T-30 regime. C2 is for either optional subjects of foreign language and information technology and C3 is outside activities. The T-35 FDS model consists of 35 periods by adding C1 to C and two more periods of C2 and two more periods of C3 (Tab. 1). When a school moving from HDS to FDS, it changes its daily schedule: periods will be taken

in both morning and afternoon, increasing extracurricular activities in the noon and afternoon time for different purposes: to help students understand better knowledge, form the skills, develop their potential through different activities and reduce learning pressure. And in case study is to reinforce both Vietnamese and Mathematics and/or ethnic minority languages.

Table 1. Instructional models of primary education\* in Vietnam (MOET, 2009)

Instructional Model	Number of periods	Curriculum content	Schooling Days
Half-day	23-25	C	Five half days
Full-day	T 30	C + C <sub>1</sub> (e.g 23+ 7 for grades 1,2,3, or 25+5 for grades 4,5)	Two full days per week + two half days
	T 33	C + C <sub>1</sub> + C <sub>2</sub> OR C <sub>3</sub>	Three full day per week + two half days
Schooling	T 35	C + C <sub>1</sub> + C <sub>2</sub> + C <sub>3</sub>	Five full days

\* Primary education in Vietnam composes of grade 1 to grade 5.

MOET allows schools to choose and implement FDS variants suitable to the school conditions and parents' desire. In practice, schools in Vietnam have been implementing FDS with different variations and some of them have been successfully implemented and some still have not. This article answers questions: why have some schools implemented FDS well, while some still have not? What factors influence the success or failure of an FDS school? What lessons can be learned to make the FDS implementation more effective in the years remaining of SEQAP and in the future in Vietnam?

## 1.2. Methods

### Samples

A total of 9 schools were selected: three in each of three provinces of Lao Cai (Northern), DakNong (Central) and Long An (Southern) representing a range of characteristics:

- SEQAP and non-SEQAP schools

- Schools implementing FDS well and schools implementing FDS less well
- Schools located in impoverished locations with a high ethnic minority student population
- Schools in remote and rural locations with a high proportion of poor, extreme poor students

To ensure coverage of the range of conditions within FDS schools, one more non-SEQAP school in an advantaged area in DakNong has been added (table 2).

### Data collection and analysis

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to collect data and information:

- Structured and unstructured interviews with individuals and groups and the answers were noted in the interview sheets (Table 3)
- Structured and unstructured observations, including lunchtime and classroom activities were noted in the observation sheets, and were pictured.

These methodologies were piloted prior to full-scale implementation.

• Primary source documents such as school plans, school timetables, teachers' lesson notes, school financial and accounting documents; secondary data available at school, Board of Education and Training of districts (BOET), Department of Education and Training of provinces (DOET), MOET levels, and through SEQAP Online were collected.

All collected data were categorized by research objectives and discussed among research team members to draw findings.

#### *Main findings*

(1) The most important reason for implementing FDS is a belief in quality improvement of the children's performance;

(2) It confirms that FDS helps the schools improve student learning achievement and education quality (See Table 4).

(3) For EMSs, fluency in Vietnamese determines their interest in going to school and learning achievement;

(4) Different factors have affected on FDS implementation, among the key factors for FDS success are: good school leadership and teacher qualification, diverse extracurricular activities, school autonomy, parent and community involvement and support.

(5) SEQAP's inputs for disadvantaged schools have helped improve school facilities, the environment and school leadership capacity which makes FDS implementation more favourable for the schools, therefore, student learning achievement has been increased;

(6) SEQAP's inputs, especially financial support for lunch, are very important for schools with a high proportion of EMSs and extremely poor students to erase the dropout rate and increases student enrolment.

(7) The SEQAP's inputs should be different for different schools, depend on their needs and circumstance;

(8) The potential for broadening the curriculum content, adopting a flexible approach, and using a wider range of teaching and learning methodologies has yet to be realised in these full day schools.

(9) Conditions for FDS implementation are better at the main schools than at satellite sites in mountainous and remote rural areas. There are still many difficulties for the schools in the poor areas, especially for satellite sites, to provide a good education for students.

Table 2. Selected Schools for the Case Study

Province	SEQAP - FDS Schools		Non - SEQAP FDS well implemented Schools
	well implemented	less well Implemented	
Lao Cai	Hau Thao, Lao Chai 100% EMSs; remote mountainous area		San Sa Ho II 100% EMSs; remote mountainous area
Long An	Duong Xuan Hoi No EMSs, but in the rural area with high proportion of poor students	Thanh Phuoc B Low % of EMSs, in a rural remote area with high proportion of poor students	Hiep Thanh No EMSs, in a rural area with high proportion of poor students
DakNong	Le Loi 78% EMSs, in the poor rural area	N'Trang Long 100% EMSs; remote mountainous area	Phan Chu Trinh No EMSs, in a rural area with high proportion of poor students Le Thi Hong Gam, few EMSs, in advantaged area
10 schools	04 schools	02 schools	04 schools

Table 3. Number of interviewees

Interviewee	Number
Parent (20/each school: 10 from more advantaged families and 10 from less advantaged families) + 2 parent committee representative in Le Thi Hong Gam)	202
Student (20/each school: 10 from more advantaged families and 10 from less advantaged families)	200
Teacher	133
School leaders	20
Accountant	6*
DOET & BOET - (Sapa, Lao Cai), Dak Mil, KrôngNô (DakNông) and Thanh Hóa, Châu Thành(Long An)	6
Kitchen staff	04
Librarian	9
Local authorities	12
Teacher in charge for Union of Ho Chi Minh Pioneers	9
Regional advisors(Long An, DakNông)	02
Community advisor - (Long An, DakNông)	02

(\*San Sả Hồ II has only a half - time accountant;  
Lê Lợi and Lao Chải accountants were away on training and did not take part in the interview).

## 2. Discussion of FDS implementation and significant factors in its success

### 2.1. FDS implementation and student learning improvement

Moving to FDS, ten schools in this case study have implemented both morning and afternoon periods, increased extracurricular activities, and nine of them have provided students with lunch. There are differences among them in choosing FDS variants and the quality of teaching, learning and extracurricular activities.

The question “Has educational quality improved because of the implementation of FDS?” is difficult to answer since there are no agreed and readily available measures to evaluate educational quality in primary schools in Vietnam. A correct assessment of the learning quality of students depends on many factors such as input variables like student capacity, professional competencies of teachers, school policies on quality, as well as teaching and education processes, quality standards and evaluation methods of student learning outcomes. However, there is some evidence of

education quality improvement. This evidence is collected from statistics of student learning achievement over the years before and after implementing FDS, and from assessments of interview participants, and observations. Student learning outcomes are often evaluated by examination results and tests, either developed by the school itself or by BOET, and applied at the end of each semester. Using these results to compare student learning quality among schools is only a relative quality measurement.

According to the statistics, student learning achievement of all schools has increased since the schools implemented FDS, and it increased especially quickly since the school received the SEQAP’s support. In HauThao School (100% EMSs), before implementing FDS, in 2008-2009 only 5% of students were at good level, 9% at fair, but in 2009-2010 when school started FDS with T30, the percentage of good students increased to 10% and in 2010-2011 when the school entered SEQAP, the percentage of good students increased to 17% and 18% by the year the school implemented T35 in 2012-2013; Duong Xuan Hoi School

(without EMSs) started FDS in 2010-2011 with mixed variants of T30 for grade 5, T 33 for grade 4 and T35 for grades 1,2,3, the percentage of students achieving a good level has increased from 35.7% in 2008-2009 to 57.7% in 2010-2011 (the year it entered SEQAP) and then 62.1% and 50% in the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. After adopting FDS and there has been only 0.3% of total students at under average learning achievement level each year. At Phan Chu Trinh (Non SEQAP) school (without EMSs), the percentage of good

students before implementing FDS was 60% and has increased to 70% or even 80% during implementation of FDS. In HiepThanh (without EMSs) this percentage was 24.8% in 2008-2009 and 44.2% right after FDS implementation in 2010-2011 and has been kept around 35% in the years after. Le Thi Hong Gam School has the most favourable conditions for FDS implementation. It started FDS with T35 variant in 2009 and keeps the percentage of students at the good level around 35%-41% every year (Table 4).

Table 4. FDS implementation and student learning achievement

Level	SEQAP Schools					Non – SEQAP Schools				
	Hau Thao	Lao Chai	N’Trang Long	Duong Xuan Hoi	Thanh Phuoc B	Le Loi	Hiep Thanh	Phan Chu Trinh	San Sa Ho II	Le Thi Hong Gam
<b>Percent of student learning achievement before FDS (2008-09; 2009-2010)</b>										
Good	5 10	N/A	0 6.1	35.7 57.7	17.8 27.5	N/A	47.8; 35.6	N/A	N/A	35.0 37.5
Fair	9 33	N/A	17.9 21.9	49.4 29.8	38.2 38.2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	41.0 34.3
Below average	0 0	N/A	16.4 12.2	1.7 0.3	4.2 4.6 3.4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.0 2.4
<b>Percent of student learning achievement after FDS (2010 -11; 2011-12; 2012- 13)</b>										
Good	17; 17; 18;	N/A	7.0 6.8; 5.9	45.2 62.1 50.0	N/A 34.6 33.6	N/A N/A 20,8	32.6; 47.8; 35.6	38.3; 33.7; 25.5	N/A	35.5; 41.0; 33.0
Fair	40; 41; 36	N/A	22.3; 22.7; 20.2	38.1 29.7 33.8	32.2 37.7	31.2	35.3; 31.6; 37.9	36.8; 36.1; 36.1	N/A	36.7; 38.0; 43.0
Below average	0 0 0	N/A	10.5; 6.3; 19.7	0.3 0.3 0.3	3.2 3.1	N/A N/A	0.9; 1.4; 1.4	1.5; 2.1; 1.0	N/A	3.0; 1.4; 1.7

Students at the schools have taken part in different competitions of informatics, art, mathematics, English and football and have gained different awards at the provincial level. At Le Thi Hong Gam, every year at least 20 students gained the first, second and third places in different competitions. One hundred percent of students of all case schools were moved to higher grades. However, at the difficult remote mountainous N’Trang Long

school, student achievement is still low. Over 12%-14% were under average before FDS, and 6-10% after FDS.

Through observation of mathematics and Vietnamese language lessons, students’ extracurricular activities, asking students to do a math assignment, read a story and answer questions to explore its content, these changes have been seen more at Lao Chai, Hau Thao, Duong Xuan Hoi, Le Thi Hong Gam and Phan

Chu Trinh than in Thanh Phuoc B or N'Trang Long. Students at these schools are more confident, more active, and more open, have a better understanding of sciences and maths, and are better at reading than students at N'Trang Long and Thanh Phuoc B. However, in most schools, the analytical, problem recognition and problem solving abilities of students are still limited. Only a majority of students at Phan Chu Trinh, as a result of the teachers' asking good inquiry questions, can effectively explore knowledge provided in the textbooks and through lessons.

One hundred percent of parents, teachers, school principals and community members said that school education quality, in fact, has experienced many changes since the

implementation of FDS. According to them, students are more open, active, confident and healthier; their Vietnamese language and Mathematics skills are better; FDS helps students to develop different abilities in music, art, sports, mathematics and literature.

It is difficult to compare student achievement of these SEQAP and non SEQAP schools without analysing factors that have impacted on education quality of each school.

School facilities become green, clean, and beautiful along with beautifully decorated classrooms that attract students to the school and encourages them to be more interested in learning. Students and parents said that students like to go to school because of the beautiful school and classrooms.



LÒ A DỀ, born in 2005, Class 3A, San Sả Hồ 2 primary school, Sa Pa, Lào Cai: Family circumstances: 1 elder sister and 2 younger brothers; father works in the forest; mother takes care of 2 children at home; parents have 2 buffalo. Both he and his sister like to go to school though parents do not allow and force them to herd buffalo, they still go to school. Reason: "I achieved good academic performance, received reward; at school I learn reading, writing, mathematics and I can play with my friends. In classroom, there are many beautiful pictures and I know many different animals (He pointed to animal pictures on the wall). I want to learn well and become an excellent student".

An FDS school should balance and connect morning, noon and afternoon periods and extracurricular activities. It means periods must be divided into morning and afternoon sessions so that students will not feel pressure and have more time to practice, play and participate in different activities to develop their abilities. Morning, noon and afternoon periods and extracurricular activities should be organized so that they are connected to each other to help students firmly develop the skills and comprehend knowledge (SEQAP, 2010).

According to interviewees, student achievement has increased because, in the

second half of the day, students can learn advanced mathematics, Vietnamese language or participate in different clubs or activities. They have more time to practice different skills and relax at home. Teachers also have more time to instruct weak students in grasping the essential knowledge and skills which they are not clear about in the morning session as well as foster gifted students. When the timetable has been rearranged so that all teachers spread their teaching activities across both morning and afternoon sessions or morning and afternoon teachers cooperate, students learn better, as is the case in Le Loi, Phan Chu Trinh, Le Thi

Hong Gam, HauThao, Lao Chai and San Sa Ho II schools. However, in the rest of the schools, the morning sessions are taught by homeroom teachers and afternoon sessions are taught by other teachers without considering the continuity of morning and afternoon sessions. The afternoon session has a very strong focus on reinforcing and consolidating what was learned in the morning, dominated by Vietnamese language and mathematics. Moreover, optional subjects and extracurricular activities have been constrained by the lack of teaching equipment and other resources. More than 60% of the students said, the afternoon sessions were boring for them.

Because the most schools are located in disadvantaged areas of Vietnam, they lacked facilities for teaching and extracurricular activities. Lao Chai, Le Loi, Le Thi Hong Gam and San Sa Ho II schools are considered better organized for extracurricular activities because of the efforts of the school leaders and teachers. At San Sa HoII School for example, extra-curricular activities are simple and confined to physical education and free games throughout the year, singing and dancing at the beginning of the morning session, during recess and before the commencement of the afternoon session. In addition to having an art club and a sports club, this school also has a handwriting club and a brocade and embroidery club, and has an extended life skills program for all students. At Hau Thao, two periods a week are set aside for Grades 3 to 5 for H'Mong language, and the school's music club performs publicly at major celebrations throughout the year. At this school also, gifted students are organised into teams for a range of activities. All three schools in Lao Cai province include folk singing, folk dancing, and folk games in their extra-curricular activities. Their

integration of the extracurricular program with the main curriculum program is a distinctive feature of these schools and to which they attribute their success in increasing children's active and confident participation in other school activities.

Usually the schools have from 2.5 hours to 3.25 hours free between the morning and afternoon sessions. The schools set 30 minutes for lunch, 60 minutes for children's naps and one to two hours for children to play or participate in a range of passive activities such as reading. However, noon activities in almost schools are poorly organized. Only one school, Lao Chai, seems to have implemented a structured midday program with activities such as dancing and singing, watching movies, playing folk games and folk dances, and reading storybooks. N'Trang Long, although SEQAP funded, does not provide a midday program either.

Library and reading is important in the operation of an FDS school, where children have more free time at noon and during the day. Through reading, children are able to broaden their knowledge and apply critical thinking, problem solving and research skills. But, most schools have failed so far to recognise the importance of their libraries as a learning resource by segregating the library from the major curriculum activities of the school. Library facilities in most schools are unable to support the curriculum activities of the school because of the inadequacies of the space available, the shelving and other storage provided for learning materials, and basic furniture like desks and chairs for children.

#### *FDS operation and affected factors*

On moving to FDS, the case schools operated their school day according to MOET's directions and SEQAP's guidelines. Besides



providing lunch for students and other expenses for schools, SEQAP has developed handbooks on FDS management for school leaders and pedagogical guidelines for teachers as well as conducted training workshops for school leaders, teachers, and accountants. The successful SEQAP schools are those well used these supports. The FDS operation is different from one school to another depending on the FDS variant that the schools choose and on the schools' capacity such as the adequacy of classrooms, spaces and facilities for extracurricular activities, the dynamism of the school leaders, teachers' skills and parents and community supports. The local socio-economic development has great impact on the success or failure of the FDS operation.

If we divide affected factors into levels: Level 1: Very important; Level 2: Important and Level 3: Less important, in this case study, the factors at the level 1 for all schools are: School leadership qualification, Teacher qualification, quality of lessons and extracurricular activities; at level 2: School autonomy, instructional facilities, parent and community involvement; and at level 3: school infrastructure. Vietnamese language fluency is very important for EMSs, but not for Kinh (majority) students, for whom Vietnamese is the first language; lunch is very important for EMSs and extreme poor students, but less important for students in advantaged socio-economic backgrounds.

School leaders play very important role in creating different strategies for successful FDS implementation. For example, the Hàu Thào, Le Loi, Lao Chai, San Sa Ho II, Phan Chu Trinh, Duong Xuan Hoi and Le Thi Hong Gam schools commit to enhance the abilities of excellent students and support weak students, resulting, the weak student rate at HauThao is completed eliminating and reducing at the rest schools. At these schools, school leaders focus

on developing teachers' qualification through professional seminars, workshops, study visits and network sharing every month on a certain topic so that teachers can understand deeply a teaching technique and apply in their teaching or organizing extracurricular activities.

It is very important that school leaders are actively and dynamic in mobilizing parents and communities' supports and participation. The Lao Chai, Hau Thao, Hiep Thanh, Duong Xuan Hoi and Le Thi Hong Gam Schools are successful in mobilizing money and other supports. In Lao Chai school, meetings with parents are given high priority. Parents are given a tour of their schools site to see the improvements made since their last visit before watching a dancing and singing display by the students. They then meet with teachers to hear about their children's performance and to discuss ways in which they can assist both the children and the school. The Commune People's Committee (CPC) undertakes the role of advocating and mobilising parents to let their children attend school for the full day. On the advice it receives from the school, the CPC also recognises and awards parents and students with high attendance and academic performances. Through the CPC, the school has a carefully organised system for involving parents and the community in school activities. The HiepThanh School is the most success in money mobilization. The principal works with the commune people committee to connect to the local successful businessmen, explain the school's needs, in result, businessmen and companies have contributed grants to students and money to the school. Every year this school receive around 150 to 200 million VND (about 7,300 to 9,200 USD by rate of 2,100,000 VND/100USD) from parents and community, occupied 27.4% of the school budget.

Le Lois school has adopted the motto: “people know, people discuss, people do, and people supervise” to attract parental involvement, and parents have been mobilised to contribute to the provision of infrastructure as well as to contributing labour to build more facilities for an improved school environment.

The support of parents for the schools in the Le Thi Hong Gam School has been enlisted in a variety of ways including for example the provision of cooking and eating utensils and mats for children to sleep on. Parents have contributed to the purchase of school supplies, planted trees in the school yard, and decorated classrooms. They have also expressed their willingness to pay for the purchase of books for the library as well as toys. Over the last four years they have contributed more than two hundred million VND annually and show great ingenuity and flexibility in resolving school improvement matters. The parent representative committee is responsible for developing and implementing the school plan for mobilising financial, material, and voluntary labour contributions from parents, as well as from different businesses and social organisations. They are also very active in asking the school to undertake improvement activities. A wide range of community groups are encouraged to participate in the work of the school. The head teacher also plays an important role in different local organisations which ensures that her school voice is heard well everywhere. The school through its management committee and its parent committee has set a long term plan for school development and is working towards those objectives. The development of Le Thi Hong Gam school provides clear evidence of the positive impact of the strong relationship between the management of the school and its school community.

However, in some schools like San SaHo II and N’ Trang Long the mobilization capacity of principals are weak. The San SaHo II has yet to hold any parent meeting in any school year at any of its sites. Whenever the school has any information to communicate to parents, it does so through the commune or village meetings. The principal, and no doubt the greater part of the teaching staff, is not confident that they can mobilise and persuade the local authority and parents to participate in and assist the school with their implementation of FDS. Therefore, San SaHo II has faced with difficulties in organizing lunch and equipping school facilities. The similar situation is in N’Trang Long, where principal hesitates to work with parents and community.

FDS is success, where teachers can use active teaching methods. All three surveyed schools in Sa Pa, Lao Cai, teachers use effectively the active teaching methods trained by UK Oxfarm. As a consequence, students are more active in learning than in other schools where teachers did not use active teaching methods well. In these three schools, teachers have more experience of working with EMSs. Therefore, teachers’ methods, their experiences and their fluency in both the EMS and Vietnamese language are important factors in enhancing the education quality for EMSs.

*For teachers to teach ethnic minority students, their fluency in ethnic minority language and experiences in working with them are very important. Besides, the teacher’s enthusiasm and patience are also needed, because ethnic minority students are slow. (Mrs Hằng, teacher grade 5, San Sa Ho II, Sapa, Lao Cai)*

The achievement of EMSs at Lao Chai, Hau Thao and San Sa Ho II is higher than students at N’Trang Long because, in the former schools, students are taught by bilingual teachers who can speak the ethnic minority

language. N'Trang Long School has no bilingual teachers, but employs temporary part-time language teaching assistants seasonally, and students are not so fluent in Vietnamese as their peers in Lao Chai or Hau Thao and San Sa Ho II Schools are.

*The learning achievement of young students (first and second grades) is higher when they learn in their mother tongue language and feel more confident and excited in learning than when they learn by Vietnamese, that they are not very fluent, makes it difficult for them to understand lessons, feel bored and want to drop out. Since learning by H'mong language, the first and second grade students have been more excited, as they can easily understand lessons, easily communicate with teachers that make them like to go to school (Bùi Thị Hoa, bilingual teacher, Lao Chai School, Sapa).*

The evidence gathered through this survey shows there is no need high quality facilities for the organization of FDS. Two schools having difficult conditions, without the support of SEQAP (San Sả Hồ II and Hiep Thanh schools) still perform a quality teaching activity. The San Sả Hồ II school lacks library, kitchen and has very poor classrooms at the satellites, the ratio of teachers to students is not enough, but the positive

improvements in student learning outcomes have motivated it to implement full-day schooling at all sites in the 2013-14 school year. Hiep Thành School has 9 rooms, of which only 6 can be used as classrooms but the academic achievement of students is improved annually.

Moving to FDS, the schools have faced with many difficulties. Three major issues are relating to funding: (1) lack of funds for the organizing educational activities; (2) lack of financial discretion, and (3) difficulties in mobilizing financial sources from parents, community, donors and other sources, particularly in regions and areas with a high ethnic minority population and less developed socio-economic conditions of N'Trang Long, HầuThào, Lao Chải and San SảHồ II schools.

Schools said that they lack funds to organize educational activities, especially the sightseeing activities, club activities, and library equipment. Funds in all ten survey schools are allocated mainly from the State budget, of which 80-85% is used to cover teacher salaries and 15% for teaching activities and school administrative activities. Support of SEQAP or parental and community contributions account from a small percentage of the total down to zero in the total school budget (table 5).

Table 5. School funding proportion in school year 2012-2013

Proportion	Hau Thao	Lao Chai	Duong Xuan Hoi	Thanh Phuoc B	N'Trang Long	Phan Chu Trinh	Le Thi Hong Gam	San Sa Ho II	Hiep Thanh
<b>Total (%)</b> , of which	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Government	96.5	98.3	90.2	95.6	94.2	97.3	94.2	100	72.6
SEQAP	3.5	1.7	3.1	4.4	5.8	0	0	0	0
Parents	0	0	5.9		0	2.7	5.8	0	2.1
Community	0	0	0.8		0	0		0	25.3
Others	0	0	0		0	0		0	0

Lao Chải school (Lao Cai), schools in Long An and DakNông had their own bank accounts but their discretion in using funds is different. Lao

Chải, Dương Xuân Hội, Thạnh Phước B schools (Long An) are enjoying high discretion in using funds based on school needs while schools in

DakNông have to use funds in compliance with financial norms prescribed by the district financial bureau and education bureau leading to the superficial discretion. Hau Thadoes not have its own bank account, lost its freedom in money use and faces slow budget delivery, causing difficulties in implementing FDS.

Lunch is very important for the poor students of the poor families in the mountainous areas as well as in the poor plain of Long An Province, as lunch gives students more nutrition. At home they may have only rice, and parents have no money to pay for lunch. Without SEQAP's support for lunch, these poor students will not attend FDS. Lunch creates convenience and safety and helps reduce the dropout rate of students who are living far from the schools as they can stay in the school whole day without returning home for lunch, which is usually a cause for them to be absent from class in the afternoon. Lunch support is important for the poor students in disadvantaged areas, but for the students of rich and average income families, parents, community and other donors can provide students with lunch. In Long An, when students stay at noon and afternoon in the schools under the teachers' control and care, they learn more, they will not have time to play games outside the school so lunch also helps to prevent bad social effects on the students. In Sapa, parents like to send their children to the schools because their children can have free lunches (from Hau Thao, Lao Chai, Thanh Phuoc interviews).

Phan Tanh Danh (Vice Director, Châu Thành BOET, Long An): Thanks to the SEQAP's supports for lunch, the poor families donot need to pay lunch for their children, the students attend the school more regularly. Thanks to the lunch, students stay in the school under the teachers' control and care, they donot go out to play games so they are avoided from

social bad impacts, parents feel more safely, students learn better. If SEQAP stops supporting lunch for students, the poor families in the disadvantaged areas are impossible to pay lunch for their children, the children will not attend the school regularly and cannot learn FDS.

### **3. Summary and conclusions**

At the case study schools, FDS has improved student learning achievement and education quality, improved leadership capacity, school environment, parents and community awareness of the FDS importance, their involvement and contributions for the schools. The success of FDS implementation depends on different factors, among them the most important is good school leadership that creates different strategies for FDS implementation; teacher qualification, parents and communities involvement and supports. Lunch plays a crucial role in maintaining student enrolment in the schools where proportions of poor and extreme poor and ethnic minority students is high. A Library, if used effectively, will support noon and extracurricular activities and expand students' knowledge. Luxury classrooms and school conditions are not needed, but adequate physical facilities are essential for schools to implement FDS easily. There needs to be effective connections of lessons with extracurricular activities and morning and afternoon sessions in FDS schools.

Schools in disadvantaged areas of Vietnam have been implementing FDS with great efforts in their difficult context. SEQAP is very helpful in facilitating conditions for FDS implementation at the SEQAP's case study schools, especially lunch support, building additional classrooms and equipping more school facilities for teaching and learning.

For further FDS implementation in Vietnam, here are some recommendations:

(1) For FDS effective implementation, schools should meet a minimum condition of classroom adequacy, teacher number and qualification, good library and teaching equipment, enough ground and club spaces, a kitchen, toilets and lunch facilities for students to stay at noon, learn and play all day with different activities.

(2) Extracurricular programs and facilities should be a strong focus to help students have diverse activities and opportunities to develop individual potential.

(3) There is a need for preparation of school leaders, teachers and parents before launching an FDS program. They should be aware, understand and have enough capacity to meet and operate FDS according to its requirements. Propaganda and training should be carried out before and during FDS implementation to enhance leadership and teacher capacity, and parent awareness. Teachers should know well FDS curriculum and have skills to use active teaching methods, to organize extracurricular activities for developing student potential.

(4) Schools should have diverse strategies to get parents and communities involved and supporting FDS, considering cultural, economic conditions, mobilizing different contributions

not only money to bring together the strengths of different supports for school operation.

(5) Poverty alleviation among the poor and extremely poor should be strongly implemented to enhance family income, therefore, creating good conditions for children's education.

(6) It is better to use EMS mother tongue in the first grade years, help them with fluency in Vietnamese and in English and provide early career orientation so that they can contribute to the family and local economic development.

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## Dạy học cả ngày tại các trường tiểu học vùng khó khăn ở Việt Nam: Một nghiên cứu so sánh

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**Tóm tắt:** Để nâng cao chất lượng giáo dục bậc tiểu học ở Việt Nam, Chính phủ Việt Nam quyết định thực hiện chế độ dạy học cả ngày (FDS) cho các trường tiểu học từ năm 2010 và một chương

trình Đảm bảo chất lượng trường học (SEQAP) được thử nghiệm nhằm thực hiện mục tiêu này. Sau thời gian thực hiện, một nghiên cứu trường hợp với 9 trường tiểu học gồm các trường thuộc chương trình SEQAP và các trường ngoài chương trình ở các vùng khó khăn của Việt Nam được tiến hành, từ tháng 9 đến tháng 12 năm 2013 để xác định các yếu tố hỗ trợ hay cản trở việc các trường chuyển từ dạy học một buổi sang dạy học cả ngày, tầm quan trọng của các hỗ trợ của chương trình SEQAP cho việc chuyển đổi này và các bài học rút ra cho việc thực hiện trong toàn quốc về sau. Nhiều kết quả khác nhau đã được tìm ra. Bài viết này không phân tích tất cả các kết quả nghiên cứu tìm được mà chỉ tập trung thảo luận việc thực hiện FDS và các yếu tố ảnh hưởng đối với kết quả học tập của học sinh. Nghiên cứu trường hợp này chỉ ra rằng việc thực hiện FDS có tác dụng nâng cao chất lượng học tập của học sinh và để một trường thực hiện tốt FDS thì cần các điều kiện tối thiểu về cơ sở vật chất và thiết bị (chẳng hạn phải đủ phòng học, đủ các không gian cho việc hoạt động của học sinh, có bếp ăn, thư viện, nhà vệ sinh...) nhưng quan trọng nhất là vai trò lãnh đạo của lãnh đạo nhà trường và trình độ chuyên môn của giáo viên, sự hỗ trợ, tham gia của cha mẹ và cộng đồng.

*Từ khóa:* Dạy học cả ngày(FDS); trường học hoạt động tốt; thành tích học tập của học sinh; học sinh dân tộc thiểu số, SEQAP.