



School Guide to Gender Equality & Preventing Gender-Based Violence

Introduction

This school guideline is created, as part of the British Council’s Going Global Partnership’s Gender Equality initiative, focused on preventing violence against women and girls in Vietnamese universities. It was a collaboration between the University of Northampton, Hanoi National University of Education, and the University of Salford. The team provided training workshops and a policy roundtable to help teacher trainers raise awareness and use practical methods to reduce Gender-Based-Violence (GBV) in education.

This school guideline is designed to help teachers and staff understand gender equality and gender-based violence, promoting awareness and creating a safer, more inclusive learning environment.

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Understanding Gender Equality

In Viet Nam, gender inequality has been shaped by Confucian values, patriarchal systems, and socioeconomic changes linked to globalisation (Vu and Pham, 2021; Duong, 2001). Despite progress in education and employment, women still face challenges such as wage disparity, limited political representation, and GBV (UN Women, 2020). Gender norms continue to evolve, with differing views on inequality in urban and rural areas (Do et al., 2023).

Our study found that tradition, family values, and patriarchy contribute to gender inequality in Viet Nam. Women with children face additional difficulties balancing work and family responsibilities. Cultural expectations often prioritise caregiving over careers, while limited access to affordable childcare and inflexible workplace policies create further barriers to leadership roles (Chanda and Ngulube, 2024). Organisations and government departments are therefore encouraged to implement family-friendly policies, such as flexible working hours and parental leave, to promote gender equity (Earle et al., 2023; International Labour Organisation, 2016).

However, our findings highlight cultural and traditional perceptions of gender as a major challenge, particularly in rural Viet Nam. Women pursuing leadership roles face numerous barriers, many rooted in societal and cultural norms. Participants identified key challenges, including restrictive social expectations, limited mentoring and networking opportunities, and a lack of role models to support women in leadership.

“The lack of female role models in leadership positions reduces guidance and motivation for women pursuing similar roles” (Lecturer 1).

“In my opinion, gender inequality in Viet Nam still exists, although there have been significant steps forward in promoting equality from the state and society. However, deeply rooted ideological things are very difficult to change, not to mention the impact of many groups receiving incorrect opinions and knowledge about gender equality floating on social networks. Women are increasingly involved in areas such as education, business and politics, but they still face many barriers ranging from social prejudice to unfair division of household labour. Domestic violence remains a serious problem in rural areas. In addition, the gap in income and promotion opportunities between men and women in many professions is also a major challenge” (Student 4).



“To end school violence, especially GBV, comprehensive solutions are needed. First, raising awareness of gender equality and understanding the harmful effects of violence is extremely important. This can be done through integrating sex education into the curriculum, organizing prevention and extracurricular activities and widely promoting. In addition, building a safe and healthy school environment is also an important factor, including training teachers, establishing support lines, developing clear regulations and cooperating with social organizations. Finally, regular and thorough evaluation and adjustment of school violence prevention programmes are necessary to ensure effectiveness” (Student 3).

What is Gender-Based-Violence

Violence against women and girls is a global issue, present in all areas of life, including education. GBV covers various forms of abuse, such as domestic violence, sexual assault, childhood abuse, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and harassment (ONS, 2023). Women and girls at universities risk experiencing or witnessing physical abuse, sexual assault, and harassment (UN Women, 2018).

In Viet Nam, GBV in schools is influenced by societal gender norms (Bich, 2019). Research, including by UNESCO, shows its harmful impact on children's mental health and well-being (Bich, 2019). Education on GBV prevention, gender, and equality is still limited at all levels (UN Women, 2021). While some information is shared informally through events, official instruction on GBV is missing from school curricula, hindering young people's understanding of gender-related issues (Binch, 2019). Our study noted that teaching gender equality from an early age helps foster respect and challenge harmful stereotypes, shaping future generations. Participants stressed the need to integrate gender equality education into the curriculum and raise awareness at the grassroots level. Addressing GBV in education requires a comprehensive, systematic approach. Our study highlighted that incorporating gender-sensitive content into curricula and establishing supportive structures can significantly contribute to safer, more inclusive environments for students and educators.





“Integrate gender equality education into curricula: Expand lessons about equality and gender sensitivity across all subjects. Increase teacher training: Equip educators with skills to handle GBV and promote gender sensitivity. Encourage parental involvement: Engage parents in awareness campaigns to build a supportive community. Implement prevention programmes in schools: Continuously monitor, evaluate, and adapt these programmes to address GBV effectively” (Lecturer 3).

Our Recommendations for Educators:

1. **Develop Standardised Gender-Sensitive Resources:** Create teaching materials that promote gender equality and challenge stereotypes in Vietnamese schools and HEIs, aligning with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
2. **Implement Consistent Gender Training:** Provide regular training for educators at all levels to enhance their understanding of gender issues and equip them to deliver inclusive education in schools, HEIs, and business settings.
3. **Provide Workshops:** Increase workshops in educational settings, ensuring accessibility for diverse audiences, including rural universities. Integrating these into professional development programmes and institutional policies could enhance their impact. Making such modules compulsory or widely available across courses could further support engagement.
4. **Review and Reform Curricula:** Assess and revise curricula to remove content reinforcing gender stereotypes, replacing it with material that promotes equality and inclusivity, similar to decolonisation efforts in Western universities.

How Can Schools Promote Gender Equality?

MOET has begun integrating gender equality into the curriculum by introducing gender-awareness education in schools and universities to promote fairness and challenge traditional biases early on (United Nations, 2015). Textbooks and materials are gradually being updated to reflect gender roles more progressively, though stereotypes persist in the hidden curriculum (Phan and Pham, 2021).

Research suggests that gender bias in teaching materials can shape students’ development and contribute to social inequalities in Viet Nam (Vu and Pham, 2021, p. 477). Participants in our study recommended a more inclusive, gender-neutral curriculum to promote equality and address GBV. This includes developing comprehensive teaching resources, introducing gender-focused programmes, and ensuring consistent gender training across all education levels. They also highlighted the lack of standardised materials and the persistence of traditional gender stereotypes.

5. **Establish Supportive Structures and Networks:** Develop frameworks within educational institutions to monitor and evaluate gender-sensitive practices.
6. **Enhance Networking Opportunities:** Create professional networks for women to share experiences, receive mentoring, and develop career opportunities. Peer learning can help individuals shape their work environments to better meet their needs.



“Through three useful live training sessions, I had extremely interesting experiences in both theory and practice. With the enthusiastic and direct sharing from foreign and Vietnamese experts, the direct and specific examples of gender bias and inequality made me feel closer and visualize these challenges more clearly in this era” (Student 3).

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