



BREAKING GENDER STEREOTYPES: ADVANCING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN VIETNAM'S EDUCATION

Ton Thi Tam
Le Vu Ha
Hoang Thi Kim Hue
Nguyen Thi Le Huyen

ABOUT NORRAG

NORRAG is a global membership-based network of international policies and cooperation in education and training. In 1977 the Research Review and Advisory Group (RRAG) was established, which then founded several regional RRAGs, one of which became NORRAG in 1986. NORRAG's core mandate and strength are to produce, disseminate and broker critical knowledge and to build capacity for and with academia, governments, NGOs, international organisations, foundations and the private sector who inform and shape education policies and practice, at national and international levels. By doing so, NORRAG contributes to creating the conditions for more participatory, evidence-informed decisions that improve equal access to and quality of education and training.

NORRAG is the Global Education Centre of the Geneva Graduate Institute and is supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). More information about NORRAG, including its scope of work and thematic areas, is available at www.norrageducation.org

 @norrag  norrag.network  vimeo.com/norrag

ABOUT THE KIX EMAP HUB

The **Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (GPE KIX)** is a joint endeavour with the **International Development Research Centre (IDRC)** to connect expertise, innovation, and knowledge to help GPE partner countries build stronger education systems and accelerate progress toward SDG 4. There are globally four KIX Hubs or Regional Learning Partners, overseen by IDRC. The Hub functions as a regional forum within KIX. NORRAG is the Regional Learning Partner for the KIX Europe, Middle East and North Africa, Asia and Pacific (EMAP) Hub (previously known as the KIX EAP Hub).

The KIX EMAP Hub facilitates cross-country knowledge and innovation exchange and mobilisation, learning, synthesis, and collaboration among national education stakeholders in 38 GPE partner countries in the EMAP region. The Hub also offers opportunities for peer learning and exchange by means of professional development and inter-country visits.

 gpekix.org/regional-hub/kix-emap  norrageducation.org/kix-emap
 @KIXEMAP  @KIXEMAP  @KIXEMAP  @KIXEMAP

ABOUT THIS CASE STUDY

This case study is a result of the KIX EMAP Learning Cycle "Increasing Women's Representation in School Leadership". Facilitated by Dr Fenot Aklog and Dr Cathryn Magno, this Learning Cycle ran from 18 September 2024 to 28 February 2025. The course equipped participants with the conceptual and analytical tools for understanding conditions that promote and serve as barriers to the recruitment, development, and retention of women in school leadership roles. Sixteen national teams took part in this Learning Cycle, including Albania, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, Kyrgyz Republic, Maldives, Moldova, Nepal, Pakistan (Punjab), Pakistan (Sindh), Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.



KIX EMAP Rapid Customised Country Support Case Study, March 2026

The KIX EMAP Hub is supported by



Canada



Photo by
pexels.com

Published under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons licence: Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0)



All queries on rights and licenses should be addressed to

KIX EMAP Hub / NORRAG

20, Rue Rothschild
P.O. Box 1672 1211 Geneva 1
Switzerland
norrag.kix@graduateinstitute.ch

This case study is a product of the **KIX EMAP Learning Cycle: Increasing Women's Representation in School Leadership** with external contributions. This work was supported by the Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (GPE KIX), a joint endeavour with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this work do not necessarily reflect the views of the KIX EMAP Hub, NORRAG, GPE, IDRC, its Board of Governors, or the governments they represent. The KIX EMAP Hub / NORRAG does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this work.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON THE AUTHORS

Ms. Ton Thi Tam is an education specialist at ChildFund and a leader in educational development with expertise in educational leadership, management and project development. She focuses particularly on advancing language and education initiatives for ethnic minority students, integrating culturally responsive approaches into curriculum design and teaching practices. Her dedication to fostering inclusive education has been recognised by prestigious honours, including a National Geographic Society Grant and an Australian Development Scholarship.

Dr. Le Vu Ha is the Management Science Division leader and a senior lecturer at the National Academy of Education Management in Vietnam. With a strong focus on educational management, student guidance and educational innovation, Dr. Ha has contributed significantly to advancing education practices and policies in Vietnam and has authored or co-authored numerous scholarly articles published in respected journals. In addition to research, Dr. Le is committed to fostering educational development through innovative teaching practices and capacity-building initiatives. Dr. Ha's dedication to the field underscores her influence in shaping future education leaders and policies in Vietnam and beyond.

Dr. Hoang Thi Kim Hue is the Management Science Division leader and a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Educational Management, Hanoi National University of Education, Vietnam. She holds master's and doctoral degrees in education. Her research focuses on educational leadership and management.

Ms. Huyen Nguyen holds a master's degree in development practices from the University of Queensland and currently serves as an education advisor for VVOB in Vietnam. She has over 15 years of experience, and has contributed to the fields of education, gender, and development. Her expertise lies in designing and implementing programs that promote equitable and sustainable education systems, reflecting her dedication to fostering inclusive development.

CONTENTS

List of Figures	5
List of Acronyms and Abbreviations	6
Acknowledgements	7
Executive Summary	8
1. Introduction	9
2. School Leader Policies and Pathways	10
3. Women in School Leadership by the Numbers	12
4. Women in School Leadership: Barriers and Enablers	14
5. Policy Recommendations	15
6. Areas for Further Investigation	16
7. Conclusion	17
References	18

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Male/Female Ratio in School Leadership Roles in the Last 5 Years	12
Figure 2 Gender Structure of Labour	13

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

EMAP	Europe, Middle East and North Africa, Asia and Pacific
GPE KIX	Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
TEMIS	Teacher/Training Education Management Information System
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We express our gratitude to the individuals and organisations that provided valuable insights, resources and support throughout the development of this policy brief, and we thank the organisers of the KIX EMAP Learning Cycle 6. The programme was incredibly insightful and well structured, providing valuable knowledge and practical strategies to address this important issue. Your efforts in creating a platform for meaningful discussion and fostering a learning environment that promotes diversity and empowerment are truly commendable. This initiative has not only inspired us but will also undoubtedly have a lasting impact on many participants.

We express our sincere gratitude for the unwavering support, valuable guidance and constructive feedback that trainers and peers have provided during our learning sessions and assignments. Their expertise and dedication have enriched our learning experience, making the journey both enlightening and empowering. Thanks for the commitment to our growth and for being an integral part of this enriching programme. Your contributions have truly made a lasting impact, and we are deeply appreciative of all that you have done.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy brief examines the impact of gender stereotypes on the recruitment process for school leadership positions in Vietnam, highlighting persistent barriers despite existing policies promoting gender equality. While women dominate the teaching workforce, they remain underrepresented in leadership roles due to societal norms, biased perceptions, and systemic obstacles. Vietnam has implemented various policies to address these issues, such as the Gender Equality Law (2006) and the National Strategy on Gender Equality (2021–2030), but gaps persist in implementation, particularly in rural areas.

Key challenges include unequal retirement ages, the absence of gender quotas and a lack of specialised leadership training programmes. Societal pressures often compel women to prioritise family responsibilities over career ambitions, and a lack of mentors and female role models further discourages women from pursuing leadership positions. Despite these challenges, supportive policies, leadership development initiatives and the advocacy of organisations such as the Vietnam Women's Union and international agencies such as UNESCO and UNICEF provide valuable support for women's advancement.

This policy brief recommends measures such as developing gender-neutral recruitment criteria, expanding leadership training and mentorship opportunities for women, implementing flexible work policies, and conducting regular gender audits. Additionally, further research into recruitment processes, policy implementation gaps and cultural barriers is essential to foster a deeper understanding of the issue and promote gender equality in educational leadership in Vietnam. The report remains limited, as it presents emerging insights based on policy analysis, field observations and a synthesis of small-scale studies, but its content may certainly stimulate important policy discussions, raise awareness and shape an agenda for further research on this important topic.

Gender equality in education leadership has been a critical focus in Vietnam's socio-economic development agenda. The country has made significant strides in promoting women's leadership through legal frameworks, policies and national strategies (Vu et al., 2016). However, the implementation of laws and policies remains weak due to a lack of accountability mechanisms, insufficient human, technical and budgetary

1

INTRODUCTION

resources and lack of awareness of the concept of meaningful/comprehensive/true gender equality among lawmakers, policymakers and government officials (United Nations Viet Nam, 2016). Persistent gender stereotypes remain a formidable barrier, particularly in the recruitment process for leadership roles in schools. This policy brief addresses the challenges posed by gender stereotypes in the recruitment and appointment processes for school leadership roles in Vietnam, examining how these biases hinder women's professional advancement.

Vietnam's policy highlights a strong legal commitment to gender equality. The Politburo's Resolution No. 11-NQ/TW (2007) emphasises building a strong contingent of female management personnel to align with the country's industrialisation and modernisation goals (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2007). The Gender Equality Law, enacted in 2006, further reinforces this commitment by establishing legal protections against gender-based discrimination in various sectors, including education (Vietnam Ministry of Justice, 2006). Addressing these issues requires a multi-level approach. At the policy level, Vietnam has introduced national strategies such as the National Strategy on Gender Equality (2021–2030), which aims for 75% of state management agencies and local administrations to have women in key leadership positions by 2030 (Vietnam Government, 2021). However, practical implementation gaps persist, especially in rural and remote areas where cultural norms are more resistant to change.

Despite these efforts, similar to many other countries, the representation of women in school leadership remains disproportionately low compared to their presence in the teaching workforce (Thompson & Stokes, 2023). This disparity suggests that gender stereotypes continue to influence recruitment, promotion and professional development processes in education. Societal norms and deeply rooted beliefs about gender roles often limit women's opportunities for career advancement, restricting their access to leadership positions (Thompson & Stokes, 2024).

School leadership is a pivotal factor in shaping the quality and effectiveness of educational institutions. Effective school leaders play a crucial role in creating positive learning environments, fostering student achievement and ensuring the overall success of a school (Leithwood et al., 2020). Women often possess strong empathy and nurturing qualities, which can create a more supportive and caring school environment, leading to more effective teamwork and communication among staff (UNESCO, n.d.). Thus, the representation of women in school leadership positions can promote inclusive, equitable and successful schools for all students.

Key challenges include gender-biased perceptions about leadership qualities, unequal access to professional development and limited representation of women in leadership mentoring programmes. Additionally, recruitment practices often emphasise formal qualifications over leadership potential, which can disadvantage women due to systemic biases in credential evaluation and career progression.

This policy brief focuses specifically on gender stereotypes in recruitment for school leadership roles in Vietnam. It highlights how these biases affect women's career trajectories and offers policy recommendations aimed at creating an equitable and inclusive recruitment process in the education sector. By examining existing challenges and identifying pathways for improvement, the policy brief seeks to inform policymakers, educators, and stakeholders committed to advancing gender equality in educational leadership.

2

SCHOOL LEADER POLICIES AND PATHWAYS

In Vietnam, school leadership plays a crucial role in improving the quality of education and building a comprehensive learning environment. The national education system encompasses levels from preschool through higher education, organised and managed by both the central government and local authorities. School leadership policies not only shape recruitment and appointment processes but also promote gender equality in management positions, ensuring that women have more opportunities than before to participate in leadership roles.

School Leadership Policies

Key policies regarding recruitment and appointment for school leadership in Vietnam include Decree No. 115/2020/ND-CP on Recruitment and Management of Public Officials (Vietnam Government, 2020), Circular No. 14/2018/TT-BGDĐT on Teacher Standards and Qualifications (Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training [MOET], 2018) and Circular No. 16/2017/TT-BGDĐT (Vietnam MOET, 2017) on the standards, duties and powers of principals and vice principals of general education institutions.

Recruitment and Appointment

According to Decree No. 115/2020/ND-CP (Vietnam Government, 2020), school leaders are selected through a competitive recruitment process that prioritises transparency and fairness. Candidates for school leadership roles must demonstrate appropriate educational credentials and undergo a rigorous selection process. The Law on Education (National Assembly of Vietnam, 2019) further stipulates that appointed leaders should possess both teaching experience and management skills to lead educational institutions effectively. Circular No. 16/2017/TT-BGDĐT (Vietnam MOET, 2017) specifies the standards, duties and powers of principals and vice principals of general education institutions, providing the basis for reviewing candidates for leadership positions in schools.

Training and Development

Training programmes for school leaders are mandated by Circular 14/2018/TT-BGDĐT (Vietnam MOET, 2018), requiring potential leaders to complete specialised management and leadership training before assuming their roles. These include formal and informal education programmes and in-service

training for women school leaders. Higher education institutions of educational science provide education management and leadership programmes at both the graduate and postgraduate levels, and these and other continuing education institutions provide in-service training for school leaders. These programmes focus on both theoretical and practical application and are designed to equip leaders with necessary skills. Furthermore, training is offered in both urban areas and remote regions to access high-quality programmes through blended learning courses.

The regulations for the continual professional development programme for education administrators are specified in the following circulars: (1) Circular No. 18/2019/TT-BGDĐT, which promulgates the continual professional development programme for administrators of general education institutions; (2) Circular No. 11/2019/TT-BGDĐT, which promulgates the continual professional development programme for administrators of preschool education institutions; and (3) Circular No. 19/2019/TT-BGDĐT, which promulgates the regulations on continuous professional development for teachers and administrators of preschool and general education institutions and teachers of continuing education centres (Vietnam MOET, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c), later amended and supplemented by Circular No. 17/2022/TT-BGDĐT (Vietnam MOET, 2022).

Retention and Evaluation

The evaluation of school leaders in Vietnam is guided by key legal documents from the Ministry of Education and Training. The Education Law establishes the foundation, defining the roles and responsibilities of school leaders. Circular No. 14/2018/TT-BGDĐT (Vietnam MOET, 2018) outlines standards for principals, focusing on leadership, management skills, ethics and professional competence, whereas Circular No. 29/2020/TT-BGDĐT (Vietnam MOET, 2020) provides criteria for evaluating principals and vice-principals across all school levels. Decree No. 115/2020/ND-CP (Vietnam Government, 2020) governs the recruitment and management of public employees in education, including the evaluation of school leaders. These regulations ensure that leadership is assessed based on capacity, ethics and performance.

Promoting Gender Equity in Leadership Roles

Vietnam has a strong legal framework supporting gender equity in leadership positions. The Law on Gender Equality (Vietnam Ministry of Justice, 2006) and the National Strategy on Gender Equality for 2021–2030 (Vietnam Government, 2021) focus on increasing the representation of women in school leadership roles. These policies encourage equitable recruitment processes and provide targeted leadership development opportunities for women. The strategy sets specific targets for increasing female representation in leadership positions across all educational levels, ensuring that women have equal access to opportunities for career advancement in education. Decision No. 1464/QĐ-TTg on the Development of Leadership and Management Capacity of Female Staff also emphasises enhancing women's leadership skills through specialised training programmes. These policies not only promote equal participation but also help women contribute more to the overall development of the education sector.

Pathways to School Leadership Roles

The typical career pathway of a school leader begins with acquiring a teaching degree, followed by several years of teaching experience, during which time the individual may take on additional responsibilities, such as leading a department or coordinating academic programmes. While this progression is clear, several challenges complicate the pathway to leadership.

Qualifications and Certification

To become a school leader, candidates must meet the qualifications outlined in Circular No. 14/2018/TT- BGDĐT, which include holding a bachelor's or higher degree in education along with specific management training. Potential leaders must complete formal leadership training programmes provided by universities or educational training centres. These programmes cover topics such as school management, pedagogy, educational policy and leadership skills.

Formal Steps to Leadership

Attaining a school leadership position requires both formal training and certification. Candidates must complete leadership development courses, often lasting several months, which culminate in certification. In addition to training, candidates must pass a competitive recruitment process that involves interviews and assessments to demonstrate their leadership potential.

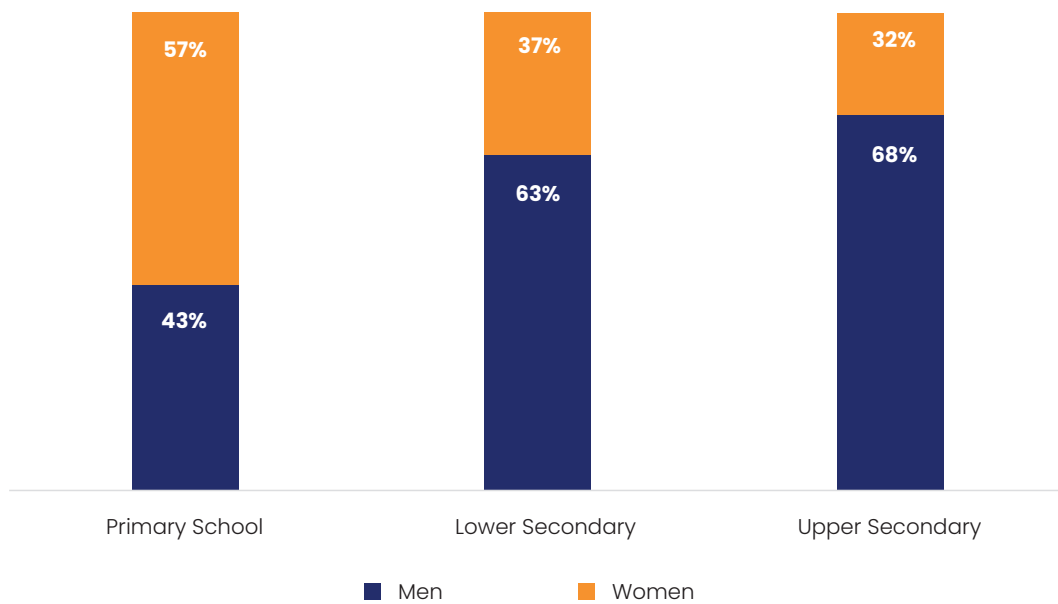
3

WOMEN IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP BY THE NUMBERS

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (n.d.) reports that Vietnam has a lower proportion of female school principals than other countries, ranking 45th of 49 countries in 2018, with only 28.8% of principals being women. This proportion is even lower at the upper secondary level, where Vietnam ranks 11th of 12 OECD and partner countries, with only 20.9% of principals being women, even though women account for more than 76% of the education workforce.

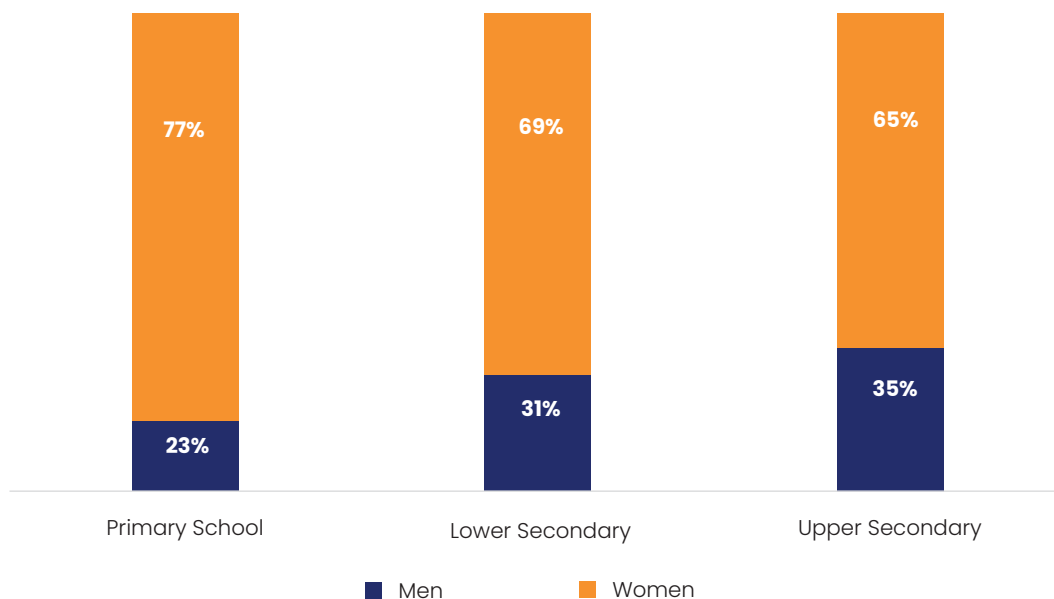
According to statistical data on school leadership positions in Vietnam extracted from the Teacher/Training Education Management Information System (TEMIS) over the past five years (2020–2025), higher school levels have lower proportions of female leaders as shown in Figure 1. Figure 2, which depicts the gender distribution of staff in schools in Vietnam, also shows that the proportion of women tends to decrease as education level increases.

Figure 1. Male/Female Ratio in School Leadership Roles in the Last 5 Years



Source: Authors' compilation from TEMIS data

Figure 2. Gender Structure of Labour



Source: Authors' compilation from TEMIS data

These figures show that at the primary level, female teachers make up 77% of the total, whereas female managers account for only 57%, meaning the proportion of women in management is 20 percentage points lower than in the overall teaching staff. Conversely, men account for 23% of the total but hold 43% of management positions, nearly double their share in the overall workforce. The disparity becomes more pronounced at the lower secondary level. Female teachers make up 69% of the total but hold only 37% of management positions, a gap of 32 percentage points. Male teachers account for only 31% of the total but hold 63% of leadership positions, more than twice their share in the overall workforce.

The largest gap is found at the upper secondary level. Female teachers make up 65% of the total but hold only 32% of management positions, a gap of 33 percentage points. Male teachers account for 35% of the total but hold 68% of leadership positions, nearly double their share in the overall workforce. Thus, the data show that at all education levels, men have a significantly greater representation in management than their share in the overall workforce, with the largest disparity at the upper secondary level (index 2.03) and the smallest at the primary level (index 1.87).

4

WOMEN IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: BARRIERS AND ENABLERS

Women in school leadership often encounter multiple barriers – institutional, societal and individual – that hinder their career progression and influence. However, several enablers can help bridge this gap, such as supportive policies, leadership development initiatives, advocacy and networking organisations.

Despite notable progress in promoting gender equality, Vietnamese women continue to face persistent barriers in attaining school leadership roles. These challenges are rooted in a combination of institutional, societal and individual factors that limit women's participation and advancement in educational leadership. Institutional barriers include structural limitations, such as the mandatory retirement age for women, which is five years earlier than for men. This policy significantly shortens women's leadership tenure and hinders their long-term career advancement (United Nations Viet Nam, 2016). Furthermore, the absence of formal gender quotas and a lack of targeted leadership training programmes limit women's access to top positions. Current education policies often fail to incorporate gender-responsive mechanisms that support women's career progression, thereby weakening recruitment pipelines and promotion opportunities for aspiring female leaders.

Societal barriers are also significant, as traditional gender norms in Vietnam continue to assign women primary responsibility for caregiving and household duties, making it difficult for them to fully engage with the demands of leadership roles. Social expectations often pressure women to prioritise family over professional advancement, leading to career interruptions. Compounding this challenge is the limited availability of affordable childcare and the persistence of stereotypes that question women's leadership capabilities, both of which diminish women's aspirations and confidence in pursuing leadership positions (United Nations Viet Nam, 2016).

Individual barriers and the constant challenge of balancing work and family responsibilities can lead to burnout or the decision to step away from leadership tracks. Without adequate support systems, such as childcare services, many women struggle to maintain leadership roles while fulfilling domestic obligations. Moreover, internalised societal stereotypes can erode women's self-confidence and ambition while also influencing how they

are perceived by colleagues, creating additional psychological and professional hurdles.

Despite ongoing challenges, several enabling factors have emerged that support and promote women's leadership in schools across Vietnam. These range from supportive policy frameworks to targeted professional development and advocacy efforts. Supportive policies and programmes provide a crucial foundation. The Vietnamese government has introduced important legislation such as the Gender Equality Law (Vietnam Ministry of Justice, 2006) and the National Strategy on Gender Equality (2021–2030) (Vietnam Government, 2021), which aims for 75% of state management agencies and local administrations to have women in key leadership positions by 2030. These policies provide a legal framework for promoting gender equality and combatting discrimination, including within the education sector.

Leadership development initiatives have also played a vital role in empowering women. The MOET, along with various universities, offers leadership training programmes specifically tailored for women, focusing on skill-building, confidence and professional networking. Mentorship programmes further enhance this support by connecting experienced female leaders with emerging ones, providing guidance, encouragement and a pathway to leadership growth.

Advocacy and networking organisations offer additional enablers. Groups such as the Vietnam Women's Union offer advocacy, support services and opportunities for women to connect, share experiences and collaborate. International partners, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), work alongside the government to promote gender equality and strengthen the leadership capacities of women educators, contributing to more inclusive and equitable school leadership structures.

While significant progress has been made, further action is needed to reach Vietnam's gender equality targets. Prioritising gender-sensitive recruitment criteria, expanding mentorship programmes and establishing clear policy mechanisms will be essential to fully empower women in school leadership roles.

5

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

A robust, inclusive policy framework is needed to address gender stereotypes in the recruitment process for school leadership positions in Vietnam. Based on the analysis of current challenges, the following recommendations are suggested. By adopting these recommendations, Vietnam can reduce gender stereotypes, ensure fair recruitment processes and promote the equal representation of women in school leadership roles in its education sector.

1. Promote equitable recruitment and appointment practices to eliminate systemic bias.

- **Standardised and gender-responsive criteria.** Develop clear recruitment and appointment standards based on demonstrated leadership competencies rather than on academic credentials alone.
- **Ensure transparency and accountability.** Implement transparent recruitment procedures, including publicly accessible job descriptions, selection criteria and final selection results, to minimise bias and enhance fairness.

2. Enhance the leadership pathway through targeted capacity development to overcome gender barriers.

- **Tailored leadership programmes for women.** Expand leadership programmes and opportunities for women in education, including mentorship, coaching and skill-building initiatives.
- **Training for recruitment panels.** Offer selection committee members regular capacity-building workshops and training on gender sensitivity, unconscious bias and equitable evaluation methods.

3. Create supportive environments to address individual barriers.

- **Work-life balance policies.** Implement flexible work arrangements and family-friendly policies, such as parental leave and childcare services, to help women maintain career continuity.
- **Peer networks support.** Foster the creation of women leadership networks in the education sector to facilitate mentorship, collaboration and mutual support.

4. Strengthen accountability through monitoring and partnership.

- **Gender audits.** Regularly review recruitment processes/practices and leadership structures to identify gaps and areas for improvement.
- **Data collection and reporting.** Mandate the collection and publication of gender-disaggregated data on school leadership positions to track progress and inform future policy adjustments.
- **Inclusive stakeholder engagement.** Collaborate with key stakeholders, such as the Vietnam Women's Union and international partners such as UNESCO and UNICEF, to advocate for gender-equitable policies and sustain ongoing dialogue.

6

AREAS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

To better understand and address the challenges of gender stereotypes in the recruitment process for school leadership roles in Vietnam, several key areas require deeper exploration as described below. This can provide a deeper understanding of existing barriers and guide evidence-informed solutions to advance gender equity in school leadership recruitment in Vietnam.

Recruitment and selection processes

- Examine how existing recruitment standards/criteria and evaluation methods may reinforce gender bias and limit opportunities for women to attain leadership positions.
- Review the current recruitment frameworks/policies to determine their fairness, transparency and sensitivity to gender dynamics.

Policy implementation gaps

- Investigate discrepancies between national gender equality policies and local-level implementation in urban and rural school systems.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of monitoring and enforcement mechanisms designed to uphold gender equality in educational leadership recruitment.

Institutional and cultural barriers

- Study the impact of school organisational cultures on women's access to and success in leadership roles.
- Explore how deeply rooted societal norms influence perceptions of women's leadership potential among policymakers, educators and communities.

7

CONCLUSION

This policy brief explored the impact of gender stereotypes on school leadership recruitment in Vietnam, where despite being the majority in teaching, women remain underrepresented in leadership roles. Societal norms, systemic barriers and gaps in policy implementation, especially in rural areas, hinder progress despite existing gender equality laws. Key challenges

include unequal retirement ages, a lack of gender quotas and limited leadership training. However, supportive policies and leadership programmes offer avenues for progress. The brief recommends gender-sensitive recruitment, expanded mentorship, flexible work policies and further research to address these barriers.

REFERENCES

- Communist Party of Vietnam. (2007). Resolution No. 11-NQ/TW on the work for women in the period of accelerating industrialization and modernization (April 27, 2007).
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management*, 40(1), 5–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077>
- National Assembly of Vietnam. (2019). Law on education (Law No. 43/2019/QH14, June 14, 2019).
- Thompson, P., & Stokes, H. (2023). Perspectives of women as they navigate their path to principalship in Australian secondary schools. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17411432231218820>
- Thompson, P., & Stokes, H. (2024). Experiences of women in middle leadership: Barriers and enablers. *School Leadership & Management*, 44(2), 1417–1434. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2023.2277187>
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (n.d.). Vietnam school leadership.
- United Nations Viet Nam. (2016). Viet Nam gender briefing kit 2016. https://vietnam.un.org/sites/default/files/2019-08/Gender%20Briefing%20Kit%202016_EN.pdf
- Vietnam Government. (2020). Decree No. 115/2020/ND-CP on recruitment and management of public officials (September 25, 2020).
- Vietnam Government. (2021). Resolution No. 28/NQ-CP: National strategy on gender equality (2021–2030).
- Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training. (2017). Circular No. 16/2017/TT-BGDĐT promulgating standards for principals of general education institutions.
- Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training. (2018). Circular No. 14/2018/TT-BGDĐT: Regulations on principal standards for general education institutions.
- Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training. (2019a). Circular No. 11/2019/TT-BGDĐT promulgating the continual professional development programme for administrators of preschool education institutions.
- Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training. (2019b). Circular No. 18/2019/TT-BGDĐT promulgating the continual professional development programme for administrators of general education institutions.
- Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training. (2019c). Circular No. 19/2019/TT-BGDĐT promulgating regulations on continuous professional development for teachers and administrators of preschool and general education institutions and teachers of continuing education centres.
- Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training. (2020). Circular No. 29/2020/TT-BGDĐT promulgating regulations on standards for principals of general education institutions.
- Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training. (2022). Circular No. 17/2022/TT-BGDĐT amending and supplementing a number of articles of Circular No. 19/2019/TT-BGDĐT.
- Vietnam Ministry of Justice. (2006). Law on gender equality.
- Vu, T. H., Duong, T. H., Lee, T.-T., & Barnett, B. (2016). Gender stereotypes against female leaders in the Vietnamese media. Oxfam in Vietnam.

KIX EMAP Learning Cycle Case Study, March 2026



20, Rue Rothschild | P.O. Box 1672
1211 Geneva 1, Switzerland
+41 (0) 22 908 45 47
norrag.kix@graduateinstitute.ch



@KIXEMAP



@KIXEMAP



@KIXEMAP



@KIXEMAP



norrageducation.org/kix-emap



gpekix.org/regional-hub/kix-emap