



Strategy for the development of Vietnam's early childhood education workforce for the period 2026–2035 in the context of international integration

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Abstract

The article aims to analyze the strategy for developing Vietnam's preschool teaching staff and education management personnel for the period 2026–2035 in the context of international integration. The strategy is built on the basis of integrating four approaches: Development according to Professional Standards; according to Job Positions; application of Human Resource Management theory; and adaptation to the domestic and international context. The study uses document analysis and synthesis methods, comparing the theoretical framework with new legal documents, particularly the 2025 Law on Teachers and related guiding circulars. The results show that the strategy reflects a shift from a seniority-based human resource management model to a competency- and performance-based model. The 2025 Teacher Law establishes a legal foundation for priority salary policies, which are expected to help resolve the paradox of remuneration and the shortage of high-quality human resources. However, the effectiveness of implementation largely depends on the ability to translate policies into feasible financial and management mechanisms at the local level, in the context of urgent demands for digital transformation and improving the quality of early childhood education.

Keywords: Early childhood education, human resource development, professional standards, human resource management, teacher law

Introduction

Early childhood education in Vietnam is being redefined as a strategic component within the national education system. Early childhood education serves as a crucial foundation, providing the first stepping stone for children's comprehensive development in physical, emotional, intellectual, and aesthetic domains, thereby laying the groundwork for lifelong learning (Ha, 2022; Nguyen Thi Que Loan & Hoang Thi Tu, n.d.)^[1, 2]. The country's long-term goal is to become a developed, high-income nation by 2045, emphasizing the importance of developing high-quality human resources from an early age and placing early childhood education in a strategic position.

Legally, the current context has been reinforced by breakthroughs such as Resolution No. 71-NQ/TW (xaydungchinhsach.chinhphu.vn, 2025)^[10], which is considered a revolutionary strategic action program in terms of thinking and institutions. In addition, the determination to expand early childhood education for children aged 3 to 6 in the Law amending and supplementing a number of articles of the Education Law (thuvienphapluat.vn, 2025d)^[8] is a clear commitment to ensuring that all children have access to basic, equitable, and quality education. These factors create pressure on the scale and quality of the preschool teaching and management staff, requiring a human resource development strategy that is systematic, logical, and feasible for the 2026-2035 period.

Methods and Research Data

The primary research methodology applied in this study is document analysis and synthesis. Specifically, the study synthesizes theoretical documents on workforce development, including approaches based on professional

standards, job positions, and Human Resource Management Theory. These documents were compared and analyzed in parallel with important Vietnamese legal documents effective in the 2026–2035 period, including the 2025 Law on Teachers (thuvienphapluat.vn, 2025b)^[6], high-level strategic resolutions, and circulars guiding job positions and staffing levels (thuvienphapluat.vn, 2024, 2025a)^[4, 5]. The objective of the comparison is to assess the consistency, feasibility, and policy implications of theoretical approaches in the context of the new institutional and governance framework of Vietnam's early childhood education sector.

The study uses only secondary data from publicly available sources, including published scientific works and official legal documents and policies of the Vietnamese government. The data does not contain personal information, sensitive data, or data requiring special permission, and therefore does not raise any research ethics issues.

Research Findings

Development objectives for the early childhood education teacher and management staff during the 2026-2035 period

The early childhood education workforce development strategy is oriented towards achieving the overall goal of developing a workforce of early childhood educators and managers who meet the requirements for early childhood education development in the 2026-2035 period. The specific objectives are divided into two main areas:

First, workforce quality (professional competence and ethics): Ensure that the workforce has professional ethics, professional competence, and professional skills in accordance with professional standards for teachers and

according to their job titles. This objective aims to meet the requirements for early childhood education reform and international integration standards.

Second, the quantity and structure of the workforce (personnel planning): Develop a workforce that is sufficient in number and consistent in structure according to job positions, meeting the requirements for early childhood education development nationwide, in each locality, and in each region.

Defining this goal poses a complex management challenge. It requires not only expanding recruitment to meet universal needs, but also optimizing the personnel structure within the framework of job positions. This requires management agencies to have accurate personnel planning at the local level, closely linked to legal documents on staffing levels, specifically Circular 19/2023/TT-BGDĐT of the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (thuvienphapluat.vn, 2025a) ^[5]. This shift requires workforce development to be managed based on data and specific job requirements, rather than just general recruitment plans.

Pagination. Foundations for the Development of Vietnam's Early Childhood Education Workforce (2026-2035)

1. Impact of the Teacher Law, professional standards, and job positions

The development of the workforce is based on comprehensive approaches, with the institutional framework focusing on professional standards and job positions, reinforced by the 2025 Teacher Law (thuvienphapluat.vn, 2025b) ^[6].

The 2025 Teacher Law, effective from January 1, 2026, is an important milestone, being the first specialized law that comprehensively regulates teachers, from their positions, professional standards, recruitment, employment, salaries and benefits, to recognition and rewards. The most significant breakthrough of the Teacher Law is the orientation to rank teachers' salaries at the highest level in the administrative and public service salary scale system. This affirms the special attention of the Vietnamese State, aiming to improve teachers' income and ensure their material well-being, thereby creating a strong motivation for them to feel secure in their commitment and dedication to the profession. This is a key solution to address the long-standing issues of low salaries and inadequate benefits, which have been systemic barriers leading to high turnover rates and a shortage of qualified personnel in early childhood education.

In terms of management, the Teacher Law stipulates stricter recruitment content and methods, including requiring teaching practice during the recruitment process to ensure actual professional competence. At the same time, the Law officially abolishes the previous I, II, III teacher classification system. This change shifts the management focus to a model based on professional titles and competency standards. The Law also stipulates that the process of reviewing and handling disciplinary actions against teachers must ensure humanity and protect the image and reputation of teachers.

Approaching job positions in workforce development is a management requirement to clearly identify personnel needs for each job position, ensuring sufficient numbers of teachers and management staff to meet the requirements of childcare and education. The legal basis for this approach is Circular No.19/2023/TT-BGDĐT (issued on October 30, 2023) (thuvienphapluat.vn, 2025a) ^[5], which provides guidance on job positions, the structure of civil servants by professional title, and the standard number of employees in public preschool education institutions. When assuming positions in early childhood education institutions, management staff and early childhood teachers must perform their duties in accordance with regulations.

The job position approach has a dual role: first, it is a human resource planning tool to ensure the quality structure of the workforce; second, it is the basis for developing appropriate remuneration policies (salaries, allowances, benefits) to attract, retain, and motivate employees, which is particularly important in difficult areas such as remote and isolated regions.

Developing the workforce according to professional standards is an important approach to ensuring and improving the quality of early childhood education. Professional standards for teachers are a system of standards on teacher ethics, training and development, and professional and technical competencies, which are uniformly applied to both public and non-public educational institutions.

Professional standards are used as a basis for recruitment, placement, evaluation, training, and development of teachers. Teachers also use the standards to self-assess their qualities and competencies and to develop plans for continuous professional development. Evaluations are conducted periodically, focusing on core criteria such as character, professional development, fostering an educational environment, community relations, and use of foreign languages/information technology.

The combination of abolishing rankings and focusing on professional standards linked to job placement (thuvienphapluat.vn, 2025c) ^[7] represents a fundamental shift to competency-based management. This model requires educational institutions to have the capacity to evaluate and plan human resources in greater detail, ensuring that all management activities (recruitment, training, evaluation) are linked to specific competency standards. To optimize this process, it is necessary to regularly update and adjust assessment tools, specify professional behaviors, and supplement assessments from parents and colleagues to increase objectivity.

2. Developing the early childhood education workforce based on human resource management theory

The development of the early childhood education workforce for the 2026-2035 period applies human resource management theory (Wright *et al.*, 1994) ^[9], a system of philosophies, principles, and scientific methods aimed at enhancing the productive contribution of employees to the organization. The goal is to meet current and future job requirements while also addressing employees' personal development needs. Human resource management theory is implemented through the following three main functional groups (Table 1):

Table 1: The main functional groups of human resource management

No.	Function	Basic Content	Legal Basis
1	Attraction Function	Ensuring the education system has sufficient preschool teachers and management staff in terms of both quantity and quality.	The 2025 Teacher Law, with its priority on the highest salaries, is expected to significantly change the education labor environment.
2	Training and Development Function	Includes activities aimed at enhancing the professional and vocational capabilities of the workforce, ensuring they possess the necessary qualities and competencies to fulfill assigned tasks.	The training program is based on the professional title standards for early childhood teachers, as stipulated in Decision 2000/QĐ-BGDĐT (Decision 2000/QĐ-BGDĐT 2023 Program for Professional Development of Preschool Teachers, n.d.). The goal is to equip teachers with knowledge, professional skills, methods, and a positive attitude.
3	Maintenance Function	Focuses on the effective use of staff and ensuring long-term employee retention. Implementing policies to attract talented individuals, salary systems, allowances, and benefits are key.	Implementing the policy of prioritizing the highest salary grades in accordance with the 2025 Teacher Law.

3. Approach based on the domestic context and international integration

This context poses urgent demands for the development of preschool teachers and education managers in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and globalization. The application of educational technology, particularly AI and IoT, expands access to advanced management and teaching models while enhancing educational effectiveness and reducing administrative burdens. However, the digital transformation process also requires the workforce to be equipped with digital capabilities and high adaptability; if human resource development functions cannot keep pace, the risk of falling behind and missing out on transformation opportunities is real.

Concurrently, the trend toward international integration has intensified competition in the quality of early childhood education, compelling the workforce to continuously enhance their professional skills, language proficiency, and access to advanced educational standards.

In the domestic context, the goal of national development by 2045 and the requirement to improve labor productivity have created conditions for the Vietnamese government to increase investment in education, while also putting pressure on the renewal of programs, methods, and conditions for implementing early childhood education based on a competency-based approach. The implementation of the workforce development strategy must ensure consistency between national objectives and regional and local policies, in line with economic, social, cultural, and developmental conditions specific to children. Local authorities play a proactive role in allocating human resources, budgets, and infrastructure to ensure the quality and safety of early childhood education.

Discussion

Although the strategic framework for early childhood education workforce development for the period 2026–2035 is built on a relatively solid theoretical foundation, the feasibility of the strategy is still affected by a number of systemic challenges. A prominent challenge is the “Investment Paradox,” manifested in the persistent imbalance between the recognition of the strategic role and long-term benefits of early childhood education and the limited actual financial investment. This gap not only reduces policy effectiveness but also becomes a structural barrier to attracting and retaining high-quality human resources. In addition, governance capacity at the grassroots level remains inadequate, as evidenced by limitations in planning, recruitment, utilization, and evaluation of staff.

This creates an urgent need for in-depth training for management staff in the field of human resource management, to ensure that the functions of attracting, developing, and retaining staff are carried out consistently and transparently in accordance with professional standards and job positions.

Based on this, the key policy implications for the 2026–2035 period should focus on three main directions. First, prioritize financing and effective implementation of the 2025 Law on Teachers, particularly the policy of setting teachers' salaries at the highest level in the administrative and public service salary scale, by translating policy commitments into feasible budget allocation mechanisms for early childhood education. Second, reform the personnel evaluation and management system to align job positions with professional standards, enhancing the objectivity and multidimensionality of evaluation tools. Third, promote technology change management by developing an integrated and focused training strategy to enhance the digital and AI capabilities of the entire workforce, while minimizing the digital divide between regions and ensuring equitable access to educational technology.

Conclusion

This paper has systematized and analyzed a comprehensive, integrated theoretical framework for the development of Vietnam's preschool teacher and education management workforce for the period 2026–2035. This strategy, based on a shift to competency-based management (Professional Standards and Job Positions) and reinforced by the 2025 Teacher Law, demonstrates a strategic commitment to improving the quality of early childhood education.

The key point is that if the legal commitments on remuneration in the Teacher Law are strictly enforced, it will create a strong financial incentive, addressing the root cause of the shortage of high-quality personnel in early childhood education. However, the long-term success of the strategy depends on the ability to manage technological change and resolve issues related to financial allocation and regional equity.

Future research should focus on evaluating the specific impact of the 2025 Teacher Law on the early childhood education labor market and studying models for evaluating the effectiveness of early childhood teachers' work based on job positions in a digital transformation environment.

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