

Extensive Reading under the 2018 General Education Curriculum for Vietnamese Literature in Vietnam

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Abstract: In the 2018 General Education Curriculum for Vietnamese Literature, extensive reading is a compulsory instructional component, systematically implemented from Grade 1 through Grade 12. Enabling students to independently and proficiently read new and equivalent texts not only contributes to enhancing their linguistic and literary competence but also plays a crucial role in fostering individuality, self-directed learning, and lifelong learning capacities. However, at present, many teachers still have a rather vague understanding of the requirements, methods, and instructional strategies for this content. As a result, some teachers either conduct lessons similarly to intensive reading sessions or provide superficial guidance without appropriate methods of assessment and evaluation. This study clarifies the concept and nature of extensive reading activities and proposes several practical solutions to improve the effectiveness of teaching extensive reading in Vietnamese Literature. In particular, the article focuses on organizing extensive reading activities by text genres and employing modern, suitable, and scientific instructional techniques and assessment methods.

Keywords: Extensive reading, The 2018 General Education Curriculum, Vietnamese Literature, Vietnam.

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1. Introduction

The 2018 General Education Curriculum in Vietnam was designed with a competency-based approach to foster the comprehensive development of learners' qualities and capacities. It aims to create a learning environment that supports students' balanced physical and mental growth, helping them become active, autonomous, creative, and confident individuals. Students are encouraged to apply active learning methods to consolidate foundational knowledge and skills, cultivate self-study habits, develop lifelong learning awareness, and enhance learning motivation, cooperation skills, and independent thinking abilities.

Among all subjects, Vietnamese Literature plays a central role in helping students develop linguistic competence through reading, writing, speaking, and listening to various communicative texts; simultaneously, it develops literary competence through engaging with literary works. Within these four skills—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—reading should be regarded as the most fundamental, as it serves as the basis for developing the other

three skills. Therefore, the 2018 curriculum and textbooks structure reading activities into multiple dimensions: reading techniques, reading comprehension (content and form), intertextual reading (making connections and comparisons), and extensive reading.

Extensive reading is recognized as an important reading activity that helps develop reading comprehension skills while nurturing students' passion and interest in reading. Internationally, the concept of extensive reading has been researched by many scholars and emphasized for its essential role in language teaching, especially in reading instruction.

Harold Palmer (1968) defined extensive reading as an activity in which teachers introduce a selected list of texts, guide students regarding reading objectives, explain requirements, suggest reading methods, monitor students' reading progress, and encourage them to fully explore the provided texts (H. Palmer, 1968, p.137).

In Russia, extensive reading is referred to as *vneklassnoye chtenie* (extracurricular reading): "a form of guided, organized

reading with a fixed group of students over a certain period and according to a flexible timetable aligned with a reading plan. This plan is developed by teachers based on educational objectives, active teaching methods, and the students' knowledge level, skills, reading habits, and interests" (T.F. Kurrdiomova, 1985, p.31). According to Iu. Bordanova and V.G. Maransman (1995), "In-class reading, when combined with extracurricular reading, more strongly promotes students' independent reading ability and interest, and extracurricular reading, in turn, serves as the foundation for the entire process of teaching literature" (p.239).

Day and Bamford (1998) proposed principles of extensive reading, highlighting the importance of selecting appropriate reading materials, ensuring a rich variety of texts, and encouraging students to read what interests them. Later, Day and Bamford (2002) outlined ten characteristics of an effective extensive reading program, including: (1) reading material is easy; (2) a variety of materials on a wide range of topics is available; (3) learners choose what they want to read; (4) learners read as much as possible; (5) reading is for pleasure, information, and general understanding; (6) reading itself is the reward; (7) reading speed is generally faster; (8) reading is individual and silent; (9) teachers guide and support students; and (10) teachers act as reading role models.

In 1989, F. Hafiz and I. Tudor described extensive reading as reading large amounts of material for enjoyment without requiring tasks or exercises. This aligns with the ultimate goal of incorporating extensive reading into the new Vietnamese Literature curriculum.

James Moffett (1992) noted, "The more schools approximate real-life contexts of reading and writing, the more successful they are" (p.42). B. Dupuy, L. Tse, and T. Cook (1996, p.10) argued that the lack of extensive reading activities greatly limits learners' language exposure. Therefore, language and literature education programs should integrate extensive reading activities.

In 1995, C. Davis emphasized that extensive reading involves dedicating time to reading, encouraging students to read engaging materials suited to their level, and reading as much as possible. Similarly, W. Grabe and F. Stoller (2002) viewed extensive reading as an approach where learners read large quantities of material within their language proficiency.

Waring and Nation (2004) explained the core principles of extensive reading, highlighted its significant role in language development, and suggested practical ways to organize it effectively.

In 2006, J. Silva explored extensive reading via the Internet and found it offered access to hundreds of new and interesting articles, allowing students to choose texts related to their interests. Macalister (2010) investigated teachers' perspectives on extensive reading principles in higher education, revealing that extensive reading can develop reading strategies, such as guessing word meanings from context.

Raihani Ferdila (2014) also discussed how extensive reading contributes to improving reading comprehension skills.

In Vietnam, although research on extensive reading in the Vietnamese Literature subject remains limited, it has begun to affirm the importance of this activity. According to Phan, T.L. (1996, p.386): "Reading literary works outside class hours aims to spark students' interest in learning and reading literature and to

train them to consciously and skillfully engage with literature—what is often called reading culture." By guiding students to independently read suitable literary works aligned with their interests, cognitive abilities, and psychological characteristics, they can develop the capacity to select and evaluate literature based on ideological and aesthetic values and gain new knowledge and perspectives on life and literature.

Regarding selecting and building reading materials for extensive reading, Phan, T.L. (1996) suggested:

- Works introduced for extracurricular reading should not overlap with texts taught in class;
- Supplementary reading materials;
- Contemporary literary works suitable for high school students, including detective fiction, adventure stories, science fiction, travel writing, and others (p.385).

Recent scholars like Do, N.T. (chief editor, 2018), Dang, T.L.T. (2022), Nguyen, H.H. (2022), and Hoang, T.M. (2023) have emphasized the role of extensive reading in developing students' aesthetic appreciation, language proficiency, and critical thinking. They recommended organizing extensive reading flexibly, combining in-class and out-of-class activities and using both print and digital resources.

The 2018 General Education Curriculum for Vietnamese Literature "was designed as an open curriculum, specifying only the learning outcomes for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at each grade level; core knowledge of Vietnamese language and literature; and certain nationally required texts of cultural and literary importance" (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018, p.4). Therefore, enhancing the quality and effectiveness of extensive reading is an urgent issue.

However, in practice, the implementation of extensive reading still faces challenges: lack of reference materials, limited instructional time, and insufficient coordination among teachers, parents, and students. These issues highlight the need for further research on instructional forms and methods that align with current teaching conditions to improve effectiveness and stimulate students' interest in reading.

From the perspective of competency development, fostering students' "independent reading competence" can be seen as a higher-order goal within the Reading component of the Vietnamese Literature subject. This paper aims to clarify the concept and nature of extensive reading activities, and to propose practical solutions to enhance the effectiveness of teaching extensive reading in Vietnamese Literature classes. In particular, the paper focuses on organizing extensive reading by text genres and applying modern, appropriate, and scientifically grounded teaching techniques and assessment methods.

2. Methods

Statistical method: We compiled and analyzed the extensive reading content specified for lower secondary and upper secondary levels in the 2018 Vietnamese Literature curriculum to identify challenges and key factors necessary for organizing extensive reading instruction. The results show that each student from Grade 6 to Grade 12 is required to read 62 texts per academic year, including literary texts, informational texts, and argumentative texts. The number of texts remains consistent across grades;

however, the differences lie in the length of the extensive reading texts—which corresponds to the length of texts in each grade's official textbooks—and the specific genres assigned for each grade. This substantial volume of reading requires significant effort and commitment from both teachers and students when implementing extensive reading activities.

Survey method: We developed a questionnaire to survey 40 teachers and 120 students currently teaching and studying at lower and upper secondary schools in Ca Mau province and An Giang province, Vietnam. The participating schools include Vo Thi Sau Lower Secondary School; Tran Huynh Lower Secondary School; Bac Lieu Specialized High School (with lower secondary classes); Bac Lieu–Ninh Binh Lower Secondary School; Hiep Thanh High School; An Thoi High School; Phu Quoc High School; Duong Dong High School; Nguyen Hung Son High School; and Chau Thanh High School. The survey aimed to collect information about the difficulties encountered in implementing extensive reading under the 2018 curriculum, as well as teachers' and students' perceptions of extensive reading instruction during the 2023–2024 academic year. The collected data provided a foundation for proposing practical and effective processes and methods to guide extensive reading instruction in Vietnamese Literature at the secondary level. The questionnaire was created using Google Forms on Google Drive, and after data collection, we used Excel to analyze the survey results.

Analysis and synthesis method: We analyzed the characteristics and requirements of the extensive reading texts, as well as examined how to organize extensive reading activities in a way that aligns with the actual teaching and learning conditions in Vietnam.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Current situation of teaching extensive reading in Vietnamese Literature

Difficulties encountered by teachers:

According to the survey results, 47.5% of teachers reported difficulties in finding sources and materials for extensive reading texts. 35.0% of teachers stated that they lacked experience in selecting appropriate texts that meet the requirements of extensive reading activities. Meanwhile, 15.0% of teachers experienced confusion and challenges in organizing extensive reading activities as required. The remaining percentage cited other reasons. Due to limited experience and unfamiliarity with balancing guidance, support, and respect for students' autonomy, the current organization of extensive reading lessons has not been systematic or effective.

Difficulties encountered by students:

Survey results show that 42.0% of students said they could not independently find texts that align with the curriculum requirements; 41.0% had not yet developed the habit of reading following the principles of extensive reading. The rest mentioned other reasons.

Students' reading preferences:

The results indicate that “stories” are the most preferred genre among students, accounting for 72.2%. This is followed by “informational texts” at 14.4%. Very few students chose to read poetry. The findings suggest that students' demand for extensive

reading primarily centers on literary texts and informational texts. Notably, students expressed a desire to select reading materials related to real-life topics, believing that this could help them apply what they read to their studies and daily life.\

Process and methods of organizing extensive reading:

More than 70.0% of teachers reported that they usually just remind students to read additional texts of the same genre at home rather than organizing a systematic instructional process. In particular, the evaluation and assessment of extensive reading outcomes have not been adequately implemented.

Thus, although the extensive reading component of the Vietnamese Literature curriculum (which began implementation in the 2021–2022 academic year) aims to enrich students' knowledge and reading competence, the greatest challenge faced by both teachers and students lies in accessing and selecting suitable reading materials. Finding appropriate texts that meet the program's scientific criteria and align with literary education standards remains especially difficult. In practice, locating extensive reading materials has largely become the responsibility of teachers and students.

For lower and upper secondary students, simply identifying text genres can already be challenging for many, let alone selecting texts that align with thematic requirements and literary standards set by the curriculum. For teachers, “evaluating” the content value and appropriateness of texts is also far from easy.

3.2. Some solutions to enhance the effectiveness of teaching extensive reading in Vietnamese Literature

Procedure for organizing extensive reading instruction:

To prepare for students' extensive reading activities both in class and at home, teachers should implement the following steps:

Step 1. Warm-up – Orienting the topic for extensive reading

Teachers should stimulate students' interest by introducing the topic or genre for extensive reading. Students then express their preferences, interests, and select topics they enjoy. The teacher assigns tasks and provides a reading list, recommended sources, and guidance on how to search for materials. Students can find and read texts discussed in class, choosing books from the classroom bookshelf, the school library, bookstores, or other resources. Teachers are encouraged to motivate students to build a classroom library from the beginning of the school year. Teachers should also prepare several similar texts to suggest or support students who face difficulties finding materials.

Step 2. Conducting extensive reading

Based on the extensive reading tasks outlined in the textbook, teachers can suggest guiding questions, reading worksheets, mind maps, etc., to help students make notes, summarize, or answer questions while reading.

Step 3. Sharing and presenting extensive reading outcomes

It is important to create opportunities for many students to share their reading products so that their classmates can learn about and become interested in texts they have not yet read. This may encourage them to seek out and read those texts. Teachers can organize group activities, forums, or presentations, allowing students to express their reflections, discuss, and engage in critical exchange.

Step 4. Assessing extensive reading outcomes

Teachers evaluate students' qualities and competencies, focusing on observable behaviors, actions, and attitudes shown during extensive reading activities. This assessment should combine qualitative methods (observation, notes, verbal comments, etc.) and quantitative methods, conducted throughout the school year and at the end of each semester.

Teachers should also develop checklists (assessment criteria) to help students self-assess and evaluate their peers' reading products. Such tools serve as a guide, helping students practice logical thinking, scientific presentation, and persuasive reasoning by comparing their extensive reading outcomes against the established criteria.

Developing extensive reading materials by grade/level

The 2018 General Education Curriculum for Vietnamese Literature stipulates that extensive reading materials must be selected based on several criteria: genre variety; appropriateness in terms of complexity; and representativeness of the humanistic and cultural values of the Vietnamese nation. Importantly, these materials must directly contribute to developing students' qualities and competencies in accordance with the curriculum's objectives and required learning outcomes.

Based on the criteria specified in the curriculum, we have summarized and supplemented them as follows:

- Suitability for students' prior experience, cognitive abilities, and psychological characteristics specific to each grade and educational level;
- Distinctive artistic and thematic value; representativeness of different genres and text types; linguistic standardization and creativity;
- Reflection of national achievements in thought, literature, and culture;
- Promotion of patriotism, national independence, and awareness of national sovereignty;
- Humanistic values that foster kindness, tolerance, appreciation of beauty and truth, love of nature, international integration, and orientation toward universal human values;
- Close and logical alignment with the core reading program;
- Structured as a system and organized into appropriate themes;
- Encouragement of students' active participation and self-directed learning;
- Integration of teachers' organizational and instructional roles.

Based on these principles, we propose the following criteria for developing extensive reading materials tailored to each grade and educational level:

Table 1. Criteria for selecting and developing extensive reading materials for Vietnamese Literature at the secondary level

No.	Criterion	Requirement
1	Genre	The text must belong to the same genre as those in the curriculum and textbooks, with clear and distinctive genre features.
2	Length	The text should be approximately the same length as the main texts in the textbook.
3	Topic	The text must align with the same topic/theme as in the textbook.
4	Author	The author must not violate ethical standards or political ideology; must not be affiliated with groups or organizations opposing the Vietnamese government.
5	Content	The text's content and language must conform to Vietnamese cultural values and traditions; The level of difficulty should be appropriate for students of that grade; The text should have literary and aesthetic value.
6	Source	The text must have verifiable and traceable origins.

The system of extensive reading texts should be logically organized:

- By genre for each grade level;
- By themes and topics corresponding to those in the textbooks.

In addition, the extensive reading materials chosen for any specific textbook series should still be connected and meet the genre requirements specified by the curriculum so they can also be used across other textbook series. Although the thematic systems may differ slightly between textbook series, teachers and students can rely on the genre criteria to select texts for extensive reading.

If well-developed and carefully edited, these extensive reading materials could be published as books, handbooks, or

manuals for teachers and students to use. Furthermore, teachers and educational management agencies should aim to build a digital corpus of extensive reading materials to modernize and facilitate teaching and learning. This digital database would allow teachers and students to directly search for and use resources (with just a computer or smartphone and internet connection), ensuring access to reading materials anytime, anywhere.

Additionally, through such a platform, teachers and students could update and share high-quality, suitable texts they discover, ensuring the corpus is continuously enriched and updated. Of course, this approach would require technological solutions (e.g., a website and technical infrastructure) and a qualified editorial team to review and approve materials contributed by the community of teachers and students.

4. Discussion

To enhance the effectiveness of teaching extensive reading activities, teachers should consider the following points:

First, guide students to apply their knowledge of text genres in extensive reading: genre-related knowledge has already been taught in the core lessons. Thus, these analytical tools and genre-based reading skills have been thoroughly introduced in regular classes. Teachers should implement strategies to help students apply this knowledge independently. For instance, teachers can use questions, mind maps, etc., to help students recall the characteristics of the genre relevant to the extensive reading texts. Teachers may also apply techniques such as self-questioning, KWL charts (Know–Want to know–Learned), etc., to support students' practice.

Second, teachers should observe and create a relaxed and supportive atmosphere for students during extensive reading. If students encounter difficulties, teachers should promptly offer guidance (without doing the work for them) to help students overcome these challenges.

Third, teachers can assign tasks beyond the textbook or design additional worksheets for extensive reading activities. These tasks should be appropriate to students' levels, stimulating interest and catering to the differentiated abilities of students in the classroom.

Fourth, teachers themselves can share their reading experiences using visual teaching aids, video clips, and other multimedia tools. This makes the lesson more dynamic, engaging, and enjoyable, helping students approach extensive reading with greater ease and curiosity.

Fifth, teachers may organize experiential activities through extensive reading lessons. For example, within the classroom or in collaboration with the school, teachers can facilitate events like a "Book Sharing Festival" where students across a grade level participate in diverse, creative, and attractive activities to promote reading.

Sixth, teachers should encourage and guide students to participate in the annual "Reading Culture Ambassador" competition organized by schools and educational authorities. Such competitions motivate many students to read more and cultivate the habit of reflecting on and sharing their love for books, thus inspiring peers through their roles as young reading ambassadors.

5. Conclusions

Extensive reading in teaching Vietnamese Literature is an important requirement emphasized in the 2018 General Education Curriculum in Vietnam. Its goal is to comprehensively develop students' language proficiency, critical thinking, creativity, and lifelong learning habits.

However, practical implementation still faces many challenges, such as limited facilities, a lack of suitable reference materials, disparities in students' self-learning abilities, and teachers' limited experience in organizing extensive reading activities. These realities require schools, teachers, and educational authorities to continue investing in and innovating: expanding libraries and digital resources, diversifying instructional formats (combining online and in-person activities), guiding students in

extensive reading strategies, and reforming assessment methods to encourage voluntary and creative reading among students.

To achieve the goal of developing students' qualities and competencies through extensive reading in accordance with the 2018 Vietnamese Literature Curriculum, teachers need to thoroughly understand both the curriculum's requirements and effective instructional methods, as discussed above. It is hoped that the ideas and insights shared in this paper will provide teachers with practical and inspiring strategies. This will help them become more confident, autonomous, and creative in designing extensive reading activities suitable for different grades and educational contexts.

Through extensive reading, teachers can inspire students to develop a genuine love of reading—thereby fostering reading competence, self-directed learning skills, and richer personal experiences connected to historical, social, and ideological contexts. Organizing effective extensive reading activities is not only essential for improving the quality of Vietnamese Literature education but also plays a meaningful role in educating and nurturing students to become active, thoughtful Vietnamese citizens of the 21st century.

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