



# Compliance of education journals in Vietnam with the minimum criteria to be indexed in the ASEAN Citation Index and Scopus

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### Abstract

This study aimed at elucidating the present situation of scholarly journals published in Vietnam according to the minimum criteria to be indexed in the ASEAN Citation Index (ACI) and Scopus, with the goal of suggesting development strategies for scholarly journals in Vietnam. From the 387 journals accredited by the Vietnamese State Council for Professorship, 13 education journals were arbitrarily selected, and their compliance with the five minimum criteria for the ACI (peer review, timeliness, abstracts in English, references in Roman script, and a website in English) and the six minimum criteria for Scopus (peer review, timeline, abstracts in English, references in Roman characters, Electronic International Standard Serial Number [ISSN], and publication ethics) were assessed. Two of the 13 journals were eligible to be indexed in the ACI, while none fulfilled the minimum criteria to be indexed in Scopus. An urgent task for the editors of those journals is to establish an informative journal homepage in English that provides basic information on the journal. Then, an Electronic ISSN can be obtained from the ISSN International Center. Furthermore, the following steps are suggested for journal promotion: establishment of appropriate editorial policies and publication ethics procedures, improvement of research integrity, enhancement of the journals' reputation in the international scientific community, and improvement of the online publishing system by adopting a journal manuscript management system. To achieve those goals, financial support from the Vietnamese government will be invaluable.

### Keywords

Editorial policies; Vietnam; Peer review; Publications; Financial support

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## Introduction

The improvement of scholarly journals published in Vietnam to meet international publication standards is in accordance with the Vietnamese government's guidelines and policies towards the development of scientific and technological capacities of higher education institutions. Furthermore, it is associated with trends in the promotion of the Vietnamese higher education system to the international level. However, despite efforts by the Vietnamese government and higher education institutions to improve the quality and quantity of scholarly journals, the status of journal publishing in Vietnam still remains under expectations. As of August 2018, there were 387 journals approved for inclusion in the list of accredited scholarly journals for consideration in promotion decisions for professors [1]. Only six of those journals (1.6%) were indexed in Scopus and/or the Emerging Sources Citation Index, including *Vietnam Journal of Mathematics*, *Acta Mathematica Vietnamica*, *Advances in Natural Sciences: Nanoscience and Nanotechnology*, *Advanced Materials and Devices Journal*, *Biomedical Research and Therapy*, and *Progress in Stem Cell*. As of June 2019, only 12 of the 387 (3.1%) Vietnamese accredited scholarly journals were indexed in the ASEAN Citation Index (ACI), as presented in Suppl. 1 [2]. Moreover, Vietnamese scholarly journals also face the following challenges in submission, editing, reviewing, and publishing: competition to recruit high-quality papers, finding international reviewers, low journal reputation (not indexed in Web of Science and/or Scopus), the need to reach a wider and larger readership, and meeting international standards for scholarly journal publications. This situation is quite similar to those of other ASEAN countries, such as the Philippines, as reported by Tecson-Mendoza in 2015 [3].

To find strategies for promoting scholarly journals in Vietnam to the international level, this study aimed to elucidate the status of scholarly journals in Vietnam. Of the 387 journals accredited by the Vietnamese State Council for Professorship, 13 education journals were arbitrarily selected. Those journals' websites and print versions were searched in order to determine whether they met the minimum selection criteria of the ACI and Scopus. According to the results, we would like to suggest long-term strategic solutions to improve scholarly journals in Vietnam, both in the education category and in other fields.

## What is the ACI?

According to the ACI Steering Committee [4], the new initiative of developing a central regional citation database was proposed at the fourth Meeting of Directors-General, Secre-

tary-General, Commissioner of Higher Education in Southeast Asia held in Jakarta, Indonesia in March 2010. The meeting stressed the importance of regional collaboration in establishing the ACI as a database to enhance research in Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries and to increase the visibility of ASEAN research productivity [5].

Inspired by the Web of Science and/or Scopus, the mission of ACI is to become "a central regional database which was designed and set up to index all the bibliographic records and the citations of all quality ASEAN research outputs appeared in the ASEAN scholarly journals." The ACI's member countries include Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The ACI Steering Committee consists of 20 experts nominated by member countries to establish policies and oversee the implementation and development of ACI. The ACI Steering Committee conducts annual meetings to share experiences, monitor implementation, and evaluate and approve journals to be indexed in the ACI database. As of the end of June 2019, the ACI database consisted of a total of 587 scientific journals from countries in the ASEAN region [2]. To be indexed in the ACI, scientific journals published in the 10 ASEAN member countries must undergo a rigorous appraisal process according to the selection criteria developed by the ACI Steering Committee, including five pre-selection criteria and nine selection criteria [6].

## Compliance of Education Journals in Vietnam with the Five Pre-selection Criteria of the ACI

The keyword "education" was used to search 387 journals accredited by the Vietnamese State Council for Professorship. There were 13 journals that had the keyword "education" in their name (Table 1).

The content of the journal website and print version was searched. The five pre-selection criteria of the ACI are as follows [6,7]: peer review, timeliness of publication, abstracts in English, references in Roman script, and journal website in English. Two of the 13 selected education journals were eligible to be indexed in the ACI database (Table 2). Two journals had a journal homepage in English. For the other journals, it was difficult to verify the items for evaluation via their online resources only.

## Compliance of Education Journals in Vietnam with the Minimum Criteria to be Indexed in Scopus

According to the journal selection policy of Scopus [8], journal titles should meet all of the following minimum criteria to be considered for review: 1) consist of peer-reviewed content

**Table 1.** List of 13 education journals accredited by the Vietnamese State Council for Professorship (2018)

Journal title	pISSN	Publisher	Website URL address	Submission method
<i>Vietnam Journal of Education</i>	2354-0753	Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training	<a href="https://tapchigiaoduc.moet.gov.vn/en/">https://tapchigiaoduc.moet.gov.vn/en/</a>	E-mail
<i>VNU Journal of Science: Education Research</i>	0866-8612	Vietnam National University	<a href="https://js.vnu.edu.vn/ER/">https://js.vnu.edu.vn/ER/</a>	Open journal system
<i>Journal of Educational Sciences</i>	0866-3662	Vietnam Institute of Educational Sciences	<a href="https://jes.vnies.edu.vn/">https://jes.vnies.edu.vn/</a>	Self-constructed journal system
<i>Journal of Education Management</i>	1859-2910	National Academy of Education Management	<a href="https://jem.naem.edu.vn/">https://jem.naem.edu.vn/</a>	Self-constructed journal system
<i>Journal of Military Theory Education</i>	1859-056X	Political Academy: Vietnam Ministry of Defence	<a href="https://hocvienchinhtribqp.edu.vn/index.php/tap-chi-gdllctqs">https://hocvienchinhtribqp.edu.vn/index.php/tap-chi-gdllctqs</a>	E-mail
<i>NUAE Journal of Arts Education</i>	1859-4964	National University of Art Education	<a href="https://spntw.edu.vn/articles.aspx?sitepageid=715">https://spntw.edu.vn/articles.aspx?sitepageid=715</a>	E-mail
<i>Journal of Educational Equipments</i>	1859-0810	Vietnamese Association of Educational Equipments	<a href="https://www.vjol.info/index.php/TBGD/index">https://www.vjol.info/index.php/TBGD/index</a>	Open journal system
<i>Journal of Education and Society</i>	1859-3917	Association of Vietnam Universities and Colleges	<a href="https://giaoducvaxahoi.vn/">https://giaoducvaxahoi.vn/</a>	E-mail
<i>Journal of Science and Education</i>	1859-1612	Hue University's College of Education	<a href="https://tckhgd.huce.vn/">https://tckhgd.huce.vn/</a>	E-mail
<i>Journal of Technical Education Science</i>	1859-1272	Ho Chi Minh City University of Technical Education	<a href="https://tapchikhgdkhcmute.edu.vn/">https://tapchikhgdkhcmute.edu.vn/</a>	E-mail
<i>Journal of Educational Management Science</i>	2354-0788	The Ho Chi Minh City School of Education Management	<a href="https://iemh.edu.vn/cm_gioi-thieu-tap-chi.html">https://iemh.edu.vn/cm_gioi-thieu-tap-chi.html</a>	E-mail
<i>Journal of Science and Education</i>	1859-4603	University of Science and Education, University of Da Nang	<a href="https://ued.udn.vn/page/tap-chi-khoa-hoc.html">https://ued.udn.vn/page/tap-chi-khoa-hoc.html</a>	Self-constructed journal system
<i>Journal of Vocational Education and Training</i>	2354-0583	Directorate of Vocational Education, Vietnamese Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs	<a href="https://jvet.org.vn/index.php/jvet">https://jvet.org.vn/index.php/jvet</a>	Open journal system

pISSN, print International Standard Serial Number.

and have a publicly available description of the peer review process; 2) be published on a regular basis and have an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) as registered with the ISSN International Centre; 3) have content that is relevant for and readable by an international audience, meaning: have references in Roman script and have English language abstracts and titles; and 4) have a publicly available publication ethics and publication malpractice statement.

The results of the analysis of the 13 journals is summarized in Table 3. None of the 13 journals fulfilled the minimum selection criteria to be considered for review and evaluation for Scopus inclusion. One journal had an eISSN that could be confirmed through the ISSN portal (<https://portal.issn.org>). One journal mentioned publication ethics on the journal homepage. No journals provided a full statement about publication ethics and a statement about the use of anti-plagiarism software systems.

### What Should Vietnamese Editors Do to Promote Their Journals to the International Level?

The above-described situation of the 13 journals reveals that they should take steps to reach the minimum standards of scholarly journals. To fulfil the minimum standards listed in the ACI and Scopus selection process, there should be an informative journal homepage in English that provides the journal title, publisher, aims and scope, editorial board, instructions for authors, publication ethics, contact address, archiving sites, and full-text content of articles including the title, year, volume, page, authors' names, and authors' affiliations. After constructing a journal homepage in English with an independent domain, the editor or publisher should obtain an eISSN from the ISSN International Center through the National Library of Vietnam. Although this is a difficult and

**Table 2.** Compliance of 13 education journals in Vietnam with the minimum criteria of the ASEAN Citation Index

Journal title	Peer review	Timeliness	Abstracts in English	References in Roman script	Website in English
<i>Vietnam Journal of Education</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>VNU Journal of Science: Education Research</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Journal of Educational Sciences</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<i>Journal of Education Management</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<i>Journal of Military Theory Education</i>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
<i>NUAE Journal of Arts Education</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<i>Journal of Educational Equipments</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<i>Journal of Education and Society</i>	No <sup>a)</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<i>Journal of Science and Education (Hue University's College of Education)</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<i>Journal of Technical Education Science</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<i>Journal of Educational Management Science</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<i>Journal of Science and Education (University of Danang, University of Education)</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<i>Journal of Vocational Education and Training</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

<sup>a)</sup>Some of the manuscripts are reviewed by the editorial board.

**Table 3.** Compliance of 13 education journals in Vietnam with the minimal criteria to be indexed in Scopus

Journal title	Peer-review description	Timeline	eISSN	Title and abstract in English	Reference in Roman characters	Publication ethics
<i>Vietnam Journal of Education</i>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No <sup>b)</sup>
<i>VNU Journal of Science: Education Research</i>	Yes	Yes	2588-1094	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Journal of Educational Sciences</i>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No <sup>b)</sup>
<i>Journal of Education Management</i>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No <sup>b)</sup>
<i>Journal of Military Theory Education</i>	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No <sup>b)</sup>
<i>NUAE Journal of Arts Education</i>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No <sup>b)</sup>
<i>Journal of Educational Equipments</i>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No <sup>b)</sup>
<i>Journal of Education and Society</i>	No <sup>a)</sup>	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No <sup>b)</sup>
<i>Journal of Science and Education (Hue University's College of Education)</i>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No <sup>b)</sup>
<i>Journal of Technical Education Science</i>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No <sup>b)</sup>
<i>Journal of Educational Management Science</i>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No <sup>b)</sup>
<i>Journal of Science and Education (The University of Danang, University of Education)</i>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No <sup>b)</sup>
<i>Journal of Vocational Education and Training</i>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No <sup>b)</sup>

eISSN, electronic International Standard Serial Number.

<sup>a)</sup>Some of the manuscripts are reviewed by the editorial board; <sup>b)</sup>There was no statement about the use of software in ensuring publication ethics, but there was a statement of compliance with publication ethics in the printed version or on the website.

challenging process that requires long-term and persistent efforts and appropriate investment in financial and human re-

sources, journal editors should have a long-term strategy for improvement.

**Table 4.** List of non-commercial open source publishing platforms

System	Provider	Website
Open Journal System	Public Knowledge Foundation	<a href="https://pkp.sfu.ca/ojs/">https://pkp.sfu.ca/ojs/</a>
DPubS	Cornell University Library, USA	<a href="http://dpubs.org">http://dpubs.org</a>
Digital Commons	Bepress	<a href="https://www.bepress.com/products/digital-commons/features/journal-publishing/">https://www.bepress.com/products/digital-commons/features/journal-publishing/</a>

The following specific solutions are suggested. First, the journals’ editorial policies and publication ethics should be established according to international standards in terms of the style and format of manuscripts, editorial policy, review process, and publication ethics policies. A more efficient way to describe the above items is that journals should follow the “principles of transparency and best practice in scholarly publishing, third version” [9]. These principles will also help editors to ensure that appropriate processes are in place to deal with any kinds of publication misconduct.

Second, the research integrity of articles should be improved. One method to maintain research integrity is to use plagiarism detection software.

Third, steps should be taken to enhance the journals’ reputation in the international scientific community. More specifically, the journals need to be developed from locally recognized journals to internationally recognized journals by establishing partnerships with experts and editors from other countries.

Fourth, online publishing should be improved by adopting a manuscript management system to receive submissions and to manage manuscripts during the review process. Taking into consideration the current financial capacity of scholarly journals in Vietnam, a feasible solution would be to use one of the open-source platforms for manuscript submission and publishing listed in Table 4.

## Conclusion

To elucidate the present situation of scholarly journals in Vietnam, 13 education journals were selected for their eligibility to be indexed in the ACI and Scopus. Two of them were eligible to be indexed in the ACI, while none of them fulfilled the minimum criteria for both databases. Promotion of those journals to the international level, at which they would be eligible to be indexed in international literature databases, is an urgent task for the journal editors. Given the rapid economic developments and scientific achievements in Vietnam, there is the possibility that scholarly journals in Vietnam will be able to reach the level of first-rate international journals in the near future. To hasten this process, it is suggested that the Vietnamese government and other stakeholders should im-

plement priority-based policy interventions and provide financial support to help scholarly journals in Vietnam to achieve internationalization.

Vietnamese journal editors should pay more attention to constructing journal homepages in English with independent domains, building or using manuscript management systems, and using tools to detect plagiarism to maintain publication ethics more efficiently.

## Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

## Supplementary Material

Supplementary file is available from the Harvard Dataverse at: <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/B0A68W>.

**Suppl. 1.** List of 12 journals indexed in the ASEAN Citation Index, out of the 387 Vietnamese accredited scholarly journals.

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