

Foreword

AsTEN Journal of Teacher Education **Special Issue, USSH-VNU**

As an educator and editor, I believe this Special Issue of the AsTEN Journal of Teacher Education arrives at a critical moment for our region. ASEAN education systems are undergoing rapid transformation—shaped by digital technologies, competency-based reforms, rising diversity in classrooms, and the accelerated integration of artificial intelligence in teaching and learning. These shifts place unprecedented demands on teacher education. They require not only new pedagogical models but also deeper empirical understanding to guide policy, practice, and professional development. This Special Issue, produced in collaboration with the University of Social Sciences and Humanities – Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City, responds to that need by bringing together studies that collectively illuminate emerging priorities and challenges in preparing teachers for a rapidly changing educational landscape.

The first article, “Undergraduates’ Experiences of E-learning at Teacher Training Universities in the South of Vietnam: A Comparative Case Study” by Phuong Thi Lan Pham, examines e-learning experiences across two teacher-training institutions. The study reveals both increasing acceptance of online learning and significant differences in infrastructure and course design, highlighting the need for stronger digital ecosystems in teacher education.

The second contribution, “Differentiated Instruction in School Practices: Managerial Implications for Teacher Professional Development” by Tran Thanh Huong, explores how subject-head teachers conceptualize and apply differentiated instruction. Despite widespread recognition of its value, DI practices remain inconsistent due to institutional limitations and varied teacher preparedness.

The third study, “Factors Influencing the Implementation of Play-Based Learning in Supporting Elementary School Students’ Social-Emotional Development” by Van Vy Dao and Thu Anh Thi Pham, uses social constructivist and ecological frameworks to identify teacher capacity, student characteristics, and learning environments as key elements shaping effective PBL–SEL integration.

From Thailand, the fourth article, “STEM-Based Gear Activities for Enhancing Understanding and Engagement in a Multi-Grade Engineering Class” by Chinapat Mongkholsiriwattana and Monamorn Precharattana, demonstrates how hands-on STEM activities significantly improve students’ conceptual understanding and satisfaction in multi-grade settings, emphasizing the value of resource-efficient experiential learning.

The final contribution, “The Context of AI-Integrated Classroom Practices in English Higher Education in the Philippines” by Sam

Roy Dela Cruz, provides compelling mixed-methods evidence on how AI tools—including ChatGPT, Grammarly, Turnitin, Copilot, and Canvas LMS—enhance instructional planning, assessment, feedback, and learner engagement.

Together, these studies offer rich theoretical and practical insights into innovation, equity, and pedagogical renewal in teacher education across ASEAN. My hope is that this Special Issue will deepen scholarly dialogue, strengthen regional collaboration, and inspire further research that advances a high-quality, inclusive, and future-ready teaching profession.

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