Vietnam continues to affirm its position as an integral player in the international education sector, with students being prepared to enter international corporate landscapes that are yet to exist. As a rapidly increasing economy, Vietnam presents a unique opportunity for Australian employers and start-ups to enhance their Asia capabilities.

As Vietnam continues to affirm its position as an integral player in the international education landscape, there remains room for growth and opportunity, particularly in preparing future employees for industries subject to rapid operational transformation. Historical education reforms in Vietnam have increased student interaction on both state and private institutional levels, but reaching international educational standards targets continue to present major challenges for Vietnamese students attempting to enter the global labour market. Enhanced pedagogical strategies, implemented through educational policy, are vital in ensuring that students are equipped with skills to be able to engage with knowledge actively. These policies, in conjunction with strengthening relationships with existing international educational providers across the public and private sector, have the potential to enable students to develop confidence in their ability to transition into international corporate landscapes that are yet to exist, particularly as Industries 4.0 and 5.0 continue to grow.

According to Nguyen Dong Anh, Vice Dean of the Faculty of International Communication at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam and 2021 AVLD Alumni, “education is one of the main areas where both countries can thrive: Australia’s education is more advanced and more developed with great programs & schools, especially in higher education; Australia’s university are amongst the best in the world. Meanwhile, Vietnam is a developing country, with a young and thriving economy. This gives it so much room for growth and development.”

Australia's investment in international education as a future asset has grown significantly in recent years, particularly within the Asia-Pacific region. As a rapidly increasing economy, Vietnam presents a
unique landscape for Australian employers and start-ups to enhance their Asia capabilities, with minimal start-up and labour costs when compared to its periphery nations. Vietnam’s willingness to engage in bilateral relations with its Asia-Pacific neighbours, Australia in particular, propounds an alternative educational landscape, one which supports development in growing industries and allows for experimentation and exploration which perhaps would be financially or physically inaccessible in other nations.

Long-term developments in both physical and technological infrastructure, paired with a commitment to fundamental and comprehensive innovation in education after 2013’s Resolution 29 policy reform, has allowed Vietnamese education providers to expand their reach domestically and abroad. Partnerships with existing institutions, including Melbourne’s RMIT, which has a long-standing relationship with Vietnam, and Swinburne University, in partnership with FPT, one of Vietnam’s largest technology corporations, has allowed for strengthened bilateral relationships between the two countries. Other institutions across Australia continue to develop partnerships in a number of different capacities with Vietnam, including Flinders University, Deakin University and the University of Newcastle, among others.

According to Dr Melissa Jardine, policing and public health expert and Board Chair at the Australia Vietnam Leadership Dialogue, “there is an attempt [from Vietnam] to converge with the international standards...To some in the university sector here in Australia, I think they would see that it could be a matter of how they can turn that into a business opportunity. There’s certainly a lot of need to, given the requirements now on academic staff at universities to perform alongside international standards. There’s a lot of demand.”

There exists ample opportunities for Australian education providers to expand their reach and develop strategic partnerships with Vietnamese institutions by establishing joint programs, exchange partnerships and international campuses within Vietnam. The Australian government and other multinational Australia-based corporations have committed to investing in international student mobility and public diplomacy within Vietnam by subsidizing the cost of studying through scholarships and grants. The New Colombo Plan scholarship and mobility grants, as well as Westpac Asia Exchange Programs, continue to support young Australians to become Asia capable leaders. As well, many tertiary education providers in Australia have committed to strengthening institutional relationships with Vietnamese partners, allowing for students to enhance their cross-cultural literacy and international capabilities.

Enrolment in higher education has grown by 125% between 2010 and 2020, a result of schooling becoming increasingly more accessible for remote and rural learners across Vietnam. With a higher number of people enrolled in schools and universities across the country, the establishment of new accreditation and quality assurance mechanisms, as well as national qualification frameworks, has improved the consistency of education across Vietnam which, in turn, has made it easier to export qualifications internationally.
Dr Huyen Bui, casual research fellow in the Faculty of Arts and Education at Deakin University, credits educational reform as one of the reasons Vietnam continues to see advancements in educational standards across the country. "National regulations and policies, including the Decree 86/2018/ND-CP on foreign co-operation and investment in education have created great opportunities for foreign investors to participate in Vietnam education's sector and contribute to boosting the country's education quality".

Underpinning change in the education industry is accessibility, affordability, convergence, scalability and personalisation. Advancements in legal framework and government strategies for digitization have also allowed for a more comprehensive and nuanced reconstruction of the pedagogical landscape across Vietnam’s private and public sector educational providers. Digital transformation and the rise of EduTech remains the biggest trend in the educational landscape both in Vietnam and abroad, but instead of relying solely on e-Learning, optimal models of teaching encourage blended styles of digital and face-to-face to ensure all modes of learning are integrated into advanced curriculums.

Rapid digitisation and increasing privatisation have allowed for international organisations to invest in Vietnamese infrastructure, which continues to prove advantageous due to low start-up and labour fees which can be leveraged at a fraction of the cost as compared to other Asia-Pacific nations.

In an increasingly globalised world, educational facilities which commit to intercultural learning, cross-border mobility and identity transformation continue to outperform institutions whose scope remains exclusively domestic in employer satisfaction and graduate performance. There is increasing demand in the international labour market for high-quality soft skills which transcend industry but, according to employers, are seldom taught in higher-education institutions. Investments in interpersonal skills that optimise long-term learning and promote competencies both inside the university and into the workplace are necessary for a viable future in the corporate landscape.

Australia’s relationship with Vietnam as a trade and investment partner begins with equipping students with skills to engage with employers in professional capacities in culturally appropriate contexts. By establishing a mutual dialogue between the two nations, both Australia and Vietnam can maximise their potential as international partners and assert their position as principal agents in education and training for their respective populations.

The end.