



## Research Article

# APPLIED EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN HO CHI MINH CITY

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## TÓM TẮT

*The article presents the research results on the purposes, contents, and evaluation of applied educational research in 19 upper secondary schools in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC). The results show that more than three-quarters of the participants reported that the purpose of applied educational research helps to develop their scientific research capacity, to propose measures to improve the quality of education, and to identify limitations in subject matter teaching. Research topics are often related to teaching and student education and produce good research results. Applied educational research was evaluated at two levels: the school level and then the Department of Education and Training level. Schools are using educational initiative criteria to evaluate applied educational action research. Schools have neither had specific regulations on the expertise of the evaluators nor invited outside experts to participate in the evaluation of topics.*

**Keywords:** educational action research; school management; upper secondary school

## 1. Introduction

Applied educational research is currently the general trend of educational science research in the 21st century, being applied in many countries around the world and Vietnam (Ngo, 2012; Nguyen & Phan, 2015; Pham, 2015). Applied educational research is one of the important activities in the professional activities of upper secondary school teachers (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018b).

Applied educational research in upper secondary schools is a type of research in upper secondary schools, conducted by school administrators, teachers, and staff, including the selection of pedagogical intervention and assessment of its influence to contribute to the

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realization of scientific research goals of the school (Ministry of Education and Training, 2010; Pham, 2016).

Applied educational research has been implemented in upper secondary schools in Ho Chi Minh City. Many high-value studies have contributed to improving the quality of teaching and education. Besides, there are still some limitations in research activities. Considering the above analysis, there is a need for a study to accurately and objectively evaluate the reality of applied educational research in upper secondary schools in Ho Chi Minh City regarding the purposes, contents, and evaluation of applied educational research.

## **2. Problem solution**

### ***2.1. Some theoretical foundations of applied educational research in upper secondary schools***

#### *2.1.1. Purposes of applied educational research in upper secondary schools*

Following the current trend of deeper international integration, the impact of the fourth industrial revolution, the requirements of the general education curriculum (2018), applied educational research has become more and more practical for every school and teacher. Applied educational research is considered a part of the professional development of teachers, and management development of managers (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018a; Prime Minister, 2017).

The purposes of applied educational research in high school cover detecting limitations in subject matter teaching, class, and school management; proposing measures to improve the quality of education; proposing measures to improve the quality of school management, organizing union activities; developing research capacity for teachers; transferring and bringing applied educational research into practice (Congress office, 2015; Guskey, 2000; Ministry of Education and Training, 2010, 2018b; Nguyen & Ta, 2017; Rawlinson & Little, 2004).

#### *2.1.2. Contents of applied educational research in upper secondary schools*

The contents of educational action research in upper secondary schools cover Group 1) Research on management and organization of union activities: School management, Fostering the team, Socialization of education, How to publish. Group 2) Research on teaching: Curricula and textbooks, teaching and learning methods, Libraries, creation of teaching aids, Application of information technology in teaching, Testing and assessing student learning outcomes, Fostering gifted students and tutoring weak students, How to guide students to carry out scientific research projects. Group 3) Research on student education: Issues on educating students' personality, Methods of educating weak students, Student issues: playing truant, school drop-out, repeating classes, and Organizing experiential and extra-curricular activities.

The contents of applied educational research in upper secondary schools now need to focus on the dialectical relationship with the following issues: Requirements and challenges of the fourth industrial revolution with high school education, the implementation of the General Education Curriculum 2018, measures to develop the capacity of managers, teachers, and staff to meet professional standards (Congress office, 2015; Ministry of Education and Training, 2010, 2018a, 2020).

### *2.1.3. Evaluation of applied educational research in upper secondary schools*

Evaluating applied educational research is the evaluation of research results based on specific and clear evaluation criteria. The evaluation of applied educational research aims to help evaluate and classify studies of managers, teachers, and staff, serving as a basis for commending and criticizing researchers. It is the basis to evaluate the effectiveness and obtain experience in applied educational research at the institution (Ho Chi Minh City Department of Education and Training, 2017; Vu, 2007; Vu, 2015). The evaluation of applied educational research is presented in terms of process and criteria.

Regarding the evaluation process, each school will establish a school-level Evaluation Council. Research projects will be evaluated by the School-level Evaluation Council based on evaluation and criteria. Each project will be judged by at least two judges independently based on the prescribed scorecard. The average score will be calculated. The judges are qualified, reputable, experienced, and successful managers and teachers in teaching and research. It is possible to invite more judges who are experts outside the institution from other institutes, universities, and schools to increase the objectivity of the evaluation. Projects being graded good at the school level or higher with an impact outside the school will be verified by the head or authorized person of the school and sent to the Department of Education and Training for grading, review, and recognition as projects at sectoral level or city level, or non-city level (if any).

Regarding the evaluation criteria, applied educational research in upper secondary schools includes the following criteria in order: novelty, science, applicability, effectiveness, and presentation. Studies are graded: Unqualified (less than 50 points); Qualified (50 to less than 65 points); Fair (65 to less than 81 points); Good (81 to less than 91 points); Excellent (91 to 100 points) (Ho Chi Minh City Department of Education and Training, 2017; Vu, 2007, 2015).

## **2.2. This study**

### *2.2.1. Investigation using a questionnaire*

The survey sample includes 14 administrators and 238 teachers and staff in 19 upper secondary schools, being selected based on systematic stratification combined with the representative selection. Management staff accounts for 5.6%, teachers 92%, and staff 2.4%.

*Table 1. Participants' information*

No	School	Position		
		Administrator	Teacher	Staff
1	Trung Vuong, district 1	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
2	Bui Thi Xuan, district 1	3.8%	84.6%	11.5%
3	Ten Lo Man, district 1	5.9%	94.1%	0.0%
4	Hung Vuong, district 5	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
5	Thuc Hanh High school Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, district 5	10.0%	90.0%	0.0%
6	Tran Huu Trang, district 5	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
7	Mac Dinh Chi, district 6	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
8	Binh Phu, district 6	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
9	Nguyen Tat Thanh, district 6	6.3%	81.3%	12.5%
10	Luong Van Can, district 8	4.5%	95.5%	0.0%
11	Suong Nguyet Anh, district 10	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
12	Nguyen Du, district 10	0.0%	88.9%	11.1%
13	Nguyen An Ninh, district 10	30.0%	70.0%	0.0%
14	Tran Van Giau, Binh Thanh district	27.3%	72.7%	0.0%
15	Quang Trung, Phu Nhuan district	10.0%	90.0%	0.0%
16	Long Thoi, Nha Be district	10.0%	90.0%	0.0%
17	Cu Chi, Cu Chi district	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
18	Trung Phu, Cu Chi district	11.1%	88.9%	0.0%
19	Binh Khanh, Can Gio district	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>5.6%</b>	<b>92.0%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>

### 2.2.2. Interview

Seven management staff, eight teachers at five upper secondary schools in Ho Chi Minh City agreed to be interviewed: Ten Lo Man, district 1; Bui Thi Xuan, District 1; Mac Dinh Chi, District 6; Nguyen Tat Thanh, District 6; Luong Van Can, District 8.

### 2.2.3. Data analysis

\* Analyzing data from the questionnaire

The researcher calculated the percentage (%), the mean, the standard deviation (sd), and the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient.

*Table 2. Data handling 1*

Contents	Degree		
	1 – 1,66	1,67 - 2,33	2,34 - 3
Research projects	Average	Fair	Good

*Table 3. Data handling 2*

Contents	Degree				
	1 – 1,8	1,81 - 2,6	2,61 - 3,4	3,41 - 4,2	4,21 - 5
Research purpose	Totally incorrect	Incorrect	Undecided	Correct	Totally correct
Evaluation criteria	Totally unnecessary	Unnecessary	Undecided	Necessary	Totally necessary

Based on the above information, after conducting the survey, we evaluated the reliability of the scales through Cronbach's alpha coefficient using SPSS for Windows software. The results show that all the scales have a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of  $> 0.7$ .

*Table 4. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients*

No	Contents	Items	Cronbach's Alpha coefficient
1	Research purpose	7	0.775
2	Research topic	15	0.935
3	Necessity of evaluation criteria	11	0.851

\* Interview data:

To process data from the interviews, the researcher coded the sample as CBQL 1 to CBQL 7 for managers and GV 1 to GV 8 for teachers. Interview data were collected to explain and illustrate the data collected from the survey, to compare the answers for each question, to find the consensus in the answers among the participants.

### **2.3. Research results**

#### *2.3.1. Purposes of applied educational research perceived by administrators and teachers*

*Table 5. The purposes of applied educational research in upper secondary schools in Ho Chi Minh City*

No	Purpose	Correct and totally correct	Mean	Sd	Rank
1	Identifying limitations in subject matter teaching	89.1%	4.08	.775	2
2	Identifying limitations in class management	74.1%	3.78	.886	4
3	Identifying limitations in school management	53.3%	3.37	1.074	7
4	Proposing measures to improve the quality of school management	66.1%	3.65	1.023	6
5	Proposing measures to improve the quality of education	87.8%	4.08	.718	2
6	Self-developing scientific research capacity	89.8%	4.16	.745	1
7	Performing as a task required by the institution	61.1%	3.50	1.093	5

The purposes of “Identifying limitations in: Subject matter teaching, class management, school management” were rated “Correct” with average scores ranging from 3.37 to 4.08. The interview results show that the majority of interviewees agreed with this purpose, “Identifying limitations in subject matter teaching, class management, and school management to propose measures for improving the quality of education and school management” (CBQL 2, CBQL 3, CBQL 7, GV 1, GV 2, GV 3, GV 4, GV 8).

The purpose of “Proposing measures to improve the quality of school management” was rated “True” with a mean of 3.65. The interview results show that the majority believed that applied educational research helped improve management efficiency, helping the school board to understand the reality of the school and offer solutions to overcome the limitations and develop the school, specifically: According to CBQL 3, CBQL 4, “Applied educational research helps to understand the reality of the school and make strategies, decisions, solutions to overcome limitations and develop the school”; According to CBQL 6, “Managers can apply the organizational method of the applied educational plan into the management of the study of documents, policies, laws, new policy research, and management methods”. In addition, some said that applied educational research helped managers have information to review the school management process; better understand the reality of the school; thereby, some assessments and measures are more appropriate and closer to reality; limit emotional and subjective decisions (CBQL 1, GV 2, GV 4, GV 5, GV 8).

The purpose of “Proposing measures to improve the quality of education” was rated “Correct” with a mean of 4.08. The interview results show that the majority of interviewees believed that applied educational research helped improve knowledge and pedagogical capacity for teachers, ensuring the ability to communicate and guide students to study effectively, thereby improving the quality of education. According to CBQL 1, CBQL 2, CBQL 5, “Help teachers save time, ensure quality, improve pedagogical capacity, help students receive knowledge more effectively, connect between teachers and learners.” According to CBQL 7, “The comparative results helped to propose measures to improve the quality of education.” According to GV 1, GV 2, GV 3, “Identifying difficulties in teaching, helping teachers organize learning activities for students in the direction of developing student's capacity and ending the teaching process, helping students form and develop their competences better.” According to GV 5, GV 6, “As a scientific activity, it helps teachers to record the experiences gained through the teaching process, analyze the causes, evaluate and improve the quality of education.”

The purpose of “Self-developing scientific research capacity” was rated “correct” with a mean of 4.16. The interview results showed that most of the interviewees agreed with this purpose. According to GV 1, “Applied educational research is to develop my own scientific research capacity and skills, to improve the quality of education, and bring knowledge to learners more naturally and effectively.” According to CBQL 5, GV 6, GV 7, and GV 8, “Applied educational research helps to develop ourselves, our scientific research capacity.”

The purpose of “Performing as a task required by the school” was rated “correct” with a mean of 3.50. Interview results showed that some teachers participated in applied educational research as an assignment. Teachers did not find any passion and excitement when doing research. The participation in research was only for emulation review. Many teachers did not even want to research because they thought it was a waste of time, effort, and money (CBQL 1, CBQL 2, CBQL 3, CBQL 6, GV 1, GV 2, GV 8).

In general, the participants of the study said that their research purposes were the same as those mentioned in the table above with all the ratings at the “correct” level. In which, more than three-quarters believed that the purpose of applied educational research helped develop their scientific research capacity, helped propose measures to improve the quality of education, identify limitations in subject matter teaching. Besides, more than half of the opinions revealed that research was performed as a task required by the school for appraisal.

### *2.3.2. The implementation of applied educational research contents in upper secondary schools in Ho Chi Minh City*

The reality of the implementation of applied educational research contents in upper secondary schools in Ho Chi Minh City is presented as follows:

*Table 6. Evaluation of the implementation of applied educational research topics in upper secondary schools in Ho Chi Minh City*

No	Group of topics	Research topic	Evaluation by school		Teacher's self-evaluation				
			Yes	No	Average	Fair	Good	Mean	Sd
1	School management	Research on school management	21.7%	78.3%	15.4%	50.0%	34.6%	2.19	0.685
2		Research on fostering the staff	6.3%	93.8%	13.3%	54.7%	32.0%	2.19	0.651
3		Research on the socialization of education	0.0%	100.0%	14.1%	50.0%	35.9%	2.22	0.678
4		Research on how to publish research results	18.2%	81.8%	14.7%	58.8%	26.5%	2.12	0.636
<b>General evaluation</b>			<b>13.3%</b>	<b>86.7%</b>	<b>14.4%</b>	<b>53.3%</b>	<b>32.3%</b>	<b>2.18</b>	<b>0.663</b>
5	Teaching	Research on program textbooks	2.2%	97.8%	3.9%	48.8%	47.2%	2.12	0.636
6		Research on teaching methodology	1.1%	98.9%	2.3%	44.8%	52.9%	2.43	0.572
7		Research on library, teaching aids	2.6%	97.4%	8.5%	54.2%	37.3%	2.51	0.546
8		Research on applying information technology in teaching	0.0%	100.0%	2.8%	43.4%	53.8%	2.29	0.615
9		Research on assessing learning outcomes	0.0%	100.0%	3.0%	32.3%	64.7%	2.51	0.555
10		Research on fostering gifted students, tutoring weak students	4.1%	95.9%	5.5%	37.0%	57.5%	2.62	0.547
11		Research on guiding students to conduct scientific research projects	6.3%	93.8%	16.1%	44.1%	39.8%	2.52	0.602
<b>General evaluation</b>			<b>1.9%</b>	<b>98.1%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>43.4%</b>	<b>51.0%</b>	<b>2.43</b>	<b>0.582</b>
12	Student education	Research on educating student's personality	2.4%	97.6%	2.3%	43.8%	53.9%	2.24	0.712
13		Research on educating weak students	5.7%	94.3%	7.0%	39.1%	53.9%	2.52	0.547
14		Research on drop-out and students repeating classes	12.0%	88.0%	11.9%	38.6%	49.5%	2.47	0.626
15		Research on organizing experiential activities	0.0%	100.0%	7.0%	35.9%	57.0%	2.38	0.691
<b>General evaluation</b>			<b>4.3%</b>	<b>95.7%</b>	<b>6.8%</b>	<b>39.4%</b>	<b>53.8%</b>	<b>2.40</b>	<b>0.644</b>



For the group “School management” assessed by school administrators and teachers, the overall assessment was “Fair” with a mean of 2.18 with an average rating ranged from 2.12 to 2.22. The interview results show that this group of topics was rarely studied.

For the group “Teaching”, which were researched by school administrators and teachers, they were generally rated “Good” with a mean of 2.43, ranging from 2.12 to 2.62. Topics assessed as “Good”: Research on subject teaching methodology, Research on libraries, teaching aids, Research on assessing learning outcomes, Research on fostering gifted students, tutoring weak students, Research on guiding students to conduct scientific research projects. The interview results show that this group of topics is interested and researched by administrators and teachers. According to CBQL 1, “Quality of student training, active teaching methods.” According to CBQL 4, “Research specific teaching activities of the subject assigned to teach.” According to CBQL 5, CBQL 6, and CBQL 7, “Researching and fostering gifted students, guiding students to conduct scientific research projects.” According to GV 1, “Some areas about the use of teaching aids, assessment of results, subject matter teaching methodology.” According to GV 4, “Teachers conduct applied educational research on the topic: Methods of guiding students to conduct scientific research in upper secondary schools and Developing students' capacity in the process of teaching organic chemistry and practical exercises.” According to GV 7, “Subject matter teaching methodology and how to apply information technology in teaching. This content is my recommendation”.

For the group “Student education” researched by school administrators and teachers, it was generally rated “Good” with a mean of 2.40, ranging from 2, 24 to 2.52. Topics assessed as performing at “Good” level: Research on educating weak students, Research on dropouts, students repeating classes, Research on organizing experiential activities. The interview results show that the group of topics on student education are interested and researched by administrators and teachers. According to GV 1, “Research on educating the personality and life skills for students.” According to CBQL 3, “Research on the management of ethical and vocational education activities.” According to GV 5 and GV 6, “Subject matter teaching methodology, thereby helping to foster gifted students and tutor weak students. Organizing experiential learning activities”.

In general, topics about teaching and student education are foci of research, with good research results. Topics on school management were less interested with fair research results.

### *2.3.3. The reality of evaluating applied educational research in upper secondary schools in Ho Chi Minh City*

The reality of evaluating applied educational research in upper secondary schools in Ho Chi Minh City is presented as follows:

Regarding the evaluation process, schools have established an Evaluation Council to evaluate proposals, including the evaluation of applied educational research. The head of the school establishes the Evaluation Council, consisting of President, Vice President, secretary, and members. The schools publicize the scorecard including the criteria and the score scale. Each proposal will be marked by two judges. Judges are individuals named in the Evaluation Council established by the decision of the head of the school. The Evaluation Council reviews and evaluates the proposals at the school level and considers the impact of the proposals outside the school. The proposal accepted at the school will be granted certificates and rewarded. Topics proposed for influence outside the school will be listed by the head of the school and submitted to the City Department of Education and Training for recognition of the sectoral, city-level, and non-city-levels (if any). Through interviews, some revealed that the Evaluation Council in each school was mainly insiders without expertise in applied educational research and then tends to be less objective. Some evaluations were believed to be still superficial, even out of respect. In addition, the schools did not specify the expertise of the examiners participating in the evaluation of topics (CBQL 3, CBQL 4, CBQL 6, GV 3, GV8).

Criteria are presented as follows:

**Table 7.** Evaluation of the necessity of evaluation criteria for applied educational research in upper secondary schools in Ho Chi Minh City

No	Criteria	Necessary and totally necessary (%)	Mean	Sd	Rank
1	<b>Novelty</b>	76.2%	3.84	0.823	3
1.1	Proposing a completely new alternative solution, ensuring scientificity and accuracy	69.2%	3.66	.956	3
1.2	Proposing a solution to replace a part of an existing solution, ensuring scientificity and accuracy	88.5%	4.07	.741	1
1.3	The new solution has recently been applied in other school and has never been applied in one's school, now the author organizes and implements it effectively for his/her school.	70.7%	3.78	.771	2
2	<b>Efficiency</b>	73.9%	3.86	0.724	2
2.1	A completely new alternative, which has been implemented throughout the industry with high efficiency	69.0%	3.74	.852	5
2.2	The solution is a partial replacement of an existing solution, which has been implemented throughout the industry with high efficiency	76.4%	3.91	.661	2

2.3	Completely new alternative, which has been implemented in the school with high efficiency	70.2%	3.83	.746	3
2.4	The solution is a partial replacement of an existing solution, which has been implemented in the school with high efficiency	84.3%	4.04	.618	1
2.5	The new solution has recently been applied in other schools and has never been applied in one's institution, now the author organizes and implements it effectively for his/her school	69.5%	3.80	.742	4
3	<b>Applicability</b>	85.5%	4.01	0.620	1
3.1	Providing scientific arguments for planning guidelines and policies: a) In the Team/Department/Commission; b) In agencies, institutions, educational and training institutions; c) In the industry	81.1%	3.94	.693	3
3.2	Providing solutions and recommendations that are practical, easy to implement, and easy to put into life: a) In the Team/Department/Commission; b) In agencies, institutions, educational and training institutions; c) In the industry	91.6%	4.07	.545	1
3.3	Has been applied in practice with high efficiency or can apply effectively in a wide range: a) In the Team/Department/Commission; b) In agencies, institutions, educational and training institutions; c) In the industry	83.7%	4.03	.622	2
<b>General evaluation</b>		<b>77.67%</b>	<b>3.90</b>	<b>0.722</b>	

The survey results show that all items were rated “Necessary” with a mean of 3.90, with more than three-quarters choosing the “Necessary” level. Through interviews, the results show that schools were using innovative evaluation criteria to evaluate applied educational research. In addition, the opinion that the criteria to evaluate applied educational research include criteria of novelty, efficiency, applicability, scientificity, formality and are classified according to five levels: Unqualified (less than 50 points); Qualified (50 to less than 65 points); Fair (65 to less than 81 points); Good (81 to less than 91 points); Excellent (91 to 100 points) (CBQL 1, CBQL 3, CBQL 4, CBQL 6, GV 3, GV 5, GV 6).

In general, the evaluation of applied educational research in upper secondary schools in Ho Chi Minh City has been assessed according to the process from the school level to the Department of Education and Training level with the influence ranging from the school to sectoral level, city level, and non-city level. Each topic is evaluated by two judges and the average score is calculated. Schools are using innovative evaluation criteria to evaluate applied educational research. The evaluation criteria of applied educational research include novelty, efficiency, applicability, scientificity, formality and are classified according to five

levels. The schools do not have specific regulations on the expertise of the assessors and have not invited outside experts to participate in the evaluation of topics.

### 3. Conclusion

In general, applied educational research in upper secondary schools in Ho Chi Minh City has achieved some advantages: the subjects have a fairly complete perception of the purpose of applied educational research, in which more than three-quarters of the opinions revealed that the purpose of applied educational research helped develop the capacity to conduct scientific research for themselves, propose measures to improve the quality of education, identify limitations in subject matter teaching; topics on school management, teaching, and student education are foci of research, in which topics on teaching and student education have good research results; schools have a clear evaluation process from the school level to department level with specific evaluation and grading criteria.

In addition, there are still some limitations. More than half of the interviewees revealed that researching was performed as a task required by the school for appraisal. Research topics on school management have received little research attention. The schools do not have specific regulations on the expertise of the assessors and have not invited outside experts to participate in the evaluation of topics.

❖ **Conflict of Interest:** Author have no conflict of interest to declare.

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**THỰC TRẠNG NGHIÊN CỨU KHOA HỌC SỰ PHẠM ỨNG DỤNG  
Ở CÁC TRƯỜNG TRUNG HỌC PHỔ THÔNG  
TẠI THÀNH PHỐ HỒ CHÍ MINH**

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**TÓM TẮT**

*Bài viết trình bày kết quả nghiên cứu về mục đích, nội dung và đánh giá nghiên cứu khoa học sự phạm ứng dụng (NCKHSPUD) ở 19 trường trung học phổ thông ở Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy có hơn ba phần tư ý kiến cho rằng mục đích NCKHSPUD giúp phát triển năng lực nghiên cứu khoa học cho bản thân, đề xuất các biện pháp nâng cao chất lượng giáo dục, phát hiện các hạn chế trong dạy học bộ môn. Các chủ đề có liên quan đến dạy học, giáo dục học sinh được quan tâm nghiên cứu và có kết quả nghiên cứu tốt. NCKHSPUD được đánh giá theo quy trình từ đơn vị cơ sở (cấp trường) đến Sở Giáo dục và Đào tạo. Các trường sử dụng tiêu chí đánh giá sáng kiến để đánh giá NCKHSPUD. Các trường chưa có quy định cụ thể về chuyên môn của giám khảo đánh giá, chưa mời các chuyên gia bên ngoài cơ sở tham gia đánh giá các đề tài.*

***Từ khóa:*** nghiên cứu khoa học sự phạm ứng dụng; quản lý nhà trường; trường trung học phổ thông