



**THE REALITY OF TEACHING MODERN VIETNAMESE  
SHORT STORIES ORIENTED TOWARDS LITERARY COMPETENCE  
DEVELOPMENT FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:  
A CASE STUDY IN THAI NGUYEN<sup>i</sup>**

**Nguyen Kien Tho<sup>ii</sup>**

Lecturer,

Faculty of Literature,

Thai Nguyen University of Education,

No. 20, Luong Ngoc Quyen Street,

Thai Nguyen City, Vietnam

**Abstract:**

Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW and the 2018 General Education Program have set an urgent requirement for transforming the educational model from a content-based approach to the development of learners' qualities and competencies, in which literary competence plays a core role in the Literature subject. This article presents research results on the reality of teaching modern Vietnamese short stories – an important and relatable genre in the Junior High School curriculum – at Quang Son Secondary School, Thai Nguyen Province, to assess the level of responsiveness to these innovation requirements. Through a survey using questionnaires for teachers and students, combined with practical pedagogical observations, the study has presented a multidimensional picture of teaching and learning activities. Survey results show that although 91% of teachers have a correct awareness of the goal of competence development, the dominant teaching method remains traditional, leaning towards lecturing and imposing perceptions, with 54.3% of teachers still maintaining the old classroom model. Regarding students, the majority remain passive in reception, and learning interest is not high, with up to 25.6% of students disliking this genre; notably, self-reading comprehension and aesthetic appreciation competence for works outside the curriculum are very limited, with 65.1% of students admitting they have not formed this competence through classroom lessons. These limitations stem from various causes such as exam pressure, rote teaching habits, and a lack of reading culture. Based on quantitative and qualitative analyses, the article affirms the necessity of synchronously innovating teaching methods that adhere closely

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<sup>i</sup> THỰC TRẠNG DẠY HỌC TRUYỆN NGẮN VIỆT NAM HIỆN ĐẠI THEO ĐỊNH HƯỚNG PHÁT TRIỂN NĂNG LỰC VĂN HỌC CHO HỌC SINH TRUNG HỌC CƠ SỞ: NGHIÊN CỨU TRƯỜNG HỢP TẠI THÁI NGUYÊN

<sup>ii</sup> Correspondence: email [thonk@tnue.edu.vn](mailto:thonk@tnue.edu.vn)

to genre characteristics and diversifying assessment forms to truly develop literary competence for students.

**Keywords:** literary competence; modern Vietnamese short stories; competence-based teaching; secondary students; teaching reality

**Tóm tắt:**

Nghị quyết số 29-NQ/TW và Chương trình Giáo dục phổ thông 2018 đã đặt ra yêu cầu cấp thiết về việc chuyển đổi mô hình giáo dục từ tiếp cận nội dung sang định hướng phát triển phẩm chất và năng lực người học, trong đó năng lực văn học đóng vai trò cốt lõi ở môn Ngữ văn. Bài viết này trình bày kết quả nghiên cứu về thực trạng dạy học truyện ngắn Việt Nam hiện đại – một thể loại quan trọng và gần gũi trong chương trình Trung học cơ sở – tại trường THCS Quang Sơn, tỉnh Thái Nguyên, nhằm đánh giá mức độ đáp ứng các yêu cầu đổi mới này. Thông qua khảo sát bằng bảng hỏi dành cho giáo viên và học sinh, kết hợp với quan sát sư phạm thực tiễn, nghiên cứu đã phác họa một bức tranh đa chiều về hoạt động dạy và học. Kết quả khảo sát cho thấy mặc dù 91% giáo viên nhận thức đúng đắn về mục tiêu phát triển năng lực, phương pháp giảng dạy chủ đạo vẫn mang tính truyền thống, thiên về diễn giảng và áp đặt cảm nhận, với 54,3% giáo viên vẫn duy trì mô hình lớp học cũ. Về phía học sinh, phần lớn các em vẫn thụ động trong tiếp nhận, hứng thú học tập chưa cao, với 25,6% học sinh không thích thể loại này; đáng chú ý, năng lực tự đọc hiểu và cảm thụ thẩm mỹ đối với các tác phẩm ngoài chương trình còn rất hạn chế, với 65,1% học sinh thừa nhận chưa hình thành được năng lực này qua các bài học trên lớp. Những hạn chế này xuất phát từ nhiều nguyên nhân như áp lực thi cử, thói quen dạy học truyền thụ một chiều và sự thiếu hụt văn hóa đọc. Dựa trên các phân tích định lượng và định tính, bài viết khẳng định sự cần thiết phải đổi mới đồng bộ phương pháp dạy học bám sát đặc trưng thể loại và đa dạng hóa các hình thức kiểm tra đánh giá để thực sự phát triển năng lực văn học cho học sinh.

**Từ khóa:** năng lực văn học; truyện ngắn Việt Nam hiện đại; dạy học phát triển năng lực; học sinh trung học cơ sở; thực trạng dạy học

**1. Introduction**

In the current educational context, fundamental and comprehensive innovation in education and training is becoming an urgent requirement and a national strategy. Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW of the Party Central Committee clearly defined the goal of strongly shifting the educational process from mainly equipping knowledge to comprehensively developing the qualities and competencies of learners (Thông Tư 32/2018/TT-BGDĐT [Circular 32/2018/TT-BGDĐT on the Promulgation of the General Education Program], n.d.). This shift has not stopped at theory but has been concretized in the 2018 General Education Program, placing learners at the center of the educational process, encouraging initiative, creativity, and the ability to apply knowledge into

practice. Within this context, the Literature subject plays a particularly important role, not only as an instrumental subject but also as an aesthetic one, contributing to fostering students' souls and personalities through the formation of specific competencies, the core of which is literary competence (Acun Çelik et al., 2024; Barrett & Borghetti, 2025). Literary competence, according to the new perspective, does not stop at students memorizing knowledge about authors and works, but is the ability to identify, analyze, reproduce, and create aesthetic elements through the activities of text reception and creation.

In the Literature curriculum at the Junior High School level (Secondary School), modern Vietnamese short stories occupy a priority position and play an important role in realizing these educational goals (Châu, 2024; Lã et al., 2021). With the characteristics of a small-scale narrative form, conciseness, suitable length, and content reflecting diverse aspects of life – from private life and worldly affairs to epic issues – modern short stories are very suitable for the reception psychology of junior high school students. Works by authors such as Thach Lam, Nam Cao, Kim Lan, or Nguyen Quang Thiều not only help students understand Vietnamese culture and people but also serve as "fertile ground" for practicing reading comprehension skills according to genre characteristics. However, teaching these works to transform book knowledge into students' actual competence remains a major challenge for educational practice in general schools today. Practical observation and surveys at secondary schools show that, despite innovation efforts, traditional teaching methods still dominate. The majority of teachers still hold the role of one-way knowledge transmitters, leaning towards "lecturing" and commenting on the beauty of the work based on their subjective feelings or those of critics, instead of organizing for students to discover it themselves (Lã et al., 2021; Trịnh, 2024). Students in these classes often play a passive role, listening and taking notes to serve exams, leading to a situation where they understand the text's content but are confused when having to approach a new text of the same genre on their own. Notably, literary competence – the core goal of the subject – has not been maximized as teachers tend to "do the work for and perceive on behalf of" students due to pressure on lesson time and the volume of knowledge to be transmitted (Trần, 2024; Vũ & Nghiêm, 2024). As a consequence, many students feel that literature classes are boring, lack interest, and importantly, they lack the independent reading comprehension and appreciation skills necessary for lifelong learning.

Stemming from the contradictions between the innovation requirements of the 2018 General Education Program and the inadequacies in the teaching reality mentioned above, in-depth research on the reality of teaching modern Vietnamese short stories is extremely necessary. This study, through a specific survey in Thai Nguyen province, aims not only to quantify the current level of students' literary competence response but also to point out specific barriers from teachers, students, and assessment mechanisms. These practical data will serve as an important scientific basis for proposing feasible pedagogical measures, helping to substantially transform the teaching process from a

content-based approach to a competence-based approach, thereby improving the quality of teaching and learning Literature in general schools.

## 2. Research Methods

To resolve the research tasks and ensure the scientific and objective nature of conclusions about reality, the article used a synchronized combination of a theoretical research method group and a practical research method group. The research and field survey process was conducted by us at Quang Son Secondary School, Dong Hy District, Thai Nguyen Province, during the period from August to September 2024, corresponding to the beginning of the 2022 - 2025 school year. Choosing this time helps the research team accurately assess the reception mindset and preparation of both teachers and 7th-grade students when starting to implement the contents of the 2018 General Education Program regarding the short story genre.

Theoretically, we used the method of analyzing and synthesizing documents to study steering documents and research works on literary competence and the poetic characteristics of modern short stories. The results of this process helped build a solid theoretical basis and clearly define the criteria to be surveyed. The focus of the practical research process was the questionnaire survey method, with two separate questionnaire systems for teachers and students. The survey content focused on the reality of awareness, teachers' teaching organization methods, and students' level of interest and self-reading comprehension ability regarding modern Vietnamese short stories.

Parallel to the survey method, the pedagogical observation method was used to increase data reliability. Through attending classes and directly observing teaching activities in class during the research period, we recorded the actual interaction between teachers and students, paying special attention to how teachers asked questions and students' reactions to problematic situations. Finally, statistical and classification methods were applied to process the data collected from the questionnaires. These data were calculated in percentages and compared to draw valid quantitative judgments about the existing advantages and limitations in the reality of teaching for literary competence development at the research site.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. Reality from the teachers' perspective

The survey results show an encouraging sign regarding the awareness of the teaching staff regarding the role of modern Vietnamese short stories in the Literature curriculum. Up to 82.6% of teachers affirmed that this system of work is "very important, cannot be omitted," and the vast majority (91%) stated that they were conscious of aiming to promote literary competence for students during teaching. This proves that the innovative ideology of the 2018 General Education Program has begun to permeate deep into the pedagogical thinking of teachers. However, delving into implementation reality,

a significant gap still exists between awareness and action, between the desire for innovation and traditional teaching habits.

Regarding teaching organization methods, statistics indicate that the traditional classroom model still prevails with 54.3%, while the modern classroom model accounts for only 41.9%. Although 51.5% of teachers stated they guide students to comprehensively analyze characters, story situations, and details, practical observation shows that the dominant method is still "lecturing and commenting." Teachers often play the role of perceiving and analyzing on behalf of students, turning lessons into one-way lectures. The cause of this situation partly stems from the pressure of limited lesson duration; teachers are forced to accelerate progress to keep up with the curriculum distribution, leading to limited time for students to experience and discover the text themselves.

Furthermore, the application of technology and innovation in testing and assessment also reveals certain limitations. Although 47.3% of teachers frequently use modern teaching aids, the effectiveness is not truly high due to a lack of seamless combination with active teaching methods. More concerning is that self-assessment and adjustment after lessons have not been duly focused on, with up to 54.9% of teachers only doing this "occasionally." Testing and assessment activities currently mainly serve exam objectives, teaching for the sake of exams, leading to teaching according to templates and patterns, eliminating students' creativity and learning interest. This "exam-oriented" teaching mindset is the biggest barrier to achieving the goal of developing literary competence – including aesthetic appreciation ability and independent thinking – making it difficult to achieve substantive effectiveness.

### **3.2. Reality from the students' perspective**

If the biggest barrier from the teachers' side is teaching methods, then from the students' side, the reality of passivity and lack of interest in literary reception is an alarming issue. Survey results show that students' level of interest in modern Vietnamese short stories is not high. Only 13.1% of students appeared "very interested" in this genre, while the majority (62.3%) stopped at "normal," and more worryingly, up to 25.6% of students frankly admitted to "disliking" it. This indifference leads to a coping learning attitude: only about 31.2% of students regularly prepare lessons before coming to class, while the majority only prepare perfunctorily or even copy from sample essay books to cope with checks. Lack of mental preparation and foundational knowledge makes it difficult for them to actively master the work during class.

Regarding reception and appreciation competence, the data show a paradox that although students can understand the surface content of the text, true literary competence has not been firmly formed. Specifically, when asked about the ability to self-read and comprehend works of the same genre outside the curriculum, up to 65.1% of students self-assessed that they did "not" form this competence through classroom lessons. This reflects the reality that they only learn by "rote" specific works without grasping the artistic codes or reading comprehension methods characteristic of the short story genre.

The consequence is that there are students who understand the lesson but do not feel aesthetic vibrations, and literary emotions become dry.

Additionally, students' self-study habits and reading culture are being seriously eroded. The percentage of students who "very rarely" look to read modern Vietnamese short stories outside of textbooks is up to 88.2%. The cause of this situation is partly due to the pressure of extra classes and exams, but largely due to the dominance of modern entertainment media such as video games and social networks, making them no longer keen on books. This lack of life experience and literary capital causes their linguistic competence and imaginative thinking to develop slowly, creating a vicious cycle that makes literature classes increasingly alien and boring to learners.

### **3.3. Causes of the reality**

The limitations in the reality of teaching and learning modern Vietnamese short stories mentioned above stem from the multidimensional impact of many factors, including subjective factors from teachers and learners and objective factors from the educational mechanism.

From the teachers' side, the core cause leading to slow innovation in methods is the pressure of curriculum duration and perfectionist psychology. With limited time for each lesson, to ensure the transmission of all knowledge content according to the program distribution, teachers tend to "do the work for, and perceive for" students. Instead of organizing activities for students to discover the text themselves, teachers often choose to lecture to save time, making the lesson imposed and lacking interaction. Moreover, the awareness of a section of teachers regarding the importance of "Reading - Understanding" activities is still limited. Many teachers have not truly focused on training reading skills for students, but have only focused on analyzing content, leading to students understanding the lesson but not grasping the reading comprehension methods characteristic of the genre.

From the side of the testing and assessment mechanism, this is seen as a major "bottleneck" hindering creativity. Currently, periodic tests and exams are still mainly zoned within the texts learned in textbooks. This way of setting questions has inadvertently oriented students towards passive learning, rote learning, and mechanical memorization of sample essays to cope with exams instead of researching and thinking for themselves. When exam questions rarely expand to materials outside the curriculum, students lack the motivation to read more books or explore other literary works, significantly limiting their self-study competence and literary thinking.

From the students' side, the main cause comes from the dominance of modern lifestyles and study pressure. Students today have to spend too much time on extra classes for other cultural subjects, while simultaneously being attracted to video games and social networks. The time fund for reading books, especially literary works, is increasingly narrowing. The decline in reading culture limits students' vocabulary and language appreciation ability, creating a psychological barrier that makes them hesitant

to approach short story texts with depth, viewing literature learning as a burden rather than a joy of discovering knowledge.

#### **4. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Research results in practice at Quang Son Secondary School show that, although there have been positive changes in teachers' awareness of educational innovation requirements, teaching activities for modern Vietnamese short stories are still heavy on traditional methods and have not truly promoted the initiative and literary competence of students. The majority of students still receive work passively, lack interest, and skills for self-reading comprehension of texts outside the curriculum remain limited, leading to low aesthetic education effectiveness. This reality confirms that the transition from content-based teaching to competence-based teaching is still facing many barriers, requiring more synchronous and drastic solutions to fundamentally change the quality of teaching and learning the subject.

To overcome the above limitations, we recommend that teachers strictly adhere to the principle of teaching closely following genre characteristics, flexibly combine active teaching methods, and diversify forms of testing and assessment to encourage learners' creative thinking. In addition, management levels and schools need to pay attention to investing in facilities, modern teaching equipment, and balancing class sizes reasonably, creating the most favorable conditions for teachers to organize experiential activities, helping students form and comprehensively develop literary competence, and meeting the requirements of the new General Education Program.

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#### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

#### **About the Author(s)**

Nguyen Kien Tho, PhD (born 1968), is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Philology at Thai Nguyen University of Education, Vietnam. He holds a Doctorate in Literature and has dedicated his career to both academic research and creative writing. His primary

research interests include literary theory, modern Vietnamese literature, and pedagogical methodologies in philology. Dr. Nguyễn is the author of nearly 20 research articles published in prestigious national and international journals and has authored three specialized textbooks for higher education at Thai Nguyen University of Education. Beyond his academic contributions, he is a prominent poet with three published poetry collections and has received several distinguished literary awards from both central and local Vietnamese literary associations.

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