

Open in app ↗

Sign up

Sign in

Medium

Search



Aneesa Kara · Follow

26 min read · Apr 26, 2023

Listen

Share

Out of School Children in Vietnam: How Structural Adjustment Programs Have Reduced Capabilities for Vietnam’s Most Vulnerable.

Table of Contents

Introduction2

Out of School Children in Viet Nam3

Capabilities Theory Overview6

Neoliberalism History and Principles Overview7

Structural Adjustment in Viet Nam9

How issues caused by structural adjustment and the corresponding capabilities they deny create or perpetuate the OOSC issue11

Conclusion 16

Bibliography17

Introduction:

A pressing issue in Vietnam which is attracting attention from INGOs and the Vietnamese government is out-of-school-children (OOSC). Comparatively with other developing and middle-income countries, Vietnam hosts some of the most impressive educational attainment rates, on par with developed countries,



comprising of almost equal gender parity rates, and 'achieving' Millennium Development Goal 4 (MDG), universal primary education, ahead of schedule.

There are a wide range of historical, social, structural, cultural and economic factors outside the formal education setting which contribute to the OOSC issue in Vietnam. In this assignment I shall conduct an in-depth analysis into the local and social elements, as well as the political, national and international factors which combine to compound the issue. Uneven distribution of state resources mean that children in rural and mountainous areas disproportionately suffer from low quality schooling and rural communities often lack things like healthcare facilities and clean water which affects educational attainment and completion rates. Geographical positioning of industrialised zones has led to 6.7 million people domestically migrating to find work, migrant children are overrepresented in the OOSC statistics, as are the unknown number of stateless children. Child labour is often a realistic alternative to schooling for impoverished families, and another point to be examined is the ethnic minority population, who disproportionately feature in OOSC statistics.

This essay will focus on the rising inequality caused in this author's opinion by structural adjustment reforms carried out in the late 80's and 90's to bring Vietnam into the global trading arena, and whilst considering that there are social and cultural issues which factor into the OOSC issue, I will be examining how implementation of a Neoliberal ideology has increased inequality and therefore compounded the OOSC issue by shining a spotlight on the inherent problems of a Neoliberal focus. To contextualise the argument, I will highlight the nationwide benefits that the reforms have granted to the Vietnamese economy and society. I will use the Neoliberal model compared with the Capabilities Approach to explore whether the Neoliberal and human capital perspective of 'development as increased human capital' and nationwide economic gains are sufficient when considering development, and when dealing with the most vulnerable in society. I will argue that the current Neoliberal focus of Vietnam and the wider global society is indeed not sufficient to guarantee access to quality education for the poorest in society, and will argue that Vietnam's perception of 'achieving' MDG 4 which focuses on attainment over quality, is simply not enough.

I shall conclude that we must consider the multidimensional social complexities



which affect a child's agency choices and capabilities with regards to schooling and acknowledge that the uneven distribution of resources created by structural readjustment means that overwhelmingly, it is children in poorer and rural areas who suffer from diminished educational capabilities and reduced agency freedoms and are therefore disproportionately more likely to become OOSC—consequently, I will conclude that a more egalitarian approach is necessary if Vietnam is ever to achieve a truly just society for all.

Out Of School Children in Vietnam.

In the 2015 Vietnamese Millennium Development Goal (MDG) country report, it states that:

“Viet Nam has achieved universal primary education and the country is moving towards universal lower secondary education.” (MoPI, 2015, p.58)

Considering that there are reportedly around 951,497 children out of school (Hasan 2013 p.43), that the figure is highly underestimated (Aptekar, 2013, p.93), and that there are millions of children that never complete school (MoPI, 2015, p.45), I find the term “achieved” difficult to accept. As well as achieving UPE the report states, “The quality of primary education has improved”, evidenced by the net enrolment and completion percentage increases. However, evidence suggests that these types of measurable goals omit the need for quality education (Fakuda-Parr, 2017, p.8), that figures are often falsified due to ‘achievement syndrome’ (Hasan, 2013, p.73), and this is while simultaneously ignoring the hundreds of thousands of children who are out of school.

There are numerous reasons why children cannot access, or drop out of school. The rate in rural areas is nearly twice the rate than in urban areas, ethnic minorities have a significantly higher number of OOSC than ethnic Vietnamese children (up to 27%), and 7% of migrant children and an unknown number of stateless children are OOSC. Children who don't hold Vietnamese nationality are ineligible to enrol in government schools and around 12% of children haven't been registered at birth, and are therefore considered ‘stateless’ (Humanium, 2013). There are an estimated 6.7 million internal migrants, the exact number of child migrants is unknown, however the average age of migrants is decreasing, and an estimated 24% in 2009 were under 20 years old (Anh et al 2012), further, the percentage of female migrants is increasing, and a large number of them are



accompanied by children (Dong, 2015, Pp.13). 16% of Vietnamese children are child-labourers (an estimated 1.75 million children), of which 42% are OOSC and 2% are permanently OOSC (Hasan, 2013, p.73, Dam, 2013, p.35), also estimates claim that 14% of sex workers in Vietnam are under 18 years old (Dam, 2013, P.5), which equates to approximately 40,000 child prostitutes in Vietnam (Humanium, 2013).

Poverty is the biggest barrier affecting school attendance, and one third of all Vietnamese children can be considered as living in poverty (Hasan, M. 2013, p.80):

“Among the 20% of the population with the lowest income, 7.8% of children 15 years old and above had never attended school.” (Hasan, 2013, p.80)

Despite impressive economic growth over the last 30 years, Vietnam is still a poor country. They do not have the resources or infrastructure to reach the poorest and most marginalised children in their society, or to provide quality education for all their citizens (Hasan, 2013 p.94). Officially 7% of people live below the poverty line (ADB, 2017), and the majority of people make minimum wage,—approximately \$145 per month as of 2018 (Treutler& Nguyen, 2017), many simply cannot afford to send their children to school (Hasan, 2013, p.95,87).

Poorer and rural region’s education systems are characterised by an insufficient number of schools with no transportation for students who live far away, poor facilities and resources, poor quality school management due to lack of funding (Hasan, 2013 p.95), inadequate facilities for disabled children, a lack of support for ethnic minorities—lessons being taught in Vietnamese rather than the children’s mother tongue (Bokova, 2010, p.18), a lack of clean water and sanitation facilities (Hasan 2013 p.93), poor teacher motivation for numerous reasons (Duc, Tam, 2013, p.5), amongst other things. This lack of quality in education has been highlighted by many reports as being directly linked to non-completion of school (Hasan, 2013, p.85), as poor people understandably conclude that their child’s time is better spent working to support the family. The government is aware of this necessity and allows some children work, approximately one in every six or seven children are engaged in economic activity (ILO, 2014). The government have put many policies in place to bridge the attainment gap, however despite numerous initiatives, the costs of children’s

education and loss of earnings from that child's labour, or the delay in receiving governmental support, is too much for some parents and orphans. School fees still apply, for uniforms, textbooks, food and transport among other things. The percentage of OOSC also increases with the child's age, as primary education is free, but the cost of secondary education is too much for many to afford (Hasan, 2013, p.95, 73).

Percentage of Drop Outs by Age (Source: Hasan, 2013, p.48)

Capability Approach

The Capability Theory (CA) was originally created by economist, philosopher and social-choice theorist Amartya Sen in the 1980's, then developed further by Nussbaum's 'Capabilities-List' in the 1990's. The theory has two principle ideas—functionings and capabilities. Functionings are our 'beings' and 'doings'—the things we are and do, the achievements a person has made—this can include anything from being able to dress oneself to a being able to perform brain surgery on another person, and everything in between—Sen states that humans are only able to achieve these beings and doings if they have the correct capability set. Capabilities are the real opportunities we have to achieve valued states of being and doing (Robeyns, 2006, p.78), the freedoms we have to make choices for ourselves—this could range from having access to clean water, to living in a country where you are allowed to 'follow your dreams', and everything in between.

The Capability Theory was designed to address Sen's concerns regarding contemporary approaches to the evaluation of 'well-being'. He identified how we must consider that:

Individuals differ in their ability to convert the same resources into different functionings, therefore we cannot focus only on means, we must focus on ends too.

One must be sensitive to the fact that although the actual achievements (functionings) of people with different capability sets may be the same (for example the physical condition of a person who is fasting, as opposed to a person who is starving), it is the agency that people have to make choices for themselves which is important.



‘Adaptive Preference’ is the phenomenon where a person internalises and normalises poor living conditions, and consequently lowers their personal expectations, to the point where they can believe they are content with their substandard situation. (Sen, 1985b, p.196).

Evaluation of a person’s well-being should consider the complexity of reality, and should therefore seek to be as open-minded as possible—(this has led to Sen’s ‘under-theorisation’ of the theory, which has led to criticism due to the theory’s non-operationalisation).

Although Sen rejects Nussbaum’s ‘Capabilities List’ approach since a concrete list is unable to consider the relevance of the values people may come to have (Sen, 2004, p.77), he generally agrees that in most incidences a sub-set of critically vital capabilities connected with basic needs can be easily recognised and decided upon as crucial ethical and political priorities (Wells, 2018). These basic capabilities can be helpful in assessing the extent of poverty in a developing country.

With the correct capabilities set individuals can start to achieve their desired state of being (Stanton, 2007, P.3). An important thing to note is how the CA focuses on ends, like standard of living, over means, like income per capita, which before the implementation of CA into the popular discourse, was the normative global indicator of success, and with regards to Neoliberalism, still is. I propose that Vietnam’s OOSC are denied pivotal capabilities during their childhood and adolescence, and the resultant outcome of non-completion of school means that they continue to be denied further capabilities into adulthood.

Neoliberalism—History and Principles

The term ‘Neoliberalism’ only featured in global political and economic discourse sporadically between 1950 and 1980, and it wasn’t until Milton Friedman and the ‘Chicago Boys’ implemented ‘shock therapy’ to the Chilean economy in the 1970’s, and then Thatcher and Regan radically overhauling their economies by applying the Neoliberal ideas of the Chicago School in the 1980’s, that it began to gain traction as the dominant ideological discourse of modern times. During the 1980’s the World Bank and the IMF adopted a Neoliberal ideology, which Klein (Klein, 2007, p.202), attributes to the, “Virtual conveyor belt delivering ‘Chicago Boys’ to



the two institutions”. This move saw the institutions conditionally giving aid loans, on the basis that recipient countries would restructure their economies and societies in-line with a neoliberal ideology—this was known as structural readjustment.

Reforms made by all the aforementioned administrations held a belief in ‘Market Fundamentalism’—the idea that ‘free market capitalism’ operating free of impediments, will take care of all of societies needs as that the market is the primary engine for growth. It will bring about improved economic welfare, greater economic freedom, and a more democratic political system (Ritzer, 2010, p.116). The theory posits that state monopolies, corruption, subsidies, bureaucracy, and regulation hinder economic prosperity, and if freed from these restraints, the market will regulate itself, driven to improve services by competition. Manifestations may include the lowering of quotas and tariffs on imported goods, tax cuts for businesses, elimination of restrictions on foreign investment and an increase of exports, privatisation of state owned industries, reduction of the welfare state, opening stock and bond markets to direct foreign investment, making currency convertible, creating domestic competition by deregulating the economy, and the maintenance of a low rate of inflation. (Ritzer, 2010, p.120)

Such reforms are meant to “shock” a failing economy into gear, however ‘shock therapy’ and Structural Adjustment (SAPs) have been charged with increasing inequality and lowering people’s standards of living, and in most cases there is a direct link with their negative effects on educational capabilities for poorer children. There is a vast body of literature critiquing the negative effects of SAPs on inequality in African countries—Ghana is one such example, where similarly to Vietnam, improvements in the national economy were recorded at the macro-level, however benefits at the micro level were a matter of considerable debate—SAPs in Ghana,

“Culminated in the retrenchment of over 300000 public sector workers... led to unprecedented cuts in state expenditures on public services and social welfare and the introduction of user fees for health and education.” (Agyemang, 2004, P.474).

Vavrus notes how SAPs in Tanzania increased inequality, and directly affected



secondary-school student's access to schooling, opportunities for employment, and heightened the risk of HIV/AIDS infection (Vavrus, 2005, P.175). Crisp and Kelly note in their study of sixteen Latin American countries how SAPs were negatively associated with increasing poverty and inequality—Affected from a local, national and international level by the removal of price supports and a drop in purchasing power, declining exchange rates, reduced government spending and jobs cuts, an increased number of families fell below the poverty line as a result (Crisp& Kelly, 2002, P.534). Further is the assertion that they harm the environment which disproportionately affects the poor, and that they create monopolies and funnel capital from poor countries to rich countries (McKinley, 2006, P.2). In the Philippines, Cruz and Repetto showed how their SAP,

“Drew down natural resource assets while it built up external financial obligations, markedly undermining the country's national balance sheet”.

Their study also shows how,

“Macroeconomic policies encouraged the rapid growth of relatively inefficient, pollution-prone processing industries, especially in the metropolitan Manila region, which consequently suffered severe environmental degradation”. (Cruz and Repetto, 1992, P.vii).

The reforms in Chile, touted as proof that Neoliberalism can save a failing economy, are now contested, in that it was actually a combination of privatisation and regulation after the financial crash of 82' that helped Chile to achieve sustained growth (Wittelsbürger, von Hoff, 2004). SAPs and Freidman's ideas have come under attack multiple times for failing to take poverty and inequality into consideration, and in most incidences are seen to increase inequality in recipient countries, whilst simultaneously forcing countries to compete in the global economy from an unequal starting point, driving down the price of their goods and services and therefore reducing their profits to a bare minimum (George, 1990, P.143,187,235).

Structural Adjustment in Vietnam

In 1986 Vietnam began to undertake the biggest changes to their state system since the end of the American war—Đổi Mới—with the goal of creating a 'socialist-oriented market economy'. Pre- 1986 the country had been in economic



crisis, inflation soared and economic output first stagnated and then began to decline, there were acute shortages of food and basic consumer goods and a growing external debt. In 1986 the election of the liberally orientated Nguyễn Văn Linh saw Đổi Mới begin—The government agreed to the abolition of centralised management with a new role for the private sector to compete with the state. Subsequent reforms saw private land rights reinstated, a reduction in the number of central government agencies, price reforms for consumer goods, a foreign investment (FDI) law, centrally planned targets were abolished for agricultural workers, farmers were allowed to sell stock on the open market, and partly due to these reforms, there was sustained economic growth (Arkadie& Mallon, 2004, P.47,68,69). Between 1989 and 1993 real GDP grew at a rate of 7%, and inflation decreased from around 400% to 5.2%, exports increased by more than 30% per annum, and fiscal restraint reduced the budget deficit from 10.3% to 3.7% (WB, 1994, P.3,4).

Economic Growth Rate of Vietnam 1986—2005 (Source Anh Et Al, 2009, P.5)

Throughout the 1990's Viet Nam undertook further structural adjustment designed and overseen by the IMF—borrowing 145 million SDR in 1993, and a further 362.4 million in 1994 (IMF, 2002). The SAPs addressed budget management, state enterprises, the financial sector, and foreign trade policy—in particular, the IMF program concerned macroeconomic benchmarks and issues of tax reform (WB, 1994, P.8). During this period a sharp increase in FDI characterised a new 'opened-door' phase for corporate interests. Vietnam saw their GDP increase during the period of 1992—1997 and surpass targets.

FDI Licensed in Period 1991—2005 (Source Anh Et Al, 2009, P.10)

Between 1998—2001 economic growth slowed, (Anh Et Al, 2009, P.11) a Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility IMF loan of SDR 290 million was agreed in 2001 with the aim to raise economic growth through increasing private investment and overall competitiveness (IMF, 2002). In 2001 the US-BTA was signed and the country's stock market made its debut trading in 2000. In 2007 Vietnam became a member of the WTO, and FDI reached an all-time high of US\$71.7 billion in 2008.

It is undeniable that Vietnam's economic and resultant social gains are partly due to the Đổi Mới reforms—A 35% reduction in poverty was achieved over the first decade and another 20% over the next 15 years (Anh Et Al, 2009, P.7). From a

Neoliberal perspective one could easily surmise that due to the implementation of a Neoliberal economic model, the country was able to move out of abject poverty and into the middle-income country bracket. This perspective omits some other very influential factors—namely: The Clinton administration dropping the US trade embargo on Vietnam in 1994, the hundreds of millions of dollars loaned to the Vietnamese government, the millions of dollars in Foreign Direct Investment revenue which poured in after the trade embargo was lifted, a dramatic increase in export revenue, and also the relaxation of the authoritarian-type control of the state over every aspect of Vietnamese society. I believe these factors are too significant to be omitted in one's overview of the impact of Đổi Mới reforms on Vietnam, and when considered, one can understand that it was not only the reforms which led to Vietnam's success, but actually a multidimensional combination of local, social, political, national and global factors, including international relationships, trade partnerships, international loans, changes in power relationships in a local and national context, a change of attitude towards Vietnam from the international community and from Vietnam towards the international community, as well as a number of other factors. While it is true that poverty has reduced significantly in Vietnam since the reforms, it is also true that income inequality and wealth disparity have risen—9.6% of Vietnamese citizens still live below the poverty line, and 20.7% still live dangerously close to it (WB, 2017b, P.6)—Neoliberalism has been charged time and time again with increasing inequality by respected academics from all areas (Klein, 2007, Chomsky, 1999, Harvey, 2007), as well as ignoring the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable in society—in this case OOSC. In Vietnam there are now 'Super Rich' citizens and a fast-growing upper middle class, juxtaposed with millions of people who still live on less than \$2 a day. From a Capabilities perspective, Neoliberal reforms have created a disparity gap which makes equality an even more distant goal for those who are structurally incapable of furthering their social position, and while many have experienced increased well-being and capabilities from the reforms, many have seen their agency freedoms being increasingly restricted by societal advancements that have left them behind.

“A nation's greatness is measured by how it treats its weakest members.” (Ghandi)

How issues caused by structural adjustment and the corresponding capabilities they deny create or perpetuate the OOSC issue.



“The capability to be educated can be defined as the freedom for a child to fully participate in the school learning process” (Vaughan, 2007, p. 116), this involves there being no restrictions on a child’s ability to access school, and once there, the ability to participate, understand, engage and learn confidently and successfully. These are capabilities which allow freedoms to and freedoms in education. To apply this to the OOSC issue in Vietnam, we must firstly consider the barriers a child faces when gaining access to education and which enabling factors are necessary to positively affect a child’s ability to attend school from an individual and societal level, then the challenges they face in education and factors which prevent them from fully engaging with the learning process. “Once children are participating in education ...it is possible to consider the capabilities that can be gained through education... the contribution of education to other life functionings as opposed to purely educational functionings” (Vaughan, 2007, p. 117). Education is a facilitative functioning, it opens up opportunities in numerous other areas of life—employment, improved health, understanding rights, participating in the democratic process, having self-confidence and self-worth—all of these and more can be gained through education, and denied if a child’s well-being or agency freedoms regarding education are restricted. Poverty is the biggest barrier affecting access to, in and through education, and people living in rural areas, ethnic minority groups, and domestic migrants suffer many capability and agency-freedom restrictions which lead to reduced functionings, and lower well-being—they have the lowest education rates in the country, as well as the worst health, and the lowest proportion of trained and skilled workers, and these figures are also progressing at a slower rate than the rest of Vietnam (Taylor, 2004, p.209).

The first barrier to education to consider is how market forces have affected the al_cpLocation of government resources, as schools (and other public services) in rural areas are underfunded compared to schools which are near to economic hubs (Chi, 2006, p.6), this has led to lower quality education in rural areas, and residents have a number of diminished capabilities as a result. The Vietnamese living standards survey of 1998 indicated that the poverty rate in rural areas was 4.49 times higher than that of urban areas, and it rose to 5.4 four years later—the Gini coefficient was 0.35, four years later it was 0.37, indicating that wealth disparity was widening (Taylor, 2004, p.210–212). More recently, Thu Le and



Booth used quantile regression techniques to measure expenditure inequality between rural and urban residents and found that inequality was rising, and Nguyen et al. found that economic disparity between rural and urban areas was due to the impact of structural effects. Rural areas are characterised by poverty and poor infrastructure, attract little investment or economic activity, job opportunities are limited, and regional differentiation in terms of access public services has become more pronounced (Thu Le & Booth, 2014, p.863, Nguyen et al., 2007, p.467). Rural inhabitants must unfairly contend with fluctuating commodity prices, poorer access to clean water, substandard health and public services, mounting fees for health care and education, and often end up indebted (Taylor, 2004, p.210–212). These all create barriers to and in education, and consequently rural children are twice as likely to drop out of school than in urban areas.

A further point to note is how due to economic activity being unevenly dispersed, cities such as Hanoi have received large levels of industrial capital and rural areas have not, furthering economic disparities between people in rural and urban regions and increasing inequality. The overall poverty reduction rate between 1998–2002 was 8.5%, however the percentage of people living below the poverty line in the 12 poorest regions of Vietnam was over 4 times higher than in the 12 best off provinces (Taylor, 2004, p.209)—Consequently while primary school enrolment rates in Vietnam overall had increased to over 90%, the enrolment rates in the 12 poorest provinces were 20% lower than in the top 12 provinces. In Hanoi the adult literacy rate was twice as high as the northern mountainous provinces and its school enrolment rate was seven times higher, the infant mortality rate was six times lower, and the under-40 mortality rate five times lower (WB, 2003 in Taylor, 2004, p.209). The trends of widening socio-economic disparity appear to be an inevitable consequence of development in Vietnam, since market forces will naturally flow capital and activities to areas which yield the highest rewards. Considering the numerous social, structural and economical disadvantages people in rural areas suffer compared to people in urban areas, one can start to understand why children from these groups suffer from diminished capability sets which can result in their becoming OOSC.

General Poverty Rates by Geographical region and Urban versus Rural Distinction.



Source: (Taylor 2005 p.209)

Percentage of OOSC of primary school age (Source Hassan 2013 P.35)

Ethnic minority groups comprise 13% of the population, but 40% of the poor (Chi, 2009, P.1). External capabilities barriers affecting access to and in education for rural and ethnic minority children in Vietnam are numerous, and internal agency barriers, for example—intellectual ability, self-esteem, motivation—can be caused or perpetuated by external capabilities being diminished. External barriers may include: availability of schools, distance to and safety on route, seasonal work commitments, public transport availability, family's income, family duties, threat of abuse at home, legal status, health and nutrition, malnutrition; these barriers and more can have a significant effect on a child's ability to participate and fully engage with the learning process. Barriers affecting capabilities in education are also numerous—facilities (sanitation for girls for example), school resources, teacher availability and motivation, classes being taught in student's mother tongue, discrimination in schools,—all reduce a child's capabilities, well-being and agency freedoms which decrease access to and in education. Ethnic Minorities suffer from structural inequality also, with disproportionately with lower incomes, higher rates of poverty, poorer health, lower school attendance and poorer access to infrastructure and services, they are over represented in the underclass, their lack of education compounding the problems (Chi, 2009, p.8). Ethnic minority groups also have lower access to formal financial services and enjoy less benefits from government programs, whilst also having lower market access and poorer returns from markets (Dang, 2010, p.2). The World Bank's Country Social Analysis report (WB, 2009, p.23), identified that ethnic minorities have less access to education, higher dropout rates, later school enrolment, and that school fees are often an unaffordable burden. The multidimensional compounding effect of poverty related capabilities reductions result in a decrease in functionings.

Domestic economic migration is an inevitable consequence when a country undergoes rapid economic and social development as poor people from rural areas flock to industrialised areas where they can find economic opportunities. Migrants disproportionately suffer from diminished educational capabilities—reduced access to and in, and poor-quality education. Vietnam's socio-economic



developments have resulted in a large increase in internal migration—In 2009 there were approximately 6.7 million internal migrants (although the exact number of migrants is unknown). Migrants have limited access to education, social services, welfare, and health services, and barriers to accessing services are often institutional, exposing migrants to greater risk of illness than non-migrant people and often excluding them from formal systems—unregistered child migrants cannot legally access social services or enrol in education (Le An& Hoang, 2012, p.12). Children of economic migrant’s capabilities regarding education are disproportionately diminished, when considering OOSC statistics, domestic migrants are less likely to attend school and more likely to drop out (Hasan, 2013, p.83). The family’s unstable living situation, coupled with their non-registered status, the fact they may move around often for work, the fact that their health is more likely to be poorer than non-migrants, that they suffer systematic discrimination, that their parents are likely working long hours in poor conditions and are not able to give them the same level of intellectual or emotional support, the fact that they are more likely than their peers to be working, that they are less able to access public services, plus a number of other poverty related issues, result in a diminished capabilities set, limited agency freedoms and reduced well-being when compared with their cohort.

For those falling behind, dropping out of school to undertake paid employment is often a preferred option, however this will also decrease their capabilities through education in the future, as they will not hold the necessary qualifications to find paid employment other than unskilled low paid positions. Two of the reasons for children dropping out of school were that they didn’t enjoy going or preferred the idea of paid work (Hasan, 2013, p.84). This was usually due to the child or their parents seeing no benefit in education, especially when considering the opportunity costs of sending the child to school compared with them working, based on the incredibly poor quality of the education available. One could argue that having the choice to drop out is the children asserting their agency freedom, however if the quality of education is so bad that there is no benefit from it, what choices do they really have? If the child regularly misses school or attends but is not fully engaged due to poverty related issues, then their agency freedoms are diminished further as they cannot fully participate at the same rate as their peers. If these children had the same capabilities and ‘educational well-being’ as children from richer families— good quality



education, good health and a stable home life—they would likely assert their agency differently, however never having the capability set to actively participate in education free from restrictions means that their agency choices are limited.

Conclusion

Considering the evidence, one can understand how despite Vietnam's claim that they have 'achieved' Universal Primary Education, there is still a long way to go before a just education system for all is provided. It has been demonstrated how as a direct result of the implementation of a Neoliberal economic model, that inequality has risen and that this in turn has negatively affected the educational capabilities of children from rural areas, including ethnic minorities and domestic migrants, and furthermore, that those reduced capabilities increase the likelihood of a child becoming an OOSC. I disagree with the 2015 Global Monitoring Report's conclusion that UPE has been "achieved", as to 'achieve' in this author's opinion means not only to provide education to all children, but also to ensure that there are no barriers in, to or through education. If we consider full participation in formal education as "educational well-being", and participation in formal education as a prime functioning, we must consider OOSC as having a severely reduced capabilities set. Our notion of agency should correspond not only with those functionings which are valued by society, but by each child also—not merely receiving formal education, but being an active agent in their own educational journey, having no barriers with regards to accessing good quality free education, having no restrictions whilst participating in education, and having the freedom to use what they have learned in a way which they value. OOSC sadly do not have these capabilities, and resultantly their functionings and therefore future life choices and agency freedoms will be limited. As Vietnam's commercial hubs become more prosperous, inequality will keep rising unless a more egalitarian approach is taken to protect Vietnam's poorest, and to address the specific social, political, and cultural issues that hinder children from accessing and completing education without limits. We must consider the multidimensional social complexities which affect a child's agency choices and capabilities with regards to schooling, and we must accept that the uneven distribution of resources created by structural readjustment means that overwhelmingly, it is children in poorer and rural areas who suffer from diminished educational capabilities and agency freedoms and are therefore disproportionately more likely to become OOSC.



Bibliography

Amartya Sen. 2004b. "Capabilities, Lists, and Public Reason: Continuing the Conversation," *Feminist Economics* 10 (3), pp. 77–80.

Anh, L, Hoang, L, Bonfoh, B and Schelling, E. (2012) An analysis of interprovincial migration in Vietnam from 1989 to 2009. Available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3535692/> (Accessed on 02/12/17)

Anh, V. Trinh, B. Thanh, N. (2009) Structural changes in Vietnamese industry and trade during 1989–2005: An Input–Output analysis. Pp.5. Available at: [https://www.iioa.org/conferences/17th/papers/254473221_090325_124103_IIOA_FULLPAPER\[1\]VUHAIANH.pdf](https://www.iioa.org/conferences/17th/papers/254473221_090325_124103_IIOA_FULLPAPER[1]VUHAIANH.pdf) (Accessed on: 21/05/18)

Aptekar, L and Stoecklin, D. (2013) *Street Children and Homeless Youth: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Available at https://books.google.pt/books/about/Street_Children_and_Homeless_Youth.html?id=7gXFBAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=kp_read_button&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false (Accessed on 02/12/17)

Asian Development Bank. (2017) *Poverty in Viet Nam*. Available at <https://www.adb.org/countries/viet-nam/poverty>. (Accessed on: 20/05/2018)

Bokova, I. (2010) *Reaching the Marginalised*. Available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001866/186606E.pdf> (Accessed on 02/12/17)

Chi, T, H. (2009) Background paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2010: Reaching the marginalized. Available at <http://www.younglives.org.uk/sites/www.younglives.org.uk/files/Impacts%20of%20Education%20Policies%20for%20Ethnic%20Minority%20Children%20in%20Vietnam.pdf> (Accessed on 02/12/17)

Chi, T, H. (2009) *Schooling as Lived and Told: Contrasting Impacts of Education Policies for Ethnic Minority Children in Vietnam seen from Young Lives Surveys*. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001866/186614e.pdf> (Accessed on: 21/05/18)



Chomsky, N. (1999) *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order*. Seven Stories Press. London.

Cruz, W. Repetto, R. (1992) *The Environmental Effects of Stabilization and Structural Adjustment Programs: The Philippines Case*. Available at: [http://125.235.8.196:8080/dspace/bitstream/CEID_123456789/4797/1/52_TheEnvironmentalEffects-AdjustmentPrograms-ThePhilippinesCase\(06_23-25\)93tr.pdf](http://125.235.8.196:8080/dspace/bitstream/CEID_123456789/4797/1/52_TheEnvironmentalEffects-AdjustmentPrograms-ThePhilippinesCase(06_23-25)93tr.pdf) (Accessed on: 21/05/18).

Dam, N, T. (2011) *An Analysis of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Selected Provinces and Cities of Viet Nam*. Available at https://www.unicef.org/vietnam/bao_cao_CSEC_tiang_anh_04-12.pdf (Accessed 02/12/2017)

Dang, H. (2010) *A Widening Poverty Gap for Ethnic Minorities*. Available at: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTINDPEOPLE/Resources/407801-1271860301656/Chapter_8_Vietnam.pdf (Accessed on: 21/05/18)

Dong, D, S, L. (2015) *The National Migration Survey: Major Findings*. Pp.13. Available at: http://vietnam.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/PD_Migration%20Booklet_ENG_printed%20in%202016.pdf (Accessed on: 21/05/18)

Duc, L, T and Tam, T, M, M. (2013) *Why Children in Vietnam Drop out of School and What They Do After That*. [Online]. Available at http://www.younglives.org.uk/sites/www.younglives.org.uk/files/YL-WP102_Le%20Thuc%20Duc_why%20do%20children%20leave%20school%20early.pdf (Accessed on 02/12/17)

Dung, N, T. (2009) *Children of the Dust*. Available at https://www1.essex.ac.uk/armedcon/story_id/childrenofthedust.pdf (Accessed on 02/12/17)

Friedman (1999) *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*. Random House, Inc., New York. Available at: <http://www.labee.ufsc.br/~luis/egcec/livros/globaliz/TheLexusandtheOliveTree.pdf> (Accessed on: 20/05/18).

Fukuda-Parr, S. *Millennium Development Goals: Ideas, Interests, Influence*. Routledge. (2017). Print.



George, S. (1990) 'A Fate Worse Than Debt'. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, pp. 143, 187, 235. Available at: <http://www.globalissues.org/article/3/structural-adjustment-a-major-cause-of-poverty> (Accessed on: 20/05/18).

Hasan, M. (2013) Out of School Children in Vietnam: A country Study. Available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002343/234310e.pdf> (Accessed on 02/12/17)

Hong, D., K. and Ohno, K. (2004) Street Children in Vietnam. Available at <http://www.grips.ac.jp/vietnam/VDFTokyo/Doc/HongKOSTChild.pdf> (Accessed on 02/12/17)

Humanium. (2017) Realizing Children's Rights in Viet Nam. Available at <https://www.humanium.org/en/vietnam/> (Accessed on 02/12/17)

ILO. (2014) One in ten Vietnamese youngsters aged 5–17 in child labour. [Online]. Available at http://www.ilo.org/hanoi/Informationresources/Publicinformation/newsitems/WCMS_237788/lang--en/index.htm (Accessed on 02/12/17)

IMF. (2002) At a Glance—Vietnam and the IMF. Available at: <https://www.imf.org/external/country/vnm/rr/glance.htm> (Accessed on: 21/05/18).

Klein, N. (2007) *The Shock Doctrine*. Metropolitan Books. Henry Holt and Company. New York.

Konadu-Agyemang, K. (2000) 'The Best of Times and the Worst of Times: Structural Adjustment Programs and Uneven Development in Africa: The Case of Ghana'. *The Professional Geographer*. 52:3, 469–483 Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/0033-0124.00239> (Accessed on: 21/05/18)

Le Anh T, Hoang Vu L, Bonfoh B, Schelling E. (2012) 'An analysis of interprovincial migration in Vietnam from 1989 to 2009'. *Global Health Action*, 5:1, 9334, DOI: 10.3402/gha.v5i0.9334

Manuson, M, T and Miyazawa, I. (2017) Situation Analysis of Out-of-School Children in Nine Southeast Asian Countries. Available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0025/002527/252749E.pdf> (Accessed on 02/12/17)



- McKinley, T. (2006) *The Monopoly of Global Capital Flows: Who Needs Structural Adjustment Now?* Available at: <https://www.soas.ac.uk/cdpr/expertise/worldmodel/file45191.pdf> (Accessed on: 21/05/18).
- Nguyen, B. T., Albrecht, J. W., Vroman, S. B., Westbrook, M. D. (2007). 'A Quantile Regression Decomposition of Urban-Rural Inequality in Viet Nam'. *Journal of Economics*. 83 (2), 466–490.
- Ritzer, G. (2010) 'Neo-Liberalism: Roots, Principles, Criticisms, and Neo-Marxian Alternatives'. In: Ritzer, G. ed., *Globalization: a basic text*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 109–138. Available at: <http://download.e-bookshelf.de/download/0002/9747/45/L-G-0002974745-0005639861.pdf> (Accessed: 14/02/18).
- Robeyns I. (2006) 'Three models of education: rights, capabilities and human capital', *Theory and Research in Education*, 4 (1), pp. 69–84.
- Sen, A. (1985) 'Women, technology and sexual division' *Trade and Development*, 6, pp.195–222.
- Stanton, E (2007) *The Human Development Index: A History*. Pp. 3 Available at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.pt/&httpsredir=1&article=1101&context=peri_workingpapers (Accessed 20/05/18)
- Tam, H, T. (2015) Vietnam's minimum wage to increase \$14–18 per month in 2015. [Online]. Available at <http://www.thanhniennews.com/society/vietnams-minimum-wage-to-increase-1418-per-month-in-2015-29590.html> (Accessed on 02/12/17).
- Taylor, P. (2004) *Social Inequality in Vietnam and the Challenges to Reform*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. Singapore. Available at: <https://books.google.pt/books?id=cg5HHziWNwkC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false> (Accessed on: 21/05/2018).
- Thanh, B., Katsushi, S. I. (2018) *Determinants of Rural-Urban Inequality in Vietnam: Detailed Composition Analyses Based on Unconditional Quantile Regressions*. Available at: <https://www.ifad.org/documents/36783902/40280999/>



Katsushi+Imai%2C+Senior+Lecturer+

%28Associate+Professor%29+Univ+Manchester.pdf/75cae7d6-717e-4625-8b77-1733f39a0d28 (Accessed on: 21/05/18)

Thu Le. H., Booth, A. L., (2014) 'Inequality in Vietnamese Urban-Rural Living Standards, 1993—2006. *Review of Income and Wealth*. 60 (4), 862–886.

Treutler, T, J. & Nguyen, A, H. (2017) New Decree on Minimum Wage Increases in Vietnam. Available at: <https://www.tilleke.com/resources/new-decree-minimum-wage-increases-vietnam> (Accessed on: 21/05/18)

Unicef. (2007) Unicef Vietnam Adolescence. Available at https://www.unicef.org/vietnam/children_273.html (Accessed on 02/12/17)

2.Unicef. (2007) Unicef Vietnam Children. Available at <https://www.unicef.org/vietnam/children.html> (Accessed on 02/12/17)

3.Unicef. (2007) Unicef Vietnam Overview. Available at https://www.unicef.org/vietnam/girls_education.html (Accessed 02/12/2017)

Van Arkadie, B and Mallon, M. (2004) 'VIET NAM: a transition tiger'. Asia Pacific Press, pp. 47, 68, 69. Available at <http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p16721/pdf/ch0412.pdf> (Accessed on: 20/05/18).

Vavrus, F. (2005) 'Adjusting Inequality: Education and Structural Adjustment Policies in Tanzania'. *Harvard Educational Review*: July 2005, Vol. 75, No. 2, pp. 174–201 Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.75.2.565v0213145413t5> (Accessed on: 21/05/18)

Vietnam Ministry of Planning and Investment. (2015) Country Report: 15 Years Achieving the Viet Nam Millennium Development Goals. [Online]. Available at http://www.vn.undp.org/content/dam/vietnam/docs/Publications/Bao%20cao%20TIENG%20ANH%20-%20MDG%202015_trinh%20TTCP.pdf (Accessed on 02/12/17).

Vuong, H, Q. (2014) Vietnam's Political Economy in Transition (1986–2016). Available at: <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/vietnams-political-economy-transition-1986-2016> (Accessed on: 21/05/18).



Wells, T. (2018) Sen's Capability Approach. Available at <http://www.iep.utm.edu/sen-cap/#H1> (Accessed on: 21/05/18).

Wittelsbürger H, von Hoff A. (2004) Chiles Weg zur Sozialen Marktwirtschaft. Auslandsinfo, Konrad Adenauer Foundation 01, (04). Available at: http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_4084-544-1-30.pdf?040415182627 (Accessed on: 20/05/18).

World Bank. (1994) Report and Recommendation of The President of International Development Association to The Executive Directors on a Proposed Credit in the Amount of SDR 103.5 Million to Socialist Republic of Vietnam for a Structural Adjustment Program. Pp.8. Available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/473311468174275309/pdf/multi0page.pdf>. (Accessed on: 21/05/2018)

World Bank. (2009) Country Social Analysis report. Available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/331741468124474580/pdf/499760ESW0Whit1C10VietnamSummary1LR.pdf> (Accessed on: 21/05/18)

World Bank Group. (2013) Poverty Reduction in Vietnam: Remarkable Progress, Emerging Challenges. [Online]. Available at <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/01/24/poverty-reduction-in-vietnam-remarkable-progress-emerging-challenges> (Accessed on 02/12/17)

World Bank (2017) Country Poverty Brief Vietnam. Available at: http://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/poverty/B2A3A7F5-706A-4522-AF99-5B1800FA3357/9FE8B43A-5EAE-4F36-8838-E9F58200CF49/60C691C8-EAD0-47BE-9C8A-B56D672A29F7/Global_POV_SP_CPB_VNM.pdf (Accessed on: 21/05/18)

World Bank (2017b) Climbing the Ladder: Poverty Reduction and Shared Prosperity in Vietnam. Available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/206981522843253122/pdf/124916-WP-PULIC-P161323-VietnamPovertyUpdateReportENG.pdf> (Accessed on: 21/05/18)