



Inept to study and/or study for what?

Learning Experiences Among Youth Belonging To Some Ethnic Minority Groups

(Case studies in Ha Giang, Yen Bai and Dien Bien provinces)

EMWG

January 6, 2012

Overview of the Policies

To name a few:

Policy of building up and development of boarding high school system, Circular No. 16/GĐĐT 14/8/1997 and Decision No. 49/QĐ-GĐĐT 25/8/2008 of MOET;

Policy of nomination of students for higher education, Resolution No. 22/NQ-TW 27/11/1989 of Polit Bureau and Decision No. 72/HĐBT 13/3/1990;

etc.

=> High rate of school drop-outs among ethnic minorities.
Why?

Research Question

Impacts on learning experiences:

- Material limitations; learning difficulties and/ or parental perceptions and attitudes on children's education and career prospects;
- Ethnic particularities and inter-ethnic relations (minority-majority, minority-minority);
- First-hand experiences and observations of policy implementation at grass-root level.

Field of Research

Selection criteria:

- Multi-ethnicity provinces, having secondary-education situation characteristic of uplands areas populated by ethnic minorities;
- Sparsely populated communities of ethnic minority groups;
- Facilitation by local authorities;
- Network of local coordinators in Ha Giang, Yen Bai and Dien Bien provinces

Methodology

- Group discussion
- In-depth interviews
- Life histories

Learning Experiences

In the classroom

- Teaching materials: too 'new'/modern'/difficult for students to learn;
- Teachers do not explain lessons thoroughly/ 'collective' approach;
- Students afraid to ask questions;
- Differences of ethnic backgrounds in multi-ethnic schools;
- Students from ethnic minority group ><Teachers from majority group (Kinh);
- Students from small ethnic minority group ><Teachers from large ethnic minority group;
- Students from small ethnic minority group ><Students from large ethnic minority group;

Outside the school

- School location: far from home, alien surroundings;
- Bullying: students from small ethnic minority group >< students from large ethnic minority group;
- Silencing (lack of trust/ openness from teachers; fear of retaliation);
- Peer pressure (skipping classes, drinking, billiard playing, computer games...)

From home realities

- Lack of financial means (high tuition fees, too many school contributions);
- *Parental failure to realize importance of education (perceptions of teachers from Kinh majority group and from large ethnic minority groups >< parents of small ethnic minority groups);*
- Ordinary people (parents and students) highly regard the importance of education:
 - - “to tell different denominations of money” – a Dao female in Yen Bai
 - - “to obtain a motorbike driver’s licence to go to commune center, district township” – a Hmong male in Dien Bien
 - - “to escape from hard agricultural work” – a member of Pathen group in Ha Giang

To policy at work

- Lack of transparency in selection criteria for boarding school: with rare exceptions, “most places are reserved for children of local cadres” - a Thai in Yen Bai;
- Criteria for government jobs: “most slots are allocated beforehand, to get one you have to pay.”
- Vocational training: haphazard, taking no account of market realities; lack of diplomas; grades 9-12 depending on types of work
- Parental worries of job prospects for children.
- Parental limited goal: literacy level for children
- Children lacking enthusiasm: “All this schooling serves no purposes, we’ll all end up working in the field.”
- Result: Early school leaving

After school

- Early/child marriage (local custom; ways male youth diminishing levels of parental supervision);
- Working away from home (hard work, inefficient);
- Returning to illiteracy again (esp. among women)

By way of conclusion

- A strong belief in the importance of education among esp. small ethnic minorities.
- Due to lack of transparency of educational and job opportunities, parental worries of job prospects for children.
- Motivation faded and lacking enthusiasm to overcome intractable obstacles and challenges to pursue a higher education.
- Re-enforcing prevalent prejudices and discrimination based on presumed ethnic differences among esp. ethnic minorities.

Suggested course of action

- In the immediate:
 1. Creating and re-enforcing belief in the merits of education and training among parents and children:
 - Clear messages to be broadcast by commune's loudspeakers;
 - Elimination of 'permanent' jobs, minimizing recruiting procedures;
 - Publicizing local cases of success/role models to a wider public

2. Facilitate schooling efforts

- Schools to be located near communes /hamlets
- A 50 percent reduction in school fees; changes in fee collecting method
- Increase in number of elementary school teachers (knowledgeable about local language, customs and mentality)
- Creation of school- friendly environment with the participation of social workers
- Priority in securing free-interest loans for schooling purposes
- Expanding scope and clarifying criteria in selecting school internees

3. Setting up community support funds

- Establishing 'education stimulation schemes' similar to those set up by kinship councils, women's and youth associations;
- Establishing a community-based public library to promote a good reading habit with an intention of developing early literacy skills.
- Encourage sentiments of solidarity, stressing the roles of local elders and influential figures in the communities

In the longer term:

- Eliminating 'negative' social aspects especially corruption (i.e., more transparent information dissemination)
- Public campaign to enhance public awareness of the multicultural character of the nation, stressing respect for cultures of ethnic minorities
- Reducing popular prejudices vis-à-vis ethnic minorities (i.e., media advocacy, education)

Thank you