



# NOPOOR POLICY BRIEF



nopoor

Enhancing Knowledge for  
Renewed Policies against Poverty

## NOPOOR POLICY BRIEF NR.16: THE IMPACT OF LENGTHENING THE INSTRUCTIONAL TIME ON INEQUALITY: THE CASE OF VIETNAM

DATE: March 2017

### AUTHORS:

Tran Ngo Minh Tam, DIAL/ IRD [tranngominhtam@gmail.com](mailto:tranngominhtam@gmail.com)

Laure Pasquier-Doumer, DIAL/IRD [pasquier@dial.prd.fr](mailto:pasquier@dial.prd.fr)

This note briefs how policies aiming at lengthening instructional time affect the inequality of opportunity, with an application to the Vietnamese context. As a consequence of the too low instructional time to ensure the basic primary curriculum in Vietnam, the private tutoring has become increasingly widespread among families who can afford it, causing inequalities in accessing the quality of basic education. In this context, full-day schooling has been initially implemented to deal with the deficiency in instructional time. But it might also contribute to the equality of opportunity in education by filling the gap in instructional time between children of different social background. However, the specificity of Vietnam in the implementation of this policy where the switch to full-day schooling is largely funded by the families and the communities makes this policy unable to reduce inequality of opportunity.



Shortages of financial and human resources have constrained many developing countries to limit the instructional time to half of the day. With economic development and the achievement of universal enrolment in primary education, many of these countries have implemented policies to lengthen the instructional time in order to reach international standards for education. Vietnam belongs to these countries. Although the full-day schooling policy was introduced very early in Vietnam (1956), its implementation remained marginal until the 2000's and has accelerated since 2009 with the School Education Quality Assurance Program.

By lengthening the instructional time, full-day schooling is expected to improve the learning achievement of the children. This is confirmed by most of the studies, although the observed effect of increasing the instructional time on achievement is often small.<sup>1</sup> Expanding the instructional time has also been proposed as a policy option to reduce the inequality of opportunity, especially in developed countries like the USA. Inequality of opportunity is defined here as the association

---

<sup>1</sup> For a review, see Holland P., Alfaro P., Evans K. (2015). Extending the School Day in Latin America and the Caribbean. *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 7309*, or Orkin, K. (2013). The Effect of Lengthening the School Day on Children's Achievement in Ethiopia. *Young Lives Working Paper 119*.

between educational performance and family background. The argument putting forward is that this policy allows children with disadvantaged social background to narrow the gap in instructional time compared to well-off children. Indeed, well-off families are able to compensate the lack of instructional time by private tutoring. In addition, children from the poorest families rely mostly on schools in obtaining their academic learning; in contrast to children from the well-off or middle-class families, who rely on schools for only a portion of their learning and are more likely to receive intellectual stimulation during the time they spend outside of the schools. By substituting time spent outside of school with time at school, children from different social background will benefit from a more similar learning environment. However, narrowing the gap in instructional time for children with different social background will reduce inequality of opportunity in learning achievement only if the quality of instructional time is the same for all groups of children.

Vietnam is a particularly interesting case to scrutinize the impact of lengthening the instructional time on inequality. First, inequality of opportunity in education is a raising concern for the country. Second, the implementation of full-day schooling in Vietnam presents some particularity that may change the effect of full-day schooling (FDS) on inequality of opportunity. The participation of the families in funding the full-day schooling policy is far from being negligible. This may impede the positive impact of this policy on equality of opportunity. On the other hand, Vietnam has conducted an ambitious policy from 2009 to 2015 to support schools in the most disadvantaged provinces in their switch to full-day schooling. The number of pupils benefiting from full-day schooling has been growing quickly, with 73 per cent of pupils in primary school in 2012.<sup>2</sup> The great extension of full-day schooling in recent time, especially for most disadvantaged children, calls for the investigation of its relationship with educational inequality.

EMN

AN

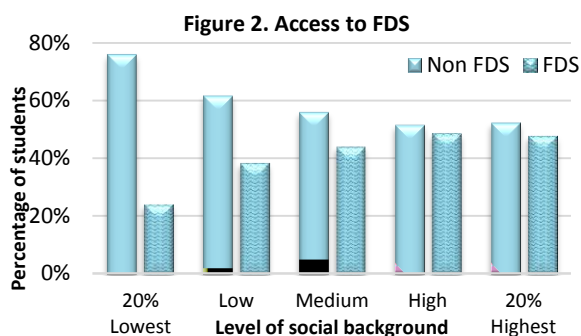
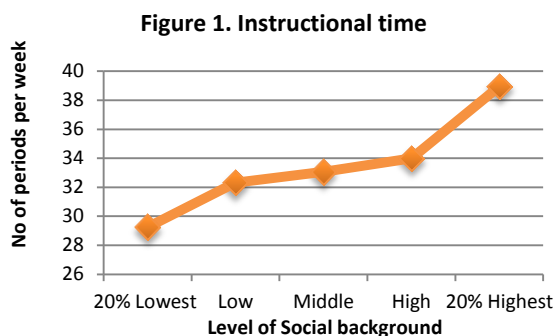
Analysis results from data of the Young Lives project<sup>3</sup> show that FDS does not narrow the inequality in education between children with different social background. On the contrary, it seems to contribute to the rising gap in learning progress between children from different social background.

Firstly, **FDS has not reduced the gap in instructional time between children with high and low social background.** Students from high social background still have more instructional time than students with low social background (Figure 1). This is because the disadvantaged background students have lower access to FDS (Figure 2), and when gaining the access to the FDS, these students are provided with less hours of instruction in Vietnamese or Mathematics than their more advantaged counterparts. In addition, the substitution of FDS for private tutoring is only partial. The attendance in FDS does not even restrict students from taking extra classes, while extra classes provide students with more hours of instruction than FDS.

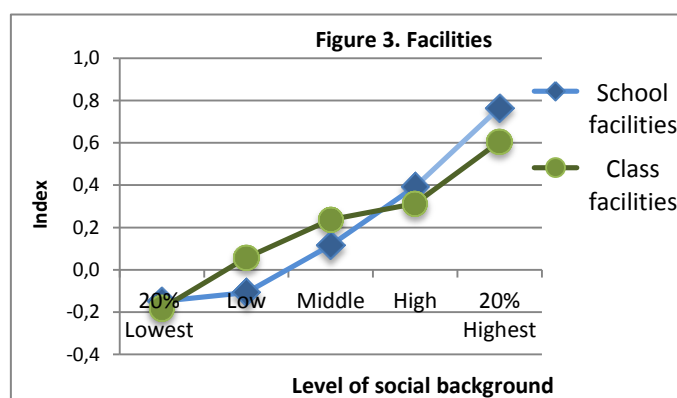
---

<sup>2</sup> Bodewig, C., Badiani-Magnusson, R., Macdonald, K., Newhouse, D., Rutkowski J. (2014). *Skilling up Vietnam: preparing the workforce for a modern market economy*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

<sup>3</sup> Young Lives project is a 15-year study of the changing nature of childhood poverty in Ethiopia, India (Andhra Pradesh and Telangana), Peru and Vietnam ([www.younglives.org.uk](http://www.younglives.org.uk)). Young Lives is funded by UK aid from the Department for International Development (DFID), with co-funding from 2010 to 2014 by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and from 2014 to 2015 by Irish Aid. We used the School Survey conducted in Vietnam during the school year 2011-2012. The views expressed here are those of the author(s). They are not necessarily those of Young Lives, the University of Oxford, DFID or other funders.



Secondly, although the students attending FDS are provided with more resources than the students not attending FDS, **the high social background students always have better school resources accompanying FDS than the low social background.** This is especially true for school facilities (latrines, electricity, library, computer, etc.), and for class facilities (books, teacher's desk, fan, video player, etc.) as shown in Figure 3.



Thirdly, **FDS attendance does not significantly improve the learning progress in Vietnamese or in Mathematics of the students, especially for children with disadvantaged social background.** Therefore, at this stage of implementation, FDS has not lessened inequality of opportunity in learning achievement. At the contrary, it seems to magnify the effect of social background on learning progress, thereby worsening the inequality of opportunity. Children belonging to the families with the lowest social background have lower progress in Vietnamese when they benefit from the FDS than when they do not. For these children, FDS is of poorest quality. The mistargeting of supportive programme from the government may explain this result. Consequently, the resources dedicated to FDS implementation is highly associated with the resources of the families who remain the main contributor of this programme. Side effect of lengthening the schooling time for this population may be another explanation: children may lose concentration by spending all the day at school if the curricula are not adapted to this change or they are less able to attend school when it requires them to spend all the day at school instead of helping their parents in their daily tasks.



The above-mentioned evidences indicate some useful hints of policy for further extension of FDS towards the target of educational equality of opportunity in Vietnam and more generally in developing countries.

First of all, it is imperative to define national standards in the definition and the implementation of the full-day schooling. Leaving the initiative to the schools in defining the level of additional

instructional time, the subject breakdown or letting them adapting the curricula would generate disparities at the expense of the most disadvantaged children. The extension of the instructional time should be accompanied by the authorities' revision of the curricula in order to avoid detrimental effect on the learning progress for the most disadvantaged students.

Second, **the public support on full-day schooling for disadvantaged students should be guaranteed.** Otherwise, full-day schooling will contribute as in Vietnam to reinforce inequality in education based on socio-economic inequality. In the long term, **the universal coverage of free full-day schooling** deserves to be considered in Vietnam for addressing the inequality in education. The current full-day schooling, which is the same as extra classes at a lower cost, could cause gaps in instructional time and school resources between students from different level of social background. **Full-day schooling could act as a policy instrument to move towards the equality of opportunity in education but only under the conditions of being free for the disadvantaged population and having clear and applied national standards.**

The study examines whether full-day schooling is associated with more educational inequality across children with different social background. It relies on data from the Young Lives School Survey (2011-2012) where 3,284 Grade 5 students in 176 classes of 52 schools are surveyed to collect information on characteristics of schools, class, principals, teachers and students. Test and retest scores in Math and Vietnamese have been administered to students at the beginning and the end of the school year. Descriptive analysis is used in this research to examine the variations in instructional time and school resources between children from different social background and with or without access to FDS. The analysis of the learning progress attributable to FDS across socio-economic status has been performed by estimating the Value-added Models by level of social background and FDS using. The methodological challenge here lies in the lack of information regarding children ability and past educational trajectory and in the non-random assignment of students to schools, in particular according to the FDS implementation criteria. Past educational inputs and unobserved characteristics of the pupils are partially captured by the lagged



## NOPOOR – Enhancing Knowledge for Renewed Policies against Poverty

Xavier Oudin, Scientific coordinator, IRD-DIAL, Paris, France [oudin@ird.dial.prd.fr](mailto:oudin@ird.dial.prd.fr)

CDD The Ghana Center for Democratic Development – Accra, Ghana  
CDE Centre for Development Economics – Delhi, India  
CNRS (India Unit) Centre de Sciences Humaines – New Delhi, India  
CRES Consortium pour la Recherche Économique et Sociale – Dakar, Senegal  
GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies – Hamburg, Germany  
GRADE Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo – Lima, Peru  
IfW Kiel Institute for the World Economy – Kiel, Germany  
IRD Institut de Recherche pour le Développement – Paris, France  
ITESM Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey – Monterrey, Mexico  
LISER Luxemburg Institute of Socio-Economic Research – Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxemburg  
OIKODROM - The Vienna Institute for Urban Sustainability – Vienna, Austria  
UA-CEE Université d'Antananarivo – Antananarivo, Madagascar  
UAM Universidad Autónoma de Madrid – Madrid, Spain  
UCHILE Universidad de Chile – Santiago de Chile, Chile  
UCT–SALDRU University of Cape Town – Cape Town, South Africa  
UFRJ Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro – Rio de Janeiro, Brazil  
UNAMUR Université de Namur – Namur, Belgium  
UOXF-CSAE University of Oxford, Centre for the Study of African Economies – Oxford, United Kingdom  
VASS Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences – Hanoi, Vietnam

FP7 Framework Programme for Research of the European Union – Collaborative project- large-scale integrating project for specific cooperation actions dedicated to international cooperation partner countries (SICA)  
THEME SSH.2011-1 – Tackling poverty in a development context.

April 2012 – March 2017, (60 months)

EU contribution: 8 000 000 €

<http://www.nopoor.eu/>

Tran Ngo Thi Minh Tam, researcher, Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences  
Laure Pasquier-Doumer, researcher, Institut de Recherche pour le développement

Delia Visan, Manager, IRD-DIAL, Paris, France, [delia.visan@ird.fr](mailto:delia.visan@ird.fr)  
Tel: +33 1 53 24 14 66 Contact email address: [info@nopoor.eu](mailto:info@nopoor.eu)

Tran, Ngo Thi Minh Tam and Laure Pasquier-Doumer (2015) “Does Full-day Schooling Reduce Educational Inequality in Vietnam?”. PERI ESP Working Paper Series 2015 No. 72 (<http://www.younglives.org.uk/publications/WP/full-day-schooling-and-educational-inequality-in-vietnam/does-full-day-schooling-reduce-educational-inequality-in-vietnam> )

Edgar Aragon, Laura Valadez (ITESM)  
Heidi Dumreicher (OIKODROM)  
Xavier Oudin (IRD)

The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the European Commission.