

DOCTORAL THESIS IN BRIEF

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Factors affecting school dropout of children in Northwest

Specialization: Social Studies

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In recent years, the rate of school dropouts has significantly decreased in all education level in Vietnam. The number of dropouts, however, still requires more attention and completed solution. Poor socio – economic provinces, which have high rate of dropout, majorly located in mountainous parts of country as Northern side, Central Highland (Tây Nguyên), and Southwest. Northwest regions have the higher rate than other provinces due to low speed growth of the economy, poor infrastructure, inconvenient traffic. One main reason is this region has many minorities living and they have various customs and cultural features. Therefore, either analysis and evaluation on school dropouts in Northwest, or improvement in knowledge level of people, have become urgent. Solution to limit the rate of dropouts is necessary in the developing and internationally integrated pathway of Vietnam. As a result, Nguyễn Thị Thanh Hương has chosen “Factors affecting school dropouts of children in Northwest” as the thesis topic.

The main concept has three chapters (163 pages), excluding introduction, conclusion, references and appendices.

Chapter 1 (page 18-55) summarizes the theory and empirical evidence of topic. Author summarized research works, viewpoints and methodology related to the topic (*document analyzing method, quantitative and qualitative collection method*), some theories on research approaches (*Morrow's theory of dropout, theory of socialization, viewpoint of ethnic people*), concept's of tools (*education level, social changes, family, gender, socialization*)...

Chapter 2 (page 56-89) analyzed *the practice of school dropouts in Northwest*.

Northwest is a mountainous part of the country and has geographical advantages of politics, economy, ecology and culture, including Lai Châu, Điện Biên, Sơn La and Hòa Bình. In the trend of growth and integration, Northwest is however facing with many difficulties from the education reality and schools dropout of children.

The figures in the research showed that the rate of people who has completed high school is only 34.6% among 402 local people joined in the survey. Among ethnic minorities, Thai people has higher rate of participating in schools but Muong people are those who have higher educational level. More than a half of households, who do not have kids dropped out school, have joined in the survey but the rate of dropping out is still high. 21.4% of families have kids dropped out school right after primary school and 38.1% of families have kids not go to school before finishing high

school. Therefore, the number of kids who do not have opportunities for further education which allows them to take part in the building of local socio – economical growth is quite high. Northwestern children themselves are losing the chances of winning over the poverty due to no education. Major reasons are: 23% of them do not like school, 22% of them can not study well and 18% of them have to work instead of study. There are some other reasons (low rate), for example, high tuition fee or school are too far for them.

There are two opposite situations happening in Vietnam. Kids from rural in Northwest, especially those are living in mountainous parts and ethnic minorities, cannot go to school because of financial difficulties, inconvenient transportation or language barriers. In contrast, urban children are often truant from school and go to Internet shops to play games or watch bad websites. On the other hands, education programs should be reformed and this could be one of the pressure for mountainous students. Teaching and learning method are all in Kinh which is hard for ethnic students to understand as well as absorb the knowledge. Moreover, the vocabulary of students is limited so it has become the barriers for Mong, Khmer and Cong student.

Chapter 3 (page 90-136) has analyzed *factors affecting school dropouts of children in Northwest*.

Firstly, it is reason of family conditions. For example, the poor financial ability, low living standards and poverty have affected the decision of going to school.

The research results showed that the lower the living standard is, the more kids drop out or join in school at older age. Family do not have financial ability, children hence go to work instead. Besides, parents and students themselves should be aware of how education impacts on students' future. The incorrect awareness and health are major reasons which increased the rate of high school students dropping out.

Secondly, it is reason of schools, for example, poor conditioned of classes and schools in Northwest. Schools are short of fundamental conditions as lightings, clean water source, public toilets and playground. Also, tuition fee and expenditure of school are disadvantages for poor families in rural and mountainous parts.

Inappropriate policies related to allowance have led to the lack of highschool teachers in mountainous regions. The quality of teacher is limited because only few of them are ethnic minorities and Kinh teachers do not know local language or local customs.

Education programs are not practical, simple and boring. Schools are not friendly while teachers do not pay enough attention to students. As a result, students feel tired of school and drop out.

Thirdly, it is reasons from society and community. The dropout situation has been happened for years in Tay Bac because it related to the prior policy for education. Costs for school building, expenditure on training for teacher and course organization are limitations. Also, educational concept and teaching

method (kinder garden to high school) are not appropriate for ethnic or mountainous students. Learning programs are overload for them, especially Vietnamese or foreign language subjects together with textbook concepts are too complicated. Households' migration is also one of reasons for school's dropping out in Northwest. Nomadic life and the mobility for living earning have forced kids to stop their learning and it is hard for them to start over. The role of organizations as youth union, women's organization, farmer community in encouraging children to go to or back to school is limited. They did not collaborate or do not have any mechanism to support students coming back schools.

Fourthly, it is reasons related to ethnic minorities. Language barrier in teaching and learning is the biggest reason that make students stop going to school. Many students cannot speak Kinh so they are unable to learn. It also makes them feel not confident to communicate with others. All of these led to the psychology of not want to go to schools.

Last of but not least, it is the long distance and inconvenient transportation from house to schools. This significantly impacts on the high rate of dropping out. Besides, factors as customs and traditions (boys are more important than girls, early marriage or housework for

women) have contributed to the high rate of female students's dropping out.

The thesis also offered some solutions to overcome challenges for education in Northwest:

Firstly, the awareness and responsibilities of public and each household toward the education for kids should be improved.

Secondly, school's infrastructure and teaching program are required to improved and renewed: i) building appropriate programs and documents for each student group; ii) implement teaching programs in two languages at primary schools iii) improve the specialized ability and operations of teachers...

Thirdly, solutions related to community and society, including: Promotion to increase the ability of community; Improve the leaders' capability at all levels; Improve the infrastructure and economy of community.

Fourthly, activities for education and socialization should consider the features of Northwest regions.

Thesis was successfully approved by the council at Institute level, held at Graduate Academy of Social Sciences – Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences in November 2012.

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