

Challenges in Vietnam's Human Development at Present from Perspectives of Improvement of Competence and Facilitation with Opportunities

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Abstract: Besides recent achievements in human development such as increases in life expectancy, the number of years attending school, enrollment rate and people's average income, Vietnam remains fraught with challenges which are likely to worsen the poverty and social inequality as well as leaving adverse impacts on the people's right to access to public services and development resources. This can lead to challenges in human development such as inequalities in opportunities to access to education, enhancement of the competence of knowledge; to healthcare system and the competence of health; to land as a development resource; high-quality and sustainable employment; opportunities to improve knowledge and be promoted; and, ultimately, the challenge in the relationship of resonance between the inequality in opportunities and the widening inequality in incomes.

Keywords: Human development, challenge, competence, opportunity, Vietnam.

Subject classification: Anthropology

1. Introduction

Prioritising investments in human capital (education and health) and promoting the equitable economic growth are the ways that Vietnam is gradually honouring its policy commitments to place people at heart of the development to create an environment with equal opportunities for developing human competences, promoting the subjectivity and

creative potential of people, using human competences in an efficient manner and bringing about the high-quality, safe and sustainable life for the people. Another pillar of human development which has been recently emphasised on is encouraging and promoting the engagement of people in social management and development through public political and administrative systems. The rapid shift in economic structure and the transition to a market

economy of Vietnam recently have yielded numerous achievements in human development such as job generation, labour productivity increase and improvement in the incomes and living standards of people. Human knowledge competence has been developed step by step, which is manifested through continuous increases in the rates of school enrolment, graduation from preschool to secondary and post-secondary levels, literacy in adults and trained workers and through basic skills (speaking, reading, writing, calculation, etc.), highly spoken by other countries in the region. The physical competence has been gradually improved with some indicators such as the reduction of infant mortality, stunting, malnutrition and maternal mortality at birth and the increase of caregivers at birth, longevity and people accessing to clean water and having rest rooms. The poverty rate in the recent years has decreased to the level that is nearly the same as the increase of economic growth rate. The poverty reduction has happened in all residential groups (rural and urban residential groups, Kinh, or Viet, people and ethnic minorities) and geographic regions. People are empowered and encouraged to actively engage in the management and supervision of society.

In addition to such great achievements, more and more complex and challenging issues are emerging and hindering the sustainable development of Vietnam and its people. *Firstly*, the industrialisation-centered development model still emphasises economic growth targets in an extensive manner and lends weight to the use of unskilled human resource and ineffective exploitation of natural resources,

which fails to meet the requirement of intensively developing based on human knowledge and skills as well as high technologies, saving energies and materials and being friendly to the environment. This leads to i) the reduced economic growth rate, weak competitiveness, decreased production and trade efficiency and worsened macroeconomic instability; ii) polluted environment and inefficient management of natural resources, which are wastefully exploited and quickly exhausted; iii) unsustainable human development and signs of stagnation and slow improvement in non-income aspects such as social equality, citizen rights, human rights, health and education qualities, environment sanitation, food safety and so on. *Secondly*, the increasingly intensive and extensive international integration and open door put pressure on the development within the country such as economic competition, cultural penetration, increased trans-national offences such as trafficking of drugs, women and children, epidemic spread and so forth. Notably, economic and financial crises in the region and world immediately leave deep impacts on production and trade activities, employment, salary and prices, thereby reversing the livelihood and life of people and seriously threatening the human development. *Thirdly*, Vietnam is undergoing considerable transformations in terms of economic, population and demographic structures, migration and urbanisation as well as experiencing ever-more impacts of the climate change. These challenges are likely to result in ones in human development from the perspectives of the improvement of competence and facilitation of opportunities.

2. Challenges in unequal opportunities to access to education and improve knowledge

Firstly, opportunities to access to education have been improved and become more equal for all, but there are still considerable differences among ethnic groups, socio-economic groups and regions. Primary education in Vietnam has been nearly universal with no big discrepancies in the school enrolment rate among regions, provinces, socio-economic groups and gender groups which reached over 95%. However, differences are still being recorded among income groups, ethnic groups and regions in learning opportunities and academic results and increasing gradually by academic levels. The trend of increasing difference in education at higher academic levels has direct impacts on the discrepancy in human development due to the close relationship among high-level education and professional skills and soft skills, entailing the differences in job opportunities and income levels.

Among ethnic groups: Basic education – lower secondary education universalisation has been reached at the national level, but the result remains poor in many mountainous districts, especially in ethnic minorities. Differences in the rate of school attendance at the right age in 2012 between Kinh people in comparison to Mong people and Khmer people (peoples with the lowest and second lowest rate of school attendance at the right age at lower and upper secondary levels) are respectively 1.8 and 1.5 times at the lower secondary level and 4.8 and 2.9 times at the upper secondary level (The author made calculations from figures in [11], [12]).

Among regions: There is a clear discrepancy among regions in the never-go-to-school rate of the population aged five or older. This discrepancy between the northern midland and mountainous region with the highest never-go-to-school rate and the Red River Delta with the lowest never-go-to-school rate is up to five times [12].

Among socio-economic groups: There is a relationship between the family context (the education of parents and the family's income) and the inequality in terms of learning opportunities before children go to school. The rate of children from families in group Q1 (the group of 20% of the poorest people), which is vulnerable to at least one aspect of development (health, psychology, social affairs, communication, language), is two times higher in comparison to children from families in group Q5 (the group of 20% of the richest people). This difference can possibly affect their years of schooling, highest education level, academic results and employment opportunities once they become grown up [9, p.47].

Between men and women: The rate of people who never go to school in women is two times higher in comparison to that of men, which causes the discrepancy between men and women in the group of people without any degrees or certificates to stand at about 1.5 times with the weight lent to men. Nevertheless, the rates of general school attendance, school enrolment at the right age and graduation at lower and upper secondary levels between men and women have almost no differences. The school attendance rate at the upper secondary level of women is even higher than that of men [12].

Secondly, despite considerable achievements in human knowledge improvement, the inequality in opportunities to access to education is one of important reasons for big differences in education results among regions, areas, ethnic groups and socio-economic groups, manifested through discrepancies in terms of the literacy rate, number of school years, academic completion rate at all levels, rate of technical degree holders or the differences with regard to educational and technical levels in other words.

The intensity of differences in education level among regions, ethnic groups and income groups is proportional to the academic level, shown in the fact that while the number of young people who never go to school or do not have primary education diplomas is ever-decreasing at all groups, discrepancies do exist in the rates of lower secondary, upper secondary, college and university graduation among groups, which are especially low for children from families of ethnic groups and poor families or children living in remote areas [8].

Thirdly, above differences extended for many years and narrowed down in a slow manner have been greatly impeding and challenging the improvement of the whole society's human resource quality and the acceleration of socio-economic development in regions, which are undoubtedly very difficult.

Fourthly, it is recognisable that there are three groups of reasons related to children's inequality in opportunities to access to education, number of school years and academic results, namely geographic conditions, ethnic groups and family's contexts.

Subjective reasons: health status, learning competence and learning motivation (the relationship between employment opportunities and education levels).

Objective reasons related to geographic conditions and ethnic groups: geographic accessibility to schools, shortage of education equipment in remote areas, uneven qualification of teachers between big cities and remote provinces, culture and language barriers. The continuously increasing number of schools/ points of school over the past years has reduced considerably students' distance to schools, but there remains a great difference among regions (if the topographical difficulties and climatic disadvantages are also taken into consideration) in the availability of schools/ points of school and the geographic accessibility. The schooling opportunities of children residing in remote and mountainous areas such as the northern midland and mountainous region are less advantageous than children living in other areas and even less in higher education levels [12].

Objective reasons related to family's contexts: the education level and attention of parents and economic conditions.

- Children born in poor families, families in rural areas or families of ethnic minority extract are likely to drop out of their schools sooner than children born in other families. These groups of children do not have many opportunities to access to high-quality learning programmes (in which it is necessary to take into consideration their little likelihood to pursue basic knowledge advancing classes, language and computer classes as well as the lack of attention to

opportunities of studying and practicing life skills, soft skills and others in schools), which obviously affects their academic results and opportunities to access to education at high levels and causes them few opportunities of getting good jobs requiring professional skills.

- Investing in education to get better jobs as the main pathway to escape from poverty and have good position in society is the thought of the majority of well-educated parents and people surveyed in plain areas where job opportunities are very available. This awareness has a very close relationship with the investments of time and finance of parents in the study of their children and the children's years of schooling [8].

Fifthly, there is a difference in the reasons for not going to school of students at different levels:

The learning competences/academic results of children and economic conditions of their families are the two reasons playing the most crucial role in deciding the continuation of their academic pathways at both basic education levels, pre-school and primary education. Language barrier and unstable health are recognised as the third most important reasons for the school quit at pre-school and primary levels yet hardly the barriers at lower and upper secondary levels. Meanwhile, the long distance to school and compulsory support for the daily work of parents is the third most crucial double reason for the school quit of students at these two levels with a higher intensity at the upper secondary level in comparison to the lower secondary one [8].

3. Challenges in development opportunities from the perspectives of training and using the human resource to meet requirements of the labour market

The Vietnamese education with a good tradition has attained impressive achievements in providing basic skills to workers. The high school enrolment rate and increasing rate of degree holders in the whole people is one of Vietnam's successes in developing human competences as well as investing in the human resource. However, bigger challenges are emerging at present in training advanced working skills to satisfy changes in the needs of the labour market during the process of economic model transformation.

The current structure of human resource training is inappropriate. Specifically, the ratio of undergraduate and graduate education/ professional high school education/ technical high school education/ college education/ technical college education is 1:0.66:0.36, meanwhile this ratio in the world is 1-4-10. This shows that Vietnam is in a serious shortage of skilled workers as well as intermediate and advanced technical labourers.

Vocational training and professional college training at present fail to satisfy the needs of the labour market in the next phase of industrialisation and modernisation process, when the demand for labour is shifted from mainly manual and simple tasks with low productivity to ones requiring more skills; and from assembly and operation tasks to ones requiring thinking, analysis, interaction and new technical skills in the modern economy. The failure in providing adequate labour to

meet the market demand is witnessed in two aspects, the low number of trained labour force in Vietnam and the lack of workers who can meet the work demand in the excess of degree holders [8].

On-spot training and re-training for employed workers is a method that enterprises are applying to immediately address this failure. On-spot training, often proceeded in a short term, provides basic and simple working skills for employees right after they are recruited. Meanwhile, the advanced training is often restricted in a few companies and for a few employees who have a certain period of time working for the companies, good competences and basic training beforehand. Workers have not yet actively taken part in the advanced training to expand their occupational opportunities due to no finance accumulated from incomes to re-invest in the human capital and hardly had motivations owing to the limited scale of the labour market [8].

For vocational training: i) the classification of students after lower and upper secondary education is not effective when only about 8% of students passing the lower secondary school leaving examination study at vocational schools and the majority of students passing the upper secondary school leaving examination tend to continue their academic pathways at universities or colleges; ii) Vocational schools/vocational training centers mainly provide preliminary vocational training, so the number of students graduating from technical high schools and colleges remains very low, leading to the lack of workers with intermediate and advanced technical levels; iii) The insufficient cooperation at the national level and shortage of overall plans

cause the overlap among kinds of degrees and teaching programmes; iv) Many vocational training programmes for target groups are developed with disregard to the special characteristics of employment in different provinces, are often conducted at a poor region (with very few non-agricultural employment opportunities) and cannot provide necessary skills based on requirements of the market to trained people, thereby failing to hit the targets of improving professional skills and reducing inequality and poverty.

For tertiary training: i) In a few recent years, the unemployment rate of people with university and college degrees has been three to four times higher than that of other subjects. Notably, that the group of people aged 20 to 24 graduating from colleges and universities or higher training institutions (fresh graduates) have a very high rate of unemployment (up to 20.75%) is a problem related to the quality of human resource and development opportunities of the youth for not only students, training facilities and units in need of high-quality workforce, but also the whole society; ii) Quite a big force of workers of tertiary education level or higher are working in occupations requiring lower technical and professional levels in comparison to their trained levels; iii) The high rate of unemployment among people of high education levels and the current technician-teacher imbalance in the labour market lead to the “inverse connection” trend when the proportion of students with college diplomas or university degrees coming back to study at the technical high school level to increase their job opportunities reaches 20-30%. This is obviously the result of

ineffective orientation of the education sector in particular and society as a whole in general in selecting occupations for students, which causes the serious imbalance between the training and use of human resource at present and the great wastefulness with regard to human and financial resources of families and the whole society [3].

The proportion of employed workers who have been trained in Vietnam remains low at about more than 20% in 2015. There is a clear imbalance in the rate of trained human resource among regions, between rural and urban areas as well as between men and women. This imbalance is up to three times between the region of the highest rate (the Red River Delta) and the region of the lowest rate (the Mekong Delta); three times between rural and urban areas and about 1.5 times between men and women. Arguably, the poorest regions are ones with the highest rates of poorly-educated workers and workers with no technical skills. In the economic context of many fluctuations, the group of workers without skills will find it hard to avoid vulnerabilities in employment and income [1].

Workers with poor skills, inadequate skills and working experience in some sectors is an outstanding feature of the Vietnamese workforce at present. The shortage of human resource with good skills and working experience reduces the attractiveness with investors, acts as the impediment to Vietnam in its participation in the chain of goods with high added values and requires innovations in technologies and skills of the labour

force. The lack of skills often happens in candidates seeking jobs in technical and managerial sectors, which require workers to perform analysis, compilation, assessment, brainstorming and interaction tasks to solve problems and make decisions. On the contrary, the lack of manpower with good skills and working experience or candidates in some specific kinds of jobs is often recorded in basic technical sectors [9].

The structure of trained workers by sectors and areas as well as their distribution by regions and provinces do not really match the demand for using human resource of society, leading to the wastefulness of resources of the state and society. On the one hand, it is due to the fact that the state, employers and workers themselves do not efficiently invest in and make the most of human capital. On the other hand, it is the outcome of the growth model based on i) Natural resource exploitation; ii) Simple labour without requirements for techniques and skills; iii) Outdated technologies in comparison to other countries in the region and the world; iv) Capital at the absence of the total productivity. This model fails to promote and attract the needs for highly-qualified human resource and improve their quality.

Despite the advantage of an abundant and young workforce, the physical health of Vietnamese workers is not durable enough, resulting in the poor pressure resistance and low labour productivity. Workers are not active in their studies and investments to develop themselves, causing the passiveness and low adaptability to changes of society.

4. Challenges in unequal opportunities to access to the system of healthcare and health development

With the promulgation and implementation of different policies, the inequality in opportunities to access to medical services has been narrowed down, but there remain some issues related to unequal opportunities as follows:

The distance from people's residences to disease examination and treatment facilities affects the opportunities to access to medical and healthcare services of people in remote areas. The majority of poor people live in these areas, which have difficult geographic locations and are sparsely populated, so the distance from their houses to disease examination and treatment facilities, including grassroots health stations is also further [12].

The difference in investments in facilities for disease examination and treatment and the inappropriate allocation of health workers between grassroots healthcare and healthcare at the higher levels and among regions lead to the inequality in opportunities to access to high-quality medical services or in benefits from healthcare, including the disease examination and treatment at higher levels, which is costly to people [6].

The level of access to medical services through health insurance varies between the urban and rural populations, poor and rich populations, Kinh people and ethnic minorities, in which the latter often have more frequent access than the formers. While the difference in the level of using medical services between rural and urban

areas is not considerable, such discrepancy among regions is very big with the Mekong Delta having the highest level and the northwestern region having the lowest level. The fact that medical services are more available and accessible in urban area and the Mekong Delta than in the northwestern region is one of the reasons for this difference. Together with the low level of using medical services, the northwestern region has a poor level of using outpatient services, which is partly due to the people there. The people living in difficult conditions and remote areas often tend to delay their disease examination and treatment until their health statuses become really serious. This is how they minimise the healthcare costs in the short term yet create a shock in the long term. This helps to additionally affirm that besides differences in the availability of health facilities and quality of medical services, the costs for medical services covered by the people's out-of-pocket money impact on the frequency of using medical services [8].

The high direct payment, high payment for medical services in comparison to the income level, high payment for medical services in comparison to the general expenditure of a household, high out-of-pocket payment for medical services of the people in comparison to the total expenditure for medical services of the whole society and current regulations on the co-payment without ceiling level for some subjects at 5% and 20% can cause the amount of money for co-payment to exceed the payment ability of households and drive them to become poor or impoverish them through health disasters. The rate of

households with catastrophic expenditures for medical services triggered by direct payment in Vietnam is higher than in other countries. That leads to the low equity of the healthcare system because the poor will find it hard to access to medical services or can only access to low-quality services. The rate of impoverishment and disasters due to the payment for medical services focusing on the poor and near poor groups proves that these populations benefit very little from medical financial policies. This rate is also witnessed in households with members holding health insurances, showing that financial impacts of the health insurance are still low [4], [5].

The health indicators have been greatly improved due to increased investments from the state budget in health sector and commitments of the Government to implementing the universal health coverage strategy. However, the differences in health indicators, especially the average life expectancy, child immunisation, child stunting, child malnutrition and child mortality among regions, ethnic groups and socio-economic groups show almost no reduction. For example, the average life expectancy is 6.2 years in difference between the southeastern region, the region with people of the highest life expectancy and the Central Highlands, the region with people of the lowest life expectancy, which has disadvantageous geographic conditions for travel, is sparsely populated, is not supplied with adequate clean water and proper sanitation and covers a high rate of poor households. The child mortality is the highest in two poor regions, the northern midland and mountainous region and Central Highlands and the lowest in the

southeastern region. The under-one mortality in the Central Highlands doubles that in the southeastern region. The under-five mortality in the Central Highlands is three times higher than that in the southeastern region. This rate in ethnic minorities is three times higher than in Kinh people. This rate in the poorest group is 2.5 times higher than in the richest group. The under-five malnutrition is the highest in two regions, the northern midland and mountainous region and the Central Highlands and the lowest in the southeastern region. Chronic malnutrition is the main reason for early disadvantages of poor children in Vietnam and has considerable adverse impacts on the brain development and academic results in the future of children [7].

5. Challenges in unequal opportunities to access to land as a resource for development

The land use right is ensured by the State through the law, but the people's exercise of this right still encounters some problems, especially in land acquisition and compensation.

The implementation of a wide range of projects on transforming the purpose of agricultural land use has reduced greatly the production resources of farmers and had considerable impacts on the life of people, especially on job change and residence stabilisation. Farmers whose production land is acquired often do not continue their traditional jobs and many of them do not have enough conditions (capital, working skills and age) to seek a stable job in the non-agricultural sector.

Inadequacies in pricing the compensation for acquired land is one of the problems directly affecting the rights and interests of people with acquired land use right. Specifically, i) The land prices for compensation calculation issued annually by the provincial People's Committees based on the price framework for different kinds of land regulated by the Government are often lower than the market prices, mainly due to being calculated by the old grades of land; ii) The market is not strong enough to adjust land prices based on the real values of land (calculated by the needs and competences of society) but always fluctuates wildly, depending on the speculation of investors; iii) The land pricing methods in bordering parts between urban and rural areas, among provinces, among districts and within a district are not proper; iv) The changes in annual land prices will lead to the situation that the compensation level for the same kind of land varies by different years in the same project; v) Due to no specific regulations and sufficient information, farmers do not know about the market price of the land and find it difficult to negotiate and calculate the compensation level for acquired land; vi) The use of non-economic methods to speed up the land acquisition of the authorities at all levels; the intransparency and inconsistency in the procedures for land acquisition and resettlement support and the calculation of land prices, which is non-uniform, self-contradictory, creates a great price difference between the periods before and after the transformation of land use purposes and makes it difficult for people to buy a similar piece of land by the

compensation that they received and highly likely for land corruptions, including benefits from land rent to happen, are some reasons for the upsetness of people with acquired land [8].

The absence of appropriate mechanism to encourage the participation of people, community and social organisations in supervising the implementation of the laws associated with land of administrative agencies, monitor the land shift, create the agreement on sharing benefits among parties related to the land shift. The lack of transparency and publicity as well as mistakes in the procedures for land acquisition, compensation and resettlement support are the main reasons causing administrative complaints and petitions related to land to rapidly increase recently.

6. Challenges in high-quality and sustainable job opportunities and shift opportunities for promotion

Firstly, the participation rate of the labour force gradually increasing year by year and the low rate of formal unemployment (about 2%) indicate that job opportunities for workers are plentiful. However, the following trends in the labour market are the reasons for concerns and impacts on the sustainable livelihoods of workers [1]:

The ability to generate jobs is decreasing, shown through the low and declining elasticity between economic growth and job increase.

The unemployment rate of young workers is three times higher than the general unemployment rate.

The quality of jobs remains low, manifested through the low rate of highly-qualified jobs (only about 10%), which mainly appear in service sector as well as socio-political and military organisations, in the correlation with the total jobs in Vietnam at present. Highly-qualified jobs in the processing and manufacturing industry, a major industry in the industrialisation and modernisation process, only account for 9% in the total highly-qualified jobs. This is a challenge in the competition of resources in the regional and international labour market [1].

Low-quality jobs and poorly-skilled workers have resulted in low productivity in Vietnam over the past years. Moreover, despite impressive growth rate, Vietnam's labour productivity in the past decade just stood at the middle low level in comparison to other countries in the region. Nevertheless, the gap between the labour productivity of Vietnam and other countries (with higher labour productivity) is being gradually narrowed down (except for China). That is a very positive signal of the Vietnamese economy in its intensive integration into the world economy (The author makes calculations based on figures of APO Productivity Databook) [13].

The agricultural productivity is low due to some following reasons: i) Agricultural production remains sporadic and confined within the household level and largely depends on natural conditions, weather and production methods, which are traditionally manual and fail to be mechanised with limited application of science and technology; ii) The agriculture focuses heavily on producing inferior products with low values in the good value chain; iii) The

extensibility of price scissors of industrial products and services with the ever-higher prices of agricultural products; iv) There is a lack of connection between farmers and the market as well as activeness in the goods value chain, which leads to the pressure of increasing prices of input goods such as breeding seeds, chemicals, fertilizers, animal feeds and squeezed output prices of agricultural products. Conversely, in spite of the highest productivity in comparison to the agriculture and services, the growth of Vietnam's industrial productivity is the slowest in the region (under 1% over the past 10 years). There are two reasons for the slow increase in industrial productivity as follows: i) The labour productivity increases slowly in labour-intensive processing industries for export such as garment and footwear because these industries hardly innovate their technologies; ii) Production industries for domestic market are mainly controlled and highly protected by the State and show no efficiency [8].

The low sustainability of jobs is indicated in the high rate of informal jobs (nearly 80%). This means that the social security level for workers at present remains very low. The proportion of informal workers in the recent years has tended to increase in comparison to some years before, which proves that the living standard of people is still low. In addition, because the social security system does not show any strong development, workers cannot stand the extended unemployment and accept to take over informal jobs with low and unsustainable incomes [10, p.33].

The livelihood unsustainability of workers in the informal sector, especially migrants, is pointed out in five main

factors, namely high living costs, unstable jobs, poor social inclusion, limited access to administrative services and inconvenient and insecure living environment. This affects seriously their socio-economic life and health in the short and long terms [8].

For migrant workers, working far away from their houses is just considered an intermediary step and ad-hoc option when they are jobless in the rural area. Few of them think that working with low skills in the non-agricultural sector is a sustainable pathway and can bestow them opportunities to invest in education, accumulate capital and gain experience to continue developing at their working places. Very few of them actively invest in self-development due to no savings from their current work and no better job opportunities. They are using their youthful health to earn a living with almost no savings for the future [8].

The labour force with poor technical level and the low rate of highly-qualified jobs can be a double-risk leading to the situation that Vietnam will be trapped by “the production of goods with low added values”. This indicates that Vietnam fails to take advantage of its golden population in development, shown in the passiveness in raising capacities and developing skills for the young labour force and creating adequate high-quality and sustainable jobs for newcomers in the labour market.

Secondly, changes in job structure fail to beat at the same pace with changes in the economic structure and tend to slow down, leading to the labour shift in the country’s period of boosting industrialisation and modernisation. This is the inevitable and ineffective need and law, which directly impacts on development opportunities of

workers because it lags behind a huge workforce in the agricultural sector with low productivity and meager incomes. Specifically, the job increase in the industrial sector is not corresponding to the yield and investment. Jobs in the service sector are not strong enough in both terms of quantity and quality to attract excessive workers that the agricultural sector is not be able to cover. Vocational training fails to meet the market’s demand, coupled with low wages and insecure social security schemes (health insurance, unemployment insurance, social insurance, housing, school for children and so on). In addition, there are few opportunities for promotion in the non-agricultural sector. All of the aforementioned disadvantages are deemed to be some important reasons, impeding and slowing down the shifts of human resource among sectors and regions.

Thirdly, the clearest shift of human resource in Vietnam recently is the one related to occupation and space, which means the possibility of changing jobs and working places of workers from farmers in the rural area to workers with responsive salary levels for their low working skills in industrial parks, manufacturing facilities or service areas. The shift as a result of investments in education or skill improvement of workers to raise their personal labour productivity is less witnessed or recorded [8].

Fourthly, there are almost no difference between men and women in utilising opportunities for job shifts, gender-prejudiced “advantages” of health, labour allocation in the family, social relationships and unknown family’s investments. At survey points in the rural area, the majority

of people migrating to other places to find new jobs and opportunities are both young women and men; meanwhile, the elderly stay at home, take care of children and perform agricultural tasks. Vulnerable groups such as single women nurturing small children face more limitations in utilising new opportunities and find it hard to change their jobs to raise above [8].

The unsuccessfulness in labour shift together with the use of a large amount of capital in the first period of development in such countries as Vietnam at present reveals the failure in taking advantage of opportunities for the general growth and the more limited distribution of growth-induced benefits (inequality in opportunities to access to jobs, leading to the income inequality) in the short term and affects the growth rate in the long term. The size of the workforce continues to increase, but the young population is decreasing. Therefore, Vietnam cannot solely rely on the size of the workforce to continue its economic transformations as it has always done for over the past decades but needs to focus its efforts on helping the labour force become more productive. The increase of productivity within the sector is the basic growth pathway in the current economy because the labour shift from agricultural to industrial and service sectors will be slowed down in the future, thereby reducing the contributions to productivity growth of the labour shift among sectors as in the previous period. The increase of productivity through prioritising effective investment in and use of human capital in different labour fields is a policy suggestion for Vietnam's economic growth in the next period. Vietnam thus needs to prioritise

human development and investment in human resource to fulfil this objective.

7. Challenges in the resonance relationship between inequality in opportunities and increase in income inequality

Firstly, Vietnam's income inequality at present in the correlation with its development is just at the middle level in comparison to other countries in the region yet has increased recently. However, the concern-worthy problem is that income inequality often goes hand in glove with inequalities in opportunities (healthcare, education) and assets (land access right). The two later inequalities have great impacts on the income inequality. Specifically, the income inequality is related to the inequality in allocating capital goods such as land, capital and jobs and the accessibility to general basic services such as health, education, housing and health insurance.

Income inequality is likely to slow down the social shift because poor and low-income groups hardly have the ability to invest in human resource for promotion in their careers, thereby leading to the prolonged poverty. In the case of Vietnam, when the economic inequality go hand in hand with the chronic discrepancies in education and health results, it can worsen the existing inequality in competences because the out-of-pocket expenditures of households for education and healthcare remain high. This can impede the human development at higher level or delete already-confirmed human development achievements [8].

Secondly, the inequality in the allocation of capital goods such as land and capital, which are often prioritised for the speculation rather than production, will create constraints for the expansion of production capacity of the population having middle income and lower.

Thirdly, the inequality in opportunities to access to healthcare and education leading to differences in healthcare and education results is both sign and potential factor for the income inequality. There is obvious evidence to prove that the child malnutrition has adverse and long-term impacts on the mutilation and mortality of mature population in the future and thus affect negatively the labour productivity and life's quality. It is also clearly evident that the rate of return from education is ever-rising in the context of increased needs for well-educated labour force. Specifically, the rate of return from education is higher in urban workers than in rural workers as well as in ethnic majorities than in ethnic minorities. This can be explained by the dichotomy of education. It means that highly-educated workers can take advantage of many new opportunities in the tranformed economy, especially in the urban area where there are numerous opportunities for jobs requiring good professional competences; while workers of lower education levels, especially in the rural area, find it hard to shift to other sectors and are often lagged behind in the agricultural sector or informal economic areas with low incomes. Undoubtedly, the increases in the demand for well-educated human resource and the return from education reflect that education is becoming an ever-more important asset which can

affect the separation of income levels in Vietnam. Therefore, removing the inequality in education opportunities and increasing the education quality is the key to the personal and community sustainable development [8].

If the inequality trio, namely opportunity, asset and income inequalities, cannot be control, they will promote one another and lead to unpredictable results. In addition to moral, social and political impacts such as creating the tension in society and eroding the social cohesion, this trio generates more serious economic effects. Specifically, instead of creating a driving force for the creativity and diligence, the inequality weakens the economic stimulations, investments, jobs and prosperity.

8. Conclusion

Opportunities to access to education have been improved and become more equal for all, but there is still a considerable difference among ethnic groups, socio-economic groups and regions in learning opportunities and results, which gradually increase by academic levels. In current period, the above difference, which has extended for many years and been slowly shrunk, has been acting as huge barriers and challenges to improve the quality of human resource of society as a whole and promote the socio-economic development in already-very-difficult areas. This difference leaves direct impacts on the discrepancy in human development due to close relationship between high-level education and professional as well as soft skills,

entailing the differences in job opportunities and income levels.

The inequality level in opportunities to access to medical services has been narrowed down. However, differences in the distance from people's residences to disease examination and treatment facilities and investments in facilities for disease examination and treatment and the inappropriate allocation of health workers between grassroots healthcare and healthcare at the higher levels and among regions lead to the inequality in opportunities to access to high-quality medical services or in benefits from healthcare, including the disease examination and treatment at the higher levels, which is costly to people. It affects the opportunities to access to medical and healthcare services of people in remote areas. The differences in health indicators, especially the average life expectancy, child immunisation, child stunting, child malnutrition and child mortality among regions, ethnic groups and socio-economic groups show almost no reduction recently.

The high direct payment, high payment for medical services in comparison to the income level, high payment for medical services in comparison to the general expenditure of a household, high out-of-pocket payment for medical services of the people in comparison to the total expenditure for medical services of the whole society and current regulations on the co-payment without ceiling level for some subjects at 5% and 20% can cause the amount of money for co-payment to exceed the payment ability of households and drive them to become poor or impoverish them

through health disasters. The rate of households with catastrophic expenditures for medical services triggered by direct payment in Vietnam is higher than in other countries.

Opportunities to access to education and medical services have been improved. The shrunk inequality in opportunities has created premises for the improvement of intellectual and health competences for people as a whole, indicated through the greatly-elevated health indicators of people and the improved education level and basic skills of workers. However, the physical health of Vietnamese workers is not strong and durable enough. In addition, they are in a lack of working, thinking, analysis, interaction and new technical skills in the modern economy. The failure in providing adequate labour to meet the market demand is witnessed in two aspects, the low number of trained labour force in Vietnam and the lack of workers who can meet the work demand in the excess of degree holders.

The participation rate of the labour force gradually increasing year by year and the low rate of formal unemployment (about 2%) indicate that job opportunities for workers are plentiful. However, the ability to generate jobs is decreasing, shown in the low and declining elasticity between economic growth and job increase. The unemployment rate of young workers is three times higher than the general unemployment rate. The quality of jobs remains low, manifested through the low rate of highly-qualified jobs (only about 10%), which mainly appear in service sector as well as socio-political and military organisations, in the correlation with the

total jobs in Vietnam at present. The low sustainability of jobs is indicated in the high rate of informal jobs (nearly 80%). All of these trends are the reasons for concerns and impacts on the sustainable livelihoods of workers

The unsuccessfulness in labour shift together with the use of a large amount of capital in the first period of development in such countries as Vietnam at present reveals the failure in taking advantage of opportunities for the general growth and the more limited distribution of growth-induced benefits (inequality in opportunities to access to jobs, leading to the income inequality) in the short term and affects the growth rate in the long term.

Vietnam's income inequality at present in correlation with its development is just at the middle level in comparison to other countries in the region yet has increased recently. However, the concern-worthy problem is that income inequality often goes hand in glove with inequalities in opportunities (healthcare, education) and assets (land access right). The two later equalities have great impacts on the income inequality. Specifically, the income inequality is related to the inequality in allocating capital goods such as land, capital and jobs and the accessibility to general basic services such as health, education, housing and health insurance.

Notes

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