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ESP Working Paper Series

**Examining the Relation between  
“Socialization” Practices and the  
Quality of Primary School Student  
Learning in Vietnam?**

*Written by*  
Duong Bich Hang

*Supervised by*  
Dr. Iveta Silova

2015 No. 73



The Privatisation in Education Research Initiative (PERI) is a global research and networking initiative seeking to animate an accessible and informed public debate on alternative education provision. In particular, it examines the social justice implications of changes in the coordination, financing and governance of education services.

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## About the Authors

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This paper is one of a series of policy-oriented research papers on privatisation in education jointly commissioned by the Privatisation in Education Research Initiative (PERI) and Young Lives using school survey data from the Young Lives longitudinal study of childhood poverty in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam. The findings of these diverse studies reflect on the manner and extent to which the varied supply of schooling types and private tutoring influences the pivotal role education has to play in societal development and building sustainable futures for all.

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## About Young Lives

Young Lives is a longitudinal study of childhood poverty following the lives of 12,000 children in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam over 15 years. It is funded by UK aid from the Department for International Development (DFID) and co-funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 2010 to 2014 and by Irish Aid from 2014 to 2015. The full text of Young Lives publications and more information about its work is available on the Young Lives website: [www.younglives.org.uk](http://www.younglives.org.uk)



## Abstract

This paper seeks a deeper understanding of education ‘socialization’ policy, the broader context (and policy discourse) within which the policy has been forged and implemented. Also, it aims to investigate how institutionalized practices of ‘socialization’ affect student learning quality. Using Hierarchical Linear Modeling and Young Lives school survey data conducted in 2011 and 2012, the study investigates the associations between whether students paid for full-day schooling, which represents family expenditures on education, and private tutoring hours (predictors), and student learning quality, as characterized by academic achievement, confidence, and effort (outcome variables). The findings reveal that spending on full-day schooling was not associated with the difference in primary school students’ academic achievement and confidence, but it had a positive relation with students’ effort. Also, the number of private tutoring hours was not a significant predictor of student learning quality. However, attending “extra classes” continued to be commonplace at the primary education level even in the rural, remote areas. The findings suggest that an increased amount of money channeled from household contributions through school fees does not necessarily lead to better learning quality. The study concludes by raising some important equity concerns that result from the institutionalized ‘socialization’ practices under investigation.

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## 1. Introduction

During the last two decades, Vietnam has implemented the “socialization” policy. Evolved from a series of measures to address the constraints of state budget, a problem common to most developing countries since the 1980s, “socialization” aims to mobilize resources from non-state sectors to improve the quality of public social services. In education, “socialization” principles encourage the sharing of costs and responsibilities for education provision between authorities, communities, and households. Owing to “socialization,” substantial flows of resources have been channeled into the education system. Most students greatly benefit from better facilities, more qualified teachers, and overall improved education quality. Also, many children at lower levels of education can attend “full-day” schooling free of charge. However, in many areas, students still have to pay for the other “half-day” schooling in addition to a “variety of sundry non-tuition expenses” (Rolleston et al., 2013, p.10). In addition, costs for “extra classes” or private tutoring, which is popular across Vietnam, are a necessity in the household budget for primary students (Dang, 2013). According to Ta and Duong (2013), rising education costs are imposing a real burden on households, particularly poor and disadvantaged families who can barely afford these costs.

This paper seeks a deeper understanding of education “socialization” policy, the broader context (and policy discourse) within which the policy has been forged and implemented. Also, it aims to investigate how institutionalized practices of “socialization” affect student learning quality. Specifically, its primary objective is to investigate whether family expenditures on education, known as direct private costs, and private tutoring are related to student academic achievement and academic self-concept.

Using Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM), the study analyzed Young Lives school survey data conducted in 2011 and 2012 in five provinces in Vietnam, i.e. Lao Cai, Hung Yen, Da Nang, Phu Yen, and Ben Tre. Of primary interest for the HLM analysis are the associations between whether students paid for full-day schooling (FDS), which represents family expenditures on education, and private tutoring hours (predictors), and student learning quality, as characterized by academic achievement, confidence, and effort (outcome variables). In addition, the study also sheds light on equity issues that have emerged as a result of “socialization” policies and practices.

It is hoped that the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of “socialization” of education in Vietnam. Thus, it will inform policy making in an attempt to achieve the goal of ensuring providing education quality and equity in the context of globalized education reforms.

The report is structured in five main sections. Following this introduction, the second section outlines a broad context of globalization that shapes education policies and practices in developing countries, leading to a shift in education governance. In this light, “socialization” in Vietnam will be analyzed to understand how it came into being, both as a result of global pressure and as a response to it. The third section presents the methodology, describing in detail data analysis and measures used in the study. The findings are presented in the fourth section, followed by the final (fifth) section, which discusses some major issues related to the key findings of the study and offers a number of implications for “socialization” practices.

## 2. Globalization and Governance of Education

### 2.1 A Shift in Governance of Education in a Globalized World

In the modern world, globalization is a phenomenon that has unprecedented effects on many aspects of human life. As Friedman (1997) states, globalization has “enable[d] individuals, corporations and nation-states to reach around the world farther, faster, deeper and cheaper than ever before” (p. 7). With immense developments in transport and communication technologies, globalization has created increasingly “entrenched patterns of worldwide interconnectedness,” where various local communities have become a part of worldwide systems and networks of interaction (Held & McGrew, 2000, cited in Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 24). At the same time, however, globalization is not a generalized phenomenon; rather, it needs to be understood as expressed in particular national histories, as well as political and cultural configurations (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). In other words, globalization is a multi-faceted phenomenon whose social, political, economic, and cultural aspects are inextricably linked.

Since modern states are increasingly affected by global forces, education in most countries has experienced major shifts in the ways it is governed. As Rizvi and Lingard (2010) observe, we have witnessed an unprecedented shift from government to governance. If government often means “political coalitions that control a nation’s state structures and practices” in a particular time, governance refers to “fundamental changes in the application of new public management across public sector” with new interests, methods, and discourses (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 118). In the globalized world, these changes are found to be increasingly linked to the notion of governments expanding their reliance on markets, leading to the new ways of delivering, funding, and regulating education as a public good (Dale & Robertson, 2002; Ball, 2008; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

Since the 1980s, when neoliberalism has gained a widespread prominence globally, education policy discourse has been significantly transformed in many countries. The principles of neoliberalism, greatly endorsed by influential international players, including the World Bank, IMF, and the OECD, have led to the accelerated privatization of education in many countries. Evidence from various education settings has demonstrated that education policy and reform agendas are being increasingly framed by market-led principles with a strong emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness (Daun, 2004; Daun & Mundy, 2011; Ball & Junemann, 2012). The literature on education policy in developing countries shows that under pressures of reducing public spending on educational expansion, while at the same time enhancing education quality, the governments have been urged to diversify their sources of educational finance. In so doing, education policies in most developing countries have adopted new arrangements of education governance. According to Ka Ho Mok (2005), these arrangements include:

- De-regulation, which includes cutting down state regulations so as to provide more freedom to the market.

- Privatization, which is based on the logic that the state sector is getting too big and too inefficient and therefore state or public enterprises should be privatized to let the market take over.
- Liberalization, which demands opening the economy to foreign investments and competition, finding a niche in the global market, and cutting trade barriers.
- New public management, which suggests that the state bureaucracy should be run like a private company, bringing in the factor of productivity and efficiency, downsizing, and subcontracting its services to the private sector.
- Scaling back or privatizing welfare and social services, including cutting social spending, making workers work harder, streamlining and reorganizing government bureaucracies to promote efficiency, effectiveness and economy.
- Bringing the society back in through revitalizing non-state sectors, including the community, civil society, families, and individuals to finance and provide social services.
- Marketization of public/social policies, including adopting market principles and using business strategies to run and manage social/public policies.

(Mok, 2005, p. 219)

In this context, decentralization and privatization have been viewed as the desirable routes to educational reforms throughout the world. In Africa, analyses of education reforms in countries such as Tanzania (Tan, 1985), Bhutan (Bray, 1995, 1996a), Burkina Faso, Uganda (Mehrotra & DelaMonica, 1998), South Africa (Fiske & Ladd, 2004), or sub-Saharan Africa (Naidoo, 2005) provide compelling examples of governments' efforts to reduce public expenditure on education and promote private provision of basic education. Similarly, policy reports and research studies on education in Asia have documented a rising advocacy of decentralization and privatization. This is evident in such cases as Cambodia (Bray & Lillis, 1998), China (Mok & Wat, 1998), Thailand (Armstrong, 1984; Tsang & Kidchanapanish, 1992), Indonesia (Bjork, 2003), and Vietnam (London, 2006, 2010), where the shifting emphasis from higher education to basic education and curriculum changes are found to clearly reflect the neoliberal principles.

As modern states adopt new governance modes in response to the changing socio-economic and political environments, empirical research also indicates the downsides of the neoliberal education reforms (Ball, 2012; Dale & Robertson, 2002; Mok, 2003, 2005; Macpherson, Robertson, & Walford, 2014). The often acknowledged negative sides include exacerbated social inequalities and an exclusive focus on economic efficiency, leading to education being primarily viewed as a tool for economic growth. Other scholars also point to the negative outcomes of such policy approach, including the consequences that are in opposition to national goals and needs of many developing nations (Williams, 2009; Daun & Mundy, 2011; Mundy & Menashy, 2014). As Rizvi & Lingard (2010) note, these neoliberal education policies have become a dominant social imaginary, shaping education priorities in many countries. In Vietnam, the neoliberal globalization effects on education are perhaps most evident in the "socialization" policy, which will be examined in greater detail in the following section.

## 2.2 “Socialization” of Education in Vietnam

Until the late 1980s, Vietnam had a long history of free public education, which was supported externally by countries of the former socialist bloc. Following the economic renovation in 1986, Vietnam undertook a number of education reforms, which significantly moved away from the Soviet model of a state socialist welfare regime. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and in the midst of global economic downturn, the under-resourced government implemented a number of cost recovering mechanisms, including copayments to supplement the state budget for education. From the early 1990s, Vietnam’s primary education found itself responding to critical reform agendas within the framework of the World Bank’s financial assistance packages and commitment to improving education quality and relevance (Mehrotra & DelaMonica, 1998). Although still strongly controlled by the government, Vietnam’s restructured education system has become gradually decentralized, largely in line with its changing political economy. In 1997, “socialization” was formally articulated in Resolution 90 (1997). It is detailed in Decrees 73 (1999), further developed in Resolution 5 (2005) and in a number of decrees such as Degree 69 (2008), Decree 59 (2014), and thus often referred to as a set of formal policies.

As stated in policy documents, “socialization” aims to mobilize thorough engagement of the whole society in order to raise the quality of public services, including education and health. “Socialization” of education emphasizes civic participation and community responsibility to contribute to a quality and equitable education system. The implementation of education “socialization” policy includes such focal practices and measures as: (1) diversifying modalities of education provision and delivery, (2) maximizing resources from local communities and international organizations, (3) mobilizing household contributions, and (4) effectively using state budgets for education.

Initially developed as a stopgap policy to reduce the state budget burden (London, 2012), “socialization” has later evolved to be a long-term policy, indicating the government’s pledge towards a more effective system which operates with market-like mechanisms. In order to rationalize a shift in ideology and gain people’s advocacy for the pragmatic turn, the policy has been carefully framed and crafted. This reflects the policy text itself, which as Rizvi & Lingard (2010) point out “is always affected by the context of its production” (p. 14). Indeed, several attempts have been made to unpack the term “socialization” and examine how it is actually conceptualized in policy statements. “Socialization” or “*xã hội hóa*” in Vietnamese, is an inherently abstract term, which would confuse many people particularly when translated into English as “socialization” (Vietnam Studies Group, 2005; Ho, T. H., 2009; London, 2012). Interestingly, the term (together with its principles) is often referred to in a way that is associated with socialism, an ideology that the country, under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam, had fought hard to pursue. In addition, the policy is framed in ways that highly invokes Vietnamese people’s traditional mutual assistance and social solidarity (London, 2012). This trait of Vietnamese collectivist culture is emphasized in most policy documents by the extensive use of concepts denoting voluntary and philanthropic spirit such as “*hỗ trợ*,” “*tự nguyện đóng góp*,” “*đóng góp*,” “*làm việc nghĩa*,” “*cống hiến*,” “*tạo điều kiện*,” etc. (e.g. Resolution 90, 1997; Decree 73, 1999). These flowery words create an irresistible

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1. assist, voluntarily contribute, contribute/donate, do a philanthropic activity, devote, facilitate.

power of calling citizenry to join efforts for the common cause, i.e. to be ready to share costs in order to improve public services that they themselves use. Overall, the meaning of “socialization” is paradoxically opposite to what is often understood in the English language as “a process whereby the state assumes financial responsibility for certain services” (London, 2007, p. 14).

Stated as one of the major principles of “socialization,” social equity stresses the means and magnitudes of mobilization relevant to different circumstances of the contributors. Social equity in “socialization” is thus claimed to be associated with the solidarity tradition by encouraging “the rich [to] help the poor, the prosperous regions [to] help the depressed ones through the establishment of various types of voluntary funds from people’s contributions” (Resolution 90, 1997, p. 1). In reality, in spite of some preferential policies that target low-income and disadvantaged students (e.g. Decree 78, 2002; Decree 164, 2006 [Program 135]; Decision 82, 2006), social equity appears to receive inadequate priority and has gained slow improvements. A number of studies has found that education expansion in Vietnam has contributed to exacerbating inequalities in relation to gender, ethnicity, region, and social status (Behrman & Knowles, 1999; Le et al., 2008; Yeow, 2009; London, 2010; Glewwe, Chen, & Katare, 2012; Rolleston & Krutikova, 2014).

Overall, the formation and implementation of “socialization” policies in Vietnam reflect much of the views held by the international agencies and financial lenders. Since “socialization” advocates the freeing up of public resources, particularly stressing the priority in the allocation of extra resources to education and the importance of partnerships between government and private sectors (e.g. Bray, 1996b, 2002), its formal practices are set to align considerably with the ideologies of international policy actors (such as the UNDP, World Bank, ADB, and the OECD). As a result, “socialization,” which is referred to by many as a euphemism of “privatization” (e.g. Vietnam Studies Group, 2005), vividly illustrates how education policy discourse in Vietnam has been affected by the global forces in a unique way.

Without question, “socialization” invariably appears as a “correct” policy in the state-controlled mass media. In a country where freedom of speech has been frequently called into question, most people are constrained to the media’s rhetoric of the promotion of democratic participation of all social strata in developing a quality education. London (2012) critically spoke to the effect of formalistic conceptualization of “socialization” as the greatest obstacle to constructive criticism (p. 13). In addition, the lack of independent research by domestic researchers, both in terms of policy efficiency and policy impacts, seems to amplify the romanticized acknowledgement of the policy’s achievements.

As a consequence, most evaluation of the “socialization” policy is often found available in government and school reports. Official evaluations tend to have disproportionately focused on the policy’s merits, while only nominally acknowledging or superficially discussing the limitations of “socialization”. In most cases, analyses of “socialization” impacts are based on scant empirical evidence and virtually missing from official state evaluations (London, 2012).

In fact, some external evaluations have acknowledged the positive outcomes of the “socialization” policy (e.g. Masato, 2007; Ushioji & Hamono, 2007; Yeow, 2009). These include “significant improvements in construction of school infrastructure, increase in

investment in school building, and rise in financial contributions” (Yeow, 2009, p. 1). Undeniably, such results have contributed to the successful universal primary education in Vietnam with high net enrollment rate of primary school and literacy rate being 99% and 94% respectively (World Bank, 2014). However, most analyses have shown that there exist major limitations and challenges, particularly related to the actual implementation of the “socialization” policy (Masato, 2007; Pham L., 2011; Tran, 2014). In their report to Young Lives, Ta and Duong (2013) stressed the increasing commercialization of education as the result of “socialization”. This is most manifested in the rising and disproportionate proportion of household costs of education services, both in public and private sectors.

The most up-to-date and insightful analysis of “socialization” is an independent report of UNDP written by Jonathan London (2012).<sup>2</sup> It acknowledges that “socialization” has contributed to significantly increased resources for education. In addition to the state budget, education financing now includes tuition fees, revenue service of science and technology, contributions of individuals and organizations (Tran, 2014). Analyzing the mismatch between the policy’s goal and its practices, London (2012) also investigated how “socialization” resulted in changes in the governance of public service delivery units and emerging informal forms of “socialization.” London (2007, 2012) echoed other authors, noting that one of the most common yet problematic forms of “socialization” is the practice of schools collecting various types of fees from families (Terme, 2003; Ushigi & Hamono, 2007). In fact, to many ordinary Vietnamese people, “socialization” simply means various types of payments, including significant expenditures on extra classes (Tran, 2014; Trung, T., 2014). In addition to formal fees, parents often have to pay a sundry of nominally voluntary and even corrupt payments. This informal form of “socialization” becomes the norm and institutionalized to the extent that any family who wants their children to continue schooling must be prepared to pay these taken-for-granted “user fees” or “user taxes.” Such fees—both official and unofficial - often include tuition or FDS fees, fees for textbooks, learning material, uniforms, parents teacher association, exams, and compulsory extra classes. Notably, while primary education is supposed to be free to all Vietnamese people, most of these “contributions” are made mandatory and thus impose a real burden on the poor and disadvantaged (London, 2007, 2012; Ta & Duong, 2014; Tran, 2014).

Alongside certain positive effects including diversification in the modalities of education services, “socialization” has also given rise to the increasing prevalence of private tutoring across Vietnam. As noted widely by researchers (e.g. Bray, 1999, 2002; Silova, Būdiene, & Bray, 2006), private tutoring tends to prosper in such countries in transition to a market economy. In Vietnam, since public service delivery units are encouraged to develop new sources of income (Decree 4, 1999; Decree 10, 2002; Decree 115, 2005; Decree 43, 2006), different educational modes including public, semi-public, people founded and private schools tend to act like enterprises to generate more profits. Education has thus become commercialized and commodified, making the business of shadow education proliferate. As a result, despite the government’s numerous attempts to curb “extra learning and teaching” and illegal schooling fees over the last two decades,<sup>3</sup> private tutoring is still growing in both legal and illicit forms.

2. The latest version is forthcoming in 2014.

3. The earliest regulations issued by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) dating back in 1993 is Inter-ministerial Circular 16 on prohibiting private tutoring in public schools.

In brief, while a popular view associated with “socialization” is that quality improvement simply requires higher funding, it is necessary to examine how the introduction of fees impacts students’ learning outcomes as well as their confidence and interest in schoolwork. The following section will review the literature on household financing of education and private tutoring and their relationship to educational quality in different country contexts, including Vietnam.

### 3. Direct Private Costs and Private Tutoring: Relation to Education Quality

#### 3.1 Direct Private Costs and Education Quality

Tsang (1989) and Tsang & Kidchanapanish (1992) classified the costs of schooling into two groups: public expenditures and private resources. Private resources or private costs of education can fall into three types: direct private costs of schooling, household contributions, and indirect private costs. Direct private costs refer to expenditures by parents on their children's schooling. Some examples of such expenditures include school fees, textbooks, and school supplies. Household contributions, either in cash or in kind, are contributions from families to the school or school personnel. Direct private costs of education are seen as the economic value of the forgone opportunities of schooling such as a child's labor in family production or in doing housework (Tsang, 1989; Tsang & Kidchanapanish, 1992).

Available empirical evidence shows that private costs, as an important element of education finance, constitute a major input to basic education. In a comparative analysis of the costs of primary education in some low income countries, Vietnam was found to have the lowest private costs in terms of per capita income (Mehrotra & DelaMonica, 1998). Meanwhile, Behrman & Knowles (1999) found that total household's school-related expenditures paid directly to schools in Vietnam were more than three times greater in comparison with school fees. According Kattan and Burnett (2004), globally, household expenditures are estimated to constitute approximately 20 percent of total spending on public primary education. Particularly in Africa and former socialist countries, user fees in various forms, including private tutoring costs, account for a very high proportion of total educational expenditure on primary education (Kattan & Burnett, 2004). Data from Vietnam's household surveys and recent studies provide similar evidence. The private cost is growing rapidly and estimated to exceed public spending on both primary and secondary education levels, constituting a vast amount of money invested in education (London, 2011, 2012; Tran, 2014).

The literature on household financing of education also indicates that private costs of education tend to be associated with educational quality. Kattan and Burnett (2004) state that although fees do not, in and of themselves, guarantee quality, they are indeed a "main source of qualitative inputs" (p. 19). In a cross-country regression analysis, Al-Samarrai (2006) acknowledges that education financing in developing countries, where the education systems are severely under-resourced, often results in larger impacts on education outcomes than in developed countries. He further suggests that levels of household spending, among other factors, are key to explaining the weak link between educational access and performance and public education expenditure (Al-Samarrai, 2006). This aligns with the results of some analyses of households' school-related expenditures and student performance in some Asian countries, including China, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, showing a strong positive relationship between these two variables (Tsang, 1989; Tsang & Kidchanapanish, 1992; Glewwe, Chen, & Katare, 2012; Nguon, 2012).



### 3.2 Private Tutoring and Education Quality

As mentioned previously, evidence reveals that “socialization” practices tend to increase the amount of private tutoring. Similar to some other Asian countries, common reasons for private tutoring in Vietnam include educational achievement centering on entrance examinations, scholastic performance being a key to social mobility, and intense competition to succeed in education (Bray, 2006, 2009; Dang, 2011, 2013). Another important reason quite typical to developing countries like Vietnam concerns “half-day” schooling. According to Nguyen and Nguyen (2008), 59 percent of students attended “full-day schooling” (FDS), for most of which families had to pay a substantial cost. In this respect, fee-based FDS in Vietnam tends to act as a system that legitimizes extra classes to become part of public schooling, without which access to the complete mainstream curriculum is far more difficult, both in terms of quality and quantity. Blurring the boundaries between public schooling and private tutoring (Brehm & Silova, 2014), such an educational arrangement has in fact effectively nullified the government’s ban on private tutoring, at least at the primary school level.

Meanwhile, there are inconclusive results regarding the effects of private tutoring on improved academic performance in lower levels of education. In general, London (2012) argued that the excessive spending on extra tutoring finds little positive association with improved learning quality. Using data from the Young Lives survey, Ha and Harpham (2005) found that less than half of 8-year-olds attended extra classes but that the uptake of private tutoring was not associated with better writing and numeracy skills. Le and Bob (2012) reported that though some factors such as parental schooling, ethnicity, and gender influenced children’s test scores, the number of hours children spend in extra classes was not associated with better cognitive test scores. However, Ko and Xing (2009) showed there was an association between taking extra classes and the subjective well-being of children in Vietnam. Additionally, Dang and Rogers (2008) reported some research which found a positive impact of private tutoring on students’ academic performance. In brief, regardless of its perceived and real efficiency, private tutoring has become an important phenomenon prevailing across Vietnam (Dang, 2008, 2011, 2013).

While the relationships between households’ schooling expenses and student academic performance become evident, little attention has been drawn to the impacts of private costs and private tutoring on students’ academic self-concept, an integral component of learning quality. As pointed out by previous research, academic self-concept, known as students’ general perceptions of their academic ability in schooling contexts, plays a key role in students’ personal adjustment and in relation with other desired educational outcomes (Marsh & Hau, 2003; Tan & Yates, 2007). This concept encompasses two subfactors: academic confidence and effort. According to Yorke (2013), “academic confidence assesses students’ feelings and perceptions about their academic competence, while academic effort investigates students’ commitment to and involvement and interest in schoolwork” (p. 3). Given the influence of Confucian heritage culture, which emphasizes “the willingness to work hard and diligence,” academic self-concept is deemed particularly important in Vietnamese students’ schooling experience (London, 2010; Nguyen, 2007, cited in Yorke, 2013, p. 2). It is, therefore, necessary to investigate whether institutionalized forms of “socialization” (such as paying the fees and taking private tutoring) actually improve educational quality and how these practices affect students’ schooling success. While evaluating policy impact and effectiveness goes beyond the scope of this research, an examination of the relationship between

such practices and learning quality is significant in laying the empirical foundation for the subsequent evaluation of “socialization” of education in Vietnam.

This paper seeks a deeper understanding of education “socialization” policy, the broader context within which the policy has been forged and implemented. Also, it aims to investigate how institutionalized practices of “socialization” affect student learning quality. Specifically, the primary purpose of this study is to determine the effects of FDS cost, as a major part of direct private costs, and private tutoring on learning quality, as characterized by student academic achievement and academic self-concept. It is important to note that though we did consider students’ attending FDS in the analysis, this study is primarily concerned with how direct private costs, in which paying for FDS is assumed to constitute a major part, is related to education quality. Drawing on the existing literature, the research is guided by the two major questions:

1. How do fifth grade students supplement their mainstream schooling in terms of direct private costs and private tutoring?
  - What kinds of private direct costs do fifth grade students normally pay for school?
  - Does spending on FDS constitute the largest proportion of direct private costs to school?
  - How prevalent is private tutoring among primary school students?
2. What is the impact of direct private costs and private tutoring on the quality of student learning?
  - Is paying for FDS and private tutoring associated with the difference in students’ academic achievement?
  - Are FDS costs and private tutoring significant predictors of students’ academic confidence?
  - Are FDS costs and private tutoring significantly associated with students’ effort?

## 4. Research Methodology

### 4.1 Data and Sample

The analysis of this study used data from the Young Lives school survey conducted in 2011 and 2012 in five provinces across Vietnam, i.e. Lao Cai, Hung Yen, Da Nang, Phu Yen, and Ben Tre. The provinces were chosen according to the four major criteria that were of interest to Young Lives (Nguyen, 2008): (1) geographical location, representing the regions in the North, Central and South; (2) geographic location, representing urban, rural, and mountainous areas; (3) poverty levels; and (4) some unique factors of the country, such as natural disasters and war consequences. From these five provinces, 30 commune sites were selected following the five principles: «(1) over-poor sampling strategy; (2) represent common provincial/regional features; (3) commitment from the local government for the research; (4) feasibility conditions for the research logistics; (5) population size» (Nguyen, 2008, p. 6).

The survey data made available for this study included data collected through the Round 1 surveys of fifth grade teachers, principals, and students, both in waves 1 and 2. In addition, the study used information from a school survey, an instrument that Young Lives first used in this round to document the effects of poverty on children's educational outcomes. All schools attended by one or more cohorts of Young Lives children in fifth grade were included in the sample. In addition, the school survey collected data on Young Lives peers, adding to the sample 20 randomly chosen pupils per class (Rolleston & Krutikova, 2014). The final sample was composed of 3,284 fifth grade students in 92 schools. However, due to missing data, the final sample for this study included 2,640 children in 87 schools. About 48 percent of the sample were females; 13 percent represented the ethnic minorities. All of the schools in the sample were public.

### 4.2 Data Analysis and Variables

#### Data Analysis and Procedures

The study used Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) to investigate the student-level and school-level effects on student learning quality, conceptualized as academic achievement, academic confidence, and effort. HLM is seen as the most precise statistical technique that estimates the variance when the data are nested. One of the advantages of HLM is that it allows simultaneous estimation of relationships within a particular hierarchical level, as well as relationships between or across hierarchical levels (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). Moreover, HLM can accommodate missing data which is a common issue in educational research. To answer the present study's research questions, we used the HLM 7.01 package software, conducting three two-level HLM analyses, each of which respectively estimated the amount of variance in students' academic achievement, confidence, and effort as explained by student-level and school-level variables. It should be noted at this point that the student version of the software limited the number of variables and the analysis level. This was the reason why we could not include teacher-related factors which would have been added as class-level variables for a three-level analysis to improve the fit of the models.

The study's primary interest concerned the relationships between payments for FDS and private tutoring hours (level-1 predictor variables) and student learning quality, as characterized by academic achievement, confidence, and effort (level-1 outcome variables). In these two-level hierarchical models, separate level-1 models were developed for each level-2 unit. These models are also called within-unit models as they describe the effects in the context of a single group. They take the form of simple regressions developed for each individual  $i$ :

$$DV_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} \cdot X_{ij} + r_{ij}$$

where:

$DV_{ij}$  = dependent variable measured for  $i$ th level-1 unit nested within the  $j$ th level-2 unit,

$X_{ij}$  = value on the level-1 predictor,

$\beta_{0j}$  = intercept for the  $j^{\text{th}}$  level-2 unit,

$\beta_{1j}$  = regression coefficient associated with for the  $j$ th level-2 unit, and

$r_{ij}$  = random error associated with the  $i$ th level-1 unit nested within the  $j$ th level-2 unit.

In the level-2 models, the level-1 regression coefficients ( $\beta_{0j}$  and  $\beta_{1j}$ ) were used as outcome variables and related to each of the level-2 predictors. Level-2 models are also referred to as between-unit models as they describe the variability across multiple groups. For example, in the case of "infrastructure" (*INFRASTR*) as a level-2 predictor, it could be modeled using these equations:

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} \cdot (\text{INFRASTR}_j) + u_{0j}$$

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11} \cdot (\text{INFRASTR}_j) + u_{1j}$$

where:

$\beta_{0j}$  = intercept for the  $j^{\text{th}}$  level-2 unit;

$\beta_{1j}$  = slope for the  $j^{\text{th}}$  level-2 unit;

$\text{INFRASTR}_j$  = value on the level-2 predictor;

$\gamma_{00}$  = overall mean intercept adjusted for *INFRASTR*;

$\gamma_{10}$  = overall mean intercept adjusted for *INFRASTR*;

$\gamma_{01}$  = regression coefficient associated with *INFRASTR* relative to level-1 intercept;

$\gamma_{11}$  = regression coefficient associated with *INFRASTR* relative to level-1 slope;

$u_{0j}$  = random effects of the  $j^{\text{th}}$  level-2 unit adjusted for *INFRASTR* on the intercept;

$u_{1j}$  = random effects of the  $j^{\text{th}}$  level-2 unit adjusted for *INFRASTR* on the slope.

The combined or mixed model incorporates the level-1 and level-2 predictors in this equation:

$$DV_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} \cdot \text{INFRASTR}_j + u_{0j} + (\gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11} \cdot \text{INFRASTR}_j + u_{1j}) \cdot X_{ij} + r_{ij}$$

It is noted that, unique to the HLM model, the error terms  $u_{0j}$  and  $u_{1j}$  allow for the model to estimate error that normal regression cannot. In the above equation, the errors are no longer independent across the level-1 units. The terms  $u_{0j}$  and  $u_{1j}$  demonstrate that there is dependency among the level-1 units nested within each level-2 unit.

Each HLM analysis was performed in two stages. At the first stage, an unconditional (null) model was created with the student-level outcome variable and no predictors, to estimate the overall between-school variance for the outcome measure. At the second stage, all independent variables at the student-level and school-level were added to the unconditional model. A complete two-level model was constructed to determine whether each variable had a significant relative effect on the outcome variables in the presence of other variables. The control variables were entered as fixed effects while the independent variables of interests (paying for FDS and private tutoring hours) were set as random effects for exploratory purposes. The missing data were specified to be deleted when making the HLM model. Except academic achievement that was entered in the analyses as a grand-mean centered predictor, other independent variables at all levels they were entered in the model uncentered because they were dummy coded or had a meaningful zero.

Finally, we also checked HLM assumptions for linearity, normality, and homoscedasticity. The tests and graphs showed no issues with linearity and normality. Tests of homoscedasticity of Level-1 and Level-2 residuals revealed potential problems with homogeneity of variance as numerous graphs revealed strong structure/patterns in residuals. Therefore, the HLM results were consistently reported from the tables of final estimation of fixed effects with robust standard errors to account for this violation. To examine multicollinearity between independent variables, we performed variance inflation factor (VIF). Typically, VIF value of 5 or higher indicates a multicollinearity problem (Studenmund, 2001); however, none of the VIF values were above 2 in this study, suggesting no multicollinearity associated with the independent variables.

## Variables

### *Outcome variables*

There are three outcome variables in this study, representing student learning quality (Table 1). All outcome variables were obtained from the Child questionnaire wave 2, i.e. at the end of the school year. The first one, **academic achievement**, was measured by averaging scores from the Vietnamese and math tests. The other outcome variables were **academic confidence** and **effort** as two first-order factors under the overarching concept of academic self-concept. They were categorized and computed following Yorke's (2013) validation which used factor and Rasch analyses. Some survey questions measuring academic confidence included: "Most of my classmates are smarter than I am," "I often forget what I have learnt," "I am always waiting for the lessons to end". Sample questions on student effort are: "If I work hard I think I can go to the college or university," "I am usually interested in my schoolwork" (see Appendix, Factor Analysis Table). After converting scores for the negatively worded questions, the scores were recoded with a meaningful zero; higher score indicated higher level of confidence or effort.

### *Independent variables*

Two research independent variables at the student level taken from the Child questionnaire were "paying for FDS" and "private tutoring" (Table 1). Given that the related data from the principals and head teachers' surveys might have been utilized, we decided to rely on students' self-reported answers. This was because there were many

missing values in FDS costs reported by school principals and evidence of discrepancies among the three sources of information on the payment of FDS and private tutoring (Rolleston et al., 2013). In addition, since these independent variables were being set as level-1 variables for the HLM analysis, individual data at the student level was preferred to collective data reported by teachers.

**Paying for FDS** was coded as a dummy variable. As further mentioned in the Limitations section, this information taken from the Child questionnaire only indicated whether students' families had to pay for FDS, the study could not explore the variance in FDS costs (as well as other types of fees) in relation to students' learning quality as with a continuous variable.

**Private tutoring (extra classes)** was measured as a continuous variable by summing the number of hours per week students spent for taking extra classes of math and Vietnamese.

### **Control variables**

Control variables included in all analyses were "school infrastructure," "student socioeconomic status" (SES), "student gender," and "ethnicity" (Table 1). Such variables as "student gender," "ethnicity," and "attending FDS" were dummy coded.

**Infrastructure** measure contained information about schools' infrastructure, including the existence and availability of libraries, computers, Internet, electricity, and toilets. These five variables were summed into one continuous variable with 0 indicating schools with no/minimum infrastructure and the higher numbers were indicative of schools with more advanced infrastructure. This was the only school-level variable used in all analyses of the current study.

**SES** variable was developed as a sum of some items students might have at home i.e. air conditioning, computer, Internet, and car, which were seen as the relative indicators of higher SES in the context of Vietnam. On this scale, those who got 0 on all three measures were considered from low SES; those who scored 1–3 were considered from higher SES.

In addition to the above mentioned controls, "participation" was added to the first analysis (with academic achievement as the outcome variable). For analyses 2 and 3 (with outcome variables being academic confidence and effort), other additional control variables were "motivation to succeed at school" and "academic achievement."

Table 1 below provides the descriptive statistics and correlations with outcome variables. As expected, the zero-order correlations between most student-level variables were significantly associated with student academic achievement, confidence, and/or effort. For example, higher level of participation was related to higher academic achievement, confidence, and effort. Being an ethnic (non-Kinh) student was found to have negative correlation with academic achievement, confidence, and effort. Higher levels of confidence and effort were found for students who paid for FDS. Similarly, private tutoring was significantly and positively related to all components of learning quality.

**Table 1**—Descriptive statistics and correlations with outcome variables

Variable	M	SD	Academic achievement	Academic confidence	Effort
<b>Learning quality (Outcome variable)</b>					
Academic achievement	6.09	1.62	—	—	—
Academic confidence	2.19	0.43	—	—	—
Effort	2.19	0.37	—	—	—
<b>Student characteristics (Independent variables)</b>					
Participation	2.77	0.72	0.24**	0.22**	0.16**
Gender (0 = male, 1 = female)	0.48	0.50	0.08**	0.10**	0.06**
Ethnicity (0 = Kinh, 1 = ethnic minorities)	0.14	0.34	-0.14**	-0.16**	-0.08**
Attending FDS (0 = no, 1 = yes)	0.59	0.49	-0.08**	0.07**	-0.001
Paying for FDS (0 = no/don't know/not attend, 1 = yes)	0.30	0.46	-0.03	0.05**	0.06**
SES	0.63	1.09	0.26**	0.06**	0.12**
Motivation	2.61	0.74	0.33**	0.29**	0.19**
Private tutoring (in math and Vietnamese)	2.55	4.19	0.10**	0.69**	0.08**
<b>School characteristics (Independent variable)</b>					
Infrastructure	2.85	1.44	—	—	—

Note: N = 2640 students, N = 87 school sites

\*\* p < 0.01

**Limitations**

There are some methodological caveats that pertain to the data and the choice of measures. First, Young Lives school survey data round 1 (2011–2012) is not considered representative of the Vietnamese population as a whole. This was acknowledged by Nguyen (2008) that Young Lives sample was drawn from five areas, most of which were perceived as poor, not diverse, and did not entirely reflect national socioeconomic differences. Second, data available for this study contained a great number of missing values, particularly those related to school fees and extra charges reported by principals. This further consolidates the fact that the actual figures of fees are far from what is recorded in official statistics. Thus, instead of having “fees” as a scale representing households’ private direct costs, this study had to use the measure of paying for FDS that was taken from the Children questionnaire, which technically did not enable the researcher to depict a more comprehensive picture of primary education expenditures in Vietnam. However, I was able to make relevant comparisons of the same data reported by principals and teachers, highlighting some areas of inconsistency in their answers pertaining to school fees.

Finally, as mentioned previously, future research should overcome any potential endogenous problems of this research by conducting three-level HLM analysis, including teacher attributes as class-level variables. Also, if data availability permits, future research should consider expanding the construct of student learning quality to a more holistic measure which may include capabilities other than “academic,” such as creativity, critical thinking skills, and participatory citizenship.



## 5. Results

### 5.1 Ways to Supplement Mainstream Schooling

As reported by school principals (N principal = 52, Principal survey), students are expected to pay a great number of schooling fees, at least 14 different types of fees, per school year (Table 2). Except for FDS, all other fees are non-tuition based, ranging widely in both amount and purpose. Among the top fees are fees for extra classes, health insurance, school construction /development fund, uniform, accident insurance, and textbooks. By far the highest fee was paid for school lunch, constituting around US\$278 per school year per student. This may partly explain why only 7 percent of students ate lunch at school while nearly 60 percent attended FDS (N student = 2,640, Child questionnaire).

**Table 2**—Per student fees paid for school (VND/student/school year)

Fees	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
1. Lunch	0	5940.00	2303.00	2413.82
2. FDS	180	2700.00	825.75	871.27
3. Extra classes	0	2700.00	270.00	853.82
4. Health insurance fees	0	219	191.52	47.46
5. School construction/development fund	30	150	78.75	40.64
6. Uniform	0	175	66.06	48.37
7. Accident insurance	0	103	55.00	19.17
8. Textbooks	0	157	53.55	67.58
9. Class fund	0	121	27.97	30.03
10. Pupils' parents' fund	0	80	25.45	19.33
11. "Trai tuyen" (fee for not having correct registration status)	0	85	9.78	29.33
12. School security	0	30	9.64	11.06
13. Extra-curricular activities	0	60	5.67	15.68
14. Exam fees	0	15	4.00	3.71

Note: All fees are expressed in thousands of VND

Less than half of schools (42.3%) with FDS reported offering it at a cost (N principal = 52, Principal survey). This figure was close to what teachers reported while only 27.6% students answered that their families had to pay for FDS. Fees for FDS (highest amount equal to US\$ 126/school year), for which some disadvantaged households were supposed to be exempt, practically imposed a burden on most low-income rural families (Ushigi



& Hamono, 2007). Moreover, a significant amount paid for extra classes at school, often not accurately reported by the school, was among one of the major education costs. In addition to other official fees such as fees for health insurance, uniforms, and textbooks, many unofficial or nominally voluntary fees were on the list that families were rarely exempt.

In terms of supplementary private tutoring, most principals (96.2%) reported that their schools did not provide additional classes. Whereas, nearly 40 percent of surveyed students reported attending non-compulsory extra classes, either at school or outside. On average, students spent around three (3) hours per week taking private tutoring in all subjects, including math and Vietnamese. This figure reveals that private tutoring among primary school students is still common, even in many rural, remote areas of Vietnam, despite the government’s increasingly strict control of tutoring over the past years.

## 5.2 Impact on the Quality of Student Learning

To examine the impact of payment for FDS and private tutoring on the quality of student learning, we performed three HLM analyses. The first analysis was with **academic achievement** being designated as the outcome variable. The test of the unconditional model revealed that a significant proportion of the variance in academic achievement (ICC = 33%,  $p < 0.001$ ; Table 3) occurred at the school level. This finding indicates that hierarchical modeling is appropriate and more than one-third of variance occurred at the school level.

**Table 3**—Unconditional models for student learning quality

Unconditional model statistics			
Statistic	Academic achievement	Academic confidence	Effort
Coefficient (Intercept)	5.82	2.18	2.18
$\tau_{00}$	0.85**	0.02**	0.02**
$\sigma^2$	1.77	0.17	0.12
Reliability	0.89	0.74	0.78
ICC	0.33	0.13	0.15

Note: \*\*  $p < 0.001$

The Level-1 model was built with six control variables (student participation, gender, ethnicity, going to FDS, and SES) and two independent variables (paying for FDS and number of hours spent on private tutoring per week). The models were estimated as follows:

### Level-1 Model

$$Achievement_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} \cdot (PARTICIP_{ij}) + \beta_{2j} \cdot (GENDER_{ij}) + \beta_{3j} \cdot (ETHNICITY_{ij}) + \beta_{4j} \cdot (FULLDAY_{ij}) + \beta_{5j} \cdot (PAYFULLDAY_{ij}) + \beta_{6j} \cdot (SES_{ij}) + \beta_{7j} \cdot (PRIVATE_{ij}) + r_{ij}$$

### Level-2 Model

$$\begin{aligned}\beta_{0j} &= \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} \cdot (\text{INFRASTR}_j) + u_{0j} \\ \beta_{1j} &= \gamma_{10} \\ \beta_{2j} &= \gamma_{20} \\ \beta_{3j} &= \gamma_{30} \\ \beta_{4j} &= \gamma_{40} \\ \beta_{5j} &= \gamma_{50} + u_{5j} \\ \beta_{6j} &= \gamma_{60} \\ \beta_{7j} &= \gamma_{70} + u_{7j}\end{aligned}$$

### Mixed Model

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Achievement}_{ij} &= \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} \cdot \text{INFRASTR}_j + \gamma_{10} \cdot \text{PARTICIP}_{ij} + \gamma_{20} \cdot \text{GENDER}_{ij} + \gamma_{30} \\ &\cdot \text{ETHNICITY}_{ij} + \gamma_{40} \cdot \text{FULLDAY}_{ij} + \gamma_{50} \cdot \text{PAYFULLDAY}_{ij} + \gamma_{60} \cdot \text{SES}_{ij} + \gamma_{70} \cdot \text{PRIVATE}_{ij} + u_{0j} \\ &+ u_{5j} \cdot \text{PAYFULLDAY}_{ij} + u_{7j} \cdot \text{PRIVATE}_{ij} + r_{ij}\end{aligned}$$

Overall, the Level-1 model with all level-1 predictors accounted for about 12 percent of the variance in student academic achievement while 16 percent of the variance in student academic achievement was explained by the Level-2 model with an additional school-level variable. The results showed that school infrastructure was not a significant predictor of the intercept of academic achievement ( $p = 0.104$ ; Table 4) and there was still a significant amount of variance in academic achievement left unexplained at both levels.

The results in Table 4 also showed that holding other predictors constant, paying for FDS was not significantly associated with academic achievement ( $\gamma_{50} = 0.01, p = 0.096$ ). Also, the relationship between the number of private tutoring hours and student achievement was not significant ( $p = 0.534$ ). However, this relationship was significantly affected by school variability when private tutoring was set as a random effect.

Surprisingly, attending FDS was not found to be significantly related to student performance in math and Vietnamese ( $p = 0.223$ ). In contrast, participation was positively related to academic achievement ( $\gamma_{10} = 0.429, p < 0.001$ ), which means the students who had high levels of participation performed significantly better in math and Vietnamese. Meanwhile, the positive correlation between student SES and achievement ( $\gamma_{30} = 0.11, p < 0.001$ ) suggested that ethnic students were lower performing than Kinh students after controlling for other factors.

We ran the second HLM analysis with **academic confidence** being designated as the outcome variable. The test of the unconditional model revealed that a significant proportion of the variance in academic achievement ( $\text{ICC} = 13\%, p < 0.001$ ; Table 3) occurred at the school level. This finding indicates that hierarchical modeling is appropriate; however, it also means most of the variance in academic confidence is within schools (87%) rather than between schools (13%).

**Table 4**—*Between School Model of Academic Achievement*

Academic achievement			
Fixed effects	Coefficient	SE	
Intercept			
Intercept	4.43**	0.33	
Infrastructure			
Intercept	0.12	0.07	
Participation			
Intercept	0.43**	0.06	
Gender			
Intercept	0.11	0.07	
Ethnicity			
Intercept	-0.47*	0.14	
Attending full-day			
Intercept	-0.23	0.18	
Paying full-day			
Intercept	0.01	0.12	
SES			
Intercept	0.11**	0.03	
Private tutoring			
Intercept	0.01	0.02	
Random effects	Variance component	df	$\chi^2$
Intercept ( $\tau_{00}$ )	0.72	26	240.30**
Paying full-day	0.43	27	43.22*
Private tutoring	0.01	27	157.93**
Level 1 $\sigma^2$ remaining	1.66		

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.001$

The Level-1 model was built with six control variables (student motivation, gender, ethnicity, going to FDS, academic achievement, and SES) and two independent variables (paying for FDS and number of hours spent on private tutoring per week). The general models were:

**Level-1 Model**

$$Confidence_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} \cdot (MOTIVATION_{ij}) + \beta_{2j} \cdot (GENDER_{ij}) + \beta_{3j} \cdot (ETHNICITY_{ij}) + \beta_{4j} \cdot (FULLDAY_{ij}) + \beta_{5j} \cdot (PAYFULLDAY_{ij}) + \beta_{6j} \cdot (AP\_WAVE2_{ij}) + \beta_{7j} \cdot (SES_{ij}) + \beta_{8j} \cdot (PRIVATE_{ij}) + r_{ij}$$



**Level-2 Model**

$$\begin{aligned} \beta_{0j} &= \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} \cdot (\text{INFRASTR}_j) + u_{0j} \\ \beta_{1j} &= \gamma_{10} \\ \beta_{2j} &= \gamma_{20} \\ \beta_{3j} &= \gamma_{30} \\ \beta_{4j} &= \gamma_{40} \\ \beta_{5j} &= \gamma_{50} + u_{5j} \\ \beta_{6j} &= \gamma_{60} \\ \beta_{7j} &= \gamma_{70} \\ \beta_{8j} &= \gamma_{80} + u_{8j} \end{aligned}$$

**Mixed Model**

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Confidence}_{ij} &= \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} \cdot \text{INFRASTR}_j + \gamma_{10} \cdot \text{MOTIVATION}_{ij} + \gamma_{20} \cdot \text{GENDER}_{ij} + \\ &\gamma_{30} \cdot \text{ETHNICITY}_{ij} + \gamma_{40} \cdot \text{FULLDAY}_{ij} + \gamma_{50} \cdot \text{PAYFULLDAY}_{ij} + \gamma_{60} \cdot \text{AP\_WAVE2}_{ij} + \gamma_{70} \cdot \text{SES}_{ij} \\ &+ \gamma_{80} \cdot \text{PRIVATE}_{ij} + u_{0j} + u_{4j} \cdot \text{PAYFULLDAY}_{ij} + u_{7j} \cdot \text{PRIVATE}_{ij} + r_{ij} \end{aligned}$$

Overall, the Level-1 model with all level-1 predictors accounted for about 11 percent of the variance in student academic confidence. The Level-2 model explained 35 percent of the variance in student confidence.

**Table 5**—Between school model of academic confidence

Academic confidence		
Fixed effects	Coefficient	SE
Intercept		
Intercept	1.84**	0.05
Infrastructure		
Intercept	-0.01	0.01
Motivation		
Intercept	0.13**	0.01
Gender		
Intercept	0.03	0.01
Ethnicity		
Intercept	-0.11*	0.04
Attending full-day		
Intercept	0.04	0.03
Paying full-day		
Intercept	0.04	0.03
Academic achievement		
Intercept	0.05**	0.01



Academic confidence			
Fixed effects	Coefficient		SE
SES			
Intercept	0.002		0.01
Private tutoring			
Intercept	0.004		0.003
Random effects	Variance component	df	X <sup>2</sup>
Intercept ( $\tau_{00}$ )	0.02	26	50.55*
Paying full-day	0.01**	27	58.55*
Private tutoring	0.0001	27	28.87
Level 1 $\sigma^2$ remaining	0.15		

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.001$

As can be seen in Table 5, both paying for FDS and private tutoring were not significantly associated with academic confidence ( $p = 0.14$  and  $p = 0.166$  respectively) after controlling for other predictors. However, it was found that the effects of paying for FDS as random factor on confidence varied significantly by school ( $p < 0.001$ ). This suggests a promising area for future research as it is currently unknown which school related factors can reinforce or suppress the effects of paying for FDS on student confidence.

The analysis also showed that academic achievement was a significant predictor of student confidence ( $\gamma_{60} = 0.05, p < 0.001$ ); which means students with better performance would feel significantly more confident in learning. In addition, student motivation was positively correlated with confidence level ( $\gamma_{10} = 0.13, p < 0.001$ ), indicating that accounting for other predictors, a one unit increase in the level of motivation would lead to a 0.13 increase in the predicted level of student confidence. Taken together with the previous analysis' finding, the results related to ethnicity showed that students of ethnic minority groups had both lower academic performance ( $\gamma_{30} = -0.47, p = 0.002$ ; Table 4) and lower level of confidence than Kinh students ( $\gamma_{30} = -0.11, p = 0.002$ ; Table 5).

Finally, we performed the third HLM analysis with **effort** being designated as the outcome variable. The test of the unconditional model showed that a significant proportion of the variance in academic achievement (ICC = 15%,  $p < 0.001$ ; Table 3) occurred at the school level. This finding means that hierarchical modeling is appropriate and only 15% of variance in student effort is between schools.

For the Level-1 model, there were six control variables (student motivation, gender, ethnicity, going to FDS, academic achievement, and SES) and two independent variables (paying for FDS and number of hours spent on private tutoring per week). The general equations for this model are as follows:

### Level-1 Model

$$Effort_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} \cdot (MOTIVATION_{ij}) + \beta_{2j} \cdot (GENDER_{ij}) + \beta_{3j} \cdot (ETHNICITY_{ij}) + \beta_{4j} \cdot (FULLDAY_{ij}) + \beta_{5j} \cdot (PAYFULLDAY_{ij}) + \beta_{6j} \cdot (AP\_WAVE2_{ij}) + \beta_{7j} \cdot (SES_{ij}) + \beta_{8j} \cdot (PRIVATE_{ij}) + r_{ij}$$

**Level-2 Model**

$$\begin{aligned} \beta_{0j} &= \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} * (INFRASTR_j) + u_{0j} \\ \beta_{1j} &= \gamma_{10} \\ \beta_{2j} &= \gamma_{20} \\ \beta_{3j} &= \gamma_{30} \\ \beta_{4j} &= \gamma_{40} \\ \beta_{5j} &= \gamma_{50} + u_{5j} \\ \beta_{6j} &= \gamma_{60} \\ \beta_{7j} &= \gamma_{70} \\ \beta_{8j} &= \gamma_{80} + u_{8j} \end{aligned}$$

**Mixed Model**

$$\begin{aligned} Effort_{ij} &= \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} \cdot INFRASTR_j + \gamma_{10} \cdot MOTIVATION_{ij} + \gamma_{20} \cdot GENDER_{ij} + \gamma_{30} \cdot ETHNICITY_{ij} \\ &+ \gamma_{40} \cdot FULLDAY_{ij} + \gamma_{50} \cdot PAYFULLDAY_{ij} + \gamma_{60} \cdot AP\_WAVE2_{ij} + \gamma_{70} * SES_{ij} + \gamma_{80} \cdot PRIVATE_{ij} \\ &+ u_{0j} + u_{4j} \cdot PAYFULLDAY_{ij} + u_{7j} \cdot PRIVATE_{ij} + r_{ij} \end{aligned}$$

The results in Table 6 reveal that holding other predictors constant, paying for FDS was positively associated with student effort ( $\gamma_{50} = 0.06, p < 0.001$ ); though as with other two previous analyses, both attending FDS and private tutoring were not significant predictors of effort ( $p = 0.65$  and  $p = 0.31$  respectively).

**Table 6**—Between school model of effort

Effort		
Fixed effects	Coefficient	SE
Intercept		
Intercept	2.00**	0.06
Infrastructure		
Intercept	-0.001	0.01
Motivation		
Intercept	0.07**	0.01
Gender		
Intercept	0.01	0.01
Ethnicity		
Intercept	-0.03	0.03
Attending full-day		
Intercept	-0.01	0.03
Paying full-day		
Intercept	0.06**	0.02
Academic achievement		
Intercept	0.02**	0.01

Effort			
Fixed effects	Coefficient		SE
SES			
Intercept	0.004**		0.01
Private tutoring			
Intercept	0.002		0.002
Random effects	Variance component	df	$\chi^2$
Intercept ( $\tau_{00}$ )	0.03	26	86.38*
Paying full-day	0.002	27	31.90
Private tutoring	0.0001	27	27.97
Level 1 $\sigma^2$ remaining	0.12		

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.001$

Meanwhile, student motivation and academic achievement were positively correlated with effort ( $\gamma_{10} = 0.07, p < 0.001$  and  $\gamma_{60} = 0.02, p < 0.001$  respectively), which means that the more motivated and better performing the student was, the more effort she made in her study. The results related to student SES from this and the previous analysis showed that students of lower SES had lower academic performance ( $\gamma_{30} = 0.11, p < 0.001$ ; Table 4) and lower level of effort than Kinh students ( $\gamma_{70} = 0.04, p < 0.001$ ; Table 6).

Finally, examining paying for FDS and private tutoring as random factors, we found that the relationships between these measures with student effort were not affected by school variability.

## 6. Discussion and Policy Implications

This research confirms what some recent studies found with respect to the growing number of fees paid by Vietnamese school students for school annually (Ta & Duong, 2013; London, 2012; Tran, 2014). Among the fees reported by schools, the FDS cost was among the highest charges. Though paying for FDS had a positive effect on student effort, the findings show no significant association between such payment and student academic performance and confidence. Overall, the results imply that family direct private costs do not necessarily translate into better learning outcomes. These findings support other researchers' conclusions that the existence of fees does not guarantee improvement in education quality (Kattan & Burnett, 2004) and that "increasing resources alone is unlikely to be sufficient" (Al-Samarrai, 2006, p. 179). This makes even more sense when education budgets are not used strategically or spent efficiently. As other studies indicate, the levels of public spending on education in Vietnam have been increasingly in line with other countries in the region, both in absolute terms and as a share of GDP (Ushioji & Hamono, 2007; London, 2012). At the same time, a substantial amount of resources has been channeled from the non-state sector, including household contributions. This certainly raises a critical question concerning the efficiency of spending and management of education resources at both the school and higher levels. When schools collect fees, they generally do not make it explicit whether these fees are official or informal and how they are spent. It is thus crucial to make school payments as transparent as possible to avoid the possibility of many informal payments contributing to corruption. In this respect, enhancing accountability of schools and local authorities with regard to transparent and efficient use of education resources is extremely important. Also, when parents are able to be involved in the process of deciding and monitoring how budgets are used in schools, they can make better sense of the extent to which their contributions have an effect on their children's learning quality. Therefore, "socialization" practices that emphasize citizens' democratic participation and actually include parents' voices should be advocated for and actively promoted.

Also concerning parental participation, the insignificant relation between students' learning quality and payments for FDS, attendance of FDS, and even private tutoring all indicate the importance of nonfinancial parental involvement in students' study. Thus, rather than holding to the general common reason of "improving the quality of teaching and learning" for collecting fees, many of which are in the name of "school construction or development," schools should optimize various opportunities for parents to be engaged in helping their children become good learners. As Coleman (1988) pointed out, unless there is an active relationship between home, school, and community, parents' economic and cultural capital will not automatically transfer to children's success. Without parents' awareness of the role of their participation, they tend to consider the amount of money they pay for school (and teachers) as a form of "user fees," in exchange for the education their children receive. Understandably, they tend to expect to have the best "return" on such investment. It is this form of "socialization" that spurs the commodification of education and has been much criticized for its narrow focus on academic achievement.

The findings related to private tutoring show that this practice continues to be widespread even in the poor, disadvantaged regions under study. Paradoxically, little has been revealed concerning the distinction between fee-based FDS versus non-compulsory extra classes



which occur at school. Nonetheless, it is interesting to find that the number of private tutoring hours, whether inside or outside school, was not statistically related to student learning quality, in terms of academic performance, competence, and commitment to schoolwork. This result corresponds to previous studies which documented weak or little impact of private tutoring on primary school students' academic achievement (Ha & Harpham, 2005; Dang, 2007; Le & Bob, 2012). Again, it is evident that the desire for academic improvement, regardless of its real or perceived effects, is among the driving factors for the popularity of private tutoring in Vietnam. Given the sizable proportion of family spending on extra classes, which arguably contributes to student overall learning quality, the government should take more effective measures to regulate private tutoring, particularly at the primary education level. In addition, it is important to incorporate comprehensive reforms in both formal and non-formal education provision, the examination systems, and teachers' professional conditions and development.

What is more important, existing evidence reveals concerns about social equity issues. Since the actual direct private costs are likely to exceed the official statistics, they undoubtedly occupy a substantial amount of households' expenditures, up to 14.5 percent of the total household income as reported by the IRC study (London, 2012). Meanwhile, similar to other developing countries, in many rural poor areas of Vietnam, children's labor is much more valuable than school attendance (Bray, 1996b, 2002; Kattan & Burnett, 2004). The burden of schooling costs, including the opportunity costs in this case, makes it much harder for those children, particularly girls, to regularly attend and complete basic education. In addition, preferential measures such as "pro-poor" policies have proved limited success, largely due to the nullified effects resulting from rising school fees that schools levy (e.g. Ushiogi & Hamono, 2007; Trung, T., 2014). Consequently, as pointed out by the findings of the current study and other research, children from lower socio-economic background are found to have poorer academic outcomes, lower-quality schooling, and are faced with more pressure to drop out of school (Dang, 2007; Le et al., 2008; Carr-Hill, 2011; Rolleston & Krutikova, 2014). Without effective state regulatory capacities, many "socialization" practices have contributed to further marginalization of disadvantaged children due to the widening wealth-based disparities.

Above all, as discussed in other research, private financing of primary education in any form tends to lead to the obstruction of the goal of free, compulsory, and universal basic education that is called for by the United Nations.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the vast majority of countries in the world, including Vietnam, adopted the Education For All initiative and have made much progress toward this goal. Like some other developing countries, Vietnam has been working actively to gradually eliminate primary school user fees as well as to offset them for the disadvantaged (Terme, 2003; Kattan & Burnett, 2004; Carr-Hill, 2011). Nevertheless, there remain substantial challenges to overcoming the limitations and adverse effects of the "socialization" policy in order to achieve quality and equity of Vietnam's education system.

4. For example, the 1948 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights; The 1959 Declaration on the Rights of the Child; the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child; the United Nations Education Millennium Development Goals; the UNESCO Education For All initiative.

## 7. Conclusion

Overall, this study found that supplementing mainstream schooling with extra user fees and extra classes has become inevitable for primary education students in Vietnam. There were at least 14 kinds of fees, as reported by school principals, that a fifth grade student had to pay for school per school year. Except fees for FDS, which constituted a large proportion of direct private costs, all other fees were non-tuition with lunch fees found to be the highest expense. While only a fraction of students had lunch at school, many of the surveyed students attended fee-based FDS, making the overall schooling cost a burden on families, particularly poor and disadvantaged ones.

The findings show that spending on FDS was not associated with the difference in fifth grade students' academic achievement and confidence, but it had a positive relation with students' effort. Surprisingly, attending FDS was not found to be statistically related to student learning quality. This particular result conflicts with what previous studies identified concerning the positive relationship between the provision of FDS and student learning outcomes (e.g. see Rolleston et al., 2013). Given that the movement toward FDS is integral to improving education quality, we tend to agree with the authors of the earlier report on the Young Lives survey Round 2, 2011-2012 that there is a need to understand how FDS is interpreted and implemented at the school level (Rolleston et al., 2013). This line of inquiry is desirable as it would bring to light the distinction between fee-based FDS versus (compulsory) extra classes within public school and the efficiency of FDS intervention.

Additionally, it was found that the number of private tutoring hours was not a significant predictor of student learning quality. However, attending at extra classes continued to be commonplace at the primary education level even in the rural, remote areas. Whether private tutoring happens at school site with the same school teacher or occurs elsewhere on a voluntary basis, evidence indicates that it puts lower-income and vulnerable groups at a disadvantage and in this way, further perpetuating educational inequalities.

In summary, this study has investigated the effects of institutionalized forms of "socialization" on primary school student learning quality. It pointed out that the adoption of "socialization" policies is inevitable in the context of Vietnam's education policy being under the growing influence of the neoliberalism globalization. While the formal goal and implementation of "socialization" policies have indeed had beneficial impacts, certain associated practices become entrenched as the result of mismanagement and weak accountability. In this regard, "socialization," of which institutionalized practices and unintended effects have not received adequate critical examination, creates a space for ineffective privatization of education that has important implications for social equity. Reforming "socialization" thus definitely requires long-term commitment and concerted efforts from all policy actors, including citizens, the state, and international community.

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### Policy Documents

- Resolution 90/CP on direction of and policy on education, health, culture socialization. August 21, 1997. Hanoi.
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- Decree 59/2014/NĐ-CP amending Decree 69/2008/N-D-CP on encouraging socialization of education, health, culture and sports. June 16, 2014. Hanoi.
- Decision 82/2006/QĐ-TTg on adjustments of scholarships from social policies and assistance to ethnic minority pupils and students in public schools. April 14, 2006. Hanoi.

## Appendix

**Table A.1**—Yorke’s factor analysis table (2013)

Factor One: Academic confidence

Factor Two: Effort

	Factor One		Factor Two
2	I day dream a lot in class. (R)	1	I can follow the lessons easily.
7	Most of my classmates are smarter than I am. (R)	3	I am able to help my classmates with their schoolwork if permitted.
9	My teachers feel that I am poor in my work. (R)	5	If I work hard I think I can go to the college or university.
11	I often forget what I have learnt. (R)	6	I pay attention to the teachers during lessons.
13	I get frightened when I am asked a question by the teachers. (R)	8	I study hard for my tests.
14	I often feel like quitting school. (R)	10	I am usually interested in my schoolwork.
16	I am always waiting for the lessons to end. (R)	12	I am willing to do my best to pass all the subjects.
17	I always do poorly in tests. (R)	15	I am good in most of my school subjects.
20	I am not willing to put in more effort in my schoolwork. (R)	19	I am able to do better than my friends in most subjects.

Note: R = items that were reversed scored











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