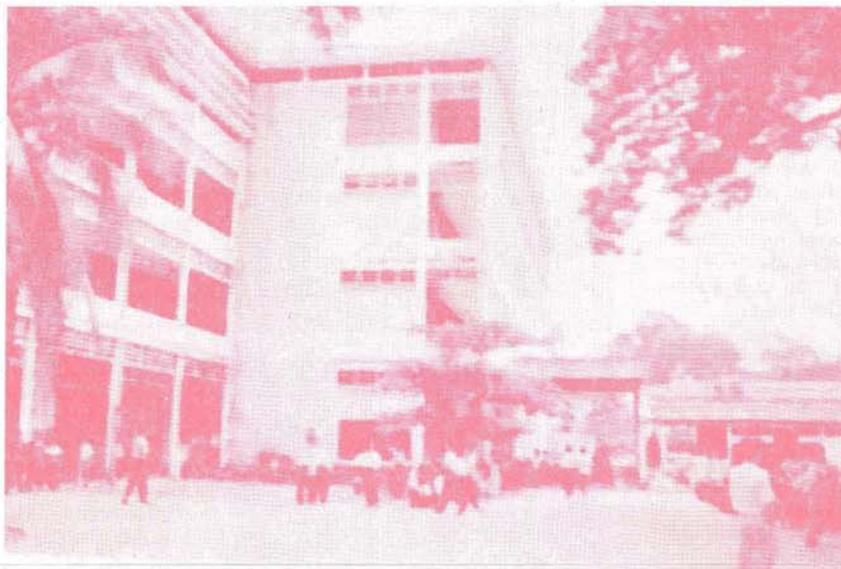


TUITION AND SOCIAL EQUITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Our country has not yet had a free higher education and may take a long time to obtain it. The Government funds public schools but their financial requirements are also offset by students' tuition. Students in public schools pay a

7.1% enjoying 50% reduction and 3.6% free from tuition payment.

As such, has our policy been able to fill all these gaps in this field? Let's see the following table:

We can draw some remarks from Table 1:

smallest group (group 1) to the largest one (group 5), then the difference will be more than 200 percent: 4.9 against 10.5. The smaller expenditure group will have fewer schooling years.

4. The area with more de-

Table 1: Ratio of students

	City	Rural areas	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Southeastern provinces	The Mekong Delta
Schooling years of ages from 18 to 24	9.8	7.2	4.9	6.6	7.2	8.5	10.5	8.5	6.3
Percentage of students aged from 18-24 having schooling years in line with their ages	21.25	5.38	0.46	0.76	3.41	7.9	28.13	13.95	5.51

Source: Survey on Vietnamese Living Standard, Thống Kê Publisher, Hà Nội 2000.

tuition of VND2 million per year. There are cases of exemption and 50% reduction due to students' family status, for example, gratitude policy or very poor ones. A survey on Vietnamese living standard conducted by the General Department of Statistics in 1997-1998 with technical assistance of UNDP and Sweden International Development Agency shows 89.3% of students paying full tuition;

1. In the schooling age, the average schooling years of rural youth are strikingly lower than those of urban youth: $9.8 - 7.2 = 2.6$

2. There is a large difference in the percentage of students having schooling years in line with their ages, the urban students' figure is fourfold that of rural ones.

3. If examining schooling years of expenditure cohort, from the

developed economy has higher educational attainment: The southeastern provinces with per capita GDP of US\$3,809 (PPP) has average schooling years much higher than those of the Mekong Delta with per capita GDP of US\$1,496 (8.5 against 6.3). The number of university students per 100,000 residents of these two areas also reflects clearly this disparity: 210 against 86.

As a result, the living standard strongly and directly affects the attending or dropping out of young people aged from 18 to 24. This is quite different from ages from 6 to 11, even 15 when the universalization of primary and junior secondary education has recorded significant achievements across the country.

We will analyze relations between per capita income with university costs based on income cohorts, expenditure cohorts, and areas as follows:

than the income of Group 5* (VND7,905,000). In urban areas, this disparity is wider: the income of a person in Group 5* is higher than the total income of 5 persons: one in each Group 1*, 3*, 4* and two in Group 2*!

2. The income gap between urban and rural residents is nearly threefold: VND7,105,000 against 2,409,000.

3. A student of the lowest expenditure group has to spend an annual learning cost which is double the income of a person in the lowest

students of the highest income group spend one-third of their per capita income on annual university cost.

4. Rural students suffer higher costs than urban ones (VND3,871,000 against VND3,360,000). The reason is that rural students have to pay accommodation cost and higher meal costs.

5. An urban student of the group with yearly per capita income of VND7,105,000 spends VND3,360,000, or 47.35% of income while a rural student with yearly per

Table 2: Annual per capita income and university learning costs (vnd1,000)

	The country	Urban area	Rural area	Central coastal provinces	Central Highlands	Southeastern provinces	Mekong Delta
Income in 1997-1998	3,073	7,105	2,409	2,577	2,535	6,017	2,834
Income of Group 1*	755	855	754	814	658	561	692
Income of Group 2*	1,416	1,465	1,414	1,414	1,431	1,431	1,433
Income of Group 3*	2,094	2,160	2,090	2,111	2,050	2,134	2,078
Income of Group 4*	3,194	3,294	3,176	3,141	3,199	3,311	3,206
Income of Group 5*	7,905	9,509	6,553	6,370	7,244	9,261	6,685
Expenditure of students in Group 1	1,500						
Expenditure of students in Group 5	3,805.1						
Average expenditure	3,543	3,360	3,871.6	3,474.2	6,916.6	3,999.1	4,225.1

Source: 2001 Report on Vietnamese Human Development, Chính Trị Quốc Gia Publisher, Hà Nội 2001, p.119.

We can have some following conclusions from Table 2:

1. There is a rather large difference in average income between the Group 5* with the rest: the total income of four persons of four groups (VND7,459,000) is still lower

income group. Therefore, if students of the lowest income group attend university courses, they are forced to borrow or sell their assets to cover the learning cost. It is the case for persons of the income group 2* but it is not fierce. At the same time, stu-

capita income of VND2,409,000 equivalent to...160.7% of income! The figures of students in the southeastern provinces and the Mekong Delta are 6,107,000 - 3,999.1 - 66.5% and 2,834,000 - 4,225.1 - 149.1% respectively.

This above analysis shows a paradox: a poorer person must spend higher costs to learn in universities in terms of absolute amount and percentage as compared to income.

Is there any solution to this problem? The Government is certainly required to make favorable conditions for generating jobs and income for poor areas and people. The system of public universities should be expanded and students offered loans when studying. The current tuition model should be adjusted. But how is it redesigned? It is suggested that schools should increase general tuition so that they can reduce tuition for poor students. The detailed answers will belong to economists, policymakers and public administrators. ■

