

ACTUAL CONDITIONS AND CHALLENGES OF EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR AN ETHNIC MINORITY IN A RURAL AREA, CENTRAL VIETNAM

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Keywords: Ethnic minority, Cờ Tu, Education, Net Enrolment Rate, Employment, Agriculture and Forestry

1. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

In recent years, Vietnam has significantly improved its rate of school attendance. The net enrolment rate for higher secondary school increased especially between from 28.6% in 1998 to 70.7% in 2013. The rates among ethnic minorities are also improving though they are lower than the rates of *Kinh* majority. However, non-agricultural job opportunities for ethnic minority groups are quite limited so they still mainly work for agriculture and forestry, and moreover almost half of them live below the poverty line.

The objectives of this study are to clarify changes in educational attitude of an ethnic minority through spread of education and to reveal the difficulty of getting job especially for them.

2. STUDY AREA AND METHODOLOGY

Doi hamlet, Thuong Lo commune, Nam Dong district, Thua Thien – Hue Province was chosen as the study site. *Cờ Tu* people, one of the ethnic minorities living in mountainous areas of central Vietnam, make their lives in Doi hamlet. This study conducted participant observations, semi-structural interviews to villagers and teachers, and questionnaire survey at high school from September to October, 2014 and from August to September, 2015. First survey was conducted to understand the actual conditions of education and employment, and second survey was conducted to detect their attitudes to them.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Doi hamlet, it was clarified that the net enrolment rate had been improving. The rate in primary school achieved 100 %, and more than 30% villagers recently graduated from high school. However, many young villagers work in agriculture and forestry against their wills, even if they graduated from high school. In regards to villagers who did not graduate from high school, almost all of them work in agriculture and forestry. Villagers were seeking “getting knowledge” and “increasing the possibility to get good job and better life” through education. They expect that education contribute to not only current life but also future. Furthermore, attending to education as high as possible is becoming ordinary between them.

Ethnic minority students recognize that some factors of family or social make getting job difficult, while teachers regard the problems as individual factors of ethnic minority students. This gap of recognition would make finding job for ethnic minority people more difficult. Regarding to villagers, those who did not graduate from high school and married couple who work in agriculture and forestry have wide range of employment problems, so intensified supports to them would be necessary in the future.