

UC Riverside

UC Riverside Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Unpredictable Agency: An Analysis of Youth and Educational Practices in Times of Political and Economic Precarity in Contemporary Đà Nẵng City, Việt Nam

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/28w4q8wh>

Author

Duong, Phuoc M

Publication Date

2017

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Unpredictable Agency: An Analysis of Youth and Educational Practices in Times of
Political and Economic Precarity in Contemporary Đà Nẵng City, Việt Nam

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Anthropology

by

Phuoc M. Duong

June 2017

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Christina Schwenkel, Chairperson

Dr. Yolanda Moses

Dr. Mariam Lam

Copyright by
Phuoc M. Duong
2017

The Dissertation of Phuoc M. Duong is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank my dissertation committee: Christina Schwenkel, Yolanda Moses, Mariam Lam, and Paul Ryer for their tough love and continually pushing me to become better than I was before. The following colleagues and friends filled my graduate school experience with splendid memories: Sarah Grant, Priscilla LoForte, Alicia Bolton, Chi Pham, Thao Nguyen, Tuyet Pham, Melissa King, Roger Baldwin, David Reyes, Rick Gallo, and Mike Atienza. I thank the following faculties from the Media and Cultural Studies department for granting me the opportunities to work on professionalizing my teaching: Lan Duong, Keith Harris, and Wendy Su. I thank the teachers, students, and generous people that I've met in the field that shared their stories with me in order to make this dissertation a reality. I thank my family: Hiep Duong, Hien Mai, and Loc Duong for their continual presence and assistance on this unconventional journey. Lastly, I would like to thank the Pacific Rim Foundation for their generous assistance in funding this research.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Unpredictable Agency: An Analysis of Youth and Educational Practices in Times of Political and Economic Precarity in Contemporary Đà Nẵng City, Việt Nam

by

Phuoc M. Duong

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Anthropology
University of California, Riverside, June 2017
Dr. Christina Schwenkel, Chairperson

This dissertation investigates how educational agency performed by young adults in Việt Nam is utilized to build and sustain the socialist nation-building project. Drawing on a framework of governmentality, I analyze the rationale of governance and agency through Việt Nam's experiment with differing political economies to contribute to anthropological debates on how the shift from collective action for the greater common good to liberal individualism by young adults, sustain or compromise the socialist nation-building project. I collected data for this research from the National Archive #3 in Hà Nội, narratives from people living through Việt Nam's experiment with different political economies in Hà Nội, Hồ Chí Minh City, and Đà Nẵng City, in-school participation-observation and volunteering work with the Youth Union in Đà Nẵng City, as well as inter-personal communication with a variety of social actors from revolutionary educators, educational researchers, teachers, to students and their families. I will demonstrate the social, economic and political forces that shaped educational experiences

of revolutionary workers that migrated from Northern to Southern Việt Nam to spread revolutionary education during the American-War years, to centralized educational practices under reunification, then to liberalized educational practices in contemporary times to make the argument that, although liberalization of the market-economy relieved financial burden from the nation-state in allowing individuals to pursue economic activities outside the confines of the state sectors, liberalization also introduced great challenges to young adults, the educational as well as employment fields, which strived for the socialist collective goal of matching appropriate forms of education with appropriate employment to continue sustaining the socialist project.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction – page 1
2. Chapter 1 – Expanding Revolutionary Education: Teachers Trekking Trường Sơn During the Việt Nam – American War – Page 27
3. Chapter 2 – Rebuilding the Nation Through Education: Centralized Planning and Exclusionary Practices in the Newly Unified Việt Nam – Page 63
4. Chapter 3 – Agency and the Unpredictable Future: An Examination of Student’s Education Actions – Page 96
5. Chapter 4 – Morality as the Site for Examination and Agency – Page 138
6. Chapter 5 – “Failure” and Agency: Searching for the Socially Desirable Self – Page 173
7. Conclusion – Page 187
8. Bibliography – Page 224
9. Appendix – Page 240

List of Figures

Figure 1. The design for a unified socialist education system – page 76

Figure 2. Thừa thầy thiếu thợ – page 142

Figure 3. Thống kê kết quả thi ĐH, CĐ năm 2011 – page 165

Figure 4. Căn đổi lao động xã hội – page 196

Introduction

The 2015 official university and college entrance examination season was met with blistering heat like most summer days in Đà Nẵng. As a volunteer with the Youth Union through the *Tiếp Sức Mùa Thi* program, I arrived at the designated general high school (Trung Học Phổ Thông) at 7:30 AM to assist the group in setting up the welcoming station. The station comprised of a couple of classroom tables set together with chairs so we volunteers could sit. The most important items for us were the two large umbrellas that hovered over our stations to shield us from the scorching sun that would bear down on us throughout the day. By eight o'clock, more members from the Youth Union had arrived to bring bottled water, vitamin water, and sodas to chill in coolers for examinees once the examination period was over. The *Tiếp Sức Mùa Thi* program was sponsored by the Youth Union and *Tuổi Trẻ* newspaper every year to assist high school students with the location of their examination site, provide transportation from and to their housing if they are from out of town, and offer hydration and lunch service to students in need.

Examinations period commenced with the pounding of the deep drum. Once examinations were in session, the metal gates to the school were closed and locked with no person allowed to enter or leave until the session was declared officially over. Outside the school, parents and family members waited patiently. Some waited for the whole duration of the exams, which were 3 to 4 hours depending on the day. This was particularly common if the students and their families came from regions outside of Đà

Nãng. To pass the time, they chatted with each other or waited quietly, fanning themselves from the heat.

The exams were scheduled in the morning and also in the afternoon with a lunch break in between. Near the conclusion of each examination session, students received a reminder through the intercom that the end was approaching. The end of the session was again signaled with the pounding of the deep drum. Students swarmed to the gate, waiting for the official approval of the end to the session. Once the gate opened, student bodies spilled out to the walkway in front of the school. We volunteers had boxed lunches or steamed buns (bánh bao) ready for students who needed lunch. Some accepted the food offerings; some accepted only water. Expressions of glee, ambivalence, or confusion colored the different students. Some were cheery because they were confident, and some were ambivalent because they were uncertain. Students looked into the distance to find their family members. I saw one mother call for her son as he looked for her. When he approached her, she took the book bag off his shoulders. As he hopped on the back of the motorbike, she pulled out a jar of bird's nest from her bag and handed it to him for consumption. Bird's nest is a highly valued and highly priced food item believed to sharpen the mind, strengthen the body, and relieve the body of a variety of ailments. The mother gave the birds nest to her son to recharge her son with energy and give him strength for the exams in the afternoon.

As the rest of the volunteers and I waited for all of the students to vacate the school, I saw a woman approach a female student close to me. The woman was dressed in pants and a buttoned-up shirt - work attire - but she was also wearing a sun-shielding shirt

and skirt. This form of clothing was very popular amongst women as they shielded their bodies from the sun while driving motorbikes. She pulled out a notebook and pen and asked the student, “The exam, what do you think about the difficulty, compared to last year? The question about society (câu hỏi về xã hội), do you think that it is too distant from students’ lived experiences?” The student replied, “I think it was close.” I believe the woman was a reporter because she asked the student which school she was from and the cluster for which she tested. The student’s statement was likely to be used to encapsulate the sentiments of students for a news story. I was also curious about why she was so brief with the questioning. One moment I saw her speaking to the one student, the next moment, I did not see her again. I believe she wanted to capture the general sentiment of students on the new examinations.

The question about society that the reporter inquired the student about asked, “There are opinions that believe that: *The task of practicing life skills is as necessary as the task of accumulating knowledge.* You should write a debate essay (about 600 words) demonstrating your thinking about the matter above.” The task of practicing life skills is premised upon growing importance that students should learn skills to live by such as learning how to communicate with different social groups, being active within one’s communities, and equipping oneself with skills to become employable.¹ These skills are considered by educators and the public as an important addition to the official school curriculum. But the life skills, however, are often undermined by students because

¹ <http://kenhtuyensinh.vn/ky-nang-mem>

² Both historians have written on the influence of France and China on Vietnamese

learning the skills do not contribute to performing well on exams, the main determining factor for university entry. Students instead prefer to spend their time studying the official curriculum and take classes to prepare for university examination.

Individual responses to the question would differ, but the formulation of the question - one that required students to formulate their individual opinion - was a new practice in the Vietnamese general education curriculum. The action of the reporter inquiring if the exam question was too distant from students' lives signified a common knowledge that schooling often prescribed political knowledge that are too complex for students to grasp. By asking students to formulate their own opinions, the educational apparatus has shifted the method of examination from pure memorization to extract knowledge to one that allowed students to express their own opinions in order to be examined.

The 2015 examination season was highly anticipated for it introduced new methodologies to the examination process. Whereas in previous years the exit examination from general education and entrance exams into colleges and universities were two separate processes, the 2015 season was novel for it combined both of the exams into one. Prior to 2015, students enrolled in general education who wished to gain entrance into colleges and universities must have first passed their exit exams in late May or early June. Students then had to enlist to take the national university and college entrance exams, which took place in July. This process was criticized by students, parents, and educators for the intensive anxiety it placed on students and their families. The changes to the 2015 exams were in part designed to alleviate this burdensome task.

The most novel change to this process was the introduction of choice. In previous years, every student had to take the examinations in five standardized required subjects. But beginning in 2015, students are examined based on three mandatory subjects: math, literature, and a foreign language. The two remaining subjects are selected by the students and dependent upon the colleges and universities they aimed to enroll in. For example, students that aim to win admission into medical university must choose subjects in the biological sciences, whereas students aiming to get into the social sciences must take an exam in geography or history. This novel approach to the examinations has been in the works for several years and speaks to broader social phenomena sweeping through Việt Nam, such as freedom of choice and individualism. While individual responsibility and liberal businesses practices have been unfolding since the mid-1980s, the educational apparatus for decades has maintained a state-centric approach to curriculum, examination, and enrollment.

In one interesting conversation I had with a mother while she was waiting for her son, she recounted that the newspaper that morning reported opinions from educational planners that the new examinations seemed to be a success. She exclaimed that the new examinations have just been put in place, how can they already claim that it is a success? The mother's surprise, and perhaps annoyance, with the educational planners' premature assessment of the exams as a success was testament to the anxiety of the public in general. The new approaches to the exams were a response to critiques from the public regarding the rigidity of the educational system. If the changes were adapted fix to a problem afflicting the whole nation, how could planners jump so soon to declare it a

success? Were they only claiming it a success because they had direct involvement with the planning and their reputations were open to scrutiny?

Public education in Việt Nam, especially the route from general education on to post-training is a highly contentious issue because parents and young adults are apprehensive, anxious, and worried that the children *must* enroll into one of the state university to have a *chance*, a *footing*, in Việt Nam's new liberalized economy. This collective anxiety is, of course, not entirely unique to Việt Nam, but the Vietnamese context allows us to examine the social actions that take place in regards to education in order to contribute to anthropological knowledge about the lived realities of young adults in an increasingly precarious globalized context. The introduction of the new examinations partly addresses this social anxiety by granting individuals more *choice* on how they want to take the exams in order to excel at them.

The ideology and practice of choice has particular rationales, especially when it is introduced and promoted by a governmental apparatus. For example, educational sociologists Scott Davies and Linda Quirke argue that the growing popularity of school choice in the Western context is linked to the spread of neoliberal ideology. Within neoliberalism, it is believed that by providing more choices of schools that cater to different desires will produce the most competitive students to perform in the market economy (Davies and Quirke: 2005). For the case of Việt Nam, before 2015, the option of choice as it pertained to the examinations were limited, students took the exams as they were. Beginning in 2015, the application of choice granted student bodies with some agency. This agency shifts responsibility onto individuals to choose what they want to

study and pursue their own occupation. At once, individuals are responsible for themselves and the governmental apparatus gave them the *choice* to do so.

This dissertation, then, investigates the collective journey of young adults from general education on to higher education in contemporary Việt Nam. It asks: how can the collective actions of this journey contribute to anthropological understanding of the rationale of government and agency in a market socialist context? And what challenges does the liberalization of the economy pose to the educational apparatus and the experiences of young adults in obtaining desirable education and employment? Drawing on participation in classrooms, volunteer events with the Youth Union, conversations with contemporary educators, conversations with retired educators (some of whom I call revolutionary workers), and archival data, I trace educational practices from the time of the Việt Nam - American War, to experiences under reunification, then to contemporary times to make the argument that, although the liberalization of the market economy assisted the nation in allowing individuals to seek economic activities outside of the state, liberalization also introduced great challenges to young adults, and to the educational and employment fields, all of which strived for the goal of matching appropriate forms of education with appropriate employment.

I pose this set of questions due my sustained observations of how public education is a highly debated issue in public discourse, which has impact on the lives of all young adults. The debates are spurred by questions about the role of education for the nation and citizens in a globalized, yet politically conservative context. Can education actually lead young adults to a place in the employment field so that they can acquire

income to take care of themselves? These debates are stimulated by a number of reasons such as the collective acknowledgment that there is extreme difficulty in finding employment within the state apparatus and the citizenry is apprehensive of unpredictable labor practices in the private sector. General anxiety about the unpredictability of the future informs a series of actions that one must take in order to compete in the liberalized market. In the chapters that follow, I will show how young adults have responded to the nation's agenda for education through different political economies.

Theoretical Approaches to Education

Education is universally practiced under the rhetoric of benevolence and social good. But education, as tied to any organized institution also risks the threat of domination, especially if it is governed by the state apparatus (Althusser 1984, Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). As critic of state authoritarianism Antonio Gramsci has famously argued, education within the context of industrial capitalism has served to garner consent from the mass population to support the hegemony of capitalist state power (Gramsci 1971).

In the ethnographic literature on education and schooling in Western contexts, the research has raised a critical dialogue exposing the inequalities inflicted by capitalism through education. Douglas Foley (1990) has argued that high schools in the United States performed like a drama on a stage, where individual actors, shaped by their class and race, perform constructed roles that were predetermined by "society." How students performed their identities in school, reflected their social role in the outside professional

world. Similarly, Deborah Reed-Donahay's (1996) research on schooling in rural France further extended the argument of inclusion/exclusion. Focusing on language and dialect, she argued that students in rural France often encountered communicative dissonance with urban teachers whose life worlds were directed by cosmopolitanism of Paris. This dissonance often excluded students from the bureaucratic and cosmopolitan world of the metropole. The ethnographic literature directed to the undismissable power that state schools had in reproducing the social order. The studies showed that modern education of the nation-state required certain attitudes and modes of conduct to maximize the productivity of human life. Schools acted as a dual guarantor of behavior and the maximization of capital accumulation.

In recent decades, studies in globalization have shifted focus to analyzing education. Much of such analysis has garnered influence from Marshall McLuhan's thesis on the "global village" in which the world has become increasingly interconnected due to advancement in telecommunication technologies. As Marcelo M. Suarez-Orozco and Desiree Baolian Qin-Hilliard have argued, "globalization decisively unmakes the coherence that the modernist project of the nineteenth- and twentieth- century nation-state promised to deliver -- the neat fit between territory, language, and identity" (Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard 2004 :3). This has affected the lives of young adults throughout the globe through their exposure to different conceptualizations of how to be a global citizen, especially in contexts where traditional cultures confronted cosmopolitanism. This gave rise to the theorization that schooling across the world was increasingly being molded into a global model (Anderson-Levitt 2003). But anthropologist Aihwa Ong has

argued that we should reconsider globalization's grand scheme to shape everything in its fold and instead, "focus our attention to everyday practice and [how] the relations of power can illuminate how the operations of globalization are translated into cultural logics that inform behavior, identities, and relationships" (Ong 1999: 22).

This dissertation is framed around compulsory general education and the route to higher education because this is a moment in time when individuals progress from adolescents - belong to the familiar - to a legal social adult, a member of society and the nation. The progress from adolescent to adulthood is also the time frame where individuals must make something of themselves and the state must craft individuals to be active participants in society. The curriculum of compulsory education must be equipped with knowledge and skills for social actors to employ in the social world. How this curriculum is planned and pedagogized was very much a part of the particular social, political and economic contexts, and Việt Nam offered interesting insight to this conversation.

As global ideas of capitalist modernity and neoliberal economic practices enter Việt Nam, such assemblages confront national and regional agendas for education. Such confrontations introduce what Aiwah Ong and Stephen Collier via Paul Rabinow have called, "anthropological problems." "They are domains in which the forms and values of individual and collective existence are problematized or at stake, in the sense that they are subject to technological, political, and ethical reflection and intervention" (Collier and Ong 2005: 2). Education in Việt Nam is an anthropological problem because it must

negotiate between the goal of socialist centralization and proliferating individual aspirations for a viable life in a liberalized economy.

Research on education in Việt Nam has been shaped by research from multiple disciplines: history, political science, economic, sociology, and anthropology, just to name a few. In the historical literature, David Marr and Alexander Woodside have been spearheaders in assembling historical accounts of educational policies and practices dating back to the revolution.² Marr's (2013) documentation of the revolutionary government's zeal and orderly planning for a new socialist education system demonstrates the indispensibility of that movement's efforts to decolonize mass education from French influence in order to win support for the nascent regime. Woodside's research traces the trajectory of a socialist mass education system to document its triumphs and failures. Woodside shows that despite the socialist state's aim to build an expansive mass educational system that links education to labor, almost a decade after the communist's victory in reunifying the nation, "the palpable malcontents of the 500,000 annual Vietnamese primary-school and middle-school graduates who, as of 1981, were neither able to go to university nor prepared to work well in the real economy, amounted to more than just a social problem" (Woodside 1983: 427).

In contemporary research since *Đổi Mới*, Jonathan London's edited volume titled, *Education in Vietnam* has been instrumental in documenting the trends, changes, and

² Both historians have written on the influence of France and China on Vietnamese education, but for this dissertation, I will mainly refer to their research on the revolution in Việt Nam.

challenges that has confronted Việt Nam's education system since opening its doors to global integration (2011). Most relevant from that volume for this dissertation, is anthropologist Trương Huyền Chi's ethnographic chapter on the lives of ethnic minority students and their journey on the road to obtaining an education in the Central Highlands of Việt Nam. Trương's analysis highlights the long enduring impasse that marginalized communities face in order to succeed in state-sponsored education. Through ethnographic documentation, Trương's data dispels the myth that ethnic minorities often do not value education. She instead demonstrates that contrary to beliefs undermining ethnic minorities' under-valuation of education, it is often linguistic and cultural barriers, as well as the structural exclusion of ethnic minorities in schools and in the local political economy that marginalizes these communities. Her approach demonstrates the urgency of anthropological theory and methods to educational research because she places people as the central focus to demonstrate the relevancy of people's response to policies.

In addition to research essays and volumes on education in Việt Nam, there are also works of research that aim to prescribe interventions for education. In a memorandum published by Thomas J. Vallely and Ben Wilkson from the Harvard Kennedy School ASH Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation, the authors offer an extensive, vociferous critique of the education climate in Việt Nam. The paper classifies education in Việt Nam as a "crisis". Amongst providing charts to demonstrate that Việt Nam is not on par with its neighbors in Asia in terms of world ranking or producing scholarly research – an issue that lies outside the purview of this dissertation – their root argument for this "crisis" in education in Việt Nam is that "Vietnamese

universities are not producing the educated workforce that Vietnam's economy and society demand." (Vallely and Wilkson 2008: 2). Elaborating further, the authors emphasize that, "With up to 25 percent of undergraduate curricula devoted to required coursework laden with political indoctrination, it is little wonder that Vietnamese students are ill-prepared for either professional life or graduate study abroad" (2008: 2)

The pinning of the fault of education on the overt political agenda is a point shared not only by the authors, but by teachers, professors, and students within Việt Nam as well. I will not refute this point as overt political control, but I argue that this point has been under-analyzed and undermining of the importance of political ideology in cementing the foundation of the education. I argue that this point cannot not be the cause of mismatch between training and employment, but rather that the mismatch between these fields stemmed from various factors such as the state's goal in diversifying educational training while individuals increasingly worked only to obtain university degrees in order to gain desirable employment. Stating that political indoctrination ill-prepared student for professional life and study abroad suggests that it is the political that stifles employability and somehow prevented students from achieving excellence. The authors, of course, suggest autonomy for institutions and called for a multi-lateral international cooperation. "The Vietnamese educational authorities retain a strongly 'state-centric' view of higher education collaboration in which governments, not institutions, are the primary counterparts. This approach is particularly ill-suited for working with the highly decentralized American system in which individual universities are the primary actors and the role of government limited" (Vallely and Wilkson 2008: 5)

The rhetoric employed by the authors, one that argued for autonomy from state intervention because such intervention was ill-suited to cooperate with institutions from the United States, is no less than an overt argument for the neoliberalization of education because unregulated institutions worked best for a market economy. In this dissertation, I will demonstrate how political ideology was essential to education to formulate the moral citizen.

In the attempts to support their argument further the authors wrote,

Intel's struggles to hire engineers to staff its manufacturing facility in Hồ Chí Minh City are illustrative. When the company administered a standardized assessment test to 2,000 Vietnamese IT students, only 90 candidates, or 5 percent, passed, and of this group only 40 individuals were sufficiently proficient in English to be hired. Intel confirms that this is the worst result they have encountered in any country they invest in. Vietnamese and international investors cite the lack of skilled workers and managers as a major barrier to expansion (Vallely and Wilkinson 2008: 2).

The story of Intel's shaky startup in Việt Nam and its disappointment has colored many conversations in conferences about Việt Nam has become the go-to story for critics of education in Việt Nam who emphasize the "crisis" in education. This particular story shed light on the ill-fittedness of Việt Nam to play host to an international corporation. Such rhetoric implied that Việt Nam must learn to play by international rules and yield in excitement of a corporation taking interest in building an industry to benefit its citizenry. The blame of this situation was wholly placed on Việt Nam for not readily accepting the rules of engagement. Instead of interrogating to what extent has Intel done research on the human capital in Việt Nam and how will it craft training programs to create employees suitable for its operation, the authors implied that it is Việt Nam that should have made itself attractive to foreign investment by training its students and workforce to

meet international standards. The critiques of Việt Nam's ill-preparedness echoes the dominant neoliberal rhetoric that developing countries should use its own expenditure to prepare its workforce for international investment and not place financial burden on the benevolent corporation.

For the framework of this dissertation, I borrow the operative concept of *rationale* from Tania Murray Li's work, *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics*, because much like developmental projects that has been put into effect in Indonesia, education is a *process* that has rationales and techniques to be applied from the governmental apparatus. On the receiving end, education also has rationales that belong to pupils that is shaped by their lived experiences and which at times do not always align with visions and goals of the governmental apparatus. This project takes a processual approach to examine the phenomenon of public education because education has been projects of governments, and the everyday process reveals intentions, rationalities, and actions that pose challenges to governing bodies as well as the governed subject.

It has been written that education belongs to the realm of *discipline*, whereas other realms within the state apparatus belong to the rationales and actions of *government*, such as the genealogy of economic thought (Tribe 1978, 1995), reason of the state (Skinner 1978, 1989, and police, population, and economy (Dean 1991, 1992). An avid believer in Foucault's ideas, Nikolas Rose writes, "liberal strategies of government thus become dependent upon devices (schooling, the domesticated family, the lunatic asylum,

the reformatory prison) that promise to create individuals who do not need to be governed by others, but will govern themselves, master themselves, care for themselves” (Rose 1996:45). This train of thought builds upon Foucault’s now famous analytical framework called governmentality.

Governmentality, as proposed by Foucault and his followers, means that in order to govern effectively, governmental apparatuses have shifted away from the absolute power of sovereignty while placing its focus to sites where the “natural” propensities of individuals to be competitive could guide their actions. Foucault and his followers’ analysis of liberalisms argues that in order for governments to govern effectively, individuals should be granted the liberty to act as rational market actors.

If we follow their rationale, that the school disciplines individuals with its vast knowledge and varied techniques, the individuals, then, are recognized, certified, and granted freedom to become rational market actors within the economy. The idea that the free liberal market acts as an equalizer that balances society is very much the train of thought within this proposal of liberalism. If we follow this trajectory, then individuals who are at least educated within compulsory education and who do not decide to pursue higher education could find employment within the liberal economy. Foucault and his followers provide scant analysis of the make up of different economies and their role in exploitation. Liberal economies, particularly those of the industrialized era, as we know, were notorious for worker exploitation (Thompson 1966, Williams 1975). Freedom of market competition allowed land and industry owners to undercut workers, and the same

ideologies of “freedom” kept workers tied to their working posts because being a wage laborer was better than not earning any wage at all.

I draw on these points proposed by Foucault and his followers because I do not see a separation between schools as a technology of discipline and the economy as a technology of governance, particularly in Việt Nam. Although schools might act according to their own logics, with discipline being one of the logics, it is always the ideal mission that the school must be tied to the economy. True to orthodox socialist ideology, schools were the cog that trained workers for the economy (Heller 1988).

On Agency

To build an operational educational system requires agentic actions on the behalf of experts, planners, teachers, cadres, and most importantly, students. This agency is in no way “natural” or “normal,” but instead relies on a set of beliefs, commitment, and perception of what would happen to the self if it did not commit to the educational process. I borrow Victoria Goddard and Ruth Lister’s definition of agency as “the capacity of individuals or groups to embark on processes of autonomous self-realization” (Goddard 2000: 27). This approach considers agency as “located in a dialectic relationship with social structures and embedded un social relations” (Lister 1997: 37). This definition matters to analyze young adult’s agency in relation to education because it allows us to locate the rationales of people’s action within particular political-economic contexts in order to trace agency’s operation.

Agentive actions in relation to education have now been made famous through the exegesis of “resistance” by Paul Willis (1977). As a part of the Cultural Studies movement, guided neo-Marxist critiques of industrial capitalism, Willis drew attention to the speech, mentality, actions and performance of gender that working class youth enact to “resist” state schooling that sought to mold young adults into utilizing the language, decorum, and discipline appropriate to the overarching apparatus. Resistance, or noncompliance with appropriate school culture, halted future prospects of young adults of entering university training. In short, young adult’s resistance only took them as far as a future in industrial labor.

But actions need not only be identified as resistance, anthropologist Saba Mahmood reminds us (2005). To do so obscures other forms of actions that are not in the spirit of resisting. For example, in this study, I did not observe any instances where students acted against the system. They did, however, enact practices that diverged from the dominant rationale of schooling to diversify training. Students went against such suggestions and enacted in ways that the self perceived was suitable to find a footing in the social world. Such actions took form in seeking out private universities when one “failed” state university entrance exams, traveling abroad for university education, and even enduring indefinitely waits without employment, unsure if any future prospects would come. Such occurrences might be perceived as “normal” or unremarkable, as they could happen to young adults in a variety of contexts, not just in Việt Nam. But as I argue, such occurrences were signs of the time that were shaped by rationales of government and individual agency. For example, studying abroad while in high school or

university has been a normalized practice within American liberal education. However, students in the United States that studied abroad usually do so with the intent to return home and not to seek out permanent opportunities abroad. These practices stand in contrast to students from the “developing” world, who seek out education abroad to improve their chances of finding employment at home or with hopes to stay abroad permanently. As Vanessa Fong has demonstrated through her research on Chinese university students studying abroad, the perception of “paradise” that students envisioned abroad were confronted with racial prejudices and vexing social terrains. Yet even though Chinese students sought to improve their economic chances via education abroad, the returned benefits of such endeavors often did not match what the students had envisioned. In simpler terms, when Chinese students who sought education abroad returned home, they realized that such endeavors did not necessarily improve their chances of finding employment (Fong 2011).

To track processes of agency, we must attune to what Foucault (1978) identified as power relations between subjects and government. Through an analysis of power relations enacted by the government and the economy, individual consciousness becomes enacted to direct certain forms of actions. To quote Saba Mahmood, “one may argue that the set of capacities inhering in a subject – that is, the abilities that define her modes of agency – are not the residue of an undominated self that existed prior to the operations of power but are themselves the products of those operations. Such an understanding of power and subject formation encourages us to conceptualize agency not simply as a

synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that specific relations of subordination create and enable” (Mahmood 2005:18).

Foucault and Mahmood’s theorization of the subject and its relation to government grant us the tools to question how a hybridized form of government utilizes socialist principles and liberal market practices to govern young adults, and subsequently, how the agency of young adults strengthen or weaken the practices of a hybridized government. Through the rationale of the governmental apparatus, that is the school, the Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Labor, students’ should accept their achievements in education regardless of the status of the degree. Whether students earn their certifications in General Education, Intermediate Education, College or University, they should accept such certification to seek employment in order to fill posts that the nation needed and not act upon their individual desires. Liberal market logics, however, have at once, “freed” individuals from tradition governmental constraints in order to seek the highest status via private means, even if it did not reward them with employment fitting of their certification. This in turn, creates a vast social problem of students chasing after achievements and over-qualification, which poses a problem for government and students themselves (Dore 1997).

In this dissertation, I will draw upon key components within the educational operations to offer a more nuanced understanding of how education is practiced through the perspectives of the administration, students, and their parents. This research contributes to existing conversations by employing data from day-to-day occurrences to make the argument that what we have come to know about education in Việt Nam

dominantly has come from a Western perspective that argues that education should be de-regulated. Drawing on ethnographic data, I will offer insight into the logics of how education operates through the lens of rationale of governance and agency within changing political-economies.

Đà Nẵng City was chosen for this case study because in recent years, it has been hailed as the rising economic hub of central Việt Nam. In 1997, the city was admitted into the Central Committee, and in 2003 the city was classified as an Urban Zone 1. As an Urban Zone 1 and a member of the Central Committee, political and economic decisions enacted in the city are directly governed by the Central Committee linked to the party-state and not by provincial government. Being an Urban Zone 1 makes the city attractive to foreign investments as well as the recipient of heavy investment from the state to build infrastructure. In recent years, the city has also shifted its main focus from being an industrial-focused city based on production to one that is reliant on tourism. Such drastic transformations in the city have brought about a need to address how public education must be planned to meet such changes.

Methodologies

This research project was first formulated through short visits to Việt Nam in summer months of 2008, 2009 and 2010. The main component of this research was conducted through fieldwork from December 2011 through January 2013, and then from October 2013 through March 2014. Another two months of fieldwork was conducted in the summer months of 2013.

The ethnographic research of schooling was conducted at the main high school in Đà Nẵng City. I chose this particular school because, other than the one high school for the gifted, it was the most desirable school to attend in the city. The school for the gifted admits students on a competitive examination. Students from this school were admitted into universities with the rate of 100% acceptance. The school that I conducted research at is located in the central district of the city, yet students from surrounding districts aspire to attend it. The school is classified as *chính quy*, meaning that it belonged to the office of education and received funding directly from the Ministry of Education (MoeT) in Hà Nội. Many schools operated outside from this school but they are classified as organized by the people or *dân lập*. Schools organized by people do not receive funding from the government but must collect tuition from students in order to pay for the operation of the schools as well as teachers' salaries. Although the curriculum at the *dân lập* schools is the same as the *chính quy* schools, examinations into the *dân lập* schools are less competitive.

Outside of my work at the school, I formulated friendships with students and their families. These relationships were first formed through permission from the school. I requested that students write their names and contact information on a sheet of paper if they wanted to contribute to my research. During the course of my research, students and their families invited me to their homes, workplace, or they invited me out for coffee and food. Even when I traveled away from Đà Nẵng to conduct research at the archives, I continually stayed in touch with my informants via Facebook. In addition to fieldwork, I also conducted archival research at the National Archive Number 3 in Hà Nội in the

months of October 2013-December 2013 and the National Archive Number 2 in Hồ Chí Minh City in January and February, 2014.

Dissertation outline

This dissertation is divided into two ethnographic-historical chapters and three ethnographic chapters, each building upon the others to trace the trajectory of increased liberalization and its effects on central planning and the lives of individuals.

Chapter 1

Expanding Revolutionary Education: Teachers Trekking Trường Sơn During the Việt Nam-American War

This chapter tracks what I call *revolutionary agency* as indispensable to building a Socialist educational system. Dating back to the early years of the Socialist Revolution, young adults were indispensable to the revolutionary nation-building project, as they were subjects of an anti-colonial and anti-imperialist education as well as agents to proliferate a new education system. During the conflict known as the Việt Nam-American war, not only did the government in Northern Việt Nam assist Southern resistance groups with military support, but there was also a concerted movement to send teachers that were educated during the French resistance years down the Trường Sơn Trail into southern territory. The goal of this mission called Đi B was to expand revolutionary education and garner support from people of the South. This chapter utilizes archival data and memoirs as well as interviews with teachers who braved the journey to expand the revolutionary education. I argue that the revolutionary agency practiced by revolutionary workers

during the war was exerted because of their dedication and fervor for a liberated Việt Nam. The efforts of the revolutionary workers laid the foundation for the expansion of education in the post-war years.

Chapter 2

Rebuilding the Nation Through Education: Centralized Planning and Exclusionary Practices in the Newly Unified Việt Nam

This chapter builds upon the revolutionary agency that garnered support in the South to focus on educational efforts to reunite and rebuild Việt Nam after the American war. Drawing on conversations, memory, archival data and experiences of people living through this time, I argue that rebuilding the nation required strict planning on the behalf of the governmental apparatus. Strict planning required the exercise of power by the state apparatus to direct individuals into fields of training and employment deemed suitable for different individuals depending on their political affiliation, class identification, and, to a certain extent, gender. While higher education was, of course, the object of desire for many, it was reserved for those who met criteria of allegiance to the revolutionary movement. Those who had affiliations with the “enemy” were contingently incorporated into the newly unified nation at the behest of the governmental apparatus. During this era of the Socialist nation-reunification project, individual aspirations were suppressed for the perceived collective functioning to the socialist apparatus.

Chapter 3

Agency and the Unpredictable Future: An Examination of Students' Educational Actions

This chapter focuses on another component of the socialist project: utilizing a market liberal economy for the economic prosperity of the nation. This experiment, however, proved challenging for the state apparatus to maintain control of the diversification of state education due to the economic precarity that liberalization brought. Drawing on in-class observations, surveys, and conversations with students and their families, I frame students' educational actions through rationale of agency effected by economic precarity. This precarity has proliferated with the regression of state welfare. Through the introduction of a globalized market economy, the state apparatus aimed to relieve financial burden from the government while attempting to keep the same structure of diversified education and employment. The introduction of a liberal market economy, however, has weakened the state's ability to direct student bodies into diversified fields of education and employment. I argue that economic precarity and new forms of liberalized thinking has influenced students to act upon their perceived necessity of winning admittance into university education in order to compete in the new economy, instead of following rigid structures of hierarchical education espoused by the state.

Chapter 4

Morality as the Site for Examination and Agency

In this chapter, I provide approaches and techniques of directing students into appropriate fields of training. Here I offer two observed themes that have been in practice by the school to deal with such dilemma: the first was a distant, but moralizing approach

in guiding students into *diverse* post-general education training, and the second was the introduction of new forms of examinations that I call *performing morality*. I argue that schools have lost overt control to diversify education and training due to students' increased individualism. Morality then became a critical site for the school to exert power over student bodies as well as to examine students in order to maintain the integrity of the Socialist mission.

Chapter 5

“Failure” and Agency: Searching for the Socially Desirable Self

In this chapter, I will provide an analysis of the experiences of students after secondary education to shed light on the continual aim for centralized diversification versus personal desires. I will provide the analysis through two lenses: first through the lens of “failure” and the paths that students took in its aftermath, and second through the experience of seeking employment after the achievement of higher education. The importance of these two processes to anthropology is that they highlight the continual quest that students venture into to find a life that is desirable for them and the challenges their desires pose to sustaining the socialist mission.

Chapter 1

Expanding Revolutionary Education: Teachers Trekking Trường Sơn During the Việt Nam -American War

Introduction

“Wherever the liberation reaches, that’s where we will open classrooms. Even for one person we will teach, even one person will get to learn.”³ With these words, a retired revolutionary teacher, Mr. B, remembered the fervor of revolutionary teachers sent to “liberate” Southern Việt Nam during the Vietnam-American War from 1955-1975.⁴ A fortunate meeting with this now retired teacher-turned-professor in Ho Chi Minh paved the way for the research this chapter to recounts⁵. Mr. B was a part of a larger movement called Đi B or the B journey from 1962-1975. The name Đi B for this clandestine operation was a euphemism for a much more grueling mission also known as “Xẻ dọc Trường Sơn đi cứu nước,” or “To cut along the Trường Sơn Trail to save the country.” Under the training of the Ministry of Education in the North via the command of the Department of Reunification of the Central Office, the Đi B mission sent cadres, medical

³ “Giải phóng đến đâu, mở lớp đến đó. Một người cũng dạy, một người cũng học.”

⁴ The term liberate, or giải phóng, was a language and ethos used by Northern Việt Nam to justify their plans and actions during the Việt Nam-American War. Even though this mentality was and still is challenged by Southern Vietnamese, for some will argue that they did not want to be liberated by the North, I utilize this term in this dissertation to demonstrate how members from Northern Việt Nam justified their educational, political and military efforts. The term liberate appears again and again through archival records, textbooks, slogans for national holidays and, accounts by the revolutionary workers that I interviewed. However problematic or challenging the term maybe, it was ingrained into the mentality of the state apparatus, and its soldiers and teachers. These members wholeheartedly believed that they needed to “liberate” the South.

⁵ I was extremely fortunate to be put in contact with Mr. B along with a number of educators during revolutionary time through scheduled conversations with a former prominent minister of education in Hanoi City.

rescue teams, and educators across the 17th parallel to combat for the liberation of the South. During this unique and calamitous war for “freedom” and “independence,” the revolutionary movement of Northern Việt Nam strategized that the war could not only be fought with military might, but that the war must also be conducted culturally and ideologically. The Northern movement commanded that people from the South must be liberated from imperialism by sending state political workers to interact with civilian populations to persuade them to change their political allegiance. Political workers sent to carry out the missions were military personnel, medics, photojournalists, and educational workers.

This chapter will focus on the educational agency and agentic actions of pupils and workers for the Đì B mission. I aim to dominantly focus on the human component of this ideological combat mission. Such an analysis will fill in the gap in the literature on education during the Việt Nam-American War, a literature that remains heavily focused on military warfare. A focus on the agentic actions of young adult educators will also contribute to debates on human agency in carrying out nation building projects. Most notably, I show that while revolution and nation building need not always be accompanied by an educational revolution, in the case of Việt Nam, immediately following the August Revolution and Declaration of Independence in 1945, an expansive “democratic” educational system was already being debated and put into effect. This system aimed to include boy and girl students as well as male and female workers. An emphasis on gender inclusivity was key to this nation-building project and differed from

the gender exclusive practices dominant in other young nations, such as the United States in its early colonial era (Tyack and Hansot 2012).

In this chapter, following Shaun Malarney, I focus on the agentic component of revolutionary education to tease out the empirical and theoretical relationship between education and nation building. Malarney drew attention to local debates surrounding rituals in Northern Việt Nam to build on larger theoretical points about ideological contestation surrounding rituals, who gets to participate in them, and for what ends (Malarney 2002: 9). Similarly, I focus on the personal commitment and sacrifice of the educators to argue that educational projects rely on a moral rationale from pupils to carry out nation building projects. During the French Resistance years and the American War era, students and revolutionary workers harnessed a revolutionary agency and love for the nation to carry out their day-to-day tasks, even facing daily threats of death. This personal commitment and sacrifice to spread and build education for the nation complicates, or even dismantles, current-day dominant practices of acquiring education for economic gains, a point revolutionary workers emphasized time and again in my interviews. A focus on Việt Nam's quest for independence reveals that at the heart of its revolutionary educational projects, pupils-turn-workers mobilized their efforts for more public-spirited aims than achievement rankings and economic gains. This agentic component of the educational experience serves as a pertinent point of discussion in subsequent chapters, as economic aspirations come to complicate the nation's relationship with pupils in its experiment with different political economies.

The literature on the Việt Nam-American War is rich with analysis of military combats and historical accounts of the two opposing sides; however, to date there is an absence of analysis on the cultural and ideological mission of education during this time. Following Yinghong Chang, in this chapter and dissertation, I “focus on a more humanistic dimension: The interaction between revolutionary change and human nature” (Chang 2009:2). The human factor, I argue, was decidedly effective in winning over the support of civilians and undecided political subjects in Southern Việt Nam. This mission, was reliant on the beliefs, fervor, agentive actions and labor of individual young adults who committed themselves to the newly formed education system of the North. Even during time of warfare, when the future of the country was highly uncertain and unpredictable, these workers lent their efforts because the task of education and the rewards of it via the belief of the creation of a free nation was immediately felt. I utilize this interdependent relationship between young adults and the educational system as a foundation that facilitated the growth of the revolutionary movement. In subsequent chapters, I show that the relationship between pupils and the system was tested in the periods after unification, then intensified after market liberalization.

This chapter mainly tracks the migration of revolutionary educators from the divided Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) downwards towards territory governed by the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) and American occupation, as well as the proliferation of classrooms and education in southern Việt Nam. I ask, how did efforts by revolutionary workers contribute to mobilizing education from Northern Việt Nam to cross into to Southern territories? How were revolutionary members selected? What was

their rationale for participating? And how did the movements create educational spaces in the southern frontier? Through interviews with revolutionary educators, their memoirs, and archival data, I weave together the human component of such systematic expansion. Here, I do not aim to represent historical “truths” nor do I provide an exhaustive historical account of events. Instead, I draw upon key points in the educational experiences of people at that time to elucidate what I call revolutionary agency. This concept is utilized to demonstrate the moral and sacrificial labor applied to the educational project. Particularly at this time, people expressed that they participated in education selflessly to contribute to the liberation of the nation. Monetary and material compensation at this time was a minimal factor because most of the population in Northern Việt Nam, including the new government, was confronted by lack of food supplies, resources, and monetary funds. I argue that the relentless efforts exerted by revolutionary workers during the Vietnam-American War, particularly teachers, was indispensable in laying the foundation for the new educational system in the post-war years.

Thematics of a Revolutionary Education

The crux of this chapter will focus on the Đì B mission, but before I arrive at that analysis, I must present some key factors that led to the rise of a revolutionary education in Northern Việt Nam during the war of resistance against French colonial occupation, an expansive foundation was constructed to migrate educational workers during the Việt Nam – American War. Without such foundational commitment, the building of a socialist

unified education after reunification would have undoubtedly taken longer to put into effect.

Revolutionary education in Việt Nam burgeoned in arduous and impossible circumstances. I utilize the term *revolutionary* to discuss education in Northern Việt Nam because, even though the country has endured tremendous shakeups in government and warfare in the last two centuries, the educational system of today traces its roots back to the humble and uncertain years of the Socialist Revolution. While this predated 1945, September 2, 1945 is the formal date of independence that was declared following the success of the August Revolution, which also took place in 1945. From a small organization in the shadows of French colonialism to a modern systematic operation, the expansion of education since the August Revolution in 1945 to the end of the Vietnam-American War proved to be possible only through the trenchant galvanization of revolutionary fervor and voluntary efforts by millions of people who *believed* in the revolution. As Hy Van Luong emphasized, the Việt Minh movement was able to garner mass support because they “had placed greater emphasis on the socioeconomic revolution at that time to the advantage of poorer peasants” (Luong 1992: 221). The complexities of how the Việt Minh ascended to power has been analyzed in a number of texts so I will not go into further details here (Asselin 2013, Marr 2013, Ninh 2002, Nguyen 2012).

The social awareness and participation of intellectuals, political actors, and military personnel, as well as civilians, in the Socialist Revolutionary project was not by chance or accident, but speaks volume on a colonized people’s compacted disdain for foreign occupation and hope for a liberated nation. David Marr’s analysis of the colonial

climate of Northern Việt Nam in 1945 offers an insightful look into the tension that Northern Vietnamese experienced under French and Japanese occupations that culminated into the August Revolution (Marr 1995). Marr’s description of this resentment and tension exemplifies Crane Brinton’s analysis of the anatomy of revolution of the old regimes of France, England, Russia, and America. Brinton explained that one of the dominant reasons that men of these old regimes were angered enough to mobilize revolutions was because they felt “cramped” by power holders of those eras. Being “cramped,” as Brinton described, was mainly due to economic hindrances produced by political arrangements. But cramp “must undergo moral transfiguration before men will revolt. Revolutions cannot do without the word “justice” and the sentiment it arouses” (Brinton 1959: 36).

Documents from the revolutionary movement in Việt Nam certainly echoed Crane Brinton’s description of “cramped” peoples in other revolutionary contexts. In a declaration circulated by the newly formed revolutionary Ministry of Education in 1945 (Bộ Quốc-gia Giáo Dục), the newly formed education apparatus employed a vehement anti-colonial language to condemn educational practices of the French regime which in 1945, had occupied the country for eight decades. The declaration exclaimed that,

The task to revolutionize education is the foundation of work to build an independent Việt Nam following the doctrine of a democratic republic. 1. We have endured 80 years of subordination under the French and endured an education system of slavery, merciless deception, inhibiting our talent and intellect, bringing out the ugly traits of our people...exhausting our capacity to be humans and citizens. 2...Our new education will not rely on the obfuscation of our intellect... It has to purely train strong young adults in their physical form and soul to have the will and clear skills and organize in a manner to bring benefit to the individual and the collective.⁶

⁶ Dossier 1, page 28. “Dự Án của BQGGD về chương trình cải cách GD năm 1945.”

The tone and anti-imperialist rhetoric of the emerging revolutionary government at that time echoed the radical sentiment that Ming K. Chan and Arif Dirlik argued was the catalyst for the founding of the National Labor University in China in 1927 (Chan and Dirlik 1991). Yinghong Cheng also emphasized that, “the new man was created not to ensure that new ideas would replace old ones and the party’s tasks would be carried out, thus avoiding becoming merely a topic in political history, but also to stand up as an alternative human model that dwarfed all prior or contemporary types of human being” (Cheng 2009: 3).

While Brinton (1959) and Marr (1945) offered us a wide snap shot of the political and economic climate leading up to revolutions, they did not incorporate an in-depth analysis on education as a pertinent component that accompanied revolutions. Susan Bayly, drawing on Gyan Prakash (2008), argues that, “attempts to refine and nuance the view of colonized people with knowledge of foreign languages and the modern scientific learning which made Socialism attractive to many anti-colonial intellectuals, as having experienced the so-called Enlightenment project as a form of ‘epistemic violence’ suppressing creativity and deadening self-worth and moral agency” (Bayly 2007: 16). Instead of focusing on government and their quest for power, Bayly focuses on the role of the people, particularly intellectuals, and their educational journey during revolution.

Memoirs and texts written by and about intellectuals on their reasoning for contributing to the revolutionary project certainly proves Bayly’s point on the colonized subjects’ attraction to socialism (Nguyễn, Trịnh, Lê, Úng, Lê and Nguyễn 2014, Vũ 2012). But the revolution in Việt Nam did not only involve intellectuals and political

actors. The project aimed to create a new nation that required and active participation from civilians and turned them into state workers. In order for this participation to occur, civilians, particularly young adults needed to be made into an important component of this movement. Through conversations with people who were young adults living in Northern Việt Nam at that time, we come to see how the revolutionary project utilized agentive actions of young adults to build an educational system when that labor was needed. It is important to note that this was the dominant practice at that time; the state desperately relied on the agency and labor of civilians to hold posts within the apparatus. This relationship in subsequent years has become complicated as we will see in later chapters, when the state increasingly became more selective as to who was welcomed into the state apparatus.

I first became familiar with the revolution in Vietnamese education through archival research, as well as semi-structured conversations and interviews with retired teachers and professors who were active during different phases of the revolution. What began as a meeting with one scholar who was the son of a former minister of education, expanded into a productive network of exchanges with a former minister of education, retired professors, retired military personnel and former *Đi B* workers.

One of the first informants who invited me to her home on a couple of occasions was a retired professor and a pioneer in the field of Vietnamese literature, Mrs. Van Loan. The professor, who is now in her eighties, was full of vitality and fervor for life, the arts, Vietnamese language, and education. Her apartment that she shared with her husband (who also was a prominent figure in Vietnamese literature) was granted to her

by the state. The apartment they shared was not grandiose by any means for a family of highly important revolutionaries. The retired couple's apartment had enough room for a small family, but most of the space was occupied by books.

The professor was one of six students of the first cohort of Phan Chu Trinh general school, which was set up by Viet Minh forces, and led by the first minister of education, lawyer Vũ Đình Hòe. The professor then graduated to attend the Đại Học Văn Khoa, which later became the department of literature (Văn Học) of the Hanoi University of Pedagogy (Trần 2010: 16). Her father was also a famous literary scholar educated at a French colonial college. He subsequently offered his services to the Viet Minh/revolutionary movement. His post was to develop the literature department of the University of Pedagogy.

What I found significant in our conversations was her recounting of her experiences in education during the War of Resistance against French occupation. Mrs. Loan proudly noted that the first cohort received top quality in education because professors leading the program at that time were at the top of their field and the first cohort received the most direct attention. Through Mrs. Loan's recounting, however selective it might have been, I discerned the selflessness of educators at that time because classes were mostly held at night in remote areas so that enemy forces could not attack the classroom and its members. The professor remembered that there were three instances where she escaped death. Most memorably when she was walking with her father and her classmates, and a French helicopter hovered over them, firing ammunitions. The group

ducked and hid under long blades of grass to take cover from the enemy firing shower of bullets.

Extreme sacrifice, such as living away from family and facing death during class hours, was a common occurrence during the French Resistance years. These themes are covered in Susan Bayly's book, *Asian Voices in a Post-Colonial Age: Vietnam, India and Beyond*. In that book, Bayly utilizes the lived experiences of intellectuals' families to make an argument that moral agency was an integral component of people's lives during the colonial and revolutionary years. Bayly's book clearly demonstrates the critical role of the intellectuals' sacrifice to study and contribute to the revolution. What she left out however, was that the revolution was not only successful because of the contribution of intellectuals, but also the conversion of ordinary civilians into workers and intellectuals that held posts in the North as well as migrated to the South.

When Mrs. Loan completed her degree with the University of Pedagogy, she was assigned to Bắc Giang to hold General Education classes for the townspeople of that region. During that time she was separated from her husband, as he was assigned to teach in Thái Nguyên province. She explained that each region was only assigned one specialist because there was a lack of cadres. Since Mrs. Loan came from an intellectual family - her father was a professor and her sister studied history - her introduction into academic life was not too much of a surprise. However, she did share with me that when she took her exit examinations in General Education, she did not pass because she "hated" the subject of Natural Studies, what we would call Biology today. Mrs. Loan graciously

gifted to me a copy of a newspaper article published about her, in which she shared her life story in academia and the experience of not passing her exam.

The educational system of that time not only required contributions of those from intellectual families, as documented by Susan Bayly, but aimed to convert common civilians into educated subjects also. This component is very much apparent in both archival materials and through stories of other civil citizens at that time. Another professor and literary figure who welcomed me to her home for conversations was Mrs. Phuong. Like Mrs. Loan, Mrs. Phuong also lived in a communal apartment building, only newer. She shared her home with her husband, who was also a professor and a retired soldier. During the times of my visits, the married couple were going through an ongoing dispute with the developer of their building. Their apartment had become a hub for addressing the disputes, so we had to hold conversations in different parts of their home while different people were coming in and out.

While our conversations lasted several hours about a variety of topics pertaining to Việt Nam and education, germane to the argument of this chapter was Mrs. Phuong's revelations regarding her family history and her experiences in education. These clearly demonstrated the revolutionary project's goal to not only educate pupils from various class backgrounds, but also utilize the labor of those pupils to expand the system. Mrs. Phuong is the eldest daughter in her family of five children. She attended Việt Bắc University in Thái Nguyên in the 1960s and went on to hold post at Hà Nội University of Pedagogy in Literature. In recounting her experiences in education, Mrs. Phuong expressed:

My home actually has no tradition of education, as my father in the old time was a soldier in the army; that was all. After that, he became a worker at an office; that was it. My mother took care of children, on a cultural level, we were very ordinary, possibly even lower than now. Because of that, in the course of learning, I could not communicate with the people in my family about my studies. I was the oldest, followed by four younger siblings... Therefore, even after I finished university, I stayed at the university, I mobilized and motivated myself. One week after I completed university, I had already married my husband. At twenty one, I married. At twenty three, we had our child, and I raised our child on my own. The reason was that my husband was a soldier, he had to go the battlefield. The first difficulty was that if my family had order and discipline, a tradition of education, then my life would have been easier. But that was normal at the time, because the number of people in circumstances like my family was large. But if we talk about the number of children called “con nhà,” meaning they had education, discipline and order, children from middle-class, intellectual family, then I was not that. I came from a very regular family who came into the university environment and I forced myself to learn a lot.

Through Mrs. Phuong’s recounting of her young adulthood and journey in education, we clearly see her honesty in describing her family’s humble class background and the opportunities she acquired despite her pedigree. As described by Christina Schwenkel (2012), studying abroad in the Soviet Union raised one’s family social status as one not only received a higher education, but one also had the opportunities to make extra income to send back home.

I have provided narratives from Mrs. Loan and Mrs. Phuong to contrast the stories of two individuals belonging to two different family backgrounds. Their stories both involved shortcomings and obstacles: one failing her General Education exam and the other coming from an ordinary class background. But the common theme in their stories remains that the education system needed them; their intelligence, and their labor. Through their agentive action of acquiring education, they made themselves available to aid the state apparatus. Neither of these professors participated in the Đì B mission. Mrs. Loan expressed that she wanted to, but her health restrained her so she did not go. She

did however, lend her efforts to teaching pedagogical courses in the South after reunification. Mrs. Phuong spent the American War years in Russia, where she completed a Ph.D in literature, then returned to lecture at the University of Pedagogy.

Sending Di B Educators to the South

By 1962, almost two decades after the victory of the August Revolution of 1945, Northern Việt Nam had already built a fully functional education apparatus from primary education to university level. Right after the August Revolution and the Declaration of Independence on September 2, 1945, the emphasis of educational training at that time was to filter citizens into the medical field and pedagogical training. Medical training was necessary to attend to the health of the population, and pedagogical training was necessary to teach a vastly illiterate nation the direction of the revolutionary movement. During this time, students in the North were frequently sent to study abroad or work in the Soviet Union. Those with newly minted doctorate degrees returned to work for the University of Pedagogy at the National University of Vietnam, Hà Nội. Pedagogy was an indispensable component of a revolutionary education. When the system was designed by the first cohort of revolutionary educators, a liberating, democratic and scientific⁷ approach towards pedagogy was always the guiding principle. The first cohort of professors for the University of Pedagogy received training under French colonial education but later joined the revolutionary movement, for they believed that the movement could liberate the country from colonial and imperial rule. The first and second ministers of education, Vũ Đình Hòe and Nguyễn Văn Huyên, never officially

⁷ Dân chủ và khoa học

joined as party members; however, they both dedicated their lives to the revolutionary government. Mr. Nguyễn Văn Huyền served as a beloved minister by the people until his death in 1973.

During Northern Việt Nam's war for liberation from imperialism with Southern Việt Nam and the United States, the revolutionary government did not solely concentrate on the military front. While war was raging on the battlefield, revolutionary workers on the social, cultural, and medical front were sent across the 17th Parallel to fight the ideological war (citation about revolutionary or social movements in other contexts needed here). The revolutionary front stressed that the South must not only be liberated by military efforts, but must also by social and cultural missions.

During the 1960s and early 1970s, with intense warfare between Southern Vietnamese and American troops and the National Liberation Front, a special operation was organized to send teachers, ideological workers, nurses and doctors (henceforth, members from these groups will be referred to as "revolutionary workers") across the 17th Parallel to liberate what the Northern government called "fellow Vietnamese brothers and sisters suppressed under imperialism." The special operation was titled "Đi B." From 1961 to 1975, a reported 2,950 teachers from the North were sent down the Southern territories via the Trường Sơn trail⁸. The teachers predominantly obtained education and training at the University of Pedagogy, a branch of the National University of Việt Nam, Hà Nội.

⁸ Nhà Giáo Nghệ An Đi B: Một Thời Để Nhớ, pg. 10.

The Trường Sơn trail (also called the Hồ Chí Minh trail), that mountainous terrain threading from central northern Việt Nam over to Laos and Cambodia, would come to be one of the strategically significant landscapes of the war. The trail was a network of footpaths, trails, and secondary roads that had been employed by the Việt Minh dating back to the anti-colonial struggle against French rule from 1946-1954 (Roseneau 2001: 6, Duiker 2000). As early as 1958, the DRV began laying the foundations for a logistical pipeline by training personnel to establish way stations and guide systems in Laos. During the 1959-1964 period, Hanoi created the trail's key logistical infrastructure, including truck parts, repair depots, vehicle shelters, and food storage and distribution facilities (Roseneau 2001: 6). The trail facilitated the transportation of weapons and equipment from north to south. In the American war years during the 1960s, the trail also facilitated the migration of revolutionary workers. In the earlier years of the Đì B project, members primarily walked on foot. In the later years, the trail eventually accommodated motorized vehicles at particular segments of its path.

The Education Situation in the South From the End of French Occupation in 1954 to Liberation in 1975

Before the official partition of North and South Việt Nam at the 17th parallel in July 1954, Southern Việt Nam already had a lively proliferation of activity from revolutionary forces. Educators from the North set up offices in the South to investigate the educational environment while also opening classes to spread ideas from the revolutionary movement. At that time, Vietnamese from the South also settled in the North to contribute support to the revolutionary government. This movement was called

“gathering to the North” (tập kết ra Bắc). This movement was heaviest during 1945, and then again in 1954 after the official partition. During those times, adult males from the South joined the military while their children attended schools organized by the socialist government. It was those young men and women revolutionaries whose homeland was in the South who would then later contribute to the Đì B movement.

In the North, schools were organized specifically for students from the South. This was to keep oversight on students from the South as they were then unfamiliar with the political agenda of the North. Before the partition, revolutionary officials also settled in the South to keep track of the movements of the enemy. Revolutionary workers were present to assess the education activities of their enemy. They reported back to the Office of Education, then to the Ministry of Education in the North. Through reports from revolutionary officials in the South in 1953 and 1954, a diverse range of additional schools proliferated. In addition to schools from the revolutionary movement that opened, schools opened by religious and ethnic communities such as Catholic schools and schools for the Chinese and Mien ethnic groups operated as well. In 1954, the Southern region had five General Education Schools (Trung Học) that belonged to the revolutionary movement, from that number, four were in the western region of the South. The schools only went up to the fifth grade with the exception of one, which went to the sixth grade.⁹

In addition to opening schools and convincing civilians to lend support to the revolutionary movement, officials also took on a mission to investigate the operation of

⁹ Dossier 156, pg. 19

schools in zones of the enemy. In a January 1955 report from Nguyễn Văn Lương, the vice head of office of the Office of Education in the South, he reported that,

Beginning in 1954, our office had given permission to two cadres to enter the region of the enemy Sóc Trăng – Cần Thơ to investigate the situation. We saw that the enemy, even though they had given attention to opening schools, they did not take control of the content; therefore, we should use that error to push the mission to move ahead with our education. We should prepare more teachers and students, to contribute directly to the center of the campaign against the American enemy and the Southern puppet government.¹⁰

Having presence in the South prior to partition fostered a familiarity with the people and terrain that aided the revolutionary movement during the intense war years with the Southern and American troops.

The Journey South

By 1961, seven years after the partition of the two countries that led to intense warfare in the Southern battlefields, the Northern government initiated an operation to liberate people in the South through a streamlined effort of sending revolutionary workers into Southern territory. The population of educators that volunteered to facilitate in the liberation and reunification of the country were former students of the South that had obtained training in the North. By May 1961, under the direction of the Central Committee, the operation to infiltrate and liberate the South was already in its preparatory stages. Teachers who qualified were sent to training at The School to Foster Politics of the Ministry of Education (Trường Bồi Dưỡng Chính Trị của Bộ Giáo Dục, or T05) and The School of Training of the Department of Reunification of the Central Committee

¹⁰ Dossier 156, pg. 20

(Trường Huấn Luyện Của Ban Thống nhất Trung Ương, or K105).¹¹ Teachers were trained in political ideologies, excellence in pedagogical training, and strength and endurance training for the uncertain and arduous journey ahead.

In October 1962, the State of Education of the South, also known as the State R, was established to facilitate the educational mission in the South.¹² One could argue that this organization was also established to project a political presence. Prior to the establishment of the State of R, it was reported that there were educational activities on the revolutionary side from cadres and teachers that lived in Southern lands. Different regions had opened classes to train teachers, composed textbooks, and published educational journals. Liberated zones (zones controlled by the revolutionary side) and contested zones with a presence of revolutionary workers had activity geared towards revolutionary education. But it was not until the establishment of the State of R that education had official leadership from the Central Committee (TWC) and the Revolutionary Party.¹³ The State of R worked directly with the Department of Propaganda and Training of the Central Committee of the South.¹⁴ Hereafter, the Department of Propaganda and Training of the Central Committee of the South will be called B3, the State of Education of the South will be called State of R and Central Committee of the South will be called TWC for short.

¹¹ Nhà Giáo Nghệ An đi B

¹² Tiểu Ban Giáo Dục miền Nam, or Tiểu Ban R

¹³ Tiểu Ban Giáo Dục R: Một Thời Để Nhớ, pg. 9

¹⁴ Ban Tuyên Huấn Trung Ương Cục miền Nam

On February 3, 1963, the State of R and TWC drafted decision 44/TT to clearly inform the mission of education of the South of Việt Nam as:

We must demolish the policy of dumbing down our people and other forms of enslaved education, reactionary, aliening, and depraved of the American and puppet. We must actively build a democratic and scientific education according to Marxism-Leninism, to foster the political and cultural for the working people, firstly for our soldiers, in order to train the younger generation comprehensively, to know deep hatred for the enemy, to love the country ardently, have intellect, morality and health in order to continue the struggle against the Americans for national salvation and social reconstruction later.¹⁵

At the time of commencement of the State of R, the organization only began with four cadres, with Mr. Dương Văn Diêu as the head of the organization and Mr. Trần Thanh Nam as vice head.¹⁶ Knowing that more man power would be needed to operate a revolutionary education system, the North had to provide qualified cadres to take on the mission of infiltrating the South to carry out its political and cultural mission in conjunction with the military war. To prepare for the journey, only teachers who had demonstrated devout commitment to the revolutionary project could enlist. In addition, only teachers in good health - this included male and female teachers - were allowed on the mission. There were indeed a number of male and female teachers eager to volunteer themselves in any way possible to liberate the South, but their weak health deterred them from participating in the mission. There were members who had to volunteer multiple times before they were allowed to participate in the mission.

¹⁵ “Dựa vào lực lượng nhân dân, cán bộ giáo dục và các nhà giáo yêu nước, kiên quyết đả phá chính sách ngu dân và các hình thức giáo dục nô dịch, phản động, ngoại lai, đòi trục của Mỹ-ngụy. tích cực xây dựng một nền giáo dục dân chủ và khoa học theo chủ Nghĩa Mác-Lênin, nhằm bồi dưỡng chính trị, văn hóa cho nhân dân lao động trước nhất là cán bộ và chiến sĩ, nhằm đào tạo thế hệ trẻ toàn diện, biết căm thù giặc sâu sắc, biết yêu nước nồng nàn, có kiến thức, đạo đức và sức khoẻ để tiếp tục sự nghiệp chống Mỹ cứu nước và kiến thiết xã hội sau này”.

¹⁶ Ba Lần Vượt Trường Sơn

The dedication and fervor of revolutionary teachers were relayed to me through an interview with a former teacher now retired and living in Đà Nẵng . I will refer to this retired teacher as Mr. H. I was introduced to Mr. H through a conversation with another teacher, Mr. L, whose family was from Đà Nẵng but had sided with the revolution. Mr. L too has worked in education since before the Việt Nam-American War.

I arrived at Mr. H's home on an early evening in March, 2014. The courtyard of the modest home was decorated with a variation of foliage. The songs of birds singing enliven the courtyard as well as the living room where we had our conversation. Mr. H participated in the expedition Đi B in 1964 and served the Quang-Nam Đà Nẵng region until liberation. After reunification, he continued to work as a teacher, then later the director of the Office of Education in Đà Nẵng until he retired. At our meeting at his home in March, 2014, he expressed that the factors that permitted a teacher to participate in the expedition was health and secondly was family history (lý lịch). Health was primary, *lý lịch* was important but not critical. When I asked why he was willing to participate in such a dangerous endeavor, the retired teacher replied,

Why did I volunteer? Of course, you know, we were at war with the U.S. At that time, it was a war that used all of our people's strength (dân tộc) to fight the Americans. Therefore, every youth and student like myself, had very good consciousness (ý thức) about participating in that war. And especially, my home (quê) is the South. Therefore, I wanted to return home to contribute to the task of liberating my home (góp phần về sự việc giải phóng quê hương). Therefore, I was very excited (hào hức). To speak generally, university students from the South studying out there were very excited.

Another teacher who participated in the expedition, who I will name Mr. B at a private university in Hồ Chí Minh City whom I interviewed at his home in February 2014, remembered that he and his fellow cadres used to call the training schools “biệt

kích,” meaning commando or surprise, because it operated in secrecy. He remembered that in addition to ideological training, they had to practice carrying thirty kilograms of weight on their bodies. While carrying the weight, they must practice walking, climbing and descending from hills in the day and the nighttime. After the three months of intensive training, these cadres were granted ten days of rest to say goodbye to their family.

The professor at that time was newly married and had a son just over a year old. He remembered in fondness that his wife was worried if he could go through with the mission at all because his stomach had “special issues.” He had been hospitalized two times before for his stomach troubles but he was committed to participate in the mission. After the ten days of rest, members of this mission returned to the school where they were trained to receive necessities for the secret operation. Members were given a bag packed with clothing, a mosquito net, a hammock, a nylon sheet to protect them from rain, medicines, and food. Members also had to change their name to protect their identity during the mission. The professor remembered that at that time, they were truly “members of the liberation front for the people of southern Việt Nam.”

As this was a secret mission, it operated under the name of Đì B to deflect attention and gossip that could foil the carefully planned movement. The professor who I interviewed remembered that he left his training school in the north on December 12 of 1964. Before leaving, the members saluted the flag of the Liberation Front and sang the anthem, “Liberating the South.” At 5PM on that day, Mr. B remembered that all of the windows of the vehicles transporting the group were covered to take them to the Phú Thọ

train station. The group had a separate train take them through Hà Nội and then to Vinh. Every time that they passed through a train station, they had to close their windows to protect the secrecy of the mission. Mr. B remembered that he broke the rule because once they were at the station in Hà Nội, he handed a letter through his cabin window to a stranger to ask them to send a “goodbye” letter to his wife. Later on, Mr. B discovered that his wife did receive that letter. Once arrived in Vinh, another covered automobile transferred them to Đông Hới. From there, the group members were carried by buffalo carriages to Làng Ho; this began the trail and communication line for the Trường Sơn Trail.¹⁷

The systematic and scientific planning and use of the trail proved paramount to guiding revolutionary workers as well as transporting warfare equipment from the North to the South. Whenever the revolutionaries moved, they had to move in groups guided by a head station leader and carefully watched by another leader at the end of the line. The station leaders were only responsible for the station ahead of them and the station behind them. Whenever they transferred a group to the following resting station, they would go back to the station behind them and await the next group. Timing and calculation proved to be of tremendous importance for the mission. The groups had to move together at the same pace from station to station, but the grueling conditions of the trail - high mountains, scorching days, cold nights, and torrential rain - eventually weakened the health of revolutionary workers. If a worker was not in good health to follow his group, he rested at the next station until he recovered. Only the unfit worker could stay behind to

¹⁷ Ba Lần Vượt Trường Sơn, Page 6

regain his strength, the rest of the group had to march ahead to keep the timely flow of the transit of people and communication line.¹⁸

After approximately five weeks of trekking the trail, members reached the end of the “democratic” line held by the North and entered the “liberation” line led by the South. The liberation line began in the south of Kon Tum bordering Bô-lô-ven of Lao. At this point, revolutionary workers were assigned to different paths depending where the mission needed them most. Mr. H was sent to zone 5 and Mr. B was sent further down to the western region of South Việt Nam. The name for the journey further south was called “Ông cụ,” or old man. Mr. B recounted that he did not arrive to his station until the middle of March 1965, eighty-six days since he departed from Northern Vietnam. His final stop to commence the revolutionary agenda was at the station called X40 in the region of Tây Ninh.

Establishing the Base

When revolutionary workers were finally stationed, they had to assemble living quarters for themselves made out of found materials. Some members found housing with townspeople depending on which region they were assigned to. Mr. H and his group established bases in liberation zones right next to the zones of the enemy, and Mr. B and his comrades built housing out of found materials from the remote woods. Underneath their built homes, they had to dig tunnels to hide from bombs and attacks.

¹⁸ Ba Lần Vượt Trường Sơn, Page 11

Daily meals were a constant challenge due to limited access to food and supplies. The workers mainly ate communally to stretch their supplies and limit waste as much as they could. Cooked rice was the most important staple of the daily meal for it lined the stomach and kept the workers feeling full. Cooked rice was often accommodated with salty dried fish to enhance the taste. Plants of the surrounding regions were also useful to making warm soup to wash down the dry, bland rice. Mr. B called this soup “international soup” (canh toàn quốc), meaning, whatever ingredients they found, they threw it into the mix to make the soup.

Housing and daily meals were the basic necessity that had to be worked out, but real work was in assembling the building blocks for a revolutionary education. This task required the knowledge to build an education system but also to recruit townspeople to attend the classes. This relied on teachers and cadres to form social bonds with villagers. The integration of revolutionary teachers, soldiers, and cadres into civilian life was of critical importance to the outcome of warfare during this time. Because liberated zones controlled by revolutionary forces and zones occupied by South Việt Nam and American military forces were right next to each other, both sides of the war had to compete for the loyalty of civilians. So how did the revolutionary side attempt to compel the dedication of the people and how were they able to convince civilians to let their children attend classes? Mr. H recounted,

Entering here, the South at that time, it was true that liberated zones were wide, but education had not developed because people were spread too far apart (rất thưa dân). The Americans and our enemies, they fought the population, they forced people into the cities where they could regulate them. Our liberated zones were only populated by small pockets of people. The population was very sparse and little. Therefore, education in those circumstances was very

difficult. People did not live in a concentrated area. And education without a concentration of people is very hard to do. Secondly, they fought us continuously (đánh phá liên tục, đánh phá liên tục). When I came here in 1964/1965, the situation was a little better. At that time, the position of the revolution was rising. But the years after, the American forces fought us continuously (đánh phá rất ác liệt). In 1965 American military began to send in soldiers, but I came here in 1964, around that time, our liberated zones were easier to breathe. But in 1965 when the Americans sent their troops, the fighting was cruel and intense. Therefore, doing education at that time was strenuous (gay) As you know, classes at that time, we had to dig tunnels. Like in the liberated zone of Quảng Nam, at that time I facilitated the operations of education in that area. We opened up to level 2, at that time level 2, now Trung Học Cơ Sở. But the numbers were small, not many, studying circumstances were very difficult. Teachers at that time worked for no wage or salary. Like us, we had to go down to the zones of the opponents (vùng địch) to recruit college students (móc, nôi, kéo sinh viên) and brought them to the liberated zones. We assembled them together and we had to train them in pedagogy. Then send them to stand in front of classes in the liberated zones. No wage or salary! Meaning, they just did it but there was no pay, at that time, there was no pay. Us, we had a little subsidy: a few kg of rice, but nothing to call pay or wage. We primarily relied on the families in the city. And students were very sparse within a class, maybe 15-16 students. But it was enough to call a school. Even though we called it a school, it was only a few classes. The classes were separated from each other because the people didn't live together in one area. Wherever there was a small population of people, then we opened a class. We dug tunnels and studied in the tunnels. The teachers taught, but if the opponent swept through, then they participated in fighting. Therefore, very many teachers during those years sacrificed. Sacrificed very much. To think of teaching as very peaceful, it was not, they were teaching and fighting. Therefore, teachers sacrificed very much.

While Mr. H extended the network of revolutionary education in the central region, Mr. B was assigned directly to the heart of revolutionary education, the Department of Education of the Central Committee of the South (Tiểu Ban Giáo Dục Trung Ương Cục Miền Nam), the State of R. Mr. B's cohort from the group K33 was composed of 207 teachers, 93 of whom were sent on the mission to the South. Under the direction of the State of R, the tasks and duties of different divisions of education were concise and segregated into units necessary for the different zones: liberated, contested, and temporarily occupied by the enemy. The State of R was divided into what was called specialized divisions (phòng chuyên môn). The different offices that were active were: Bình Dân Học Vụ (Education of Common People), Phòng Sư Phạm (Office of

Pedagogy), Phòng Phổ Thông (Office of General Education). The revolutionary side had intentions to build a university but this task was not accomplished during the time of warfare. Each office and division had a different special target for different populations. Each specialized division was also a unit of combat. The people in each division must find an area in the woods to establish housing, a work area, and a tunnel. Each division had to take care of their specialization but also must be ready to engage in combat¹⁹. One of the significant contributions that this department accomplished was to assess the education environment of the South and plan how to proliferate revolutionary education in the future. The State of R granted Mr. B the task of writing textbooks for the level one general curriculum.

The first school that was established by the State of R was called The August School of Education.²⁰ The August School of Education was established on September 6, 1963 in the forests of Hoà Hiệp, district of Tân Biên in Tây Ninh. The school commenced with students who also had duties as cadres, teachers joining the movement from zone 6 (South-Central Việt Nam) to Cửu Long, and also Vietnamese cadres returning from Campuchia.²¹ Given the turbulent circumstance of war, the school was only active for two sessions. Session one commenced from September 1963 through April 1964 with 107 students. Session two picked up from August 1964 through May 1965 with 125 students. Under the training, students from both courses had to learn to specialize in fields of the social sciences, literature, history and geography. In addition, they were

¹⁹ Phòng Sư Phạm Tiểu Ban Giáo Dục R, pg 45

²⁰ Phòng Sư Phạm Tiểu Ban Giáo Dục R, pg 45

²¹ Trường Giáo Dục Tháng Tám, pg 18

trained in pedagogy. More importantly, the school attached special importance to teaching students politics, the doctrine of Marx and Lenin, the revolution of the South, socialist education, the methods of thinking, dialectical materialism and historical materialism, in order to help students repair the deviated consciousness with which the schools of the Americans and Southern Việt Nam had equipped them. The school emphasized that students needed to have a new method of recognizing the problems of the natural and social world, to assess the enemy, to believe in the task of liberating the South and reuniting the country (Nguyen 2008: 25).

One might ask, why would cadres and existing teachers enroll in school? Mr. B wrote in his memoir that, “of course, the number of teachers [from the August School of Education] had excessive revolutionary spirit and love for the country, but their level of specialization and professional knowledge were still very limited” (Nguyen 2008: 25). Although teachers in the South might have had revolutionary values, they were not all equipped with the necessary training to teach. Teaching was not a professional skill that was innate in everyone. As pedagogy was a field that was heavily implemented through training in Northern schools, the revolutionary movement aimed to replicate the same rigorous education in the South. While not all cadres and teachers were officially trained during the Việt Nam-American War, after the war, teachers had to go through official training to continue to work in the state apparatus. Graduates from the August School of Education went on to teach for schools throughout the South aligning with the revolution.

Assembling classrooms

Expanding classrooms in a war climate required contributions by townspeople of the South. In regions occupied by the revolutionary fronts, classes and schools were set up through contributions by civilians. A portion of the teachers-to-be were recruited by cadres from the North, but countless Southern civilians also volunteered. Monetary compensation was almost non-existent for their contributions, and the danger was grave. But incrementally, Southern men and women volunteered their labor to the revolution. This proved catastrophic in innumerable circumstances because death was always a possibility.

Young men and women who were of age fourteen and above attended pedagogical classes. Those who were able to temporarily traveled to the August School of Education, received their training there, then returned to their home region to set up classes. In the years of the 1970s, more and more teachers who had been trained operated pedagogical classes in their regions to teach for new teachers-to-be.

In Region 5, which encompassed central Việt Nam, the front was able to open a Pedagogical School for General Education in September 1964. This school trained teachers for nine provinces in the region. In addition, the region also opened a pedagogical school to train teachers for the mountain provinces of Tây Nguyên and the western areas of Quảng Đà, Quảng Ngãi, Bình Định. The pedagogical school for the mountain region operated for ten years during the war, taught five sessions that trained 250 teachers for level 1, and taught two sessions for 125 teachers for level 2. In 1974 the

region was preparing to open a College of Pedagogy, but this plan was not realized because cadres and teachers had to service following the attacks in Buôn Ma Thuột.

In Region 5, each province had at least one General Introductory Course to Pedagogy (Lớp Sư Phạm) to train teachers and Supplementary Culture Classes (Bổ Túc Văn Hóa) for cadres. The region was able to open primary classes to level 1, then also level 2. One revolutionary, Tô Uyên Minh, wrote in an essay that schools proliferated under the concrete guidance that: “Wherever there is a liberation zone, there is a school” (Tô 2012: 32). However the operation of the school was always under the threat of being attacked. When enemy forces swept through, classes temporarily stopped operation. When the enemies left, the classes reopened. He noted that General School Level 2, Lý Tự Trọng was burned and attacked by the enemy ten times, and then the school was re-established ten times (2012: 32).

In the region of South Central Việt Nam (Trung Nam Bộ), which encompasses areas around Đà Lạt, at the end of 1962, they opened a pedagogical class for cadres of the different provinces and districts to unify the direction and viewpoint of revolutionary education, and the content and methods of teaching. In 1965, officials the region opened an Intermediate School of Pedagogy in a forest called *Rừng Nhum* in Long An. In 1966, the school relocated to Bến Tre. Then after Tết of 1968, the school relocated to Tà Nu of Pray Veng province bordering Laos. At the escalation of the war in the early 1970s, the school relocated again on the other side of the Laos border and remained there until reunification.

In the western region of the South, or Tây Nam Bộ, a school of pedagogy for the region was established to train teachers level one and level two. In ten years, the school trained 400 hundred teachers for level 1 and 145 teachers for level 2 and improved training for 146 cadres in education. In the eastern region of the South, Đông Nam Bộ, including Saigon and Nam Định, teachers attended training courses by the State of R which offered short term courses (Nguyen 2012:17).

Writing and Reproducing Texts in Time of Warfare

The State of R was also responsible for writing textbooks for the classrooms that were to come. The department was able to build a General Education curriculum and Supplementary Culture Classes (Bổ Túc Văn Hóa) to teach illiterate townspeople how to write the Vietnamese national language (quốc ngữ). This also allowed for the revolutionary movement to plant the seeds of ideological training for townspeople unfamiliar with the revolution. In times of turbulent warfare, the practice or “gift” of granting civilians language and literacy proved paramount to establishing a line of communication, and more importantly, trust. Jack Goody, too, has shown in the context of colonial Brazil and West Africa, that slaves in West Africa were not as successful at uprising and revolt because the oppressed in West Africa did not “have a book to guide, sustain, and stimulate them to revolt” (Goody 2000: 107).

In the year of 1965, professor B recounted that he was assigned the responsibility of writing the textbooks for the general education level. This proved to be a complicated task because he did not have access to the textbooks of the complete Northern

curriculum. More challenging yet, printing supplies were not available. The first few books were all written by hand until the teachers learned how to assemble makeshift ink screeners. This technology allowed for the duplication of textbooks, however, supplies were still fairly limited.

Ms. Dinh Le Ha, a revolutionary volunteer from the South, recounted that in 1968, she was assigned the task of replicating texts. She was assigned to a branch titled Letters and Documents and Production of Educational Texts (Văn Thư – Phát Hành Sách Giáo Khoa). She first had to learn how to type with a typewriter without paper or ink to learn the positions of the letters. She learned at night next to an oil lamp because during the days, she assisted with other tasks. Only after she was fluent with the typewriter was she given materials to type on. Early on, she typed onto stencil paper. These were made of a sturdy material with a coat of wax on the surface. When the letter pressed onto the wax, it made an imprint of the letter. The paper was then put on to a silk or fabric screen, then a coat of ink was pulled over the sheet, making a page of text.

During the years of 1968-1973, the majority of educational texts were produced in this fashion. It was not until after 1973 that the State of R received more modern printing technologies from the North. Since then, materials were duplicated by a printing press. During the days, Ms. Ha's component produced letters and textbooks in a designated area. At night, the component took on the task of washing ink from printed papers so that the papers could be used again for other purposes. Each day, the Propaganda Committee (Ban Tuyên Huấn) of the TWC would bring documents and textbooks to be duplicated by Ms. Ha's component. The meeting location changed frequently due to the war climate. At

the meeting zone, the Letters and Documents department (Văn Thư) traded materials with the Propaganda Committee. Members of the Propaganda Committee then delivered letters and textbooks to their designated destinations.

At the central base of the Letters and Documents department in Sau Cau, Ms. Ha and colleague dug a trench to store the printed texts. The trench was 70-80m square with wood flooring. The revolutionary workers called this their mini library. While the printing operation was efficient in carrying out its duties, its existence was always under threat. Ms. Ha recounted that one day in May 1970, she received word that the operation had to relocate due to the threat that the area would soon be attacked. Within fifteen minutes, Ms. Ha and her comrades had to gather all their personal belongings as well as the mini library that they carefully built and evacuate the area. Ms. Ha carried one bag on the front of her body with her belongings and one bag on her back with the printing materials and textbooks. As the comrades ran away from their working grounds, they heard explosives firing behind them. The operation then relocated to Campuchia.

Some Points on Education of the South

During the war years, Southern Việt Nam via control of the RVN operated its own educational systems with more heterogeneity than the monolithic educational system of Northern Việt Nam. Thaveeporn Vasakul's dissertation demonstrates that education in Southern Vietnam was reliant on cultural influence first from France then the United States. She argued that, "the school apparatus of the State/Republic of Việt Nam reflected a mixed internationalist/statist character" (Vasavakul 1994: 48). While the French school

system served as the archetype for building of the RVN school apparatus, a variation of schoolings were in operation: French schools, Vietnamese public, semi-public, and private schools; Buddhist, Catholic, and secular schools; Schools for the Montagnards, schools for the Chinese, and schools for the Khmers.

At this time, the Ministry of Education of the South (Bộ Giáo Dục Quốc Gia Việt Nam) was located in Saigon and oversaw the licensing and curriculum planning of schools outside of the state's public schools. Semi-public, private, and religious school sought licensing and curriculum from the Ministry of Education, but the construction and management of schools were mainly handled by private personnel. I argue that during this time, though schools belonging to the Ministry of Education of the South were better funded with more modern amenities, their reach was not as encompassing and their educational apparatus was not utilized to facilitate war efforts as much as those of the North. Furthermore, even though schools proliferated in the urban zones, in more remote regions away from Saigon, schooling existed few and far between. This circumstance allowed for the revolutionary education to earn the trust of townspeople.

Transitioning After the War

In the days after the military defeat of the Southern government, the revolutionary front members occupied local offices respective to their training. Mr. B was granted the title of head of the Department of Education in the South. Making his first speech to his new colleagues, Mr. B announced, "April the 30th is an important day- the day that our people won the war, the day we all won the war. Happy April 30th, the day the people of

the south have been completely liberated.” The professor expressed his salutations in front of a group of 500 teachers and workers in education of the old government. He expressed that he did not want to relish in the fact that his side has won the war and the workers were on the side that lost. He thanked them for still being present and for giving him the chance to speak in front of them.

As part of his first tasks, the professor organized a conference for the Office of Education for all of the South as a way to welcome in a new year of schooling under the revolutionary government. From the old ministry of education 3,040 workers had stayed to offer their labor to the new government. Even though there was a drastic change in ideology and government operations, schooling in Southern Việt Nam did not face a drastic change to match the curriculum that was being taught in the north. During the school year of 1975, students were allowed to finish the curriculum as it was already constituted. New changes were not introduced until the fall of 1975, and even then, the changes were not abrupt, but instead transitioned slowly. At the end of the war, secondary education in urban zones of the South capped at the twelfth grade to match the systems of Western countries. In the North, however, secondary education capped at the tenth grade. It was not until 1979 that Việt Nam as a whole, North and South, ushered in a centralized national general education system that capped at the twelfth grade.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have drawn on conversations with educators from the North and former Đì B educational specialists, as well as archival and published texts in Việt Nam

to analyze the contributions of teachers to expand revolutionary education during the Việt Nam-American War. I argued that the continual expansion of the revolutionary project hinged on the labor and sacrifice of the revolutionary workers. The stories that I have recounted demonstrate not only the fervor for revolution and liberation, but the endurance that revolutionary workers committed to facilitate the social and cultural work of the revolution. Amidst impossible circumstances, revolutionary workers persisted in teaching, producing textbooks, and even engaging in combat to fend off their opponents. In the next section, I focus on efforts to expand revolutionary education in the South in the years following reunification.

Chapter 2

Rebuilding the Nation Through Education: Centralized Planning and Exclusionary Practices in the Newly Unified Việt Nam.

“That time was so much struggle, so much struggle that you can’t imagine. There was a lack of everything. Eat, there was not enough to eat. Wear, there was not enough to wear,²²” expressed by the mother of Lan Anh, Ms. Six, as we sat and conversed at her banh mi cart in front of an alleyway that leads into a residential neighborhood. Ms. Six’s banh mi cart was her livelihood and main source of income. These forms of businesses are not just cultural staples, they also function as the dominant source of income for thousands of individuals and families. They exist particularly because civilians cannot find positions in official employment posts and, in some cases, because civilians enjoy the freedom of informal labor. Such fields of work are recognized as forms of employment by the Ministry and Offices of Labor and War Invalids and are factored into the employment rate. Informal work, however, is inconsistent, dependent upon the weather, and without social security.

The struggles that Ms. Six was referring to were her experiences as a young adult in the years after the war when the state was focused on the rebuilding of the country under one new nation-state. This struggle was also expressed by other adults that I spoke to who had grown up during that era. During casual conversations where I did not even

²² “Hồi đó cực lắm, cực không tưởng tượng được. Thiếu thốn đủ thứ hết. Ăn không có ăn, mặc không đủ mặc.”

solicit about life experiences during this era, people commented on how far Đà Nẵng City has come in terms of material abundance and the improved quality of life. Such observations were stimulated when adults inquired about my life experiences in the United States. They were aware that life in the U.S was plagued with work, bills, and debt. They compared the hardships of life in the U.S. to Đà Nẵng to make the assertion that if one had access to money, living in Đà Nẵng was a better option. They could live life at an easy pace, see their families whenever they wanted, and have access to a vast array of material goods. They compared this improved condition to their experiences during 1980s and early 1990s when life was much a struggle.

The struggle that townspeople spoke of referred to the overall experiences of lack that everyone encountered during the years after the war. The lack in steady food supply was mostly vocalized. In addition, people also lacked material goods and reliable transportation. A common lament that people shared was that one was lucky to have even a bicycle to navigate everyday life back then. Ms. Six remembered that she had to walk all the way from her home over the Han Bridge to District Three everyday to go to school and then back home in the evening.

As captured by the following passage in a collection of stories titled “Chuyện Thời Bao Cấp,” or “Stories From the Subsidization Era,” the son of a prime minister expressed, “at that time, what did people wish for? A Thống nhất bicycle. An Elephant’s Ear fan. A pair of plastic Tiền Phong slippers. An egg for each meal. A sack of rice that did not smell like mold. A block of fragrant Camay soap...”(Thu Hà 2012: 23). Through

this brief passage, we grasp the sense that what people cherished most during this era were the most basic of necessities: a bicycle, a bar of soap, an egg.

Lack, during that era did not refer to material inequalities that fostered class differentiation (Bourdieu 1977); rather, it was a condition experienced by most, if not all because the country was recovering from a catastrophic war while also rebuilding economies under a new ideology of ownership, production, and distribution. Even though that Ms. Six experienced lack, she was not entirely cast to the margins in the years following reunification. She received training in infrastructure building and was actively employed within the state apparatus -- employment that she frowned did not bring sufficient monetary and material compensation, but she nevertheless received education and training and then was utilized for her labor based on her training. Ms. Six's employment, however, came to a halt when she left her job in order to have a family. After losing her employment within the state apparatus, Ms. Six has subsequently sought out a living doing various occupations such as cleaning, washing dishes, and taking care of the elderly and the sick. She constantly performed various labor until her friends banded together to invest in a *banh mi* cart for her.

Ms. Six's lament of this era, similarly expressed by others, emphasized the struggle of lack and material scarcity. But important to my analysis of the role of young adult in the reunification of the nation and building socialism, within that struggle that Ms. Six as well as millions young adults experienced, she also had the assurance of education and the utilization of that training. Miss Six received a social recognition that differed greatly from her youngest daughter, Lan Anh, whom I came to know through

volunteering with the youth club. Ms. Six often frowned about Lan Anh. She was worried that her daughter was twenty-something years old and still has not pursued anything permanent or long lasting as a career track. Ms. Six recognized that Lan Anh's options are limited because she has not enrolled in any intermediate or college training. She and her other daughters have convinced Lan Anh to take some English training so she can at least apply it for a permanent position.

At her daughter's age, Ms. Six had received training and employment, a social recognition that her daughter was still seeking. Social recognition and the closure of the circle of education and employment during the years of rebuilding, the mid 1970s-1980s, were then a common practice that facilitated nation building. This was in no way a utopic practice of an economically wealthy nation that provided substantially for its citizens. The dominant practice of this era was to provide enough support of education and employment so that common citizens were socially recognized as educated and employed, even though monetary and material compensation was scarce. This planned assurance, however, has become ambiguous and unpredictable in the years following renovation. The effects of market liberalization upon the bodies of young adults will formulate the object of analysis in the subsequent chapters.

This chapter is an investigation of the life experiences of young adults through the lenses of education, employment, integration and nation rebuilding in years following the end of the Việt Nam – American war in Đà Nẵng City. It picks up where chapter one left off with a grand plan of expanding a revolutionary national education. The actors that drive the narrative of this chapter are now adults still living in Đà Nẵng. They are the

parents of students and civilians that I came to know. This chapter will also capture voices from teachers who have been working in the city since the end of the war. This chapter does not aim to tell an exhaustive “truth” about this era but instead focuses on the dominant attributes of the educational experience of that time to provide a basis for comparison to the experiences young adults in contemporary time in the following chapters. Whereas chapter one argued that a collective sacrifice and moral devotion on the behalf of young adults was pertinent in expanding a revolutionary education, this chapter argues that reunification required the state apparatus to direct student bodies into different educational tracks dependent on regional and national needs despite personal desires.

Utilizing the stories of young adults living through the decades of 1970s and 1980s, I argue that rebuilding the nation required strict planning on the behalf of the governmental apparatus. While higher education was, of course, an object of desire for many, it was reserved for those that met the criteria of allegiance to the revolutionary movement. Those who had affiliation with the “enemy” were contingently incorporated into the newly unified nation at the behest of the governmental apparatus. However, some with affiliation with the defunct Southern regime were not permitted to enroll into state universities, they were offered education at a lower status, such as technical training and short-term training. These young adults also subsequently were recruited into employment fields based on their training, a practice that greatly differs experiences of young adults in contemporary times.

Theories of Rebuilding the Nation Through Education

The revolutionary expansion southward was consistently spearheaded under the dominant banner to liberate the whole of Việt Nam from foreign occupation and eradicate inequalities inflicted by imperialism, colonization, and private property. While the North “won” the war for liberation, the post-war reunification years were the darkest times that millions of Vietnamese within the country and abroad could remember. Relying on Vietnamese governmental statistics, David Marr and Christine White report that in the South alone, “the war produced 20,000 bomb craters, 10 million refugees, 362,000 war invalids, 1 million widows, 880,000 orphans, 250,000 drug addicts, 300,000 prostitutes, and 3 million unemployed; two-thirds of the villages were destroyed and 5 million hectares of forests destroyed” (Marr and White 1988: 3). Grave economic insecurities, plus fear of persecution for those affiliated with the Southern regime, paved the way for the mass exodus of Vietnamese to places all over the world: Southeast Asia, Hong Kong, Australia, France, the United States, and many more. Andrew Hardy wrote that by April 1980, the number of men, women, and children who had left Việt Nam tallied at 333, 725, reaching a cumulative total of 839, 228 in countries of first asylum by 1997 (Hardy 2003: 117, Condominas and Pottier 1982: 90, Robinson 1998: 294).

Amidst the human, environmental, and political messiness of reunifying the country, the economic joining of a shortage economy in the North with a varied capitalist economy in the South into to a centralized economy was also a challenging feat (Paine 1988). Melanie Beresford’s analysis of the North and South economic divide shows that “sections of the southern society proved capable of resisting the changes which the

government wished to bring about after 1975: this brought forth both a repressive response and also a series of compromises which have created new institutions and practices not hitherto part of the Vietnamese Socialist system” (Beresford 1988: 96).

A disaggregated economy posed a challenge to education and training, as production in light and heavy industry was fluctuant and stagnant (Beresford 1988). Reunification also proved challenging to a uniform transition in different regions of the South. Melanie Beresford noted that the region of Trung Bộ, where Quảng Nam – Đà Nẵng was situated, more readily accepted collectivization than the Mekong Delta because the former was poorer in terms of scarce means of production as opposed to the latter which was more abundant (Beresford 1988: 63).

Theoretically, during the reunification years, Việt Nam entered what Dean Mitchell called an era of “nonliberal rule” and Foucault called an experiment with “National Socialism” (Dean 2001). An analysis of nonliberal rule in Việt Nam during the postwar years advances debates surrounding education, ideology, and employment because in order for the state to advance its goal of building socialism, it relied heavily on authoritarian rule to direct individuals to study in fields that the apparatus deemed as necessary regardless of personal desires. Following Foucault, Mitchell Dean argues that whereas the art government in Western democracies relied on biopolitics and sovereignty, nonliberal government too depends on these two realms, albeit through different means.

Dean calls biopolitics a politics concerning the administration of life, particularly as it appears at the level of populations. It is “the endeavor . . . to rationalize problems

presented to governmental practice by the phenomena characteristic of a group of living human beings constituted as a population: health, sanitation, birthrate, longevity, race” (Dean 2001: 47, Foucault 1997: 73). Following this rationale, a liberal government that relies on the biopolitics of its populations governs through knowledge of the population via the sciences and statistics, but actions taken by men, women and children, particularly with education and economics, are dependent on the individual’s will and skills. Individual will, education and economic growth are dominant rationales of governance in different configurations of liberal capitalisms because the joining of these three entities is argued to be the best configuration for growth.²³

Dean and Foucault identified such states as Nazis Germany and China as “nonliberal governments,” and I include Việt Nam during its reunification years. The exercise of government, including the education and health of its population, relied on sovereign elements of decree, interdiction, punishment, and reward within a detailed biopolitical intervention into the intimate lives of its population. Nonliberal states accomplish this through targets, quotas envisaged by state-centered plans. Mitchell made clear that “Chinese policy is nonliberal in that it does not rely on the choices, aspirations, or capacities of the individual subject” (Dean 2001:61).

Dean’s analysis of nonliberal government applies to the case of Việt Nam during the reunification years because in order to align all individuals with state planning of building socialism, particularly in the realm of education and employment, the state, via local administrations directed individuals into fields that the apparatus deemed pertinent.

²³ http://www.bhef.com/sites/default/files/brief_2006_leap.pdf

This was regardless of individual aspirations for following educational passions or striving for economic wealth. As Mikhail Heller argues in *Cogs in the Soviet Wheel* (1988), through the “nationalization of time,” Soviet authorities established a synchronization of time where people lives were directed by a “past-present-future” framework. Therefore, a person who positioned himself in accordance with the timing and planning of the party-state was willing to accept his party-assigned task in life with an outlook to the future planned by the state. This matters for understanding the role of individuals and nation building because even though individual desires were suppressed, it was deemed necessary for the collective common good. Under the new centralized economy, the state desperately needed the labor of individuals to be employed in diverse sectors, and individuals needed to dedicate their labor for monetary compensation and desirable rations. This interdependence, however, was not productive for exponential economic growth (Verdery 1996), which paved the way for debates of renovation in the late 1970s (Beresford and Đặng 2000). The interdependence of individual and state for building the nation changed drastically in decades following Đổi Mới where individuals were encouraged to rely on themselves for economic prosperity and not the governmental apparatus. This allowed some actors to thrive in the marketplace while others longed for the embrace of the public apparatus because of the instability of the market economy.

Aspirational Plans for a New Education System

Immediately following the end of the Việt Nam – American War, despite economic turmoil, general education was chosen by the Party, via operations by the

Ministry of Education along the Central Committee, to build a system that facilitated a truly “democratic” apparatus with creating the “new laborer” as its main focus.

Prior to the official end of the war, the Ministry of Education had already drafted a plan on how to revolutionize and reconnect the education system of the whole country. In a project planner titled, “The Research Committee to Revolutionize General Education,”²⁴ education planners devised the plan that the revolution in general education will follow in the ideologies of Marx and Lenin under the directorship of the Party. In the new phase of the revolution (reunification), the North was to resolve the problems of “who lost to whom,” and charge ahead to unify an independent democratic people with those subsumed by Americanism, imperialism, and colonialism. The North needed to integrate socialist ideologies into “toxic” practices of capitalism and ascend the North firmly to socialism along with the South in order to achieve complete independence and peace for the entire nation.

At the core of this new education was the role of production, which was stressed heavily in the plan. The plan stated: “We must hold on tightly to the dictatorship of the proletariat class, strongly bring into play the rights of collective ownership of our people to labor, charge forward with our three revolutions: revolution in relationships of production, revolution in technology, evolution in our beliefs and culture, within that, the revolution in our technology must be key²⁵.” The plan stressed the role of labor and production in order to guarantee that young adults that reached laboring age of 15-16 could be put to work. To facilitate this new general education system focused on

²⁴ Dossier 3411

²⁵ Dossier 3411, page 3

production and the linking of the school with the community, planners proposed a schooling system with the central core of moving student bodies into fields of labor, with only a small percentage allowed to enroll into colleges and universities.

If we look at this design for a new education system, students who had reached the age of 12-15 were dominantly filtered into production after general schooling in production (lao động sản xuất). Students between the ages of 16-18 were filtered to specialized intermediate schools or general school of work, and students who had completed general education could also move to technical school or specialized intermediate school. Those who had gone through schooling and had worked in production could later move up to colleges and universities, but the broad foundation was heavily focused on study and work going hand in hand.

This newly proposed apparatus of the society-school model drew on the influence of Marx and Engels on educational planners. because they stressed that a socialist revolution could only be won through the efforts of the people. That if the proletariats were incorporated into the educational fold, they too could transform the vexed social world of capitalist private property. By having the school as a dominant institution that oversaw the political maturation of individuals while guiding them into fields of production, the educational apparatus envisioned that every individual would find consciousness and produce materials to be shared communally. This idea of the productive school is a component that I will elaborate on later in this chapter.

Marx did not write in depth on education but he was very explicit on eradicating private property and the violence of capital possession. His approach to education,

however, suggested (but never completely fleshed out) that the educational process could raise class-consciousness and transform lived social realities. Such a conceptualization of education was clear when Marx wrote that, “The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is men who change circumstances and that it is essential to educate the educator himself” (Marx 1945)²⁶

This passage encapsulates the argument that men (humans) themselves must educate themselves to become aware of their own domination and that practices of education could transform this. Under the leadership of Marxist ideas, supported by the Party and the Ministry of Education, the Minister of Education during the 1960s and 1970s, Mr. Nguyen Van Huyen, was very admiring of the Socialist Revolution in the Soviet Union and the revolution they had accomplished in education. In a book titled *Vấn Đề Cải Cách Giáo Dục Liên-Xô*, Mr. Huyen and Mr. Nguyễn Sỹ Tỷ reported on their observations of the revolution in state education in the Soviet Union. One of the components of state education that they noted was the Soviet Union’s ability to build a system that combined physical labor and intellectual labor. In fact, they stressed heavily on the labor component of public education:

We must revolutionize our schools in order to prepare for our youth completely, equally having a standard level of culture of general education in order to continue on to college, at the same time having a career to enter the social world, and enter into production in a way that is natural and rich in quality. Because of that, we must have labor education in our schools in order for everyone, depending on their circumstance, to study and work at the same time. If labor education is just instruction, or a glossing over, then that is too abstract. If we cannot organize for students to participate in production education, then we cannot educate students with the right attitude in

²⁶ <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/>

relation to labor (Nguyen and Nguyen 1962: 18).

The diagram below was taken from a research plan to revolutionize public education in the newly reunified Việt Nam after the war. The model similarly resembles the plan for schoolings that educational planners observed while conducting research in the Soviet Union, particularly Russia and East Germany. The model heavily emphasized on practical labor training in the lower-tiered schools. According to the model, after General Education, student bodies will be moved into schools that trained in various productions. At the top of the diagram, only a small number of student bodies will be moved into college and universities for training in research.

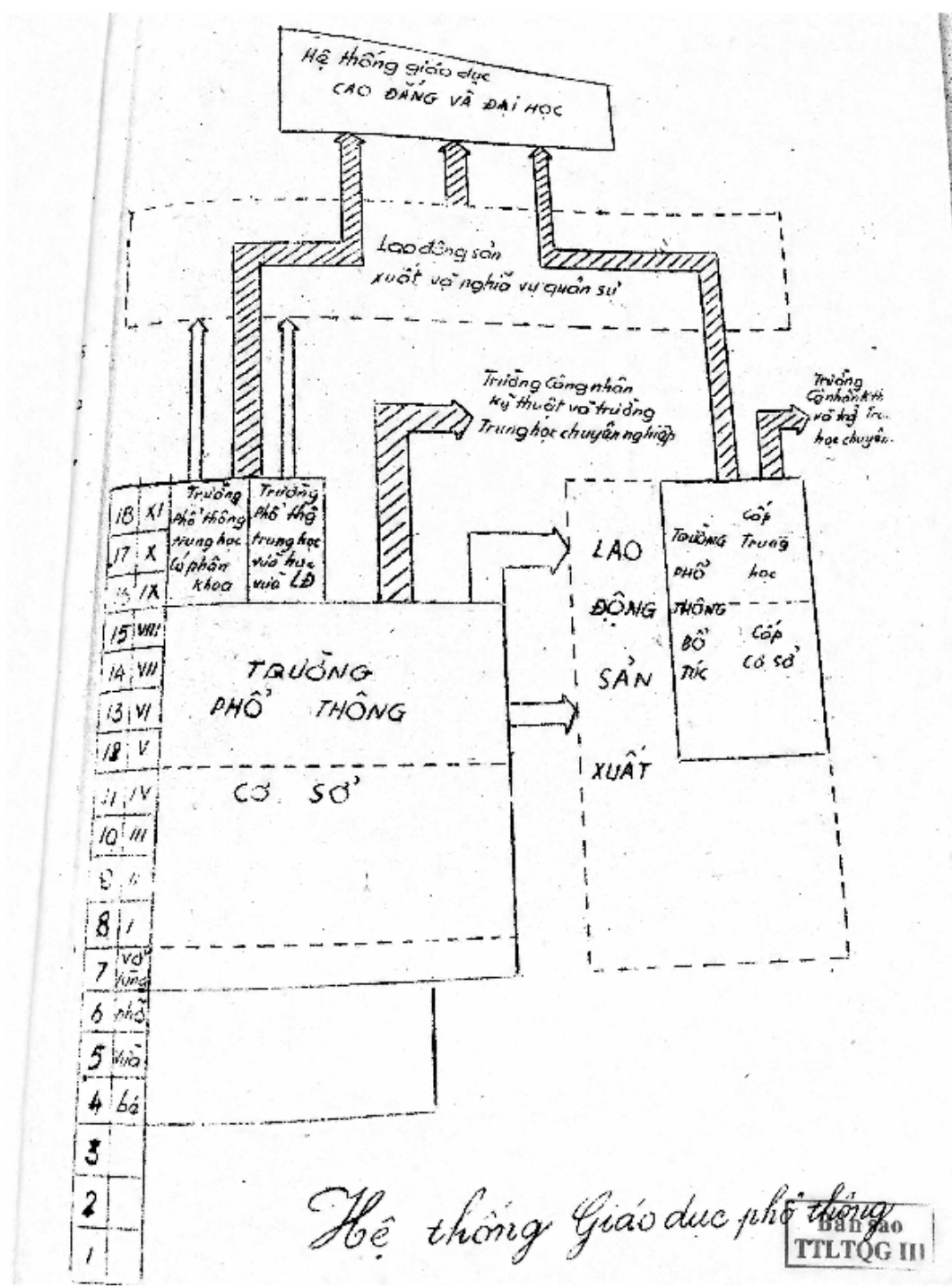


Figure 1. The design for a unified socialist education system²⁷

²⁷ Dossier 3411, page 25

But while the visions to build a revolutionary system were grand and idealistic, actually putting the ideas forth faced human obstacles. In the following sections, I will show that enforcing a new schooling system based on a bureaucratized democracy not only required the exercise of power and exclusion that facilitated central planning, but also enacted exclusionary practices on those with the “wrong” or no political affiliations. In the following sections, I will provide analysis from the memories and life experiences of young adults growing up at that time, as well as archived reports of occurrences within the schooling apparatus that posed challenges to mobilizing the educational system.

Remembering Growing Up in the Time of Reunification

The years following the official end of the Việt Nam – American War, commonly recognized as April 30, 1975, were not a smooth transition nor was it a triumphant victory, as enduringly proclaimed by the state apparatus. Here, I will not go into details on how the war was won, nor will I provide any analysis on military missions. I will instead provide stories from people who were young adults at the time, regarding their educational experiences and the employment opportunities that were afforded to them.

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated how the revolutionary movement was heavily reliant on utilizing the efforts of common townspeople to expand the movement. Aside from this population, across all regions of southern Việt Nam, there resided other populations of townspeople with allegiance to the former government, along with people with no ties to either political affiliation. Such affiliations and allegiances proved to be critical in re-integrating into a new nation state.

The data collection for this chapter spanned years of encounters and semi-structured interviews with people who lived through this era. The stories have come to life mainly through people remembering and particularly through my inquiry. Memories of the hardships of life during the reunification years were frequently expressed by my informants, but their particular experiences of education arose mainly through my solicitation.

Memories are difficult to track, particularly those of individuals which have not been documented or commemorated by larger institutions like local government or by the state. In regard to memories concerning the Việt Nam – American War, anthropologist Christina Schwenkel (2009) has shown that the war continues to generate competing memories. For those who lived through the rebuilding of the nation, the memory of experiences from their young adult lives is colored by opportunities that were given or taken from them. For instance, informants who had affiliations with the former government spoke about loss and resentment, while cadres remembered that time as one of struggle; that there were restrictions placed on non-revolutionaries, but it was only for a brief time.

I first became aware of life experiences in Việt Nam after the war directly through my parents well before I embarked on this research project. Having immigrated to the U.S in the early 1990s and having had family members directly involved with the Southern regime during the tumultuous war, my parents had experiences that were shared with many living in the southern part of the country, as well as with those that fled with the mass exodus. Even years prior to my research, my parents at times randomly

recounted stories of land belonging to their parents that had been unrightfully “stolen.” We now know that through the official narrative of the governing apparatus, repossessed lands were “redistributed” for a variety of purposes including communal projects. They recounted stories of family members being sent away for “re-education,” then coming back with limited social and employment prospects available to them.

But amidst these tales, they also recounted stories of how they were sent away to school, my mother to Trường Trung Cấp Thương Nghiệp, The Intermediate School of Commerce. This was a trade track school that taught pupils the theory and practice of working at state-run commercial stores. She reminisced that one had to take an exam to be admitted into the school and that only a handful of people in her class were admitted. Her parents allowed her to go because the school offered room and board, which meant that there would be one less mouth to feed at home. At that time, such form of education was appreciated by the household because it lessened the economic burden. When she completed the program, she was taken by a friend of a family member to find employment at a state-owned commercial store where she continued to work from the early 1980s until the early 1990s.

While the framing of my mother’s story was to inform her children of how *she* felt unjust under the new governing apparatus, her story reveals that even those with affiliations with former government were afforded opportunity in the new nation, albeit not all opportunities were equal. My mother’s experiences of reintegration into the newly reunified nation was not dissimilar to Ms. Six, whose story I began this chapter with. Ms. Six made no secret of her life struggles following reunification mainly because her father

was a landowner who owned several rice storages that delivered to retailers, including officials working for the Southern government. It was those relations that made him fear for his well-being after the defeat of the Southern regime. Ms. Six recounted that he owned a ship that docked on the Han River, and it was that ship that he used to cross the seas to flee out of Việt Nam.

In the absence of her father and his economic contribution to the family, Ms. Six decided to not complete the twelfth grade and forwent prospects for enrolling in university. In her words, she remembered that she was a good student, always ranking first or second in her class, but that time had been unfair for her family. Without her father's economic contribution, she had to leave the twelfth grade to work for her family's well-being. She also recounted that even if she had tried harder in general education and aimed for university, she wouldn't have been able to enroll anyway because of her father's affiliation with the former government.

Framing Reintegration Through the Lens of the Apparatus

Miss Six's remembrance of the opportunities that were afforded to her was not a singular experience but a common one amongst civilians who had family members affiliated with the former government. These experiences can be corroborated with documents circulated by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Intermediate Education.

In March 1977, close to two years after the declared end of the war, the then Office of Education of Quang Nam Đà Nẵng province reported to the Ministry of Education that there were fifteen General Education schools operating, containing

students from grade ten to twelfth with a total of 12,960 students.²⁸ General schools in the South at that time went up to the twelfth grade while the North went up to the tenth grade. One of the main reasons for the ten-year ladder of the North was to reduce the number of years of general school so that student bodies could migrate into specialized higher education for labor training more quickly, as the country needed laboring bodies.

In the aftermath of warfare and reunification, education in the South was not confronted with an abrupt revolution, but instead underwent a transition that lasted several years. This was partially because the reunification regime lacked cadres from the North who had rigorous training of the revolutionary path to hold post in the South. Through introduction from a cadre of the Youth Union, I met a now retired teacher who was one of the first members selected by the Ministry of Education to take on assignment for assembling the Office of Education in the Quang Nam Đà Nẵng province. The teacher, Mrs. Xuan came down to the province towards the end of 1975 of what was the last operation of the Đì B mission for education. She received specialized training in the natural sciences at the University of Pedagogy in Hà Nội and was recruited to resettle with her husband, who had training in the chemical sciences.

As a cadre and a member of the side that “won,” she remembered that social life at that time was a struggle for cadres and civilians alike. Being from the North, she and her family were not automatically granted housing by the ministry but instead were assigned to live in remote areas, “vùng nông thôn,” until accommodations in the city could be decided upon. Mrs. Xuan expressed that the lack of cadres made assessing the

²⁸ Dossier 3434, page 1.

numbers of schools, teachers, students, and curriculum an arduous task for her. She remembered that, due to being in a new land, living in a remote area, commuting to work multiple kilometers everyday, she wanted to resign the assignment and return to the North. Mrs. Xuan's predicament was similarly experienced by other cadres and was reported in documents from the Office of Education. In such documents, officials reported that the experiences and mentalities of cadres from the North was a concern as some of them seemed to want to move swiftly through their assignment so that they could return home in the North.²⁹

Mrs. Xuan corroborated that while assessing and mobilizing a new educational system, workers who had direct affiliations to the former military in the South were let go from their posts. This view of mistrust as handed down from above and enacted by officials is where I will turn to next to assess the rationale of building a new educational system. During the new school year that followed the "end" of the war, The Ministry of Higher Education and Specialized Intermediate Schooling circulated notices to provinces of the South on the process of holding examinations and enrolling students into universities, colleges, and specialized intermediate schools. The circulation declared that those who were qualified to participate in the exams were

Everyone who is a citizen of the Socialist Republic of Việt Nam and have not lost their citizenship . . . They must have culture³⁰: to enroll in university and college, they must have graduated from level three of general education (12 or 10 years) or from level three of *Bổ Túc Văn Hóa* Education. To enroll into Specialized Intermediate Education, students must also have graduated from levels of education stated above. Only those belonging to ethnic minority groups

²⁹ Dossier 2274, page 16

³⁰ Culture, or *văn hóa* is often utilized to mean those who are educated and cognizant of the revolutionary path and follow the ideologies of socialism wholeheartedly. A cultured person apply the lessons that they've learned to their daily life in school, at home, with their families, and in their community.

who received priority policy and who had finished level 3 of general education could also participate in exams for universities, colleges, and intermediate education.³¹

While the outline of those who could take the examinations were broad, it was the criteria for who could receive priority enrollment that revealed exclusionary practices enacted upon student bodies. The circulations explicitly outlined the terms, conditions, and criteria of those that were eligible to enter schools. Universities received the strictest regulations. Among those who received *priority* in enrolling in college and university entry were:

- 1) Those who had received recognition and medals for bravery in battle and those who were heroes in labor;
- 2) Those who had participated in battle, production and participated in revolutionary assignment from two years onwards... particularly those who participated in guerrilla missions, as commandos in cities, and youth that participated in the revolution in liberated zones must have participated one year prior to April 30, 1975 and are still continuing their assignments;
- 3) Those who belonged to ethnic minorities of the South. If those who are ethnic minorities from the North, they must have entered the south before August 1945;
- 4) Those who are children of disabled veterans from before August 1945 until now; children of disabled veterans during the resistance war against France and rank 8 during the war with America;
- 5) Those students who had parents who contributed to revolutionary organizations;
- 6) Those students who have had parents who were cadres of the revolution before August 1945 and have continually served for the revolution. Those students who have had a father or mother that have been active on the battlefields of the B, C, and K missions and have continued to serve the revolution;
- 7) Students who are children of cadres of the revolution within the regular staff (*biên chế*) of the state at least one year before April 30, 1975 and who had continued to serve the revolution;
- 8) Students who had a father or mother who had contributed to protection facilities of the revolution that have had offices from the district (or something similar). Those students that had older or younger brother sisters who were veterans of the revolution, or had three older or younger brothers and sisters who had participated in the revolution at least one year before April 30, 1975 at any of locality belong to the old South;
- 9) Students who were children of industrial workers or agricultural workers that directly produced (*sản xuất*) and had a good history of political consciousness;
- 10) Those students that had a father or mother who is of Kinh ethnicity that have had serviced in production in mountainous regions, that themselves have official registry in mountainous regions, have volunteered long term in mountain regions after graduation. Those who have volunteered to build the new economic zones for the time period of at least 2 years and beyond.³²

³¹ Dossier 2658, page number not listed.

³² Dossier 2658, page number not listed.

Such strict restrictions, in combination with the limited number of colleges and universities in the South, made it nearly impossible for students with affiliations to the former Southern government any opportunity to enroll into university. Through the experience of students, such measures could have been perceived as a form of exclusion or even punishment, but through the view of the apparatus, such measures were coded through the rhetoric of trust and political consciousness.

Mr. Thanh, now a retired father of a student, remembered that when the new government took over the nation, he was an excellent student at his school, always at the head of his class. At the time, he had aspirations to enroll into medical school in either Hue or Hồ Chí Minh City. The first year he took the exam, he was not able to enroll because of his lý lịch. As Anne Marie Leshkovich writes, the lý lịch is “a socialist tool of classification to make the population legible through state categories of economic and political class (Leshkovich 2014: 149). The document outlines an individual’s birthplace and class identity and his or her family’s political affiliation. Leshkovich notes, “after the end of the war in 1975, these documents were crucial to the economic and political reckoning of the “high socialist” years as the basis for classifying southerners in political terms as supporters or opponents of the revolution and in economic terms by documenting their peasant, worker, or bourgeois capitalist origins” (2014: 150).

Mr. Thanh’s lý lịch merited scrutiny because his father had political affiliations with the defunct Southern government and rented his home to Americans during the war. After being denied admission into medical school, Mr. Thanh waited a year to apply again but was again denied. It was not until 1978 that Mr. Thanh applied to the

University of Polytechnic in Hồ Chí Minh City. Hồ Chí Minh City had more universities than Đà Nẵng at that time, which increased his chances of winning admittance into a university. While Mr. Thanh seized the opportunity in HCMC, as his educational life was stagnant in Đà Nẵng, he also took a big risk because his family registry (hộ khẩu) and food ration booklet (sổ lương thực) were assigned to Đà Nẵng. The food ration booklet was among an individual's most valued possessions because it was how one received access to subsistence. The loss of or damage to this booklet was viewed as detrimental which gave rise to the common saying, "Your face is so sad like you just lost your food ration booklet³³." Despite losing his ration rights, Mr. Thanh left to study in Hồ Chí Minh City anyway because his educational prospects were stagnant in Đà Nẵng. He recounted that for one year, he did not have a food booklet and lived on the sharings of his classmates. One year into his studies he was able to cut his ration booklet in Đà Nẵng and transfer it down to Hồ Chí Minh City. He proudly recounted that it was not until he returned to Đà Nẵng after his studies that he found out that when he first took the exams for universities, he had indeed receive enough points to enroll into a medical university but the district did not reveal the results to him. Having returned to Đà Nẵng, he was able to find employment in the electrical department of a tobacco factory in Cẩm Lệ where he worked until he retired a few years ago.

Mr. Thanh felt that he was treated unfairly because his family had affiliations with the former government. But he believed that if the system was truly democratic, as it always purported to be, then his examination scores, the objective numerical

³³ "Mặt buồn như mất sổ gạo."

measurement of his performance, should have been enough to allow him to be a medical doctor to assist the nation. However, Mr. Thanh was not afforded a prestigious medical education because the educational system could not be sure of his intentions due to his family's affairs with the former government. Education at that time was firmly fixated on devotion to the revolution. Such devotion was assessed on voluntary contributions. Although Mr. Thanh achieved passing scores, his commitment to the revolutionary agenda could not be assessed; therefore, the government could not afford to take a chance on him.

One important thing to note again is that, even though Mr. Thanh's political record did him no favors in awarding him the education he *desired*, his intelligence and labor was utilized within the state apparatus. His case exemplifies the double-edged sword of centralized planning in that one lacked agency to act on life as one desired, but one was also utilized by the state apparatus and granted social recognition. Mr. Thanh's story of becoming an adult during that time drastically differed from those of his two children, both of whom attended the prestigious high schools in Đà Nẵng and university in Hồ Chí Minh City. His daughter, however, is still awaiting (she has been waiting for a few years now) employment fitting of her education. His son, on the other hand, was won a scholarship to pursue a master's degree in computer technology in South Korea and has been lucky enough to find employment that matches his training at a South Korean tech company based in Hồ Chí Minh City.

While Mr. Thanh was able to enroll in a university, albeit far away from his home and under pressured circumstances, what were educational opportunities like for other

people with questionable or no political affiliations? Through my participation with the Youth Union, young adults with whom I built a relationship over time shared their family stories with me, as well as introduced me to their parents. Mrs. Minh is the mother of Linh, a coordinator for young adult affairs at the union. Mrs. Minh owned a rice and grains business that utilized the front of her house as a storefront. Even though she is a business owner now, her introduction to the business stemmed from opportunities given to her by the local government after the years of reunification.

Mrs. Minh lost her parents at a young age and grew up during the war with family members. She attended school only until the sixth grade, which at the time was not an uncommon practice for children from families lacking financial stability. Mrs. Minh was in her teenage years when the war ended and reunification efforts began. She had an uncle who had contributed to revolutionary efforts, and when he returned, he was assigned to take over a state-run food store, “cửa hàng lương thực.” Because Mrs. Minh’s parents were no longer alive, her uncle vouched for her to become an employee of the operation. In December 1976, she began to work under contract.

Even though Mrs. Minh lacked a high level of education, her employment allowed her to take classes at night through the Bổ Túc Văn Hóa program, in which students studied a version of the General Education curriculum. The program taught students fundamental skills in language, mathematics, and the path of the revolutionary movement towards socialism. Throughout her employment, Mrs. Minh was afforded supplementary courses (lớp sơ cấp), in the science of food, rations, and scales repair. Because rationing was of utmost importance in distributing the right amount of food to

different individuals and families, learning how to operate and fix scales was indispensable to her job.

Even though Mrs. Minh lacked a clear political record, she was given employment and educational opportunities. While the education that she received was not at the highest level, her training and labor was utilized and deemed as important to the state apparatus. Through her employment, Mrs. Minh was even granted a moderate apartment for her and her family in state housing. But while Mrs. Minh was content with the employment she received, her position within the state apparatus was not eternal. Mrs. Minh recounted that in the aftermath of renovation during the mid-1980s, the state increasingly retreated from centralized food distribution to allow market competition in food production and distribution. During the early 1990s when marketization began to take a strong hold on the economy, Mrs. Minh was given permission to leave her position. She revealed that the order for her to leave was expressed as a “permission” to leave, but in actuality, she was being let go due to a restructuring of state operations. Even though Mrs. Minh was let go, her experience in food supply, as well as her established relationships with rice producers, facilitated the opening of her own business.

I draw upon the story of Mrs. Minh to demonstrate the necessity of human labor at that time in contributing to reunification efforts, even though it was not utilized at the prestigious level of university education. At that time, even a person with a moderate education was able to be utilized and make significant contributions to the operation of society.

So far in this chapter, I have utilized life experiences of a number of young adults in different fields of training to demonstrate that in order for the nation to unify and progress politically and economically, the exercise of power from the apparatus was utilized to direct individuals into varied fields: those with “clean” political affiliation were favored for higher level training, while those with questionable affiliations were strategically assigned to lower level training. In the next section, I will focus on a dominant field that a significant portion of the population was absorbed into, the field of pedagogical training.

Absorbing the Population Into Pedagogical Training

In 1976, the Ministry Of Education released a tally of accounted universities, colleges, and intermediate schools of the South. At that time Hồ Chí Minh City had twelve universities: University of Science, University of Polytechnics, University of Architecture, University of Agriculture, University of Medical Sciences, University of Dentistry, University of Pharmacy, University of Pedagogy, University of Technical Pedagogy, University of Economics, University of Literary Sciences and a program to teach accounting that belonged to the School for Cadres in Finance and Accounting.³⁴ Cần Thơ province had the University of Agriculture and the University of Pedagogy. Huế province had the University of Pedagogy and University of Medical Sciences. Đà Nẵng province at that time had only the University of Technology, which in 1977 became the University of Polytechnics.

³⁴ Dossier 2657, page 86

Beyond the universities, the Ministry of University and Specialized Intermediate Schooling pushed for localities to certify their intermediate schools so that they could become active under the new system. The strongest push for localities all over the South was to set up an expansive system of schooling for pedagogical training, as the South was in dire need of teachers at all levels of general education. Students who did not enroll into universities, colleges, or intermediate schools were channeled into pedagogical training. In some cases, because of the severe lack of teachers, some teachers were even put to work without official schooling. What I want to emphasize by drawing on the availability of schools and trends in enrollment is the demand of the apparatus and the experiences of pupils accepting posts that fell outside of their desires, a condition starkly different from contemporary times when pupils would very much prefer to be employed within the apparatus.

As reported to the Ministry of Education from Offices of Education from the South, after the complete liberation, the revolutionary side retained 65,000 education workers teaching at general and elementary education that the Americans and the “enemy” had left behind. The numbers of educational workers that the North sent to the South during and after reunification tallied at over 10,000. These individuals were deemed as having a firm political foundation and were assigned to hold specialized positions at different posts in the South. And the numbers of new teachers that were trained after liberation totaled over 25,000.³⁵

³⁵ Dossier 2274, page 14

Of all fields of occupation available in the newly reunified South at that time, educational workers were in the highest demand. In contemporary times, pedagogical training remains a dominant focus of the state, as tuition for pedagogical colleges and universities are subsidized, but the demand for teachers and the utilization of their labor has changed drastically, as thousands of graduates from colleges and universities of pedagogy cannot find employment fitting of their training.³⁶

Within pedagogical training, students were trained not only to teach, but also to become members of communal social life. Most notably common at this time was the utilization of students' labor to farm, perform social services, and produce miscellaneous items for the schools such as school supplies, straw mats, and brooms. This portion of education was called labor production (lao động sản xuất), which was very much a social function of this era.

According to reports of the Specialized Intermediate School of Pedagogy in Quang Nam Đà Nẵng in 1977:

The task of realizing our educational philosophy has moved forward and brought results in the school year of 1977-1978. The whole school has risen to realize our educational philosophy in combination with labor. All four forms of labor (production labor, public good labor, infrastructure building labor, as well as professional labor have all been deemed as important. Even though we do not have land to grow, we went to claim abandoned land far from us 30km . . . We brought teachers, cadres, and students to labor. The results: our school has claimed abandoned land to grow 7 hectares of yucca. We have cultivated 4.5 tons. We planted 13.7 hectares of pineapple, and 2834 jackfruit trees . . . We built one mechanic factory, one wood factory, and one small sewing factory that we have put to use. We also raised 55 pigs and collected 3.2 quintal of meat.³⁷

³⁶ <http://dantri.com.vn/viec-lam/hang-van-sinh-vien-su-pham-that-nghiep-loi-tai-ai-20160605124920363.htm>

³⁷ Dossier 2287 page 71

I have provided this excerpt from a communication of the Intermediate School of Pedagogy with the Ministry on the labor component of education to demonstrate that labor and profession were very much intimately linked at the time. This was also not a one-off occurrence but a routine practice as labor and education were practiced where the circumstances allowed. Through the language in the report, we see that labor was very much a part of the educational philosophy, a component that has almost vanished in current times, at least at school in the cities.

In the reunification years, pedagogical training not only facilitated the state's goal of indoctrinating the youth population into education and employment, it also recruited teachers from the former Southern regime and re-trained to work for the new government. I got a chance to engage in a generous conversation with three teachers who worked under the government of the Republic of Việt Nam in Đà Nẵng City. In the aftermath of the war, they maintained their employment as teachers. One of the most important transitions that they had to make was to learn the revolutionary ideologies of the new government. During our long conversation, one teacher relished her former days as teacher under the old government. She was thankful that she was able to retain her employment as a teacher although she argued that the vast expansion of the pedagogical fields minimized the importance and integrity of the profession. The teacher recounted,

Before 1975, students who entered the University of Pedagogy of the South were deemed as important members of society because entry into the school required amongst the highest scores. But after 1975, there was a period when the weakest students entered the pedagogical field. Because they couldn't enter other schools, the points of admission into the schools of pedagogy were the lowest. For a very long time after 1975, many decades, cohorts of teachers entered the profession, but they did not love the profession as much as us because they had to fall into the profession. They did not have enough points to enter other schools, not because they chose teaching. Their passion for teaching was not the same as us, we could see that.

Đổi Mới and the Beginning of the Liberal Era

Đổi Mới, or renovation, is likely the most used term in contemporary research on Việt Nam. *Đổi Mới* was envisioned as an economic restructuring from a centralized planned economy into a mixed economy based on the market as well as state-owned enterprises. In theory, this transition envisioned utilizing the market economy in order to arrive at socialism. The plan was to invigorate the economy and increase production within the country for export. The plan was to allow the economy to develop with regulation from government in order to ensure stable and steady material production and wealth accumulation. Most importantly, the plan was envisioned to assist everyone to obtain a common standard of living with access to necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, healthcare and education.

The transition over onto a more liberalized economy allowed individuals to seek out economic opportunities outside of the centralized economy. When I asked adult informants about their memories of this transition, the majority of them struggled to remember or perhaps find words to describe it because it was long ago and it does not directly impact the now. One parent of a student casually commented that in terms of material abundance, the present is much better. Children now had more to eat and all kinds of services and materials available to them. But the downside of the now comparing to then was that young adults had few prospects to find employment and a career for themselves. A young adult individual must be very talented (*rất là tài*), lucky, or have very good connections to find a footing in the employment world.

Within the field of education, the retreat of state welfare and the introduction of a liberalized economy produced social problems that no one could have predicted. One of the most pressing problems is the waning preference for non-university education. This problem has led to the expansion of unofficial off-hours schooling to accommodate students' demands for extra study so that they can excel over others in exams in order to win admission into university. This has become a dominant practice because students have increasingly developed an under-appreciation for the technical education track.

In an assessment of education in Việt Nam since *Đổi Mới* titled, *Giáo Dục Việt Nam: Đổi Mới và Phát Triển Hiện Đại Hoá* published by Việt Nam's Education Press,³⁸ educational experts provide an assessment of the steady decline in the number of students attending Trade Education and Specialized Intermediate Education. At the beginning of the *Đổi Mới* era, the number of students attending Specialized Intermediate Education was 122,860, and the number of students attending Trade Education was 113,016. By 1989-1990, five years after liberalizing the economy, the number of students in Intermediate Education had fallen to 107,595 and Trade Education was down to 92,485 (Vũ, Đặng and Trần 2007: 39).

The authors attribute the decline to the lack of interest of students and a decrease in demand of hiring students trained at these institutions. At the same time that the popularity of and enrollment into Trade and Intermediate Education declined, the demand for university and college education have surged, leading to the proliferation of private universities to compete with state-run universities. This shift to the marketization of

³⁸ Nhà Xuất Bản Giáo Dục

education has been met with vociferous critiques from educational workers who had been dedicated to the revolutionary project. In judgment of this shift, the authors wrote,

Education cannot chase after the goal of “commerce,” meaning it cannot chase after the goal of the most profit; the highest profit like every business selling material products. If the goal of “business” is put out there, then education can never be the process to reproduce cultural intelligence, scientific knowledge. Never can education completely accomplish the responsibility of raising high human capital, train human strength, and nourish the talent of our people (Vũ, Đặng, and Trần 2007: 42).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have utilized narratives, memories, and archival data to represent the dominant practices in regard to education during the uncertain time of reunification. I provided ethnographic data from individuals who lived through this period as well as presented archived reports from the Ministry of Education to show that in order to rebuild the nation, the state adhered to an agenda of strict centralized planning in the directing of student bodies into varied educational fields. I have argued that, through the consolidation of power on the behalf of the apparatus, individual desire for educational attainment was restricted but student bodies were still given an education although it was not at the highest level. After completing education, pupils were also employed by local government and the state. In the next chapter, I bring readers into the now to show how the decentralization of education and training shapes the social worlds and educational experiences of young students in contemporary Đà Nẵng City.

Chapter 3

Agency and the Unpredictable Future: An Examination of Students' Educational Actions

Voices and Agency From Inside the Classroom

At the beginning of every school session, Mondays through Wednesdays, then Fridays and Saturdays, as Thursdays and Sundays were days off, the sound of the deep bass drum echoed through the courtyard and hallways, a sound that that be heard through approximate neighborhoods, students scattered running into their classrooms. Inside the classrooms, before the teacher entered, students bounced around noisily. In the classrooms, I regularly sat in the back so I could glance from one side of the room to the other to observe students' movement and gestures. The classrooms were open with wide windows to let the sun and breeze in. On rainy days they stayed shut. Within each classroom were long wood-top tables with equally long benches attached to them. I often found it uncomfortable to sit for a long period because the benches had no backs attached to them. Under the tables were single shelves that served as storage for the students' books and writing utensils. Between the alarm drum and teacher's arrival to the classroom, the students scuffled around, joking with one another and sitting in one another's seats. Some students sat patiently by themselves without socializing. Students frequently glanced at my notebook, curious about what I was writing.

One day in March 2012, the English lesson was on the future tense. The female teacher in her early forties, dressed in the official teacher attire, a traditional long dress,

asked, “What would you do if you were president?” The English class teacher asked this question aloud to solicit students’ verbal response. Amidst some hesitation from other students, a male student enthusiastically stood up and answered, “If I were a president of Vietnam, I would change the education system.” The teacher repeated, “If Minh were president, he would change the education system. Very good, that is the future tense. We speak not of the now, but what will happen in the time yet to come.” The lesson of course went on to address different uses of the future tense, but I interpret the student’s comment as a line of flight to frame an analysis of agentive actions in this chapter. (In class observation, March 2012).

This moment was intriguing as well as important in that a student utilized a lesson on the future tense in English to voice his opinion about a shared public experience such as education. But what did the student mean by change? The teacher did not ask him to elaborate on his answer but instead let the opinion go unquestioned. This moment could not have been read in the singular vein of students vocalizing their discontent with burdensome schooling, as this would be the case universally; students complain about schooling. I also do not read this moment as an act of rebellion or resistance against schooling as Paul Willis has shown (Willis 1977). This moment, however, revealed more of a personal anxiety brought about by precarity shared collectively by young people. Although the student did not express what change meant to him or who would take part in such change, I could read between the gaps of what he meant as concerns of whether schooling could lead to employment. Anxieties and discontent surrounding education and

employment through my time in the field were expressed to me over and over again by other students as well as news stories that circulated around the nation.

The student's expression was a shared sentiment, felt throughout Đà Nẵng and the nation as a whole. In that instant, education stood as an allegory for the government's responsibility to open opportunities for students. Schooling is arduous for young adults everywhere. But in Việt Nam, students' express that schooling is intensely arduous because the curriculum is demanding of time and expenses. But even if one devoted all of one's energy toward achieving the best grades and entering the best university, there is still no guarantee that one would obtain desirable employment.

The ability for a student to openly critique the educational system opens up an important space for analysis because Việt Nam is still governed by a hegemonic state under the guiding principle of socialism. Pre *Đổi Mới*, such a critique perhaps would not have occurred. What was more interesting was that the student's critique was within an English language class, a place where he was given an opportunity to interact with the language of a global power with which his country of citizenship was once at war. The English lesson was granted him by the nation-state. Its power offered him knowledge to translate and vocalized his critique within a space of state governance. I did not read this moment as one of dissent or an attempt for political upheaval; rather, the moment was one of acting in the world. While the student's response was solicited under the open question of what he would do if granted power and leadership, a question which he could have responded to any number of ways or which he could have applied to any topical interests, he chose to reply with a critique of education.

In other instances, when I revealed to students my interest in doing research on education in Đà Nẵng, I often received responses such as, “Why would you want to do research on education in Việt Nam? What’s there to study about it? They change textbooks whenever they want. And when they feel like it, they change it back.” In one particularly instance, an informant explicitly asked me, “If you wanted to know about education, you should just ask me. I went to the best school. Why don’t I stay here? Education and finding a job in Việt Nam is like a plate of meat on a rotating dish: Whoever is the fastest grabs the biggest portion until it is all gone.”³⁹ Here, we see perhaps the clearest instantiation of the obfuscated link between education and employment.

This student did attend the most prestigious high school in the city, one for gifted students,⁴⁰ but he then went to study abroad in Switzerland at a university specializing in hotel management and hospitality. After completing his education, he returned to Đà Nẵng and was working at one of the premiere five-star resorts. His earnings, however, were a little over four million Vietnamese dong per month, roughly \$200. His salary was hardly enough to ever compensate the tens of thousands of U.S. dollars that his parents spent on his education in Switzerland as a foreign student. At the time that I knew him, he was planning to study abroad again, but this time in Australia. He was to start a new bachelor’s program in business unrelated to education he received in Switzerland. He is currently still living in Australia on a student visa. He continually stays in school, paying

³⁹ “Giáo dục và việc làm ở Việt Nam giống như mâm thịt quay, ai nhanh tay thì nạp trước”

⁴⁰ Trường Trung Học Phổ Thông Chuyên

international student tuition to prolong his stay. He hopes to find a permanent job in Australia that will grant him a visa to work and become a resident.

These critiques were wholly negative, highlighting the hegemony of the education apparatus to enforce sudden changes while stressing its inadequacies to lead to employment. My informants' expressions and agentive actions align with what James Scott proposes in his study of peasant resistance in Malaysia as “propaganda” and “cornerstones of an ideological edifice under construction” (Scott 2008: 22-23). Scott’s analysis of recurring stories told by his informants surround two figures Razak and Haji Broom. Through the informants’ retelling of the stories, Razak belonged to the category of the dishonest and poor, while Haji Broom belonged to the category of the greedy and penny-pinching rich. Scott utilized this example to make an argument for how an entire story could be told through the coupling of these two examples demonstrating the undesirable qualities that humans possessed. By repeating the same characterizations of these two figures, Scott’s informants highlight the undesirable qualities of the dishonest poor and greedy rich. Repeated stories told about the two figures embody, as ideology, a critique of things as they are as well as a vision of things as they should be (2008: 23). This echoes the repeated sentiments expressed by the students I came to know, as well as by figures situated in the education field in Việt Nam, that a change, or many changes, in education is needed. One of the main changes desired was that education should lead to employment in the field one has studied. Anthropologist Andrew Kipnis writes that the idea of “change” implies a revolutionary totalitarianism. Change becomes the only worthy action when the world is conceived as holistically evil. He stresses that the point

will be not simply to change the world, but to act in the world, reproducing what one sees as good and changing what one sees as bad (Kipnis 2008: 29).

Acting in the world is exactly what students I came to know do, but their actions do not always coincide with the official schooling's agenda of: first, crafting moral citizens, and second, directing students into proper fields of labor dependent on their demonstrated capabilities. The questions that this chapter will answer are not whether people act, but *how* they act. How can agentic actions in relation to education facilitate an understanding of young adults' actions in sustaining socialism? Through an analysis of educational practices that are pupil enacted: taking extra study courses and setting future goals *only* on higher education, we will see that our agents' rationales for how and why they act are influenced by conflicting ideas of individualism introduced by a liberal market economy, as well as by collectivism encouraged by the governing apparatus.

The Materiality of Economic Precarity

The line between good and bad is quite blurry when it pertains to education and employment in contemporary Đà Nẵng and Việt Nam as the instances that I have recounted are a few out of many that were expressed to me. I cannot ignore my informants' shared sentiments, as this was the reality that they lived. Visual materializations of economic growth in Đà Nẵng were starkly visible through the eyes of civilians and visitors, especially compared to ten years ago, and even more so compared to twenty years ago. When exiting from the airport, one follows a long concrete-paved modern boulevard that carries cars and motorbikes into the heart of the city. At the end of

the boulevard, the Dragon Bridge carries visitors to District Three and then ends right at the foot of a miles long stretch of scenic beaches. The once sand-lined beaches have been redesigned with the addition of civilizing walkways. Hotels, both locally operated and international luxury brands, line the miles of beaches. Visually, Đà Nẵng has become modern.

Yet while the visual manifestations of modernity have taken hold of visitors' imaginations, one cannot ignore the countless civilians walking, peddling, carrying goods ranging from plastic toys, balloons and food, all trying to earn some form of income from this "growth." In town, at coffee shops, at the market, stories of unemployment, instability, and the abandonment of built properties abound. For instance, the construction of the Sun Villas has been stagnant for years. Skeletons of villas stand erect from the ground; yet no walls, windows and doors to make them habitable. These observations demonstrate the instability, unevenness, and precarity of the officially heralded growth.

According to an article published by Đà Nẵng Online Newspaper on July 21, 2015, from the fourth quarter of 2014 and the first quarter of 2015, the number of unemployed people who graduated from undergraduate and graduate programs increased from 165,600 to 177,700. The unemployed rate of college graduates (2 to 3 years), rose from 74,700 to 100,600 people; the number of employees without a degree or certificate increased from 600, 500 unemployed people to 726,100 people. In addition, the number

of unemployment for those that graduated from vocational colleges, vocational secondary schools, and elementary occupations also increased in the first quarter of this year.⁴¹

Stories of unemployment and insecurities abound. As recently as November 2015, news affiliates reported that the Ministry of Education predicted that 10,000 graduates from pedagogical universities would be unemployed⁴². Facing unemployment in the fields they trained for, university graduates often resort to working at restaurants and factories or pursuing employment abroad to make a living.⁴³ Such real and lived conditions of uncertainty, even amidst economic growth, mark what scholars call “precarious life.” Quoting Kalleberg (2009), anthropologist Anne Allison writes, “at its base, precarity refers to conditions of work that are precarious; precarious work is ‘employment that is uncertain, unpredictable, and risky from the point of view of the worker’” (2013: 6). Taking on this definition, precarity is the condition that countless workers in Việt Nam face, and it is a fear that many young students have that it will be their futures.

⁴¹ <http://baodanang.vn/channel/5399/201507/gan-28000-thac-sy-cu-nhan-that-nghiep-2429680/>
<http://vldanang.vieclamvietnam.gov.vn/TinTuc/tabid/7672/n/51334/c/4151/Default.aspx?tin=G%E1%BA%A7n+178.000+c%E1%BB%AD+nh%C3%A2n%2C+th%E1%BA%A1c+s%C4%A9+th%E1%BA%A5t+nghe%E1%BB%87p>

⁴² <http://vtv.vn/chuyen-dong-24h/se-co-hon-10-000-sinh-vien-nganh-su-pham-ra-truong-that-nghiep-20151119101736213.htm>

⁴³ <http://www.tienphong.vn/giao-duc/xot-xa-cu-nhan-dh-su-pham-that-nghiep-643997.tpo>

Theorizing Precarity

Ethnographic works on education in the past decade in China have given us necessary insight on the transformation of educational practices in the market socialist context. In *Only Hope*, Vanessa Fong argues that singletons, the first generation of children birthed in accordance with the one-child policy, relied on the hope of succeeding in education to uplift their family out of their “backward” social status. This hope that Fong located was influenced by the modern and Western lifestyles of the “First World.” The educational aspirations of students from China was influenced uni-directionally by the first world.

Andrew Kipnis (2011) has also investigated the educational phenomenon in China. He set out to capture where the desire for education comes from. He argues that educational desires in China derive from four sources: emplacement, politics, culture, and governance. Interestingly enough, hope in Fong’s work and desire in Kipnis’ are two affects on the same continuum. In this chapter, I aim to contemplate the social practice of education as influenced not from elsewhere, particularly not uni-directionally from the West as dependency theory argues for, but instead focus on a local context to demonstrate a set of actions and their rationale. At the outset of this chapter, I painted a particular milieu of economic life in Đà Nẵng, one that is characterized by precarious employment. In the section that follows, I will delve further into this concept of precarity. The precarity that my case study reveals is contingent on particular economic and political circumstances that spill over into the educational sector.

Judith Butler writes, “precarious life implies life as a conditioned process, and not as the internal feature of a monadic individual or any other anthropocentric conceit. Our obligations are precisely to the conditions that make life possible, not to, ‘life itself,’ or rather, our obligations emerge from the insight that there can be no sustained life without those sustaining conditions” (Butler 2010: 23). This definition directs us to recognize social life not as a solitary existence but as practices that contingently depend upon the “exposure both to those we know and to those we do not know; a dependency on people we know, or barely know, or know not all” (2010: 14). Education is precisely a process that continually builds upon relationships with state employees, i.e. teachers, administrators, etc. Through educational processes, individuals learn and are disciplined to recognize and apply codes of acceptable behaviors to exist in a social collective (Elias 2000). In the context of Việt Nam, even after one completes university, acceptance into a field of employment depends upon the recognition of other people. The recognition that I am speaking of is the ability of someone in a superior position being able to vouch for a job applicant. Recognition dominantly is generally acquired through social and political network, a clean family historical background, or exceptional performance at university.

Social life, in order to elide precariousness, relies on a set of conditions. The conditions that sustain social life according to Butler are the basic supports: food, shelter, work, medical care, education, rights of mobility and expression, and protection against injury and oppression (2010: 22). These basic rights that Butler values are the sustaining conditions that should be secured by current regimes of state-centered government, the dominant form of government that rule societies in contemporary times. But these basic

rights, as we know, are not always protected by states and are often transferred onto individuals especially in capitalist contexts.

In *Precarious Japan*, Anne Allison offers us a striking examination of precarious life in the aftermath of economic decline and catastrophic natural disasters in contemporary Japan. Her approach to precarity revolves around pain and the crumbling of state security . On precarity, Allison writes, “Though it may start in one place, precarity soon slips into other dimensions of life. Insecurity at work, for example, spreads to insecurity when paying bills, trying to keep food on the table, maintaining honor and pride (in one’s community or head of household), finding the energy to keep going.” (Allison 2013: 9).

Precarity emerges out of particular political, economic, and social milieus. Capitalism is particularly susceptible to precarity due to capital’s quest to continually and rapidly find cheap labor elsewhere (Giddens 2002, Harvey 1991). Therefore, the national industrial capitalism that Japan and the United States once had in the aftermath of World War Two has been reconfigured by capital’s escape from the nation to find new circuits of cheap labor in “developing” parts of the world, i.e. China, India, Việt Nam and Cambodia, just to name a few (Appadurai 1996, Handsen and Mitchell 2010, Hancké, Rhodes, and Thatcher 2008).

Capital’s escape, or what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari call “lines of flight,” builds upon their analysis of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Demonstrating the

processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, Deleuze and Guattari paint us the image of the orchid and the wasp. They write,

The orchid deterritorializes by forming an image, a tracing of a wasp; but the wasp reterritorializes on that image. The wasp is nevertheless deterritorialized, becoming a piece in the orchid's reproductive apparatus. But it reterritorializes the orchid by transporting its pollen. Wasp and orchid, as heterogeneous elements, form a rhizome. It could be said that the orchid imitates the wasp, reproducing its image in a signifying fashion (mimesis, mimicry, lure, etc.). But this is true only on the level of the strata—a parallelism between two strata such that a plant organization on one imitates an animal organization on the other. At the same time, something else entirely is going on: not imitation at all but a capture of code, surplus value of code, an increase in valence, a veritable becoming, a becoming-wasp of the orchid and a becoming-orchid of the wasp. Each of these becomings brings about the deterritorialization of one term and the reterritorialization of the other; the two becomings interlink and form relays in a circulation of intensities pushing the deterritorialization ever further. (Deleuze and Guattari 2002: 10)

Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor grants us a way to grasp capital's constant need to remake itself in the new world order. In contemporary practices of capitalism, new configurations of capitalist production and wealth accumulation are decentered from the state onto individuals, we can see that capitalism contained within the nation has been unanchored or deterritorialized to be reterritorialized somewhere else. Such deterritorialization then reterritorialization then remakes new systems of labor and dependency where the detached capital has formed its new grasp. Such changes, of course, have drastically transformed access to employment in the once budding national economies such as the United States and Japan. Anne Allison's analysis is wholly premised on this deterritorialization and decline.

Territorialization, then, requires a closing off of certain boundaries, for example, national boundaries. Alexei Yurchak's work on the last Soviet generation demonstrates this point. His analysis of how the dissolution of the Soviet Union was at once,

“unimaginable yet unsurprising” hinges upon the closing off of Soviet life within a defined boundary. Before the last Soviet generation, or what Yurchak calls late socialism, lasting from 1960s to 1980s, livelihoods and social experiences that animated life within this boundary, or territory, were directed by an authoritative discourse. Yurchak shows that this authoritative discourse was once monitored by Stalin, but after the death of Stalin, this authoritative discourse no longer had an authoritative figure, therefore, opening up social life to unpredictable and imaginative configurations.

Post-1975, Việt Nam too underwent a period of internalization, territorialized by the boundaries of the nation. While different regions of Việt Nam were incorporated into the Socialist life at different pace, the dominant discourse for education, training, and employment existed. The directing of individuals into appropriate education and training fields under collectivized socialism was an act on the behest of the state apparatus. Within the collectivized era after the war, general education was a gateway into subsequent education and training: Intermediate School of Vocational Training, College, and University.⁴⁴ Entry and completion in these designated levels ushered individuals into assigned state offices or factories dependent on the educational level that pupils acquired. Education, training and employment went hand in hand, for the state via its different branches was able to determine, better yet, predict how to train and absorb labor. Pupils certainly and predominantly aspired for higher education into the universities of prestige and better state positions. However, if they were not admitted into the universities, they, by default, had to choose to attend a lesser-ranked school. The

⁴⁴ Trường Trung Cấp Nghề, Trường Cao Đẳng, and Đại Học

completion of such programs directed them into fields of employment befitting with their training. The possibility of utilizing one's individual skills to find employment in the liberal market did not exist at this time. One either worked within the appropriate field directed by the state via local municipals or one found work in alternative sectors fostered by the local economy. The future, through the more authoritative governance of the state, unobstructed by market logics, was foreseeable. To borrow a phrase from Yurchak, "everything was forever."

In contemporary times, while Việt Nam has yet to achieve the modern economic prosperity that Japan and the United States once had, it still experiences conditions of precarity that are indicative of neoliberal times. But precarity operates differently in different contexts. The precarity that Việt Nam confronts is one from securitized collective state-socialism to a rapidly expanding non-securitized market economy. While the United States and Japan's capitalist growth predominantly relies on a national economy of production and consumption, Việt Nam's current experiment with capitalism is reliant on extracting natural resources for export, producing global goods for export, and a strong reliance on foreign capital to develop the economy within. In the case of Đà Nẵng, tourism's growth constantly depends on outside investments and visitors to sustain the economy within.

The economic dependencies have produced uneven growth that foster precarity. While the government's vision was grand, objectively, one can see abandoned buildings that were once the grand plans of the future. Locally, I felt and experienced the lived realities of my informants, college attendees and graduate unemployed, let go from their

jobs, relying on the good will of their parents and occasionally borrowing money from me. If the comrades that I surrounded myself with, credible adults with university education and proficient English skills, were underemployed, unemployed, or let go, then they were also predictors of the possible future of the students whom I came to know at the school.

As Alexander Woodside writes, “the “invisible hand” of the market may create certain economic efficiencies that were beyond the dreams of the repressive Stalinist Vietnam of the 1960s and 1970s. But the “invisible hand” is not adequate as a civic faith to compel social cooperation in more comprehensive terms. In a regime of market economics, politics is in jeopardy of being trivialized and reduced to a question of interests; as the philosopher George Grant has eloquently warned, the principle of calculating individualism is unlikely to generate “a doctrine of the common good” broad enough to hold states, or the planet, together in the long run (1985, 40-41). Market economics, while requiring greater trust in the state, does not show theoretically how to create it” (Woodside 67-68).

In Vietnamese, the terms *tạm thời* (temporary), *không ổn định* (instability), and *không bền vững* (short lasting) is often utilized by townspeople to signify precariousness and instability. *Tạm thời* emphasizes the non-enduring, like *công việc tạm thời*, or temporary jobs. *Không ổn định* expresses unstable conditions such as, *công việc không ổn định*, or unstable work. And *không bền vững* demonstrates the unsustainable like, *Việt Nam phát triển quá nhanh, không bền vững*, or Việt Nam has developed too quickly; it is unstable. All three of these terminologies are often expressed by informants when they

are asked about development in Đà Nẵng and Việt Nam. Amidst Việt Nam's economic ascent and reliance on foreign capital to create employment markets, the fear of young people is that the marketplace had created instability and a decrease in the types of employment that they desire.

Such unpredictability of capitalist economic expansion is what thrills professionals in finance, as Hirokazu Mizayaki (2013) has demonstrated in his work on derivative traders in Japan. The unpredictability of post-industrial capitalism allowed those with the means to gamble and predict on the future. But to ordinary people like the students I worked with and their families, capitalist expansion, especially one with limited protection from state-sponsor safety, brought real worrisome realities.

The phrase "socialism with market orientation" is a blanket statement that encompassed and captured the current political, economic, social, and educational context in Việt Nam. Socialism with market orientation was ushered in after collectivized socialism, an experiment that turned inwards to a national economy that operated in communication with other socialist ecumenes proved to be ineffective. Despite popular claims that market socialism was an attempt for the Communist Party to hold on to power, which would wither away into a full-blown capitalist society, market socialism in Việt Nam has been claimed by government officials to utilize the market to strengthen a not-yet-determined socialist future.

The future here is an important concept because it was always on the horizon, but its form, shape, and operation, is yet to be determined. The future and its unpredictability

are especially critical for educational systems, for they must educate and train individuals capable to perform necessary labor in that future. The new official future in Việt Nam is set on the end goal of socialism, but the path to that future has created a set of problems pertaining to education, training, and employment.

Theorizing Agency

Precarious economic climates produce unforeseen set of actions. When students responded, “I aim to enter university for a better future for me and my family,” or, “What’s there to research about education in Việt Nam?,” these perceptions and sentiments were crippling to me as the researcher because they were finite in their expression and content. These moments marked an end to a point in regard to the necessity of excelling in general education in order to become admitted into a state university, in order to have a *chance* to compete in the marketplace. Such responses did not highlight the beneficial components of education, such as foreign languages, mathematics, and the literatures of Việt Nam. But we cannot dismiss that these affective sentiments on the part of students were felt and experienced. They possess qualities of what Raymond Williams refers to as “structures of feelings”. For Williams, the term 'feeling' is chosen to emphasize a 'distinction from more formal concepts of 'world-view' or 'ideology' . He was concerned with “meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, and the relations between these and formal or systematic beliefs are in practice variable (including historically variable), over a range from formal assent with private dissent to the more nuanced interaction between selected and interpreted beliefs and acted and justified experiences” (Williams 1975: 133).

Writing about the differing practices of cultures between classes in industrial England, the bourgeoisie versus the waged laboring class, Williams emphasizes that demarcated class boundaries contain culture, life practices, and shared beliefs that are recognized between members of the specific classes. Beyond artifacts of the past that each class has materialized (i.e, literature and visual arts), structures of feelings, embedded in culture, can be seen in the “alternative ideas of the nature of social relationships,” (Williams 1977: 312). For Williams, the “nature of social relationships” between members of particular classes is the distinctive marker of culture that sets it apart from other categorizing terms that have come to associate with the definitions of culture.

While Đà Nẵng and Việt Nam cannot be neatly divided into a society of rigidly demarcated classes, students collectively do share a contemporary social relationship that is anchored by a “structure of feelings” of anxiety pertaining to education and employment. As Marilyn Strathern writes, “social agency manifests and realizes itself in the effects of actions. An agent thus requires a relational counterpart, that which shows the effects of another’s agency” (Strathern 1999: 17). The “another’s agency” that Strathern refers to is the effects of another entity that conjures an agent to act. In the context of Việt Nam, precarity is the ‘effects of actions’ of politics and the economy that conjure young adults to act. I argue that this anxiety is particular to newly “developing” nations and cannot be clustered with uncertainties that students who live in other political-economies might share. For example, students from the United States also face anxiety about college admissions. However, the United States does not have as strong of a shared cultural belief that higher education at a state university is the only route towards

employment. This is due in part to a culture of individualism and entrepreneurship that is deeply entrenched in American life and less so in Việt Nam. In Việt Nam, poor and wealthy students alike are vexed by an unpredictable future, and education remains the dominant avenue to alleviate that uncertainty. While such anxieties are commonly felt, they, of course, are more strongly inflected upon the lived realities of poorer students. These feelings carried into the classroom, as that space was the dominant agent that could transform the uncertain future. As bodies and minds contained within the classroom, students could foresee and feel that their futures will be unpredictable and precarious. Therefore, they expressed their concerns to me and in front of the classroom in order to put out into the social world a feeling that was privately felt but socially shared.

Structure of feelings is rooted in individual subjects, but it also fosters contemplation and actions. Following Biehl and Locke, the stories of the students whom I came to know “bear an understanding of their worlds, of the social problems they must circumvent or transcend, and of the kind of politics that would actually serve their aspirations that is unaccounted for in policy discussions and decisions” (2010: 336). For these students, feelings of uncertainty and anxiety led to a set of actions to transform the current state. The social and economic world beyond the home and the school reminded them of the hardships that were to come -- the arduous task of finding employment and the possibility of under-employment or even unemployment. While under the collectivized period, employment was anchored within the state apparatus; in a market economy, employment has been deterritorialized from the rootedness of the state and has reterritorialized onto spheres regulated and controlled by a variety of parties: private,

multinational, or fleeing to elsewhere. To act upon and have a sense of agency on the future, the dominant avenue for students then became to find a way to land a spot at one of the state public universities. It is important to note that landing a spot does not guarantee one a chance in finding desirable employment. In later chapters, I will show how difficult this continues to be. Landing a position at a state university only acts as a temporary promise that one will continue to have *a chance* at realizing desirable employment.

Talal Asad writes that “agency’ is a complex, relational term, whose senses emerge within semantic and institutional networks that define and make possible particular ways of dealing with people and things” (Asad 2000:35). Taking on this definition, we see that agency, the action of people, will vary across historical contexts, sociological conditions, and cultural norms. In his essay “Agency and Pain: An Exploration,” Asad outlines various strains of thought spanning from the story of Oedipus to an ethnography of pain in childhood to trace moments where actions could produce symbolic meanings and generative actions onto the world. Where Oedipus’s action demonstrates a moral imperative, North American birthing without bio-medicinal aid to experience pain “can help to subvert the gendered image of male strength and female weakness” (47). Through these instances, we recognize moments of actions that project meanings and generative actions onto the social world. If the experience of pain is utilized to subvert gendered perceptions, then actions taken in relation to education can illuminate the logics of agency that challenges the restrictions of class positionality and political affiliation. For Asad, agency or actions, in his recapitulation of Oedipus and

moments of birthing seems to be spontaneous spurts of in-the-moment actions enacted to create some form of meaning. I would like to extend this analysis of agency further to focus on its enduring dimensions. The enduring dimensions of agency, particularly to my case, do not happen at once and then cease, it is a day-in and day-out practice to produce an outcome.

The enduring component is critical because the students I met held on to the act of continually applying oneself. Landing a spot at the state university required daily exertion of mental labor to navigate the official curriculum. The education curriculum in Vietnam is rigorous in breadth and depth. While “first world” nations like the United States provide lessons in six to seven subjects, Việt Nam, however, provides thirteen, all of which are mandatory. During my time as a visitor at the school, I got to participate in classes to observe student-teacher interactions, the curriculum, and the pedagogy. The most important three years of school were in the Trung Học Phổ Thông, with the twelfth grade being the most important year. Although students begin preparing for university exams in the tenth grade, during the twelfth grade, preparation becomes more intense with increased focus on fields that they are to take the exams in. Following the trajectory of the modern industrialized world, the curriculum of the twelfth grade consists of mandatory courses in mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, civics, literature, history, physical education, and a foreign language. These courses band together as a package deemed necessary for knowledge to be upheld by a citizen of the modern nation state. In the everyday context, these knowledges circulated within the classroom, and they followed students into their lives at home and spaces of additional studies class.

Economies of Action

Anxieties of the unpromised future spills over into the educational realm because through education, pupils had some agency over their future. While dedication to official schooling may have been sufficient, pupils attempted to seize control over their future via unofficial extra study classes. In a survey I conducted amongst five classes and 239 students, 100% of students that responded to the survey listed that they enrolled in extra study courses outside of the official curriculum. The majority of students listed math and biology as the extra study courses they needed help with the most. 100% of students also listed state universities as their top choice, and 21 out of 239 students (8.7%), listed a back-up plan of a three-year college or two-year technical school. Students expressed these classes were necessary because the time spent in official classes at school was not enough to prepare them to excel at examinations into state universities. During my time at the school, I observed that each classroom housed roughly 45-50 students with every seat taken. Each class lasted fifty minutes with only one teacher. Extra classes were a strategy for students to acquire extra help with the official curriculum in order to perform well and ultimately pass exams and acquire a position within a state university.

Regional and national demand for extra study classes spill over into the homes of students and their families, regardless of their socio-economic background. However, economic standing did not really deter family from poorer backgrounds. Through the rationale of these families, acting on the chance of obtaining admittance into a state university did not guarantee a less precarious future; it simply acted as a placeholder. If one was admitted into a state university, it alleviated the anxiety for the time being. But

once that degree was achieved, the journey to finding employment brought out new uncertainties.

It is important to note that extra study classes are in no way promoted or sponsored by official schools. In fact, there have been official policies put in place to minimize such practices. Circular 17/2012/TT-BGDĐT⁴⁵ from the Ministry of Education clearly outlines the parameters under which extra study classes could take place. Matter number four of the circulation outlines that teachers cannot teach to students who attend schools two sessions a day, and teachers cannot teach extra study outside of the classroom to students from their own class. While unofficial study classes have become a ubiquitous phenomenon all over Việt Nam and Asia, their proliferation is dependent on the particular contexts. For the case of Việt Nam, additional studies classes are agentive actions born out of economic precarity following Đổi Mới.

The Rationales of Agency

In this section I present a collection of narratives from students whom I came to know. The narratives capture the agentive thinking and actions of students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. While the students differed in family background, they all shared a collective aspiration for entering state universities. I present the story of one student from a family of state employees that stood a strong chance of receiving admittance into a state university, one story of student who set her plans on studying abroad, this student came from a family that could facilitate the financial demands of

⁴⁵ <http://thuvienphapluat.vn/van-ban/Giao-duc/Thong-tu-17-2012-TT-BGDĐT-day-hoc-them-139414.aspx#>

studying in a foreign country, and lastly, two stories of students from families in more precarious economic positions. The students all shared the same awareness that they *must* enter a state institution of higher education to have a *chance* at competing for employment in the marketplace. We must recognize how firmly the students held on to their opinions of the inequalities of the social world. For it was how strongly they believed the structures of the social world to be that directed their course of actions.

While students who were admitted into a state university or university abroad achieved the desired results that they had worked eighteen years for, students who did not get admitted employed a course of action that was surprising to me. They did not opt to take the path that was deemed appropriate for their university exam scores, such as a three year college or technical training; they instead chose the option of private universities. I call this process as *the enduring dimension of agency* because it was purely associated with the title of “higher education” and not following the path that was directed by the official education apparatus. It was an enduring dimension of agency because students who were not admitted acted on their own, will based on social assumptions that the title of “higher education” would be a more potent ammunition to take on the unpredictable marketplace.

Being welcomed to speak to and observe Vietnamese families was a not a simple endeavor. In order to meet with students and their parents, I acquired permission from the head teacher of the classrooms in which I was a participant. Initially, I received invitations from seven students. I followed through with these invitations by scheduling meetings with the students and their families. I subsequently was welcomed to interact

with more students. The narratives that I present below capture a pattern of the courses of action that students and their families took.

The first student who invited me to her family home was a female student from the twelfth grade. She will be referred to as Lu. Her house was nestled in an alleyway in which lived many families who were former soldiers. She and her mother welcomed me to sit in their living room. During our conversation, the student expressed that she had attended some seminars on studying abroad in Singapore. She planned to test into group D for the Đà Nẵng University of Economics. She had ambitions of studying abroad in Singapore because it is a leader in tourism education in Southeast Asia. Singapore offers more affordable tourism education for students from Việt Nam because it is closer than European countries. The tuition in Singapore was also not as high as other elite tourism and hospitality colleges in Europe, most notably Switzerland, where a number of students from Việt Nam obtain their training because their families can afford the fees.

Tourism is a growing industry in Đà Nẵng City. It has become an economic development plan officially sponsored by the city's government. Global brand hotels and resorts like Hyatt, Accor, and Intercontinental have all invested in properties on elusive beach-front locations. Business entrepreneurs from Hanoi have also built smaller scale hotels. At the local level, local residents too have converted their residence into mini hotels. Amidst all this growth, Lu was confident that Đà Nẵng would be in need of a well-trained tourism specialist who had been trained in Singapore.

Lu's mother was already a civil service member working at a state telecommunication operation. She had left it up for her children to study whatever they wanted, but she had suggested that her daughter study information technology or communications because she could at least guide her to obtaining employment. Lu's mother lauded state employment because it offered a number of opportunities and security. But despite her mother's encouragement, Lu had set her ambition on studying economics at the Đà Nẵng University of Economics or tourism in Singapore. Here we already see the development of a form of agency of individual volition facilitated by possibilities of the marketplace.

With her parents' financial support, Lu would have acted upon studying tourism in Singapore. But 180,000,000VND (approximately \$9,000 a year) tuition a year deterred them from hastily making that decision. As a subject coming into adulthood in post-reform Việt Nam, Lu was equipped with an education from the state but had fostered individual aspirations. She envisioned her future through different operational possibilities and ideologies than those presented to her from her parents. She had determined that tourism was the field to aim for. Training at a state university would suffice, but training in Singapore would have set her apart and made her more competitive. Just through these two options alone, we see the Lu's logic of utilizing specific forms of education to combat unpredictability. The option of entering a state university was better than that of not entering a state university, but the option of training in Singapore, which was better recognized in the tourism industry, was a better option than studying tourism in Việt Nam to compete in the unpredictable marketplace.

During one conversation I gasped at how many exams she had to take: the end of semester exams, the high school exit exam, and then the college entrance exam. “Of course I have to take the exams. If not, I will stay home forever and my father and mother take care of me.” Lu equated her actions of studying and taking exams to achieving independence from her parents. Although she was not yet a professional or ready to be hired, her commitment to education revealed an emergent professional agency in the making. Due to the availability of choice, Lu carefully examined her future options. In this instance, Lu had close connection to a state employee who could guide her, but she exercised her freedom to choose her own path. Lisa Hoffman reminds us that, “Freedom, then, is not indicative of the absence of power or governance, but is a technique of governing whereby the regulation and management of subjects happens ‘through freedom.’ This analytical orientation shifts questions of autonomy and privatization away from state-society power struggles and toward an examination of job choice as a mechanism of governing and subjectification” (Hoffman 2008: 172).

Lu’s aspiration to study abroad was confronted with financial restrictions; this demonstrates the exercise of choice but restraint from action due to the costs of studying abroad. Such opportunities were only afforded to families with means or savings. Lu did indeed receive admittance into the Đà Nẵng University of Economics. Admittance into a state university is a moment when one’s agentive action is rewarded with a desirable result. Maintaining one’s standing throughout college, of course, also requires continual actions, but from the perspective of a student in general education, being absorbed into a

university zone is a safer haven than not being admitted, which would require further action and investment.

Throughout Lu's university career, I kept in touch in with her periodically. Due to her English skills, Lu secured seasonal work at the Hyatt hotel,. She also served an internship at a Singaporean tourism firm, but her time there was also temporary. When I asked her towards the end of her university program, "Do you feel confident that you will find employment that you prefer?" She responded, "I believe that I can find a job to earn my living. But as you know, it's not easy at all to get a really good job that I also love." Based on Lu's expression, after four years at a state university, she was still at an unpredictable stage in finding employment that was commensurate with the investment that she and her family had put in. She was nearing the degree that she desired, one that she perceived would take her out of the uncertainty zone, however, the unpredictable labor market was yet to be able to provide a place for her.

Another student who had aspirations for international education was Niu. When I first met her in the classroom, she was the first student who confidently spoke with me in English. She knew about anthropology and expressed great interest in the human sciences. She said that if it were up to her, she would love to specialize in one of those fields. Niu sought to have conversations with me in English whenever she could because she wanted to converse with someone who spoke English fluidly. I must say, she spoke excellent English

It was a surprise to me when I asked Niu if she was prepared to take the university entrance exams that she said she was not going to test into a university in Việt Nam. She had taken two exams to screen for acceptance into two international universities, one university in Finland and one in Japan. Niu was very competitive. She expressed how she was shocked when she was not admitted into the high school for gifted students because she missed .5 of one point. She had attended a secondary school for gifted students, and it was a common path for students from that school to move on to the gifted high school. She lamented that it was a shock to go from a gifted school to a general school.

Niu an interest in studying abroad with many students, but unlike others who pay high international fees for their studies, Niu sought out programs that offered 100% tuition. She even expressed that she was happy to have been accepted by a university in Japan but disappointed that they had offered only a 80% tuition remission. Niu's excellent performance in school and aspiration for international education was fostered by her doctor father and pharmacist mother. Her father maintained a position at a state hospital but also had his own private office. This was the dominant trend amongst medical specialists. For most of her young life, her parents reserved their financial resources on her education. Her upbringing was ensured by a familial ecumene that was fostered by education and financial stability.

Niu, via the financial assistance of her parents, deployed an agency that took actions to obtain higher education away from one's home nation state. This form of agency was facilitated by the governing apparatus opening its borders to global

integration. The action at once facilitated global exchange but also relieved the burden of the Vietnamese nation state from having to expend resources on a particular student.

Niu was admitted into a university in Japan as well as Finland. But because the university in Japan offered only a partial fellowship, while the university in Finland offered an almost full fellowship, she proceeded with university in Finland. I also kept in contact with Niu throughout her university years. She also reached out to me to proofread her senior thesis. Near the end of her studies, I asked Nu about her future plans and whether she would return to Việt Nam to pursue a career. She replied that she would only return if she was granted a work visa in Finland. Her reasoning was that she was concerned if she returned to Việt Nam, she would lack the personal connections to find employment. As we can see, Niu took actions on her future by going abroad to study. Her public education in Việt Nam, as well as extra study classes, was beneficial to her in obtaining admittance abroad. But even as she neared the completion her studies she persisted to stay abroad because she lacked personal connections back in Việt Nam to obtain employment.

An intellectual ecumene proved to be essential in fostering educational aspirations and course of actions for students. Such as the story of the next student, Quang. I first met Quang in the classroom, and at my request to speak with his family, they invited me out to lunch. I was very surprised when they invited to one of the trendiest caf es in Đà Nẵng City. I had been to the caf e before, but because it was on the higher end, it was not one of the places that I frequented regularly. I felt very honored and undeserving, as a visit to their house would have sufficed. During our conversation, however, I discovered that

their house was being remodeled. They stated that it was next to a popular karaoke shop on a street I knew. I later drove by, and I indeed saw a house being remodeled with a European façade.

At the lunch Quang's parents greeted me with a handshake. Also present at the lunch was Quang's sister, who was a few years his senior. The family was very calm and composed; they spoke softly, indicative of an educated family. My observation that this family was cultured and educated was confirmed later when Quang's mother said that their family was a *gia đình đạo đức, sống lành, gặp lành*. This meant that they were a moral family; they lived peacefully, in hopes to encounter the good in life. This also translates to, treat others as you would like done to you.

Quang's father worked for the state as a mechanical engineer. He had attended the Đà Nẵng University of Polytechnic. His mother was an English teacher for a public secondary school. Quang's first choice for university was the Đà Nẵng University of Polytechnic. His mother wanted him to follow in the footsteps of his father and specialize in mechanics. She was hopeful that Việt Nam needed people in this specialization. His second choice for university was the Đà Nẵng University of foreign languages, so that if he later wanted to study abroad, he would have the language skills.

Quang's sister was a model case of educational aspiration. She attended the only public school for gifted students in Đà Nẵng City. Her education there gave her such good training that she did not attend university in Việt Nam. She was granted a scholarship to study at the University of California, Irvine, specializing in physical

chemistry. When her undergraduate studies were done, she was granted the opportunity to stay at UC Irvine and pursue a doctorate degree in physical chemistry.

Even Quang's family enjoyed educational success, beyond that of the majority of families, his mother worried that even if he attended a reputable school in Việt Nam, there was no guarantee that he would find employment, which is why she preferred that he specialize in mechanical engineering like his father. By specializing in that field, the family would at least have one person who could utilize their social network to help her son find employment.

The stories that I have recounted thus far exemplify the social-cultural positions of students from families that were financially stable or even well-to-do. The parents of these students all obtained higher education under the collectivized period. Their education guided them into stable state employment, and after renovation some were capable of venturing into the private sector. Some even retained employment in both the public and the private sectors, further accruing financial capital to fund their children's education. These stories, however, are exceptions and not the rule in a privatizing climate such as Đà Nẵng. The majority of families and students are not fortunate enough to have a stable income and guidance from educated parents. In the post-socialist climate, many families take on various jobs and occupations that vary in income and stability. An example from two hard-working families is where I will turn to next to present the educational courses of action taken upon by less educated and affluent families in order to show the classed dimension of agency.

One informant whose honesty and generosity with her time greatly contributed to my study was Xanh. She was the youngest daughter in her family. Her older brother had graduated from high school but was not admitted into a prestigious university. He attended a technical college specializing in electricity because he was advised to do so by an uncle who worked for the city's electrical co-operative. The uncle promised that once Xanh's brother finished the program, there would be a vacant job for him, but when the time came, there was a fee to be paid for the position, and the family could not afford the fee. Even with the political capital of an uncle working at a state cooperative, Xanh's brother could not obtain employment without a fee. This speaks volumes about the importance of state employment positions and the desirability to achieve them. To secure employment with the state, one must first complete the official education. Then, in order to be considered for a position, one must have a social or political connection to someone else in the field *and* pay the fee asked. The triple-tiered obstacle makes it extremely difficult for students who do not meet any one of these criteria to even consider a position in the state. Because the family could not afford to pay the fee, Xanh's brother did not go on to work at the electrical cooperative. He instead moved on to work as a delivery man for a cigarette company, a job his uncle helped him secure.

Like many families in Việt Nam, Xanh's family experienced economic hardship. Her mother suffered a stroke, which inhibited her from working. Her father was an attendant at a gas station and brought home three million dong each month (\$150 US) to support his family of four. I was invited to her family home a few times. Xanh's family unit shared an eight feet wide and twenty feet long space that was the living room and

dining area. Behind this was a cooking area with a double propane stove and single sink. Narrow wooden stairs that were just wide enough for one person led upstairs to a sleep quarter that all four family members shared. The family living unit was attached to another residence, which housed four of Xanh's uncles, their wives, and their children.

In a social context that relies on political affiliations and social connections, Xanh's family lacked such associations. Xanh's parents' families were civilians during the war and were affiliated with neither side, but her parents did not succeed in higher education during the collectivized period. Xanh's parents both finished the twelfth grade but after they completed compulsory schooling, her father joined the military and her mother worked in a state factory doing quality assurance. After the military, her father worked odd jobs, such as being a driver, then settled as a gas attendant. Her father had hopes for his son to specialize in electronics at the University of Polytechnics and for her to specialize in economics. He believed that office work was, in essence, more suitable for women. Xanh, however, aspired to study food technology at Đà Nẵng University of Technology because she performed well at math.

Thanh was another student whose family experienced financial hardship. Because her mother was always at work, Thanh invited me to visit her at her mother's store when I asked to speak with her parents. Thanh's mother, Toan, operated a storefront adjacent to the Han market, the most popular marketplace in Đà Nẵng City. The Han market is one of Đà Nẵng's most popular tourist attractions where visitors can eat local foods and buy material goods to take back to their countries. It occupies an important place in Đà Nẵng

's geography as both of its entrances face the two most highly valued streets that run through the heart of tourism, cultural, and economic life. Its back faces the Han River.

Toan's storefront was situated facing towards one side of the market. Since it is close to the river, this area of the Han market specializes in the sale of fishing equipment, from big fishing nets to small baits. I was surprised that Thanh's family operated a business on such an expensive street considering that Thanh told me that she came from an economically poor background. But as my conversations with her mother unfolded, her story revealed that material belongings did not represent wealth, but that all the items in the store were purchased on loans in order for the family to have a business to earn an income. Making a living out of many different ways is very much intrinsic to the vast population of non-state workers in Đà Nẵng and Việt Nam at large. Thanh's father was not regularly employed, and he assisted her mother at the store when she needed breaks or when she was busy. Toan's store was the main source of income for the family of four. Thanh's first choice for university was the Đà Nẵng University of Foreign Languages, specializing in English, which would enable her to pursue work in tourism. Therefore, Thanh took extra English and, because her second choice was the University of Economics, math courses. Toan paid five hundred thousand dong each month per extra-curricular class that Thanh attended.

The Enduring Dimension of Agency

Shortly after the results for the 2013 university examination season were made public, I reached out to Xanh to talk about her experience. She informed me that her school of first choice, Đà Nẵng University of Technology, had set the standard qualifying score of 19.5 but she had received a cumulative score of 18. Even though her score was only 1.5 below the standard, this meant that she would not be allowed to attend the university. This decision on the behalf of the system dramatically rerouted Xanh's future direction. She received word that her score of 18 was enough for her to enroll at the College of Commerce for the three-year program. Obtaining a three-year degree would lower Xanh's future pay grade because a three-year college degree fell into a lower pay bracket in state firms.

After some consideration, Xanh and her family decided that she would attend a private university to major in tourism and hospitality. The university that Xanh enrolled in was becoming a notable institution in Đà Nẵng because it absorbed the populations of students that did not receive qualifying scores for admission into the state universities. Even though fees for this private university were triple that of the public universities, Xanh and her family decided that the school would be a better investment than obtaining a three-year degree in an area in which she did not want to specialize. Xanh and her family reasoned that tourism was a growing industry in Đà Nẵng with more and more hotels and services popping up every year. Even though the family would have to make a financial sacrifice, Xanh expressed that her parents would invest in her private education

if that was what she desired. The *likelihood* of Xanh finding employment in tourism outweighed the uncertain outcomes of a three-year degree.

Thanh also failed to gain admission into the University of Foreign Language, where she had hoped to specialize in English. She too enrolled in the tourism program at the private university. Enrolling in the program meant that her parents would have to pay substantially more for the private education. While Thanh was attending the private university, she also retrained herself to better prepare for the examination of the next season. She wanted to try to test again into The University of Foreign Languages, but this time in Hồ Chí Minh City. She was aware of how the fees at the private university were taxing her family. She aimed to test again into a public state university in order reduce the burden less on her family and pursue the education that she really desired.

Rerouting and acting upon one's future in the aftermath of disappointing results is what I call the enduring dimension of agency. This form of agency is not spontaneously activated but enduringly practiced to make a projection onto the social world. To better understand her rationale, I asked Thanh why she did not choose the path of a three-year college or two-year technical school. She replied,

The opportunities to find employment are extremely low. These days, even the highest scoring graduates of famous schools face difficulties in finding a job, brother. Not to mention a number of people have to work in the wrong profession.

As we have seen, despite not passing the national exams for state universities, students from poorer families persisted to take further actions on their future by opting

for private universities because their degrees were perceived to have a better chance of obtaining employment. Such convictions showed us that our informants' lives were at an impasse and the courses of action that they pursued hinged on the route they perceived to be most secure based on hierarchical cultural models. In fact, jobs were available throughout Đà Nẵng, but they were predominantly in fields that did not require high degrees and came with lower wages.

Reason and the End(s) of Education

Education must lead to an end. It must have a reason for its existence and operation, if it doesn't, the power of the offering institution will be seriously questioned, as is the current case with Việt Nam through criticisms from students, parents, and educational planners. In the contemporary era, the rationale and end for education in Việt Nam and other nation states are undergoing serious critique due to the neoliberalizing project of global capitalism (Aronowitz 2001, Aronowitz and DiFazio 2010, Giroux 2013; 2014).

The futures of young Vietnamese are projected by normative social designs that are predetermined for them and reflected within signifiers of modern consumption. The social design is that if individuals subject themselves to the rule of schooling and continue to craft their mental and bodily capabilities in accordance within the confines of the mode of conduct, they have a chance to convert their labors into secure employment position with satisfactory monetary returns. The reason for and end of education for individual students, then, is to enter a state college or university, preferably a university.

The students' mode of reasoning for education to acquire social esteem and mobility, a liberal mentality, is quite different from the reasoning of the state apparatus, as I will show. The students' individual rationality, and together, a collective social mentality, is what cultural theorist Max Horkheimer called subjective reasoning. He argues,

In the subjectivist view, when 'reason' is used to connote a thing or an idea rather than an act, it refers exclusively to the relation of such an object or concept to a purpose, not to the object or concept itself. There is no reasonable aim as such, and to discuss the superiority of one aim over another in terms of reason becomes meaningless. From the subjective approach, such a discussion is possible only if both aims serve a third and higher one, that is if they are means, not ends (Horkheimer 1947: 6).

In *Eclipse of Reason*, Horkheimer provides an exegesis of reason as an objective and universal law of performing life duties as human beings. He traces a shift in reason from an "objective" existence rooted in ancient Greece, a way of life based on the laws of the universe and nature, to a modern mode of reason that serves the aims and ends the nation. He demonstrates that reason was once the grand principle of life, but it has become a tool for particular agendas. Focused on western nation states, with mention of the United States and its constitution, Horkheimer illustrates that men utilize reason to claim rights to certain ends without reflection that reason in its own right is the objective law of all human kind. He writes, "The more the concept of reason becomes emasculated, the more easily it lends itself to ideological manipulation and to a propagation of even the most blatant lies. The advance of enlightenment dissolves the idea of objective reason, dogmatism, and superstition; but often reaction and obscurantism profit most from this development." (Horkheimer: 24). When reason becomes obfuscated and a mere tool to achieve particular ends, the objective universal law of humankind becomes manipulated

to claim rights to particular actions, Horkheimer presents an excerpt from Charles O’Conor, a celebrated lawyer of the period before the Civil War and his argument that “negro slavery is not unjust; it is just wise, and beneficent . . . I insist that negro slavery . . . is ordained by nature.” (Horkheimer: 25). Highlighting the manipulation of subjective reason Horkheimer asserts, “Though O’Conor still uses the words nature, philosophy, and justice, they are completely formalized and cannot stand up against what he considers to be facts and experience. Subjective reason conforms to anything.” (25).

The overarching reason of the state governed by the communist party is to prolong the life of its existence. To prolong such life, the state must secure its operations by protecting its borders through military might, filling bureaucratic positions, and providing an education that asserts the state’s right to govern. The reasoning of the state, then, is to maximize sovereignty; education becomes a technology to craft the most dutiful and earnest defender of the state’s legitimacy.

Horkheimer’s explanation that objective reason was once embodied in the process and act of universal human life to achieve “the ideas of justice, equality, happiness, democracy, property,” (Horkheimer: 20), shares commonalities with John Dewey’s argument that the education of the child should be exercised in the act of the everyday, beginning with his/her immediate family, to demonstrate to them lessons to be practiced and experienced in the now instead of the future. Dewey argues that the education of America in the age of industrial capitalism has been predicated on the future. Through the classified and technologized curriculum, the child has been compartmentalized as an instrument to perfect information that has been abstracted for him to consume and master

and utilized to produce something else, something of importance to be sold and consumed. The experience of learning geography, arithmetic, and science is not of his own discovery but has been carefully packaged for him. This form of education has perfected the act of saving time. The child has not been disposed to come to knowledge on his own, but the pre-packaged knowledge has been for him to utilize efficiently to save time. Critiquing the modern curriculum, Dewey writes,

The “new education” is in danger of taking the idea of development in altogether too formal and empty a way. The child is expected to ‘develop’ this or that fact or truth out of his own mind. He is told to think things out, or work things out for himself, without being supplied any of the environing conditions which are requisite to start and guide thought. . . . Development does not mean just getting something out of the mind. It is a development of experience and into experience that is really wanted.” (Dewey 1966: 18).

Experience is a concept pertinent to both Horkheimer for determining why we do certain things. For Horkheimer, any act must be done for the act in itself, just as Dewey argues that education should be experiential and not disciplinary.

Horkheimer’s analysis of reason and Dewey’s of the modern curriculum resonates with what Paul Rabinow, following in the works of Pierre Bourdieu calls *illusio*. In *Essays on the Anthropology of Reason*, Rabinow writes,

Fundamentally there are only two types of subjects for Bourdieu: those who act in the social world and those who don’t. Those who do, do so on condition that fundamentally they are blind to what they are doing, they live in a state of *illusio*. . . . The scientist, through the application of a rigorous method preceded and made possible through the techniques of asceticism applied to the self, frees himself from the embodied practices and organized spaces that produce the *illusio* and sees without illusion what everyone is doing.

He elaborates further,

For Bourdieu, all social actors are (always) self-interested insofar as they act. . . . self-interest is defined by the complex structure of overlapping sociological fields to which actors must be blind in order to act. Bourdieu is absolutely unequivocal that social actors, while acting in terms of their sociologically structured self-interest, can never know what that self-interest is precisely because

they must believe in the illusion that they are pursuing something genuinely meaningful in order to act. (Rabinow 1996: 9).

What these theorizations of reason, the curriculum, and *illusio* demonstrate to us is that in the modern age, the reason and pedagogy of education has become an illusion. That actors, in this case, students as well as school teachers, act as instruments in what they believe they should do. Teachers are expected to teach the prescribed curriculum in the most efficient manner, one in which every student throughout the nation must master. Students are also actors in that they must engage with the materials handed to them and learn to master the material in the most efficient manner.

Conclusion:

In this chapter I have presented the observable conditions of economic precarity in Đà Nẵng, Việt Nam. This very real and felt condition spills over into the educational realm and into the homes of students and their families. The anxieties that students experienced, rooted in structures of feelings, directed certain actions on how to take hold of one's future. I have shown that in the context of Đà Nẵng, obtaining higher education remained the dominant action to take to ensure one's future, but I have argued that this action was only a temporary relief for precarity. I then tied my observations of these practices to theoretical conceptualizations of the reason for practicing education. I argued that that in the modern age, the reason and pedagogy of education has become an illusion. In the next chapter, I build upon how the school applies changes to methods of examination in order to adapt to economic precarity.

Chapter 4

Morality as the Site for Examination and Agency

In late 2015, an online newspaper, Baotintuc.vn, published an article titled “Thừa thầy thiếu thợ,”⁴⁶ or “Too Many Teachers, Not Enough Workers.” In addition to being a common saying among townspeople and the media, the title of the piece exists as a national rhetoric pertaining to the education and employment condition. As the word *thầy* can translate not just to teacher but also to one who is superior over others, this saying has a double meaning: that society has too many trained teachers, but also that too many people in society want to be the superior to other people. In other words, Việt Nam has too many people who strive to acquire university training for the title and its commensurate employment instead of accepting employment as workers in manual or trade labor. The word *thợ* means worker—e.g., *thợ mộc*, wood worker, or *thợ nghề*, trade worker.

The article reported on the 10th Meeting of the National Assembly Session 13, which took place in late November 2015. According to the article, at the meeting, National Assembly members raised their concerns regarding education within the nation to the Minister of Education, Mr. Phạm Vũ Luận. The following paragraph captures points of contention pertaining to this national dilemma that required immediate attention:

We must recognize that the status of "too many teachers, not enough skilled workers," the imbalance in training a human resource force, has been in place for a very long time, and

⁴⁶ <http://baotintuc.vn/goc-nhin/thua-thay-thieu-tho-20151202173816713.htm>

currently, there has been no satisfactory solution. On the other hand, the training of human resources in Vietnam has not yet been linked to the needs of the market either in terms of quantity, structure or quality. Many businesses reflect that graduates do not meet the requirements of the business. The number of university and college graduates increases daily (72,000 bachelors in the condition of unemployment), while skilled workers to meet the requirements of the work is always lacking.

This story, a representation of a national predicament, drew attention to the mismatch in training and employment. As reported, this national predicament led to a host of social dilemmas, such as misuses of public funding as well as ineffective use of human resources. Another report highlighted that this dilemma was evidence of a social sickness, where people focused on personal achievement rather than the collective wellbeing of the nation, *bệnh thành tích*. Anthropologist Susan Bayly has identified this concept as a “disorder of the social body,” highlighting that it is “to be understood as a pointer to forms of impropriety and social harm” (Bayly 2012: 11). The social dilemma of extreme competition on the road from secondary to university education is of course not unique to Việt Nam but is quite prominent in Asia. This dilemma has prompted educational researchers to ask, “are there no alternatives?” (Abelman, Choi and Park 2012).

News reports and education experts in Việt Nam argued that demands from parents, competitive examinations in general education, and a culture of status had mobilized this national dilemma. The different reports similarly presented a proposed solution from an education expert, Đào Trọng Thi, Ph.D, that the national problem must be addressed through governmental intervention via the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labor. The proposed solution called for centralized state intervention to

alleviate a problem exacerbated by a market economy and emerging individualistic subjectivities.

The proposed solution provided a vision that invited analysis, as it did not call for the decentralization of the education and labor apparatuses and turning them over to private individuals, an option that both civilians and education workers prefer. Rather, the proposed solution advocated for increased intervention by state ministries to correct the problem. Such proposed plans encompass what Jacques Ranciere calls the policy component of his three concepts for governing the social: policy, emancipation and the political (Ranciere 1995: 64). In his definition,

The political is the encounter between two heterogeneous processes. The first process is that of the governing, and it entailed creating community consent, which relies on the distribution of shares and the hierarchy of places and function. The second process was that of equality. It consisted of a set of practices guided by the supposition that everyone was equal and by the attempt to verify this supposition (Ranciere 1995: 63).

Ranciere calls the first process *policy* and the second one *emancipation*. His analysis of politics in relation to the individual interrogates the weight of inequalities inflicted upon individuals in the late capitalist era. The goal of political efforts is to enact services and resources to all those under the modern-nation state. When such processes go array, governmental institutions aim to apply a policy “in the handling of a wrong” (64).

The call for government intervention in the education and employment dilemma was an attempt to correct an enduring social dilemma. In an era where education increasingly becomes attuned to business incentives (Orta 2013), and where governments increasingly rely on private or “neoliberal” accountability techniques to alleviate financial burdens on governments (Strathern 2000), Việt Nam’s call for increased state

intervention offers a unique approach on measures to bridge the education and employment gap. One solution proposed that at the end of the ninth grade at Trung Học Cơ Sở, schools should devise examination to measure students qualified to move onto the tenth to twelfth grade and then later into colleges and universities. The other track would move students into specialized technical and trade training. The proposed plan recognized that until then, schools operated with a goal of migrating students onto the next level with the university as the final destination. This continual delay clustered students into public and private universities with the belief that university training equated with absorption into employment fields.

The article also included a comic that illustrated a scene that appears to be an enrollment office at a university. The two characters within the comic include one frightful male student carrying a messenger book bag with his back hunched and his eyes wearily fixed on the other character. The other character is an older woman administrator who appears to be heckling for students to step up to her desk. The front of her desk reads: “Enrolling Students: Colleges and Intermediate Level Connecting Up to University.” In a satirical and ironic manner, as comics tend to be, the meek male student vocalized, “. . .Is there any downward connection from university down to intermediate trade school to have more opportunities for finding employment?” This comic was subsequently picked up and reprinted by other news outlets.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ <http://baotintuc.vn/goc-nhin/thua-thay-thieu-tho-20151202173816713.htm>



Figure 2. Thừa thầy thiếu thợ

The comic and article captured the general sentiment amongst the population, that there is a mismatch between the different levels of training and the utilization of appropriate training for the proper employment. Being that this topic has garnered national attention that needed to be addressed by the Ministry of Education and politicians, it is an enduring condition that confronts governmental planning as well as the lived realities of young adults.

The theoretical themes that emerge from such a dilemma are questions on how to govern correctly via education during a time of unpredictable agency in which individuals acted upon their own volition instead of according to national needs. This chapter then, investigates approaches and actions taken by a school to address the larger dilemma of how to direct students into appropriate training after general education.

Chapter three demonstrated the social and economic precarity that mobilized student bodies to dominantly strive for higher education. In this chapter, I detail approaches used by a school for directing students into appropriate fields of post-secondary training. The directives employed by the school, in general, did not lead to concrete practices of accepting diversified fields of training. The directives did, however, offer insight on techniques employed by the educational apparatus that speaks to larger conversations on governance. Here, I offer two themes that have been put in practice by the school to deal with the education dilemma: the first is a distant but moralizing approach in guiding students into *diverse* post-general education training. The second is the introduction of new forms of examinations that I call *performing morality*. I argue that schools *aim* to direct student bodies into diverse fields of training and employment in efforts to “balance” the labor economy. But as I have shown in chapter three, the majority of student bodies acted upon their own volition. To accommodate increasing demands for entry into universities, I focus on one component that the curriculum heavily emphasized as the primary means of measuring student’s quality: morality. I show that in an era of economic uncertainty and proliferating social “problems,” morality becomes an integral component of the education experience because it is utilized to measure student’s consciousness of the socialist project.

Training In the Classroom

During my time as a participant at a well-known School of General Education in Đà Nẵng City, I regularly met with the vice principle of the school for conversations. She was instrumental in ensuring that I was welcome into classrooms and in facilitating me with contacts if I requested them. One afternoon in March 2012, we met to go over the design of a survey that I intended to pass out to students.⁴⁸ Another male administrator then entered the room and began talking with the vice principal about a male student they both knew. The administrator said that the student was determined to take the university entrance exam. The vice principal proclaimed to the other administrator that the student should test into a technical school.⁴⁹ The administrator said that he spoke to the student, who said he would turn himself around and dedicate himself to the university exams.

In that instance, I witnessed the challenging decisions that schools and their administrative personnel were responsible for on a daily basis. We see through their conversation that both of these administrators knew a particular student. Their shared interest in the student's progress was formulated by the student's demonstrated academic performance at the school in addition to his potential. The vice principal suggested to the administrator that the student should aim for a Specialized Intermediate School because his performance to that point was probably best suited for that route. The male administrator's response, that the student would turn himself around, indicated that the

⁴⁸ The final version of the survey was approved by the vice principle and was utilized for analysis in chapter 3.

⁴⁹ "Thôi, khuyên nó thi vào trường trung cấp đi!"

student believed in his potential and agentive actions enough to perform better and aim for university.

In this scenario, we witness the educational apparatus' attempt to direct a student into a field of training based on his performance and potential. The student's agentive action, however, was aimed otherwise. Even though schools are institutions of power, this scenario reveals the limits of the school's power. In the era of liberalization and competition, the school could only *suggest* and not *enforce* how students should approach post-secondary education. The educational apparatus's aims to diversify training for Intermediate Schooling was certainly a valid option for post-secondary training. The suggestion also sought to diversify training so that not all students would cluster at the gates of universities, neglecting other institutions of training. But this was not what the student desired. Perhaps the technical route lacked prestige, as is generally perceived, so he aimed for admittance into an institution of higher prestige.

In a later meeting with the vice principal, I asked her about the role of the school in directing student bodies into diverse post-secondary training. Particularly, I asked if the school had connections to technical or trade schools as alternatives to the dominant choice of university. She replied,

Honestly, students at our school, their ability to study is good in this city, therefore, parents as well as students take exams into university is primary. Minus a number of students who do not pass the exams, then they go into the college, but technical school I think is very rare, almost none. Because honestly, the schools outside of public colleges and universities (meaning private universities), parents would rather send their children there than technical schools. But that's our beliefs (*quang niệm*). But if, correctly, we train a trade or technical school for students who head towards that direction, our facilitation (*công tác*) of that is not well yet. This is not yet dependent on the organization and deciphering of schools in an organized way... And we still rely on the want of parents, and the ability/condition (*điều kiện*) of the family and *thực lực* of the student, not

many students want to go to technical school (*trung cấp*). Mainly *trung cấp* is for students in the countryside or students whose ability to study is not well, their strength has a limit so they have to accept, but students at this school going to college is primary. (Conversation March 2014)

A few themes emerge in the vice principal's response. The first is that traditionally and statistically, students at this school are competitive because they had to take an exam to enter the school. The second is the theme of individual choice on behalf of students and parents; parents would rather send their children to private universities than technical schools. The third is that the facilitation and association of secondary school with technical schools has not gone well. The fourth is that technical training is more for students from the countryside, not students in the city, because students in the countryside do not have the ability to study well and would perhaps face other challenges such as financial constraints.

These themes overall show that individuals were the determinants of their educational paths regardless of the school's advising. Nonetheless, schools lacked resources to facilitate diversified training outside of the dominant position of admittance into universities (three-year colleges were even perceived as a less desirable option). The themes also show that individual desires operated through individuals' own independent rationale because the educational apparatus lacked the facilitation and association needed to offer training based on regional and national needs. Lastly, students in the city found a variety of ways to achieve university training outside the public apparatus while lower forms of training would be suitable for those living in the countryside.

The case of secondary schooling in Đà Nẵng and Việt Na exemplifies a social dilemma that differs from analysis of secondary schooling in industrial England and

France. While Paul Willis (1977) sheds light on concerns of working class kids' destiny in the factories, in Đà Nẵng, there is quite a different problem. As Nadine Dolby and Fazal Rizvi note, Willis' work "may have been one of the final major studies of a working class in the First World that had jobs and a future to look towards" (Dolby and Rizvi 2008: 6). From the vice principal's description, we see that factories or technical jobs are not a desired reality. Therefore, the school employs a distant stance, leaving those choices to students and families. But what does it mean when a school applies a distanced stance to post-secondary training?

The proposed plan by educational experts with which I began this chapter aimed to alleviate this condition spurred by the agentive actions of individuals. As mentioned in chapter 2, while postwar rebuilding was based on the centralization, and arguably monopolization, of power on behalf of the governmental apparatus, liberal market capitalism and the perception of choices has created a dilemma that requires the re-intervention of governmental control. The contemporary practice of leaving such decisions to individuals at once rectified postwar practices of strategic admittance of student bodies based on political affiliation while also weaving new webs of social disorganization. Each apparatus (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labor) was aware of this disorganization and devised different agendas to fix it, but results were often delayed or yet to be seen.

In the dominant view that schools are disciplinary apparatuses that correct behaviors based on the agendas of the overseeing institution, whether it be the church or the state, disciplinary techniques oversee, measure, and shape individual bodies to behave

correctly in the social world (Elias 2000, Foucault 1977). I, however, argue that the position that secondary schools maintain is a critical component in the operation of society that requires intervention from the governmental apparatus. Schools are implicitly and explicitly a mechanism within the governmental apparatus. Schools discipline behaviors, but they are also a project of governmentality to produce laborers for the economy. A calculating state that seeks to maximize its human capital would strategically devise schooling that *closely* resembled the needs of its economy.⁵⁰ As a social making project, schools harkens Tania Murray Li's overall analysis of nation states' "will to improve." Where Li's main objects of analysis were developmental plans, she locates these plans within the realm of governmentality as separate from apparatuses of discipline such as schools, prisons, etc. The dilemma in Việt Nam challenges this configuration in the way that schools not only discipline, but also must remain within governmentality, as nation states rely on schools to direct populations into diverse occupations for regional and developmental plans.

I see the vice principal's encapsulation of the schooling dilemma as an anthropological problem, as schools rely on liberal practices of transferring responsibility onto individuals to make choices. A comparison of the transferal of responsibilities onto individuals might not be novel when we compare Việt Nam to other contexts where liberalism has been long in practice. However, we must still remember that liberal practices in Việt Nam were activated as a response to foster economic growth and mediate dependency, *not* as a teleological movement from the collective to the individual.

⁵⁰ Albeit states would strive to perfectly match education and employment

In the best-case scenario, where individuals pursue state universities, complete their training, and receive employment commensurate with their training, these liberal practices do indeed work. But as I will show in the next chapter, such a pairing of education with employment does not come into fruition for a significant number of the population. How do schools then inform, address, and enact curriculum to prepare students for post-graduation life?

Moralizing the Labor Fields

Towards the end of every school year, schools in Đà Nẵng and Việt Nam begin to more frequently inform students of different career tracks. As I witnessed, these informational hours were scheduled during homeroom classes, *giờ sinh hoạt*. Some of the sessions were led by teachers while others were organized by leading students in the class. Student leaders must be exemplary students in academics but must also participate in social training sessions sponsored by the Youth Union. These sessions trained student leaders on themes, events, and methods of social interactions as guided by the teachings of Hồ Chí Minh.

The theme of March 2012 was, “What Do You Think of the Issue of Establishing a Career and Work To Service Society?” As the head of the class posed the question to her peers, one student answered that it would have to be a career in which she had passion (*đam mê*) and which was of her own choosing (*tự chọn*). Again, an enduring theme of individual choice and passion arises. Amongst peers, concepts of passion and choice resonate because every individual believes that they should be able to pursue their

passion. However, passion emerged at a time when security was precarious. Therefore, passion must be employed to combat economic insecurity. In this session, the main teacher was not involved, so students peer mentored amongst themselves. Per my observation, the event fostered discussion amongst student bodies. It also affirmed students' desires to act upon their volition rather than cooperate with the school to discover a post-secondary education and career trajectory outside of the university track.

At another career familiarization session titled, "Activity: To Learn About Different Careers and Trade," students were divided into four groups depending on where they were sitting. Students were asked to list the most important jobs in the region and the country. While groups 2, 3, and 4 listed "doctor" as the most important job to pursue, group 1 listed "being a dad," "petty cab driver," "pawn shop," and "shoe shiner."

As group 1 named their list, the whole class laughed loudly in amusement, prompting the teacher to step in to maintain order. The teacher expressed confusion as to why group 1 would name such forms of labor, as they fell outside the dominant forms of desirable employment. To my surprise, the teacher expressed that while such forms of labor did not require further education beyond general schooling, they were important forms of labor that many people in the city rely on for their livelihood. She said that instead of seeing these occupations as a form of amusement, students should think harder about the importance of these occupations—someone has to do them.

In practice, the teacher's admonishment will likely have no direct impact on student's actions, as students by this point had already made up their minds on their

future educational and career trajectory. As seen in chapter 3, most, if not all students will aim for university entrance. But deeper contemplation reveals that the teacher, an actor within the state apparatus, has practiced what Michael Lambek calls “the ethical condition” of human life. Lambek (2015) stresses that ethics is ingrained in our human experience. For him, ethics is not only about knowingly doing what we know is good, but about all of us striving for goodness even though there are times when it is not accomplished.

In the vignette from the classroom, the teacher, a representative of the state apparatus, practiced what Lambek calls the fifth register of his ethical formulation. The fifth register “refers to the specialized work of ascertaining, discerning, or declaring authoritatively what is right and good, often performed by experts who draw on or develop the body of objectified knowledge and rules” (Lambek 2015: 9). The vignette can be read according to Lambek’s analysis of value. For the students, the teacher’s moralization of different labor fields expressed the ethical dimension that all forms of labor should be valued. But the teacher’s admonishment also fell into the realm of incommensurability because such fields of labor did not translate to economic value, which remains the dominant value of our times. The occurrence, nonetheless, represented an expression of ethical value on behalf of the teacher, whose aim was to train students to respect all forms of occupation.

The teacher’s ethical stance and display of compassion was precisely what Andrea Meuhlebach (2012) called “the production of compassion.” Focusing on the context of a neoliberalizing Italy, Meuhlebach shows that in times of economic

uncertainty, the education of morality and compassion becomes a desired pedagogical tool in public schools. When the state and its schools' ability to offer students a firm holding on the precarious economic world becomes increasingly restrained, morality, such as having compassion, or even embracing a less attractive occupation, become more respected in the name of the collective common good.

Schools and “Society”

Schools prepare students for “society,” or at least that is the theory and a dominant mode of knowledge. By now we are well familiar with neo-Marxist critical literature that dissects the ways that schools within capitalist nation states act as agents that divide those fit for capitalist administrative life from those that are more suited for manual labor. Schools will be the agents of social reproduction in one way or another, particularly if they utilize hierarchical evaluation methods. The problem of social reproduction could be alleviated if hierarchical examinations were eliminated and optimism was placed onto the innate benevolent qualities of all social bodies. Jurgen Habermas (1992) reminds us that all individuals carry the capacity to be rational actors in civic life. But in all nation states, resources allocated into society are scarce. Certain bodies will be absorbed into the state apparatus while other bodies will not. The question, then, is how do we measure what certain bodies are fit for?

Once I grasped the structures of feelings and agentive actions of students, I set out to piece together teachers' perceptions about the education apparatus. It was difficult to find time to have in-depth conversations with teachers while at school, but the vice

principle of the school was very generous; we had conversations in her office from time to time. Aside from classrooms observations, my interactions with teachers took place in the teachers' lounge, where we exchanged small talk.

At my request, one teacher whose class I was observing invited me to her home. She lived not too far from where I was living. The front entrance of her home faced a staple marketplace in the city. The sign above the entrance indicated that it was a doctor's office. Therefore, I assumed someone from her home was the doctor. While I was waiting in front of her home, a group of students descended from a room upstairs to leave. Aside from teaching at the school, this teacher also held private classes at her house. But she made it very clear that she only accepted students from other schools and does not teach extra classes for students at the school where she worked.

At our meeting, I wanted to understand this teacher's perception of schooling so that I could have an interpretation to compare to students' popular opinions. I expressed to her that I had spoken to many students who I sensed were anxious due to the unpredictability of the educational process and the future. The anxieties of students were not lost on her. I recounted that I had interacted with numerous students who had expressed that they put energy into schooling so that they could have a better chance at employment. The teacher, without hesitation, corrected me, saying that education's primary goal was not only to help students with employment, but "that education's main purpose was to train people to do good for society."⁵¹

⁵¹ "Giáo dục là để đào tạo những người làm việc tốt cho xã hội"

If we take the perceptions and actions of our interlocutors as a “truth” encapsulated in a particular context, time, and space, as anthropologists aim to do, then we have incongruent perceptions and actions that do not always align with that of pupils and the educational apparatus. When students and their families set their sights on using education as an avenue to employment and economic viability, a set of actions emerge that use economic capital and mental labor to realize this goal. As I have shown in the last chapter, agentic actions do not always occur in the realm of resistance. Pupils instead utilize resources such as public education in combination with choices available in the market place to take courses of actions that are fitting for them.

When general education is utilized by teachers and the educational apparatus to “train people to do good for society,” the focus is on crafting nationalist, moral and law-abiding citizens. “Doing good for society” is not unique to Việt Nam; it can be agreed upon as the universal aim for state education in all modern nation-states. But doing good also requires certain directions and concrete actions for the educational apparatus so that pupils could apply the efforts of doing good. For example, archival documents from schools in northern Việt Nam from the pre-unification period show that certain schools were comprised of a production component. This was called *Giáo Dục Sản Xuất*, or production education. In addition to the academic component, pupils also produced things for consumption such as gardening and making school supplies. As one teacher reminisced, “education and practice went hand in hand.” This teacher’s memory of education before renovation in some ways is a romanticization of the centralized period,

as education and practice was likely not applicable everywhere. But in that era, the two concepts had the capability of going hand in hand.

Any educational system can say that they teach students to do good, which generally means doing good moral deeds while admonishing social evils. However, the social world is filled with uncertainties and anomalies that could dissuade a student who was taught to do good but then caved into doing ill. It is also possible for an academically inclined student who excelled in school to steal, participate in petty crimes, or gamble because he cannot find employment to financially support himself—these scenarios do happen in Việt Nam as well as in other contexts. When the teacher stated that the goal of general education is to train people to do good, I interpreted it in the most general way for Đà Nẵng and Việt Nam: to instill an enduring moral responsibility that one should be able to see good or ill in every situation and make the most morally sound decision. At the root of this doing “good” is a notion of morality that becomes a benchmark for assessing students.

“Too Many Teachers and Not Enough Workers”

In the clearest instantiation of linking school to employment, the teacher further elaborated that Việt Nam now had too many teachers and not enough workers: “xã hội bây giờ dư thầy mà thiếu thợ.” This saying was and still is often deployed in conversations with other teachers and in newspapers. This teacher believed that a balanced society should have roughly 30% teachers and 70% workers (an opinion also expressed by other teachers that I spoke to). Currently, however, students chase after

titles without understanding what the country needs most. Once again, divergent views emerge on behalf of the apparatus versus the pupils. This perception has mobilized the actions of students, as I have shown in chapter three.

As our conversation progressed, I inquired about the process of evaluating students in the classroom. The teacher revealed that for any student to be considered a “good” student, an important marker on the official school record, they must receive eight points or greater on their mathematics and Vietnamese literature exams. A student who achieves below an eight in these subjects can earn only at best a rank of “average.” *Văn Học*, or literature, was indispensable to the curriculum because it was mandatory for all students. Literature and math were also always mandatory subjects for the exit examination.

Crafting the Moral Subject

Why then is literature so indispensable to the curriculum and to the categorization of “good” students? My inquiry into the literature component of the curriculum revealed pertinent insight on the utilization of words and stories to address immoralities of the past and the present. While schools cannot control the outside world, or tie employment directly to the school, they can act to make every student body into a moral subject. This morality can be utilized as a site of examination.

Following the conversation with the teacher, I began to pay close attention to the literature component of the curriculum. I adapted this strategy because literature and the ideas that it disseminates anchored the curriculum. Mathematics and the natural sciences

have become of great importance in international curriculums, but literature, especially the way that it was taught in Việt Nam, carried the weight of the nation, as it possessed values that pupils must adhere to. A curriculum that teaches only the natural sciences would lend itself to the mastery of these fields, but it cannot demonstrate the moral imperatives and social responsibilities that words and ideologies carry.

One of the most recurring themes integral to the curriculum was the concept of human morality, or *nhân cách* and *nhân đạo*.” This theme was not only prominent in the literature subject but also in citizenship education, “*Giáo Dục Công Dân*. While literature has been an important component of modern national education curriculums from the United States to China, literature in the Vietnamese curriculum has predominantly focused on national writers, focusing explicitly on benevolent human morality as a technology to guide the judgment and actions of young Vietnamese. This morality was highlighted through the valorization and indispensable benevolence of the socialist revolution as well as through the explicit demonization of former colonial and imperialist governments.

Throughout the three years of *Trung Học Phổ Thông*, students encountered different bodies of literature from significant time periods, with special focus on the August Revolution of 1945 and on revolutionary writers. Through observation of lectures by teachers and analysis of high school exit and college entrance exams, I discovered that the stories of *Vợ Nhặt* and *Chí Phèo* were two of the stories most frequently used to emphasize the necessity of benevolent human virtues and the scathing evil of feudalism and colonialism. During literature lectures, I became enthralled with the teachers’ ability

to emphasize the necessity of these concepts. For example, when lecturing on *Vợ Nhặt*, one male teacher emphasized,

Vợ Nhặt, if you grasp the most important point, it recounts the depressing scenario of poor laborers of the famine of 1945. To illuminate this situation, we rely on the scenario of Tràng getting married. This situation exposes all the natural depressing qualities of the famine. The first depiction of this reality is embedded in the scenario of Tràng marrying his wife. The author recounts the depressing lives of people living at this time. The matter of marriage, a highly regarded matter in life, but only through a few jokes and laughter, through one meal of *banh duc* but they have become husband and wife. That story is truly one of a quick wife. They laugh, but their laughter spill tears...Secondly, the story recounts the reality of that time: the soul and sentiment of the people heading towards the revolution. Only through a few suggestions at the end of this work can we see this reality. Most importantly, this work dives deep into the human morality. The first criteria is the love and affection for people, for the natural, the uprising and framing of the gruel pressure stepping on people, stepping on their lives. More importantly, this work highly regards the people, the beauty, the beauty of their material existence, the beauty of human qualities, beauty of talent. It firmly highly regards all the thirst, highly regards truthful humans, thirst for love, happiness, freedom and equality.

The teacher's narrative displays his mastery in drawing students into the climate of 1945, a tumultuous time when Vietnam was undergoing revolutionary changes politically, economically and ideologically. To be indoctrinated into the highly selective profession of teaching at a state school, and more importantly in literature, the teacher must have been rigorously trained to teach the textbooks exactly as they were written and how they were meant to be taught. Like others, in his role as a teacher, he must participate in monthly political training.

In conjunction with repeated lessons on humanity, valorization of the revolutionary state, and admonishment of former governments, homework assignments encouraged students to admire virtuous human qualities as tied to the revolutionary nation. One of my closest student informants, Thanh, shared several of her assignments

with me for my research. While analyzing the student's writing and her teacher's critique, it was to my surprise that the student received a range of four to seven points on her assignments, never more. The critiques on her assignments were brief, with suggestions that she open the topic more to dig deeper to the roots of the problem. For one of the many writing assignments, she was asked to answer the questions,

In a letter debating a work of literature, author Nguyễn Văn Siêu wrote, "In literature [...] there are those that we should worship and there are those that we should not worship. Those who we should not worship are those that only particularly focus on the aesthetics of literature. Those who deserve to be worshipped are those that specifically focus on the human." Please express your opinion on this topic.

Again, the figure of the moral human finds its way into the curriculum. This time, the assignment invites the student to express her own opinion. I argue that this component of the curriculum is new and that it challenges critiques that education in Việt Nam has been predicated on rote memorization and lacked pedagogies of critical thinking (Pham 2011, Harmon and Nguyen 2009). I will later demonstrate that writing in one's own voice is one instance where agency is encouraged in newer practices of college examinations.

In her response, the student emphasized that works of literature that we should worship are the works that have the ability to bring humans closer to one another, like the work of Nam Cao in *Chí Phèo*. Again, we see this story being utilized as a hallmark of great literary works in Việt Nam. Even though literature was not one of the student's strengths, she must grasp the arguments, the central focus of the human figure, and the benevolence of those who sacrificed to break the chains of imperialism and colonialism and bring the ideological focus back to a national-revolutionary one. My student

informant, along with the rest of the students throughout the nation, must devote herself to such pedagogy if she is to advance to university and obtain state employment.

Writing and Morality as the Site for Examination and Agency

If literature is the imperative site for student bodies to interact with nationalist and revolutionary thinkers from the past, then it is also the site to examine individual bodies for moral integrity. Andrew Kipnis has shown through in-class observations in China that the “memorization of classics results in holistic improvement in children’s overall Quality, and the memory of how to write individual characters is one of the central aspects of this overall improvement” (Kipnis 2011: 104). If memorization of classics is the traditional method to examine moral qualities, then the introduction of writing one’s own thoughts on exams is a shift in examination based on one’s agency.

Twenty-first-century human life has been the age of continual and ubiquitous examination. From the hospital room, medical record, and prison cell to the classroom, our bodies, minds, strengths and weaknesses can all be measured to reveal knowledge on how we can improve ourselves. Much like the hospital room and prison cell, the examination has become the indispensable component of education and bureaucratic technology of the nation state. Not only do examinations possess the power to individualize and subjectivize bodies and minds, they also reach into the mentality of individuals to illuminate intellectual discipline and adaptability. Systems and rationalities of examination, oral or numerical, have the power to assess the quality of individual human beings. Methods of examinations, be they written or multiple choice, also reveal

how the examining administration determines value attached to the extracted knowledge. Oral examination reveals the ability to allay words together while numerical examination reveals the ability to apply objective universal values of numbers to individual bodies. As the educational apparatus expanded its reach into every city and family unit, it galvanized the collective desire of an entire nation due to its perceived return of status and economic prosperity.

To young adults, exit exams out of general education and entrance exams into college and university define their life's accomplishment. The integral importance of the exams is captured in the way students structure their daily routines. As I observed in my fieldwork, outside of official school sessions, students peddled their bicycles, electric cycles and motorbikes to makeshift classrooms throughout the city to attend examination preparation classes. Such daily rituals might lead to the interpretation that the exams were something to be cherished. However, the reward of the exams was not fixed into something tangible, but was rather a perceived hope of what these exams might offer. In the sections to come, I track the shift in the forms of questions posed on exit examinations from high school and entry examinations into colleges and universities. I focus on the literature component of the exams, one of the required fields. I analyze the transition of questions based on memorization of assigned texts to questions that ask for demonstration of individual creativity. I argue that because of unforeseen social problems introduced by market liberalization, examinations pose creative writing questions on themes of social evils and patriotism as an assessment of students' academic ability.

As I observed, examinations outlined goals to be accomplished and measurements to be obtained. In an everyday context, schools examined students on their behavior and ability to recite previously inculcated knowledge. The classrooms were a place where behavior, speech, action, and inaction were formalized, observed, and recorded. In every classroom rested a book with the names of every student along with their assigned seat. Each student became an object for measurement and examination. Students who sat in the wrong seat or behaved beyond expected norms were inscribed in the book. One morning, the head teacher, the state employee assigned to oversee all activities within the classroom, read aloud the names of students who were sitting at the wrong desk and requested that they return to their appropriate seats. A student who had his shirt untucked was also scolded to go to the washroom to tuck his shirt and fix his hair. Repeated offenses, especially after the second warning, automatically lowered a student's ranking from "excellent" to "good" or from "good" to "average." Refrain from misbehaviors such as these signified students' ability to follow orders and govern themselves from the inside out. Such infractions fell under the category of poor conduct and morality, as the teacher informed in my analysis in chapter two.

The exit exam to general education and entrance exam into college and university were records of discipline and integrity of the governed individual. Though students who do not complete the exams will find employment opportunities through other avenues, the completion of the exams was an integral totem of trust and discipline. When reviewing data acquired from the local office of education, I found that the percentage of students that passed their general examination was quite high. The percentage of

graduates who entered universities varied, with the school that received the most recognition having the highest acceptance rates. This triggers the question, why? The answer lies in the ability of students at the specialized school to be exposed to examination questions and practice them prior to taking the exam.

The most surprising component of the examinations is their explicit and strategic goal to only select top scoring students. This is the most “socialist” component, a component strictly governed by the party and Socialist ideologies. Examinations are highly hierarchical, meant to only select a certain percentage of the population. Examinations are intended strictly to select the highest scoring students—I translate this to the most governable citizens. While hierarchical selection is not unique to Vietnam, what makes it unique is the fact that examination and competition are integral to Socialist governance to foster dedicated political subjects. We have already seen such practices in factories competing to achieve production goals and in cities competing to be the cleanest and most patriotic.

The school at which I was a guest was highly revered as the top school in the area with a long tradition of training students dedicated to the love of learning, or *hiếu học*. But what I discovered during my time there was that the school did not specifically train students to take college and university entrance exams. This school, along with others in the area, only held review sessions close to the end of the school year to assist students in practicing for their exit exams. These once a year practice sessions did not guarantee that students would gain entry into college or university, as the process might take several years of practice. Through interactions with students and teachers I discovered

that at a specialized school across the Hàn River, students were exposed to a rapid speed of teaching and learning.

This particular school received priority funding from the state via the local office of education. Teachers recruited to work at the school must pass employment exams and display visible political commitment. Students at this school learned from the accelerated version of textbooks. At the non-specialized schools, only selected students learned from the accelerated texts. Students at the specialized school studied through the three-year curriculum in their first two years while the last year was dedicated to preparing for the university entrance exam. The school operated within the paradigm of consolidating public funds to craft individuals with the most talent. Talent here refers to the ability to discipline one's body, to transform oneself to be expedient. Students at that school, along with other specialized schools located in major provinces of Vietnam, must always maintain a score of eight or above in every subject or they will be placed on probation and possibly moved to another school. It was at that particularly school that the city of Đà Nẵng and the state apparatus exerted the most effort in navigating students directly to university. Students in the surrounding schools consequentially only received admittance into state colleges and universities after students at the specialized school received first priority.

The document below is the calculation rate of high school graduation and of college and university admittance in 2011, the school year before I conducted fieldwork.

⁵²For instance, the graduation rate at the specialized school listed first is 100% and admittance into university is 100%. Students here did not enter into two-year or three-year colleges. As is clearly evident, this school's special training proved to be effective. The school at which I conducted fieldwork was ranked at number two with a 100% graduation rate. However, university admittance for that school was only 72.80% and college admittance was 12.52%. As seen further down the list, graduation rate decreased along with university admittance. The percentage of college admittance increased for those schools because those students were not admitted into university. At the colleges,

UBND THÀNH PHỐ ĐÀ NẴNG
SỞ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO

CỘNG HÒA XÃ HỘI CHỦ NGHĨA VIỆT NAM
Độc lập - Tự do - Hạnh phúc

Đà Nẵng, ngày 28 tháng 11 năm 2011

THỐNG KÊ KẾT QUẢ THI ĐH, CĐ NĂM 2011
Khỏi các trường Trung học Phổ thông

STT	Đơn vị	Tổng số học sinh đỗ tốt nghiệp		ĐKDT ĐH, CĐ		Tổng số học sinh đỗ nguyện vọng 1				Thủ khoa
		Số lượng	Tỷ lệ (%)	số lượng	Tỷ lệ hồ sơ/ học sinh	Đại học		Cao đẳng		
						Số lượng	Tỷ lệ (%)	Số lượng	Tỷ lệ (%)	
1	Trường THPT Lê Quý Đôn	249	100.00	498	2.00	249	100.00	0	0.00	7
2	Trường THPT Phan Châu Trinh	1533	100.00	3168	2.07	1116	72.80	192	12.52	4
3	Trường THPT Hòa Vang	627	99.36	1042	1.66	239	38.12	139	22.17	1
4	Trường THPT Hoàng Hoa Thám	572	99.65	1078	1.88	214	37.41	101	17.66	1
5	Trường THPT Nguyễn Trãi	597	97.86	1159	1.94	140	23.45	138	23.12	1
6	Trường THPT Ông Ích Khiêm	615	96.24	1014	1.65	131	21.30	116	18.86	
7	Trường THPT Thái Phiên	995	98.71	1840	1.85	150	15.08	267	26.83	
8	Trường THPT Trần Phú	1047	99.43	1627	1.55	138	13.18	137	13.09	
9	Trường Hermann Gmeiner	132	97.05	149	1.13	16	12.12	14	10.61	
10	Trường THPT Phan Thành Tài	538	98.71	770	1.43	65	12.08	256	47.58	
11	Trường THPT Nguyễn Thượng Hiền	433	92.52	699	1.61	33	7.62	93	21.48	
12	Trường THPT Ngũ Hành Sơn	464	99.14	768	1.66	30	6.47	72	15.52	
13	Trường THPT Nguyễn Hiền	746	97.00	1121	1.50	33	4.42	93	12.47	
14	Trường THPT Phạm Phú Thứ	408	91.47	660	1.62	16	3.92	52	12.75	
15	Trường THPTTT Diên Hồng	112	91.05	104	0.93	4	3.57	12	10.71	
16	Trường THPT Ngô Quyền	484	90.13	606	1.25	12	2.48	42	8.68	
17	Trường THPT Thanh Khê	407	94.43	593	1.46	10	2.46	53	13.02	
18	Trường THPT Tôn Thất Tùng	454	96.18	659	1.45	10	2.20	37	8.15	
19	Trường THPTTT Quang Trung	370	86.85	422	1.14	1	0.27	42	11.35	
20	Trường THPTTT Khai Trí	52	61.90	59	1.13	0	0.00	2	3.85	
Cộng		10835	96.72			2,607	24.06	1,858	17.15	

Người lập bảng

GIÁM ĐỐC

Figure 3. Thống kê kết quả thi ĐH, CĐ năm 2011

⁵² Document courtesy of the Office of Education in Đà Nẵng City

students enrolled in three-year programs but they had to take the exams again to enter into universities.

Creativity in the Exams

During my time in the field, the term *sáng tạo*, or creative, reappeared overwhelmingly often in different contexts. Students, parents, and common people alike repeatedly expressed that to find employment these days, one needs to have talent (*có tài*) or creativity (*sáng tạo*) to succeed in the liberalized market. When asked to elaborate on talent or creativity, people seldom gave concrete examples of what creativity and talent entailed, except strong performance in school. Per my observations, those who have found employment commensurate to their education are those who graduated with an “excellent” marking who were then either recruited into employment or had the capital to venture into their own businesses. If we take seriously people’s expression regarding the talent and creativity earned via education, then those who “succeed” are those who have the talent and creativity needed to do well in school or in business. Susan Bayly emphasizes this point by providing examples of business success in Singapore (Bayly 2014). Aside from being a social mantra, creativity has become a component within the secondary school curriculum. Within the classroom, students are increasingly encouraged to be creative. This novel concept for Việt Nam was never more apparent than in the literature portion of the exit examination out of general education and entrance examination into university.

Susan Bayly attributes the emerging rhetoric of creativity in Việt Nam to the realm of exaltation for achievements. But where Bayly saw creativity within the realm of achievement, I view it as an implementation of a liberal agency to examine human moral character. Because of the way that creativity emerged as a rhetoric and requirement in the educational process, this is crucial to examine. As colleges and universities are highly desirable, and because of the increased individualism and social “evils” that emerged during the liberal era, the introduction of a creative component to the exam allowed examiners to gain insight into students’ moral groundings. Because most students desired a seat at universities, and because there were not enough seats in universities for every student, the introduction of the creative component to the exam enabled examiners to assess student’s performance of their views on social dilemmas through the creativity of their own writing.

John Liep (2001) argues that, creativity, as encouraged and deployed as an ethos of consumer capitalism, is synonymous with “innovation.” In a consumer-driven world, innovation drives the creation of “new” products that are consumed and then wither away to make way for more “innovations.” Liep (2001) links intensified interest in forms of creativity with economic changes that assign high value to innovation in the production of new commodities. In the context of late modernity, Liep defines creativity as a form of “cross-fertilization” that occurs via the “fusion of disparate cultural configurations” (Ingold and Hallam 2007: 16). If modernity concerns itself with creative innovation, and late modernity, concerns itself with the fusion of disparate cultural configurations, then the introduction of this new examination method of utilizing creativity through the

writing of oneself can be viewed as examination of the self-utilizing creative capabilities of the self.

One of the most important exams that all students must take is their command of the Vietnamese language and literature as formalized by the Ministry of Education. Though the national language and literature are integral components of modern education systems across the continents, their content and ideology differ. During my time in the field, it was common occurrence to keep hearing words like *nhân đạo* (human conduct), *nhân cách* (human characteristics), and *đạo đức* (morality) used to refer to education, especially the subject of literature. In my observations, the teachers always referred to the human, the spirit of the human when teaching about works of literature, a point on which I will elaborate below. In addition to helping students grasp knowledge about the objective world through the modernist subjects of mathematics, biology and the like, literature grounds the subjects of knowledge outside of the human experience to a human, moral, and political responsibility.

To track the changes made to the examination questions for the exit and entrance exams, I analyzed the records of the literature tests dating back to the year 2003. From 2003-2008, I discerned a similar pattern in the format of the questions. However, I discovered that beginning in 2009, the exams introduced a new method of asking questions. This new method shifted the responsibility to students to reflect on social issues such as honesty and integrity in examination. Beginning in 2009, for the first time, students were encouraged to reach into their individual vocabulary and knowledge to formulate a social critique of pressing issues introduced by economic liberalization.

Before 2009, exams from 2002-2008 followed a format of questioning that drew from learned works of literature assigned according to the main and only set of textbooks. The works surveyed different techniques and moral values of literature but always fell in line with critiques of former governments, valorizing the revolutionary movement of the Viet Minh and the continual progression of the party.

If we examine the literature portion of the exit exams from 2003 (appendix 1) to 2008 (appendix 2), we can discern a pattern in the structure and style of posing questions. The exams open with a general question that all students must answer. For example, question number two from the 2008 exam asks, “The poem titled, ‘Over the Duong river of Hoang Cam’ came to life under which circumstance?”

Beginning in 2009 (appendix 3), we see a change in the language of questions in number two of the exit examination, as seen with the question “Mr./Ms., please write a short essay (no more than 400 words) to give your opinion on the effect of reading.” If we compare the order of question number two of 2009 to that of 2008, we can discern that an invocation of a subject begins to appear. If we move on to the 2012 exit exam (appendix 4), we see a similar occurrence, wherein all students encountered the statement, “‘The habit of dishonesty is a manifestation of a retrograde of morality in the life of society.’ Write a short essay (about 400 words) to present your thinking about the opinion above.”

The introduction of an active subject as an object to be assessed illuminates a critical moment in education and governance. Following decades of critiques of staunch

ideological rote memorization, the new method of posing essay questions subjectivizes the students to live with the vocabulary and language they know. While questions regarding the beauty of Duong river are neutral and depoliticized, the new essay questions force students to position themselves in a manner that acknowledges the social problems that have occurred due to market liberalization such as the habit dishonesty. Correction of these problems can only be obtained through the creativity of the individual guided by the nation state. The rhetoric of *sáng tạo*/creativity at once responsabilizes individuals while also deflecting the burden and blame off the state. Where under state political and economic governance, the state is solely responsible for the welfare and job placement of its citizens, the liberalization of the economy showcases the state's adaptation to popular critique while using examination to create responsible subjects.

The human subject as an object of knowledge has long been an important object of inquiry for Foucault and other scholars following him. In *History of Sexuality volume 1*, Foucault investigates the matter of subjective desire such as sex and sexuality. He argues that the two are quite distinct, as sex belongs to the family for procreation while sexuality is a matter of the individual fraught with uncertainties and mystery that must be tamed. The church confessional was the object that Foucault examines to talk about the power of the individual to know about himself. The school examination extends from these centuries-long practices of observing individuals. Studying is the collective practice among pupils within the same class, while evaluation of the exam individuates separate bodies to extract knowledge of strength and weakness.

Examination of the phrasing and active verbs of these questions shows how the Ministry of Education has shifted the power to the individual subjects to vocalize their opinions. Where from 2003-2008 questions pertained only to written texts, from 2009 onward an evaluation method has transferred power to individual bodies and minds. These changes arose from a long-standing critique that education in Việt Nam has stifled creativity. I find that this critique needs further qualification of the relation between academic performance and economic growth. Through my research and interactions with students, I have found students to be quite articulate and very respectful. Their frustration and discontent with education does not necessarily lie with the curriculum itself, but with the fact that their hard effort might not reward them with the life they desire. This fault lies not only in education itself, but in the complex operation of the market economy.

The shift in the forms of questions was an attempt of the state to introduce the liberal practices of young adults to find their own language to express a viewpoint. However, such practices have always been reflective, hypothetical, and preemptive in correcting future behaviors—they have never been fully activated. Through words, the state has been able to guide practices and instill guilt and responsibility. Such practices reveal that the state's response to critiques of sovereignty and strict governance in education was to switch to a strategy that was more adaptive.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed student's agentic actions into the classroom. I demonstrated that students' worries were not lost on the schooling apparatus, which was why the school aimed to direct students into diverse post-secondary training. I also drew attention to the moral and creative components of education. I argued that these components have become indispensable to the general education curriculum because the state has aimed to craft moral citizens in line with socialist ethics. Finally, through the introduction of creativity into exams, the state has been able to utilize students' creative responses relating to a nationalist and socialist ethic to determine which student bodies were most fit to enter state colleges and universities. In the next chapter, I develop the idea of the afterlife of general education, examining in particular the experiences of those who have "failed" their examinations.

Chapter 5

“Failure” and Agency: Searching for the Socially Desirable Self

“Failing the college entrance exam does not affect a thing. Not a thing!” Henry vehemently exclaimed as I navigated our conversation into the realm of education and careers.⁵³ Henry sat in the back of my motorbike slightly leaning on my left shoulder so that we could hear each other over the whistling wind and traffic noises on the streets of Đà Nẵng. That conversation was one of the many that took place at cafés, the beach, food stalls, and motorbike trips as our friendship developed during my time in the field. When I was not working at the school, Henry became one of my most trustworthy informants and my friend. During the time that Henry and I spent together, I periodically asked questions about education, employment, and family life. I observed the patterns of what he was attempting to do with his life; he was interested in learning English to strive for a career opportunity in tourism. Henry did not pass his university entrance exam into the Đà Nẵng University of Foreign Language.

I encouraged Henry to seek out other options for himself, to perhaps aim for a post-secondary school that was less competitive like a specialized intermediate school or a short-term training course related to tourism. I attempted to explain to Henry on several occasions that with the current state of politics and the economy, it was best if he tried

⁵³ During my time in the field, Facebook was a social media site that was popular amongst younger and older adults alike. Henry frequently changed his name to American names and Korean names. I read this practice as a method of demonstrating different forms of identities attuned to global influences. These new forms of identity also allowed Henry to take on the role and trends of pop stars.

different options for public education, not just the university route. I even tried to express that it was perhaps a viable option for him and the socialist nation if he sought out options of diversification because it could benefit society. But each time I brought up politics or the diversification of employment to help the nation, Henry vehemently expressed that he did not concern himself with politics or what the local government could do for him; he just wanted a new life that was economically stable. In fact, Henry's sentiments were shared by many young adults that I encountered. They did not care about politics or the socialist building project, but were concerned rather about how to equip themselves with an education and employment with which they were satisfied. This fell outside the realm of what local politics could do to aid aspirational young adults. Henry routinely expressed interest in a life in the United States. In fact, his family had been looking for avenues for him to come to the U.S. In the meantime, Henry spent his days at home, waiting for a change in his life.⁵⁴ As Bruce O'Neill (2014) has demonstrated in his research in post-socialist Romania, waiting, passing time, and boredom are common features of precarious times.

While Henry demonstrated a positive and care-free perspective regarding his "failed" university entrance exams, the disappointment of failure has led to drastic reactions by other young adults. On August 4, 2014, various news outlets in Vietnam

⁵⁴ I chose the name Henry for my informant and friend because he used foreign names in person and on Facebook. He frequently used the site to post sentimental quotations about relationships and breakups. He generally used the third person to refer to a wide array of people, addressing his frustrations with romantic relationships but never addressing the person directly by their name. "Time, please return. I don't want to lose you my love! My heart aches with every beat. I cry because I know that I am wrong, everything is because of me..." Henry posted without referring to any specific situation.

published a story about an eighteen-year-old male student in Quảng Ngãi who set himself on fire after failing to achieve a passing score on his university exam.⁵⁵

A similarly drastic measure of self-injury occurred on January 18, 2013 when a seventeen-year-old female student, while school was still in session, leaped off the fifth floor of a school to her death in front of schoolmates.⁵⁶ This tragedy occurred at the school where I was conducting fieldwork. Students I knew were in class that day and confirmed that she leaped off the building as the school day was ending. News stories that later reported the incident recounted the event briefly without going into much detail. It was reported and accepted that she committed suicide because of “depression,” or *trầm cảm*. Students recounted to me that the student and her mom came to the school that day so that she could revisit her friends. As the mother asked school officials’ permission for her daughter to visit, the student ran up the stairway to jump off the balcony. She landed on the school courtyard paved with concrete. These tragic stories of self-injury reveal that schooling and examination can inflict unpredictable burden on the shoulders of young adults in Vietnam.

Drastic measures of social withdrawal, self-injury, and suicide by young adults capture the public’s attention every school year. These measures can be read as side-effects of economic restructuring, privatization, decreased social security, and increased precarity. While the mental states of the young adults who met a tragic fate differed, these victims clearly shouldered unimaginable burden due to the unpredictability of the

⁵⁵ <http://www.baomoi.com/Thi-sinh-truot-DH-tu-thieu-Nguoi-tre-chiu-qua-nhieu-ap-luc/59/14492837.epi>

⁵⁶ <http://www.baomoi.com/Nu-sinh-nhay-lau-chet-truoc-mat-ban-hoc/141/10222467.epi>

future. These stories are not unique to Việt Nam, but can be seen across Asia. In her book *Precarious Japan*, Anne Allison captures similar drastic actions amongst young adults in Japan. In chapter one of her book, Allison recounts the story of a seventeen year-old student at a highly-ranked high school who decapitated his mother and carried her head with him to karaoke and then to an Internet café. Allison attributes such drastic social actions to the restructuring of the Japanese economy that has produced unpredictable actions caused by the dismantling of security. Allison emphasizes,

Everywhere people are suffering, caught by the instabilities and inequities of neoliberal globalism run amok. In the acceleration, and spread, of a market logic that has privatized more and more of life and deregulated more and more of capitalism's engine for extracting profits, the struggle – and often failure - of everyday life has become an all too common story for all too many people around the world. (Allison 2008: 5)

In his dissertation titled, “A Life of Worry: The Cultural Politics and Phenomenology of Anxiety in Hồ Chí Minh City, Vietnam,” Allen Tran presents ethnographic experiences of worry and anxiety experienced by residents of Hồ Chí Minh City that have proliferated due to global integration. In his analysis of one of the tenets of anxiety, Tran describes anxiety as

Distinct from other emotions because it lacks a specific object. Whereas fear has an object, anxiety is characterized by vague apprehension... Thus, as an object of anxiety recedes from recognition, the felt experience of anxiety may increase. Someone who is afraid is aware of the self and the object and therefore is able to orient him or herself to the fear object and mobilize for an appropriate fight-or-flight response. The apprehension decreases once the object of fear is removed through such action. (Tran: 8)

Anxiety is a very real lived condition for young people in Việt Nam. As I detailed in Chapter 3, education and extra study courses become the object to alleviate anxiety and precarity. But what happens when the efforts applied to the objects lead to a non-rewarding result?

The stories that began this chapter represent two modes of actions at two ends of the spectrum of the educational experience. At one end, young adults perceive “failure”⁵⁷ from exams as not having a significant impact on the self. At the other end, young adults took drastic measures to injure the self and even end life itself. These two ends of the spectrum allow us to grasp what could happen in the aftermath of failure. In this chapter, I analyze actions that fall in between this spectrum to contribute to the discussion of the social self and courses of action in the afterlife of general education in a marketizing socialist context. While failure and prolonged unemployment are conditions that plague young adults globally, not just in Việt Nam, I offer critical points on how adults manage to progress with their lives. I also examine governmental interventions that seek to address the youth question. The questions that direct this chapter are: How can the afterlives of secondary education, post-secondary, and higher education contribute to anthropological knowledge of agency? How is agency reworked after “failure” and a prolonged state of uncertainty?

I examine these questions through two lenses: that of failure and that of seeking employment. In the first, I analyze how failure is talked about and experienced and the set of actions that follow. In the second, I consider the experience of seeking employment following the achievements of higher education. I choose these two lenses because the desire for education has undoubtedly been to create a visible social self and to alleviate economic precarity. From an anthropological perspective, failure and employment

⁵⁷ I put failure in quotations here to emphasize that meanings attached to the term are not fixed. Although those students who did not pass exams did indeed “fail,” they do not categorize themselves as “failures”.

seeking are important to consider because these two processes formulate the lived realities for young adults. However, they are also critical points for governance and the sustaining of the socialist project.

Higher education helps one to achieve this socially desirable self in two ways: first, it marks the self as a social body that is educated (Levinson, Foley and Holland 1996). Second, it opens paths for employment that have been deemed meaningful to the self. If *desiring* higher education is an action to create a visible social self and alleviate precarity, then the *obtainment* of higher education is the object of realizing a certain sense of security. However, I noticed during my fieldwork that in the lives of my informants, obtaining higher education did not always alleviate this precarity because the availability of employment in the market economy does not always satisfy the education that one has obtained. To become a socially desirable self, one has to not only obtain the higher education of one's choice, but also acquire the employment to match that education. Despite these difficulties, my informants continued to pursue higher education and a meaningful employment commensurate with their education. The constant factor in these two processes is the search for a socially desirable self.

To continue the argument of the previous chapters, if building socialism from the ground up requires the sacrificial efforts of young adults, regardless of material and financial compensation, and if reunification of the nation requires stringent exercise of power by the state apparatus to direct individual bodies into diverse fields of training and employment, then the slow dismantling of the state-protection scaffolding at once lessens the burden of the state while also allowing individuals to perceive that the new social

world is theirs to construct. In the case of Henry given at the beginning of the chapter, he refused to accept a lower form of education and employment because he believed that he could find a way to obtain the education and employment that he desired. A lack of desirable employment for thousands of young adults eventually led them to perform odd labor, enduring a state of *bare life*, which Giorgio Agamben (1998) analyzes. When I knew Henry, he was not yet pushed to a state of bare life because he had the support of his parents for housing and subsistence. But for thousands of young adults, a state of bare life, or the performance of unstable and even dangerous labor, is a normalized condition of post-renovation. Aside from the unstable labor of café and beer vending, Thu Huong Nguyen Vo (2008) and Kimberley Kay Hoang (2015) describe alternative forms of employment in times of precarity, such as the emerging sex trade that resulted from neoliberal market restructuring.

The young adult in contemporary Việt Nam then stands on shaky ground. They are at once perceived as necessary to sustain socialism through political devotion and to perform various occupational labors as deemed by the state. But exposure to global possibilities has hindered the socialist project of everyone accepting their role for the greater benefit of the nation. As demonstrated in chapter two, in the reunification years, the state apparatus enforced a diversification of education and training upon the bodies of individuals. The individual can either accept such assignments or choose to eke out a life for themselves however they see fit.

In current times, a school graduate or failure must seek employment via the dominant means of relying social networks or via employment fairs organized either by

the hiring company or by the Ministry of Labor and War Invalids. The usage of such agencies again lessens the direct burden and responsibility from the state to create employment opportunities and encourages individuals to seek their own way of life. The shift from state control of education and training to market-oriented practices such as employment fairs formulates the crux of Lisa Hoffman's analysis in *Patriotic Nationalism in Urban China: Fostering Talent*. In that work, Hoffman contributes to the growing debate surrounding neoliberalism to argue that educated adults in China have been increasingly fostering their entrepreneurial selves through a nationalism honed under the Mao era. These individuals then utilize that sense of nationalism to be competitive in the global market. Hoffman argues that married educated young adults in China strategize for wives to be employed within the state apparatus for security while husbands venture into the free-market for entrepreneurial opportunities.

Hoffman complicates the notion of neoliberalism, arguing against Andrew Kipnis' (2008) interrogation of the usefulness of the term, showing that it has relevance even if it does not necessarily dominate every aspect of social life globally. However, the study offers too neat of a depiction of young adults' reality. Hoffman's argument demonstrates that neoliberalism is indeed a force to be reckoned with, as individuals are presented with the choice to be employed in the private or public sector. However, Hoffman's presentation makes it appear as though quality employment is abundant and that individuals have many choices, that if one cannot find employment within the state apparatus, they can simply find it in the private sector. What is lacking from such an analysis is a presentation of how the private sector favors short-term contracts, only

keeping a small cohort of full-time employees while employing others on a case-to-case basis (Hudson 2007, Kim and Kim 2003, Mills 2003). This is seen in the case of tourism, the fastest growing industry in Đà Nẵng, as well as in other contexts in the “developing” world (Ghodsee 2005, Ness 2002).

Hoffman’s focus on neoliberalism and patriotic nationalism aligns with contemporary debates surrounding the role of government in former socialist states. The interweaving of these different institutions formulates a new discourse of socialism that scholars in the anthropology of post-socialism call “the new social.” As Li Zhang and Aihwa Ong describe, “the new social space is produced through the interplay of state authorities in combination with a multitude of self-interested actions that give form and meaning to the popular experience of Socialism from afar” (Zhang and Ong 2008: 4). However, they stress that neoliberalism was not a conscious choice of the party-state. Similar to Vietnamese authorities, Chinese authorities have clearly and firmly rejected the adoption of neoliberal thinking and strategies:

Nevertheless, many of the new policies and practices introduced under the rubric of privatization have been deeply influenced by what we would consider a neoliberal line of reasoning. Privatization informed by neoliberal thinking helps the Chinese state break with failed practices and resolve issues of growth and participation in globalization. (2008:4)

Privatization as informed by neoliberal thinking can best be witnessed through the state’s cooperation with multinational corporations, encouragement of private entrepreneurship, and expansion of employment fairs to foster individualistic opportunities. While the proliferation of these new organizations for employment appear hopeful in rhetoric, with the spread of privatization, the businesses themselves, not the

governing apparatus, dictate the terms and quality of employment. Such privatized forms of work themselves are highly unpredictable, as they set up, use local labor, and then close shop when profits dwindle. Such conditions set the tone of insecurities of the young adults that I knew in the field. As Philip Taylor wrote,

The Vietnamese state's response to inequality-based disputes and its commitment to poverty reduction suggests that its concern is less to attain social equity than to minimize the risks that overt forms of social exclusion might pose to its underlying quest for a strong nation, a cohesive society, and a coherent ideological mandate. In short, it would appear that Vietnam's Socialist state is significantly tolerant of social differentiation. (Taylor 2002: 25)

The Question of Failure

Failure of examinations is systematically produced; one either achieves the determined score or one does not (Archbald and Newman 1988, Gardner 1992, Houts 1975, William 2010). The actions taken by various actors until the moment of reveal of the scores matter. One could choose to practice for the exams religiously, sometimes, or not at all. Whether one has paid to take preparatory class or not also matters. How one fails also matters. If one misses the mark by 0.5 or 1 point, then one could apply to another major within the same university. One could also choose to study at a three-year college; such actions would still allow the student to be deemed as a success by the school apparatus. After all, it has been the apparatus's goal to diversify training. Nonetheless, failing the exam is a personal failure. The only way to recuperate would be to try to meet the objective of passing the test. This would be a success that is meaningful to the self. The search for a socially desirable self reworks failure in interesting ways: it shapes the actions of seeking meaningful employment and of rejecting employment deemed unfulfilling to the self. For one to achieve complete contentedness with oneself,

one must be able to study in a field that one has passion for and to be employed in a field that one has desired.

The data that upholds this chapter are the stories of students and young adults that I knew in the field. This chapter is comprised of narratives about the experiences of failure from students I have already introduced, Xanh and Thanh. I also provide a narrative from Mai, who I came to know through a close informant, Violet's sister, Xuan. All three of these informants have acquired higher education in some form, but during the time that I was in the field, all had difficulties finding desirable employment. I am choosing to focus on this notion of agency and the afterlives of education because it is perceived that if one has obtained higher education, then one will have a better chance of finding the employment that one desired. However, all my informants have experienced disappointment in relation to education and finding employment. The aims of this chapter is to first trace the socio-economic conditions that shape these disappointments and to then point to how individuals act to find desirable education and employment.

I use the term afterlives of education because graduation from general education marks the transition of the student body from an adolescent belonging to the care of the household and the state via the school to a body belonging to "society" (Côté 2014, Dolby and Dimitriadis 2004, Furlong 2012). This transition is publicly recognized and celebrated through the staging of the event called *Lễ Tri Ân*, or the Ceremony to Give Thanks. This event, which takes place every year amongst all general education schools, is not the graduation ceremony but a public display of gratitude. It is a symbolic public display of thankfulness to teachers, the school, and parents for nurturing young students

into social adults. After the twelfth grade, young adults no longer belonged to the shelter and everyday discipline of the school. The young adult becomes responsible for his or herself, disciplined by the rules of “society” and, unavoidably, the “market.”

If the school nurtures student bodies, then the ceremony marks the end of that process. But social life marches on outside the confines of schooling. In the month following the ceremony, students will continue to take the college entrance examinations. Students that pass will move on to the adult phase of university training and its higher thinking. Students will also enroll in mandatory courses on Marxist ideology and Vietnamese revolution and will be required to undergo some military training to learn the fundamentals of defending the country. Students that do not pass the exams, however, must proceed by different routes. This chapter tracks the processes of these different routes to derive an analysis of failure and agency. I provide the experience of students to argue that failure or not passing is a systematic decision on the part of the schooling apparatus to stratify the division of labor. Failure is also, however, a condition that is felt and experienced. Recuperation from failure requires strategies to render the self socially desirable.

The subjectivities and modes of actions that I have shown provides insight into to the social worlds of the young adults that I came to know and to the course of actions that they have taken to become coded, visible, and absorbed into a mixed economy of socialist and privatized capitalist employment. The line of argument that I have presented has shown education and employment to increasingly belong to two different realms, as

my informants have repeated time and time again.⁵⁸ It continues to be their task then to join the two paths of education and employment. The point of intersection of these two paths, that is, the reciprocation of being rewarded employment in the field that one has studied for, is a realm of privilege that only a small percentage of the population experiences. What then do individuals who do not find employment in their desired field do?

In the previous chapters I traced a genealogy of agentive actions in relation to education. Chapter three presented the desires and actions of students. Chapter four presented a set of practices by the school apparatus to moralize individual subjects while applying a distanced directing of individuals into diverse fields of post-secondary training rather than only into university education. But if student bodies dominantly act to win admittance into state universities, there will be a population that will not be accepted. How does failure help us understand about agency?

Situating Agency

The term agency conjures debates across multiple fields in the social sciences and cannot be pinned to a singular definition across all time and place. Within academic discourse, human agency, as summarized by Wimal Dissanayake (1996), has traditionally been divided into two theoretical frameworks: the liberal humanist tradition and the structural foundations of human life. Dissanayake emphasizes that the gaps from both frames, however, have “overstated their case, much to the detriment of human agency

⁵⁸ “Học là một chuyện, tìm việc là một chuyện khác.”

and its undeniable role in culture. In one case, the fault is one of exaggeration; in the other, of total neglect” (Dissanayake 1996: xiii).

In the same vein of drawing attention to the liberal romance with resistance, in *Politics of Piety: Islamic Revival and The Feminist Subject*, Saba Mahmood offers an exploration into the agency of women during the Islamic Revival project in Egypt. Mahmood questions the gendered structures of Islamic practices while offering possibilities to understand women’s agency in a context that is tightly knit by gendered-traditions not determined by Western liberal traditions of resistance. Mahmood argues for a conceptualization of agency that does not fall neatly into Western liberal traditions of repression and resistance. She instead argues for modalities of agency, writing,

If the ability to effect change in the world and in oneself is historically and culturally specific... then the meaning and sense of agency cannot be fixed in advance, but must emerge through an analysis of the particular concepts that enable specific modes of being, responsibility, and effectivity. Viewed in this way, what may appear to be a case of deplorable passivity and docility from a progressivist point of view, may actually be a form of agency – but one that can be understood only from within the discourses and structures of subordination that create the conditions of its enactment. (Mahmood 2005: 14-15)

Anthropological research in Việt Nam has offered considerable knowledge on the impact of global integration on agency. The introduction of the global market place has undeniably allowed for a proliferation of lifestyles. Because economic activities have been freed from stringent state control, actors on the ground can perform various types of labor, from selling food or coffee in one’s home to working in a state enterprise or as a private entrepreneur. Anne Marie Leshkovich’s (2015) work demonstrates how women traders at Hồ Chí Minh City’s Bến Thành Market were able to carve out an industry for

themselves through essentialized categories of femininity that were at once constructed by cultural discourse but also deployed by the women themselves to make their trade operate. This chapter contributes to this conversation by focusing on the lives of young adults in the afterlife of failure, viewing their attempts at finding employment as a form of agency.

In an ethnographic account of lives on the margins of Hồ Chí Minh City, Erik Harms (2011) affirms a common awareness of great inequalities between the urban and its peripheries. He argues that those on the edge deploy an action of “social edginess” to vacillate between life on the outside and inside of the urban city. The works of Leshkovich and Harms show it is possible to find employment in a variety of fields in contemporary Việt Nam. However, those fields of work contain uncertainties and are available to adults with little prospects. This chapter contributes to this discussion by focusing on young adult actors who are aware of a certain self that they aspire for themselves—a self that is not ready to be absorbed into a labor economy of constant trial and uncertainty.

Through this analysis, I do not attempt to present a cohesive representation of the agency of “the Vietnamese people.” I find such an analysis, such as on “the person” by Marcel Mauss, to be homogenizing. Instead, I analyze a set of actions that took place at a particular political-economic epoch that facilitated competing ideologies: socialism vs. privatization and the collective vs. the individual.

The Socially Desirable Self

Lisa Rofel (2007) argues that neoliberal projects have fostered “desires” regarding sexuality, political subjectivity, and liberal politics. Focusing on public cultures, Rofel traces how public cultural productions such as soap operas, art exhibits, and gay spaces have fostered subjectivities that were inhibited under socialism. Importantly, Rofel analyzes how economics allowed for an imagination of one’s desirable self that was unrestrained by tradition and politics. In the case of Việt Nam, market transition has influenced the kinds of social and economic actors that one can be in the globalized world.

Erving Goffman equates the social person to a performer on stage, writing, “when an individual appears before others he will have many motives for trying to control the impression they receive of the situation” (Goffman:1952). Per Goffman, all social actors are equipped with a “front,” that is, the activities of an individual in which his/her presence has some influence on the observers. The obtainment of a university education in Việt Nam performs a critical function because it formulates the presentation of the social self that Goffman extensively analyzes. The following example illustrates the importance of the presentation of the self in Việt Nam.

The mother of my informant Xanh conversed with me about the pros and cons of buying a home. Though she dwelled on the debt that would accrue, she needed to buy a home. Her son was to be married and they needed to make a social impression on the family of the bride. She affirmed that even if she could not buy a home, she would still

rent a place for the married couple to show that the groom came from a family that could take care of that matter, whether it was financially burdensome or not. Furthermore, she elaborated that by buying a home, “in the future, if her daughter was to get married, the potential groom’s family could see that her family had a firm place to live.” Again, the presentation of the social self was deemed necessary to secure life’s multiple social transactions. Earning a university degree was the most prestigious social presentation for any person.

If the socialist project is about eliminating rigid class structures and committing oneself to the overarching plans of the state, then the experiment with privatization and economic insecurity rolls in individualistic aspirations with a vengeance. Anthony Giddens (1991) identifies modernity as risk culture, as a post-traditional order. Within the traditional order, humans rely on local knowledge of cosmology and religion to order social life. In the modern phase, humans turn to rationality to conduct social life. But this rationality does not always lead to the assurances once allowed by the traditional order. The condition of modernity impacts the self by causing it undergo necessary “reskilling” to react to the “expropriating effects of abstract systems” (Giddens 1991: 7). Abstract systems in the age of capitalist modernity are the proliferation of unpredictable social forms, be it the privatization of work life or the reworking of social life through digital cultures.

During my research, I encountered a methodological issue of gaining access to a vast population of young adults to deeply understand their lives in a variety of contexts. I perceived a general sentiment that people in the setting of Đà Nẵng dominantly organize

themselves around their nuclear families while being reclusive to neighbors. Of course, in public spaces, such as the alley eateries that populate every neighborhood, people converse, make small talk, and gossip, but only to a certain extent.

Each family, I noticed, was reclusive in their own homes. This was very apparent because almost every home was locked by a metal gate with heavy locks that sometimes required two keys to unlock. This organization is important to understanding the socially desirable self. For instance, children were seen as the prized possessions of their parents and had grown up to know the financial worries of their parents. I have seen the glee on parents' faces when they talk to other parents about their children earning admittance into a state university or university abroad. I have heard the pride in their voices when they talk about how their child landed an important job. When adult friends greet each other at public cafes, they often ask about each other's children. It was not uncommon for one party to say, "I heard your daughter went there," or, "I heard your daughter went over there." "Went," or "went over there," was understood to mean the United States. The U.S., or its Vietnamese noun, *Mỹ*, did not need to be vocalized; both parties already knew the meaning. This exchange represented the people of Đà Nẵng's relationship with the U.S., as many people from the city had family there. This common greeting was an expression of people's aspiration for sending their children to the U.S. When friends or acquaintances expressed that their children "went," it was commonly accepted as a sigh of relief or even joy because the family was able to have a child go abroad. The socially desirable self is a constant state once it is earned—a seat at a prestigious university or

desirable employment stays with one forever. However, it is through these social engagements that the value of such a self earns social weight.

Failure and Agency

In chapter three, I demonstrated the conviction of students' beliefs that earning university entrance is a method to alleviate precarity. If that path is the dominant determination, then failing the university entrance exams is a force that halts that mission. Failure, however, does not necessarily cripple the process, but instead hinders the journey by confronting the individual with alternative options to be acted upon. While successful scores on examinations usher student bodies through the gates of state universities, failures keep student bodies stagnant, rerouting their future paths.

My investigation of failure is not equivalent to the analyses of causes of school failures that has been productively conducted by Western studies of education and psychology. For instance, in their study "Theories of Failure and the Failure of Theories: A Cognitive/Sociocultural/Macrostructural Study of Eight Struggling Students," Dressman, Wilder, and Connor focus on failure "defined operatively as the demonstrated inability or failure of a student to fit in within his or her home school environment..." (Dressman, Wilder and Connor 2005: 9). The failure that I examined is the lived reality of not passing university entrance exams. Surely, one could devise a procedural study on economic class and private exam training as the determinants of not passing the exams. However, this was outside the scope of my analysis. Because the students who I have come to know have all passed general education, I do not look at the school as the

determinant of this kind of failure. Instead, I focus on the social processes that unfold in the afterlife of not passing university exams.

In his book *Born Losers: A History of Failure in America*, socio-cultural historian Scott Sandage (2005) presents one of the most compelling in-depth analyses of failure. Sandage investigates the socio-cultural construction of success and failure in America's early experimentation with "go-ahead" capitalism in the nineteenth century. Rather than celebrate success, Sandage examines the failures of those who went asunder and died with no achievements to their name in a nation that highly valued economic success. Sandage cogently argues that during this time, America's obsession with economic accumulation and growth led to equating economic success and failure with personal identity. In nineteenth-century America,

Failure had become what it remains in the new millennium: the most damning incarnation of the connection between achievement and personal identity. "I feel like a failure." The expression comes so naturally that we forget it is a figure of speech: the language of business applied to the soul. (Sandage 2005:5)

Sandage stresses that America's early experiment with capitalism has been more successful in producing failures than successes. Quoting Henry David Thoreau, Sandage writes, "that among all merchants, 'a very large majority, even ninety-seven in a hundred, are sure to fail'" (2005:7).

Through this analysis, failure can be recognized as an experience that is felt but that also has the capacity to inscribe an interior state and a public identity. Humans all have aspirations to accomplish various tasks and goals, but the economic weight of failure becomes a prominent condition of individuals within capitalist modernity. Public

identities of failure have intricate social ramifications; when one is confronted with a social impasse, such as the denial of an employment opportunity, or even something as personal as the denial of marriage, the full force of failure is felt.

Building on Scott Sandage's book, Judith Halberstam's work on the failures of queer subjectivities within American dominant hetero-normative culture provides a language to scrutinize our understanding of successes and failures. Following James C. Scott's (2008) grand analysis of statecraft and legibility, Halberstam "wants to pick up some of the discarded local knowledges that are trampled underfoot in the rush to bureaucratize and rationalize an economic order that privileges profit over all kinds of other motivations for being and doing" (Halberstam 2011: 9). Halberstam analyzes failures amongst queers as a problematic aspect of contemporary capitalism due to queer subjectivity's inability to reproduce and contribute to the laboring class. While my research in Việt Nam cannot wholly adapt Halberstam's queered frameworks, Halberstam's analysis of failure is useful in reading failure as producing a series of agentive actions that were not previously seen by the subject who experiences failure.

Like Halberstam and Sandage, philosopher Renata Salecl analyzes anxiety and failure in the West as conditions that subjects experience due to their reliance on material objects. The Western subject's reliance on material objects, whether it be consuming Nike or belonging to a health fitness club, is a method of belonging. Salecl pointedly notes,

If what mattered in industrial society was the quantity of goods, in post-industrial society this is replaced by quality of life...It looks as if capitalism is losing its material origins and is

becoming a temporal affair, and this is linked to the fact that customers do not so much need things, but just their function. (Salecl 2004: 60)

These analyses of failures within the American context address the lack of access to material wealth. For Sandage, American capitalism in the early twentieth century was plagued by failures as lived realities and as inscriptions onto individual identities. Where Halberstam's analysis of failure considers queers' lack of contribution to reproduction, Salecl's focuses on the failure dealt with material inadequacies. In sum, capitalism can be regarded as a system that produces a variety of failures. In this body of literature, only Halberstam's work goes beyond an acknowledgement of how failures are produced—his work looks for possible alternatives. In addition to dissecting failures, Halberstam turns to “less serious” media such as animated films to look for themes of collectivities, transformation, identification, animality, and posthumanity that could be applied to contemporary social relations and actions (Halberstam 174).

I contribute to an anthropological understanding of failure by analyzing exam failure in Việt Nam as a lived condition while also analyzing the forms of agency that were deployed to rectify and rationalize failures. In the following section, I present an analysis of students that failed to achieve the desired results on their university entrance exams. I show how they talk about the experience and then I examine the methods that they employed in the aftermath. These students' actions were surprising because they continued to seek out possibilities that were meaningful to them rather than accept the alternatives that were offered, such as college, technical training, or skill-focused training with less requirements. These students' actions show that failure did not lead to actions

that could be interpreted as more secure, but to actions that were more meaningful to the self.

Let me explain. I perceive that if it were the goal of students to obtain any form of employment at all, such as an attendant position at a restaurant or coffee shop, then there would be more of a secure chance of obtaining those forms of employment. In fact, many young adults in Việt Nam, especially those from less urban areas, come to Đà Nẵng and other major cities to tend bar and coffee shops as their full time employment. But the students that I knew did not seek out these forms of meaningful employment. Instead, as I have written previously, they sought out higher education as a chance to find employment that was more socially recognized and desirable for the self.

There were times when I brought concrete examples, such as data from the Center for Employment Services, to show students that there are more employment opportunities in fields that require less training. In addition to my research with students, I conducted participant-observation at The Center for Employment Services,⁵⁹ a division of Đà Nẵng's Office of Labor and War Invalids.⁶⁰ There I became acquainted with the director of that office, Mr. Phan, who offered me data collected by the office. One of the documents was titled "The Balance of Labor in Society."⁶¹ It indicated that in the year 2011, the number of laborers in Đà Nẵng with training was 480,880. Of this number, 39,950 were laborers with technical skills, 27,440 had training in general education, and 88,000 had training at a college or university, while the largest number of laborers fell

⁵⁹ Trung Tâm Dịch Vụ Việc Làm Đà Nẵng

⁶⁰ Sở Lao Động và Thương Binh Đà Nẵng

⁶¹ Cân đối lao động xã hội

into the category of “other” with a total of 325,490. The category of other could stand for levels of training that were unaccounted for, but it likely stood for people who had no training at all, such as people who worked informal labor. Per the job availability numbers from the Center for Employment Services for March 10, 2014, when I was in the field, the demand for employees with training and experience was a total of 474 while the demand for employees with a general education level was 1,210.⁶² Per the current numbers as of May 5, 2016, the demand for laborers with training and skills was 622 while the demand for general education laborer was 1,080.⁶³

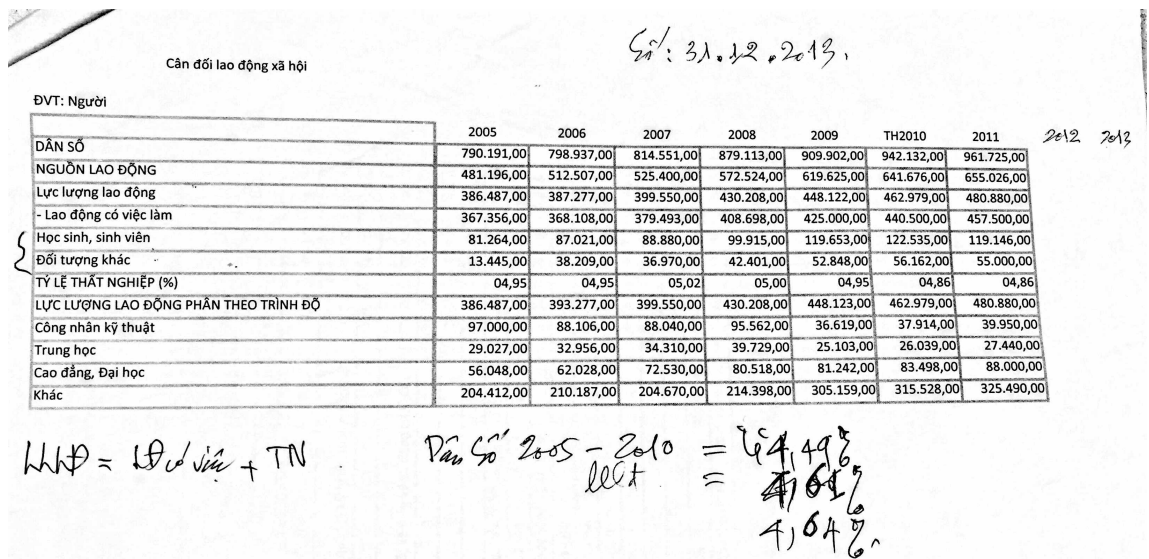


Figure 4. Căn đối lao động xã hội

⁶²<http://vldanang.vieclamvietnam.gov.vn/TinTuc/tabid/7672/n/38165/c/2669/Default.aspx?tin=K%E1%BA%BET+QU%E1%BA%A2+PHI%C3%8AN+GIAO+D%E1%BB%8ACH+VI%E1%BB%86C+L%C3%80M+NG%C3%80Y+10.03.2014>

⁶³

<http://vldanang.vieclamvietnam.gov.vn/TinTuc/tabid/7672/n/58169/c/2669/Default.aspx?tin=K%E1%BA%BET+QU%E1%BA%A2+PHI%C3%8AN+GIAO+D%E1%BB%8ACH+VI%E1%BB%86C+L%C3%80M+NG%C3%80Y+05.05.2016>

When I presented one of my informants, Thanh, with this information, she replied, “Yes, they announce the hiring like that. But when you turn in your application to interview, then they will have to take in people with higher form of education.” I do not believe that Xanh had ever sought services from the Center for Employment Services, but my presentation of the data did not make her re-evaluate the statistical findings. Instead, it reaffirmed to her that obtaining higher education would put her ahead of other applicants on the job market.

The anthropological problem here is not that privatization has withered away employment in general, but that it has diminished opportunities for meaningful employment with socially recognized titles and secure income. The market economy has introduced a proliferation of low-skilled employment, such as service jobs at cafés or restaurants. This is not to say that these are the only forms of employment that exist; job opportunities in tourism and governmental posts are also available. However, these jobs are challenging to obtain, a reality that causes my informants to be anxious about their future.

I return now to discussion of the continued search for the socially desirable self. Failure from the exam did not lead students to accept lesser levels of education. Instead, they sought out higher education via private channels to reclaim a socially desirable self. This action of obtaining higher education via private channels did not always result in employment in the field that one had trained for. To acquire employment in a market place made precarious by privatization, one often has to forego a component of the socially desirable self, as I will now show.

In the field, the Vietnamese terms *không đậu*, *trượt*, and *rớt* are used to mean “did not pass,” “to slip,” or “to fall.” The term *loại* is also invoked to mean “to be eliminated” or “to exclude.” This term is often used to refer to contestants that do not succeed in competitions such as exams or game shows. To “not pass,” or *không đậu*, is often used to claim a sense of salvation on behalf of the individual, as opposed to “slip” or “to fall.” “To not pass” places the obstacle onto the exam itself as barring test takers from getting to the other side. “To not pass” also invokes a temporary state, as the test taker could go through the process again. “To fail,” however, invokes a meaning that places blame on the subject while also marking a permanent identification onto the subject. Regardless of which terms are used, those who do not pass are not absorbed into the university system. The movements of individuals who do not pass are restricted, because to not pass means that one has to stay home and restudy for the next exam season, find work wherever possible, or do nothing at all.

The afterlife of not passing or failure for any individual is private, familial, and at times social, such as in the drastic measures of suicide described in the beginning of this chapter. While I cannot derive a theorization of the inner states of students after they do not pass their exams, it is possible to formulate an analysis of the possible paths students took in the afterlife events. This analysis allows for a consideration of how power and agency operate.

The possibilities for those who do not pass are formulated by the political economies in which they live. As I showed in chapter 2, in the post-war era of the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, the state-centric plan of building a collective socialism relegated

educational training and post-graduation employment to the determination of supply and demand by the state via local branches. Because the state oversaw the educational realm, students who did not receive entry into a state college or university had to re-plan their lives and accept training in post-secondary schools, such as technical schools or short-term training programs, that were less prestigious than the colleges and universities. Straining moved pupils to a large extent into fields of employment fitting to their training. Within the constraints of centralized socialist governance, non-admittance into a university meant that one needed to navigate into different fields as directed by local offices and bureaus. Under a capitalist market, however, one could reroute their future via private means. Renata Salecl writes,

While on the one hand the Western subject is perceived to be a self-creator (i.e. a subject who can create out of him-or herself whatever he or she pleases, and who no longer relies on old authorities like family, religion and state), on the other hand the subject has lost the ‘security’ that the struggle with old authorities brought about. (Salecl 2004: 33)

While people living in Việt Nam cannot yet be fully equated with the liberal Western subject, the capitalist project, if arguably with neo-liberal configurations, has brought about a subject formation that is increasingly individualistic with the discipline to be self-responsible via market means.

Deborah Reed-Danahay writes,

Bourdieu’s theory of habitus thus came to intersect with his politics, as he saw the concept of the individual not just as a “modern” notion related to the modern economy as opposed to precapitalist economy (that is, in terms of theory), but he saw the concept of “the autonomous individual” as dangerous and prohibitive of political actions that could protect the poor and working class. Bourdieu’s criticisms of neoliberalism were mainly that it was breaking down collective structures. (Reed-Danahay 2005: 148)

To rebound or recuperate from failure, actors have several possible options. They could enroll into a training program with less demanding criteria, such as a trade or technical school. They could study for the next year and then take the exams again, or they could pursue work wherever available. A market economy opens the freedom of choice to re-evaluate oneself and the freedom to take a variety of paths. Outside of the suggestions of the educational apparatus, one could turn to the freedom of the private market to accommodate desire; this is seen with students that turn to private universities to combat uncertainty, as will be discussed.

If the experience of being admitted into a state university can be viewed as the making of a complete social self, as an educated individual with an open path for desirable employment, then the failure to achieve such desires injures those two components of the self. The individual is not marked as educated and the path for desirable employment is indeterminately closed. While the directive of enrolling into a program with less prestige and a lower pay grade is a fine alternative, that option is often forgone. Private universities are made available by the market as an option to recuperate the self. But this process puts the subject into another realm of uncertainty. For one, they will have to pay for this more expensive education. Additionally, because one cannot be sure if the certification will be accepted, such education involves risk. This was seen in the case of Thanh in chapter 3, where her brother was not accepted for employment once the employer discovered that he had received his training from a private institution. When I asked Thanh to explain the process of waiting for the results of the exams as well as her own thoughts and feelings about the exam, she expressed,

Here is how my feelings are, let me tell you so you can understand clearly, ok? Normally, before they notify the exact scores to us students, they give out a tentative possible base score. If my score is equal to the tentative score then I can be happy but I am still worried because that is only the tentative score but there is hope. If the tentative score is higher than my score then I already know the result, a humiliating failure (*thất bại thảm hại*). No longer a ray of hope left, because if the tentative score is high than rarely is the exact score lower. When we received the exact score then there is many confused emotions. If I pass the base score as well as the score of my chosen major then it is a complete happiness. But if I pass the base score but I do not pass the score of my major then it is truly difficult because I don't know what to do. If I study another field then there's no passion. If I choose to take the exam again then I need a whole other process, patience. Or enter into a private school to study then I endure people in life saying in this and that. In general, that is a hard math equation.

As Thanh's explanation shows, the experience of the university entrance exams is marked by a constant state of uncertainty and a range of emotions. The revelation of the exam base score was dependent upon the minimum base for university entrance. This base score was dependent upon the demands of the different universities and the rigor of the programs. For example, the base score to win admittance into Đà Nẵng University of Economics in 2013 was 19.5. However, to enroll into a field such as accounting, a student must have received the required score for the major of 20 points or higher.⁶⁴ If a student aspired to study accounting but only received a score of 19.5, they were not allowed to enroll in that major but instead needed to enroll into another major offered at that university. The redirection of enrolling into another field of study was enacted by the apparatus but can have a significant impact on the student, as the new field of study could be outside the realm of their specialty. In the case of Thanh, she was not admitted into the University of Technology but was directed to The College of Commerce.

⁶⁴ <http://tin.tuyensinh247.com/diem-chuan-truong-dai-hoc-kinh-te-dai-hoc-da-nang-nam-2013-c53a11921.html>

To win placement into a university and major of one's choice was an accomplishment perceived to make a socially desirable self. As Xanh expressed, "If I pass the base score as well as the score of my chosen major then it is a complete happiness." This was considered complete happiness because, for one, the self achieved the accomplishment of studying at a school with prestige. Secondly, the self played an active role in choosing a field of study that the self desired. On the inverse, if the base score was higher than the accumulated score, then it would have been a "humiliating failure." If the self opted to study for an alternative field outside of its choosing, then that self forgoes the passion of study. As Xanh stated above, "If I study another field, then there's no passion."

The Freedom to Choose

The central tenets of capitalism, and its advanced form, neoliberalism, include the perceived limitless expansion of the free market, the proliferation of choice, and the activation of the responsible and at times entrepreneurial self. In neoliberalizing contexts, if state education does not grant the education one desires, then the freedom of the market can reclaim that privilege. Private education must be understood as derived from measures to privatize. In the case of Việt Nam, private colleges and universities emerged due to the increasing demands that the state could not fulfill. However, in the realm of education, private universities in Việt Nam acted as a stand-in for the state through their content but not always in their certification. Once again, Xanh's expressions provide explanation. In the following excerpt, she elaborates on her sentiments about

simultaneously enrolling at a private university while working to retake the exams for the public state university:

At that time [after not passing the exam], I had an ebullient way of thinking (ý nghĩa bông bột). I said to myself, never will I take the exam for the university again, I am too tired. I will enter to study at Duy Tân,⁶⁵ whoever has anything to say, I don't mind. But after a time of studying, suddenly I had a thirst to take the exam again in a vehement manner. But I couldn't balance the timing of the task of preparing for the exams again and my school work. I couldn't focus for both things at one time. Sometimes, I suddenly think if only at that time I thought a little more carefully and reserve time to take the exam again and not study at Duy Tân then right now I will be studying at a good school. My decision was hot and rushed. The other students like me have many ways of deciding, they study at Duy Tân for a semester, then hold their credits for the second semester to focus on taking the exams again because they know they cannot focus on two things at one time. Then there are some who studied for a time then they left, prepare for the exams again. To sum it up, alone, we cannot do two important things at one time. We have to know which task is more important than the other. That's my experience. (Conversation in November 2014)

Xanh sees the option of enrolling at a private university as an alternative attempt to earn a university degree and not settle for a lesser degree. She is aware of the social stigma of attending the school, saying “whoever has anything to say, I don't mind.” “Whoever has anything” are the voices from the outside, the voices of society; they are at once everywhere and nowhere. In Việt Nam, social stigmas are as much perceived as they are believed to be “real.” I present this here not as a judgment of private universities, as they hire faculties trained from the state's Universities of Pedagogies, but to demonstrate that private universities maintain an ambiguous role in the Việt Nam.⁶⁶ This ambiguity is evidenced by the fact that private universities receive zero funding from the state apparatus itself and must hire lecturers and professors that did not, or were not able

⁶⁵ Duy Tân is a private university in Đà Nẵng City that students who failed to receive entry into state universities enroll into.

⁶⁶ <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/education/69804/private-universities-seek-better-treatment.html>

to, receive employment in state colleges and universities. To summarize, private universities maintain an inferior status because of the public's lack of trust in them. Enrolling and obtaining certification at a private university is an action of risk, but one that is seen as having better odds at increasing one's chance of finding desirable employment than would a lesser university degree. In the case of Xanh and Thanh, amongst other students, enrolling at a private university prolonged their chances of obtaining a university degree, which they deemed would make them more competitive in the market over someone with a less valued degree.

Marketization introduced options of freedom to once centralized state economies. The proliferation of choices meant that one could turn to alternative options to make a socially desirable self. Freedom is a useful concept to consider agency and the remaking of oneself. John Christman (1991), a theorist of liberal political philosophy, offers two distinctions of negative and positive freedom. Saba Mahmood summarizes these two forms as follows:

Negative freedom is the absence of external obstacles to a self-guided choice and action. These external obstacles could be regarded as those imposed by the state, corporations, or private individuals. Positive freedom, on the other hand, is understood as the capacity to realize an autonomous will, one generally fashioned in accord with the dictates of "universal reason" or "self-interest," and hence unencumbered by the weight of custom, transcendental will, and tradition. In short, positive freedom may be best described as the capacity for self-mastery and self-government, and negative freedom as the absence of restraints of various kinds on one's ability to act as one wants. (Mahmood 2005: 11)

If state university education is perceived as a more assured way of completing a whole self, a self ascribed as educated and desirably employable, then this self would be more "free" to fit into Vietnamese society. Under a centralized system, if an actor realizes him or herself to be free only through a university education, then a downgrade into a less

prestigious education would move them into a realm of less freedom because that choice was imposed on them by a higher governmental apparatus. We see this through examples from the post-1975 years with pupils who had familial engagement with the southern government. Pupils who had such affiliations were rarely permitted into state colleges and universities. They were relegated instead to less valued institutions of training or, at times, no training at all. In a market economy, one can become more free if they choose to forgo the imposition of the governmental apparatus by enrolling at a private university. The private, however, places unforeseen obstacles to the formulation of a complete social self.

A Follow Up with Xanh

When I returned to Đà Nẵng in the spring of 2014, I visited Xanh and, separately, her parents at the fishing supply store. The overall tone of the family was contentment, if not happiness, because they had bought a new house. One of the main reasons the family decided to buy a house was because Xanh's brother was to be married and they needed extra room for his new family. The family told me of the brother's trouble finding employment. The job into which he was in the process of being hired was at a building and construction company. The family revealed that they had assembled the fees asked by the company and the process was almost done when the company decided that they could not hire the young man because he had obtained his degree from a private university in Ho Chi Minh. The decision was due to the lack of trust in the training provided by these private institutions.

Xanh told me she was content at the private university. The teachers were “genuine,” or *nhiệt tình*, and the curriculum was easy to understand. At that time, she was also preparing to take the university entrance exam again because she had a “thirst” to try again. Earning entrance into a state university would also lessen her family’s financial obligations. The sentiment in general was a forward-looking contentment.

When I reached out to Xanh in the fall of 2014 via Facebook, she revealed to me that she did not pass the university exam the second time around. This time, she only missed the mark by half of a point, receiving 20.5 points when the mark was 21 points. She attributed her lack of success to being unlucky, or *xui*. She also revealed that she was studying for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) with plans to apply to study abroad in Coventry, England. I was surprised by this choice and joked with her that it was a fancy choice. Xanh replied that it was nothing special and was, in fact, normal, or *bình thường*. She affirmed that, “only an international degree can have more value in Việt Nam.” The value that Xanh referred to was the value of exchange of a degree and its ability to make an application more competitive over the next.

When I contacted Xanh on Facebook during the Tết season in March 2015, she revealed to me that her family was experiencing difficulties, so it was hard for her to be happy even if it was Tết. The family’s main source of income, her mom’s storefront, was experiencing financial troubles.

In the summer of 2015, when I returned to Đà Nẵng, I touched base with Xanh. She revealed that her family had lost their new home. The whole family, including her

newly married brother and his wife, had to move into her paternal grandparents' home. Xanh had to withdraw from the private university because her parents could no longer afford the fees. Xanh told me that she still took English classes here and there to build her language skills in hopes of finding employment at a resort.

A Continued Search for the Socially Desirable Self

“Goodbye Đà Nẵng and family, I have to try harder,” read Facebook post caption on September 22, 2016 to a picture of a plane ticket tucked in a Vietnamese passport tagged at the Đà Nẵng City, Airport. The ticket was tucked in a manner where the destination was not revealed. The post was from Xanh, a student whose story I captured in chapter 3. I immediately messaged Xanh to ask where she was going. Two days later, she responded that she had left for the United States. One of the comments on the post was from Thanh, a good friend of Xanh, whose story was also captured in chapter 2. Xanh commented on Thanh's post asking, “Why didn't you say goodbye? You left, why didn't tell me?”

Xanh responded to my message to say that the whole process for her to leave was immediate and transpired in the time frame of one month. When she passed her interview and acquired a visa to leave, her family booked a ticket for her immediately. One of the last comments that Xanh posted was, “Goodbye Đà Nẵng and family, I have to try harder.”

“I have to try harder,” was tied to the experience of not passing the exam into her university of choice, Đà Nẵng University of Technology. As seen in chapter 3, after the

exam results, Xanh used agentive actions to redirect her goals to the private university majoring in tourism and did not attend the three-year college that was recommended for her based on the score of her exam. If we take Xanh's expression at that time in 2013, "now I can no longer study something of my liking, now, to study something that will get me a job, that will be happy enough for me," as an encapsulation of how she felt towards not passing, we can see that she strategized to enter a field deemed to be in demand despite her lack of interest. We can interpret Xanh's decision as her forgoing her personal desire and instead strategizing in relation to economic security.

Such actions serve to recuperate a sense of belonging for oneself. Although Xanh was not admitted into a state university and would not be rewarded a university degree, she could still potentially earn a university degree, albeit one from a private university that is less revered in this social context. A university degree matters. It projects a double identification onto the subject. One, a university degree projects an identification of status. Two, it projects the possibility of earning a higher income. These two projections are both positive identifications but they do not always lead to an outcome where the two projections converge. For instance, the perceived outcome of earning a private university degree in tourism would mean one is university educated and not college or technical educated. Additionally, one would be absorbed into a field of employment in tourism, which rewards one with a salary commensurable to one's training. If she had heeded the advice following the results of her exam and attended the three-year program at the College of Commerce, Xanh could have been presented a field of possibilities from that training. Instead, Xanh utilized her agency for something different.

In the case of Xanh, the events subsequent to her not passing introduced a course of action that included coming to the U.S. The suddenness of Xanh's departure was surprising to me because she never once expressed that she had plans to study abroad. But the secrecy of her departure, of not even telling her closest friend "goodbye," is not an uncommon story of Vietnamese young adults leaving Việt Nam to come to study in the United States. Secrecy is often practiced to minimize the risk of others knowing and gossiping about the individual's intent to leave. Different individuals believe such gossip could damage the application process and result in them not leaving. I found, however, that secrecy surrounding one's departure is more common if the journey is intended to be more of an exit strategy than a yearning to study abroad to bring one's international training back home. I have had conversations with students who were very open about their plans to study abroad. They revealed that they would not take the university entrance in Việt Nam and conserved their time and focused on other international exams. These students also expressed that they would take the university exam for fun or to see how they would do. They sought to attend international programs that offered funding, then to return to Việt Nam, or perhaps stay in the host country if they were granted a work visa. The objective of these students to leave was expressed honestly in comparison to the suddenness of other students' departures. I noticed that students who were willing to share their plans to leave were those whose family was financially capable of funding their journey. Students who were candid also spoke English very well, another evidence of their family's ability to fund private courses to facilitate their journey. With excellent English skills and an international degree, these students were well suited to obtain work

for a private or international company in Việt Nam. Xanh does not fit this scenario. Her surprising departure reveals a more unique situation in which she did not have plans to leave, but decided that she must transform her life.

While Xanh was in the United States, I attempted to reach out to her at least once every month to see how she was doing. I asked about her life and she asked about my research. One time, she expressed that she wished her life could be more like mine; “free to go here and there to learn.” Xanh had been working and had put her goals for school temporarily on hold. Her main goal in coming to U.S. was to attend school and earn some form of income to send back to support her family. She did not fully grasp that in order to start schooling in the U.S., she needed to take a series of English courses before transferring into a college or university. She attempted to take some ESL classes but temporarily withdrew to work and save to return to school at a later time.

The freedom to choose brought to Xanh a series of unforeseen circumstances. After not passing the university exam, she opted for the private university for a better chance of finding employment. In her own words, “that would make her happy enough.” Even though the private university was not a choice that she personally desired, it was a choice perceived to alleviate economic precarity. Her decision to come to the U.S., however, was part of a chain of events that precipitated out of this precarity in Việt Nam. In the process of earning an education that she desired and finding economic opportunity to match that education, Xanh had to sacrifice the status component of the desirable self to obtain the economic component.

“It Is True That That Was Kind of a Waste of Four Years of University”⁶⁷

I came to know a young college student named Mai through Xuan, Violet’s sister. During the time that I knew Violet, her sister Xuan would come to visit her occasionally and our friendship developed over time as she helped me with my research and I helped her in providing advice about studying abroad. When Xuan found out that I was researching the lives of young adults and their educational experiences, she introduced me to her roommates. At the time, Xuan was living in a home with seven other female college students. The students all come from different regions of Việt Nam and, because they were all from practicing Christian families, had learned about the *sinh viên* house through a Christian network. The house consisted of only one sleeping area upstairs, which all the women shared. The house was offered to students at a low rent of four hundred thousand Vietnamese dong per month, or roughly twenty dollars per student.

One of the students who was most generous with her time and willingness to share her experiences in education was Mai. At the time, Mai was a third-year student at a private university. She came from Gia Lai and was introduced to the school by another woman in her hometown. Her first choice was to test into the College of Pedagogy for Pre-Schoolers, which was only a two- to three-year program with less competitive requirements than the University of Pedagogy. Mai expressed that people in her hometown aspired for careers either in education or medicine. Both fields are dominantly controlled by the state apparatus in terms of training and employment.

⁶⁷ “đúng là cũng hơi phí 4 năm đại học”

After taking her exam for the College of Pedagogy, Mai received only eight points total, which was not enough to enroll in the school. Of course, Mai could have re-studied for the exams and tried again the next exam season, but she decided to enroll at a private university in Đà Nẵng. Her first choice was to study tourism at the school, but her score was not enough to enroll in that program. She was directed to study Business Management instead.⁶⁸ She had set goals on finding employment in business after finishing school.

After I returned to the U.S., I reached out to Mai via Facebook to see how she was doing after graduating school. She expressed that she had been working as a sales attendant at a store for several months but recently found a job at the Furama Resorts in Đà Nẵng through an Internet hiring site. She worked in the rooms and board division,⁶⁹ first as a part-time employee but she was then kept on full time. Mai expressed that she was content, if not happy, to finally find a full-time job, but it was not what she had studied for. In fact, the job required no college or university training at all. When I asked if her training at the private university had helped her find employment, she responded,

Not very much. Possibly not at all. But it will help me with future plans. My university degree might not help me right now but it will help me later. Because this work is not long-term work that I will choose. It is true that that was kind of a waste of four years of university, a long span of time.

Mai's story is reminiscent to that of Xanh and Thanh. All three did not win entry into their first school of choice and had to re-route their lives via private education. The underlying aspiration, of course, is to achieve higher education and employment in a field

⁶⁸ Quảng Trị Kinh Doanh

⁶⁹ Nghiệp Vụ Buồn Phòng

that one desired and studied for. From these three cases, Mai remains the only one who has completed school and currently works. In the United States, Xanh works also, but mainly because she absolutely has to in order to save for school in the future as she has always planned. As Mai expressed, she works, but it was not long-term work of *her choice*.

Searching for the Socially Desirable Self After University

In the summer of 2016, I returned to Việt Nam for follow-up research with informants who I had kept in contact with over the years. I reached out to a student, Amelia, who attended the general high school that I volunteered at in 2012. Amelia had just returned from studying abroad at a four-year university in the United Kingdom majoring in business.

We scheduled a meeting at a Coffee Bean in Hồ Chí Minh City. It was a pouring rainy summer night. Amelia greeted me soaking wet, as she had walked from her work place to our meeting location. To my surprise, she invited two other students who were her classmates at the high school and who I also knew, Yen and Bi. Yen had been living in the city studying finance at the University of Economics. Bi also lived in the city and had just graduated from the University of Social Sciences with a major in journalism. Yen brought along her boyfriend, Tu, who also attended the University of Economics. The now grown up and university-educated students expressed that it was a special occasion, as they all lived in Hồ Chí Minh City but rarely saw each other. They thought that it was the perfect opportunity to reconvene and have coffee with me.

Amelia said that she had returned to Việt Nam three months ago and had been working as a sales representative for a Johnny Walker distributor. She expressed that it was not the employment that she had hoped for, but she was recruited into the company because she attended university in the U.K. She also revealed that other colleagues of hers at Johnny Walker also attended her university in the U.K. The company sought graduates from the U.K. because it was believed that they brought an international perspective to the brand. To my surprise, Amelia expressed that she only intended to stay with the company short term while she pursued her true passion, banking. She confessed, however, that she did not know how this pursuit would be possible because she lacked the connections to be recruited into that field. Banking is indeed one of the most prestigious employment opportunities in Việt Nam. From the stories that I have encountered, one requires an impressive social network to be absorbed into such a field. One has to have a family member in the field or seek out opportunities where a bribe would have to be paid.

Yen, on the other hand, expressed that she was preparing to move back to Đà Nẵng because there was a job waiting there for her. She was recruited to work as a service representative for Mobifone, one of Việt Nam's leading telecommunication companies. Yen was recruited into the job because she had an aunt who worked for the company and was able to open a spot for her employment. Yen expressed that she earnestly did not want to leave Hồ Chí Minh City and she had no training for the job. But if she gave the opportunity up, another one would not come for a while.

The most surprising conversation I had was with Yen's boyfriend, Tu. The young man told me that although he majored in finance, there was nothing he could do with his degree. He said that "studying finance was a big mistake," but he did it to please his parents. In his exact words, he felt like "he contributed to the wrong direction for the country." Through his explanation, I gathered that each individual has a role in this world. When one chooses to study a major at a university, that major should be what one desires to do for a lifetime, as one's parents had sacrificed the finances for one to accomplish such a mission. Tu, however, has experienced complications finding employment in the field he studied. The vision he had as a teenager, that if he accomplished this goal of getting into university his life would unfold in the desired path, has been indefinitely been put on hold.

Tu's expression echoed conversations that I had with the director of the Office of Labor and War Invalids, Mr. Phan. To quote him verbatim, "Many people come in and they do not find employment that's fitting for them. It is a waste of time for job seekers and employers. If employees find work that they have trained in, it will make the process of the facility more efficient." Mr. Phan consistently expressed that employees should strive to find work that has *nguyên nhân*, or reason. The "reason" that employees who had attended job fairs, as well as Tu, long for is a social reality where one has purpose, to study and work for what one desires—much like practices under collectivized socialist times when individuals had just that.

The updates from these three students revealed that precarity slices both ways: it cuts through the life visions of those who fail exams as well as those that complete

university. Even though these three students completed university, an accomplishment that my other informants, Thanh, Xanh, and Xuan, passionately yearned for, their life trajectories also led them down a path of continually searching for what they desired: to study and work in a field they had passion for.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown the journey of three young adult women who marched on to be recertified and achieve a visibility in the aftermath of not passing the official university entrance examinations. They have all rerouted failing by enrolling into private universities. I argue that such actions are performed to continue to make a socially desirable self. The socially desirable self, however, is also not always accomplished by those who complete university, as I have shown through the stories of Amelia, Yen, and Tu. Through their stories, I have shown that completing a university degree only grants the recipient a certification that could be used to find employment in a desired field. The task of finding employment in the field that one has specialized in, however, continues to be an enduring challenge. Ultimately, in order to be employed and make a life for oneself in a precarious context such as Việt Nam, one must either accept the opportunities that are granted even if it does not match one's earned qualifications, or one must continue to search for the socially desirable self.

Conclusion

On May 17, 2016, an online magazine, *The Atlantic* announced that Thanh T. Nguyen, a high-school senior from Hà Nội, Việt Nam, as the winner of the 2nd Annual *The Atlantic* and College Board Writing Prize. The award was announced by the editor of *The Atlantic*, Scott Stossel, and the College Board’s vice president of communications at *The Atlantic*’s “Education Summit” in Washington, D.C.

Thanh T. Nguyen’s winning essay analyzed Raphael’s painting *The School of Athens* in order to critique education in Việt Nam . In his analysis, he utilized figures in the painting to argue for the classical world’s advocacy for the exchange of ideas that should set an example for education in Việt Nam. Thanh wrote,

With this interpretation in mind, I’ve come to view Raphael’s fresco as an invitation to engage with the great thinkers of the past—to learn from or question their ideas. Unfortunately, such an invitation has been largely withheld from students in Vietnam. Here, ideological constraints in the modern education system and a tradition of rote learning has resulted in limited exploration of a narrow range of ideas. For instance, in mandatory high-school civics courses, “philosophy” is introduced only to advance Marxism-Leninism. Ideas seem to be taught not so much for critical study as for nation building, through the promotion of a single worldview.⁷⁰

Within hours of the announcement, Vietnamese Americans, Vietnamese nationals, and media outlets within the country posted praise via social media for such a grand accomplishment for a student from Việt Nam. Not only did Thanh take the grand prize for the essay context, he was also set to attend Duke University in the United States the following fall with a scholarship worth \$300,000.

⁷⁰ <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/09/reading-raphael-in-hanoi/492725/>

Thanh's accomplishments and awards were extremely notable, to say the least, but what was surprising was the objects of critique of Thanh's essay, education and government in Việt Nam. Thanh's accomplishment put commonly shared critiques of education in Việt Nam at the forefront with social media by once again rehashing a rhetoric of anti-government sentiment and an educational system in need of change. Such rhetoric, very much captured by the essay, continued to harp on the connection between the centralization of education and monolithic thinking, a point that I have analyzed in this dissertation , arguing that it is not entirely accurate.

The public, and in my view the student, failed to realize that the student himself was a product of the Vietnamese education system. He was a student of the very prestigious Amsterdam-Hà Nội School, which is a specialized school for the gifted. The school only accepts students with exceptional examination scores with an admittance rate of 10%. The school nonetheless belongs to the Vietnamese education system with a core curriculum similar to the main track of general education followed by the whole country, the main difference being that in this school teaching and learning transpire at a much more rapid pace.

The winning essay was written in excellent English for a high school student, perhaps even better than that of many students from the United States. The student's proficiency in English, I believe, was honed by the curriculum that this school offered, with extra training from outside agencies.

The critical content of the essay as well as the commentary that followed did not drift far from the sentiments expressed in media outlets and online forums when in December 2013 the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) released to the public their results for the Program for International Assessment (PISA) that were conducted in 2012. At the time of announcement, to the public's surprise, Việt Nam performed quite well, placing 17 out of 65 countries. Surpassing the results of economically wealthy and industrialized countries, most notably the United States at 36 and the UK at 26.

Soon after its release, the PISA results were confronted by comments of disbelief on Vietnamese studies message boards and Vietnamese newspapers alike. Some members of message boards insinuated that education specialists in Việt Nam had somehow allocated tests to only well-performing schools. Newspapers also warned that MoET should not take too much pride in the results.⁷¹ While individual analysis of the results were open to different interpretations, given that the tests were conducted independently by PISA through their selective methods, the results that students in Việt Nam produced should speak loudly. Based on academic output - that is, the absorption and execution of academic knowledge - Việt Nam was as well as; if not better than, other countries with much more wealthy economies. The critique of Việt Nam then returned to the unrelenting misinterpretation of linking economic wealth and educational performance. The fact that these critiques arise anytime the topic of education and Việt

⁷¹ <http://thanhnien.vn/giao-duc/tu-hao-nhung-can-tinh-tao-8987.html>
<http://dantri.com.vn/giao-duc-khuyen-hoc/hoc-sinh-hoc-gioi-sao-nuoc-chua-giau-1386920633.htm>

Nam is mentioned informs the general public on how to think of Việt Nam; most generally, that socialism and strict state governance led to the stifling of creativity and business growth. These points echo the reports from Harvard Kennedy School that I presented in the introduction as well as support arguments for Western orientation.

The student's position, however, demonstrates the arduous journey that Việt Nam has undertaken to design an educational system under which its students could perform well on the international stage when compared to exponentially wealthier nation-states such as the United Kingdom and the United States. In response to these grand assumptions, I argue that economic wealth and educational performance need not necessarily to go hand-in-hand. How a nation such as the United States became a global economic power has much to do with processes of colonialism, the export of its industries to global regions of cheap production, and a business culture built on individualism.

This dissertation was written precisely to offer a counter-argument to these dominant beliefs that take hold of the mentalities amongst those fixated on binary opposition between privatized liberalism as a desired practice of freedom comparing to socialism and collectivism as practices of stringent political control. Through this dissertation, I have told the story of how a revolutionary government utilized the labor of young adults to win a political and cultural war, but in order to sustain that socialist agenda, the state demanded tough sacrifices and experimentations which in turn drifted young adults away from a firm dedication to the socialist project. Through liberalization,

the governing apparatus aimed to economically benefit the nation while retaining the structure of education and employment that adheres to ideologies of state-centralism.

By looking closely at the relationship between agency, governance, and political economy, this dissertation reveals findings that intervene in dominant arguments that link economic development to educational liberalization. This research intervenes in the existing bodies of literature in a number of ways. First, by defining agency as a form of social action that is activated by particular modes of governance and political economy, I was able to show that the fervor to contribute to building a revolutionary educational system is a political act for independence and not motivated by material gains. By concretely locating the operation of agency to particular historical and political-economic contexts, I contributed to the dominant analysis of agency as belonging to realm of resistance. Particularly important to education, my analysis will provide future research projects with the language and methods to track the subtle actions that inform agency.

Second, by drawing attention to how education in Việt Nam operates through different experiments with politics and economics, I revealed the role of the state via the educational apparatus in directing classed and gendered bodies into different educational and employment fields in order to diversify the labor market. These practices alter arguments that identify educational tracking as intended practices to exclude certain populations of people from economic success. By documenting the rationales of the governmental apparatus as well as how pupils on the ground respond to those rationales, I demonstrated that in order for a new nation-state to achieve its goal of building a

functional state, it must intervene in the practices of directing pupils into educational and labor fields that the governed territory needed.

Third, by historicizing agency, I have shown that agency as connected to education is not always motivated by economic determinism. While in contemporary times, economic precarity is a real lived condition, I have shown that the actions that young adults have taken in order to secure a viable future is not solely premised on obtaining education abroad as research from other Asian contexts have shown. I instead show that that educational agency operates contingently on the condition that one must obtain higher education in a field that one has passion for in order to combat economic insecurity.

Fourth, by focusing on failure, I was able to demonstrate that most pupils who have failed their exams do not identify as failures nor do they abandon education for good in the aftermath. I show that those who have experienced failure with their exams utilize a variety of strategies such as opting for a more expensive private education in order to improve their chances of competing in the labor market. By focusing on this component, I draw attention to the benefits and sacrifices of liberalizing the economy. For one, liberalizing the economy unburdens the state from providing education to all citizens. However, because of liberalization, the state must also contend with the problem of how to diversify education and employment so that pupils do not continually aspire for higher degrees and instead be content with the diverse labor market that the state has helped to create.

Through the interventions stated above, I follow what Susan Bayly (2014) via Jack Friedman (2007) argues as the critical concerns for analyzing social life in the age of global integration, that is consciousness and subjectivity. In arguing so, the authors echo Aihwa Ong's critique of globalization's succession over the nation-state. What these authors called for was a keen focus on the local unfoldings of social life that supplement or challenge commonly held notions of globalism. What I have attempted to accomplish with this dissertation is to complicate the much written trope of students from the "developing" world dominantly aspiring for a Western life by achieving success in higher education. I have done so through a close analysis of educational practices that unfold on the ground. By documenting agency as it relates to education through experiments with different political economies, I have shown that research on education will benefit greatly by seeking for answers through a structural and individualistic approach. This approach allowed me to examine the goals of the governing apparatus as well as those of its citizens.

Yet while this dissertation has made contributions to ethnographic research on education, there remains some limits that can be addressed in future research projects. For example, this research focused on an emerging urban context where young adults have had ambivalent feelings about non-university education. Future research could focus on localities where specialized technical and trade education play a strong role in social life. A focus on that component will contribute to further understanding on the effectiveness of a diversified education and its role in further strengthening the socialist project.

Bibliography

Archival sources from The Ministry of Education at The National Archive #3, Hà Nội Việt Nam.

Dossier 156

Dossier 2274

Dossier 2287

Dossier 2657 Tập tài liệu của Bộ ĐH-THCN tuyển sinh vào các trường THCN 76-77

Dossier 2658

Dossier 3411 Đề án cải cách GDPT năm 1975

Dossier 3434 Kế hoạch phát triển GDPT trung học năm học 1977-1978 của Ty Giáo dục Bình Thị Thiên, Đà Nẵng

Books and Articles

Althusser, Louis

1984 *Essays on Ideology*. Verso Books

Abelman, Nancy, Jung-Ah Choi, and So Jin Park, eds.

2012 *No Alternatives?: Experiments in South Korean Education*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Agamben, Giorgio

1998 *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Allison, Anne

2013 *Precarious Japan*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Anderson-Levitt, Kathryn, ed.

2003 *Local Meanings, Global Schooling: Anthropology and World Culture Theory*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan

Appadurai, Arjun

1996 *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Archbald, Doug A., and Fred M. Newman

1988 *Beyond Standardized Testing: Assessing Authentic Academic Achievement in the Secondary School*. Washington DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Aronowitz, Stanley

2001 *The Knowledge Factory: Dismantling the Corporate University and Creating True Higher Learning*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Aronowitz, Stanley, and William DiFazio

2010 *The Jobless Future: Second Edition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Asad, Talal

2000 "Agency and pain: An exploration, *Culture and Religion*, 1:1, 29 — 60

Asselin, Pierre

2013 *Hanoi's Road to the Vietnam War, 1954-1965*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Bayly, Susan

2007 *Asian Voices in a Post-Colonial Age: Vietnam, India and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2014 "How to Forge a Creative Student-Citizen: Achieving the Positive in Today's Vietnam." *In Modern Asian Studies* 48, no. 3: 493-523

Beresford, Melanie

1988 "Issues in Economic Unification: Overcoming the Legacy of Separation." *In Postwar Vietnam: Dilemmas in Socialist Development*. David G. Marr and Christine P. White, eds. Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asian Program.

1988 *Việt Nam: Politics, Economics and Society*. London and New York; Pinter Publishers.

Beresford, Melanie and Đặng Phong

2000 *Economic Transition in Vietnam: Trade and Aid in the Demise of a Centrally Planned Economy*. Cheltenham and Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Biehl, João and Peter Locke

2010 "Deleuze and the Anthropology of Becoming." *In Current Anthropology* Volume 51:3.

Blum, Denise

2011 *Cuban Youth and Revolutionary Values*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre

1977 *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre and Jean-Claude Passeron

1977 *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Butler, Judith

2010 *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable*. Brooklyn: Verso

Brinton, Crane

1959 *The Anatomy of Revolution*. New York: Vintage Books

- Chan, Ming K., and Arif Dirlik
 1991 *Schools Into Fields and Factories: Anarchists, the Guomindang, and the National Labor University in Shanghai 1927-1932*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Chang, Yinghong
 2009 *Creating the "New Man": From Enlightenment Ideals to Socialist Realities*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Christman, John
 1991 "Liberalism and Individual Positive Freedom." *In Ethics* 101 (2):343-359
- Collier, Stephen J, and Aihwa Ong
 2005 "Global Assemblages, Anthropological Problems." *In Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics As Anthropological Problems*. Aihwa Ong and Stephen Collier, eds. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Condominas, Georges, and Richard Pottier
 1982 *Les Refugies Originaires de l'Asie du Sud-Est*. Paris: La Documentation Francaise.
- Côté, James
 2014 *Youth Studies: Fundamental Issues and Debates*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan Press.
- Davies, Scott and Linda Quirke
 2005 "Providing for the Priceless Student: Ideologies of Choice in an Emerging Educational Market." *In American Journal of Education* 111: 523-547.
- Dean, Mitchell
 1991 *The Constitution of Poverty: Toward a Genealogy of Liberal Governance*. London: Routledge.
- 1992 "A Genealogy of the Government of Poverty." *In Economy and Society* 21(3): 215-51.
- 2001 "Demonic Societies": Liberalism, Biopolitics, and Sovereignty." *In States of Imagination: Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State*. Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat, eds. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari
 1987 *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press.

- Dewey, John
1951, 1916 *Democracy and education; an introduction to the philosophy of education*. New York: The Macmillan.
- Dissanayake, Wimal
1996 "Introduction / Understanding: Agency and Cultural Some Preliminary Remarks" *In Narratives of Agency: Self-Making in China, India, and Japan*. Dissanayake, Wimal, ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Dolby, Nadine and Greg Dimitriadis, eds.
2004 *Learning to Labor in New Times*. New York and London: Routledge Press.
- Dolby, Nadine and Fazal Rizvi
2008 "Introduction: Youth, Mobility and Identity." *In Youth Moves: Identities and Education in Global Perspective*. Nadine Dolby and Fazal Rizvi, eds. New York and London: Routledge Press.
- Dore, Ronald
1997 *The Diploma Disease: Education, Qualification, and Development*. London: Institute of Education Press.
- Dressman, Mark, Wilder, Phillip and Julia Johnson Connor
2005 "Theories of Failure and the Failure of Theories: A Cognitive/Sociocultural/Macrostructural Study of Eight Struggling Students." *In Research in the Teaching of English*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Aug., 2005), pp. 8-61.
- Duiker, William J
2000 *Ho Chi Minh*. New York: Hyperion Press.
- Dunn, Elizabeth
2008 "Standards and Person-Making in East Central Europe." *In Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Elias, Norbert
2000 *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Foley, Douglas E.
1990 *Learning Capitalist Culture*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Fong, Vanessa L.

2004 *Only Hope: Coming of Age Under China's One-Child Policy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

2011 *Paradise Redefined: Transnational Chinese Students and the Quest for Flexible Citizenship in the Developed World*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Foucault, Michel

1977 *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Allan Lane.

1978 *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. New York: Pantheon Books.

1991 *Governmentality*. In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. Graham Burchell, C. Gordon, P. Miller, eds. Chicago: University of Chicago press.

Friedman, Jack R.

2007 "Shock and Subjectivity in the Age of Globalization: Marginalization, Exclusion, and the Problem of Resistance." In *Anthropological Theory*. Vol 7(4): 421-448

Furlong, Andy

2012 *Youth Studies: An Introduction*. New York and London: Routledge Press.

Gardner, Howard

1992 "Assessment in Context: The Alternative to Standardized Testing." In *Changing Assessments: Alternative Views of Aptitude, Achievement and Instruction*. Bernard R. Gifford and Mary Catherine O'Connor, eds. New York: Springer Science and Business Media.

Ghodsee, Kristen

2005 *The Red Riviera: Gender, Tourism, and Postsocialism on the Black Sea*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Giddens, Anthony

1991 *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

2002 *Runaway World: How Globalization is Reshaping our Lives*. London and New York: Routledge Press.

- Giroux, Henry A.
 2013 *America's Education Deficit and the War on Youth: Reform Beyond Electoral Politics*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- 2014 *Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.
- Goffman, Erving
 1952 *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday.
- Goody, Jack
 2000 *The Power of the Written Tradition*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Gramsci, Antonio
 1948 *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*. New York: International Publishers Co.
- Habermas, Jurgen
 1992 *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Halberstam, Judith
 2011 *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Hancké, Bob, Rhodes, Martin, and Mark Thatcher, eds.
 2008 *Beyonce Varieties of Capitalism: Conflict, Contradictions, and Complementarities in the European Economy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hansen, Wendy L., and Neil J. Mitchell
 2010 "Globalization or National Capitalism: Large Firms, National Strategies, and Political Activities." *In Business and Politics* Vol. 3, Issue 1. Pp. 5-19.
- Hardy, Andrew
 2003 "State Visions, Migrant Decisions: Population Movements Since the end of the Vietnam War." *In Postwar Vietnam: Dynamics of a Transforming Society*. Hy Van Luong, ed. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Harman, Kay and Nguyen Thi Bich Ngoc
 2009 "Reforming Teaching and Learning in Vietnam's Higher Education System." *In Reforming Higher Education in Vietnam: Challenges and Priorities*. Grant Harman, Martin Hayden, and Thanh Nghi Pham, eds. Dordrecht, Heidelberg, London and New York: Springer.

- Harms, Erik
2010 *Saigon's Edge: On the Margins of Hồ Chí Minh City*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Harvey, David
1991 *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry Into the Origins of Cultural Change*. New York: Wiley-Blackwell
- Heller, Mikhail
1988 *Cogs in the Soviet Wheel: The Formation of Soviet Man*. London: Collins Harvill.
- Hoang, Kimberley Kay
2015 *Dealing in Desire: Asian Ascendancy, Western Decline, and the Hidden Currencies of Global Sex Work*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Hoffman, Lisa
2008 "Post-Mao Professionalism." *In Privatizing China: Socialism from Afar*. Zhang, Li, and Ong, Aihwa, eds. Ithaca, NY, USA: Cornell University Press.
2010 *Patriotic Professionalism in Urban China: Fostering Talent*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Horkheimer, Max
1947 *The Eclipse of Reason*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Houts, Paul L.
1975 *The Myth Of Measurability*. New York: Hart Publishing Company.
- Hudson, Kenneth
2007 "The new labor market segmentation: Labor market dualism in the new economy." *In Social Science Research* [Volume 36, Issue 1](#), March 2007, Pages 286–312.
- Ingold, Tim and Elizabeth Hallam,
2007 "Creativity and Cultural Improvisation: An Introduction." *In Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*. Elizabeth Hallam and Tim Ingold, eds. Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers.

Kim, Dong-one, and Seongsu Kim

2003 "Globalization, Financial Crisis, and Industrial Relations: The Case of South Korea." *In* *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society* Volume 42, Issue 3. Pages 341–367

Kipnis, Andrew

2008 "Audit cultures: Neoliberal governmentality, Socialist legacy, or technologies of governing?" *In* *American Ethnologist* Volume 35, Issue 2. Pages 275–289.

2008 *China and PostSocialist Anthropology: Theorizing Power and Society after Communism*. Norwalk: East Bridge.

2011 *Governing Educational Desires: Culture, Politics, and Schooling in China*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Lambek, Michael

2015 *The Ethnical Condition: Essays on Action, Persons and Value*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Leshkovich, Ann Marie

2014 *Essential Trade: Vietnamese women in a changing marketplace*. Honolulu : University of Hawai'i Press.

2014 "Standardized Forms of Vietnamese Selfhood: An Ethnographic Genealogy of Documentation." *In* *AMERICAN ETHNOLOGIST*, Vol. 41, No. 1, pp. 143–162.

Levinson, Bradley A., Douglas E. Foley, and Dorothy C. Holland, eds.

1996 *The Cultural Production of the Educated Person: Critical Ethnographies of Schooling and Local Practice*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Li, Tania Murray

2007 *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Liep, John

2001 "Introduction." *In* *Locating Cultural Creativity*. John Liep, ed. London: Pluto Press.

London, Jonathan D. ed,

2011 *Education in Vietnam*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

- Luong, Hy Văn
1992 *Revolution in the Village: Tradition and Transformation in North Vietnam, 1925-1988*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Mahmood, Sabah
2005 *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Malarney, Shaun Kingsley
2002 *Culture, Ritual and Revolution in Vietnam*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Marr, David G.
1995 *Vietnam 1945: The Quest for Power*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
2013 *Vietnam: State, War, and Revolution (1945-1946)*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Marr, David G, and Christine P. White
1988 "Introduction." *In Postwar Vietnam: Dilemmas in Socialist Development*. David G. Marr and Christine P. White, eds. Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asian Program.
- Marx, Karl
1970 "Theses On Fuerbach." *In The German Ideology*. Karl Marx and Frederick Engles. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Meuhlebach, Andrea
2012 *The Moral Neoliberal: Welfare and Citizenship in Italy*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Mills, Mary Beth
2003 "Gender and Inequality in the Global Labor Force." *In Annual Review of Anthropology* Vol. 32, pp. 41-62.
- Miyazaki, Hirokazu
2013 *Arbitrating Japan: Dreams of Capitalism at the End of Finance*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ness, Sally Ann
2002 *Where Asia Smiles: An Ethnography of Philippine Tourism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Nguyễn, Bảo Quốc

2012 “Công Tác Đào Tạo, Bồi Dưỡng Đội Ngũ Cán Bộ Giáo Viên Của Sự Nghiệp Giáo Dục Cách Mạng Trong Thời Kỳ Chống Mĩ Cứu Nước Ở Miền Nam.” *In* Giáo Dục Giải Phóng Thời Kỳ Chống Mĩ Cứu. Eds. Nguyễn Quốc Bảo and Phạm Thanh Liêm. Hồ Chí Minh City: Nhà Xuất Bản Giáo Dục Việt Nam.

2012 Những Trải Nghiệm Mới về Giáo Dục Trong Thời Bình. Hồ Chí Minh City: Nhà Xuất Bản Giáo Dục.

2008 Ba Lần Vượt Trường Sơn. Hồ Chí Minh City: Nhà Xuất Bản Giáo Dục.

Nguyen-Vo, Thu Huong

2008 *The Ironies of Freedom: Sex, Culture, and Neoliberal Governance in Vietnam*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Ong, Aihwa

1999 *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Ong, Aihwa and Li Zhang

2008 “Introduction: Privatizing China. Powers of the Self, Socialism from Afar.” *In* *Privatizing China: Socialism from Afar*. Zhang, Li, and Ong, Aihwa, eds. Ithaca, NY, USA: Cornell University Press, 2008.

Orta, Andrew

2013 “Managing the Margins: MBA Training, International Business, and “The Value Chain of Culture.” *In* *AMERICAN ETHNOLOGIST*, Vol. 40, No. 4, pp. 689–703

Paine, Suzy

1988 “The Limits of Planning and the Case for Economic Reform.” *In* *Postwar Vietnam: Dilemmas in Socialist Development*. David G. Marr and Christine P. White, eds. Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asian Program.

Pham Thi Hong Thanh

2011 “Doi Moi (Renovation) and Higher Education Reform in Vietnam”. *In* *International Journal of Educational Reform* Vol. 20, No. 3. Guildford: Rowman and Littlefield.

Phan Đức Ái, Chu Cấp, Hậu Tư Hoàng and Tiến Đức Ngô

2013 *Nhà Giáo Nghệ An Đi B: Một Thời Để Nhớ*. Nghệ An: Sở Giáo Dục Đào Tạo.

Nguyen, Lien-Hang T.

2012 *Hanoi's War: An International History of the War for Peace in Vietnam*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

Nguyễn Bá Cường, Trịnh Huyền Huân, Lê Hiến Chương, Ứng Quốc Chính, Lê Xuân Quang, and Nguyễn Thanh Xuân

2014 *Đại Tướng Võ Nguyên Giáp: Với Sự Nghiệp Khoa Học Giáo Dục và Đào Tạo*. Hà Nội: Nhà Xuất Bản Đại Học Sư Phạm.

Nguyễn Văn Huyền and Nguyễn Sỹ Tỷ

1962 *Vấn Đề Cải Cách Giáo Dục ở Liên Xô*. Hà Nội: Nhà Xuất Bản Giáo Dục.

Ninh, Kim N. B.,

2002 *A World Transformed: The Politics of Culture in Revolutionary Vietnam, 1945-1965*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

O'Neill, Bruce

2014 "Cast Aside: Boredom, Downward Mobility, and Homelessness in Post-Communist Bucharest." *In Cultural Anthropology* 29, no. 1 (2014): 8–31.

Rabinow, Paul

1996 *Essays on the Anthropology of Reason*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Ranciere, Jacques

"Politics, Identification, and Subjectification." *In The Identity Question*. John Rajchman, ed. New York and London: Routledge Press.

Reed-Danahay, Deborah

1996 *Education and Identity in Rural France: The Politics of Schooling*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2005 *Locating Bourdieu*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Robinson, Courtland W.

1988 *Terms of Refuge: The Indochinese Exodus and the International Response*. London and New York: Zed Books.

Rofel, Lisa

2007 *Desiring China: Experiments in Neoliberalism, Sexuality, and Public Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Rose, Nikolas

1996 "Governing "advanced" liberal democracies." *In* Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism, and Rationalities of Government. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Roseneau, William

2008 Special Operations Forces and Elusive Enemy Ground Targets: Lessons From Vietnam and the Persian Gulf War. Santa Monica: Rand

Salecl, Renata

2004 On Anxiety: Thinking in Action. New York: Routledge Press.

Sandage, Scott

2005 Born Losers: A History of Failure in America. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Schwenkel, Christina

2009 The American War in Contemporary Vietnam: Transnational Remembrance and Representation. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

2012 "Soviet Trained Scientist." *In* Figures of Southeast Asian Modernity. Joshua Barker, Erik Harms, and Johan Lindquist, eds. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. Pp. 59-61.

Scott, James

1985 Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance. New Haven: Yale University Press

2008 Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Skinner, Quentin

1978 The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

1989 "The State." *In* Political Innovation and Conceptual Change. Terence Ball and James Farr, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Strathern, Marilyn, ed.

1999 Property Substance and Effect: Anthropological Essays and Persons and Things. London: The Athlone Press

2000 Audit Cultures: Anthropological Studies in Accountability, Ethics and the Academy. London and New York: Routledge Press.

- Suarez-Orozco, Marcelo M., and Desiree Baolian Qin-Hilliard, eds.
2004 *Globalization: Culture and Education in the New Millennium*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Taylor, Philip
2002 "Introduction: Social Inequality in a Socialist State." *In Social Inequality in Vietnam and the Challenges to Form*. Philip Taylor, ed. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Thompson, E.P,
1966 *The Making of the English Working Class*. New York: Vintage.
- Thu Hà
2012 "Tiêu Chuẩn Bộ Trưởng Không Dùng Hết." *In Chuyện Thời Bao Cấp Tập 1*. Hà Nội: Nhà Xuất Bản Thống Nhất.
- Tô Uyên Minh
2012 "Giáo Dục Khu V Trong Thời Kỳ Chống Mỹ." *In Giáo Dục Giải Phóng Thời Kỳ Chống Mỹ Cứu*. Eds. Nguyễn Quốc Bảo and Phạm Thanh Liêm. Hồ Chí Minh City: Nhà Xuất Bản Giáo Dục Việt Nam.
- Tran, Allen
2012 "A life of worry: the cultural politics and phenomenology of anxiety in Hồ Chí Minh City, Vietnam." PhD Dissertation, University of California, San Diego.
- Trần Văn Ba
2010 "Chủ Tịch Hồ Chí Minh – Một Tầm Nhìn Chiến Lược Về Giáo Dục và Sư Phạm." *In Kỷ Yếu Hội Thảo Khoa Học: Chủ Tịch Hồ Chí Minh – Một Tầm Nhìn Chiến Lược Về Giáo Dục và Sư Phạm*. Lương Thanh Thủy and Đào Thu Hằng, editors. Hà Nội: Bộ Giáo Dục và Đào Tạo.
- Tribe, Keith
1978 *Land, Labour and Economic Discourse*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

1995 *Strategies of Economic Order: German Economic Discourse 1975-1950*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Trương, Chi Huyền,
2011 "They Think We Don't Value Schooling": Paradoxes of Education in the Multi-Ethnic Central Highlands of Vietnam. *In Education in Vietnam*. Johnathan D. London, ed. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Tyack, David and Elisabeth Hansot
1992 *Learning Together: A History of Coeducation in American Public Schools*.
New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Vallely, Thomas J. and Ben Wilkinson

2008 *Vietnamese Higher Education: Crisis and Response*. Electronic Document,
<https://www.hks.harvard.edu/innovations/asia/Documents/HigherEducationOverview112008.pdf>

Vasavakul, Thaveenporn

1994 *Schools and Politics in South and North Vietnam: A Comparative study of State Apparatus, State Policy and State Power: 1945-1965*. Cornell University: Dissertation.

Verdery, Katherine

1996 *What was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Vũ Đình Hòa

2012 *Thư Lập Thân*. TP Hồ Chí Minh: Nhà Xuất Bản Trẻ.

Vũ Ngọc Hải, Đặng Bá Lãm, and Trần Khánh Đức

2007 *Giáo Dục Việt Nam: Đổi Mới Và Phát Triển Hiện Đại Hóa*. Hồ Chí Minh City: Nhà Xuất Bản Giáo Dục.

William, Dylan

2010 "Standardized Testing and School Accountability." *In Educational Psychologist* Volume 45, No. 2.

Williams, Raymond

1975 *The Country and the City*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

1977 *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Woodside, Alexander

1983 "Triumphs and Failures of Mass Education in Vietnam." *In Pacific Affairs* 56, No.2, pp. 401-427.

1997 "The Struggle to Rethink the Vietnamese State in the Era of Market Economics." *In Cultural and Economy: The Shaping of Capitalism in Eastern Asia*. Timothy Brook and Hy V. Luong. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Yurchak, Alexei

2006 *Everything Was Forever Until It was No More: The last Soviet Generation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

ĐỀ CHÍNH THỨC

NAM HỌC 2002 - 2003

MÔN THI : LÀM VĂN

Thời gian làm bài: 150 phút, không kể thời gian giao
đề

Thí sinh chọn một trong hai đề:

Đề I

Câu 1 (2 điểm) :

Anh hoặc chị hãy giới thiệu ngắn gọn tiểu sử và sự nghiệp của nhà văn Sôlôkhốp. Sáng tác nổi tiếng nhất của ông là tác phẩm *Sông Đông êm đềm* hay tác phẩm *Số phận con người* ?

Câu 2 (8 điểm) :

MỚI RA TÙ, TẬP LEO NÚI

Hồ Chí Minh

Núi áp ôm mây, mây áp núi,
Lòng sông gương sáng, bụi không mờ ;
Bồi hồi dạo bước Tây Phong lĩnh,
Trông lại trời Nam, nhớ bạn xưa.

Nam Trân dịch

(Theo *Văn học 12*, Phần VHVN, NXB Giáo dục - 2002, trang 25)

Anh hoặc chị hãy phân tích bài thơ trên để nêu bật vẻ đẹp cổ điển và tinh thần hiện đại của tác phẩm này.

Đề II

Câu 1 (2 điểm) :

Theo anh hoặc chị, hoàn cảnh ra đời bài thơ *Việt Bắc* của nhà thơ Tố Hữu có những điểm gì cần lưu ý, giúp người đọc hiểu sâu thêm về tác phẩm này?

Câu 2 (2 điểm) :

Anh hoặc chị hãy trình bày vấn đề tất những nét chính về phong cách nghệ thuật của nhà văn Nguyễn Tuân.

Câu 3 (6 điểm) :

Cảm nhận của anh hoặc chị về hình tượng cây xà nu trong truyện ngắn *Rừng xà nu* của nhà văn Nguyễn Trung Thành.

----- Hết -----

Họ và tên thí sinh :

Số báo danh :

APPENDIX 1

Thí sinh chọn một trong hai đề sau:

ĐỀ I

Câu 1 (2 điểm)

Tóm tắt tác phẩm *Số phận con người* của M. Sôlôkhốp.

Câu 2 (2 điểm)

Bài thơ *Bên kia sông Đuống* của Hoàng Cầm ra đời trong hoàn cảnh nào?

Câu 3 (6 điểm)

CHIỀU TỐI

Hồ Chí Minh

*Chim mỏi về rừng tìm chốn ngủ,
Chòm mây trôi nhẹ giữa tầng không;
Cô em xóm núi xay ngô tối,
Xay hết, lò than đã rực hồng.*

Nam Trân dịch

(Theo *Văn học 12*, tập một, tr. 20, NXB Giáo dục - 2006)

Anh/ chị hãy phân tích bài thơ trên để thấy được vẻ đẹp tâm hồn của Hồ Chí Minh.

ĐỀ II

Câu 1 (2 điểm)

Nêu những nội dung chính bản *Tuyên ngôn Độc lập* của Hồ Chí Minh.

Câu 2 (2 điểm)

Nêu ngắn gọn những cảm nhận của Tố Hữu về thơ Nguyễn Du trong đoạn sau:

*Tiếng thơ ai động đất trời
Nghe như non nước vọng lời ngàn thu
Nghìn năm sau nhớ Nguyễn Du
Tiếng thương như tiếng mẹ ru những ngày*

(Trích *Kính gửi cụ Nguyễn Du*, *Văn học 12*,
tập một, tr. 160, NXB Giáo dục - 2006)

Câu 3 (6 điểm)

Phân tích nhân vật Mị trong truyện ngắn *Vợ chồng A Phủ* của Tô Hoài (đoạn trích sách giáo khoa *Văn học 12*).

.....Hết.....

Thí sinh không được sử dụng tài liệu. Giám thị không giải thích gì thêm.

Họ và tên thí sinh: Số báo danh:
Chữ ký của giám thị 1: Chữ ký của giám thị 2:

I. PHẦN CHUNG CHO TẤT CẢ THÍ SINH (5,0 điểm)

Câu 1. (2,0 điểm)

Trong phần cuối tác phẩm *Số phận con người*, nhà văn M. Sô-lô-khốp viết:
Hai con người côi cút, hai hạt cát đã bị sức mạnh phù phàng của bão tố chiến tranh thổi bạt tới những miền xa lạ...

(Ngữ văn 12, Tập hai, tr. 123, NXB Giáo dục - 2008)

Hai con người được nói đến ở trên là những nhân vật nào? Vì sao tác giả gọi họ là *hai con người côi cút*? Hình ảnh *hai hạt cát* trong câu văn có ý nghĩa gì?

Câu 2. (3,0 điểm)

Thời đời trả là biểu hiện của sự suy thoái về đạo đức trong đời sống xã hội.

Viết một bài văn ngắn (khoảng 400 từ) trình bày suy nghĩ của anh/chị về ý kiến trên.

II. PHẦN RIÊNG - PHẦN TỰ CHỌN (5,0 điểm)

Thí sinh chỉ được làm một trong hai câu (câu 3.a hoặc câu 3.b)

Câu 3.a. Theo chương trình Chuẩn (5,0 điểm)

Phân tích đoạn thơ sau trong bài *Việt Bắc* của nhà thơ Tố Hữu:

*Ta đi ta nhớ những ngày
Mình đây ta đó, đắng cay ngọt bùi...
Thương nhau, chia củ sắn lùi
Bát cơm sẻ nửa, chăn sui đắp cùng.
Nhớ người mẹ nắng cháy lưng
Địu con lên rẫy, bẻ từng bắp ngô.
Nhớ sao lớp học i tờ
Đông khuya đuốc sáng những giờ liên hoan
Nhớ sao ngày tháng cơ quan
Gian nan đời vẫn ca vang núi đèo.
Nhớ sao tiếng mõ rừng chiều
Chày đêm nện cối đều đều suối xa...*

(Ngữ văn 12, Tập một, tr. 111, NXB Giáo dục - 2009)

Câu 3.b. Theo chương trình Nâng cao (5,0 điểm)

Phân tích hình tượng sông Đà trong tác phẩm *Người lái đò Sông Đà* của nhà văn Nguyễn Tuân (phần trích trong *Ngữ văn 12 Nâng cao*, Tập một, NXB Giáo dục - 2009).

-----Hết-----

Thí sinh không được sử dụng tài liệu. Giám thị không giải thích gì thêm.

Họ và tên thí sinh: Số báo danh:

Chữ kí của giám thị 1: Chữ kí của giám thị 2: