Technical Note 38

Young Lives

The Design of the 2016-17 Young Lives School Survey in Vietnam

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About Young Lives

Young Lives is an international study of childhood poverty, following the lives of 12,000 children in four countries (Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam) over 15 years. **www.younglives.org.uk**

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1. Introduction to the survey

Young Lives is an international study of childhood poverty in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam. Its aim is to improve understanding of the drivers and impacts of child poverty and development.

Following the Young Lives survey on primary school effectiveness in Vietnam (conducted in 2011-12; see Rolleston et al 2013), Young Lives is conducting a survey on secondary school effectiveness in 2016-17. The study examines school effectiveness through multiple outcome measures: Grade 10 students' performance in Maths, Functional English, and Transferable Skills. Student performance in Maths and Functional English is assessed using repeated measures, which involves the administration of linked cognitive tests at the beginning and the end of Grade 10 (Wave 1 and Wave 2 of data collection respectively). This will allow students' progress over the course of one year of secondary schooling to be considered in relation to student, class, teacher and school factors.

Children from the Young Lives 'Younger Cohort' (born in 2001-02) who participated in the 2011-12 primary school survey will be included in the 2016-17 school survey, and this will offer a rich longitudinal perspective on the school system in Vietnam. In particular, it will be possible to explore the links between learning outcomes and student, class, teacher and school factors at two key points of schooling: the end of primary school (Grade 5), and the beginning of upper secondary school (Grade 10).

Priority areas for secondary education policy and practice in Vietnam have been identified in consultation with key stakeholders, including the Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), World Bank, Asian Development Bank and UNICEF. Based on these consultations, the Vietnam secondary school survey is guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent do schools support the development of transferable skills in Grade 10, in both core curricular and cross-curricular domains?
2. What are the student, teacher, class and school-related factors associated with the development of transferable skills?
3. What are the factors associated with transition to upper secondary school?
4. How are learning outcomes in and transition to Grade 10 affected by ethnic background?
5. To what extent can learning outcomes in and transition to Grade 10 be linked to learning outcomes in Grade 5?

This design note outlines the context and policy background, the research design, and the policy implications of the Vietnam secondary school survey.

2. Context and policy background

Vietnam's general education system is highly effective in supporting the development of foundational cognitive skills such as numeracy and literacy, as indicated by Vietnam's performance in PISA 2012; the country's 15-year-olds were ranked 14th out of 65 participating countries, on a par with their peers in Germany (Bodewig 2013). However, to ensure that Vietnam can meet the needs of a rapidly expanding economy and create a highly skilled workforce, the country's education system needs to support the development of transferable skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication and teamwork

(Le Thuc Duc & Nguyen Thang 2014; World Bank 2014). The Government of Vietnam's General Renovation of Education (2013-2020) therefore includes a new, competency-based curriculum which will promote the development of these skills (World Bank 2015).

Equitable access to secondary education remains a concern in Vietnam. Enrolment in lower secondary education (Grades 6-9) is approximately 80%, while enrolment in upper secondary education (Grades 10-12) is approximately 60% (World Bank 2014). The most disadvantaged children in Vietnam, including those from ethnic minority backgrounds, are largely those excluded from secondary education (World Bank 2014). In order to promote better access to secondary education, the Government of Vietnam has set a target of 99% net enrolment at lower secondary level and 80% net enrolment at upper secondary level, to be reached by 2020 (Asian Development Bank 2012).

3. Survey sample

Following consultations with education stakeholders and the Young Lives Vietnam team in Hanoi, it was decided that the school survey would be conducted with Grade 10 students in the five Young Lives provinces in Vietnam: Lao Cai, Hung Yen, Da Nang, Phu Yen and Ben Tre. Grade 10 is the first year of upper secondary level, and was chosen as this is the grade in which the majority of Young Lives Younger Cohort children are expected to be enrolled in 2016-17. Moreover, there has been limited research into the quality of education at upper secondary level in Vietnam, and so findings from the Young Lives school survey will provide valuable new evidence about a stage of schooling which is increasingly viewed as critical for the development of transferable skills for the labour market in Vietnam.

In Vietnam, students typically attend the upper secondary school located in the commune in which they live. If there is no upper secondary school within their commune, they travel to the nearest upper secondary school in the district. While there are exceptions (e.g. ethnic minority students who travel beyond their district to enrol in an ethnic minority boarding school), this pattern of upper secondary school enrolment led to the decision to include in the survey all upper secondary schools in the 20 Young Lives districts – a total of 55 schools.

A pre-survey tracking exercise (conducted in February – March 2016) revealed a large number of Grade 10 students enrolled in these 55 schools – 17,344 students in total – indicating that it would not be feasible to adopt a census sampling approach for Grade 10 students in Young Lives districts. It was therefore decided to sample a maximum of five Grade 10 classes per school, as this provides sufficient variation for analytic purposes. In schools with six or more Grade 10 classes, classes are sampled using a random selection process. The final survey sample therefore includes just under 9,000 Grade 10 students.

4. Research design

The 2016-17 school survey in Vietnam will produce policy-relevant observational data, with a particular interest in the factors that relate to better learning outcomes. Students' learning outcomes over the course of Grade 10 will be assessed using three cognitive tests: Maths, Functional English and Transferable Skills. Background instruments will collect data on students, teachers, principals, and school infrastructure and facilities.

To estimate the effects of school, classroom or student-level factors on learning, a value-added approach will be used. The value-added approach allows a comparison of how much teachers and schools contribute to student progress each year. This means focusing on how much improvement students make from one testing period to the next – thereby reducing the effects of individual heterogeneity on estimates of classroom and/or school effectiveness.

Because the value-added approach adjusts for students' prior performance and observable background characteristics, one school or teacher value-added estimate can be compared with another without fear that the estimate is heavily biased by selection processes or other variables. A value-added approach therefore returns a less-biased estimate of how much teachers and schools add to the students who learn in their schools – with strong research and policy implications (Kane & Staiger 2008).

Table 1 provides an overview of the survey instruments, and Table 2 outlines the timeline for the secondary school survey. For a more in-depth discussion of instruments used in the survey, see Young Lives technical notes on the Maths, Functional English and Transferable Skills tests, and psychosocial skills measurement.

Table 1: *Survey instruments*

Student outcome measures	Background instruments
Maths test Repeated measures, administered at the beginning and end of Grade 10. Assessing students' curriculum knowledge, and ability to apply curriculum knowledge in less familiar contexts.	**Principal questionnaire** Collects background data on the principal and the school (including school management practices).
Functional English test Repeated measures, administered at the beginning and end of Grade 10. Assessing students' English reading skills relevant to the contexts in which they use (or will use) the language.	**Teacher questionnaire** Collects background data on Grade 10 Maths and English teachers (including teacher motivation, and class-level information).
Transferable Skills test Cross-sectional measure, administered at the end of Grade 10. Assessing problem solving and critical thinking skills.	**Student questionnaire** Collects background data on Grade 10 students (including academic support within and beyond school, and psychosocial measures).
	School facilities observation Collects data on school infrastructure.

Table 2: *Survey timeline*

2016	March	Wave 1 Pre-pilot
	April – May	Wave 1 Pilot
	June – July	Wave 1 Pilot data analysis and item selection
	August	Wave 1 Fieldworker training
	September – October	Wave 1 Data collection
	December	Wave 2 Pre-pilot and pilot
2017	January	Wave 2 Pilot analysis and item selection
	February	Wave 2 Fieldworker training
	March – April	Wave 2 Data collection

5. Policy and practice implications

With its value-added methodology and focus on student, teacher, class and school factors associated with the development of transferable skills, the Vietnam secondary school survey will provide policy-relevant evidence for the next phase of quality education – the development of 'higher order' cognitive and non-cognitive skills (Rolleston 2015). The research will also provide insights into how the Vietnamese school system has achieved its remarkable success in the equitable development of basic skills such as numeracy and literacy; this evidence can be used to indicate 'what works' for other education systems in South-East Asia which continue to struggle to impart these foundational skills.

The research will indicate the extent to which the current curriculum and pedagogical approaches within Vietnamese secondary schools support the development of 'higher order' cognitive skills such as problem solving and critical thinking. Currently, reports of students' low ability in these areas are largely anecdotal in Vietnam. The survey will therefore fill a key evidence gap by providing a useful benchmark of these skills prior to the introduction of Vietnam's new competency-based curriculum.

The longitudinal nature of the Young Lives study also offers unique insights for policy and practice. For example, school effectiveness data collected at Grade 10 for Young Lives children can be contextualised within five rounds of Young Lives household survey data, as well as school effectiveness data collected at Grade 5. Learning outcomes and transition to Grade 10 can therefore be analysed in relation to a wealth of explanatory variables, including nutrition and health outcomes from early childhood to adolescence; livelihood and assets; and learning outcomes at Grade 5 along with associated student, teacher, class and school factors.

Longitudinal analysis of school survey data will also provide insights into the factors associated with transition to upper secondary education, or drop out from education once compulsory education ends at Grade 9. This evidence is required if future education policies and programmes are to support students at risk of dropping out and enable them to remain in school. A key priority for the Government of Vietnam and stakeholders such as the World Bank is to increase access to tertiary education, and improving transition rates to upper secondary education is essential to achieving this goal.

Evidence from the secondary school survey will also offer insights into ethnic minority experiences of upper secondary education. The Vietnam primary school survey suggested that gaps in learning progress between ethnic majority and minority children narrow over the course of Grade 5 (Rolleston et al 2013), and it is important to determine whether this trend continues at higher levels of education. The secondary school survey will provide evidence on the factors associated with the level of progress made by H'mong students, and, if lower than their ethnic majority Kinh/Hoa counterparts, the school effectiveness design will offer insights into ways in which upper secondary schools can support more equitable outcomes for ethnic minority students.

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Young Lives
An International Study of Childhood Poverty

About Young Lives

Young Lives is an international study of childhood poverty, involving 12,000 children in 4 countries over 15 years. It is led by a team in the Department of International Development at the University of Oxford in association with research and policy partners in the 4 study countries: Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam.

Through researching different aspects of children's lives, we seek to improve policies and programmes for children.

Young Lives Partners

Young Lives is coordinated by a small team based at the University of Oxford, led by Professor Jo Boyden.

- *Ethiopian Development Research Institute, Ethiopia*
- *Pankhurst Development Research and Consulting plc, Ethiopia*
- *Centre for Economic and Social Studies, Hyderabad, India*
- *Sri Padmavathi Mahila Visvavidyalayam (Women's University), Andhra Pradesh, India*
- *Grupo de Análisis para el Desarollo (GRADE), Peru*
- *Instituto de Investigación Nutricional (IIN), Peru*
- *Centre for Analysis and Forecasting, Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences, Vietnam*
- *General Statistics Office, Vietnam*
- *Oxford Department of International Development, University of Oxford, UK*

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