

Vietnamese school children are 'years ahead' of Indian pupils

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A new study has found that even the most disadvantaged children in Vietnam are educationally years ahead of their peers in India, and this is likely to have significant consequences for both economies.

The study by Oxford University's Young Lives research project found that 95% of 10-year-olds in Vietnam could add four-digit numbers, 85% could subtract fractions, and 81% were able to find x in a simple equation. This contrasts with India, where a nationwide survey reports 47% of 10-year-olds unable to add two-digit numbers and as many as 68% of grade-three children in government schools unable to read a test designed for first-year pupils.

A lack of educational skills is one of the biggest problems facing the

large youth populations of [emerging economies](#). The study, published on 12 August to mark World Youth Day, points to poor teaching practice in the classroom as the main reason why many students in India who regularly attend are still not learning.

The study examined more than 3,000 children drawn from 56 state schools in Vietnam, who were from disadvantaged as well as average or better-off backgrounds. While poorer children started from lower attainment levels, almost all made good progress in classes taught by 'motivated and well-trained teachers'. However, in India (where almost half the population is under 25 and per capita GDP is broadly similar to that of Vietnam) disadvantaged pupils get relatively poor academic results. Young Lives concludes that in India schools are very often failing to deliver good teaching to children from low-income backgrounds.

In Vietnam, the social or [financial situation](#) of a child's family seems to have little effect on the child's quality of education and their progress, says the study. In India, Young Lives found parents in the state of Andhra Pradesh were so disappointed with the low quality of state schools that the proportion of eight-year-olds being educated in low-fee [private schools](#) almost doubled to 44% between 2002 and 2009. The study in Andhra Pradesh showed the poorest children were more likely to be in schools with relatively high levels of absenteeism among the teachers.

Professor Jo Boyden, who leads the Young Lives research, said: 'The study suggests there is a problem in India with teaching systems being unable to meet the needs of the vast majority of children. However, the Vietnam data indicates that most pupils, regardless of background, can make good progress if they are in schools that provide effective support for their learning.'

Young Lives also found poor standards in [school](#) studies undertaken in Peru and Ethiopia.

Professor Boyden added: 'With many emerging economies having more than 40% of their population below the age of 25 (for example Vietnam, India and South Africa), and in some cases the proportion being more than six in 10 (for example Ethiopia, Angola and Rwanda), failure to deliver quality education will thwart ambitions for future development.'

Growth Through Quality Jobs and Investment is one of the three key themes of next month's G20 Summit. To continue growing, many of the emerging economies will need to shift from a dependency on commodity extraction or manufacturing for export to jobs that require better educational outcomes. Human capital will be crucial for future inclusive growth in countries such as India, and even more so for fast-growing African countries such as Ethiopia and Angola. The improvements need to start in the schooling that children receive, and teaching standards in all schools need to give the best start to [children](#) of all backgrounds, say the researchers.

More information: www.younglives.org.uk/

Provided by Oxford University

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