

ANALYSIS OF VIETNAM'S DEVELOPMENT USING  
THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX  
AND INSTITUTIONALISM

by

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## ABSTRACT

The world has been changing and developing rapidly with advanced technology and the enhancement of humans' living standards. Economics is one of the disciplines that works to define "development," determine nations' current stage of development, and design policies to work effectively and efficiently in the long term. There are many definitions and approaches to determining economic development, depending on different perspectives and context. In this paper, I will take the specific case of Vietnam's development, which has changed remarkably over the past 30 years. In order to analyze my research comprehensively, I will examine three school of thoughts: Neoclassical Economics, Marxism, and Institutionalism. After evaluating their perspectives on development concept, I apply one – Institutionalism – to Vietnam. In this research, what I discover is that the Institutional approach suggests that Vietnam's emphasis on instrumental rather than ceremonial valuing in developing policy has been a key factor. As evidence, I use the Human Development Index's three categories of health, education, and income. While a great deal of progress has been made, I still offer my own suggestions for future policies to enhance the quality of life of the Vietnamese people and improve Vietnamese reputation from other nations in the world.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

Despite COVID-19, Vietnam's economy has remained resilient, growing at 2.9 percent in 2020, one of the highest rates in the world, according to the International Monetary Fund's latest annual assessment of the country's economy. This is due to strong economic fundamentals, decisive containment measures, and well-targeted government support. Vietnam gained a global reputation for its containment of COVID-19 and was the one Southeast Asian nation to register positive growth (Strangio, 2021).

The headline news, such as “Vietnam: Successfully Navigating the Pandemic” or “Vietnam Notches Record GDP Contraction as COVID-19 Outbreak Bites” suggest that Vietnam has had a successful record of economic development. How was that achieved? One might argue that Vietnam has expressed its capability and confidence in building and developing the nation thanks to the personalities of Vietnamese people, which are hard-working and open-minded, to always study new things and apply suitably to fit with its patterns of politics and economics. While this may well be true, my plan is to evaluate Vietnam's progress by examining the patterns in the real world using a framework suggested by economic theory. In this case, how to do so can be a challenge since the definition and framework offer many choices when it comes to identifying the economic development within the economic frameworks. Therefore, I will evaluate three of the competitors and weigh their strengths and weaknesses, in the end selecting the one definition with one suitable framework that is consistent with what I have learned about Vietnam and available for the data to support my thesis.

Indeed, a number of authors have researched the development of Vietnam by using an Institutional perspective with different approaches, such as *Institutionalism and its Effect on Labor Forecasting in Vietnamese Firms* (Nguyen & Do, 2020) and *Governmental Influences on the*

*Evolution of Agricultural Cooperatives in Vietnam: An Institutional Perspective with Case Studies* (Vo & Le, 2014). Otherwise, my paper outlines that Vietnam is in the process of achieving the state of economic development by investigating the correlation between the Human Development Index and Institutionalism. How I choose the Human Development Index and Institutionalism will be explained and discussed clearly throughout my paper. Besides, this paper shows how Vietnamese government has implemented policies to adapt different circumstance in different periods of time.

The paper proceeds as follows. In the next section, the state of economic development is defined, followed by a short introduction of the specific case of Vietnam. I then spend a considerable amount of time analyzing different schools of thought and their perspectives on development. After choosing one, I apply it to the case of Vietnam. Policy and further concern follow.

## Chapter 2. The State of Economic Development

In the first section of this research paper, I will define the state of economic development to answer to the question: “What does it mean to be a developed country?” There are two important distinctions to be made here: first, that between economic development and economic growth, and second, that between the state of economic development and the process of economic development.

Economic growth is simply an increase in the market value of all final goods, services, and structures produced in one year by labor and property located in the home country (also known as gross domestic product, or GDP). This can happen in any nation, developed or undeveloped. While it may contribute to or result from economic development, it is not the same thing as economic development and is therefore not the subject of this paper. Economic development, on the other hand, encompasses broader processes of change and modernization. It is associated with a “sustainable increase in the overall standard of living for individuals within a community” (Greenwood & Holt, 2014) and may go well beyond what we might typically consider economics to include political structures, the legal system, land tenure, literacy rates, and so on. The idea is to create a system that provides material wealth at all levels of society and protection of human rights, particularly the agency to have control over your own destiny. A nation is said to be economically developed (i.e., reach a state of economic development) when it achieves a particular level with respect to these criteria. By contrast, the process of economic development is the route to achieving that state. In this paper, it will be necessary to define the former before we can discuss the latter.

Generally speaking, a developed country is a sovereign state with technologically advanced infrastructure *compared to other nations (Developed countries list)*. It is necessarily a relative and not an absolute term. A developed nation is developed *relative to* other nations. The selection of a

cutoff point between developed and less developed or developing is necessarily a judgment call and will therefore vary among economic policy makers. This does not mean it is arbitrary. It should be made with the overall goal in mind. For example, if the group creating the dividing line between developed and less developed is responsible for the dispersal of aid, then it is important to bear in mind that designating a country as “developed” means that it will not receive as much help. Hence, a policy maker in that position would want to bear this in mind before creating the criteria to be used. Fortunately, that will not be a problem in this paper as my goal is to track Vietnam’s development over time and not set out to determine whether it is “developed” or “less developed.”

While traditionally economic development was associated with manufacturing, that is not necessarily the case anymore. A developed country also includes post-industrial economies with service sectors contributing more to the nation than the industrial sectors. The World Institute for Development Economics Research argues that there are four aspects of a country that build the foundation to make it developed: economy, polity, society, and administration (*Developed economy*). In terms of polity, the more developed economy is, the more responsive the governments or polities are to the preferences of its citizens. In terms of society, although there are many different patterns of demography, it is critical that humans achieve their personal success. The reason is that once they think they can succeed, they will invest their capability and try hard to make their work more productive, leading them to contribute to the economic development of their society. In terms of administration, it refers to the action and implementation of policies that the government establishes, which is different from polity which requires that the government adjust policies based on its citizens’ preference. In other words, people need to trust the government and obey their policies that encourage the economic development. Amongst these four aspects of a developed country, the economy aspect is the most common theme because it is

important to achieve a high level of productivity and income. When income is high, the quality of human life also increases because the more they earn, the more they consume to satisfy their demand. To determine which countries are developed based on the income, we can use gross national income (GNI) per capita<sup>1</sup>. According to the World Bank, the GNI is gross national income converted to international dollars using purchasing power parity rates<sup>2</sup>. Developed countries refer to as the upper middle income and the high income. According to the World Bank's statistics, in 2016 upper middle income is approximately the range of \$4,036 to \$12,475, and the high income is above \$12,475 (*New country classifications by Income Level: 2016-2017*).

Another way to classify a developed nation is to look at the Human Development Index (HDI), according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The HDI is a composite index of three indices measuring countries achievement in life expectancy, education, and income. Its aim is to consider the multifaceted nature of development. The HDI is set on a scale from 0 to 1, and most developed countries have a score above 0.80. The UNDP considers nations with positive income growth and strong performance on health and education indicators in comparison to other countries at comparable levels of development when identifying developed countries with high HDI. Also, the UNDP can seek for nations that have done a better job of reducing the "human development gap," as indicated by a decrease in their HDI deficiency. The basic idea is that the HDI is used to assess a country's level of human development, as more developed countries often have a higher quality of life. As it will figure prominently in my paper, the exact measurement of the HDI will be explained in detail later.

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<sup>1</sup> GNI is the total amount of money earned by a nation's people and businesses, including investment income, no matter where it was earned. It is used to measure and track a nation's wealth from year to year. The number also covers the money received from overseas sources, including foreign investment and economic development aid.

<sup>2</sup> Purchasing power parities are the rates at which the currency of one country would be converted into that of another country to buy the same amount of goods and services in each country. Purchasing power parity is used to compare economic productivity and standards of living between countries.

From a different approach, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) classifies the developed countries based on (1) per capita income level, (2) export diversification, and (3) degree of integration into the global financial system (Gbadamosi, 2021). This international organization categorizes developed countries as “advanced economies.” Advanced economies are sub-categorized into European Area, Major Advanced Economies (G7), Newly Industrialized Asian Economies, Other Advanced Economies (Advanced Economies excluding G7 and Europe Area), and the European Union. In terms of the first of their three criteria, income is measured based on real GDP per capita. In the second place of the IMF criteria, export diversification is defined as the changing of country’s export composition and structure. The process can be achieved by changing existing export commodities pattern or through innovation and technology. Dennis and Shepherd (2007) define export diversification as broadening the range of products that a country is exporting. The IMF categorizes the developed countries based on export diversification because it can be true that smaller and resource-rich nations are less diversified. However, resource abundance avoids diversification not only at the distribution of export earnings across a fixed set of products, but also at the change in distribution of export earnings due to addition of products. Thus, countries with higher natural resources are even likely to export fewer products after controlling for other factors. The third IMF criterion is a degree of integration into the global financial system. According to the definition, the global financial system is a larger regional system that includes all financial institutions, borrowers, and lenders in the global economy (The Investopedia Team, 2021). For the creation and execution of policies to promote macroeconomic stability and growth, understanding the intricate connection between the financial and real sectors of the economy is essential (De Rato, 2006). Therefore, the degree of integration into the financial

system will reflect the countries are developed or not because financial sector and macroeconomic developments are closely intertwined.

As we can see, in the same concept of developed countries, there are three different names to classify: “Developed Countries” from the UNDP, “Advanced Countries” from the IMF, and “High income countries” from the World Bank. This illustrates that there are a number of different criteria exist for defining whether a country is considered as the developed country or not. As a result, we need to look at different measures from different aspects to determine a developed country, but the common theme of a developed country is based on the quality human living standard, which expresses through the economic indicators, such as the GDP and the GNI per capita. Besides, it cannot deny that technology and industrialization play a significant role to contribute to the level of a country’s wealth.

In my research, I will employ the Human Development Index as my core measurement to define the economic development. I will do so because it is relatively broad based, including education, longevity, and income, and the data are easily available for a large number of countries over an extended period. This will allow comparison across time and space. Because it will play a key role in my paper, I will offer a more in-depth explanation of its measurement here.

As suggested above, the HDI is the geometric mean of normalized indices for each of the three dimensions (a long and healthy life, access to education, and a decent standard of living). First of all, health is life expectancy in years. In the second place, education is measured by expected years of schooling of children at school-entry age and average years of schooling of the adult population. Breaking down into sub-categories, expected years of schooling calculates the number of years of schooling that young generation accesses education and average years of schooling estimates the mean of years of total schooling adult aged above 25 have received.

Thirdly, HDI includes monetary standard of living which is calculated by gross national income (GNI) per capita.

The first step is to form indices for each of the three metrics. Values of each of the metrics need transforming and expressing on scale of 0 to 1 by setting the “goalposts” of the minimum and maximum values, which are set by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Table 1: “Goalposts” of the minimum and maximum limits on each metrics set by the UNDP

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>
Health	Life expectancy (years)	20	85
Education	Expected years of schooling (years)	0	18
	Mean years of schooling (years)	0	15
Standard of living	Gross national income per capita (2011 PPP\$)	100	75,000

Having the minimum and maximum values based on the table 1 with the actual value for a given country, the dimension indices are calculated by the following formula

$$Dimension\ index = \frac{actual\ value - minimum\ value}{maximum\ value - minimum\ value}$$

After the dimension indices are measured, the second step is to aggregate the metrics to produce the HDI’s result. The HDI consists of three dimensions, so it is calculated as the geometric mean, which means equally weighted of health, education, and income. Therefore, the HDI is determined by simply having the sum of the three measures divided by three.

$$HDI = \frac{I_{Health} + I_{Education} + I_{Income}}{3}$$

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<sup>3</sup> The education index ( $I_{Education}$ ) is the average of the expected years and mean years of schooling index.

### **Chapter 3. The Process of Economic Development**

With the state of economic development defined, I will now introduce the specific case of Vietnam with the intention of later discussing its current state and process of development. In order to accomplish the latter, we will need a framework. For that reason, after saying a few words about Vietnam, I will present the approaches of three different economic schools of thought – Neoclassical Economics, Marxism, and Institutionalism – and explain how they argue that an economy achieves economic development. The purpose of examining three specific schools of thought is to determine which is the most powerful in explaining the patterns we see in the real world and then using that approach to highlight the case of Vietnam.

#### **3.1. The case of Vietnam**

Over the past 30 years, Vietnam's state and path of development have changed remarkably. As of 2020, the population of Vietnam was over 97 million people. The main social class in Vietnam is the working class with average monthly income per capita of approximately 4.19 million Vietnamese Dong (corresponding to US \$181). According to the World Bank, Vietnam has transformed from one of the poorest countries worldwide into a lower middle-income country (World Bank, n.d.). From 2002 to 2018, the GDP per capita rose by 2.7 times, reaching over US \$2,700 in 2019 (Philipp, 2021). Furthermore, all organs of Vietnamese government are controlled by the Communist Party. Government tries to reform and adjust daily to make Vietnamese residents better, such as develop the transportation system, expand the hospital, as well as school by cooperating with more professionals and specialists from international.

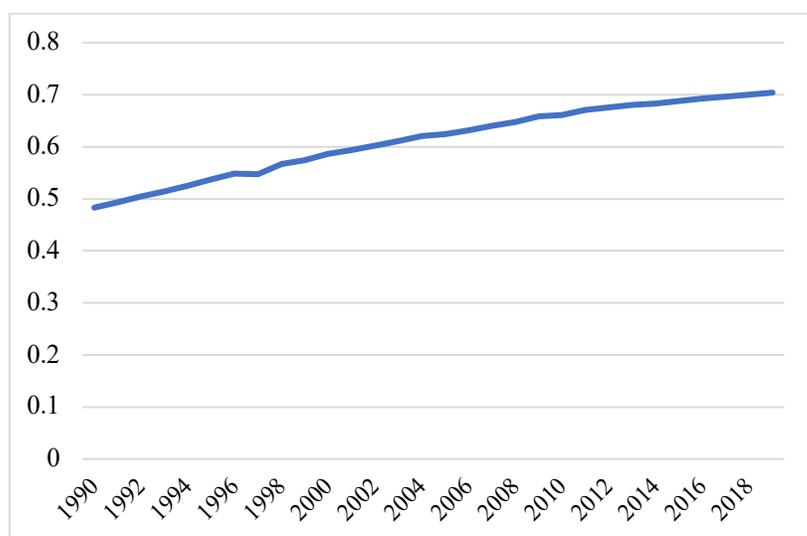
Vietnam has witnessed the increase in the Human Development Index (HDI) over the 1990-2019 period. The HDI is in the process of reaching the threshold, which increased to 0.704

in 2019. On December 2020, in the Human Development Report 2020, UNDP Resident Representative Caitlin Wiesen said:

Vietnam's High Human Development is a remarkable achievement and also creates opportunities for greater and more rapid progress in the coming development period. The country is at a critical juncture as it designs its next Socio-Economic Development Strategy, with decisions made today determining whether it will continue on its current path of growth and low inequality, and whether it can simultaneously shift to reducing pressure on the planet to enhance the harmony of the people and the environment.

Source: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2020)

Figure 1: Vietnam's HDI from 1990 to 2019



Source: United Nations Development Programme

According to the World Bank, a Vietnamese kid born today will be 69 percent as productive as she would be if she had access to a thorough education and good health. Even though Vietnam's HDI is significantly far from the threshold of HDI as a level of a developed country, it is the highest among middle-income countries.

Vietnam is composed of diverse ethnic minorities. The Viet (Kinh) people make up 87 percent of the population of Vietnam and dwell mostly in the Red River delta, the central coastal delta, the Mekong delta, and major towns. The remaining 53 ethnic minority groups, totaling over eight million people, are scattered over mountain areas, which cover two-thirds of the country's territory) spreading from the North to the South (*Ethnic groups in Vietnam*). Most ethnic groups inhabit the highlands that differ culturally and linguistically from the Vietnamese. According to the report from World Bank, the vast majority of Vietnam's remaining poor are ethnic minorities with 86 percent. The human capital index<sup>4</sup> value for Vietnam increased from 0.66 to 0.69 from 2010 to 2020, but there are some disparities within the country, especially for ethnic minorities. An ethnic minority household's average income is solely one-sixth of the national average. Access to essential health and education services is often difficult for children, women, and men from ethnic minorities. Women made up approximately half of the active workforce at the turn of the century, and highland ethnic minorities were more likely than lowland Vietnamese to be jobless or working in agriculture and forestry.

A significant proportion of ethnic minorities have mastered various farming methods. They cultivated rice plants in flooded paddy areas and irrigated them. Others maintained a semi-nomadic lifestyle, hunting, fishing, and collecting. As a consequence of a century of collaboration on Vietnamese land, a basic unity has been developed among ethnic groups. However, there are many ethnic challenges, such as the economic repression. Confiscation of ethnic groups' land by the state is rampant, decimating agriculture in many minority communities. The most polluting factories are frequently located in ethnic communities (Hutt, 2019). Average incomes for the Viet households were 1.64 times higher than those of minority households in 2002. By 2014, they were

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<sup>4</sup> Human capital index measures the productivity and human capital potential of children in each country, given optimal health and education conditions.

2.04 times higher. This is confounded by a widespread aloofness, which often verges on racism, of the Viet majority towards the ethnic groups (Hutt, 2019). In the first century of the history, a mutual supplement in economic relationship between lowland people and mountainous people was formed. This solidarity had been unceasingly strengthened during wars of resistance for defending the country. Through the shared struggle for defending and building of the country, the mutual assistance for co-existence and development between the Viet people and other ethnic minority groups had been established and continuously consolidated (*Ethnic Groups in Vietnam*).

Historically, the main production activity in Vietnam was based on agriculture due to the characteristics of its culture and natural resources and geography. Agriculture accounted for 14 percent of GDP and employed 36 percent of the total workforce in 2020 (World Bank, n.d.). Main crops include rice, coffee, corn, pepper, cashew nuts, sweet potatoes, and tea. However, recently, Vietnam has shifted more to the industry sector, which represented 34.5 percent of GDP (World Bank, n.d.). Many individuals have relocated from rural to urban area to find a job because of the better income, which also a part of contribution in the pattern change in the economy. To create productive jobs at a large scale, people need to train and be trained to gain technical skills in the workforce. More importantly, as I define the state of economic development, it goes parallel to the development in technology and industrialization. Vietnam has entered the “digital world” to upgrade human life, such as Internet banking. Thanks to the benefits that Vietnam has in terms of natural resources and many factors, its economy has attracted to many foreign investments and gain the number of trade agreements. This illustrates that Vietnam has improved to adapt to industrialization step by step to develop its economy as well as its standard of human’s life.

To understand how Vietnam achieved the state of economic development it has during the different periods; it will be necessary to interpret Vietnam’s history in the context of an economic

model. However, many different approaches exist. As suggested above, I will examine Neoclassical Economics, Marxism, and Institutionalism to see how they explain economic development and then decide which best explains what we see in the real world. My reason to choose these three schools of thought because Neoclassical is the dominant view, Marxism has the obvious connection to the philosophy of the Vietnamese government, and Institutionalism provides a unique contrast with those two. The one that I deem best will then be used to look at the specific case of Vietnam.

## **3.2. Economic School of Thought**

### **3.2.1. Neoclassical Economics**

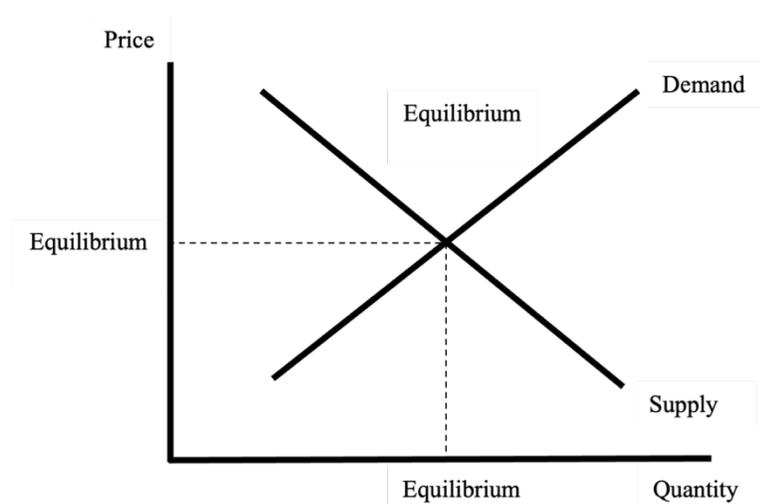
Neoclassicism is the dominant school of thought in economics (Wikimedia Foundation, 2021). Also referred to as mainstream or orthodox economics, it is of central importance because of its role in policy. Almost every economic advisor and central banker in the world comes from this school of thought (Harvey, 2020). Because Neoclassical economics is such a large school of thought, it is difficult to generalize; however, the more specific concept that Neoclassical economics implies was captured by Lionel Robbins in a 1935 essay: “The science which studies human behavior as a relation between scarce means having alternative uses” (Robbins, 1935, p. 16). Scarcity is defined as a lack of sufficient resources to meet all demands and requirements; if there is no scarcity and no alternative uses for existing resources, there is no economic problem. This is a key organizing concept for this school of thought.

To Neoclassicals, economics is about allocating limited resources to infinite wants and needs. Within this context, they focus on prices, as determined by laws of supply and demand, as being key to that allocation process. That allocation is considered optimal when the market is in equilibrium, or where the quantity demanded and the quantity supplied are equal. It also takes into

account long-term resource expansion, which will enable for more commodities and services to be produced. Saying that, I will explain how Neoclassical economics thinks a market works by introducing a supply and demand diagram in the next paragraph.

Decisions regarding how much of a product to produce, what price should be charged, or how much of it should be purchased can be understood by using a supply and demand model. Figure 1 shows such model. With the y-axis representing price and the x-axis representing quantity, demand is represented by a line with a negative slope (demand curve), reflecting that everything else being equal, as the price declines, consumers are willing to purchase more goods and services. Tastes and preferences, population composition and size, costs of comparable commodities, and even expectations are all factors that influence demand. A shift in demand will occur if any of these elements that affect how many units individuals are willing to buy in response to a given price change. For instance, about the changes in expectations, if people hear that a shut-down in the country is going to happen within two weeks, they may rush to the supermarket to buy all the food and other essential things used enough for 14 days. Thus, this causes the demand curve to shift right because of the increase in demand. Supply is typically represented by a line with positive slope (supply curve), demonstrating producers' willingness to supply more of a product as the price rises. Several other things affect supply are changes in weather or other natural conditions, new technologies for production, and government policies. For example, if a drought happens, it will decrease the supply of agricultural products, which means that there will be a decline in the quantity at any given price. The supply curve shifts to the left. Conversely, good weather is expected to shift the supply curve to the right. The equilibrium point is where the demand and supply curves intersect, or where the quantity demanded and the quantity supplied are equal.

Figure 1: General equilibrium model



The idea is that this system is supposed to generate a price that leaves both suppliers and consumers satisfied (at least at that price). For example, imagine a price on the graph below the intersection. At that price, there will be an excess demand for the good or service. Because this means there are consumers who are willing to pay more, the price is bid up. As it is, some consumers are priced out of the market and decide they do not want the good or service anymore. This is a movement to the left on the demand curve. However, at the same time, the higher price encourages entrepreneurs to be willing to produce more, which is the movement to the right on the supply curve. This continues until both sides are satisfied with the existing quantity.

In the Neoclassical economics, the market allocates limited resources to infinite wants and needs. When a product is scarce, its demand is high relative to supply, leading to the high price. The Neoclassical economics is based on the idea that free markets will generate competitive environments where producers will have motivations to participate in the global marketplace (Schoepf et al., 2000). This is good because it encourages more production of that scarce product, and it causes consumers to find alternatives. The market allocates scarce resources among competing ends by adjusting prices so that supply and demand come into equilibrium. In the case

of businesses, competition will create the most efficient methods of allocation. Firms competing among themselves to please consumers is a big deal, so it is why Neoclassicals do not worry about individuals being concerned for others. The higher prices of the relatively scarce resources encourage firms to substitute other, while the higher prices of good manufactured with more scarce resources will allocate them among those who are most willing to pay for them (Matthaei, 1984). It is believed that factor prices vary inversely with relative scarcities and are determined by supply and demand (Howard, 1983).

To place this in the context of economic development, in this school of thought's view, less developed countries lack the resource called capital. It includes buildings, factories, and technology, and it is what makes it developed, and it is what developed nations already have in relative abundance. However, if capital is scarce in developing countries, then it surely commands a higher price there. And, if it commands a higher price, then it will be attracted to the developing world and development will occur automatically due to market incentives. In fact, the less the government interfere with markets, the faster this will occur. The economy works best when left alone. The logical policy recommendation is to liberalize markets and stand back.

However, it has been convincingly argued that this is not what we actually observe in the real world. It is not evident that development has increased that much. Not only are there theoretical problems linked to their theories of technological development (Nelson, 2008), their use of a-historical general equilibrium frameworks (Ho, 2018), and insufficient attention paid to critical institutional factors (James, 1996), but there is little evidence that neoliberal policies have led to any substantial increase in development in the world (see for example Harvey, 2010; Onis, 1995; and Ormaechea, 2021). Particularly given the fact that Vietnam chose a very different route and appears to have, at least so far, been very successful, this makes me hesitant to employ the

Neoclassical model in my paper. Therefore, I will not choose Neoclassical economics to look at the specific case of Vietnam.

### **3.2.2. Marxism**

By definition, the Marxist school is a social, political, and economic philosophy named after Karl Marx (The Investopedia, 2021). Generally speaking, it looks at how capitalism affects labor, productivity, and economic progress, and it advocates for a worker revolution to overthrow capitalism and replace it with communism. Marxism recognizes a tension between the problematic nature of capitalist accumulation and the requirements of social reproduction in the economy.

According to Marx, the analysis of social class, class structures, and changes in those structures are essential to understanding capitalism and other social systems. In the “Communist Manifesto,” Marx comments that the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle (Rutman & Bottomore, 1985). That struggle focuses on the conflict between two classes in capitalism which are capitalists and workers. Capitalists are the owners of capital, owning the means of production, such as the physical and natural resources necessary, for producing and distributing goods. Otherwise, the working class sells their labor to the capitalist class in exchange for wages. Since the workers have no property, they must find employment work for an employer to obtain an income for themselves and their families. In other words, under capitalism, the worker is an exploitative social relationship.

The basis for Marx’s argument that workers are exploited by capitalists is the labor theory of value, which is one of the pillars of Marxism. The theory’s basic claim is that the value of a commodity is determined by the average number of labor hours needed to produce that commodity, and the exchange value of a commodity varies directly (Cohen, 1979). Marx applied the labor theory of value to labor, known as labor-power, which is the ability of a worker to produce a

commodity. To achieve profits, capitalists overwork employees, leading workers to produce more value than what they are being compensated for. It is in this manner that workers are being exploited.

However, there is more to exploitation than just that associated with the labor theory of value (Prychitko, 2018). Marx thought that capitalism did severe psychological damage to the worker, which is called alienation. Alienation refers to the act of making a worker feel “alienated” from the products of his or her labor. When workers’ right to conceive of themselves as the director of their own activities is taken away, they lose their power to control their own life and destiny. What Marx wants is the opposite, he believes that individuals should be free to determine their fate. By contrast, under capitalism, people cannot do what they want with their lives, which is one of the goals of development discussed above, because the individual is not truly free in a capitalist society. The more the worker produces, the less he has to consume, and the more values he creates, the more he devalues himself because his product and labor are estranged from him. The worker’s life is dependent on things he has created but that are not his.

Marx believed that capitalism would initially be extremely successful, taking over an increasing number of tasks and advancing into every part of the globe and society. However, eventually capitalism destroys itself because it creates the conditions wherein workers would eventually realize that they were being exploited, which would cause them to revolt. Therefore, if we want an equitable economic system without exploitation, then Marxism suggests that we must change the economic system from capitalism to socialism (Moseley, 2011). From the 1920s until Mao’s death in 1976, the Maoist version of Marxism, established by Chinese communist leader Mao Zedong, grew popular in the Chinese Communist Party (Harvey, 2020; Britannica, 2018). In his view, the rural peasantry was the proper mechanism for the socialist revolution. Mao was very

explicit about the need for violence, especially guerrilla warfare, to resolve the contradictions that emerged under capitalism. Once we have moved to socialism, The capitalist class values would continue to permeate society, requiring a second “cultural” revolution (Harvey, 2020).

Taking the example of Vietnam with the peasant uprising, Vietnam became a French colony in 1877 with the founding of French Indochina (Rotondi, 2020). According to Marxism, imperialism is basically capitalists moving into countries and draining their resources. France wanted to exploit Vietnam because of its resources. The French colonization of Vietnam began in earnest in the 1880s and lasted six decades. The French justified their imperialism with a “civilizing mission,” a pledge to develop backward nations (Llewellyn et al., 2019). Yet, in reality, economic concerns were the driving force for French colonization. Land acquisition, labor exploitation, resource exportation, and profit were all priorities for French colonists. This fits precisely what Marx’s and Mao’s views. The French took control of Vietnamese land and collectivized into large rice and rubber plantations. Local farmers were forced to labor on these plantations in difficult and dangerous conditions. Still, the eventual result is the same as we move on to socialism and in the form that Mao predicted, where we no longer have a capitalist class exploiting the worker.

Marx anticipated that private ownership of the means of production will be replaced by community ownership as a result of the revolution, first under socialism and subsequently under communism. Marx was confident that a popular revolution would occur and bring a communist system that would be more productive and far more humane (BBC, 2011). In the final stage of human development, social classes and class struggle would no longer exist.

From all these interpretations, Marx emphasized that: “In acquiring new productive forces men change their mode of production, and in changing their mode of production they change their

way of earning their living – they change all their social relations.” In short, economic activity is a changing social process. However, Marx gives no advice on future policy because he is not trying to affect change within the system. Rather, he expects the system itself to change. Hence, while this was clearly an important influence on the Vietnamese government and therefore deserves at least some treatment in this paper, the fact that Marxism does not suggest any particular institutional changes or policy routes makes it difficult to use as a framework for interpreting Vietnam’s development. The idea that capitalism is oppressive and must end to create real economic justice is evident, but a means of doing so (other than forced seizure of the means of production from the capitalists) is absent. I believe we must look elsewhere to find a useful model of economic development.

### **3.2.3. Institutionalism**

Institutionalism is the idea that the value structure undergirding and legitimizing a particular economic system is the most important thing to study. Going back to the Neoclassical and to some extent to Marxist approaches, there is this idea that economic systems are natural. The Institutionalists outright reject that concept, instead saying that they are going to focus more on the underlying value system.

The reason we should focus more on the value system is that all homo sapiens are social animals and as such they crave acceptance by the group or tribe. This is as instinctive to us as it is to bees, chimpanzees, and lions. It is not a choice; it is an evolutionary development related to the fact that homo sapiens have a competitive advantage when living and hunting in groups. Thus, to feel as if we are a member of a group, we must share its values and rules of behavior. We do this without thinking about it. Homo sapiens depend more heavily on learned than instinctive behavior and are heavily influenced by culture. If this is such a central part of human behavior, say the

Institutionalists, then surely it also affects economics. Indeed, they would argue that you really cannot separate the economy from other aspects of a society, such as religion, politics, and kinship patterns. They are intertwined. Within that context, all behavior is evaluated.

The key concept to emphasize the value system is the instrumental and ceremonial dichotomy. First, ceremonial values are past-binding and oriented toward defining status and acceptable behavior in society (Harvey, 2020). They are habitual and conditional by traditional practices; they reflect deferential concern with status, power, and custom (Hickerson, 1988). For example, the stereotype that the cleanliness and appearance of a house are wives' responsibility shapes the behavior of housewives. The roots for this attitude can be found in values embedded in the institution of marriage (Todorova, 2000). Meanwhile, this institution is based on the presumption that women need to satisfy the demand of their husbands. Besides, women had better do their best to provide a good home environment because making a house a comfortable place to live is also wives' responsibility. Ceremonial beliefs set standards for valuing particular behavior and prescribe specific status in society to certain segments of people. Moreover, ceremonial values are culturally relative. For instance, in most countries of Asia, people use chopsticks for eating because they are traditional eating implements in many Asian cultures. Otherwise, Americans use forks. In the American style, when eating, people hold the knife in the right hand and the fork in the left hand. More interestingly, Indian people eat food with hands because the practice of eating with hands because Ayurvedic beliefs hold that our bodies are in tune with the five elements of nature and each finger represents one of these components (Kishore, 2020). Therefore, ceremonial behaviors make sense only in societies where they are practices. They derive their legitimacy from their connection to tradition (Harvey, 2020). In short, ceremonial values are based on tradition and are culturally relative.

Second, instrumental values are based on logic and reason and are goal oriented and experimental (Harvey, 2020). Paul Bush (1988) also states:

While ceremonial dominance determines the ceremonial feasibility of the range of permissible behavior, it is the knowledge fund that determines the instrumental feasibility of problem-solving activities.

In a simple example, I have a mathematic problem. My goal is to solve it within five minutes. This problem is not extremely hard, but it requires a lot of calculations. Initially, I try to calculate by hand because I think writing in the paper by hand will be quicker than using tool. However, it is impossible to complete within five minutes if I calculate by hand because of the number of calculations. As such, I change and do different method, which is to use calculator to boost my speed and ensure my accuracy. When new instrumental realities occur, new patterns of behavior capable of absorbing the tools and skills are required (Todorova, 2000). Continuing with the same example, using calculator requires skills because I need to be familiar with the tool. If not, it still takes me time to figure out how to use calculator, then, I cannot finish the problem within five minutes. Such actions are not related to culture and may be impractical without knowledge. Information about technology is also essential here. To conclude, instrumental behavior is goal-oriented and experimental.

For Institutionalists, they believe that societies that emphasize instrumental values are more likely to develop. Behaviors sanctioned by ceremony derive their legitimacy from the authority, not from logic or experimentation (Harvey, 2020). Ceremonial value is the reason for social conflicts that makes these conflicts irreconcilable in view of its tendency to perpetuate the existing social order. This leads to create invidious distinction, which is a distinction calculated to create animosity, resentment, or envy. Invidious implied in the ceremonial behavior is manifested in the disintegration of society into higher and lower classes (Hielscher et al., 2014). Therefore,

ceremonial values can result in a lavish spending on goods or services with the primary goal of displaying social status, which is called conspicuous consumption. For example, driving a luxury car creates more motivation rather than an economy car. Any automobile can get you to your destination, but driving a luxury car emphasizes the driver's apparent wealth. As a result, whatever interests are served by ceremonial behaviors, they can certainly not be designated as the common interests of humanity (Hielscher et al., 2014). They are necessarily limited to particular elite groups of people. As a result, the development in societies is not homogeneous because the focus of ceremonial behavior is only on specific group of people and its goal is the arbitrary award and maintenance of status, power, and privilege. By contrast, instrumental values are for all people. Instrumentality brings a cooperative perspective of mutual betterment (Hielscher et al., 2014) because it tends to advance faster, which means toward democratic problem solving. In other words, it is the extension and improvement of the life process for the community. "Life process" indicates that all goods possess serviceable and honorific elements (Phillips, 2014). Back to the above example, driving a car indicates that one is rich enough to avoid using public transit, but a luxury automobile indicates that one is not required to utilize public transportation or drive an economy car, implying even greater social standing. Even if the existing social structure is constricted and deformed by whatever invidious class distinctions happen to exist, instrumental value makes it possible to exceed the inherent class conflict. Therefore, the more the instrumental cooperation proceeds, the less the invidious distinctions become in the actual organization of social life. Once again, societies that emphasize the instrumental values are more likely to develop.

I suggested above that I was going to define economic development as encompassing broader processes of change and modernization and that it is associated with a sustainable increase in the overall standard of living for individuals within a community. This is very similar to the

concept of instrumental valuing in Institutionalism, which raises the living standard of the average citizen. For all individuals concerned, thinking in terms of instrumental value is to look for ways to realize common interests and the primary object is the instrumentally warrantable knowledge (Hielscher et al., 2014). I believe that this concrete connection to what I have defined as development is a convincing reason to employ Institutionalism as the school of thought providing the framework for my analysis.

## Chapter 4. Approaches to Vietnamese Development

Using the Institutionalist approach means examining the value structure in Vietnam to see what institutions encourage instrumental behavior, which is based on logic and reason, and what leads to ceremonial behavior, which is exploitative, past-binding, and traditional. In this section, I will highlight the characteristics of instrumental values from Institutionalism. This will mean looking in particular for those elements that focus on the cooperative perspective of mutual betterment (democratic problem solving), goal-orientation and experimentation, and extension and improvement of the life process. Economic development would bring benefits about enhancements in health, education, and income. Especially, these enhancements are boosted mainly by a process of institutional change (Myrdal, 1974). In this context, the Human Development Index (HDI) may prove especially useful as it looks at health, education, and income, each of which should lead to the improvement of the standard of living in Vietnam. Everything else being equal, institutions marked by instrumental valuing should lead to an increase in the HDI, while ceremonial ones will decrease it. I will divide my discussion into the HDI's three categories of health, education, and income.

### 4.1. Health

To better understand the recent changes in the health care system in Vietnam, one must look at the transform process through Vietnamese history in different periods of time. There are two “milestones” of period when Vietnamese people often mention about history: before and after *Doi Moi* (Renovation). *Doi Moi*, literally translated as “to make a change,” was first introduced by the Communist Party of Vietnam in the late 1980s. The birth of *Doi Moi* was the result of a severe social and economic crisis (Bui, 1995).

Before *Doi Moi*, Vietnam experienced and witnessed as a dependent country in the war and under the colony of other nations. Before 1945 is when Vietnamese people were under French colonial rule and the country was divided into two parts, which were North and South Vietnam. This split occurred in 1954, so for a long time, France ruled over a united Vietnam (French Indochina). These two parts of the country did not unify under a national system until 1975. Before reunification, health services in the rural areas of the South were underdeveloped, whereas they were well-developed in the North (Britannica, n.d.). However, at that time after 1975, the Northern system was extended to the South, and health facilities and employees were increased in general. Despite the fact that the communist state's health-care system is one of its greatest achievements, it has been severely handicapped by a shortage of funding since the late 1970s (Britannica, n.d.). Still, it is challenge for me to include every single historical detail in this research paper. During the period of time, Vietnamese government has implemented many policies to develop the nation, so I decide to narrow down and focus on some outstanding policies that highlights the relationship with Institutionalism.

#### **4.1.1. The Financial Autonomy in Public Hospitals**

Since 1954, the supply of health care personnel had been given considerable attention by the central Vietnamese government. The Vietnamese health-care system was entirely subsidized by the government (Thanh et al., 2014). Citizens would have free access to health-care services. All training was also publicly funded, and health care workers were encouraged to continue their training to achieve higher levels of proficiency (Ladinsky & Levine, 1985). However, health care services could not meet the overall health needs of people in terms of quality and quantity because of a constrained health care budget. To overcome this problem, the Vietnamese government has implemented a new policy of allowing hospitals to charge user fees for “socialization of health

care,” meaning mobilizing all available and possible resources in society toward health care (Thanh et al., 2014). It is well recognized that public hospitals in Viet Nam need to strengthen its finance and management and be effectively governed at the system level to drive improvement in quality and efficiency. In parallel, the government also plans to intensify its investment in grassroots health care system in the district and commune level to reduce overcrowding in central and tertiary hospitals and promote overall service integration across the system and care providers.

Since the reform, available resources for health care have expanded dramatically, alleviating pressure on the government to boost health-care budget reallocation. Keep in mind that before the reform, government funding accounted for 100 percent of public hospital revenue. When individuals utilize health services, most of which are based on a fee-for-service system, they directly finance a higher share of the expenses by making out-of-pocket payments (Thanh et al., 2014). Alternatively, people pay for health insurance premiums monthly or yearly. In brief, once the policy was established, public hospitals have generated revenues from at least three sources, including government funding, health insurance, and patients’ out-of-pocket payments for hospital user fees (Thanh et al., 2014).

Most importantly, with the health care reform policy, the quality of health services has improved by investing more in modern technologies, especially in diagnostics, such as computed tomography scanner, magnetic resonance imaging, and color ultrasound machine, to provide a portion of the revenues to the hospital. When private actors open a private clinic or a private hospital, they fund a larger portion of health-care investments because they partner with a public hospital to open a “service-on-demand” ward with more expensive and higher-quality health-care services for patients who are willing and able to pay, and/or purchase high-tech diagnostic equipment. This policy is clearly the example of instrumental valuing of Institutionalism that is

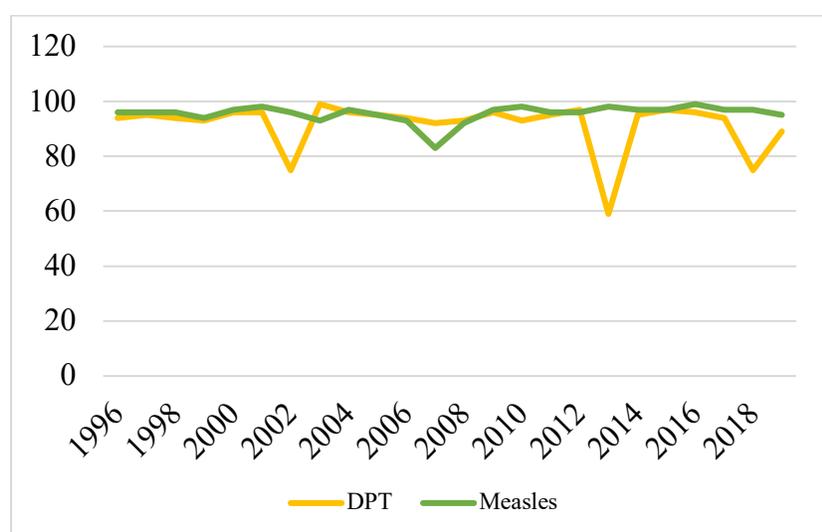
based on reasoning and experimental and goal oriented. The government realized the problems and has solved by orienting clear goal of enhancing the quality of people's living. They experiment the reform and it has been working well. Obviously, there are many challenges with the change day by day in the pattern of economy and polity, but it is worth to be goal-oriented and experimental. For example, allowing hospitals to charge users' fee helps the government reduce the stress and have enough financial resources to invest high-technological tools. These high-tech tools help doctors adopt a more modern approach to diseases by supporting them a lot of in terms of diagnose and cure patients more effectively and efficiently. Technology also boosts doctors and professional people working in the medical field to improve their technical skills and train because high technology equipment requires people having enough, even "expert" understanding and knowledge to use.

#### **4.1.2. "Leaving No One Behind"**

Vietnam is composed of diverse ethnic minorities. According to the report from World Bank, most Vietnam's remaining poor are ethnic minorities. It is difficult for people living in the rural areas to access to as the same health care system as people living in the urban centers. Therefore, "leaving no one behind" was a central mandate in Vietnam's health care. In 1992, health insurance was first made available to formal-sector workers and the impoverished. The Vietnamese government established policies aimed at giving coverage to the poor, either by exempting them from paying user fees for services or by offering health insurance coverage to increase health-care access for the poor and other vulnerable populations (Tran et al., 2011; Wagstaff, 2007). Until today, the government subsidizes 100 percent of premiums for the extremely poor, ethnic minority children, and children under the age of six, at least 70 percent of the premium for the "near-poor," and at least 30 percent of premiums for school children and

students as well as the remainder of the informal sector. Despite the fact that the program was not targeted at the poor, as children from wealthy households are also covered, it provided health care to a huge portion of the population. Out-of-pocket health-care spending climbed rapidly as the reforms were implemented, attaining a share of total health spending of 71 percent by 1993 and 80 percent by 1998 (Lieberman & Wagstaff, 2009). It declined to below 50 percent with increasing public health spending in the 2000s.

Figure 5: Immunization (Percent of Population)



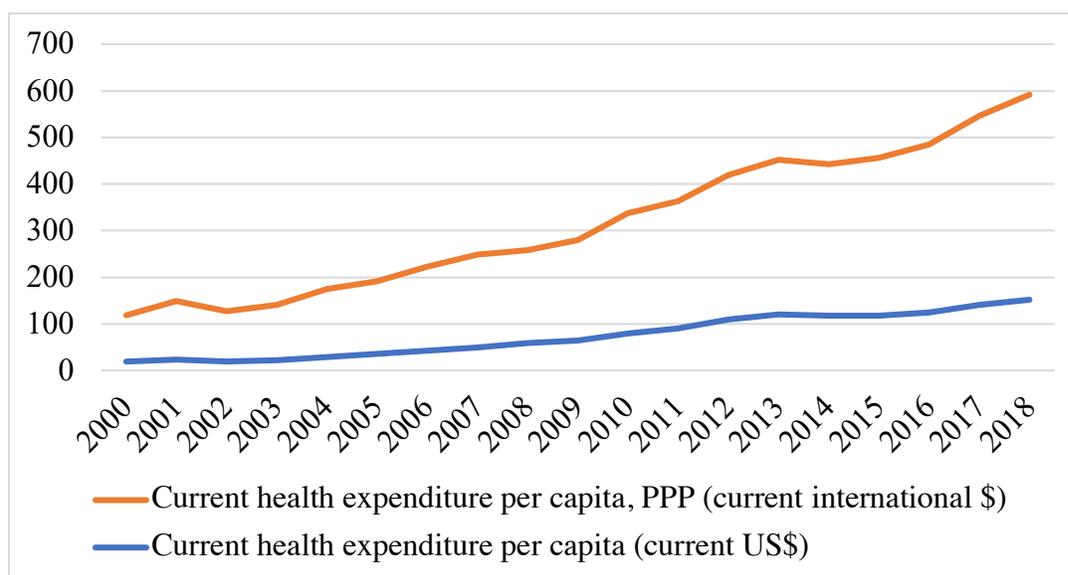
Source: World Development Indicators

This was very clearly an instrumentally warranted policy. It has extended and enhanced the life process by employing logic and reason through democratic problem solving. Vietnamese government put the priority of residents and try to establish policy that is suitable for each characteristic of different regions around the country.

Accordingly, the maternal mortality rate declined by 75 percent between 1990 and 2015 (VNR, 2018). National statistics on new cases of HIV/AIDS and related deaths have declined in recent years, and new cases of tuberculosis per 100,000 people were reduced from 375 cases in 2000 to 130 cases in 2017 (World Health Organization, 2018). Immunization was brought close

to 100 percent a few years following *Doi Moi*. Some 73 percent of Vietnam's population has access to essential health services, and health insurance coverage was 87 percent in 2018. According to Figure 3, per capita health spending has been quickly increasing as well, implying that current health expenditure estimates encompass healthcare products and services used has grown significantly.

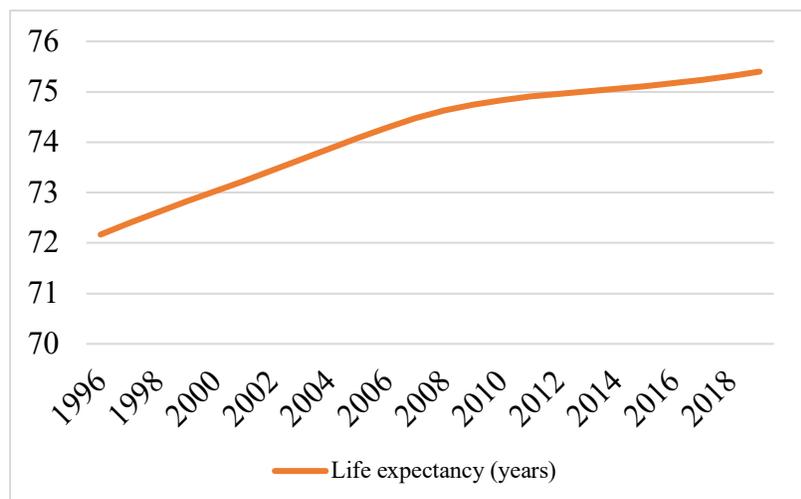
Figure 3: Total health expenditure per capita



Source: World Development Indicators

It can be seen clearly from Figure 4 that life expectancy has also risen during the period of 1996-2019. According to the 2019 Population Census Report, 55.5 percent of the population is under the age of 35, with an average life expectancy of 76 years, the highest among countries in the region at similar income levels (World Bank, n.d.).

Figure 4: Life expectancy (years)



Source: World Development Indicators

For Institutionalists, they believe that societies that emphasize the instrumental values are more likely to develop. Instrumental values bring a cooperative perspective of mutual betterment (Hielscher et al., 2014). This concept shows very clearly in the case of Vietnam, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The outbreak of COVID-19 has brought about unprecedented challenges worldwide and in Vietnam in particular. Moreover, Vietnam has worked beyond its borders to demonstrate international and regional solidarity and cooperation in responding to COVID-19. Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc also addressed in the World Health Organization Western Pacific Region under the theme “Stand in Solidarity to Combat COVID-19” and the closing session of the 73 World Health Assembly, in which he stressed international solidarity and concerted efforts against the pandemic. Vietnam’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs also donated \$50,000 to the World Health Organization COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund and provided bilateral support to other countries (Malhotra, 2020). Vietnam’s pandemic response is guided by the ethics of care, which promotes collaboration and accountability.

However, the spread of the pandemic has developed complicatedly coupled with extreme climate events, such as the severe drought and entailed saltwater intrusion in the Mekong Delta, despite the fact that the Vietnamese government has taken steps to prevent the spread of the pandemic. This has had significant impacts on Vietnam's most vulnerable citizens, especially poor women, children, and other marginalized groups such as elderly and people with disabilities. The need for basic social services, including clean water and sanitation, has grown even more urgent in light of the pandemic's and drought's multiple challenges. Both require a water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) solution. Our partner, Thrive Networks - East Meets West, in conjunction with the Vietnamese Women's Union, has launched a VND 2.4 billion program called "Women's initiatives in ensuring no one is left behind in the fight against COVID-19" to help alleviate the combined influences of the pandemic and the drought (Water for Women Fund, 2021). During every crisis, the most vulnerable individuals - women, children, and persons with disabilities - are the ones who suffer the most. As part of the Vietnamese government's statewide response, "Joining hands in the fight against COVID-19 towards the goal of leaving no one behind," the program has carried out a variety of activities across 173 communes in the project provinces. In the fight against COVID-19, the program has delivered 2,018 handwashing facilities and soaps to all communal health stations, 173 kindergartens, and 980 vulnerable homes. Water storage units for rainwater collection have been provided to 200 impoverished and vulnerable homes (Water for Women Fund, 2021). To summarize, thanks to democratic problem solving, Vietnamese people are mitigated and get over through the crisis by the program organized by the Vietnamese government.

## 4.2. Education

Vietnam is an important member of the Southeast Asian community. It seeks to build its higher education system as quickly as possible, in line with regional ambitions. Again, it is necessary to understand briefly about Vietnam's history to see the difference on education system under particular circumstances, especially before and after *Doi Moi* (Renovation). As I mentioned above, *Doi Moi* was created as a result of a terrible social and economic catastrophe. Therefore, this reform has brought about radical/dramatic changes in many spheres. Subsequently, these changes have led to breakthrough innovations in the higher education system. In the following parts, I will analyze the relationship between this aspect of the Human Development Index, education, with Institutionalism in terms of the education system reform in Vietnam.

### 4.2.1. Teaching and Learning Reform

Before *Doi Moi*, the nation was governed by the Chinese and French for over a thousand years, Vietnamese education was dominated by both Confucian thought and French education. According to Confucius, students must obey and respect their teachers because they are not only people who teach knowledge, but they also role models for proper behavior (Confucius, 1947). Students should solely focus on mastering the information through effort and patience rather than questioning or disputing what is provided (Pratt, 1992). Moreover, they are discouraged from thinking for themselves, questioning the teacher's information, and coming to their own conclusions (Ruby & Ladd, 1999). Since individuality and uniqueness are relatively irrelevant, individual interpretations of material are not required (Pham, 2008). Rather than focusing on how students might acquire and develop knowledge, teaching focuses on how existing authoritative information can be transmitted and digested in the most effective and efficient manner (Jin & Cortazzi, 1995). To conclude, knowledge is strongly emphasized as a one-way transmission from

the teacher to students. Later, during French colonialism in the nineteenth century, Vietnamese education was based after an intellectualism-oriented system, with the teaching of a succession of systematized pieces of knowledge in print regarded the foundation of knowledge (Dinh, 2000). The educational governance paradigm used by the French colonial powers was quite hierarchical (London, 2010). Then, students were required to memorize everything in the textbooks that were given to them. In other words, the reliance on rote repetition and a passive learning approach were common features of both Chinese and French educational systems. Skills like questioning, assessing, generalizing, disputing, and analyzing were deemed unimportant. Therefore, once *Doi Moi* entered in Vietnam, the society had changed, leading the education system to change as well.

When the government launched the *Doi Moi* policy, the Vietnamese economy was dominated by fast expansion, with small businesses and modern technology becoming the most important aspects of the economy. The application of superior contemporary technologies is spreading across all industries. As a result, workers must possess abilities that enable them to operate constructively and interdependently in production teams with people from various cultural backgrounds. Accordingly, educators must instruct students in acquiring not only scientific and cultural information, but also skills such as logical reasoning, abstract thinking, and creative ability. To put it another way, Vietnamese education must prepare students to become autonomous thinkers rather than technicians (Ministry of Education and Training, 2001).

Therefore, education has been a national priority since *Doi Moi*. It can be seen clearly that this is instrumentally warranted policy from Institutionalism. Instrumental values are based on logic and reason and are goal oriented and experimental (Harvey, 2020). It is necessary for the development to be experimental and always evolving the new things because when the newer instrumentalities appear, the more skills require to adjust new patterns of behavior adapt to the

changes. Vietnam has outperformed several developed countries in the 2012 and 2015 Young Lives longitudinal study and the Program for International Student Assessment. In 2016, 95 percent of children aged 15 and above were literate, 92 percent of three to five-year-old children attended kindergarten, and 99 percent of primary school-aged children were enrolled (VNR 2018). Over time, the focus switched from education quantity to quality, and the general government budget now earmarks 20 percent of budget expenditure for education and training each year, even though the number has not always been reached. Thereby, education outcomes today reflect the legacy of putting education first in national strategies since *Doi Moi*. The government recognized that educating only the young would be insufficient to lift sufficient people out of poverty in the short term, given the longer lag of school children entering the labor market. As a result, education for both the young as well as the out-of-school population was strengthened.

Also, in 1994, the Vietnam government generated a strategy to reduce the number of subjects studied in school to make school education more responsive to labor market demands and requirements (Sarkar, 2020). This robust education reform was transmitted to development in late 1997 when a framework was organized to modernize education to support wide-ranging market reforms. The process of education reform still has been continuing recently because goals are to develop the existing human capital, to boost higher education enrollment, and to modernize education in such a way that it can meet global industrialization needs of the country. With a lengthy history of educational reform in Vietnam, there have been several turning moments in policymaking for the development of human resources, as well as upgrading and modernizing education to speed up production and the economy. The process of determining this goal and objective, as well as situation evaluation, curriculum building, and the creation of teaching-learning techniques and learning aids for basic and lower secondary education, was ongoing.

During the refurbishment process, there was some trial and error, ongoing study of the situation, and learning from success and failure. Again, that emphasizes exactly the characteristic of Institutionalism, which are goal-oriented and experimental.

The 2018 World Bank reports: “Growing Smarter: Learning and Equitable Development in East Asia and Pacific” recognizes Vietnam as one of two East Asia-Pacific nations in which the education system has progressed tremendously. Over the last two decades, physical infrastructure development and educational policy measures have witnessed a steady rise in the number of students entering in and remaining in education. Every aspect of education and vocational training has been scrutinized over the last two decades, with major accomplishments including the establishment of new accreditation and quality assurance mechanisms, as well as the establishment of a national qualifications framework that will enhance qualification consistency across the country and make them more easily exportable internationally. Efforts have been made to simplify the high-stakes assessment system in order to lessen student stress and enable instructors to focus on skills and application rather than a more restrictive “teaching to the test.” University admission examinations were integrated with the end of the High School National High School Graduation Examinations (NHSGEs) in 2015 to achieve this goal.

#### **4.2.2. Education for All**

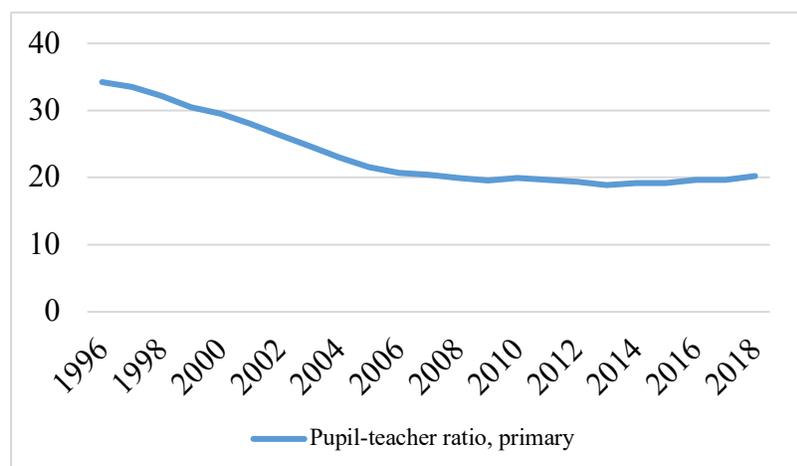
Even though there was a grow in the number of new higher education institutions, almost 37 percent of the Vietnamese below the age of 25 did not attend upper secondary school (Asian Society, n.d.). As the Program for International Student Assessment evaluates the learning of 15-year-olds in school, the results were likely to inflated by the underrepresentation of children from low-income and disadvantaged groups. Reduce early school dropout and related disparities while preserving quality is a big problem. In previous years, Vietnamese colleges were only able to

accept one-third of applications. In 2009, only 6.7 percent of Vietnamese over the age of 25 had a postsecondary degree, a much lower ratio than in other Southeast Asian nations such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines (WENR, 2021).

The administration recognized that a significant proportion of underprivileged groups and communities are lack of access to education and textbooks. They were out of reach of mainstream basic schooling and other fundamental social services. As a result, management expanded boarding schools and set out a plan for employees and intellectuals to get training from ethnic minorities. The government has made major interventions to help ethnic minorities and disadvantaged populations, such as establishing schools in flooded areas and mountain areas, constructing typhoon-resistant schools, advancing lower secondary schools in poor areas, and diversifying non-formal education. One more time, this is the democratic problem solving of Institutionalism in the specific case of Vietnam when everyone gathers and helps people who are poor and disadvantaged have an opportunity to equally access to education system.

Following with that, public education expenditure increased dramatically. Primary education expenditure doubled until 1990. By late 1990, education expenditure accounted for about 15 percent of total public spending and was subsequently increased to 20 percent of annual general government budget expenditure, where it remains until today (Baum, 2020). The state budget remained the main funding source, with donor support estimated to cover only 10 percent of the total public education budget in the 1990s (Baum, 2020). Public education spending was first used for investing into schooling institutions and primary school teachers, followed by an expansion of secondary school teachers (Baum, 2020). Vietnam's situation was helped as the school-age population began to stabilize, meaning more resources could be spent on fewer children, and the student-teacher ratio fell from 34.2 in 1996 to approximately 20.2 today (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Pupil-teacher Ratio in Primary Education



Source: World Development Indicators

In 1992, Vietnam committed to the “Education for All” (EFA) 1993 to 2000 Action Plan, which was followed by a second EFA for the years 2003 to 2015. Quality primary education for all, gender equality across all levels of education, and suitable education and training for all out-of-school young people and adults in need of basic education to encourage adult literacy were at the heart of the first EFA plan, which ran from 1993 to 2000. The 2003–15 EFA plan set five main goals: moving from quantity to quality, completing universal primary and universal lower secondary education, providing lifelong learning opportunities, mobilizing full participation (all for education), and ensuring effective management and ever better resource utilization.

Most crucially, the world continues to grow technologically, with large-scale programs to deliver first power, then internet infrastructure to the entire country – even in the most isolated rural and mountainous areas – wrapped up with the investment in education. Vietnam is rapidly catching up to the developed world in terms of internet access, and views regarding the internet are evolving as well. During a first phase to 2020, the focus was to establish the framework for a second phase of world-class innovation in the use of education technology to improve learning and assessment. The first phase included ambitious, far-reaching goals including creating a

national database for the whole education and training industry and a common repository of e-learning resources. In the second, the country will use information technology to become a driving force for innovation in educational management, content development, teaching and learning technique, and education and training assessment, putting them in the forefront of ASEAN adopters (*A spotlight on Vietnam's transformation in Education*). To conclude, educational reform system plays an essential role in Vietnam's economic development because education enhances the living standard of people's lives and makes them choose how their life is going to be in the future. This seems like something that encourages instrumental valuing in Vietnam, therefore, helping develop because the policy and system should evolve to be goal-oriented and experimental with different cases to keep up with the fast developmental speed globally in general.

### **4.3. Income**

According to Human Development Index, monetary standard of living is calculated by gross national income (GNI) per capita. GNI is the entire amount of money earned by a nation's citizens and businesses, including investment income, regardless of where it was earned (Investopedia, 2021). It also includes funds obtained from abroad such as foreign investment and economic development aid. The more widely known term gross domestic product (GDP) is an estimate of the total value of all goods and services produced within a country for a set period. GNI is an alternative to GDP as a means of measuring and tracking a nation's wealth and is considered a more accurate indicator (Investopedia, 2021). In brief, GNI is a broad measure of all economic activity that demonstrates the quality of live standard of people.

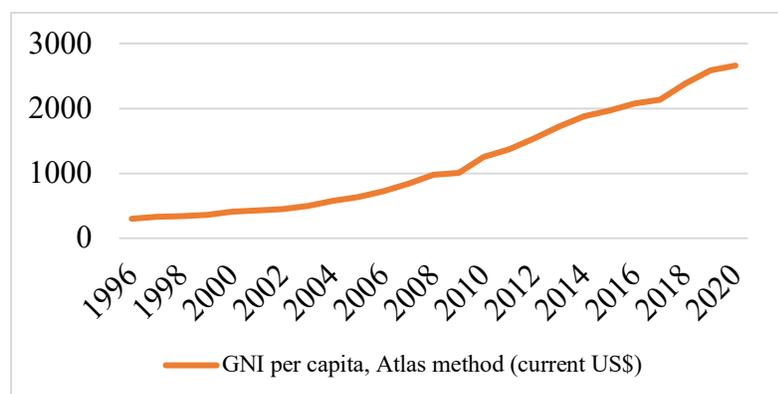
The standard of living also emphasizes through the life process of humans. For the time being, Institutionalism realizes the importance of the extension and enhancement of the life process as the goal in economic development. While it is understood that GNI does not completely

summarize a country's level of development, it has proved to be a useful available indicator that has a strong correlation with the other two: education (enrollment rates in school) and health (life expectancy at birth and mortality rates of children). I mentioned and discussed about the increase in life expectancy, the decrease in mortality rates, and improvement in enrollment rates in school in Vietnam in the previous parts. Therefore, in the following parts, I will provide the background about the quality of living standard of Vietnamese people and highlight its extension and enhance of the life process, which is the main concept of Institutionalism.

#### 4.3.1. Standard of Living

The standard living in Vietnam is rising. In major cities, such as Hanoi (the capital of Vietnam) or Ho Chi Minh City, monthly salaries are increasing steadily – although not yet in line with equivalent Western cities – they are steadily getting there (*Vietnamese living standard: Standard of living in Vietnam*). “Storming Price” is mentioned everywhere as the gasoline price keeps increasing very rapidly. This is accelerating with the new prosperity, foreign trade relations, and rapidly rising standards of education in major centers. Any areas of the farmland change to be industrial parks and urban areas in the last few years. Thereby, it leads to the increase in GNI per capita, according to Figure 7.

Figure 7: GNI per capita, Atlas method (current US\$)



Source: World Development Indicators

There are many development projects implemented to help improve the living conditions of the urban poor in selected cities, such as the Mekong Delta Region Urban Upgrading project. Its object is to enhance infrastructure services in low-income areas in the Mekong Delta Region. The city-wide infrastructure upgrades and new social services helped an extra two million individuals in an indirect way (World Bank, n.d.). The long-term benefits go beyond the duration of the project. In terms of healthcare savings, productive time, flood management damage, and enhanced land value, the total measurable benefits are expected to be over US\$724 million.

#### **4.3.2. Extension and Enhancement of the Life Process**

Again, “life process” indicates that all goods possess serviceable and honorific elements (Phillips, 2014). People should live longer and more pleasant lives. In 2019, Vietnam joined the Human Capital Project to promote nutrition, access to high-quality education, and workforce development in a changing economy. Vietnam has received World Bank assistance in revamping its educational system at all levels. For example, the School Readiness Promotion project helped increase access to full-day preschool to 84 percent of five-year-old children in 2015 from 66 percent in 2011 (World Bank, n.d.). The implementation of a child-centered learning strategy for 250,000 early childhood education teachers increased the quality of preschool instruction. More importantly, in the northern part of Vietnam, 13.7 million people, many of whom are from remote locations, now have greater access to decent healthcare. By investing in medical infrastructure and educating health personnel, the Northeast and Red River Delta Regions Health System Support initiative increased the treatment capacity of 74 public hospitals at the district and provincial levels. Key interventions in five areas of cardiology, obstetrics/gynecology, pediatrics, oncology, and trauma (surgery) are now available at these hospitals, obviating the needs for patients to seek care at tertiary hospitals far away from home.

## Chapter 5. Policy and Further Concern

Traditional rituals in Vietnam have a rich history and variety, and they represent a time-honored mode of communication and a living record of common heritage. However, traditional ceremonies will be modified, understood, and applied in a wrong way time by time, leading a negative influence on the development. Recall that ceremonial valuing is the valuing based on myth and mysticism. For instance, belief life is one of the traditional cultures in Vietnam. The folk beliefs of the Vietnamese people specialize in praying the tutelary deities. This has been most in the ancient villages in Vietnam. The temples of the villages represent a traditional cultural practice that shows respect and good gratitude to tutelary spirits who have made merit to the village or the nation (*6 prominent values of the traditional culture in Vietnam*). However, many people under hard circumstances, such as the unemployed, misunderstand the purpose and beauty of praying and respecting ancestors, so they depend on praying intentionally. The reason is that they believe, once they go to pray for being luck and rich, these things will automatically come to them. As a result, do not make an effort to find jobs or do something useful to earn income for their family. As we can see, this holds back the personal development. If the majority of people in a nation falls in that “mystic” belief, this definitely leads to the delay in its economic development when people stop working and earning income.

To conclude my paper, I examine that there is a correlation between Human Development Index as my core measurement to define the economic development and Institutionalism as believing that societies that emphasize the instrumental ones are more likely to develop. I, Anh Nguyen, want to say some last words related to the policy and system. As Institutionalists highlight the democratic problem solving and extension and improvement of the life process, they are the goal for the economic development. I also demonstrate the same pattern as Vietnam is doing in

the process of economic development. However, there are still many daunting tasks in the future. Democracy is generally held to be a better foundation for participatory discretion in the planning process than either political autocracy or a market mechanism that fails to deliver its touted social benefits. Weak democracies that have succeeded highly authoritarian regimes often have no “road map” to get back on a growth track (Street, 1987). I would not say that Vietnam is a weak democracy, but Vietnam should be careful about the frequency of policy reform. Policy reform should be experimental to see the result whether is suitable or not for the current condition of Vietnam. Yet, policy makers should have clear goal-orientation and reunification. Without goal-orientation along with different opinions from policy makers, experimental policy will never go to the end with the desired result. For instance, higher education system reform is a promising and has been a good signal, but with the high frequency, it will make Vietnamese students confused and stressed a lot about their next school year. Specifically, students do not know if they need to take the entranced exam or not, or what materials they should have and review because of the change in the textbook system. Most importantly, Vietnam deals with many daunting tasks because of the lack of data and information available to have more in-depth analysis paper. Also, the challenges exist in many aspects related to economic development. Again, economic development encompasses broader processes of change and modernization, so it needs to be updated day by day, especially in the technological world like nowadays.

Vietnam is in the process of achieving the state of economic development. Vietnam aspires to become a developed country by 2045 (Fukuoka, 2021). The Vietnamese economy has been influenced by the ongoing COVID-19 epidemic due to its close interconnectedness with the global economy, but it has demonstrated extraordinary resilience. In 2020, GDP increased by 2.9 percent (World Bank, n.d.). It was one of the world’s few countries to do so, but the crisis had a long-term

effect on households, with 45 percent reporting lower household income in January 2021 than in January 2020 (World Bank, n.d.). On the strength of effective COVID-19 infection control, strong export-oriented industrial performance, and solid domestic demand recovery, Vietnam's GDP is predicted to increase 6.6 percent in 2021. Vietnam has also witnessed the increase in Human Development Index in spite of being in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though we are aware that these optimistic views face many challenges, we still can have a right to believe that Vietnam will achieve the goal by the time set with the ongoing characteristic of Institutionalism, including cooperative perspective of mutual betterment (democratic problem solving), goal-oriented and experimental, and extension and improvement of the life process.

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