The relationship between adult basic education and poverty alleviation in ethnolinguistic minority communities in Viet Nam

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This paper examines two approaches to literacy (adult basic education/ABE) and their influence on accessing poverty alleviation resources in selected ethnolinguistic minority communities in Viet Nam. In a multiple case study that relied heavily on structured and semistructured interviews, investigations focused on the use of local languages, curricula, methodology, teacher/facilitator training, link to poverty alleviation, and postcourse use of literacy and literate environments by participants.

Although there are numerous models and methods for implementing ABE programs, this study focuses on Reflect and the Government of Viet Nam’s Adult Literacy Program implemented by local education authorities (DOETs). Reflect, an approach developed by ActionAid, is based on the theory of conscientization pioneered by Paulo Freire. Adult learners explore development challenges and these become the basis to be taught literacy and numeracy skills. This approach is compared and contrasted with the more conventional functional literacy approach of DOETs using the Government of Viet Nam poverty alleviation program P135 to measure the influence both approaches have on access and participation. Findings concentrate on answering the main research question: How do differences in ABE/literacy approaches impact on how specific ethnic minorities access specific poverty alleviation resources in Viet Nam?

Major findings indicate that ABE approaches such as Reflect have a greater potential to impact upon access and participation in P135 when implemented using participatory methodology and delivered by local facilitators who are from the target ethnic group, understand the local language and culture, and have an awareness and understanding of government poverty alleviation policy and strategy.