

# Social Capital as Investment in the Future: Kinship Relations in Financing Children's Education during Reforms in a Vietnamese Village

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**Abstract:** This paper identifies how social capital in kinship relations is employed to foster children's education in the Reform era (Đổi mới), based on an anthropological and sociological study in Quỳnh Đôi village, Quỳnh Lưu district, Nghệ An province, Vietnam. The paper shows that in the Đổi mới period, with the state policy of 'socialization of education', many social forces have contributed to educational affairs. In rural areas in northern Vietnam, kinship institutions such as patrilineage groups have played an important role in supporting children's education through "study encouragement funds" [quỹ khuyến học]. From a social capital perspective, we argue that social capital, understood as enforceable trust and reciprocity exchanges, was the foundation for raising patrilineage study encouragement funds. One significant observation was that both patrilineage members and non-members contributed to these funds. Moreover, pupils receiving financial study encouragements could be either patrilineage members or non-members. Thus, the kin-based support system for children's education has gone beyond the boundaries of patrilineage kin groups to include both patrilineal and other kin relations. From a receiver's viewpoint, the social capital benefiting pupils was located in ego-based kinship networks which extended beyond just patrilineages. Therefore, in the Đổi mới era, villagers went beyond their patrilineage boundaries to mobilize social capital in their ego-based kin networks, including both relatives inside and outside their patrilineage, to encourage children's education.

*Keywords:* Social capital, kinship relation, education.

## 1. Introduction

Social capital has an important role in the creation of human capital. As Putnam points out, social capital brings about many positive effects including better education (Putnam, 2000) [1]. In the same vein, Coleman asserts

that education as human capital of "the skills and knowledge acquired by an individual" is closely linked with social capital (Coleman, 1988: 10) [2]. This is in line with the view according to which social capital creates a convenient milieu for children's education (Teachman, Paasch, & Carver, 1997: 1356) [3].

This paper examines how villagers mobilize social capital in kinship relations to encourage

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children's education in the economic reform period. This period started officially in 1986 aiming at transforming a socialist economy in terms of a state subsidized and centrally planned economy into a socialist oriented market economy. These reforms in fact had their beginnings in 1981 in the domain of agricultural production. Economic reforms were not only carried out in agriculture, but also in the domains of industry and trade. There was growth of private domestic enterprises and foreign investment (Sikor & O'Rourke, 1996) [4], accompanied by a shift from protectionism to a liberal trade regime (Mazyrin, 2007) [5]. On 11 January 2007, Vietnam became the WTO's 150th member, which marked the historic integration of Vietnam into the global market economy.

In this paper we define social capital as *resources in terms of enforceable trust and reciprocity exchanges embedded in individuals' social networks. Individuals can produce, maintain and use social capital through ties in that network to secure benefits for themselves.* This definition fits into the general premise that social capital is network-based, which is acknowledged by most scholars (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Fukuyama, 2001, 2002; Lin, 1999, 2001; Portes, 1998; Putnam, 1995, 2000) [1, 6-10]. In addition, the perception of social capital that entails enforceable trust and reciprocity exchanges also derives from the discussions of these scholars on social capital (Coleman, 1988; Fukuyama, 2001, 2002; Portes, 1998; Putnam, 1995, 2000) [1, 2, 9-12].

Putnam differentiates between "bonding" social capital and "bridging" social capital. Bonding social capital applies only within homogenous groups while bridging social capital is formed across diverse social groups. And while bonding social capital is useful for "getting by", bridging social capital is important for "getting ahead" (Putnam, 2000: 22-23). The perception that bonding social capital is good for getting by and bridging social capital is crucial for getting ahead is also emphasized by Woolcock and Narayan

(Woolcock, 2001; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000) [13, 14]. If Putnam's perception of bonding and bridging social capital could be linked to kinship relations, bonding social capital is built and used among relatives of the same patrilineage and bridging social capital is built and used among relatives belonging to different patrilineages. It should be noticed that the distinction between bonding and bridging is flexible depending on the questions under examination (Putnam, 2000: 23). If the village boundary is taken into account, bonding social capital could be built and used among relatives who belong to the same patrilineage and live in the same village, while bridging social capital could be built and used among people living in the village and relatives of the same patrilineage living outside the village.

From the social capital perspective mentioned above, we shall analyze the linkage between kinship relations and children's education through Patrilineage Encouragement Funds. We shall also show that social capital in kinship relations is not only restricted to the confines of patrilineages but also extends to circles of relatives who do not share the same patrilineal ancestors, in creating favorable conditions for children's education. Attention will be paid to the changes that blur the gender lines in patrilineage-related activities along with an improvement of women's position.

Scholars usually study Vietnamese kinship from a patrilineal viewpoint such as Pham Van Bich (1999) and Mai Van Hai and Phan Dai Doan (2000). In addition, Luong van Hy suggests that Vietnamese kinship consists of "the two structurally opposing male oriented ("patrilineal") and non male oriented ("bilateral") models" (Luong, 1989: 742) [15]. Viewing kinship from an ancestor-based vantage point and from an ego-based perspective enables us to clarify the types of kinship. From an ancestor-focus, descent groups form membership groups in which members define their relationship to each other with reference to a common ancestor – the lineage. The various types of lineage organize

kinship in membership groups with boundaries defined by rules of descent. If we view kinship from the ego-focus, all people who are related to ego can belong to the ego-based kin network, including those who do not share a common ancestor. A vital feature of the ego-centred kin network is that all ego-based cognates up to a certain degree are recognized as having some duties toward him and some claims on him (Fox, 1967: 146-174) [16]. Fox contends that in complex societies, kinship tends to be defined more in terms of ego-based kin networks than in terms of membership in (lineage) descent groups (Fox, 1967). In the setting of Vietnamese society, one that is rapidly changing and becoming more complex, besides considering the viewpoints of patrilineage and the “bilateral” model, we will also look at Vietnamese kinship relations as ego-based kin networks.

The data used in this paper came from fieldwork conducted in Quỳnh Đôi village, Quỳnh Lưu district, Nghệ An province, Northern Vietnam. This village has a long, well-recorded history and a long tradition of education with many villagers getting degrees equivalent to bachelor, master and doctoral degrees in the era of the classic Hán-Chinese education system. This village is also the homeland of several famous “historic” people including revolutionary leaders. Quỳnh Đôi is a part of Nghệ An province where revolutionary ideals took roots and collectivization policies were implemented with great fervor, depriving kinship - especially patrilineal ties which were considered as vestiges of ‘feudalism’ - of some of its pre- and post-revolutionary functions. Quỳnh Đôi inhabitants not only bear the full brunt of revolution and war but are also subjected to the socio-economic, cultural and political changes that have transformed northern Vietnamese villages in the past decades. Against this background, this sociological and anthropological study of family and kinship can elucidate how kinship relations played important roles in children’s education in the economic reform period.

In this paper, we use both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data come from two sources. The first source is published and unpublished data of the patrilineages, the village, and the commune. The second source is observations, interviews and conversations during fieldwork by the first author (Nguyen Tuan Anh). Between 2000 and 2008, we made numerous short and long trips to the field for data collection, which enabled us to have a deep understanding of the village life. The quantitative data come from three surveys, which were carried out in 2000, 2003, and from late 2006 to early 2007. The sample size of each survey was 300 villagers. The total village population was 4,567 people in 2000, 4699 people in 2003 and 4640 people in 2006.

The next section of this paper covers the policy of ‘socialization’ as a key point in the education domain. The financial burden as a consequence of this policy will be discussed in section 3. In sections 4, we shall examine kinship relations and children’s education through Patrilineage Encouragement Funds.

## 2. The “socialization” of education - a key education policy since *Đổi mới*

The year 1986 has been officially considered as the starting point of *Đổi mới* in Vietnam, which marks the shift from a state subsidized and centrally planned economy to a market oriented economy under state management. The radical changes introduced by *Đổi mới* have made a strong impact on all aspects of Vietnamese society including education. An important departure in the policies of *Đổi mới* is the “socialization” of education<sup>1</sup> [17, 18]. The concept “socialization” is directly translated from “*Xã hội hóa*” in Vietnamese. “Socialization” is the concept officially adopted in the Eighth Communist

<sup>1</sup>It has been suggested that the phrase ‘Social participation in the cause of education’ would be better to interpret the phrase “*Xã hội hoá giáo dục*” (Bùi Trọng Liễu, 2007; Nguyễn Lộc, 2007).

Party of Vietnam Congress (Bùi Gia Thịnh et al. 1999:7) [19].

The Communist Party guidelines on "socialization" of education were translated into Education Laws that were promulgated in 1998 (Quốc hội Nước Cộng hòa Xã hội Chủ nghĩa Việt Nam, 1998) and in 2005 (Quốc hội Nước Cộng hòa Xã hội Chủ nghĩa Việt Nam, 2005) [20, 21]. Article 12 of the Education Law in 2005 stipulates that the state and the entire population, organizations, families and citizens share the responsibility of promoting the cause of education. Article 105 stipulates that pupils or their families have to pay enrolment and tuition fees. Article 13 urges all Vietnamese organizations, individuals, and foreign organizations and individuals to invest in education. The existence of private schools is confirmed (article 48 of the 2005 Education Law in 2005; article 44 of the 1998 Education Law).

Thus 'socialization' of education is a significant development in the *Đổi mới* era. The policy is opposed to the old state subsidy system [*chế độ bao cấp*] that prevailed before the *Đổi mới*, when education was officially free of charge and there were no private schools. Today, the establishment of private schools is encouraged by the state and pupils of both private and public schools have to pay tuition<sup>2</sup> fees. Besides, households have to bear other. It extra expenses in order to send their children to school seems rather ironical but "socialization" of education in the age of the *Đổi mới* means nothing but outright "privatization", shifting the financial burden to individual households. As Vũ Quang Việt points out, in educational matters the government has minimized the responsibility of the state and maximized the contributions of the population through "socialization", a misnomer [22]. In the next section, we will show that "socialization", in practice, has been imposing heavy individual contributions to education.

<sup>2</sup> Pupils of public primary schools do not have to pay school fee but have to pay several types of expenses. See the information below.

### 3. "Socialization" of education and financial burden to the households of pupils

In Quỳnh Đôi financial contributions of households to their children's education are very high in comparison to their incomes<sup>3</sup> [23]. On 24 October 2007, we conducted an interview with Nguyễn Thị Ninh, born in 1973 and living in hamlet number 6. She and her husband have two children, one attending primary school (2nd grade) one following secondary school (8<sup>th</sup> grade)<sup>4</sup>. She listed the expenses incurred in sending their children to primary and secondary schools in 2007 as follows<sup>5</sup> (table 1).

The data above shows that households have to pay numerous kinds of expenses related to children's education in the *Đổi mới* period, when the state ceased to subsidize the education system as in the socialist transformation period. There were 12 kinds of fees for primary school, and 13 kinds for secondary school. There were several rather weird items such as 'charge for electricity for fans and light bulbs used in classrooms, or 'depreciation cost of tools used in classrooms such as water basins, tablecloths', etc. According to a survey in late 2007, in places like Trà Vinh, An Giang, Vĩnh Long, Đắc Lắc and Hồ Chí Minh city, most household expenditures on children's education were not spent on tuition fees but on 'contributions' related to schooling (Trần Hữu Quang, 2008) [24]. Studying in Yên Bái province, Dang Bich Thuy listed quite a few contributions related to schooling such as the pupil parent association fund, the school construction fund, electricity use in class, school protection and cleaning (Dang Bich Thuy, 2008: 169-171) [25]. In her studies in the

<sup>3</sup> Expenditures on education in Vietnam recently account for a sizable portion of GDP and GNP. For example in 2005 this accounts for 8.3% of GDP. It is worth noticing that 40% of these expenditures come from pupils and their families (Vũ Quang Việt, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> In Vietnam, households assume all children's living expenses.

<sup>5</sup> In October 2007, 1 USD was approximately to 16,309 VND.

provinces of Yên Bái, Thừa Thiên Huế and Tiền Giang, Dang Thi Hoa pointed out that tuition fees and other expenses such as school buildings, buying textbooks were a financial burden for most rural households (Dang Thi Hoa, 2008: 147-149) [26]. It is worth noting

that extra classes have been a big problem for parents and children alike (Dang Bich Thuy, 2008: 167). The problem of extra classes occurred not only in Quỳnh Đôi but was a widespread phenomenon nationwide (Lê Quang Dũng, 2005) [27].

Table 1. Expenses for a child of Nguyễn Thị Ninh<sup>6</sup> attending primary school

No	Items	VND	USD
1	Buying supplementary teaching aids	50,000	3.06
2	Maintaining school and learning equipment (table and chair)	70,000	4.29
3	Body insurance [ <i>Bảo hiểm thân thể</i> ] <sup>7</sup>	20,000	1.22
4	Medical insurance	60,000	3.67
5	Parents' association fund	9,000	0.55
6	Extra classes	297,000	18.21
7	Depreciation of class room tools	4,000	0.24
8	Youth pioneer union fund	9,000	0.55
9	The electricity	5,000	0.30
10	School uniforms	29,000	1.77
11	Text books	100,000	6.13
12	Notebooks	32,000	1.96
13	Total expenses	685,000	42.00

Table 2. Expenses for a child of Nguyễn Thị Ninh attending secondary school

No	Items	VND	USD
1	Maintaining school and learning equipment	80,000	4.90
2	Tuition fee	135,000	8.27
3	Body insurance	25,000	1.53
4	Medical insurance	60,000	3.67
5	Fund of parents' association	15,000	0.91
6	Fund of youth pioneer union	9,000	0.55
7	School Fund	5,000	0.30
8	The electricity	5,000	0.30
9	Fee for bicycle parking	25,000	1.53
10	Fee for trial examination	5,000	0.30
11	Extra classes	150,000	9.19
12	Text books	Borrow from a relative	
13	Notebooks	50,000	3.06
14	Total expenses	564,000	34.58

<sup>6</sup> The names of informants in this paper are fictitious in order to ensure the anonymity and privacy of the informants.

<sup>7</sup> This is a type of insurance providing financial support in the event the policyholder is ill or injured.

This problem was raised by a number of members of the National Assembly (VietNamNet, 2004) [28]. As shown above, Nguyễn Thị Ninh's household had to pay 297,000 VND (18.21 USD) for extra classes for a child following primary school, and 150,000 VND (9.19 USD) for a child following secondary school in 2007. The money for extra classes is the biggest expense item in comparison with other contributions on the list. As Nguyễn Thị Ninh told me, although these extra classes were not compulsory, many parents still sent their children to these classes because they were afraid that their children would fall behind in the learning process. Moreover, parents did not wish teachers to have a negative attitude toward their children for not attending these classes.

A survey in late 2007 showed that on average, household expenditure on education for a pupil per year was 525,000 VND (32.19 USD) in Trà Vinh province; 499,000 VND (30.59 USD) in An Giang province; 736,000 VND (45.12 USD) in Vĩnh Long province; 1,320,000 VND (80.93 USD) in Đắk Lắk province and 2,840,000 VND (171.13 USD) in Hồ Chí Minh city, which was the highest (Trần Hữu Quang, 2008). Comparing these data with the information provided by Nguyễn Thị Ninh above, we can see that her household educational expenditure for each of her children falls in between the average spent on education for a pupil in Trà Vinh province and Vĩnh Long province.

In order to gain insight into the financial burden on the average household income, we will make a comparison between the case of Nguyễn Thị Ninh's household and the average expenditure on education for one of her children in 2007. The total income of her household came from two sources: agricultural production as the primary source and cottage industries as secondary. Combining the incomes from agricultural production and from secondary jobs, the total income of her household was 9,800,000 VND (600.89 USD). Her household had 4 people, thus, the total

income per person a year was 9,800,000 VND (600.89 USD) divided by 4 makes 2,450,000 VND (150.22 USD). And the total income per person of her household a month was 2,450,000 VND (150.22 USD) divided by 12 makes 204,166 VND (12.51 USD).

In the year 2007, the expenditure for her children was 1,249,000 VND (76.58 USD): 685,000 VND (42.00 USD) for the first child plus 564,000 VND (34.58 USD) for the second child. Thus, on average, for each child going to school, her household had to pay as follows: 1,249,000 VND (76.58 USD) divided by 2 makes 624,500 VND (38.29 USD). If comparing the average expenditure on education of one her child with the average income of one her household member, we can see that the average expenditure on education accounted for 39.23% of the average income [2,450,000 VND (150.22 USD) divided by 624,500 VND (38.29 USD) multiplied with 100].

According to the computations of Vũ Quang Việt, an United Nations expert (Vũ Quang Việt, 2007), in terms of monthly income the population of North Central region (Nghệ An province belongs to this region) could be divided into five groups in which the first group constitutes 20% of the population having the lowest income and the fifth group makes up 20% of the population having highest income, as follows:

Table 3. The income per month per person in 2006 in the North Central region of Vietnam

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
156,000 VND (9.56 USD)	249,000 VND (15.26 USD)	341,000 VND (20.90 USD)	481,000 VND (24.49 USD)	931,000 VND (57.08 USD) <sup>8</sup>

(Source: Vũ Quang Việt, 2007)

In comparing these data with the income of Nguyễn Thị Ninh, we can see that the average income of a member of her household falls

<sup>8</sup> In October 2007, 1 USD was approximately equivalent to 16,309 VND

between group 1 and group 2. If a household belongs to group 1 (the poorest) and has two schoolchildren like Nguyễn Thị Ninh, it would need the income of about eight months of a person to pay for their children school expenses; 156,000 VND (9.58 USD) compare with 1,249,000 VND (76.58 USD). It should be mentioned that these expenditures on education do not include items such as food and clothing for children to attend school.

In August 2005 at a government-sponsored conference aimed at speeding up socialization of education, many participants warned that this may lead to the situation where pupils might not be able to continue their schooling because their families simply could not afford it (TBTC 115, 2005) [29]. An organizer of the survey conducted in late 2007 in the provinces of Trà Vinh, An Giang, Vĩnh Long, Đắc Lắc and Hồ Chí Minh city, reported that 56% of parents considered that education expenditure for their children was “heavy”, among these 38% thought it “quite heavy” and 18% “too heavy” (Trần Hữu Quang, 2008).

The consequences of heavy education expenditure on households could be seen in the data published in March 2008 by the Ministry of Education and Training (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo, 2008) which show the number of school dropouts from primary schools to high schools in recent years as follows: 2003-2004: 841,916 pupils; 2004-2005: 854,185 pupils; 2005-2006: 869,222 pupils; 2006-2007: 400,771 pupils; the first semester of 2007-2008: 119,194 pupils<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> According to an official explanation of the Ministry of Education and Training (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo, 2008) in March 2008, the decrease of the number of pupils dropping out of school was a result of a movement carried out in 2006 that aimed at fighting against negativity and overcoming the ‘disease of mediocrity’ in education [Chống tiêu cực và khắc phục bệnh thành tích trong giáo dục] (Thủ tướng Chính phủ, 2006). However, there was evidence to show that more pupils dropped out of school than the data the Ministry of Education and Training reported. (Tổ Quyên, 2008). In May 2008, the Ministry of Education and Training reported again on the number of pupils dropping out of school in the first semester of 2007-2008 school year. The new data gave 147,005 pupils (the old data were 119.194 pupils). The Ministry explained that

[31,32]. According to the Ministry of Education and Training, one of the main reasons was lack of financial means for households to continue sending their children to school, especially poor households (Hồng Hạc, 2008; Kim Dung, 2008) [33,34]. The fact that many children dropped out of school because their families simply could not afford them was also confirmed by studies in the provinces of Yên Bái, Thừa Thiên Huế and Tiền Giang (Dang Thi Hoa, 2008).

To alleviate the education costs on household budgets, at local level the patrilineages have taken a measure through their Study Encouragement Fund.

#### 4. Study encouragement through patrilineage study encouragement funds

One important phenomenon reflects the link between kinship relations and children’s education is the Patrilineage Study Encouragement Fund [*quỹ khuyến học dòng họ*]. In Quỳnh Đôi, the process of setting up Patrilineage Study Encouragement Fund began in 2000 pioneered by the Nguyễn patrilineage. From 2000 to 2006, twenty five other patrilineages in the commune followed this example (Hội khuyến học xã Quỳnh Đôi, 2006)<sup>10</sup>.

The results of our own survey in 2000 show that the majority of villagers supported the setting up Patrilineage Study Encouragement Funds, although there was no indication whether they would actually contribute money to these funds. 46.7% of respondents said that setting up these funds was very necessary while 49.0% said it was necessary. Only 4% thought this was not necessary and 0.3% had other opinions. In order to examine kinship relation related to the funds, we should examine two

the reasons for changing the data were the mistakes of calculations and the increase of new pupils dropping out of school (Vĩnh Hà, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> The phenomenon of raising fund to support school children has been widespread in many places (Huỳnh Định, 2008).

aspects: Who contribute money to the funds and who receive money from them.

#### 4.1. Individual contributions to the funds

Fund raising among members and non-members is an important feature of the Patrilineage Study Encouragement Section. For example, each year the Study Encouragement Section of the Nguyễn patrilineage sends out an appeal to all relatives, males as well as females, living within and outside Quỳnh Đôi to contribute to the fund<sup>11</sup>. There is no fixed amount required, and contributions are voluntary. This means there has been a loosening up of patrilineage regulations that no longer enforce compulsory contributions from male members. A letter sent out in 2005 also informed relatives that from September 2000 to January 2005, the total sum of money raised for the fund was 5,430,000 VND (342.19 USD) (Hội đồng Gia tộc họ Nguyễn Triệu Cơ, 2005)<sup>12</sup> [35-37].

No	Categories of donors	Number
1	Number of donors	144
2	Number of donors who are patrilineage members	91
3	Number of donors who are non-members of the patrilineage	53
4	Numbers of donor who are patrilineage daughters	23
5	Number of donors who are patrilineage sons-in-law:	11
6	Number of donors who are patrilineage daughters- in-law	14
7	Number of donors who are patrilineage outer-relatives <sup>13</sup>	5

A scrutiny of the list of people contributing to the Study Encouragement Fund of the Nguyễn patrilineage (Hội đồng Gia tộc họ Nguyễn Triệu Cơ, 2000-2007), shortly after the

<sup>11</sup> In the old days, if a patrilineage needed money to carry out its affairs, patrilineage members (all males) had to contribute their shares which were equally divided among them regardless age, earnings, occupation and social status.

<sup>12</sup> In January 2005, 1 USD was approximately to 15,868 VND.

<sup>13</sup> Grandfathers of their mothers are Nguyễn patrilineage's members.

fund was set up in September 2000, indicates the types of donors within the kinship network as follows:

The data show that a considerable number of donors were non-members of the patrilineage. The donors fell into four categories: patrilineage daughters, sons in-law of the patrilineage, daughters in-law of patrilineage and patrilineage's outer-relatives whose grandfathers of their mothers are Nguyễn patrilineage's members. The situation is clearly illustrated in a report on the activities of the Study Encouragement Section, dated from 25 December 2005, in which four people were particularly praised for their contributions to the fund - one of these was a non-member of the patrilineage (Hội đồng Gia tộc họ Nguyễn Triệu Cơ, 2000-2007).

Both the Study Encouragement Section and the donors considered contributions to the fund as voluntary. This was confirmed by patrilineage documents such as the 'Report on the results of study encouragement activities' [*Báo cáo kết quả công tác khuyến học*] of the Nguyễn Patrilineage Council (Hội đồng Gia tộc họ Nguyễn Triệu Cơ, 2007). Of course, there was always social pressure exerted on potential donors from their patrilineage environment. However, in general contribution was voluntary depending on the economic conditions of each individual, and many contributors came from people living outside Quỳnh Đôi village (Hội đồng Gia tộc họ Nguyễn Triệu Cơ, 2000-2007).

#### 4.2. Beneficiaries form the funds

Concerning people receiving money from the fund, while doing fieldwork in Quỳnh Đôi the researchers noticed three important aspects. The first is that patrilineages rewarded schoolchildren who had good results at school and helped poor households who had children attending school. For example, in the case of the Nguyễn patrilineage (Hội đồng Gia tộc họ Nguyễn Triệu Cơ, 2000-2007), the criteria to reward money from the study encouragement fund is set as follows:



1. Certificates of merit [*Giấy khen của họ*] and 15,000 VND (0.91 USD)<sup>14</sup> to pupils (whose fathers are patrilineage members or whose mothers are patrilineage daughters – con *cháu nội hoặc con cháu ngoài*), who win prizes at district level competitions on school subjects.

2. Certificates of merit and 20,000 VND (1.22 USD) to pupils who win prizes at provincial and higher-level Olympiads on school subjects.

3. Certificates of merit and 20,000 VND (1.22 USD) to pupils and students who pass university entrance examinations or graduate from universities.

4. Certificates of merit and 20,000 VND (1.22 USD) to pupils and students who pass junior college entrance examinations or who graduate from junior colleges.

5. Support poor households having pupils who get good school results with 50,000 VND (3.06 USD).

From the record of the study encouragement section from 2000 to 2005, this patrilineage helped three poor households whose children received good school results with 50,000 VND (3.06 USD) each. The number of pupils who received the patrilineage rewards were as follows (table5)

Another important aspect is the way the fund is used for educational encouragement: boys and girls are treated on an equal basis. This is a far-cry from the 'feudal' time when females did not have the right to follow education let alone take part in examinations. At the spring ancestral rite in 2006 performed by the Cù patrilineage, one of the researchers was able to read the information posted on the notice board hung in its patrilineage hall. Among the five pupils who passed the university entrance exams and singled out for commendations and rewards, two were females.

<sup>14</sup> In October 2007, 1 USD was approximately to 16,309 VND

Table 5. Number of pupils received the Nguyễn patrilineage rewards from 1999 to 2005

School years	Numbers of pupils and students	The achievements	The prize money	
			VND	USD
1999-2000	28	Win prizes at district-level	360,000	24.72 <sup>15</sup>
2000-2001	34	Olympiads on school	410,000	25.98 <sup>16</sup>
2001-2002	41	subjects, pass university and college	690,000	43.09 <sup>17</sup>
2002-2003	53	entrance examinations	870,000	53.86 <sup>18</sup>
2003-2004	63	and graduate from	999,000	63.30 <sup>19</sup>
2004-2005	29	universities and colleges	480,000	30.03 <sup>20</sup>

(Source: *Hội đồng Gia tộc họ Nguyễn Triệu Cơ, 2000-2007*)

In the school year of 2005-2006, the Phan patrilineage rewarded 31 pupils for their achievements with 1.190.000 VND (71.72 USD)<sup>21</sup>. Among these, 17 were schoolgirls.<sup>22</sup> In the same period the Nguyễn patrilineage commended and rewarded 39 pupils, 17 of whom were females, with a sum of 1.184.000 (71.35 USD).<sup>23</sup>

<sup>15</sup> In December 2000, 1 USD was approximately to 14,559 VND

<sup>16</sup> In December 2001, 1 USD was approximately to 15,779 VND

<sup>17</sup> In December 2002, 1 USD was approximately to 16,011 VND

<sup>18</sup> In December 2003, 1 USD was approximately to 16,152 VND

<sup>19</sup> In December 2004, 1 USD was approximately to 15,780 VND

<sup>20</sup> In December 2005, 1 USD was approximately to 15,982 VND

<sup>21</sup> In December 2006, 1 USD was approximately to 16,592 VND

<sup>22</sup> Phan Tất Tuyên, 71 years old, hamlet number 3, interview on 27 October 2007, and also information from the summarizing report on study encouragement affair of Phan patrilineage

<sup>23</sup> Nguyễn Danh Hùng, 76 years old, hamlet number 5, interviewed on 27 October 2007 and also information from the summarizing report on study encouragement affair of the Nguyễn patrilineage

The third aspect related to receiving money from the funds is that both school children whose fathers are patrilineage members [*con cháu nội*] and those whose mothers are patrilineage daughters [*con cháu ngoại*] are eligible to be monitored, commended and rewarded for their achievements.<sup>24</sup> Treating *con cháu ngoại* and *con cháu nội* on an equal basis in matters regarding study encouragement received approval from the vast majority of villagers. In the survey conducted in December 2006 and January 2007, 89% of the informants (267 people) shared this view whereas 11% of informants (33 people) expressed the view that only *con cháu nội* should be eligible for study encouragement measures. Most patrilineages came to an agreement to treat both *con cháu nội* and *con cháu ngoại* on an equal basis at the time when the patrilineages began their study encouragement activities. For example, the regulations of the Study Encouragement Fund of Phan-Phạm patrilineage stipulates that the patrilineage commends and rewards all *con cháu nội* and *con cháu ngoại* with high achievements in education, and these include sons, daughters, daughters-in-law, sons-in-law and their children. In the school year of 2005-2006, the Phan patrilineage honoured 31 pupils with awards and cash prizes for their achievements, 10 of them were children whose mothers are daughters of the patrilineage [*con cháu ngoại*].<sup>25</sup> In the same period the Nguyễn patrilineage rewarded 39 pupils, 26 *con cháu nội* and 13 *con cháu ngoại*.<sup>26</sup> The case study below illustrates more that phenomenon.

<sup>24</sup> In the past and even today, ‘con cháu ngoại’ children whose mothers are patrilineage daughters are not considered to be the patrilineage members. Their names are not on the membership list/ledger.

<sup>25</sup> Phan Tất Tuyên, 71 years old, hamlet number 3, interview on 27 October 2007, and also information from the summarizing report on study encouragement affair of Phan patrilineage

<sup>26</sup> Nguyễn Danh Hùng, 76 years old, hamlet number 5, interviewed on 27 October 2007; also information from the summary report on study encouragement of the Nguyễn patrilineage.

#### 4.3. The case of Nguyễn Bá Ky's household

The researcher interviewed Nguyễn Bá Ky, living in hamlet number 3, on 26 December 2007. Nguyễn Bá Ky born in 1956 and his wife, Hồ Thị Dinh, born in 1957, have four children. The first son, Nguyễn Bá Cường, born in 1985, graduated in mechanics from a vocational school. The second son, Nguyễn Bá Duân, born in 1987, graduated from high school. In 2007, the first and second sons of Nguyễn Bá Ky - Nguyễn Bá Cường and Nguyễn Bá Duân got manual jobs in Đắc Lắc province. The third son, Nguyễn Bá Du, born in 1990, was an 11<sup>th</sup> grade pupil of a high school. The fourth son, Nguyễn Thành Cung, was born in 1991. He was following the 10<sup>th</sup> grade of a high school. Nguyễn Bá Ky's household has 5 sào<sup>27</sup> of agricultural lands. Nguyễn Bá Ky's household is ranked as poor because their income per capital per month is less than 200.000 VND (12.27 USD).<sup>28</sup> Both Nguyễn Bá Du and Nguyễn Thành Cung did well at school. Two years ago Nguyễn Bá Du won the first prize at a physics competition at district level. For many years, Nguyễn Bá Du and Nguyễn Thành Cung were good students and received encouragement study prizes equally from the Nguyễn patrilineage of their father and the Hồ patrilineage of their mother. In 2007, the two brothers received 50,000 VND (3.06 USD) each from these two patrilineages, thus bringing the total prize money they received from the two patrilineages to 200,000 VND (12.27 USD).

It can be said that there has been a considerable change in the study encouragement affairs of patrilineages. If in the era of the classical education system in Hán-Chinese script, only patrilineage (male) members were eligible to receive encouragement and rewards (Hồ Phi Hội, Hồ Trọng Chuyên, & Hồ Đức Lĩnh, 2005 [1856, 1963]) [38], in the reform era, the range of contributors to the Patrilineage Study Encouragement Fund has been extended to non-members of the patrilineage whereas

<sup>27</sup> 1 sào = 360 m<sup>2</sup>

<sup>28</sup> In December 2007, 1 USD was approximately to 16,292 VND

recipients from the fund are extended to *con cháu ngoại*- children whose mothers are patrilineage daughters. In addition, girls are treated as equal as boys in receiving financial support from the patrilineage education encouragement fund. Thus, in the *Đổi mới* era the patrilineage boundary has become blurred and more flexible. Moreover, women's position in kinship setting has been enhanced.

Viewed from the perspective of someone receiving money from the patrilineage encouragement fund in relation to donors to the fund and the people who run these patrilineage encouragement activities, we can see that an ego-based kin network (centred on the receiver) explains the money flows and relations better than the patrilineage system itself. In fact the receiver is able to get money not only from their father's patrilineage but also from his/her mother's patrilineage. In addition, contributors to the fund not only come from the ranks of patrilineage members but also include non-members of the patrilineage such as patrilineage daughters, daughters-in-law, and sons-in-law. Under these circumstances it can be said that patrilineages serve as institutional/ organizational vehicles for wider kin-based activities which are less membership-based and more network-oriented.

Social capital in terms of reciprocity exchanges and enforceable trust is thus created and channeled through the motivations and actions of both donors and receivers concerning the fund. The receivers' motivations are to get money to pursue their education; their repayments are in the form of the expected excellent results that will make the donors – from within and outside the patrilineage – feel mighty proud themselves either individually or as a group. As for the donors, in giving money to the fund they expect and trust to receive returns not only from individual receivers (a sense of gratitude) but also from the collectivity as a whole (patrilineage members and non-members of the patrilineage). These are expressed by awards of honour such as certificates of recognition, and citations read out at the patrilineage hall on ancestor worship

day in the presence of relatives, far and near. Contributions are duly acknowledged and recorded in a patrilineage book.

Activities around patrilineal education fund bring to mind the question of approval and status rather than direct repayment, as Portes remarks when discussing social capital related to offering and receiving a scholarship within an ethnic community: "...a member of an ethnic group may endow a scholarship for young co-ethnic students, thereby expecting not re-payment from recipients but rather approval and status in the collectivity. The students' social capital is not contingent on direct knowledge of their benefactors, but on membership in the same group" (Portes, 1998: 9). In short, regarding the Patrilineage Study Encouragement Fund, social capital serves as the foundation for actions of both donors, who contribute money to the fund and receivers, who receive money from it.

About the patrilineal education funds, the distinction between bonding and bridging social capitals could be seen from the village level. If the relevant boundary is the village boundary, the reciprocity exchanges and enforceable trust between relatives within the village can be labelled as bonding social capital, whereas reciprocity exchanges and enforceable trust between villagers and their relatives outside the village can be considered as bridging social capital. While both bonding and bridging social capitals form the basis for contributing to the patrilineage education funds, the bridging social capital is the driving source. Data from my fieldwork in Quỳnh Đôi show that both villagers and their relatives outside Quỳnh Đôi contributed money to these funds, but the major part of these funds often came from relatives outside Quỳnh Đôi. This fact is illustrated in the case of the Phan patrilineage which had set up a Study Encouragement Section in Hanoi. Every year this section raised funds to encourage pupils of the patrilineage.<sup>29</sup> For example, in the school year 2005-2006, 28 pupils of the

<sup>29</sup> Phan Tất Tuyên, the head of the Phan patrilineage in Quỳnh Đôi, interview on 27 October 2007

patrilineage living in Quỳnh Đôi received encouragement money totalling 1,190,000 VND (71.72 USD).<sup>30</sup> Therefore, bridging social capital understood as enforceable trust and reciprocal exchanges between villagers and their relatives outside the village constituted the main source for the patrilineage education funds. With these resources, the pupils and their families are given the opportunities to 'get ahead' through education by getting good scholastic results, winning prizes at Olympiads on school subjects or passing junior college entrance examinations (the case of Nguyễn Bá Ky's household above was an example). In short bridging social capital between villagers and their relatives outside the village was a key factor for pupils to get on with their education.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper we have examined kinship relations in children's education, from a social capital point of view in the context of *Đổi mới*. Social capital in terms of reciprocity exchanges and enforceable trust plays an important role in generating human capital through encouraging children to follow education particularly at a time when the state policy on 'socialization' - in fact nothing but pure privatization - of education has caused financial hardship to individual households. Facing this situation kinship relations play an important role in supporting those school pupils and households in financial need.

The distinction between bonding and bridging social capital focusing on the village dimension is also useful. As presented above, the bridging social capital between the villagers and their relatives outside the village was the main foundation for contributing money to and receiving money from the patrilineage education funds. By receiving money from the funds, the pupils did get ahead or expected to

get ahead understood in terms of educational advancement (getting good school results, winning prizes at Olympiads on school subjects, or passing junior college entrance examinations). Students could receive money from Study Encouragement Funds of their patrilineages or the patrilineages where their mothers were daughters. Regardless whether the Study Encouragement Funds belonged to paternal or maternal patrilineages, bridging social capital between villagers and their relatives outside the village was the basis for raising the money allowing children to study and thus creating opportunities to get ahead.

It is worth mentioning that gender-based distinctions are no longer prominent in patrilineage-related education encouragement activities. Donors are free to contribute regardless of their gender or official status in the patrilineage membership. The same goes for recipients of the fund: nowadays both children of patrilineage's sons and daughters are eligible for rewards for their school achievements. This reflects the blurring boundary of modern-day patrilineage together with the improvement of women's position in the domain of children's education. In a way it can be said that patrilineages have provided institutional and organizational conduits for facilitating these wider kin-based practices, forming ego-based networks that extend beyond 'traditional' male-dominated patrilineage membership. In other words, our analysis suggests that the classic understanding of kinship in rural Vietnam as governed by corporate patrilineages marked by generational, age-set and gender hierarchies - while still relevant - must be complicated by taking an ego-based kinship perspective into account which blurs sharp boundaries in favor of fuzzy networks of mutual relations.

All this is a far cry from study encouragement schemes under the classical education system in Hán-Chinese script, when only males were eligible to study and receive support from the patrilineages. To some extent, kinship relations have intensified in the education domain in the *Đổi mới* era, but do not

<sup>30</sup> In December 2006, 1 USD was approximately to 16,592 VND

represent a simple return to the patrilineages in the old days. From the relations between receivers and givers as individuals through Patrilineage Study Encouragement Fund, there has been an emergence of ego-based kin networks in which the egos are receivers. Drawing on patrilineage and on non-patrilineage kin relations, the Patrilineage Study Encouragement Funds create both bonding social capital (within the village) and bridging social capital (beyond the village). To what extent this social capital is convertible into other forms of capital in line with Bourdieu's classic text *The Forms of Capital* (1986), and hence holds the potential of overcoming class, gender and regional distinctions in Vietnam is another important question which this paper cannot answer on the basis of the data.

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## Vốn xã hội như là sự đầu tư cho tương lai: Quan hệ họ hàng trong hỗ trợ tài chính cho việc học hành của trẻ em trong quá trình đổi mới ở một làng của Việt Nam

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**Tóm tắt:** Bài viết này khám phá cách thức vốn xã hội được vận dụng để khuyến khích việc học hành của trẻ em trong giai đoạn *Đổi mới* dựa trên một nghiên cứu nhân học - xã hội học tại làng Quỳnh Đôi, huyện Quỳnh Lưu, tỉnh Nghệ An. Bài viết chỉ ra rằng trong giai đoạn đổi mới, với chính sách “xã hội hóa giáo dục”, nhiều lực lượng xã hội đã và đang đóng góp cho sự nghiệp giáo dục. Ở các vùng nông thôn miền Bắc Việt Nam, thiết chế họ hàng, cụ thể là dòng họ, có vai trò quan trọng trong việc hỗ trợ trẻ em học hành thông qua quỹ khuyến học. Từ góc nhìn vốn xã hội, chúng tôi chỉ ra rằng: vốn xã hội, được hiểu là lòng tin và quan hệ có đi có lại, là cơ sở để xây dựng quỹ khuyến học của dòng họ. Điểm đáng lưu ý là cả thành viên dòng họ lẫn những người họ hàng không phải là thành viên dòng họ đều đóng góp cho các quỹ này. Thêm nữa, học sinh nhận sự hỗ trợ tài chính từ quỹ khuyến học dòng họ bao gồm cả thành viên dòng họ và những người có quan hệ họ hàng mà không có tư cách thành viên dòng họ. Như vậy, hệ thống hỗ trợ việc học hành của trẻ em dựa trên quan hệ họ hàng vượt ra ngoài ranh giới dòng họ. Từ góc nhìn của người nhận hỗ trợ từ quỹ khuyến học dòng họ, vốn xã hội giúp mang lại lợi ích cho các học sinh này ở trong những mạng lưới họ hàng lấy cá nhân làm trung tâm mà các mạng lưới đó rộng hơn phạm vi dòng họ. Như vậy, trong thời kỳ *Đổi mới*, cư dân của làng đã vượt ra ngoài ranh giới dòng họ nhằm huy động vốn xã hội từ nhiều mạng lưới họ hàng lấy cá nhân làm trung tâm, bao gồm những người họ hàng bên trong và bên ngoài dòng họ, để khuyến khích việc học hành của trẻ em.

*Từ khóa:* Vốn xã hội; họ hàng; giáo dục.