

ANALYSING INCOME INEQUALITY IN VIETNAM THROUGH THE LENS OF MARXIST DISTRIBUTION THEORY

[ANÁLISE DA DESIGUALDADE DE RENDA NO VIETNÃ ATRAVÉS DA TEORIA DA
DISTRIBUIÇÃO MARXISTA]

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ABSTRACT: This study examines the application and challenges of Marxist distribution principles within Vietnam's socio-economic context, particularly in its transition toward a socialist-oriented market economy amidst growing income inequality. Despite significant economic growth and poverty reduction during the Doi Moi period, income disparities remain prevalent, influenced by regional, urban-rural, and sectoral differences. By analyzing statistical data and theoretical frameworks, this research explores how Marxist theories of labor-based distribution are applied and assesses their effectiveness in addressing modern economic disparities. The study also integrates Paulo Freire's educational theories to highlight the role of education in promoting social equity. The findings suggest that while Vietnam's economic policies reflect Marxist principles, significant challenges persist in achieving equitable wealth distribution. Key recommendations include enhancing educational quality, expanding job creation, improving rural living standards, and reforming the income distribution system. These insights offer valuable guidance for policymakers and contribute to the broader discourse on income inequality in transitional economies.

KEYWORDS: Income inequality; educational reform; Marxist distribution theory; Paulo Freire; Socialist-oriented market economy; Vietnam

RESUMO: Este artigo trata da aplicação e dos desafios da teoria da distribuição marxista no contexto socioeconômico vietnamita, sobretudo, em relação à economia de mercado de orientação socialista, com uma crescente desigualdade de renda. Apesar de avanços significativos e redução da pobreza no período Doi Moi, grandes disparidades persistem, influenciadas, entre outras coisas, pelas diferenças regionais, urbano-rural e setoriais. Através da análise de quadros estatísticos e teóricos, a pesquisa mostra em que medida as teorias marxistas da distribuição, baseadas no trabalho, são aplicadas e avaliam sua efetividade em relação a desafios modernos. A pesquisa também busca integrar a teoria da educação de Paulo Freire, a qual atribui um destaque ao papel da educação na promoção da igualdade social. As conclusões sugerem que, mesmo que as políticas vietnamitas reflitam princípios marxistas, desafios significativos permanecem em relação à distribuição dos bens. Como conclusão, as principais recomendações sugerem melhora na qualidade da educação, expansão da criação de empregos, melhoria nos padrões de vida rural, e reforma no sistema de distribuição de renda. Estes *insights* oferecem um guia valioso para governantes e contribuem para um discurso mais amplo sobre o crescimento da desigualdade na economia de transição.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Desigualdade de renda; reforma educacional; teoria da distribuição marxista; Paulo Freire; economia de mercado de orientação socialista; Vietnã

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INTRODUCTION

Income inequality remains a persistent and pressing issue in transitional economies like Vietnam, which is navigating a path toward a socialist-oriented market system. Marxist theory, particularly the concept of distributing resources based on labor, offers a comprehensive framework for analyzing and addressing these disparities. In Marxist thought, labor is not merely a means of individual survival but is fundamentally tied to the collective well-being of society. Karl Marx advocated for a system where goods and resources are allocated based on the amount of labor contributed, with compensation proportional to each individual's work effort. This approach directly challenges the capitalistic distribution mechanism, which often leads to the accumulation of wealth among a small elite, thereby exacerbating social inequalities.

In Marxist theory, labor is conceived as a social activity that is central to the production of goods and services. It involves not just physical or mental exertion but also the collective effort of workers who contribute to the common good. This collective dimension of labor reflects the spirit of solidarity and the communal sharing of resources, where the fruits of labor are distributed equitably among all members of society. Marx emphasized that true freedom and equality can only be achieved when the distribution of goods is directly linked to the labor performed, ensuring that each person receives a fair share based on their contribution to the collective effort¹.

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Vietnam presents a unique case study for the application of Marxist distribution principles due to its distinctive blend of socialism and market-driven policies. Despite achieving rapid economic growth and significant poverty reduction, the country continues to grapple with substantial income inequality. This juxtaposition provides a relevant scenario to explore how Marxist theories can be contextualized and implemented within a modern socialist-oriented market economy.

However, addressing income inequality in Vietnam requires more than just an economic analysis; it necessitates an understanding of the social and educational dimensions that underpin these disparities. Paulo Freire's educational theories², particularly his concept of critical pedagogy, offer a crucial perspective in this regard. Freire emphasized education as a means of empowerment and social transformation, which is particularly relevant in a context like Vietnam, where educational access and quality significantly impact socio-economic disparities (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2021). Freire's critique of traditional educational models, which often reinforce existing power structures, underscores the importance of fostering critical consciousness among marginalized populations to enable them to challenge and overcome their conditions of oppression.

In Vietnam, where educational disparities are closely tied to economic inequalities, integrating Freire's educational theories into the analysis provides a more holistic approach to understanding and addressing these issues. By bringing Freire into the discussion early in the analysis, this study highlights the need to consider educational reform as a fundamental component of socio-economic reform in Vietnam. Education, when aligned with the principles of critical pedagogy, can serve as a powerful tool to reduce inequality and promote equitable development, thereby

complementing the economic strategies derived from Marxist theory.

This research aims to examine the layers of income inequality in Vietnam through the combined theoretical lenses of Marxism and Freire's educational theories. It will assess the effectiveness and challenges of applying Marxist economic principles in today's context while exploring how Freire's ideas on education can be harnessed to empower marginalized groups and promote social equity. Additionally, the study proposes actionable solutions to mitigate income disparity, contributing to both academic discourse and practical policymaking. By combining theoretical insights with empirical data, this research offers a comprehensive analysis that can inform scholars and policymakers interested in the dynamics of income distribution and social equity in transitional economies.

Vietnam's socio-economic landscape has undergone significant transformations over the years, shaped by a complex mix of historical, political, and ideological factors. As the country addresses challenges such as income inequality and wealth redistribution, insights from both historical and contemporary thinkers provide a crucial foundation for these efforts. The evolution of Marxist theory and its application within Vietnam's socialist distribution frameworks offer a unique perspective on the nation's economic dynamics.

The philosophy of Ho Chi Minh, deeply rooted in Marxist-Leninist ideals, has profoundly shaped Vietnam's approaches to socio-economic development and wealth redistribution. Ho Chi Minh emphasized the importance of comprehensive education as a key element in the nation's progress. He advocated for the development of moral, intellectual, and physical capacities in the youth, believing that a well-rounded, educated, and ethically grounded workforce was essential for driving socio-economic progress and addressing income disparities (P. T. Nguyen & Q. T. Nguyen, 2024; Nguyen et al., 2023). His vision for education extended beyond mere knowledge acquisition; it was about nurturing a generation capable of contributing to the collective well-being and advancing social equity in Vietnam.

Ho Chi Minh's ideas on education and socio-economic development are not only reflective of his Marxist-Leninist beliefs but also deeply influenced by his experiences as a revolutionary and leader of a nation striving for independence and equality. His works, such as *The Prison Diary* and selected speeches and writings in *On Revolution*^{1x}, offer insights into his commitment to education as a tool for social transformation. These writings emphasize the role of education in the moral and intellectual development of the youth, serving as a foundation for building a strong and equitable society that aligns with Marxist-Leninist principles.*

Additionally, the influence of Confucian principles on Vietnamese governance and social ethics, as analyzed by Nguyen and Cao (2022), Nguyen (2022), and N. T. Nguyen and Q. T. Nguyen (2024), historically interweaves with Marxist ideals to shape policies to reduce socio-economic disparities. These principles emphasize virtuous governance and the moral education of political beings, essential for equitable wealth distribution and the reduction of income inequality.

In a global context, Pham et al. (2023) discuss the intercultural resonances between Western communitarianism and Eastern philosophies like Confucianism, underscoring the global relevance of Vietnam's ideological and practical approaches to socio-economic issues. The interplay between different cultural doctrines provides additional perspectives that enrich understanding socio-economic development and income redistribution.

In short, integrating Marxist theory, Confucian principles, and contemporary socio-economic analyses offers a comprehensive framework for addressing income

inequality and promoting wealth redistribution in Vietnam. These philosophical and practical approaches form the backbone of efforts to build a more equitable and prosperous society that can navigate the complexities of modernization and international integration.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: MARXIST VIEWS ON DISTRIBUTION

This section delves into the theoretical foundations underpinning the analysis of income inequality in Vietnam, emphasizing the integration of Marxist distribution theory and Paulo Freire's educational theories. Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive lens for understanding and addressing the socio-economic challenges faced by Vietnam as it transitions towards a socialist-oriented market economy.

Marxist Distribution Theory

Karl Marx's theory on the distribution of goods within a socialist framework is crucial for understanding the evolution of economic and social justice concepts. Initially outlined in his Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, Marx argued that the distribution of resources should be based on labor. In this framework, labor is not simply a means of survival but a fundamental principle for the equitable allocation of resources in society. Marx further developed these ideas in works such as *Capital* (Volume 1) and the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, where he proposed a model for distributing the total social product. This model emphasizes beginning with collective income, addressing communal functions like education, healthcare, and production needs before distributing resources to individuals. This approach ensures that distribution supports both individual well-being and societal progress (Adam, 2013; Dias Gadanha, 2021).

Marx's method involves systematically categorizing the social product into essential deductions before allocating the remaining resources to workers based on their labor contribution. This method is critical during the transitional phase of socialism, which Marx considered a necessary precursor to mature communism. During this phase, public ownership of the means of production facilitates a more equitable distribution of wealth based on labor, a principle that challenges the capitalistic accumulation of wealth by a small elite (Ho, 2000).

In the context of Vietnam, the study examines how these Marxist distribution principles are applied within the country's socio-economic policies. It highlights the challenges in addressing income inequality, especially in a rapidly developing economy with persistent regional and sectoral disparities.

Paulo Freire's Educational Theories

While Marxist theory provides a solid foundation for analyzing economic structures, addressing income inequality in Vietnam also requires a nuanced understanding of educational disparities. Paulo Freire's educational theories, particularly his concept of critical pedagogy, are essential in this regard. Freire, known for his work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), argued that education should serve as a tool for liberation, fostering critical consciousness among marginalized populations (Freire, 2005). This empowerment enables individuals to challenge and overcome the

socio-economic conditions that oppress them.

Freire's critique of the traditional "banking model" of education, where students are passive recipients of knowledge, is particularly relevant in Vietnam. The country's educational system, although improving in access and literacy, often struggles with quality and relevance, especially in rural and ethnic minority areas. Freire's emphasis on participatory learning aligns with Vietnam's need for educational reforms that empower students to actively engage with their socio-economic environment.

Synthesis of Marxist and Freirean Theories

By integrating Marxist distribution theory with Freire's educational theories, the study offers a comprehensive approach to analyzing and addressing income inequality in Vietnam. Marxist theory provides the economic basis for equitable resource distribution, while Freire's pedagogy emphasizes the role of education in achieving social justice. Together, these frameworks highlight the need for a dual approach to reform that addresses both the economic structures and educational systems perpetuating inequality.

This theoretical framework supports the study's analysis by offering a nuanced understanding of income inequality in Vietnam. It underscores the importance of combining economic and educational reforms to create a more equitable society, providing actionable insights for policymakers aiming to reduce inequality and promote social equity within Vietnam's evolving economic landscape.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-method approach to comprehensively analyze income inequality in Vietnam through the lens of Marxist distribution theory. The methodology integrates both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a robust analysis of the socio-economic landscape and income disparities within Vietnam.

For the quantitative analysis, data is collected from primary sources including the General Statistics Office of Vietnam, the Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey (VHLSS), and various national reports and databases. The time frame for data collection spans the past decade (2012-2022) to observe trends and changes in income distribution. Key variables include income levels, GINI coefficient, regional income disparities, urban-rural income differences, and sectoral income variations. Basic statistical tools are used to summarize and describe the data, including measures of central tendency (mean, median) and dispersion (standard deviation, variance). The GINI coefficient, a measure of income inequality, is calculated for different years and regions to assess the extent of income disparities. Multiple regression models are employed to identify the determinants of income inequality, focusing on factors such as education, employment, regional development, and government policies. Additionally, income distribution patterns are compared across different socio-economic groups, regions, and sectors to highlight disparities and identify trends.

The qualitative analysis begins with an extensive review of existing literature on Marxist distribution theory and its application in transitional economies, particularly Vietnam. This includes works by Karl Marx, as well as contemporary interpretations and critiques. Historical documents and policy papers are analyzed to understand the evolution of Vietnam's socio-economic policies and their alignment with Marxist

principles. Several case studies of regions with significant income disparities are conducted, including both urban and rural areas, to understand the local socio-economic conditions and the impact of national policies. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions with policymakers, economists, and local stakeholders are carried out to gain insights into the practical challenges and successes of implementing Marxist distribution principles in Vietnam. The study applies Marxist distribution theory to the Vietnamese context, analyzing how the principles of distribution according to labor are operationalized in practice. The interplay between Marxist theory and contemporary socio-economic policies in Vietnam is critically examined to identify gaps and propose actionable solutions for equitable wealth redistribution.

The findings from quantitative and qualitative analyses are integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of income inequality in Vietnam. This involves triangulating data from different sources and methods to validate findings and ensure robustness. Cross-referencing quantitative data with qualitative insights ensures consistency and accuracy, while qualitative findings are used to explain and contextualize the quantitative results, particularly in understanding the socio-economic dynamics and policy impacts. By combining statistical analysis with theoretical and empirical insights, the study develops a holistic view of income inequality in Vietnam. Policy recommendations are proposed based on the integrated analysis to address income disparities and promote equitable distribution of resources.

By employing this mixed-method approach, the study aims to provide a nuanced and thorough analysis of income inequality in Vietnam, grounded in both empirical data and theoretical perspectives. The methodology ensures a comprehensive examination of the complexities and multi-dimensional aspects of income distribution within the country's unique socio-economic context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. CURRENT TRENDS AND DATA ON INCOME INEQUALITY

Vietnam has witnessed significant economic growth over the past few decades, accompanied by substantial improvements in living standards. However, this economic advancement has not been evenly distributed, leading to widening income disparities that challenge the goals of a socialist-oriented market economy. According to the General Statistics Office of Vietnam, the country's GINI coefficient—a measure of income inequality—remains moderate at 0.375, but this figure masks regional and urban-rural disparities. Recent data highlights that income growth has been most substantial among the wealthiest segments of society, exacerbating the income gap. For instance, the income of the top 20% of households is significantly higher than that of the bottom 20%, with disparities particularly pronounced in urban areas compared to rural settings.

Several factors contribute to the persistent and growing income inequality in Vietnam. One of the most significant drivers is the urban-rural divide. Urban areas, especially major cities like Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, have higher wages, better infrastructure, and more access to services, which attract investments and skilled labor, further accelerating their growth. In contrast, rural areas, which are still heavily reliant on agriculture, suffer from lower income levels, less investment, and slower growth in infrastructure and services.

Economic activities in Vietnam are not evenly distributed geographically. The Southeast and Red River Delta, which include major urban centers, are much more economically developed than regions such as the Northwest and Central Highlands. This uneven development is reflected in the income levels and economic opportunities available to residents of these regions. Additionally, the transformation of Vietnam's labor market from agriculture to manufacturing and services has not been uniform across different sectors and regions. High-income sectors such as finance, real estate, and information technology are concentrated in urban areas and employ a smaller percentage of the population at significantly higher wages than traditional sectors like agriculture, which employs a large portion of the rural workforce.

Access to quality education is another critical determinant of economic opportunity. In Vietnam, there is a stark contrast in the quality and accessibility of educational resources between urban and rural areas and between different regions. This disparity translates into unequal access to high-paying jobs, which often require higher education and specific skills that are more readily available in urban educational institutions.

2. ANALYSIS OF INCOME DISPARITIES

Vietnam adopts the Marxist theory of distribution according to labor as its guiding framework. While the country has made significant strides in developing a socialist distribution regime tailored to its specific conditions, it grapples with widening income inequality amid robust economic growth. The income disparity is evident within various regions and across different socio-economic groups, particularly in rural areas. Despite improvements across all income groups, the disparity in the rate of these improvements highlights substantial gaps in average income per capita between urban and rural locales, across different regions, and among various occupations and social groups.

2.1. Analysis of Income Distribution Using the GINI Coefficient

The GINI coefficient is a global standard for assessing income distribution variances among individuals. A GINI coefficient below 0.4 indicates a lower degree of inequality, which is significant in evaluating economic fairness within a nation. The 2022 Statistical Yearbook from Vietnam's General Statistics Office reports a stable GINI coefficient of 0.375 for Vietnam, consistent with the figures from 2020 and 2021, suggesting moderate inequality levels. Notably, the Northern Midlands and Mountains and the Central Highlands regions display the highest GINI coefficients at 0.408 and 0.399, respectively, aligning with their higher poverty rates (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2022, p. 18).

Income inequality between socio-economic groups is reflected in the difference between the average income per capita of the 20% wealthiest households and the poorest 20% households. The 2022 statistical yearbook shows that the average monthly income per capita of 20% of households with the highest average income per capita reached 10.24 million VND, 7.6 times higher than the group of 20% of households with the highest per capita income. The lowest average income per capita (1.35 million VND) (Figure 1).

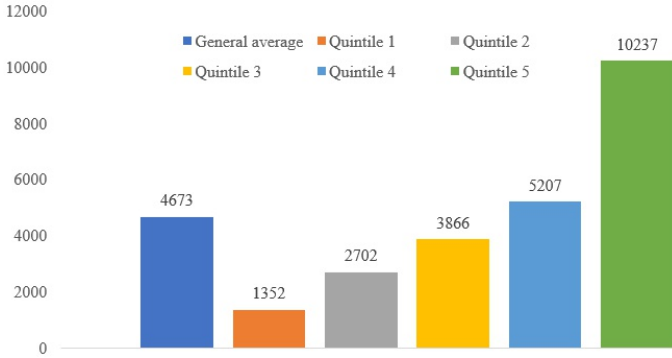


Figure 1: Monthly average income per capita in 2022 at current prices by income quintile (Unit: 1,000 VND)

In urban areas, the average income difference between these two groups of people is 6.1 times, while in rural areas, it is about 7.2 times (Figure 2).

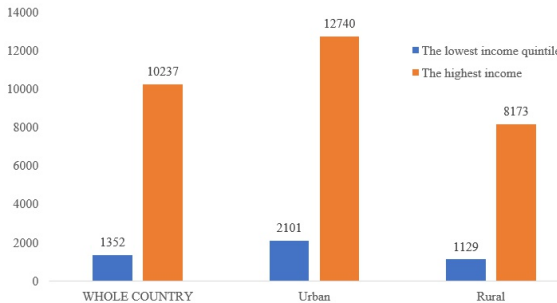


Figure 2: Monthly Average Income per Capita in 2022: Comparison between the Highest and Lowest Income Quintiles at Current Prices (Unit: 1,000 VND)

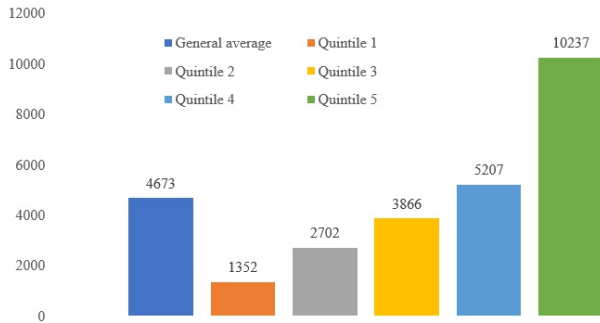
The observed inequality in monthly living expenses per capita between the wealthiest group (group 5) and the poorest group (group 1) is 3.2 times in 2022, with average living expenses per capita per person per month in households in group 5 being nearly 4.1 million VND compared to nearly 1.3 million VND/person/month in households in group 1. The difference between the richest and poorest groups in 2022 is highlighted. Part of the improvement compared to 2020 (the difference in 2020 is 5.7 times) is mainly due to a sharp decrease in living expenses of the wealthiest group (5.7 million in 2020, reduced to 4.1 million in 2022) (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2023).

2.2. Urban-Rural Income Disparity

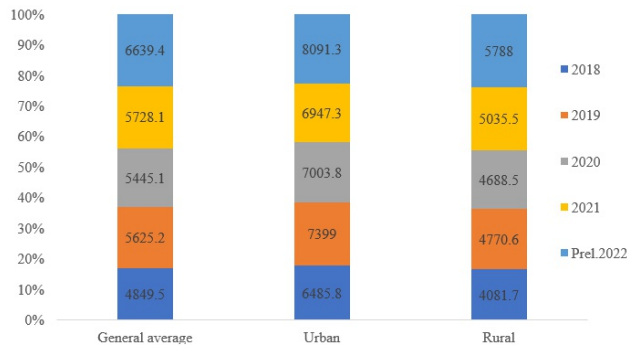
Income inequality among people between regions is relatively straightforward as the Southeast still has higher income growth than other regions. Income inequality between rural and urban areas is shown by the fact that the average income of urban residents is about twice as high as the income of rural residents, and the general spending level of urban residents is also higher, about twice the general spending level of rural areas.

The income gap index between urban and rural residents is the most intuitive index, reflecting the income gap between urban and rural residents. Among the six socio-economic regions, the Southeast has the highest average income per person per month in 2022 (6.33 million VND). The region with the lowest average income per person per month is the Northern Midlands and Mountains (3.17 million VND).

The average income per person per month in 2022 in urban areas will reach nearly 5.95 million VND (an increase of 10.4 percentage points compared to 2021), 1.54 times higher than the average income in rural areas. 3.86 million VND (an increase of 10.8 percentage points compared to 2021) (Figure 3).



In 2022, the average income of a worker working in urban areas was 8.09 million VND, while the income of a worker working in rural areas was 5.78 million VND (Figure 4).



2.3. Occupational Income Gaps

Since economic reforms, urban salaries have seen steady growth; however, the income disparity across different sectors is widening. High-income workers are predominantly found in sectors employing fewer individuals within the social labor structure, leading to significant income disparities. The top five earning sectors include extraterritorial organizations, information and communication, financial services, real estate, and professional services. In stark contrast, the lowest incomes are reported in agriculture, household activities, accommodation and food services, arts and entertainment, and other services. The income difference between the highest and lowest sectors widened slightly from 9.18 million VND in 2018 to 9.36 million VND in 2022 (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2021).

From 2018 to 2022, the top five industries in terms of the average income of urban residents in Vietnam are Activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies (13.24 million VND); information and communication (11.19 million VND); financial, banking and insurance activities (10.75 million VND); real estate activities (10.64 million VND); and professional, scientific and technical activities (10.35 million VND).

The five sectors with the lowest average income are Agriculture, forestry and fishing (38.78 million VND); household activities as employers; undifferentiated goods and services producing activities of households for own use (49.83 million VND); accommodation and food service activities (62.91 million VND); arts, entertainment, and recreation (63.35 million VND); and other service activities (67.67 million VND).

In 2018, the difference in average income between the highest income group and the lowest income group was 9.18 million VND, and the difference continues to widen to 9.36 million VND in 2022 (Figure 5).

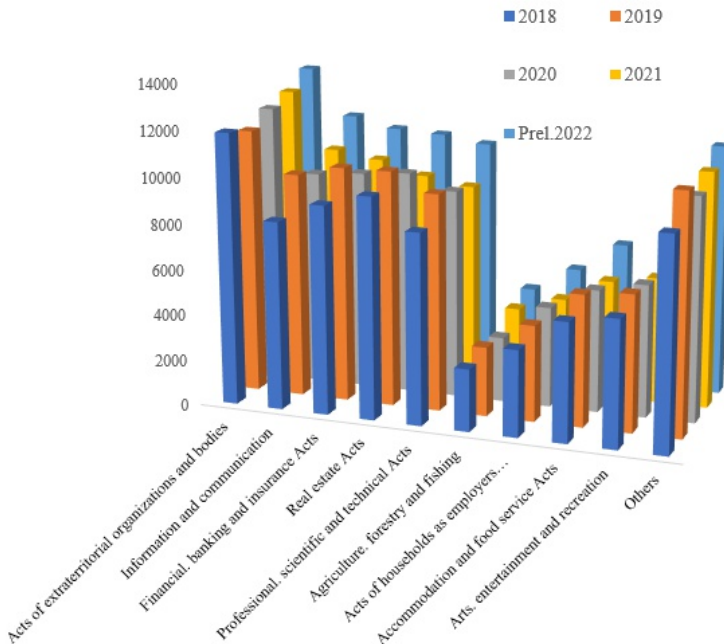


Figure 5: Monthly average income per employee by kind of economic activity (Unit: 1,000 VND)

Second, comparing the income growth rate by economic sector in Vietnam from 2018 to 2022, the growth rate in income in high-income sectors is generally higher than the growth rate in other sectors with low incomes.

2.4. Regional Income Discrepancies

Due to the influence of many factors, such as uneven regional economic development, in Vietnam, there is still a difference in people’s income between different regions; this is mainly shown in the following aspects:

First, there is a significant difference in people’s income among the six major economic regions. The main reason is that people’s per capita income and income growth rate in the South East region are significantly higher than in the Northern midlands and mountain areas and the Central highlands (Tung & Bentzen, 2022). Taking the income of residents in the six major economic regions of Vietnam from 2018 to 2022 as an example, the average income per capita of residents of the Red River Delta, Northern midlands and mountain areas, North Central and Central coastal areas, Central Highlands, South East, Mekong River Delta increased from 4,775 million VND, 2,542 million VND, 3,014 million VND, 2,895 million VND, 5,782 million VND, 3,585 million VND in 2018 to 5,586 million VND, 3,170 million VND, 3,967 million VND, 3,282 million VND, 6,334 million VND, 4,077 million VND in 2022 (Figure 6).

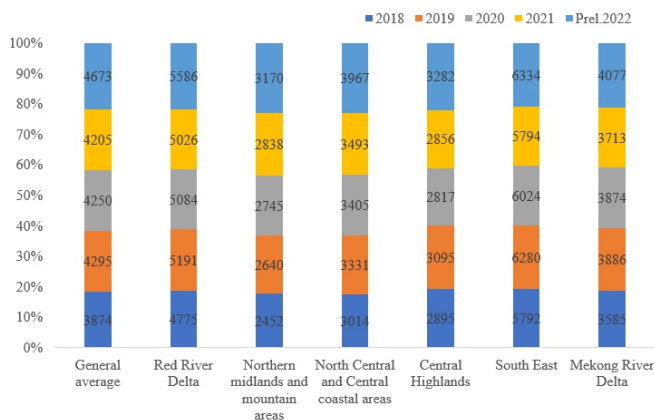


Figure 6: Monthly average income per capita at current prices by residence and by region (Unit: 1,000 VND)

Second, there are significant differences in people’s income levels in each economic region. Among the six economic regions of Vietnam in 2022, the gap in average income between the group with the highest income and the group with the lowest income in the Northern midlands and mountain areas is the largest, up to 8.84 times. The South East region is where the difference is smallest, 4.57 times (Figure 7).

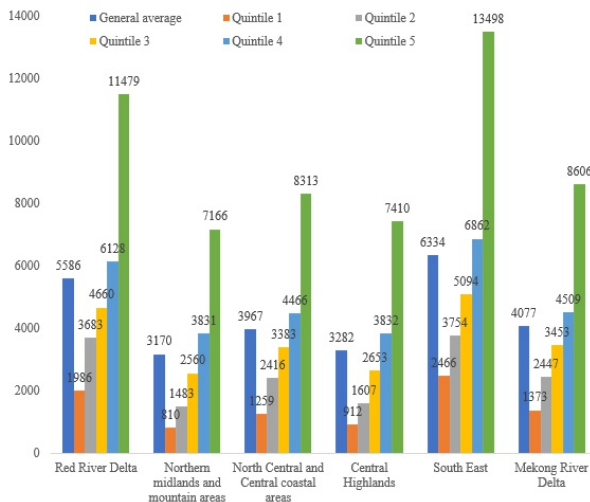


Figure 7: Monthly average income per capita in 2022 at current prices by income quintile, by residence of household head and by region (Unit: 1,000 VND)

3. STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING INCOME INEQUALITY IN VIETNAM

Vietnam’s economic growth during the Doi Moi period has significantly improved living standards, but the current policy framework does not sufficiently address persistent inequalities (Tuan, 2009). To effectively reduce income inequality, it is necessary to reform the distribution system, elevate income levels for low- and middle-income groups, and close the gap between the wealthiest and poorest populations. Achieving this requires coordinated efforts from the government, society, and businesses (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2021).

3.1. Enhancing Educational Quality

While economic advancements during the Doi Moi era reduced poverty, educational disparities remain a key factor in income inequality (Tuan, 2009). Enhancing educational quality and accessibility is crucial, with reforms needed to focus on practical skill development, aligning with socialist market economy principles, and promoting lifelong learning, especially in underfunded adult education (Phu Hop & Jun Wu, 2013). Integrating Paulo Freire’s concept of critical pedagogy into these reforms can empower marginalized groups, fostering critical consciousness and enabling them to challenge the structures that perpetuate inequality.

3.2. Job Creation Initiatives

Despite the creation of millions of jobs, Vietnam’s workforce still faces insufficient employment opportunities, particularly in rural areas (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2024). Expanding job creation and entrepreneurship, particularly for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), is essential. Vocational training programs should

also focus on young ethnic minorities to better integrate them into the economy and reduce poverty. Freire's emphasis on participatory learning can ensure these programs not only teach skills but also empower individuals to take control of their economic futures.

3.3. Improving Rural Living Standards

Addressing the urban-rural divide requires enhancing rural infrastructure, public services, and agricultural productivity. This approach should aim to create equitable living conditions and enable rural residents to contribute effectively to the national economy. Freire's principles of community participation and empowerment are vital here, ensuring that development initiatives are responsive to local needs and foster sustainable growth.

3.4. Reforming the Income Distribution System

Reforming the income distribution system is essential to ensure fair income opportunities. Policies should focus on aligning earnings with contributions, adjusting tax regulations, and promoting equitable wealth distribution. Additionally, educating the public on economic justice, in line with Freire's philosophy, can empower citizens to advocate for fairer policies and participate in discussions on social equity.

By implementing these strategies, Vietnam can reduce income inequality, enhance economic stability, and improve the quality of life for all its citizens. These recommendations, grounded in Marxist economic principles and Freirean educational theories, offer a comprehensive approach to building a more equitable society.

4. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND SOLUTIONS

Improving Quality of Education. To reduce income inequality and promote social equity, it is essential to reform Vietnam's educational system. This includes increasing funding, improving educational quality, and aligning programs with labor market needs. Inspired by Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, these reforms should also foster critical thinking and empower marginalized students. By combining practical skills with critical awareness, education can better equip individuals to navigate and challenge socio-economic inequalities.

Creating Employment Opportunities. A comprehensive job creation strategy is crucial for reducing unemployment and enhancing economic stability. This involves supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and expanding vocational training aligned with Freirean principles of participatory learning. By empowering workers and fostering entrepreneurship, these efforts can reduce income disparities and promote inclusive economic growth.

Enhancing Rural Living Conditions. Addressing urban-rural income disparities requires integrating rural areas more closely with urban development. This can be achieved by improving infrastructure, public services, and agricultural productivity. Policies should also emphasize community participation, as advocated by Freire, ensuring that development reflects the needs and voices of rural populations, thereby fostering sustainable growth and reducing income gaps.

Reforming the Distribution System. To ensure fairer income distribution,

Vietnam must overhaul its income distribution framework. This includes aligning earnings with contributions, implementing tax reforms, and promoting equitable wealth distribution. Informed by Freirean principles, these changes should also focus on fostering a broader understanding of economic justice, leading to more equitable policymaking.

By adopting these strategies, Vietnam can make meaningful progress in reducing income inequality, enhancing economic stability, and improving quality of life. These recommendations, integrating Marxist economic principles and Freirean educational theories, provide a concise roadmap for achieving a more equitable and prosperous society.

CONCLUSION

This study has critically analyzed the relevance and challenges of implementing Marxist distribution principles within Vietnam's unique socio-economic framework, focusing on the country's efforts to transition toward a socialist-oriented market economy. While Vietnam has made substantial progress in economic growth and poverty reduction, the persistence of income inequality, driven by regional, urban-rural, and sectoral disparities, underscores the limitations of current policies.

The integration of Marxist distribution theory with Freire's educational principles reveals that addressing income inequality in Vietnam requires a multifaceted approach that goes beyond economic reforms. Enhancing educational quality and accessibility, especially through critical pedagogy, is essential for empowering marginalized groups and fostering social equity. Moreover, job creation initiatives and improvements in rural living standards are vital to bridging the income gap and ensuring inclusive economic growth.

The study's findings emphasize the need for a comprehensive overhaul of Vietnam's income distribution system, aligning it more closely with the contributions of labor while promoting broader economic justice. Although Vietnam's policies have made strides toward integrating Marxist principles, the ongoing income disparities highlight the need for more nuanced and adaptive strategies.

In conclusion, while challenges remain, there is significant potential for Vietnam to refine its policies to reduce income inequality and foster a more inclusive economy. By continuing to adapt Marxist principles to contemporary socio-economic realities and integrating educational reforms that promote critical consciousness, Vietnam can move closer to achieving equitable wealth distribution. This study contributes to both the theoretical discourse and practical policy-making efforts aimed at addressing income inequality in transitional economies.

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NOTES

- 1 Ho Chi Minh's key works, including *The Prison Diary* and *On Revolution*, provide a deeper understanding of his philosophy on education and socio-economic development, emphasizing the importance of nurturing a morally and intellectually capable workforce for the advancement of social equity in Vietnam.
- 2 Paulo Freire (1921–1997) was a Brazilian educator and philosopher who is best known for his influential work in the field of critical pedagogy. His most renowned book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), introduced key concepts such as critical consciousness (*conscientização*), which emphasizes the role of education in empowering the oppressed to recognize and challenge social injustices. Freire's theories advocate for a participatory, dialogical approach to education, where learners actively engage in the process of knowledge creation rather than being passive recipients. His ideas have significantly influenced educational practices around the world, particularly in the context of social justice and empowerment.