Vietnam and the Problem of Embeddedness

Contributions to the Political Economy of Learning

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Key Questions

- How?
  - How is Vietnam's education system performing?

- Why?
  - Features of Vietnam, education system, accountability relations

- So what?
  - What can Vietnam, world gain from systems approach?

Multiple Countervailing Accountabilities

- High levels of sustained political commitment
  - Robust public spending, redistribution across provinces, consistent attention

- Promotion of professionalism within bureaucracy and schools
  - Perpetual political processes around the CPV

- High levels of societal involvement in education
  - Societal investment, societal engagement

How?

Vietnam's performance around learning

- Impressive gains suggestive of possibilities
    - Enrollments, achievement*, assessments of learning

- High performing, but room for improvement, often brutal
    - Perncious inequalities, inequities around access, quality
    - Weaknesses in upper-secondary, post-secondary ed.

- Vietnam does well, can do better still
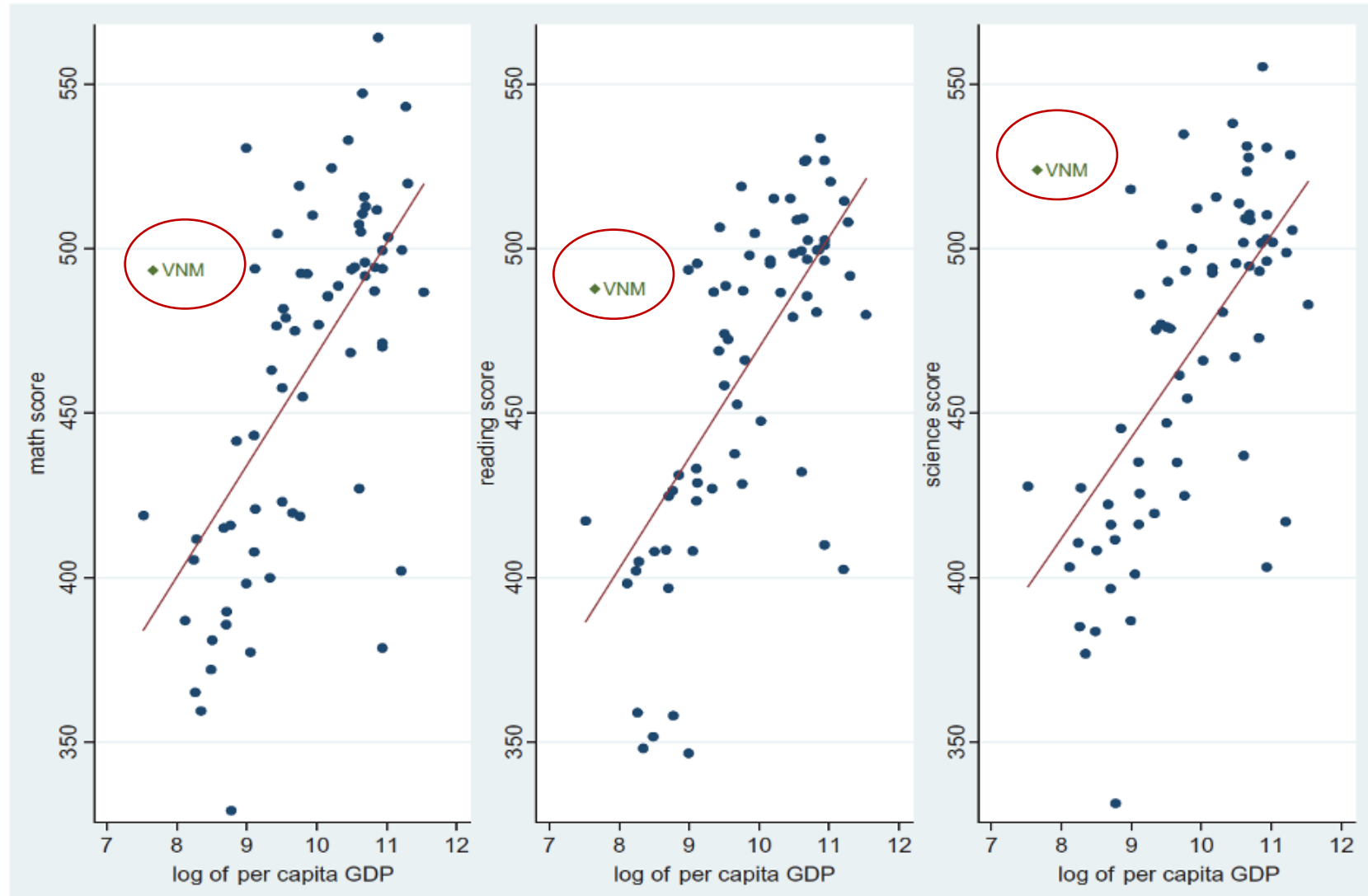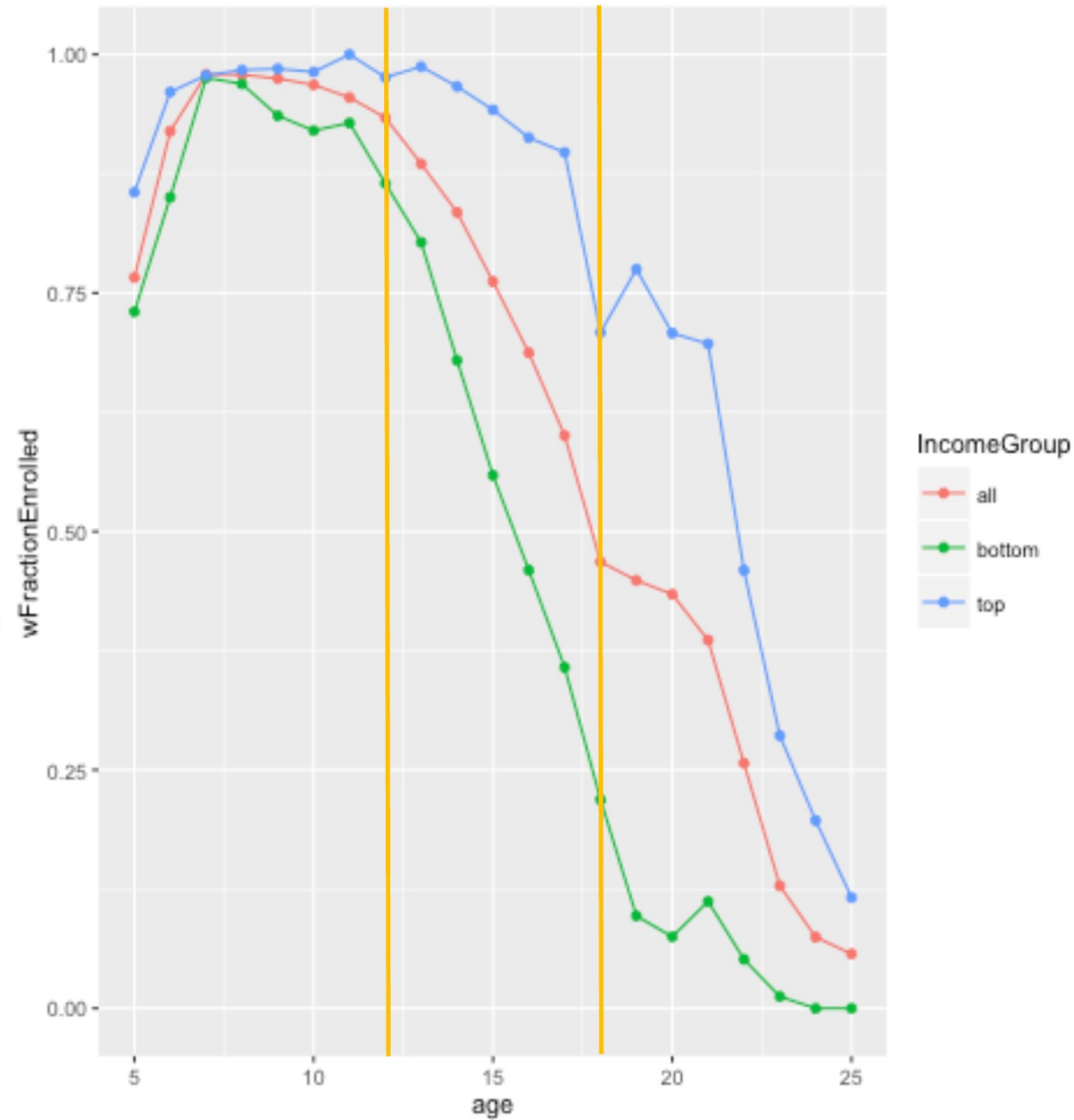   - Systems diagnostic of education system as socially embedded

Figure 1. PISA test scores vs. country income level, 2015.
Source: PISA database and World Bank's WDI database.

Vietnam:
net enrolment rate
from age 5 - 25
2012

92% of 12-year olds
are in school

Only 46% of 18-year olds
are still there

Why?

Hanoi, 1990

Hanoi, 2020

Systems thinking

By examining an education system as a whole, we can see how its components are not working together to produce learning.

The systems approach

Just as we can describe the economy as interactions between producers and consumers, we can describe an education system as a series of interactions between different actors. Education systems are made up of the complex interactions among people (teachers, students, parents and administrators) and things (curricula, books, schools).

This is why 'common sense' solutions may not always work: the same intervention may have very different effects in different systems.

Two crucial questions

A systems perspective on education first asks: why are learning outcomes poor in this school, district, or country? Once that question gets answered, a systems thinker asks: why do those conditions which we have identified as causing low learning exist?

Once we understand why our education system isn't producing learning, then we can work to realign the relationships in our system to be **coherent for learning**, meaning that every component works together as a whole with the goal of improving learning.
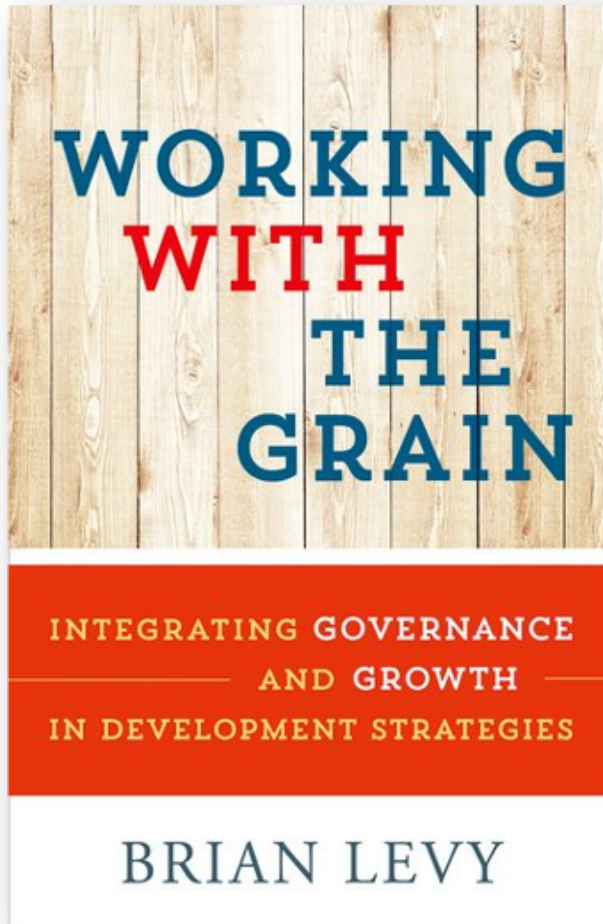
For more, see our list of RISE research on systems thinking.

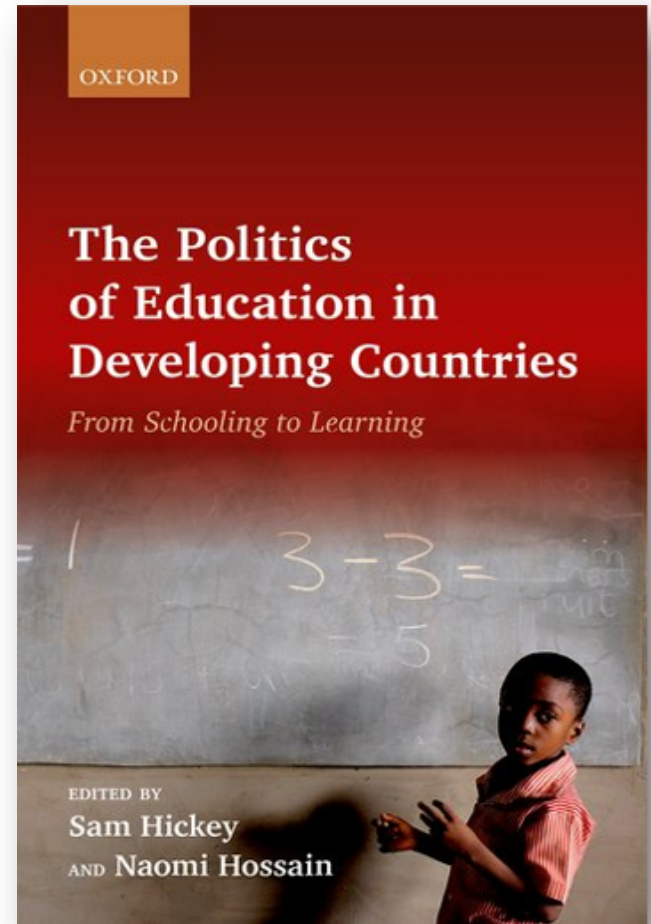# Research on Improving Systems of Education

- Features of countries' education system

- Features of politics, political commitments, public governance

- Features of accountability relations

Coherence for learning

Research on the Political Economy of Education and Learning

Africa Studies
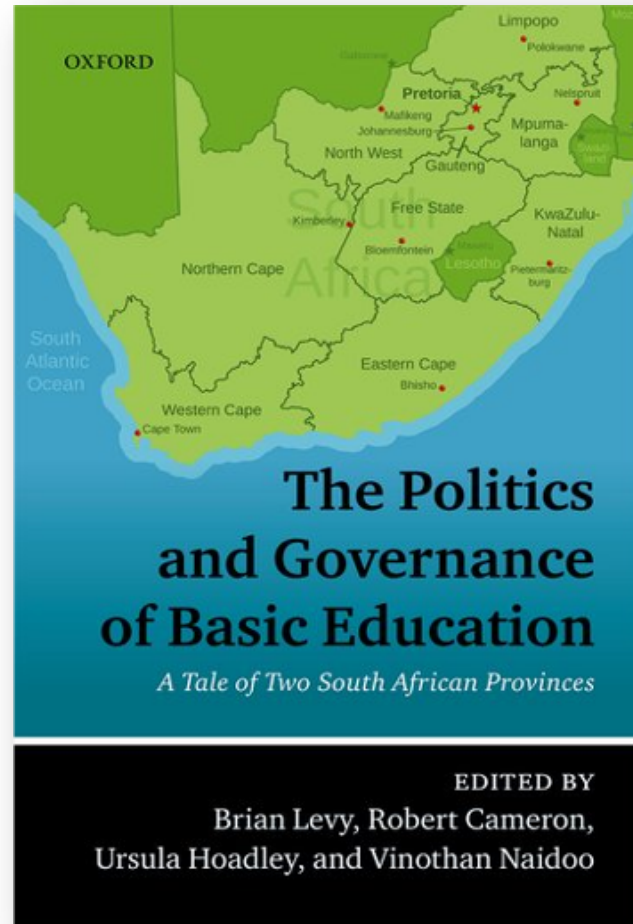
Global Case Studies

Sóc Trăng, 2008

The Grand Question

Which features of politics, accountability relations, institutions…

have shaped goals, evolution, and performance….

of VN's education system (1985-2020)

Particularly with respect to learning

Research Methods

- Historical sociological, extended case approach * PET-A framework
  - Deep explorations of embeddedness of education systems, learning

- Process tracing evolution of VN's education system
  - Extensive documents and policy review spanning four decades and beyond

- Data collection, analysis ← RISE, SABER, Levy, Hickey, Hossain etc.
  - 76 in-depth interviews at central and local levels,
  - National level + three Vietnam provinces, districts, communes, and schools
  - System coherence/incoherence for learning

Social embeddedness of Education system

1. Political commitments of CPV re education, learning

2. Features of accountability relations

3. Societal participation in the education system
   - Societal investment, societal engagement

Conjecture 1
Party politics

KẾT QUẢ LẤY PHIẾU TÍN NHIỆM LÃNH ĐẠO CAO CẤP 2018

VietNam FINANCE

Tín nhiệm cao: **140**
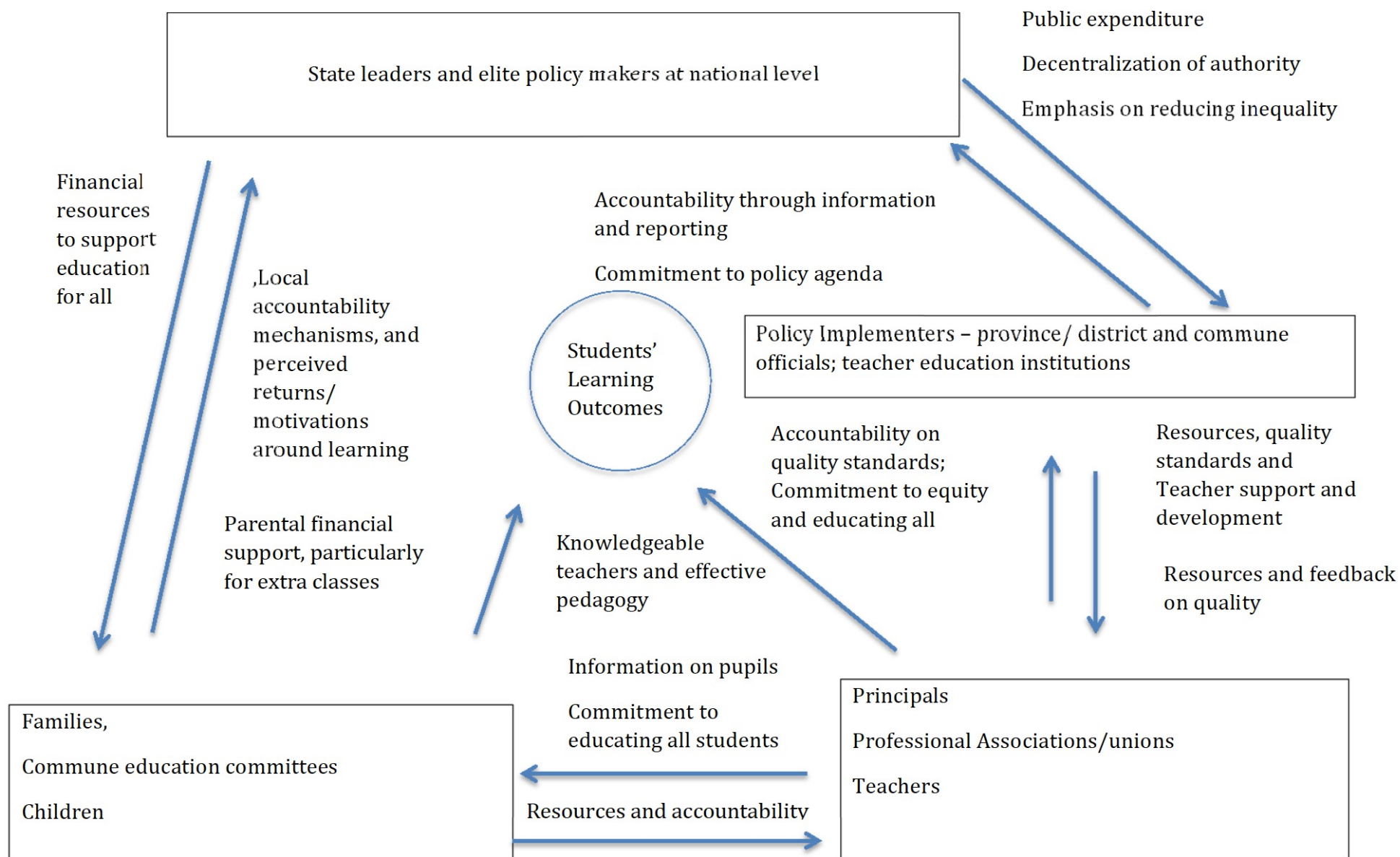Tín nhiệm: **194**
Tín nhiệm thấp: **137**

Bộ trưởng Bộ GD&ĐT
Phùng Xuân Nhạ

Ông Phùng Xuân Nhạ (sinh năm 1963, quê Hưng Yên, giáo sư, tiến sĩ kinh tế) là Ủy viên Trung ương Đảng, Bộ trưởng Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo.

BAN TUYÊN GIÁO TRUNG ƯƠNG
HỘI NGHỊ
TRIỂN KHAI QUYẾT ĐỊNH CỦA BỘ CHÍNH TRỊ
... TÁC CÁN BỘ
... tháng 4 năm 2021

vietnamnet
vietnamnet.vn

Conjecture 1: Party Politics

- Presence of CPV means perpetual political process within system
  - Runs parallel with policy implementation, service delivery

- Affecting all relations within education system
  - Lends force to accountability within and across organizations

- Political priorities within education system addressed regularly
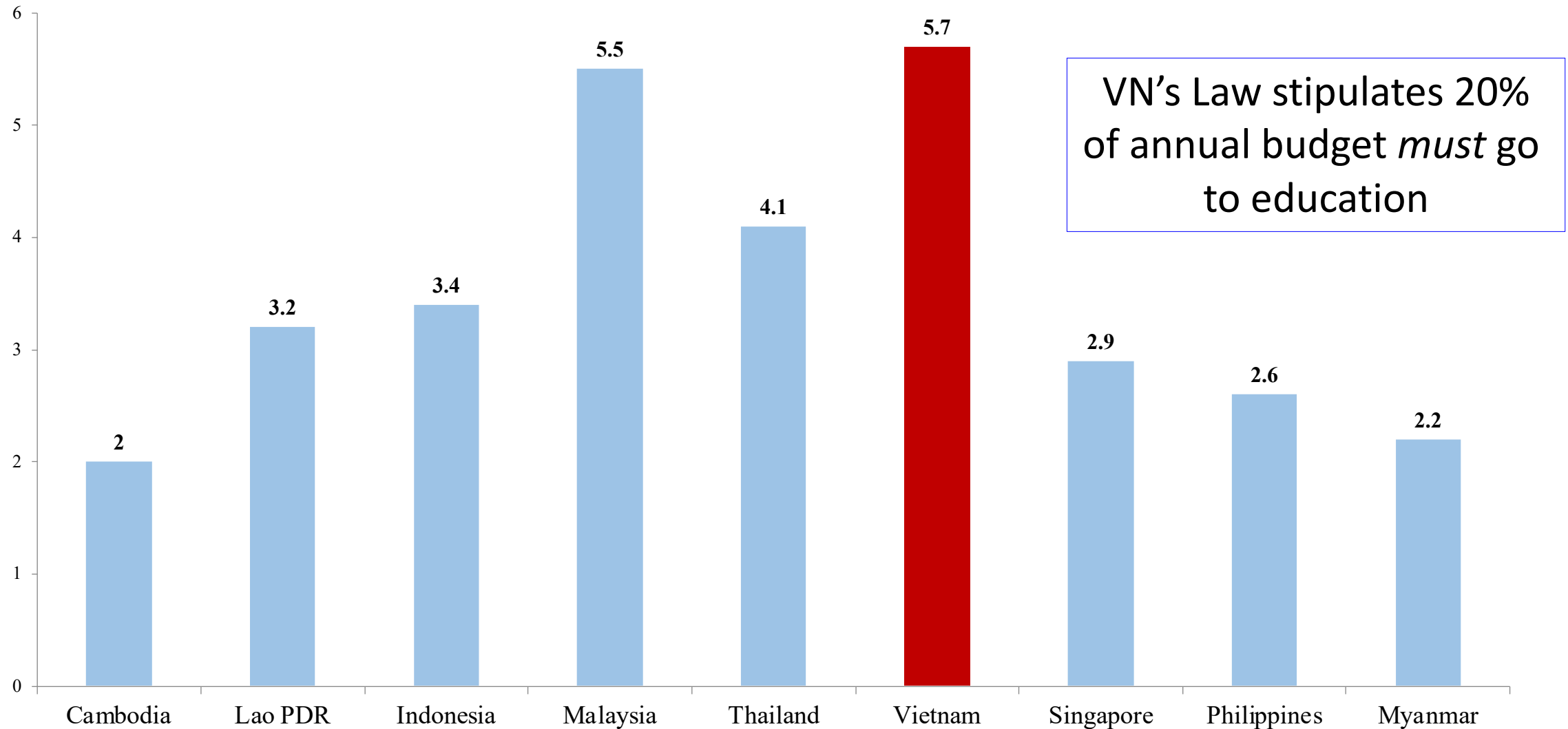 - Political, career incentives for principals, teachers

State leaders and elite policy makers at national level

Public expenditure

Decentralization of authority

Emphasis on reducing inequality

Financial resources to support education for all

Accountability through information and reporting

Commitment to policy agenda

,Local accountability mechanisms, and perceived returns/ motivations around learning

Students' Learning Outcomes

Policy Implementers – province/ district and commune officials; teacher education institutions

Accountability on quality standards; Commitment to equity and educating all

Resources, quality standards and Teacher support and development

Parental financial support, particularly for extra classes

Knowledgeable teachers and effective pedagogy

Resources and feedback on quality

Information on pupils

Commitment to educating all students

Families,

Commune education committees

Children

Principals

Professional Associations/unions

Teachers

Resources and accountability

Public expenditure on education, Southeast Asia

VN's Law stipulates 20% of annual budget *must* go to education

2	3.2	3.4	5.5	4.1	5.7	2.9	2.6	2.2
Cambodia	Lao PDR	Indonesia	Malaysia	Thailand	Vietnam	Singapore	Philippines	Myanmar

CÁC KHOẢN THU CHÍNH HỌC SINH
NĂM HỌC 2017 – 2018

Stt	Khoản thu	Số tiền
1	Vở viết	110 000
2	Vở bài tập Sách thực hành	350 000
3	Đồng phục	750 000
4	Bảo hiểm y tế	491 000
5	Bảo hiểm toàn diện	120 000
6	Hoạt động hè	50 000
7	Sửa chữa trong nhà trường	300 000
8	Liên lạc điện tử	120 000
9	Học phí	540 000
10	Học thêm	3 072 000
11	Quỹ bảo đội	100 000
12	Quỹ đồng hành cùng bạn đến trường	45 000
13	Quỹ hội – Khuyến học	300 000
14	Đề, giấy kiểm tra	120 000
15	Lao công, bảo vệ	100 000
16	Nước uống	100 000
17	Gửi xe	120 000
18	Kỹ năng sống	300 000
19	Học thêm nhóm	1 600 000
20	Quỹ lớp	500 000
	Tổng	9 188000

* Đề nghị phụ huynh thu xếp nộp cho giáo viên chủ nhiệm trong tháng 9 để thanh toán với nhà trường để không bị ảnh hưởng đến thi đua của lớp

Conjecture 2: Societal Investments

- Circumstances in late 1980s, early 1990s → co-payments
  - "Societalization" → three-decades' effort at resource mobilization
  - Investments in education by households in a literal sense

→ At best: "You get what you pay for"   → At worst: Costly, unfair

→ Irony: Weakness/limit of system at times lever of accountability

* Not to be romanticized, also a lever of inequality

Societal engagement

Lò Văn Huynh
(nguyên Trưởng phòng Khảo thí và Quản lý chất lượng giáo dục)

■ ■

21 năm tù

Nguyễn Thị Hồng Nga
(nguyên chuyên viên Phòng Khảo thí và Quản lý chất lượng giáo dục)

■ ■

19 năm **6** tháng tù

Cầm Thị Bun Sọn
(nguyên Phó Trưởng phòng Chính trị tư tưởng, Sở GD&ĐT tỉnh Sơn La)

■ ■

10 năm tù

Trần Xuân Yến
(nguyên PGĐ Sở GD&ĐT tỉnh Sơn La)

■

9 năm tù

50 triệu đồng

Đặng Hữu Thủy
(nguyên Phó Hiệu trưởng Trường THPT Tô Hiệu)

■

8 năm tù

20 triệu đồng

Nguyễn Thanh Nhàn
(nguyên Phó Trưởng phòng Khảo thí và Quản lý chất lượng giáo dục)

■

2 năm **6** tháng tù

Đỗ Khắc Hưng
(nguyên cán bộ Phòng An ninh chính trị nội bộ, CA tỉnh Sơn La)

■

3 năm tù treo

Đinh Hải Sơn
(nguyên cán bộ Phòng An ninh chính trị nội bộ, CA tỉnh Sơn La)

■

2 năm tù treo

Conjecture 3: Societal Engagement

*Broad civic engagement brings an additional element of accountability*

- Vibrant education "public sphere"

- State media plays a clear role, from the central to local levels

- New Media: education sector scandals as staple of "Vietnam political diet"

- Public calls for transparency bring pressure to bear

Teachers: Caught in the Middle

- Highly respected in principle, and key target of reforms

- Meager salararies → extra teaching → diminished status

- Pressures from all corners: parents, (at times corrupt) authorities

- Evaluated, overloaded w/teaching, admin, political work

Mulitple Countervailing Accountabilities

- Conjecture 1, regarding political commitments of CPV

  - Political leadership, countervailing political force

- Conjecture 2, regarding "societalization"

  - Contributions from society sometimes enhances accountability

- Conjecture 3 – Societal engagement

  - Civic engagement encourage a culture of accountability
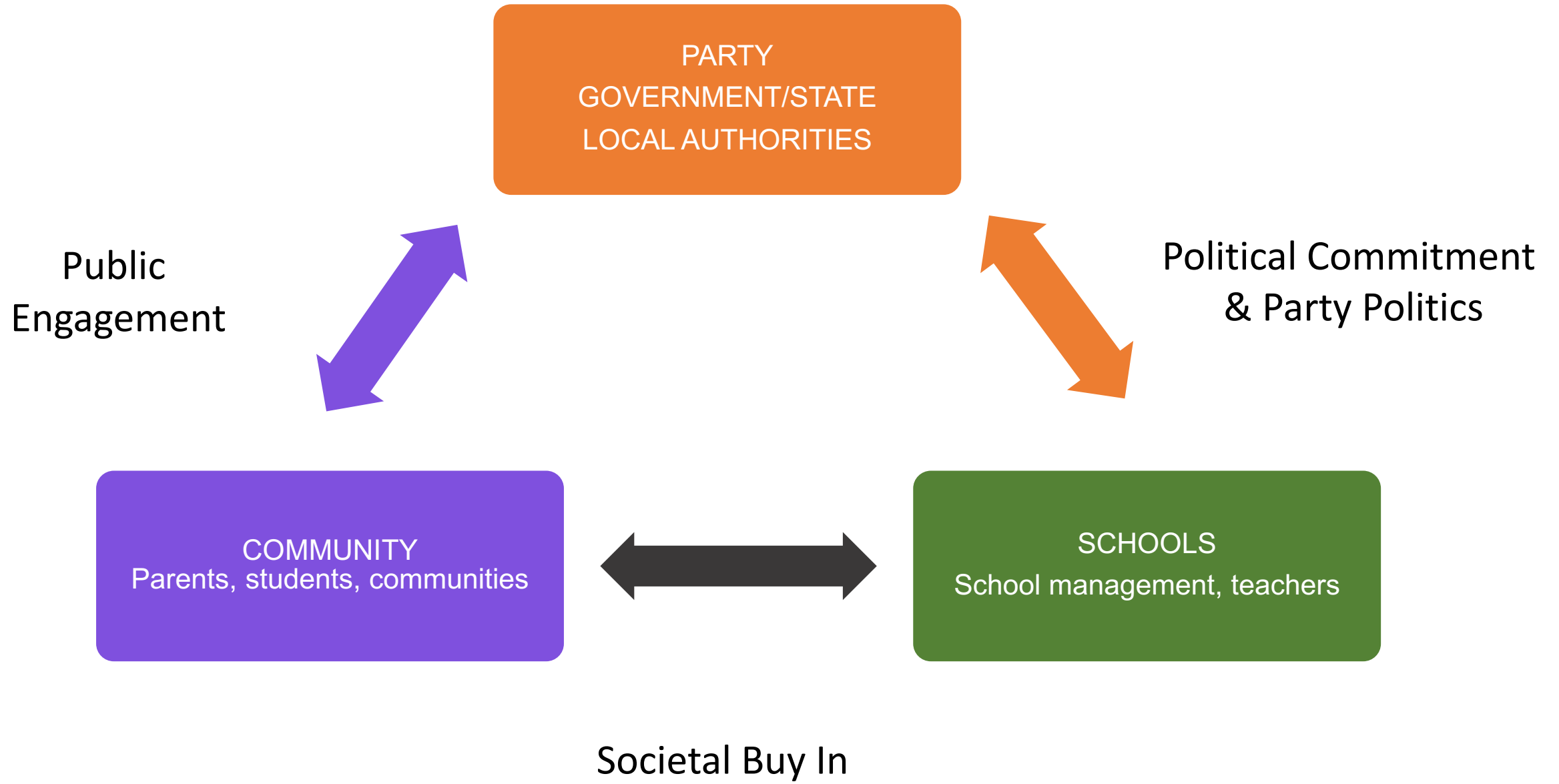
So What ?

Significance

- Account for sources, limits of VN's performance on learning

- Prospective contributions to enhancing policy effectiveness
  - Subnational diversity in policies/practices, e.g. finance, EMIS

- Contribute to research on political economy of education

Systems Thinking Subnationally

• Why are learning outcomes strong, weak?

• Why do conditions accounting for performance exist?

• What explains system coherence/incoherence for learning?

• Features of accountability (esp political aspect) in provinces

Exploring Subnational Diversity in Politics

- Political priorities across, within provinces
  - Alignment with national policy goals

- Finance, school support
  - Features of education finance within system, budgets,

- Education management and information systems (EMIS)
  - Use of information systems across, within provinces

Hải Phòng   Nghê An   Kiêng Giang

Exploring Subnational Diversity

- Comprehensive, well elaborated policies
  - But large gaps with 'conditions on ground'

- Political commitment, ritual and real
  - Finance, equity but also inequities, e.g. opportunities

- Fragmented, decentralized, varied system
  - Unwieldy distribution of responsibilities

Multiple Countervailing Accountabilities

- Modes of education system politics

  - What sorts/aspects of political processes can promote coherence?

- Modes of societal investment

  - Under what conditions public, private buy-in beget accountability

- Modes of societal engagement

  - When/how does civic engagement encourage accountability

An Approch for an Embedded Analysis

- Distilling key insights from RISE research internationally

- Extending accountabilities research to new contexts

- Leveraging deep understandings of specific contexts

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