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SOCIAL CLASSIFICATION IN SOME DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND THE PRACTICE IN VIETNAM WITH THE RECOMMENDATIONS¹

CLASSIFICAÇÃO SOCIAL EM ALGUNS PAÍSES EM DESENVOLVIMENTO E A PRÁTICA NO VIETNAME COM AS RECOMENDAÇÕES

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ABSTRACT

Inequalities are a reality in both developed and developing countries. Inequality in society can be detected through economic and social dynamics. There has been concern about the poor getting poorer and the richer accumulating more wealth to themselves; thus, the gap between the two continues to widen. Inequalities can be defined by income and an individual's living standards and wealth distribution, healthcare conditions, home surroundings, people's purchasing power, and political impact. Vietnam, for instance, is experiencing a high prevalence of social inequality (Un.org, 2021). This inequality can be attributed to the high unemployment rate, variation in taxation rates, and unfavorable income distribution, which gives an added advantage to the wealthy while disadvantaging the poor. Therefore, this article will discuss the concept of economic inequality in the world, the causes of economic inequality, how the two economists Thomas and Amartya explain the concept of inequity, and finally, give recommendations on how businesses can help solve the problem of social and economic inequity.

Keywords: Social classification; Equality; Vietnam social classification; Inequality in Vietnam; Economic inclusion; Social management.

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RESUMO

As desigualdades são uma realidade tanto nos países desenvolvidos quanto nos países em desenvolvimento. Desigualdades na sociedade podem ser detectadas através de dinâmicas econômicas e sociais. Tem havido a preocupação de que os pobres fiquem mais pobres e os mais ricos acumulem mais riqueza para si mesmos; assim, o fosso entre os dois continua a aumentar. Desigualdades podem ser definidas pela renda e pelo padrão de vida e distribuição de riqueza de um indivíduo, condições de saúde, ambiente familiar, poder de compra das pessoas e impacto político. O Vietnã, por exemplo, está experimentando uma alta prevalência de desigualdade social (Un.org, 2021). Esta desigualdade pode ser atribuída à alta taxa de desemprego, variação nas taxas de tributação e distribuição desfavorável da renda, o que dá uma vantagem adicional aos ricos, ao mesmo tempo em que coloca em desvantagem os pobres. Portanto, este artigo discutirá o conceito de desigualdade econômica no mundo, as causas da desigualdade econômica, como os dois economistas Thomas e Amartya explicam o conceito de iniquidade e, finalmente, dará recomendações sobre como as empresas podem ajudar a resolver o problema da iniquidade social e econômica.

Palavras-chave: Classificação social; Igualdade; Classificação social do Vietnã; Desigualdade no Vietnã; Inclusão econômica; Gestão social.

Introdução

On comparing the income inequalities of countries, the disparity is still enormous. The GDP of European countries is approximately eleven times higher than that of sub-Saharan African countries (Un.org, 2021). On the other hand, North American countries' GDP is sixteen times higher than that of sub-Saharan Africa. "As the developing countries continue developing faster than the already developed nations, the absolute gap, the mean per capita incomes rose from about twenty-seven thousand dollars to about forty-two thousand and eight hundred dollars" (Un.org, 2021).

The disparity the income distribution in the developed nations and the middle-income group has been continually growing in the past three years. Estimated using the Gini coefficient, from 1990-2016, this inequality increased in forty-nine nations and decreased in fifty-eight of them (Ravallion, 2021).

Literature Review

SOCIAL INEQUALITY

In 2014, following the 2008 Washington DC financial disaster and the ensuing consequences, Thomas Piketty wrote the book 'Capital in the Twenty-First Century' (Boston Review, 2021). The book presents a mathematical formula that shows that economic inequality will always be evident in economic systems controlled by capitalists. Inequality occurs when the stock of wealth growth rate is faster computed to economic development. This means that the income of individuals who depend on capital investment continues to get higher than those who rely on labor to acquire salary. ($r > g$) (Boston Review, 2021).

Later, Thomas wrote a book called "The agenda for economics and inequality" explaining his opinions about the surge of economic inequality after 1980 (Boushey et al., 2019). In this book, Thomas termed economic inequality as an ordinary vigor that tends to operate naturally instead of what we think or what we suppose. Piketty insists that "there are no dynamics, for instance, market rivalry,

wage rates, money, and liabilities” (Boston Review, 2021). Economics develops naturally and cannot be explained by these dynamics. Piketty claims that economic inequality is an illicit ad. Therefore, it can only be justified using ideologies. Historical and political ideologies better explain how inequality occurs, according to Piketty. Revolution in the two ideologies could solve the problem of economic inequality.

SEN, AMARTYA ON SOCIAL INEQUALITY

In "Inequality Reexamined" Amartya (1992) evaluates the various perceptions surrounding the idea of inequality. Amartya claims that inequality is the primary idea explaining all the current social theories (Panandiker, 2017). Amartya argued that the poor in countries with social inequalities do not have a major influence on the policies affecting society. However, low-income individuals residing in developing nations can be involved in policymaking. Moreover, low-income earners residing in developed countries, for instance, Britain, are rarely involved in policymaking because it is difficult for them to attend such meetings because of the requirements (Panandiker, 2017). According to Panandiker, (2017) argued that freedom is defined by the human rights that make one eligible to do certain things and the person's capability to practice freedom. Therefore, other factors, for instance, physical disability, may explain the economic inequality in society and not just the size of someone's income.

UNEMPLOYMENT

March 2020 was the onset of the current economic decline, marking the end of rapid economic expansion in various countries globally. Consequently, this was followed by a great recession, a downturn believed to be worse than the Great Depression experienced in America in 1929 (Anderson et al., 2020). As a result, the unemployment rate skyrocketed in March 2020, surpassing the peak seasons that had previously been experienced in many countries. Further, a high unemployment rate was recorded. A tremendous job loss (over 110.4 million jobs) was witnessed globally between March 2020 and May 2020 (Anderson et al., 2020).

Generally, many people left the job market at the start of March, and by June 2020, the participation rate in the labor force had reduced to 59.8% (Anderson et al., 2020). Noticeably, while some people left the labor force voluntarily due to the fear of contracting COVID-19, others left due to the closure of businesses. For instance, workers in the tourism, hotel, and hospitality sectors were fired. This was because these sectors were shut down for they were deemed 'high-risk sectors' regarding exposure and transmission of COVID-19. Thus, ideally, unemployment across countries mainly resulted from the implementation of measures that limited physical contact among the people.

Also, unemployment resulted from a decline in local and international trade. The COVID-19 pandemic forced countries to limit trade activities both locally and internationally. Therefore, there was no exportation or importation of goods and services. In addition, low production in industries within various countries led to a rise in unemployment. As a result, the increased unemployment rate has led to low economic growth, low Gross Domestic Product, and reduced per capita income.

INFLATION

The outbreak of COVID-19 changed the spending and consumption patterns of people as many consumers started avoiding restaurants, movie theaters, and bars (Anderson et al., 2020). Such consumer behavior greatly affected the inflation rate of many countries. Basically, less spending meant a decrease in the inflation rate. Also, decreased demand for goods and services by consumers reduced the inflation rate.

COVID-19 changed monetary policies where the implementation of higher interest rates was executed, which caused a decrease in inflation (Anderson et al., 2020). Additionally, recent reports indicated that between March to September 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic was severe and critically affecting the global economy, the average prices across countries were reduced by 0.5%, thus reducing the inflation rate (Anderson et al., 2020). Generally, countries have been experiencing low inflation rates since March 2020 due to reduced prices of goods and services, less consumer spending, and unfavorable monetary policies.

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

Countries were affected differently economically by the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, developed countries were affected less compared to developing countries. This is because they have strong economic indicators as compared to developing countries. A country such as The United States of America experienced a decline in economic growth by 1.5%, while in a country like Ghana, the economic growth declined by 4.6% (Anderson et al., 2020). Moreover, countries that record huge numbers of COVID-19 cases also experienced a high economic impact compared to countries with fewer COVID-19 cases.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Countries have set measures and policies that are meant to help in economic recovery from COVID-19. Such measures include; the reduction of interest rates, the creation of employment opportunities, the revival of tourism and recreational sectors, and the expansion of global markets (Ella & Maital, 2020). Organizations such as the IMF have funded various economic growth projects across several countries (Ella & Maital, 2020). Notably, countries are striving to improve monetary policies which will attract and allow investment.

Methods

Income inequalities have been measured via the mean-log deviation (MLD) in both developed and developing countries; income inequalities have been measured via the Mean-log deviation (MLD). In a situation where the income for all households is equal, the MLD is equal to zero. $MLD = 0$. As income inequality increases, the overall MLD increases proportionally. Data for the MLD for the developing nations was estimated to be 0.578 (Ravallion, 2014). This MLD can be used to determine the disparity in income between the wealthiest, and the poor. It is assumed that this MLD represents distribution with three incomes (1,2 and X). Then x will be 12.73. Interpretation of this calculation translates to the richest being twelve times richer than the lowest-income group and six-time richer than the middle-income group (Ravallion, 2014).

In Vietnam, income disparity is more definite. A survey outlined by Ravallion, (2014) showed that the richest group consists of ten percent of the Vietnamese population. In comparison, ninety percent of the nation's population comprises the poorest population (Ravallion, 2014). The estimated income of the individuals in the wealthy bracket is one hundred and ninety-six times that of the low-income group.

Results

The global GDP was notably affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, where it declined by 6.7% in 2020 (Anderson et al., 2020). This could be due to decreased economic activities across countries due to COVID-19-related lockdowns. As a result, there were no trade transactions within the countries and across borders. Consequently, the decline in stock markets within the countries immensely contributed to a decline in Gross Domestic Product. This has heavily affected the economy of developing countries.

Accordingly, the underutilization of capital and labor across countries due to the COVID-19-related lockdowns also affected the Gross Domestic Product (Anderson et al., 2020). People were not productive by engaging in activities that contributed to increasing gross domestic product; thus, suppressed government revenues led to a decline in economic growth. Generally, economic growth is one of the key factors that increase the gross domestic product of countries. Therefore, with the COVID-19 outbreak, many countries' economic growth slowed down due to low production rates and governments' high spending on COVID-19 mitigation measures, thus leading to an overall decline in economic growth and Gross Domestic Product.

Recent reports show that the gross domestic product has declined by 2.5 % in developing countries worldwide and by 1.8% in developed countries (Anderson et al., 2020). This indicates that developing countries were more affected by the pandemic than developed countries.

Moreover, the upsurge in international trade costs and reduction of travel services also contributed to a drop in Gross Domestic Product among nations. Many

local and international tourism travels were restricted; thus making countries lose earnrevenues from such economic activities.

Discussion and Conclussion

Various factors cause a disparity in earnings among individuals in both developed and developing countries. Some people end up being paid millions while others receive peanuts. Firstly, technological change has resulted in this inequality. Technological advancement led to increased advancement in productivity—the rate of joblessness increases in the job sector with the deployment of technology in the production sector (Leung, 2015). The invention of computers and machines has replaced most human labor since machines are fast and efficient. As a result, in some sectors, many unskilled workers are then rendered jobless. In developed countries like the United States, some forms of skilled labor have also been rendered jobless due to the introduction of artificial intelligence, which has invented robotics capable of undertaking skills-based jobs such as the deployment of military drones. Due to this increased unemployment, inequality has been evident among individuals who rely on their skills to earn a salary and individuals who rely on business investments. The gap between these two groups continues to widen because of technology.

Secondly, the education factor has been discussed as one of the causes of economic inequality. In most countries in the world, the main determinant of wages is the level of education (Leung, 2015). Higher education comes with more skills that only a few individuals can offer. These few individuals represent the developing countries that can demand high wages. Some developed nations like Britain have policies that support education for all, such as free education. However, economic inequality is still profound in such nations due to variations in innate factors such as intelligence, motivation, and talent. Moreover, access to free education for all individuals in developed countries doesn't translate to obtaining the same quality of education and training. Therefore, apart from the education policies in developed and rapidly growing nations, an individual's level and quality of education are perfect examples that explain economic inequality.

Thirdly, changes in the labor market organization have brought about economic inequality. For example, when a major trade organization collapses, the respective member's wage bargaining power declines (Leung, 2015). Due to this, wage disparity arises. For a market characterized by frequent employment, loss of jobs, and unfavorable salary protection policies, it tends to experience disparity in the distribution of income among the market players.

Lastly, in most developing countries, the notion that gender does not matter results in economic inequality. For instance, in America, gender income inequality is evident. The number of women in full-time employment and receiving a salary is seventy-seven percent compared to males (Leung, 2015). Moreover, females earn more than males in the population that neither gets married nor has kids. Although gender does not play a role in wage inequality, the data offered by the US national census could depict how gender can explain the nation's economic inequality.

Research has shown that COVID-19 is not ending anytime soon. Data shows a rapid increase in infection rates but, society is learning to live with it. This phenomenon has triggered a surge in demand for surgical and pulmonary instruments like surgical masks that people are advised to put on as they interact with people in public streets and closed areas. Come December 2022, the disease may not have been eradicated from the world, but putting on masks will be the norm for almost everyone in public gatherings as a measure to live with the disease (Mossa-Basha. et al., 2020). Most parts of the EU, and North America have been affected by the disease but as a result of the call for the re-opening of the global market connecting to these regions; provides a great opportunity for businesses dealing in surgical and pulmonary instruments for hospitals and clinics.

Ideally, the focus should be the acquisition of tenders from schools, hospitals, and clinics to distribute these essential tools to be used as an element to curb the spread of the disease across the world. This is because, among the measure to be put in place for schools to re-open for physical class attendance come 2023, there will be a need for a reliable supply of sanitizers, surgical masks, and sanitary gloves to meet the World Health Organization transmission prevention policies. Chances are very high that clinics and hospitals shall be flooded with patients who demand to be tested and acquire certificates for their workplace as a ticket for every civil servant;

this means there will still be an increase in the demand for testing kits in both the private clinics and the public hospitals (Becker, Hege & Mella-Barral 2020). The United States, the country with the most cases of infections in the world according to the latest update, is an opportunity for my client to invest more in the United States market as compared to the international market.

One of the key marketing strategies will be to intensify the market entry strategy. Towards this end, businesses can go for the production of subsidized surgical instruments as compared to other production companies in the same market. However, the quality of products has to be maintained. Still, the focus should be the acquisition of tenders from major companies and public institutions to supply sanitizers and masks within their premises. This will make the business develop trust among all the players in the health sector, including the World Health Organization and the local government, as part of the plans to restore normalcy in different countries as well as the world. With sufficient production materials distributed in these key areas across the world, businesses will be able to sell their instruments and increase the rate of returns as well as profit margins.

This is especially a concern since innovation developments reach developing countries where culture is highly relevant almost at the same time that they reach developed countries where culture as a factor is less significant. Innovations also need to be financially feasible for developing countries and considerate of environmental repercussions. Developing countries have less experience managing tech innovation compared to developed countries, and therefore the need for proper frameworks to be developed and applied to support the growth of tech innovation. Below are some framework solutions to solve some of the problems in managing tech innovation in developing countries.

One of the ways tech innovation is managed in developing countries is through the preference for incrementally—innovative products which are not new to the industry but to particular businesses. This is done as a “risk-aversion strategy that constitutes the use of fewer resources and therefore safeguards businesses from losing a lot of money” (Wellalage and Fernandez, 2019). This management practice of building on the innovation of others tends to have fewer business rewards and is somewhat a compromised approach to tech innovation in business.

The solution to encouraging more businesses in developing countries to “embrace tech innovation ideas fully can be achieved through government initiatives as well as other organizations to promote the exchange of ideas and improvements between firms across borders” (Fernández Sastre and Vaca Vera, 2017). Governments can also support technology transfers and encourage innovation risk-taking by establishing venture capital organizations that will act as safety nets in case of innovation failure. This is a practice well embraced in developed countries.

In developing countries, the size of the enterprise constitutes a challenge in the management of tech innovation. In developing countries in Asia and Africa, it has been observed that large-scale organizations are more responsible for introducing innovation practices. While this is not necessarily negative, such large companies have complex internal structures, meaning there is a big disconnect between the management of such companies and the local needs. More innovation by smaller firms on a large scale is desirable for better management of tech innovation in developing countries. Financial risk is a major, determining factor for small businesses. Therefore, providing financial support to such businesses can encourage the development and taking of tech innovation that is relevant to the local markets. Furthermore, teaching small business owners how to use tech innovation to rapidly scaproductionity can encourage more risk-taking for greater profits and simultaneously promote innovations that are best applicable to local needs.

The level of education is also a big determinant of how much tech innovation is adopted or applied in developing countries. For example, middle, and upper-class families have more access to post-secondary education in Sub-Saharan countries. This challenge in managing tech innovation is critical because efforts to increase the number of people accessing tertiary education do not necessarily increase innovation but rather produce more employees and bureaucrats. It could also lead to such professionals leaving for developed countries in what is known as brain drain, hoping for better compensation. Increasing access to education in developing countries is still necessary as a way of promoting the adoption of tech innovation. Such efforts should also focus on reducing the existing gender disparity in access to education. This can be done by promoting online education to remove the cost barrier for the populace who resolve to educate sons instead of girls because of

education costs. To ensure that more students transition into entrepreneurship, there is a need to increase awareness of non-traditional entrepreneurial careers from the secondary school level. This solution has been found to work in South Africa through the elite African Leadership Academy. Brain drain in developing countries can be countered through government-supported economic and social incentives.

Another challenge in managing tech innovation in developing countries is that most of businesses only trade locally. While this is understandable when a business is starting, to reach a high economic growth level that requires a higher level of innovation, businesses in developing countries need to grow their operations internationally. Standardizing some industries, such as the medical industry, can encourage businesses in developing nations to enter international trade. Governments in developing countries can advocate for the enforcement of international standards in different industries and provide an advantage to local businesses on an international level. Educating entrepreneurs on the benefits of international trade can also be useful in pushing more businesses internationally, where more innovation will be demanded.

In developing nations, low populations have lower rates of innovation, while densely populated areas produce more innovations. It is not feasible or reasonable for all businesses to move to densely populated areas such as metropolises to foster innovation. One primary purpose of innovation is bringing people out of poverty, and given that rural populations are generally poorer, instead of encouraging entrepreneurs to move to bigger towns, increasing the connection between urban and rural populations can help to promote innovation even in low-population areas. Improving communication systems and internet penetration in developing countries' rural areas can help foster the connection between urban and rural populations. Electricity is also a factor that governments in developing countries can improve to foster the growth of businesses in rural populations and thus increase innovation..

In developing countries, using family members and friends as a source of labors is very common. The use of such social networks is preferred because such provide inexpensive, below-market-value employees who can be trusted more than

random engaged employees. This is a problem in the management of tech innovation because while it can be a source of competitive advantage, it also discourages risk-taking and, as a result, stifles innovation. Innovation in such family-owned businesses can also be constrained by the belief that the eldest family members are more knowledgeable about what is good for the business and can discourage the uptake of proposals generated by the younger people who generally tend to be more innovative and open to new ideas. The solution to this problem is to promote the abandonment of family relations for employment which could be received poorly because of inherent cultural values. Another idea would be to promote formal and informal networking in family-owned businesses and encourage the swapping of ideas and promote innovation.

Different business sectors tend to demand different levels of innovation. This is a problem in the management of tech innovation in developing countries because it leads to some industries lagging behind others. While in developing countries the product and services industries lead in innovation, the agricultural sector has hardly any innovation. This is mostly due to financial and labor challenges. Given the fact that most of the populace in developing countries are subsistence farmers, the overall levels of innovation are quite low and translate into high poverty levels. One proper solution to this is NGO intervention in the agricultural sector and other industries that seem to be lagging behind regarding innovation. Agriculture, for example, can be improved by scaling up irrigation, and NGOs may intervene to promote this by promoting and providing pumps and other irrigation equipment to encourage innovation. Such innovations can help farmers to move from subsistence farming to commercial farming, hence reducing poverty and subsequently increasing the uptake of innovation.

In developing countries, policies and their formulation are a big problem for innovation. This is especially true for sectors such as finance. Many regulations tend to discourage innovators from focusing on some industries, leading to an oversaturation of innovations in one industry and fewer to no innovations in another. In Nigeria, for example, financial technology companies must deposit a huge amount of money with the central bank before they can be allowed operation. Given that the innovators are mostly young people, they cannot raise such amounts,

and thus such innovations do not take off. The solution for this is mostly a change in such policies. Their formulations can only be achieved through rallying the government and policymakers to focus on promoting innovation in such industries.

Another problem in managing tech innovation in developing countries is how to measure innovation. In today's world, innovation is measured by western standards, which include how many international tech innovations are coming from a company. While this measurement can be applicable, it also translates unfairly when comparing a developed with a developing country. In developing countries, innovation can be measured in different ways. For the major companies, innovation can be measured by the budget size allocated towards research and development in the said companies. In western countries, the number of patents is used to measure innovativeness within a given period. In developing countries, patents cannot be used as a measurement since the enforcement of patent rights is not so reliable. In developing countries, the development of industry segments and whole industries is a great indicator and measure of innovativeness. Given the fact that tech innovation is not so widespread in developing countries, innovation tends to lead to the creation of entirely new industries. The rate at which new industries are developed is thus an important measure of innovativeness.

Finally, it is worth noting that there are several other factors that do not affect the management of tech innovation in developing countries. Such factors include a business's age, firm employment growth, and worker training. Management of tech innovation in developing countries needs to adopt frameworks that embody the solutions discussed in this paper to increase innovation levels from developing countries and provide such countries an opportunity to grow and become as productive as developed nations. Innovation in business in developing countries is more crucial than in developed countries because it could make a big difference in the quality of life for people.

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