

The Awareness Change Towards Secondary Education in Rural Minority Villages in Lao PDR

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate how awareness of secondary education in rural minority villages of Lao PDR has changed, as well as to examine how the local government is working to create a unique learning style for out-of-school children and youth.

The primary methodologies employed in this study were semi-structured interviews. Interviewees were local government staff of the district education office, teachers, villagers, and out-of-school youth. As an analytical framework, coding techniques were adopted, and the words that were frequently and repeatedly emphasized within the interviews were employed as empirical evidence.

The findings of the study are as follows: First, many students have dropped out of secondary education, and awareness of education has tended to decline. The main causes of this phenomenon are ongoing inflation, trends in migrant labor, and a mismatch in learning content. Second, it was found that the local government was working with international organizations to provide degree certification programs and long-term vocational training. However, local demand and interest for these educational opportunities were low, as people prioritized earning immediate income over pursuing education. Evidence from the field interviews indicates that strategically responding to local needs and re-examination of educational options are required. Therefore, providing short-term vocational education programs and considering a curriculum that integrates vocational skills into secondary education are suggested to raise educational awareness.

Keywords: out-of-school children and youth (OOSCY), educational awareness, drop out, flexible learning style

1. Introduction

There are still many out-of-school children and youth (OOSCY) in Lao PDR. According to the World Bank (2023), there are approximately 60,000 children in Lao PDR who have not completed five years of primary education, representing a rate of 7.8 %. When comparing this rate with neighboring countries, Bangladesh has a rate of 5.3 %, Cambodia has a rate of 4.0 %, and Thailand has a rate of 1.6 %. Therefore, Lao PDR still shows a high figure (World Bank, 2023). According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), the number of OOSCY increases further in secondary education, reaching 475,723 in 2023. The high number of OOSCY is closely related to the high dropout rate, because one of the OOSCY's definitions is students who drop out. In Lao PDR, the dropout rate was 10.3 % in lower secondary education and 8.8 % in upper secondary education in 2020, however it is reported to have risen to 12.4 % and 13.8 %, respectively, by 2024 (Lao PDR Education and Sports Management Information System [LEMIS], 2024).

Until now, the importance of education has been recognized nationwide, and people in rural areas have been encouraged to continue secondary education as long as possible. However, from what the author has observed in mountainous areas, there seems to be a change in local people's awareness of education. In particular, the social situation has changed significantly since the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, which has also affected people's awareness of education.

In recent years, newspapers have widely reported that an increasing number of students in Lao PDR are not completing secondary education. The tendency not to continue education can be inferred from the high dropout rate in rural provinces. For example, a recent newspaper article (Laotian Times, 2025, April 15) reported that the dropout rate in both primary and secondary education in Xekong Province, located in the south, is continuing to increase due to economic difficulties and a lack of interest in school. It also reported that there are approximately 2,500 OOSCY in Xieng Khouang Province, located in the northeast, with the dropout rate for lower secondary school reaching 8.9 % in

2024 (Vientiane Times, 2025a, February 5). The Vientiane Times (2025b, June 6) also reported that the number of students taking the secondary school graduation examination in 2024 had decreased from 115,500 in the previous year to 110,922. This means that the number of secondary school graduates in Lao PDR has decreased by approximately 4,600 from the previous year.

Children from poor families, girls, and ethnic minorities living in mountainous areas are particularly susceptible to dropping out. According to the author's research experience, in mountainous areas, the only lower secondary schools are located in towns where access is difficult, so students are forced to support themselves in dormitories near the school and return home on weekends. Many children are unable to endure this harsh lifestyle and decide to drop out.

The Lao government has set educational goals of ensuring that all children complete at least secondary education and eliminating urban/rural disparities (Vongvichith, et al., 2020; Ministry of Education and Sports [MoES], 2023). Many international aid organizations and NPOs have been working on various strategies to help children continue their education. Despite this, it remains difficult for children to continue their education, and they tend to drop out. Currently, in rural areas of Lao PDR, how do villagers and children perceive learning in secondary education? And how do they perceive receiving an education if their children drop out of school and become OOSCY?

There are two objectives in this study. The first objective is to investigate how awareness of secondary education at ethnic minority villages in Lao PDR changed after the expansion of COVID-19. The second objective is to examine how the local government is working to create a unique learning style for OOSCY.

This study focuses on secondary education. As shown in Table 1, secondary education in Lao PDR consists of four years of lower secondary education and three years of upper secondary education, for a total of seven years. When interviewing informants, many of them mentioned their age along with their grade; therefore, the grade and common age are listed in the table.

Table 1. Grades and common age in secondary education in Lao PDR

	Lower secondary				Upper secondary		
Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Common age	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

2. Previous Research

2.1 OOSCY in Lao PDR and Its Causes

According to UNESCO, OOSCY is defined as follows. The term "Out-of- School Children and Youth" (OOSCY) encompasses children and youth in one or more of the following four key situations: (a) children and youth who do not have access to a school in their community; (b) children and youth who do not yet enroll at a school, despite the availability of a school; (c) children and youth who have enrolled but do not attend school or are at risk of dropping out; (d) children and youth who drop out of the education system (UNESCO, 2016).

In this way, there are many different types of OOSCY. In this study, among OOSCY, group (d), children and youth who dropped out despite having access to educational institutions were the focus. Inui, et al. (2025) have previously conducted research into education access, continuity, and quality of education for out-of-school children (OOSC) at the primary level. The results showed that traditional customs, lack of budget, poor access to education, and a shortage of teachers hurt the quality of education, especially in mountainous areas where ethnic minorities reside. This situation continues up to the present and it has had a major impact on continuing children's studies.

As Boualaphet and Goto (2019), indicated, in Lao PDR, reducing dropout rates for ethnic minorities in rural areas is a major challenge. The cause of dropping out varies; however, access to schools, poverty, unstable household income, and child labor (especially girls), were pointed out to be major factors (Xayavang, & Pholphiru 2018; Itthida, 2020). Parental education, such as mother's, was also reported to make impacts on the children's dropout. As another aspect, a survey found that 15 % of all dropouts in school were considered stunted children (National Information Platforms for Nutrition [NIPN], 2024), which means malnutrition is one of the causes of dropout.

In recent years, the relationship with learning interest has also been mentioned as a reason for not attending secondary education. For instance, the students lose interest in learning (Laotian Times, 2025, April 15), the students recognize staying at school often does not meet their schooling needs (Itthida, 2020), and children and parents choose to discontinue school when they recognize that little is being learned (Khaffenberger, et al., 2023).

2.2 Research Framework—Existing Models for Alternative Provision of Education

Until now, the theoretical framework and global education policies and momentum have been based on the premise of achieving universal education by 100 % enrollment, returning out-of-school children to school, and solving problems within formal education. Most developing countries followed the policies that were led by developed countries and international organizations (Inui et al., 2025).

According to Ngware, et al. (2018), two pathways have been proposed for out-of-school youth. The first one is remediation programs that aim to bring out-of-school youth back to formal schooling or alternative education programs; and the second choice is integration of youth into the labor market through workforce development. The first one was meant to offer education again to the OOSCY.

The GPE [Global Partnership for Education] (2024), led by the World Bank, also intends to promote access to certified education for children and youth who drop out and miss graduating the formal education. In detail, “accelerated education programs” offer flexible learning classes for OOSCY in terms of time-tabling and mother-tongue-based instruction within formal education. UNESCO also implemented the Primary Equivalency Programme (EP) with the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), which provides elementary school dropouts (OOSCY) (6-14) with a graduation qualification in three years. As a result of such support, the graduates from the program have the option to progress on to formal lower secondary education (UNESCO, Bangkok, 2019). Moreover, international NGOs such as DVV International also work with MoES and provide knowledge and skills with an alternative opportunity to finish primary or secondary education for people who lack the opportunity to receive formal education, people that have dropped out of school (DVV International, Laos, 2023). In this way, existing models for alternative provision are focused on the learning style and finishing formal education.

2.3 Flexible Learning Strategies in Lao PDR

In Lao PDR, the importance of formal education is being emphasized in line with the Global Partnership Education (GPE) policy (Note 1), and accelerated education programs (AEPs) have been adopted. AEPs reduce the number of years in a learning cycle and allow learners to complete a certified, equivalent level of education in a shortened time frame (Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies [INEE], 2017). The BEQUAL project, which is a major international cooperation project in the field of education in Lao PDR, also emphasizes the importance of education under the motto of “Stay in School”, and encourages students not to drop out (Lao News Agency, 2025). Moreover, as advocated by UNESCO, the need for flexible learning (such as learning outside of school to develop literacy, arithmetic, and life skills), visualization, and realization of diverse learning has been valued.

As mentioned by Inui, et al. (2025), in ASEAN countries, the field level that is close to OOSCY suggests the development of innovative and flexible learning models, such as vocational and life skills education, spearheaded by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local government agencies. In fact, in Lao PDR, the national government has encouraged vocational education to the youth who are at risk. For instance, the Prime Minister outlined a comprehensive plan for six months, including an emphasis on vocational training for students. The government aims to encourage applicants to select courses that equip them with practical skills, enabling them to secure employment and become self-sufficient upon graduation (Laotian Times, 2023, July 5).

As stated previously, the current local government in Lao PDR is taking the dropout problem seriously. For example, Xekong Province is exploring various ways to help OOSCY, such as providing scholarships and school meals. Xieng Khouang Province is also considering strengthening education laws and making parents aware of the importance of education (Laotian Times, 2025, April 15; Vientiane Times 2025a, February 5). These recent educational models of local governments are similar to the trends of international organizations. However, this study also raises the question of how these educational models are being received by the demand side of education.

3. Research Methodology

The primary methodologies employed in this study were semi-structured interviews based on field research. Because the methodology is based on interviews, narrative responses of the informants were valued.

The field research was conducted in March and September 2025, at four villages of A Province in Lao PDR, where the dropout rate has increased. The dropout rate in lower secondary education was 11.5 %, and in upper secondary education was 14.0 % in the province. A notable feature is the dropout rate in the fifth grade, the first year of upper secondary education, which was as high as 22.3 % (LEMIS, 2024).

There are 50 ethnic groups in Lao PDR (UNDP, 2022), and most of the minorities reside in the mountainous areas. In this table, Lao, in K Village, belong to the majority group, but the Hmong and Khamu are considered minorities who live in the mountainous areas.

Table 2. Overview of research sites and informants

Village initials	Hours from the city (by car and truck)	Minorities	Informants
L	1 hours	Hmong	village head (1)
K	2 hours	Hmong, Khamu, Lao	director of the school (1), local government staff (1)
P	2.5 hours (mountain top)	Hmong	local government staff (1), teacher (1), village head, OOSCY (3)
H	2.5 hours	Khamu	local government staff(1), director of the school (1), teacher (1)

All four villages in A Province, where the field research was conducted, are ethnic minority villages located more than one to two and a half hours away from the provincial center. As stated in previous studies, it was assumed that access to education influences villagers' educational awareness, therefore four different villages were investigated.

During the field visits, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the local government staff of the district education office, teachers, and villagers, depending on the villages. Most of the interviews were conducted at the schools. The interview duration varies depending on the subject, but it was approximately 20-30 minutes.

The distinctive feature of this study is that it approaches the educational awareness of local people from various perspectives. In other words, this study attempts to listen to the voices of the demand side of education, such as villagers and OOSCYs, while also listening to the trials and efforts of the local government that is the provider side of education.

The main questions for each group are as follows. For the demand side, the key questions were the enrollment status of the youth at secondary schools, the time (grade level) the youth dropped out of school and became OOSCY, and the reason for dropping out of school. The author attempted to ask OOSCY in P Village about the reason of dropping out and their path after dropping out. Regarding this main question, the school directors and teachers, who grasp the village's educational trends, were also targeted.

For the provider side, such as local government staff, the author asked about available learning support for OOSCY, and the options that dropout students take after being OOSCY.

In conducting this research, local laws and regulations regarding personal information and human rights were complied with the advice of local coordinators. Moreover, the field research was conducted under the permission and supervision of the local government with respect for local culture, religion, and customs. In this study, to ensure the safety and human rights of the research subjects, sufficient communication and mutual understanding with local government agencies were carefully considered.

The interview analysis involved transcribing all responses and employing coding analysis. In detail, narrative responses were treated as data, and the phenomena and words that were repeatedly emphasized in the semi-structured interview were considered as empirical evidence.

For instance, regarding the first question, "the status of the youth at the secondary school and the timing of dropouts," the grades that were identified as having the highest dropout rates were compiled by village.

As for the second question, in responding to available learning supports for OOSCY, and the options that dropout students take after being OOSCY, the most frequently repeated keywords were marked, and a short label (code) that describes its content was assigned.

4. Research Results and Discussion

4.1 Perspectives From the Demand Side of Education

4.1.1 Grade Level of School Dropout

At what grade level do children typically drop out and become OOSCY? Since this varies by village, the results are organized in a table. Table 3 shows village overviews (partially from Table 1) along with the age of dropout and the path taken after becoming OOSCY, highlighted in shaded cells.

Table 3. The highest dropout grade and OOSCY's path after dropout

Village initials	Hours from the city (by car)	Minorities	Highest dropout	OOSCY's path
L	1.0 hour	Hmong	S3, S4	migrant work (Chinese farm)
K	2.0 hours	Hmong, Khamu, Lao	S5, S6	migrant work (farm, casino, get married)
P	2.5 hours	Hmong (mountain top)	S1, few enter higher secondary	migrant work (farm, construction, get married)
H	2.5 hours	Khamu	S5, S6	migrant work (house keeper, farm, casino)

Description: e.g. S3: Secondary third grade. The number of informants in the village is written in the Table 2.

In K Village and H Village, many students drop out during the fifth and sixth grades. This aligns with the trend observed in the surveyed province, where the dropout rate for fifth grade secondary school students is the highest (22.3 %, LEMIS, 2024). After becoming OOSCY, it is common for youth from both villages to go to work as migrant laborers. In villages near K Village, nearly all students graduate from lower secondary school due to its proximity. However, only about 60 % of these students advance to upper secondary school. Even after enrolling, due to family economic circumstances, they can typically continue their education for only about one year. They tend to drop out around the fifth year of secondary school (S5), with boys going to work as migrant laborers and girls getting married (director of school, K Village). In H Village, 90 % of lower secondary school graduates advance to higher secondary school. However, about 20 % drop out during the fifth (S5) or sixth (S6) grades of secondary school and tend to go to work in other provinces (director of school, H Village).

In L Village, relatively closer to the city, a different trend is observed. The highest dropout rates occur in the third (S3) and fourth (S4) grades of secondary school, with approximately 10 % dropping out during these grades. While dropouts are also estimated to occur in upper secondary school, once students begin upper secondary, they tend to graduate. This is because having a secondary school diploma expands job options in the city (village head, L Village). Notably, those who drop out in S3 or S4 tend to engage in migrant labor (agricultural work in China).

In contrast, in P Village, located on a mountaintop, attending lower secondary school requires living in a dormitory. Consequently, many children cannot adapt to dorm-life and drop out immediately after entering school. Furthermore, with few options beyond agriculture—either migrating for construction work or marrying—there is a tendency toward low educational awareness (teacher, P Village). Interviews with three OOSCY (A, B, C) spending time in the village revealed: A (23 years old) dropped out in fifth grade, while B (19 years old) and C (18 years old) dropped out in the first year of lower secondary school (S1). All dropped out due to poverty and have since continued helping their parents with slash-and-burn farming. C mentioned working as an apprentice at a motorcycle repair shop while also helping with farming. Both A and B were already married, indicating a situation of early marriage.

4.1.2 Changes in Educational Awareness

Interview results revealed that informants in all villages reported a noticeable trend of students dropping out of secondary education. This aligns with recent newspaper reports, indicating that only a very small number of students graduate from upper secondary school and proceed to university. Two common perspectives emerged across all four villages. First, influenced by the scarcity of students entering university, many fail to see value in completing upper secondary school. A shared tendency existed in every village: students preferred to save the opportunity cost associated with university, enter the labor market sooner, and seek cash income through migrant work earlier than completing upper secondary education. Second, students drop out because they perceive the curriculum as irrelevant to future income. Students recognize that subjects like physics, chemistry, history, and geography studied in upper secondary school are not practically useful, and that spending years studying them does not lead to improved livelihoods. Consequently, they choose not to continue their education.

As one informant stated, “Only wealthy families in urban areas with financial leeway send their children to university” (teacher, local staff, H Village). Higher education remains an event from another world for ethnic minorities living in rural areas. The disparity in educational awareness is also influenced by distance from the city (the provincial center). The village head of L Village, closest to the city, stated, “If going to university, choose vocational education. If you go to the city, there are jobs and you can earn an income.” Conversely, the local staff responsible for P Village, over 2.5 hours from the city, remarked, “In highland areas like P Village, there are no jobs besides agriculture. There is a vocational education center, and OOSCY still have the flexibility to pursue vocational education. When they truly have

no flexibility, they choose to go out to work.” Similarly, a local staff member responsible for H Village, located at a similar distance, stated, “Here, there is no work other than agriculture. OOSCY consider the time spent on vocational education a waste and start working immediately.” In other words, it became clear that the further away from the city, the less work is available, leading to a tendency for educational awareness to decline.

As the next step in the analysis, to identify the phenomena that caused the change in educational attitudes, keywords cited from informants’ narrative response were selected in descending order of frequency. Therefore, the results include descriptive expressions.

4.1.3 Inflation

During interviews, the most frequently cited reason children gave for dropping out was ongoing inflation. Not a single day passed without an informant mentioning this term.

In Lao PDR, inflation accelerated in June 2022, triggered by the sharp depreciation of the local currency, the Kip, amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Underlying this were global price increases, exemplified by gasoline prices, and the ongoing weakening of the Kip. The Lao PDR’ inflation rate averaged 23 % in 2022 and reached 31 % in 2023, with prices rising 1.8 times between August 2019 and August 2023. These factors made it impossible for workers to maintain their standard of living, contributing to the trend of seeking work abroad, such as in Thailand. (Yamada, 2024).

Despite unrelenting inflation in Lao PDR, wages remain stagnant. According to the director and local staff in H Village, becoming a civil servant after university graduation to secure stable income was once the regional model. However, civil service positions are now unpopular due to stagnant wages. Consequently, they pointed out that the perceived lack of benefits from university education, coupled with the ease of earning income through migrant work even without a secondary school diploma, has led to declining educational motivation.

4.1.4 Migrant Labor

Nearly all informants repeatedly mentioned “migrant labor” during interviews. The types and methods of migrant work are diverse: working across provincial borders on Chinese plantations (cultivating bananas, melons, watermelons), serving as housekeepers or restaurant staff in tourist area hotels, or engaging in construction sites or sewing factories in the capital. Overseas migrant work is also common. Many work in factories in Thailand, a nearby country with a similar language. Increasingly, young people are also obtaining formal visas to work on farms in South Korea.

Social media is the primary catalyst for migrant work. Many informants stated that most children now own smartphones and easily find job information through SNS. For example, jobs cultivating vegetables in other provinces. By the age of fifth or sixth grade in middle school, they have grown physically capable of agricultural work, so they jump at information about jobs with better pay. Young people also continuously seek work at casinos near the border, where income is even higher (local staff, K Village).

Staff responsible for H Village also stated that because information about migrant work is shared on young people’s TikTok and Facebook, cases of them leaving school and the village in search of better-paying jobs are endless. This trend is the same in other villages.

It has become clear that the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, increased mobility, and the spread of social media use even among secondary school students are driving children into migrant work, which is also affecting their attitudes toward education.

4.1.5 Study Curriculum and Learning Contents

As shown in previous studies, the issue of learning content also affected the educational awareness of local people. Informants felt that formal education was not a major viable option, as studying at school does not directly lead to employment or income promptly. Even if they obtain a high school diploma or a university degree (BA), the job opportunities are limited, especially in rural areas. Along with this fact, as an article of Laotian Times introduced, the students tend to lose interest in learning at schools (Laotian Times, 2025, April 15).

What struck the author during the interview in H Village was the statement that only families who are wealthy could continue studying (village head, local staff). In Lao PDR, many students are impatient to continue their studies without working. As mentioned above, upper secondary education is aimed at acquiring knowledge and contains few practical or business-related content. Even if students receive a scholarship, if they realize that the content of their studies will not lead to cash income, they will not choose to continue their education.

In the author’s experience of conducting research in mountainous regions, many parents say that their children do not see the value in studying at upper secondary school because studying at school will only lead to university, and that the upper secondary school curriculum does not connect with future benefits.

5. The Perspective of the Providers' Side of Education

5.1 Offering a Variety of Education Programs—AEP Program

The second objective of this study is to investigate how the local government and NGOs in Lao PDR challenge to create their unique way of learning style based on the social reality and stakeholders.

As a result of the semi-structured interviews, it was found that the local government office offered two major supports for students who dropped out and became OOSCY. The first one is supplementary courses in the evenings and on weekends. This is called “accelerated education programs” (AEP), introduced earlier in this study.

In our district, we adopt AEP that offers formal education courses to the OOSCY for a total of two months. It is conducted after school hours, and if they finish the courses, they are entitled to finish secondary education. The teacher gets an extra payment and, sometimes, visits the rural villages too if there is a need. We would like OOSCY to return to school; however, too many children try to get married or go to work. (local staff, P Village)

According to the local staff, this is likely an international project run by DVV International, and they explained that it has the advantage of being able to teach in the homes of children who cannot go to school.

5.2 Vocational Education

In this field research, when we inquired about the possibility of vocational education in each village, access to vocational training centers was available around L Village and P Village.

In L Village, vocational training opportunities were available near the city, offering diverse options such as engineering, construction, and car repair (village head, L Village). Additionally, the local staff responsible for P Village stated that a vocational training center was located near a town about a 30-minute descent from the mountaintop where P Village is situated. This center provides free training targeting lower secondary school graduates (or upper secondary school dropouts) in livestock farming methods, cooking, mechanics, and tourism. All these programs span three years.

Before undertaking this study, the author recognized flexible learning, such as vocational education, as a potentially effective direction for OOSCY. Lamb (2011) found that, globally, providing vocational education tends to prevent dropouts and keep students in school. Furthermore, diverse initiatives, including distance learning via television and radio and group learning models, had begun in developing countries (Figueredo, & Anzalone, 2003).

5.3 Perspectives of OOSCY Individuals and Local Staff

However, all three OOSCY informants from P Village had not chosen vocational education. When asked why they did not attend vocational schools, all three stated the programs lasted three years, which they considered too long. When asked if attending a vocational school for auto-repair might provide more specialized skills, C replied that working as an apprentice allowed him to earn an income sooner and offered the advantage of becoming immediately employable. This tendency to avoid vocational education was also evident in interviews conducted in other villages.

If they become OOSCY, they won't go to vocational school. Parents actually want to support their children, but after dropping out, the children don't want to study and lose interest in learning itself. (local staff, H Village)

Consequently, it also became clear that they show no interest in projects like the AEP provided by the local government to return to school.

Even if they go to vocational training school, the chances of getting stable work are low, right? There are no jobs or places to work. Instead, they work in shops selling things to make a living. If they do go back to school, studying Chinese at the Chinese language center will be the most popular. Once they can speak it, they work on China-related projects or in factories. (local staff, K Village)

Thus, it became clear that many OOSCY show little interest in the AEP or vocational education promoted by the local government, instead taking action to earn even slightly higher incomes.

6. Conclusion

The first objective was to investigate how awareness of secondary education at ethnic minority villages in Lao PDR changed after the expansion of the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of this study indicated that many children drop out of secondary school despite global policies and momentum that promote staying in school.

The reasons for this are related to unavoidable social conditions. Namely, that poverty brought about by inflation in recent years has been a major cause, leading to a decline in interest in secondary education and a tendency to focus on earning cash as quickly as possible. It was also found that a major cause was losing interest in the learning curriculum. For these reasons, village youth tended to choose not to continue their education and jump into the job market immediately. It is noteworthy that the interview results in this study reflect the recent observation that low interest in

learning content is influencing educational attitudes (Laotian Times 2025, Ittida 2020, etc.)

The second objective was to examine how the local government in Lao PDR challenge to create their unique way of learning style for OOSCY. The field research found the local government was working with international organizations to provide OOSCY with a unique and flexible learning style by offering qualifications and vocational training. This approach is effective in the village close to the city area where there are job opportunities even after graduating from school, but it has become clear that it is not necessarily effective in mountainous areas where ethnic minorities reside. If these situations continue as they are, the educational awareness of ethnic minorities living in rural areas will decline, and they will continue to take temporary jobs without acquiring specific skills. Therefore, as Leung, et al. (2025) indicate, successful multiple and flexible pathways responded to the needs of OOSCY and, strategically aligned with local or national priorities, re-examination of educational options is required.

Although this study was unable to go into depth, the results of the narrative dialogue analysis also revealed that there is a low need for vocational education that takes several years.

Considering this fact, and as Molla, & Gale (2024) state, equity provisions need to widen options so that disadvantaged people do not adjust their preferences to their circumstances, and more options are needed to be prepared. Therefore, providing short-term vocational education programs and considering a curriculum that integrates vocational skills in secondary education would be suggested to raise educational awareness. A future challenge is to determine what kind of learning opportunities and flexible learning style are suitable for OOSCY to diminish the gap between urban areas and ethnic minorities residing areas.

Notes

Note 1. GPE is the largest global fund that has been dedicated to transforming education in lower-income countries, and a unique, multi-stakeholder partnership. It is a foundation that brings together all partners such as lower-income countries, donors, international organizations and the private sector (GPE, 2025).

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