

### The signals of being oppressed and the oppressors in the teacher's perception of education: a case study of Vietnam from critical theories

Phan, Tuyet Van Thi; Duy Khang, Nguyen

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

#### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Phan, T. V. T., & Duy Khang, N. (2017). The signals of being oppressed and the oppressors in the teacher's perception of education: a case study of Vietnam from critical theories. *Society Register*, 1(1), 107-121. <https://doi.org/10.14746/sr.2017.1.1.10>

#### Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer CC BY-NC Lizenz (Namensnennung-Nicht-kommerziell) zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu den CC-Lizenzen finden Sie hier: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/deed.de>

#### Terms of use:

This document is made available under a CC BY-NC Licence (Attribution-NonCommercial). For more information see: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>

**PHAN THI TUYET VAN**

Vinh Long Community College, Vietnam  
*pttvan@vlcc.edu.vn*

**NGUYEN DUY KHANG**

Vinh Long Community College, Vietnam  
*ndkhang@vlcc.edu.vn*

## **THE SIGNALS OF BEING OPPRESSED AND THE OPPRESSORS IN THE TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF EDUCATION. A CASE STUDY OF VIETNAM FROM CRITICAL THEORIES**

**Abstract:** In light of Freire Today, this paper aims to present the results from a case study in Vietnam about the teachers' perception of education with the recognized signals of being oppressed and the oppressors in their teaching. This study was conducted to clarify the problems preventing education to be developed in this context with the participants from 3 provinces in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. The qualitative data was collected through using a mixture of 7 interviews and 10 opened-question surveys due to the geographical difficulties. The data collection was framed by using the Padilla's (1994) techniques of unfolding matrix for data analysis. The findings show that the authoritarian education remains unchanged or slowly transformed with the signals of the teachers as both the oppressors to their learners and the oppressed in their working system. The findings would be meaningful during the ways to figure out the real challenges of current Vietnamese educational system in which critical theories could be considered as one of the possible solutions.

**Keywords:** Freire Today; Critical Theories; Vietnamese Education; Being Oppressed; the Oppressors.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The first book we read about critical theories was "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" by Paulo Freire through its translation of the 30-year anniversary in 2005. This Freire's work has started the curiosities and cognition about our own teaching praxis in Vietnam and continued with series of literature in critical theories from different perspectives of not only Freire, but also Lorenzo Milani, and Jacques Rancière through the lectures of the researchers in critical theories with Jan Masschelein, Gert Biesta, Peter Mayo, and Carmel Borg. In light of Freire Today, the idea of this paper was developed to collect the data about teachers' perception of education as one of the first information sources for critical theories in Vietnam.

When the terminology of “critical pedagogy” from critical theories is still new or not properly recognized in this context, the authors attempt to find the signals of being *oppressors* to the learners and *being oppressed* (Freire 2005) to the working system of Vietnamese teachers. As both the insiders and outsiders of the research context, we seek to understand the views of the teachers about their own teaching practice from the influences of the outside perspectives of critical theories. For that reason, different perspectives of other writers would also be interpreted including the roles of the teachers in Vietnamese education analyzing from Freire’s perspective and how teaching and learning happens with or without the ideas of equality in education analyzing from Rancière (1991).

Another important reason of this research was about the attempts to understand the current chaos of Vietnamese educational system from a lens of the educational researchers, not the authoritarian perspectives. The educational chaos could be derived from different conditions and dubious philosophies of education. However, with an assumption in the hierarchy of oppressions both with and without the recognitions of the teachers’ own positions, the researchers focus on analyzing their perceptions relevant to their thoughts from their working contexts as well as the challenges to better their educational transformation.

One or different portraits of Vietnamese teachers through their educational perceptions will be analyzed as one of the primary sources grounded for the development of critical pedagogy in the contemporary era. The study aims to find answers for the question:

***What would be the praxis of Vietnamese teachers through their perceptions as the challenges in educational transformation?***

The inquiries to answer this question promote the authors to review the relevant literature related to different terminologies regarding critical theories. The research methods, findings, and conclusions will also be described in the coming sections.

## **A REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE**

Different concepts derived from critical theories should be clarified or defined with a connection to educational context of Vietnam with the possible chaos and the needs to analyze the teachers’ praxis.

### **Current chaos of Vietnamese educational system from critical views<sup>1</sup>**

Over the decades since the liberation of the country in 1975 and since the economic renovation called “Đổi mới” policy from 1986 onwards, Vietnam has experienced profound changes, especially in the education system. For instance, Nguyen Duc Hung’s (2010) investigation shows that the number of schools at all levels and quality of teaching have been constantly increased by years. Illiteracy rate changed from 95% in 1945 to 2.7% in 2010. However, it seems to be not enough for various and often contradicting educational philosophies to be declared or referred to in official state documents. Problems arise only when many different versions are available and when it is hard to know which one is acceptable or perceived by the society and the current teaching and learning stakeholders. Currently, people have blamed for the chaos of Vietnamese education because of different perspectives about its philosophies including (1) Vietnam has inadequate educational philosophies, (2) Vietnam does not have any philosophies, and (3) Vietnamese educational philosophy is not appropriate.

The first reason for this study to be conducted is due to repeating inquiry by Vietnamese educators and citizens about the current educational philosophy. This inquiry started a decade ago when education entered a crisis. Many national conferences, decisions, and even national discussion forums were begun to seek an educational philosophy for Vietnam at the meantime though each teacher may realize it or not for their teaching career, and the huge resources of philosophies during the complicated history of Vietnam. Under a long history of Chinese influences, the Confucian philosophy of education focused on scholarly quotations, such as “nhân bất học bất tri lý” – a person without learning does not know that something is right or wrong; “ấu bất học lão hà vi” – if a child does not learn when becoming an old person, he knows nothing; “học nhi bất yếm hối nhân bất quyện”, there is no boredom in learning with learners and in teaching with teachers; “tiên giác giác hậu giác” – who knows teaches those don’t know yet, and “tiên học lễ hậu học văn” – first learn to be polite then learn for the literacy. In addition, during the feudal regimes, many kings and national leaders’ decrees had been announced to encourage education (King VIth Hung, ending in 258 BC; King Le Thanh Tong, 1460 – 1497; or President Ho Chi Minh, 1890 – 1969...). Education was from “hiền tài là nguyên khí của quốc gia” – good scholars and learners are the national vigors in the feudalism to “gắn nhà trường với cuộc sống” – sticking schooling to real life, “hai tốt” – good teaching and good learning, “mọi người ai cũng được học hành” – everyone has a chance to learn in Ho Chi Minh’s ideology. Vietnam also respects the UNESCO philosophy of education for a 21st century.

The second reason for this study is the importance of an educational philosophy. This quest turns to be vital to Vietnamese education when people are concerned about the consequences of having none or inappropriate ones in the context of globalization and technology. For example, Vietnamese education, under the great influence of the feudal ideology together with Confucianism and French education for many centuries, has still maintained the tradition of rote learning. More importantly, the desire to have a degree and even an advanced degree for a good job or promotion is quite popular among the majority of the Vietnamese population because it echoes the custom of becoming mandarins or governmental officials as a goal of education. This leads to a vicious cycle of not only learning by rote as much as possible to pass the exam but also to cynicism about testing, leading to fraudulent degrees and the habit of exaggerating the importance of degree over the knowledge and skills.

In addition, although Vietnamese education has made some achievements as the number of schools and students at all levels have been increased; educational facilities have been significantly improved and gradually modernized; especially in higher and vocational education, many drawbacks have been also pointed out such as the quality and efficiency of education and training is still low compared to the requirements; lack of correlation between levels and modes of education and training; still focus on imparting knowledge instead of inspiring to develop critical thinking and creativity; theory takes priority over practice; training has not been linked to the needs of the labor market; and obsolete teaching, learning, and testing and evaluation (According to the Resolution 29 promulgated on November 4th, 2013 by the General Secretary bringing out a comprehensive view and innovation about Vietnamese education). It is noted that the drawbacks which are more

obvious and overwhelming than the achievements have hindered the development of Vietnamese education for many decades.

According to Noddings (1995), "the philosophical study of education and its problems...its central subject matter is education, and its methods are those of philosophy" (p.7). Sadker & Zittleman (2004) clarifies this viewpoint by stating that philosophy of education answers the question about the educational goals or the purpose of schooling; it also helps shape the roles of teacher and determines both the pedagogy and the content. Similarly, the vital role of philosophy of education is pointed out by Gutex (1997): it both guides the whole educational process and provides the foundation for any curricular designs. In other words, philosophy of education is extremely important because it helps define the purpose and focus of education of an institution and a country, and more significantly, replace destructive thoughts on education with more progressive ones.

Furthermore, a number of researchers have suggested that teachers should be aware of philosophies of education (Martin 1956; Vandenberghe 1984; Croll et al. 1994; Gutex 1997). As in their statements, teachers' awareness about educational philosophy provide them with many benefits such as knowledge and the ability to identify between the gains and losses of educational innovations organizationally and instructionally, capacity of working in terms of satisfying both personal and professional goals, and significantly, motivate them to build and examine educational policies and programs which are main components for effective reforms and development. Because of the importance of teachers, this research studies their perceptions of educational philosophy through their teaching practice. Its author also seeks to gain more insights into the teacher's whole stories about their professional career which reflect their educational philosophy.

The fact of the matter is that Vietnamese education needs to have more time for a real and stronger change, particularly a guiding philosophy consistent and compatible with Vietnamese conditions. Researching about educational philosophies becomes more important than ever because Vietnam is entering a new period of reform in a row, the fifth educational renovation since 1946. This renovation of 2011 notes the urgent necessity of building a modern educational philosophy as a basis for fundamental and comprehensive innovation of the education became the spirit of the 11th Party Congress on January 12th, 2011 of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Although Resolution 29 from the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam is said to be a good signal was recently stated as a philosophy of Vietnamese education by the Minister of Education and Training, it still general and formalistic, and the gap between orientation and realization is still big. From all of these reasons, the research is worth conducting from a Vietnamese perspective so as to refine and reconstruct the educational philosophies for the new stages of development in Vietnam.

In short, the teachers' important role in being aware and knowledgeable about educational philosophy; since then, it contributes to reforming and developing Vietnamese education. Therefore, this research is conducted due to some weaknesses of Vietnamese education; a clear philosophy of education from teachers will help the researchers identify the current modes of the teachers' teaching praxis which would push some changes to the situation.

### **The need of analyzing the praxis of Vietnamese teachers**

Analyzing the praxis of Vietnamese teachers through their perception of education would provide the authors with some classifications of the current theoretical and practical knowledge about their teaching. From which, the authors will look for the signals of different types of educational systems in accordance to critical theories as associated with different notions in Freire (2005) about being oppressed and the oppressors with “banking education”, solutions of Freire’s “dialogical pedagogy” and Rancière’s “interrogation”, and the sense of educational equality between the teachers and the learners.

The norm “praxis” was defined by Freire from what people act and linked to some values in their social lives.

“Reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it”  
(Freire 2005: 50).

The influential factors different from the teachers’ immanence have modified the current teaching situations. The demands for teachers’ transformation have never been urgent as at this stage of the development of Vietnam. It requires the teachers to orient their concentration into their alternative solutions or renovations for their own transformation. It is important to analyze the teachers’ perceptions because the historical and cultural factors have possibly fossilized the mindsets with this context. The teachers may think that they and what they teach are very important throughout the educational process of the learners. In addition, the current testing systems which have focused the learners from the manner of “banking education” (Freire 2005) have wasted the learners’ time on their real learning journey. It was from the phenomenon that the teachers think they know the knowledge and their jobs are to *transmit the knowledge to the learners who do not know* (the signal of the oppressors in Freire 2005). Associating with these models, the learners would be oppressed to learn to remember, understand, and retell what they have been taught by the teachers as described in Freirean’s concept of “banking education”. Simultaneously, the teachers might see their roles as important explicators to explain what have been written in the books, from the curriculum designed by the higher levels of management in their system. This symptom could be classified to be the problems of education regarding Rancière (1991). However, if the current society can only provide this kind of teachers for the learners’ learning process, the learners of the current social development would not satisfy with their learning needs because the technologies may sometimes do a better job than the teachers from this sense. In fact, the teachers who can only *explain what is written in the textbooks or teach as the knowledge transmitter are exactly the “intelligent teachers”* as described in Rancière (1991).

It could be assumed that analyzing the teachers’ perception from the praxis of their teaching as one of the only ways to make some changes in education. As in Biesta (2013), with the teachers’ teaching praxis, when they can overcome their own limits, *transcend in every of their lessons*, and differ themselves from others with their thoughts and teaching methods, the learners would be facilitated better for their own learning. This is the case that the teachers play an important role in the educational process and the learners’ learning and emancipation which is different from the notion of learnification (Biesta 2013).

In short, critical theories with Freirean dialogical approach and Rancière’s interrogation seem to be two of the possible helpful ways for solving the current chaotic situations in Vietnamese education. With these backgrounds and to answer

the research question, how this research should be conducted will be clarified in the following section.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

This research was designed with a case study to collect data about the praxis of Vietnamese teachers through their perceptions in the context of Mekong Delta of Vietnam, in particular 3 provinces of Kien Giang, Tra Vinh, and Hau Giang.

The data was collected through the interviews and opened-question surveys to answer the inquiries about the challenges of Vietnamese teachers' educational transformation. Different tools were applied due to the geographical difficulties, but they were utilized for the same form of qualitative data collection. The participants of the study included 5 teachers in Hau Giang, 5 teachers in Kien Giang, and 7 teachers in Tra Vinh. The language of communications or in the surveys was in Vietnamese, the mother tongue of both the researchers and the participants. The messages later were transcribed and translated into English by each of the researchers. The final discussion of the English translated versions was organized to negotiate the core values and the linguistic equivalences among the two sources.

The collected data from the interviews and surveys were framed using the *Padilla's (1994) technique of unfolding matrix for qualitative data from the collected data*<sup>1</sup>. The data was then coded and classified into different modules of the research direction. The extracts from data were carefully coded with possible retrieval of its sources as in the following displayed samples:

Codes		Samples and extracts
I = Interview S = Survey KG = Kien Giang TV = Tra Vinh HG = Hau Giang		Participants: 17 (code from 1 to 17) Number of extracts: 60 Sum of coded extracts in words: 5328 words.
Sample codes	Source	Sample extracts
I01TV01	I = Interview 01 = Teacher # 1 TV = Tra Vinh 01 = Extract # 1	My most concern is that I must know what to teach when going to a class. From the content of teaching I consider for appropriate methods to transmit effectively. Certainly, when teaching I also pay attention to time allocation because I must guarantee the quantity of teaching content within the allotted time. [I01TV01]
S14HG31	S = Survey 14 = Teacher # 14 HG = Hau Giang 31 = Extract # 31	For different learners, it is obvious that I have to select different methods of transmission. Basically, everything must start with some models because it is impossible to ask learners learn by telling them to describe something and do exercises in accordance to my teaching. [S14HG31]

Table 1: Description of how the data was coded with samples

These coded extracts were then classified into different modules of challenges for educational transformation with two main themes for the signals of being oppressed and being the oppressors in the teachers' teaching praxis using Padilla's technique (1994):

<b>Teachers perceptions through praxis</b>	<b>Being oppressed</b>	<b>Being oppressors</b>
Challenges for educational transformation		
Roots of these challenges		
Possible ways to improve the situation		

Table 2: The empty matrix for qualitative data framing using Padilla (1994)

The coded extracts from the qualitative data were utilized for data analysis with the findings and evidences as in the following section.

## **FINDINGS**

This study revealed the signals of both being the oppressors and being the oppressed within the same contextual situations from the teachers' own teaching praxis. From the critical theories, some possibilities of transformation were also found from the collected data regarding the teachers' recognitions of the challenges, the origins of these challenges, and how to overcome them.

### **The signals of being the oppressors from the teachers' teaching praxis**

The signals of being the oppressors in the teaching process were found in fourteen out of 17 participants. The two obvious signals which were figured out from the findings were (1) the domination view of education as the transmitting process (Freire 2005) and (2) the inequality in education with the teachers as evaluators and oppressors (Ranci re 1991).

#### ***The domination view of education as the transmitting process***

In an educational system with the concentration on the solid values of knowledge with examination as the only powerful means of evaluation, the signals of authoritarian education are not dubious. The majority of teachers have used their time of teaching for transmitting the knowledge as described in Freire's conception of banking education. This type of education values the capacity of remembering the facts or knowledge which students were transmitted. For that reason, who can remember well during the exam or according to Freire it is the process of withdrawing the knowledge from the bank of the teachers will be the best students. The teachers' perception with this view was found in at least 11 out of 17 participants.

I pay attention to the matter if the learners learn the essential knowledge in the classroom. It is normal that the teacher teach and transmit knowledge to students, students write down, and go home with their homework. If students do not learn the lessons at home and do homework,



that knowledge will be missed. To avoid this consequence, I aim to do whatever to make students remember and apply around 70% to 80% of the lesson before going home. The rest of 20% will be ensured with reviewing the old lessons. [S12KG26]

I believe that I can transmit knowledge to my student at 30-40%, and experiences at 50-60%. I often explain and talk to them, and I also share my experiences to them. In the past time, I worked a different job, so I have had some experiences related to their future job. These experiences are very useful for them [I07TV17]

If the participants emphasized on the percentage of knowledge that they want their students to understand and remember as in S12KG26 and I07TV17, seven of them raised the importance of transmitting knowledge to the learners as in following extracts:

Although my school is operating in some principles and regulations, this is acceptable for me... My thinking is very simple. I think that no matter teacher uses traditional or modern methods; provided that the teachers achieve the goal of transmitting knowledge is good. It means education is how to achieve our set goals [goals set by teacher]. [I06TV16]

With different objects of transmission, I have different methods. For example with early education, everything should be in models because describing something and asking them to follow the instructions would not be possible. [S14HG31]

In each lesson, I care about the lesson focus. I will try to transmit that focused content to the learners and give exercises for them to apply. The teachers know and the learners do not know the lessons so the teachers teach them to know after the teaching process. [S08HG20]

Students should learn the knowledge and understand the contents that I transmitted and applied them to the exercises. [S13HG57]

It depends on the lessons that I will transmit the content to the learners. When teaching, I pay attention to the degree of understanding the lessons because that is the measurement for the quality of that lesson. [S09HG21]

My most concern is I must know what to teach when going to a class. From the content of teaching I consider for appropriate methods to transmit effectively. Certainly, when teaching I also pay attention to time allocation because I must guarantee the quantity of teaching content within the allotted time. I am also under pressure of time but this issue is just my secondary concern. It is due to the fact that if I care much about time, the teaching content will be underestimated or less deep. However, sometimes I cannot proactively ensure teaching time because students don't understand some points of the lesson. It will take time for explaining further and the lesson cannot be finished on time. [I01TV01]

To me, teaching is using effective tools or methods to transmit knowledge to students. We [teachers] also fail in case we have knowledge to transmit but the tool for transmitting is not effective. [I02TV07]

When the signals of being the oppressors in education from the teachers' perception were quite obvious, it was undeniable to catch the ideas of putting

knowledge higher than any others factors in education. The books were seen as one of the most important sources for the contents of their teaching.

I want the students to learn the lesson contents, be able to do the exercises, and apply what they have studied. [S08HG39]

I want my students to understand the knowledge I taught them to application. [S16KG43]

Students just receive knowledge from the teacher... For example, when I teach about a type of disorders, I just ask early education students for their ways to deal with it; they will search information and find related books to discuss with me in the following class meeting. I can't employ that teaching method to Khmer language and culture students (laughing) [I05TV13]

In short, this unfolding matrix of the data related to the signals of the teachers as the oppressors in their teaching perception would explain partly the one root of the current chaotic situations in Vietnam.

***Inequality in education with the teachers as evaluators and oppressors***

The signals of being the oppressors did not end at transmitting knowledge as one of the main teaching methods and the emphasis on knowledge from the curriculum or books designed by other people. The inequality in education was also found when students' asking is not free and permission needs to be granted.

We should limit students to freely make questions and criticize. With some good questions or opinions, I will accept and check for more information to answer if the response is not available immediately. If students are free to ask and criticize, the class will be chaotic. [S15KG59]

Teachers allow the learners to pose questions or to criticize about the knowledge from the taught lessons that they have not understood yet. I encouraged the learners to give their own opinions. If I think these ideas are appropriate, I will accept these ideas. [S10KG36]

I am teaching with the emancipated orientation because I do not oppress or force the learners to learn. They are free to discuss and I confirmed the final answers to the problems. [S08HG38]

I think that the teachers usually make students think that there is only one correct answer for every question. And this fact exists in all levels of education. [S10KG46]

In my class, I raise an issue for students to discuss for a while and getting them to do presentation by many ways such as every student takes turn to speak out his idea. The whole group will stand in front of the class to present. Every group brings out its idea and the following groups cannot repeat the ideas from the previous groups. [I02TV05]

When I ask "do you have any opinions?", my students usually keep silent because they are afraid of making mistakes or being laughed by their friends of asking stupid questions. Never asking in the class is the good strategy for my students. [S11KG40]

It could be seen from these extracts that the students had their voice only with the granted permission from the teachers. Students could give their opinions when their ideas are accepted by the teachers. The learning process would not be from the learners' interests or there would be no equality among their roles in the classroom with one granted and one asked for granted. This phenomenon was

similar to the viewpoints of oppression in the critical theories by Freire (2005) and the inequality was found and criticized in Rancière (1991). From this sense, equality in education requires the teachers to be at similar levels of understandings with the learners in which the teachers would not be the transmitter of knowledge (Freire) or the explicator (Rancière) to stultify the learners with the *teachers' intelligence*.

***The signals of being oppressed from the teachers' teaching praxis***

Aside with the signals of being the oppressors, the teachers also implied their positions with tight hands and being oppressed from their hierarchy system of education. Nine out of 17 participants described their perceptions with these signals of being oppressed in their daily teaching praxis from the higher levels of management. It could be easily to recognize that they had to follow some kinds of curriculum designed by some people in the top-down system and the books were the main resources for teaching. Even if the books were convinced to be one of the materials, the important final exams at any levels of education must be extracted or designed from these textbooks.

In my opinion, no matter what we do we must reserve love for our job. A teacher must have a heart and a passion for the job. It means teacher must do something to ensure that all contents must be **transmitted** [*help students understand*] **which are in the curriculum**. [I01TV02]

I think that current education focuses on the transmitting models and lead the learners to the ideas or knowledge which were already designed [*by the leaders or the system, not the teachers*]. [S12KG44]

My teaching environment is that the teachers must follow the curriculum designed by someone else and the contents must be managed to be taught. [S16KG52]

Education here forces people to learn and follow what they might not agree for the knowledge or thinking to be right. People must do something in education because they are forced to do so. [S11KG24]

My teaching habits are influenced by the program, curriculum, the school policies... which critical ideas would not be encouraged. [S16KG42]

The teachers order and the students follow without any rights to debate, give opinions, or criticize even if the case is problematic. And this phenomenon exists everywhere even for the teachers with their higher levels of management. [S17HG60]

After 18 years of working, I still love this job but I feel tired with the pressure from the designed curriculum and I am facing the boredom of learning from the learners. I am still going to class with all righteous procedure of teaching as I have been told. [S12KG55]

The signals would not be limited to the aforementioned extracts. Being oppressed could be found from the teachers' oppressing to the students' learning with different positions in education. The teachers would experience similar cases regarding the relationship with their bosses that were originated from Vietnamese history and cultures.

I am your teacher, I have more experience, and I learned more than you now. There is no reason that you do not agree with the matter that I have

taught you. This type of teachers can be found everywhere in our country, at school, at work, at home, and so on. [S15KG58]

The elderly will become the master. The ethical individuals may become a model for the others. People must follow the rules which are not from their wills or wishes. Parents force their children to do what or to be whom the parents want to be. [S14HG41]

At school, students must do rote learning, re-tell what they remember and every teacher does similarly. [S11KG25]

In fact, the signals of being oppressed exist not only in the institutional spaces, but also in the society and in the parents and different generations with Vietnamese cultures. As in the extract of I07TV18, being oppressed framed the learners to their passiveness in learning at school, to be obedient at home and in the society, and to become ignorant in front of people with their judges from concept of “banking education” for a good person or student.

***Some possibilities of transformation regarding the teachers' recognitions of the challenges in education***

When realizing the needs of teachers' transformation from their consciousness, philosophy, and even practice in teaching, this study was so far analyzing the teachers' perception to explore the challenges of modernizing education to the tendency of critical theories. The data analysis showed the signals of possible transformation with the teachers' recognitions of the challenges and needs to change in education. The findings could be described in the following themes of (1) the challenges for educational transformation, (2) the roots of the challenges in educational transformation, and (3) the possible ways to improve the situation.

About the challenges for educational transformation, the teachers listed some issues which may prevent the alternative or innovative process. The problems could be from having not enough money for suitable learning facilities. When education was led without enough “doing manner” for experience, it could end with failure. In a different perspective, the teacher#11KG recognized the importance and the risks of both promoting creativity in education and the autonomous sense of learning.

To me, education is to experience. Experience here means doing. Education which is not doing is completely a failure. In addition, it closely related to money too. Without money, we can do nothing with education. Students cannot acquire the fullest sense of some courses because of lacking of supported facilities. [I05TV14]

Some teachers like to bring creativeness to learning and let students figure out the learning issues by themselves. Some teachers going back from studying abroad set the goals and then people go their own ways without checking. Who study hard and like learning without pressure will improve, who don't study hard will do nothing. [S11KG48]

There would be some causes as the root of these challenges. Some teachers emphasized the original roots of Vietnamese educational chaos from “*the reality of teaching with testing concentration as the only means of evaluation*” (S16KG54). At least six of the participants indicated testing as the primary cause of the current education. Education seemly failed to meet the social needs that evaluating policies must be alternated for the development of skills for better improvement.

We should start with re-training the teachers with the modern orientation for developing skills, reducing the meaningless races of fame, changing about the testing system and approaches, facilitating the teaching career with better facilities and resources for students to grow and be mature. [S16KG53]

If Vietnamese education still pursues the final exams as their only evaluation methods, nothing could change the reality of teaching and learning. Different methods of evaluation vary with more possibilities. [S10KG47]

Even though I do not like the designed and fixed curriculum and requirements, I cannot change to better students learning from my sides. A lot of responsibilities will be if students cannot pass their important exams because they have been studying something useful for them. When it is useful, it is not in the exam. [S12KG45]

It depends on the subject and object to decide what methods to be applied. However, I am focusing on the final exams of the students. [S08KG23]

In a board of examining the teachers' teaching, while one examiner considers about contents, the rest give their general comments about manners and attitude, teaching methods, ways of transmitting, and voice. [I06TV15]

When I was young, I made a mistake that I always wanted to be the best student. For that reason, whenever I entered an examination room I was under the pressure of how to do the exam perfectly, how many scores I can get and with these scores I could gain the title of an excellent student or not. I bore that pressure right in the examination room. The only thing I did right after getting out that room was checking for how many percentages I could finish. I recognized that I had wrong thinking. [I04TV12]

However, possible ways to improve the situation were also found from the teachers' perceptions. Although different challenges with the majority of causes were from the testing system as the main means of evaluation, the teachers implied in their answers the possibilities to change education. Eleven extracts were found relevant to the possible changes in education. The teachers shared some different viewpoints about teaching as sharing, not teaching as usual (I04TV11). This teacher #04TV also realized that there were other important things in education different from knowledge, like behavior, attitudes, and mind development.

Sharing knowledge only is not enough; it must include attitude, behavior and passion for teaching job as well. It sounds rather odd when teaching without having passion for it. In education, I want teacher to be a supporter or facilitator and students must play the active role in their learning. Teacher satisfies students' needs is much better in comparison with the vice versa. When teacher forces his students to do something, they will quickly forget. I used to try that and recognized students didn't remember just after one day. On the other hand, everything goes easily if students really want. In the future, I want to do some more things to help students to be more active. Students must be active in practicing as well as seeking places for practice. I feel that in the past, in order to be confident we must be active because no one can force and decide on how and what we are. I also share

with students a lot about the ways to become active in their learning environment. [I04TV11]

Another special note was found from the participant #03TV with the distinction between teaching and educating roles and missing one of these roles, machinery would be possible to replace human for the educating job.

It absolutely cannot replace teacher in terms of converting students by his nice personality. Students are concurrently influenced by two factors: firstly, the knowledge and talent of teachers; and secondly, emotional life and ethics of teachers. That is very important and the reality reflects that now almost all educational institutions in Vietnamese education system run after achievements and knowledge so they try to cram knowledge to students as much as possible but lack the roles of a pedagogue and an educator. [I03TV09]

Although the challenges and the roots of these issues would be strongly influential to teachers' transformation, the possibilities were also found from within their implications. The overall strengths of these possible movements were from their positive thinking from their insights of the teaching practice and experience after the realization of the current issues. At least 8 extracts from the participants explicated these possibilities from the mindfulness importance of education from the teachers' side as the learners with less teachers' central roles (S14HG28, S09HG29, S14HG33, S11KG49, S13HG34, I02TV06, I03TV10, and S14HG50).

After some years of teaching, everything seems to be different. I am more interested in teaching and put more pressure on my skills. Students' improvement becomes the motivation for me that I will try harder to find better ways for students to learn better and to be human. [S14HG28]

It is important not to judge an idea or a solution right or wrong when each learner may have their own opinions. The way to approach the problem is more important in the learning process. [S09HG29]

It is essential to renovate the concepts about the teachers and the learners though it is difficult in its historical, consciousness, and cultural roots of each person. [S14HG50]

Authentic experience, skills, and teachers must play themselves in the roles of the learners to understand what they need to foster their awareness and curiosity of learning. [S11KG49]

Last but not least, the most vital ideas would fall to the important concepts of the learning society with social consciousness. The recognitions of these social roles and stresses of education would facilitate the sense of equality in education as from Rancière for the development of both individuals and society.

To education I think that the learning society should be built for our society to develop. If literacy levels are low, it is difficult to strongly develop. Therefore, my brief statement about philosophy of education is how to develop an educational system with its true meaning. True meaning here is to develop higher education scientifically and artfully. Just doing so we can contribute to building a learning society and promoting social

development. Education must go with real teaching and real learning.  
[I03TV10]

As a similar conclusion with the following extract from #I03TV, *education plays a special role in creating social consciousness. Firstly, it promotes and perfects personality of each individual and each group of people in community. Secondly, it enhances social development about culture, science and technology. Those are two roles of education in orientating and enhancing for the development of both individuals and the society... And people must understand about the equality in education and I think education should develop in that direction* (I03TV08). In a word, regardless the signals of systematic oppression with the teachers being the oppressors with and without their attention and being the oppressed in the same context, the possibilities of the teachers' transformation were found within their perceptions and in their teaching praxis.

## CONCLUSIONS

The signals of the teachers as both the oppressed and the oppressors indicate the existence of current authoritarian education in which they remain unchanged or slowly transformed in their working context. From the teachers' perceptions, the teachers experience their praxis as the oppressors both with and without their cognition. The signals of the oppressing society including education do not be limited within any forms of institutions, but can be found at home and in different means of communication in the a community. From this society; it could be assumed that the dubious situation of the current educational system has the connection with the less alternative means of evaluation. If education is still limited to "the act of transmitting knowledge", the teachers' job would be ended soon in accordance to the technological development. From the perspectives of critical theories, it could not be generalized, but the empirical analysis would be possible to convince for the future of learners with the teachers' positive transformations of Freire though the signals of being the oppressors and the oppressed which are very obvious. Similarly, the importance and proper equality in education would limit the difficulties of raising or hearing the demands or important voices from students as in Rancière. As an attempt to conclude from this empirical study, Vietnam needs to overcome the current chaos in education with different considerations, but most important a type of non-dubious philosophy to guide the teachers for their clearer mindfulness and cognition of their own teaching. From this study, an alternative of critical theories would be possible to bring the new strength to Vietnamese context as long as the teachers and the other social stakeholders will be able to recognize their roles and values in correspondence with the responsibilities from the learning process, life, and the system.

## REFERENCES

- Biesta, G. 2013. *The beautiful risks of education*. Colorado, USA: Paradigm Publishers.
- Croll, P., Abbott, D., Broadfoot, P., Osborn, M. & Pollard, A. 1994. Teachers and education policy: Roles and models. *British Journal of Educational Studies* 42(4): 333-347.

- Freire, P. 2005. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (30 year anniversary publication). The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc: New York.
- Gutex, G. L. 1997. *Philosophical and Ideological Perspectives on Education* (2nd Ed.) MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Martin, W. O. 1956. The importance of the philosophy of education for administrators and teachers. *Educational Theory* 6: 232–235. doi:10.1111/j.1741-5446.1956.tb01176.x
- Noddings, N. 1995. *Philosophy of Education*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Padilla, R. 1994. The unfolding matrix: a technique for qualitative data acquisition and analyses. *Studies of Qualitative Methodology* 4: 273 – 285.
- Phan, T. T. Van. 2017. Investigation into Educational Philosophy in the context of Vietnamese Higher Education. PhD dissertation with public defended on June 28, 2017 with a copy available at the Main Library of University of Gdansk at Wita Stwosza 53 in Gdansk, Poland.
- Rancière, J. 1991. *The Ignorant Schoolmaster – Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*. Stanford University Press. California.
- Sadker, D. M. & Zittleman, K. R. 2004. *Teachers, Schools, and Society*. (9<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Vandenbergh, R. 1984. Teacher's role in educational change. *Paper presented at the European Seminar of the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession*, Athens, Greece.
- Vietnamese Communist Party. 2013. Resolution N<sup>o</sup>29 about bringing out a comprehensive view and innovation about Vietnamese education dated on November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013 by the General Secretary.