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Conceptual changes in Higher Education Teaching and Learning:

Insights from a compulsory teacher training program for higher education teachers in Vietnam

Thi Van Su Nguyen

A thesis submitted in
fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Sydney School Education and Social Work

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Signature

Name: Thi Van Su Nguyen

Date: November 2017

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved Grandma,

who sadly passed away in 2016.

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My first and greatest acknowledgement goes to Ms Fran Laws, a loving and inspiring educator not only to me, but to many of my colleagues. Four years ago, back home, when I was still hesitant if I could make it to Sydney to start my PhD degree, Fran said: "You will finish it for sure". I thank Fran for her trust, from which I took a life-changing decision. Fran will always be missed. I own my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Kevin Laws, who always surprises me with his wisdom, expertise, caring, devotion and patience. To Kevin: Thank you for being my research supervisor. I am too fortunate to have you forever as my life mentor, and career inspirer.

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ABSTRACT

Compulsory pedagogical training programs for higher education teachers have become a common practice in many countries. The pedagogical training program for higher education teachers in Vietnam has been made compulsory since 2007 (Decision 61/2007/QĐ-BGDĐT), however, no published studies have reported participants' changes in their practices or conceptions on teaching and learning in higher education. Examining changes on participants' conceptions or practices after participating in this training program is essential for the restructure of the program. This study was conducted to fill this gap by investigating the program participants' conceptual changes in higher education teaching and learning after completing the compulsory training program.

Constructivist grounded theory was used to identify themes, categories and dimensions related to participants' conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education. Fifteen program participants of one program cohort at one university in the Mekong Delta River region (Vietnam) were interviewed using a semi-structured interview prior to commencement of the program and immediately after completion. Five program presenters were also interviewed, and relevant documents were analysed.

The post-program phase saw greater understanding of the role of higher education in the development of social responsibility and the development of an individual's capability. The post-program also saw conceptions of the roles and standards of higher education teachers to be more demanding, especially accepting responsibility for the development of curriculum competence. Conceptions of teaching were found to be significantly changed to a greater student-centred orientation, with an outcome-based curriculum orientation. The conceptualisation of teaching approaches after the program was found to be more considerate of students' learning diversity and contexts.

This grounded theory of conceptual changes in teaching and learning provides evidence to support the initiative to make teacher's professional development programs compulsory in higher education. The study provides an initial theory of Vietnamese teachers' conceptions on not only approaches to teaching and learning, but also the development of an appreciation of the role of higher education, and teachers' roles in those aspects.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Research into the compulsory higher education teacher training policy and practice, popularly through programs known as Post-Graduate Certificates of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, has indicated potential outcomes on multiple aspects of teaching, and improved students' learning (Gibbs & Coffey, 2004; Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne, & Nevgi, 2007; Stes, Min-Leliveld, Gijbels, & Van Petegem, 2010; Trowler & Bamber, 2005). Higher education teacher training has become compulsory in many countries such as UK, Denmark, Australia (IECD, 2014). Multiple studies have been conducted to advocate this training policy as it is believed that training for higher education teachers will lead to better students' study approaches, teachers' teaching skills and even institution development (Butcher & Stoncel, 2012; Gibbs & Coffey, 2004; Knight, 2006; Trowler & Bamber, 2005).

Since 2007, the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has started to implement the Decision 61/2007/QĐ-BGDĐT which requires early-career higher education teachers to participate in an induction program designed by MOET, specifically for this group of higher education teachers, in an effort to enhance quality teaching and learning in the context of higher education reform in Vietnam. The aim of the program is to enhance higher education teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills. Due to the increasing demands of higher education teachers, in 2013, the Minister of Education and Training made a few modifications to the first decision of the program. In this updated Circular (Circular No. 12/TT-BGDĐT), MOET decided to extend the participants, so that prospective higher education teachers who are professionals or graduates may participate in the program too. Similar to the previous Decision, in this new Circular, the curriculum for the program was designed and suggested by MOET, and universities that were accredited to implement this program exerted certain authority to flexibly redesign the program according to MOET's guidelines and requirements.

The motivation to conduct this study was derived from my own experience as a former participant of this program in 2011 when I was a newly recruited higher education teacher. Since the program was promulgated, until now, no study has been officially published to measure its impacts. I was curious to find out the impact the program exerts on participants, especially on their conceptual changes regarding teaching and learning in higher education. It

would be important to also find out to what degree the program in Vietnam might lead to changes in participants' practice, as a few evaluation studies on higher education teachers' training policy elsewhere have reported. However, from my own experience, changes in actual teaching practice require time, faculty support and personal drive, whereas it is more possible to determine conceptual changes, which I believe are a determinant in changing one's teaching practice. This assumption is in tune with a number of researchers' viewpoints, who have suggested that the most effective way to promote development for academics is developing their conceptual understanding of the nature of teaching and learning (Åkerlind, 2008, 2004; Ho, Watkins, & Kelly, 2001; Kember, 1997; Prosser & Trigwell, 1997), rather than the traditional focus on developing their teaching methods and skills. It is argued from this line of research that the development of teaching activities for participants of this program should not be addressed in isolation from the ways they think about teaching and learning. For this reason, I was interested to examine the conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education from this program participants' perspective and how they changed their conceptions from participating in the training program.

Higher education reform is taking place worldwide and higher education academic development has been progressing in quantity and quality. Dall'Alba (2005) believed that enabling academic program participants to "integrate enhanced knowing about teaching, breadth in what they can do when they teach, as well as who they are as university teachers" (p. 371) within the constant changing context of higher education development is important. Researching conceptions of teaching which address the overlooked ontology (being and becoming) in higher education, therefore, was proposed to be challenging but necessary in the design and practice of higher education teacher training programs (Dall'Alba, 2005). In some contexts, the restructure of the academic training program has been shifted to a social-realism approach, which focuses its attention to contextual influences and the many factors that might go beyond the control of academic developers (Leibowitz, 2016). Research that investigates values that inform teaching and professional development for higher education teachers such as academics' responsibility to students, colleagues, and the world (Nixon, 2001), contextual influence on teacher training programs (Leibowitz, Bozalek, van Schalkwyk & Winberg, 2015) are advocated because it allows in-depth discussion on the underpinning values that could affect higher education teacher training policy and practice.

1.2 Research Problem and the Purpose of the Study

The study looked at how participants of the program perceived higher education teaching and learning before they participated in the program and after they completed the program. The study has not attempted to measure long-term impacts on participants' conceptions because there might be factors such as departmental cultures, individual differences and pathways that might interfere with participants' conceptions in the long run; this could be another line of future research. The focus in this study is on the immediate change of participants' conceptions of teaching and learning after participating in the training program.

Although recent literature has seen a plethora of studies in higher education in Vietnamese contexts, most studies report on management, governance, and especially higher education teaching, learning, curriculum, assessment and quality control (see Tran, Marginson & Nguyen, 2014, for example), not on higher education teacher training. Higher education teachers' professionalism, and specifically the new compulsory higher education teachers' training program which was initiated in 2007, is therefore a potential area for more research. Additionally, no published research has attempted to examine the conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education in this context. Higher education teachers' voices concerning teaching and learning have been scarcely researched and it is argued that what they have conceptualised about teaching and learning in the current higher education reform in Vietnam might be contradictory to what is expected of them. It is necessary to consider teaching and learning in higher education through higher education teachers' perspectives, especially in the reform context of higher education in Vietnam. Considering those underexamined areas of research in Vietnam, investigating changes of program participants' conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education will firstly, provide a general picture on the participants' conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education in the reform context, and secondly, measure possible changes on participants' conceptions of teaching and learning. Further impact evaluations of such studies, especially on teachers' change in practice after completing the program, could be motivated by the present study. The restructure of such a training program could be developed from this investigation and recommendations drawn to help administrators and academic developers of this program to reflect on their current practice.

The study is drawn upon the belief that teachers' conceptions drive their actual teaching practice and only when their conceptions of teaching and learning change can their actual practice change (Hativa, 2002; Kember & Kwan, 2000; Radloff, 2002). As stated by Fitzmaurice (2013), or Stes, Clement & Van Petegem, (2007) personal diversity, personal

values, beliefs of individual teachers exert powerful influences on teachers' beliefs and future practice. Challenging the underlying conceptions of higher education teachers, rather than focusing on their teaching approaches, is therefore high on research agenda. A conceptual change approach to higher education teacher training has been proposed (Ho et al., 2001) to help facilitate program participants' change in their conceptions. In case this approach is not adopted and the program curriculum is imposed by the government, it is questioned to what degree such a conceptual change can take place. In an attempt to further investigate the understanding of possible changes of participants' conceptions of higher education teaching and learning in the Vietnamese context by participating the teacher training program this study was developed. It must be noted that this study is not an impact evaluation of the program which takes the program outcomes into account. No evaluation framework was followed for that reason. In contrast, it aimed to investigate participants' conceptual changes regarding teaching and learning in higher education by comparing two sets of data, prior to participants joining the program, and after completing it.

Another aim of this study was to attempt to broaden the conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education, which were thought to be restricted to the classroom perspective, as indicated in the latest literature on higher education teaching and learning conceptions (Kreber, 2013a, 2013b; Leibowitz, 2016). Learning and teaching contexts are eclipsed and values that underline those conceptions of teaching and learning have not been explored in current higher education literature on teaching and learning (Leibowitz, 2016). An examination of the conceptualization of teaching and learning from a socio-cultural viewpoint, taking the values of higher education into account, is therefore required, especially under the complexity of higher education development as Barnett (2005) has argued. Similarly, models and approaches to higher education teachers' professional development activities are believed to be dominantly driven by epistemology (theory of knowing), while its ontological part, which emphasizes teachers' thinking about themselves as teachers (teachers' thinking and identity), is overlooked (Dall'Alba, 2005). Based upon those two arguments, this study was developed to also respond to the challenge of extending the understanding of teaching and learning in higher education. Therefore, this study did not restrict the investigation of participants' change in their conceptions just at the classroom level. An investigation into how participants perceived teaching and learning, incorporating higher education values and their roles and to what degree those conceptions changed at the end of their participation in the training program was also conducted. As such, this study did not only respond to current lack of empirical studies on the

implementation of the compulsory training program for Vietnamese higher education teachers, it also aimed to provide initial theory on the understanding of Vietnamese higher education teaching and learning in its broader sense, taking higher education functions and teachers' roles into account.

1.3 Context of the study

Vietnamese higher education institutions are facing double burdens under current higher education reform: improving quality teaching and learning, and contributing to social and economic development to push the country out of the under-developed zones (Chapter 2. Literature Review, 2.1.6). MOET has proposed and implemented policies to drive this higher education reform process. The initiative to make pedagogical training compulsory for prospective and in-service higher education teachers was propagated as one of those policies aiming to elevate teaching quality in the context of mass development of higher education institutions in Vietnam. Certain higher education institutions are accredited to implement the program for higher education teachers and have a certain degree of autonomy in the development and implementation of such training although the curriculum of the program must be abided by (Circular 12/2013/TT-BGDĐT).

The institution which was chosen for this study is based in the Mekong Delta river region, in the southern part of Vietnam. This university (MK University) was one of the first universities to be chosen by MOET to coordinate the pedagogical program for prospective and in-service higher education teachers in this region. Although recently more institutions in the same region have been accredited to coordinate a similar program, MK university is popular for their program and usually coordinates three to four cohorts of participants per year, not only for its staff members but for all participants countrywide. The School of Education of MK University, through its Centre for Teachers' Professional Development, is responsible for coordinating the program, redesigning curriculum for the program based upon MOET guidelines, recruiting participants, delivering the programs, assessing participants and providing certificates for participants once they meet all program requirements.

MK University was chosen for this study because I have a good connection with this university and have a few years of experience teaching there. This connection helped establish a good relationship with the field stakeholders and participants, which facilitated the research process. From a constructivist grounded theory viewpoint, where context accounts for a smooth and reciprocal exchange of shared understanding between the researcher and participants, this

choice also allowed in-depth investigation of the examined phenomenon through my experience of the program location. The familiarity with context also helped to form better theoretical sensitivity for this research. Another rationale for choosing MK University was due to the experience it has in coordinating such programs and the influence it might exert on future and in-service teachers in the Mekong Delta river region. Considered the main production of labor force for the region, this university has a long history and has achieved remarkable accomplishments recently. The Centre for Teachers' Professional Development and the School of Education of this university are considered the pioneers in training teachers for the whole region. Having experience in coordinating the program, MK University offered more lessons on the reflection of the program implementation, which was useful for the construction of theory in this study.

The study was conducted from late October 2014 to late March 2015. The examined program took place from 15th November 2014 to 25th February 2015 and it was a full-time and extensive program. The program adapted at MK University is presented in Table 1.1. In this program curriculum, the two optional modules which MK University chose from the suggestions of MOET are: Research Methodology and Teaching Practice.

Table 1.1 *Program curriculum at MK University*

Number	**Contents/Modules**	**Credits**
1	Higher education in the world and in Vietnam	1
2	Educational Psychology in higher education	1
3	Principles and methods of teaching in higher education	3
4	Curriculum design and development	2
5	Assessment and evaluation in higher education	2
6	Use of ICTs	1
7	General Psychology (new)	2
8	Introduction to educational science (new)	3
9	Research Methodology (optional)	2
10	Teaching Practice (optional)	3

1.4 Research Question

Examining the extent to which participants changed their conceptions of teaching and learning was the focus of the study. The main research question is: **To what extent does a compulsory**

higher education teacher training program change participants' conceptions of higher education teaching and learning?

However, understanding participants' conceptions of teaching and learning, in its broader sense as discussed in 1.2 Research Problem, and how those conceptions changed is a complex process and the results were hard to predict at the beginning. It was decided that a set of sub-questions would be helpful to investigate participants' conceptions of teaching and learning throughout two phases of the study. Those sub-questions were used to guide the study:

1. To what extent did participants change their conceptions of higher education purposes and their standards and roles in it?
2. To what extent did participants change their conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education?

This study used constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014, 2006), which recommends that researchers should start their research with open and broad questions so as not to restrict the investigation to certain frameworks or themes. The constructivist approach to interviewing (Charmaz, 2006) was strictly followed to allow room for participants to express their conceptions freely. Categories and subcategories on each theme were formed based upon participants' self-reported conceptions and were not influenced by any theoretical frameworks.

Although the study attempts to investigate possible changes of participants' conceptions of higher education teaching and learning as a result of participating in the program, it did not employ quasi-experimental research methods, such as surveys, observations, questionnaires or tests due to its focus on participants' self-reflections and experience in revealing their conceptions of teaching and learning. It can also be argued that the use of constructivist grounded theory is not suited to for studies targeting at measuring conceptual changes like this because the post-phase conceptions findings cannot be accurately interpreted as impacts of the program when comparing to the pre-program conceptions. However, a constructivist grounded theory approach can lead to an understanding of the changes in participants thoughts on teaching and learning. It is emphasized that the study does not aim to evaluate the impacts of the program, but just aims to compare two sets of data to highlight the differences in the ways participants perceived teaching and learning and offers implications for the program. In addition, another aim of the study is to generate a theory of teaching and learning in higher education, from the perspectives of higher education teachers in Vietnam, a topic upon which there is little.

1.5 Methodology

The present study followed a qualitative inquiry approach, in particular, grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2014, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was adopted because this qualitative approach allows the process of generating theory rather than testing a particular content (Patton, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This study followed the constructivist epistemological paradigm and interpretivism theoretical perspective. Interpretivists believe people create and associate their own meanings through the interactions with objects around them, that is, the meaning is constructed, not discovered. This study adopted an interpretive position to its methods, in which meaning is constructed, not discovered, and participants construct their own meaning in different ways. The constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014, 2006) and its principle of reciprocity, the co-construction of theory through the shared reality between the researcher and participants' views, (Charmaz, 2006; Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006), was followed during all stages of the study. The study used both the first and third person throughout the research although it might be argued that the third person use is more persuasive. The use of first person in grounded theory is not abnormal because as argued by Jones and Alony (2011), "it provides a more subjective view of the research process, since subjectivity is an inherent component of qualitative research" (p. 7).

The constructivist paradigm views research as constructed rather than discovered and, therefore, "fosters researchers' reflexitivity about their actions" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 13). The aim of this study was to generate a theory on the co-construction of meaning through the voices and experience of both the participants and myself, to generate new perspectives and conceptions (of higher education teaching and learning) that can represent the specific group of participants in a particular context (the Mekong Delta River region, Vietnam). The investigation of participants' conceptions, in this study, did not follow an objective stance, but instead, was socially constructed through an interactive process with stakeholders, and participants under diverse cultural and contextual influences that the study took place. Steps and processes for connecting induction and deduction through a constant comparative method, and theoretical sampling are important in grounded theory (Birks & Mills, 2011; Patton, 2002) and were followed in this study.

Constructivist grounded theorists (Charmaz, 2014, 2006; Mills et al., 2006) also support interpretivist approach in using literature review, and the researchers' role as a part of knowledge construction. Adopting the constructivist approach (Charmaz, 2014; Dunne, 2011; Mills et al., 2006), this grounded theory used literature throughout the entire study; before

going to the field, during the data analysis stage when categories emerged, and even during the theory development process. The iterative process with a quite substantial body of literature relevant to the emerging themes helped yield a higher level of abstraction for the theoretical framework of this study.

This study used individual semi-structured interviews with program participants, individual semi-structured interviews with the program presenters of the studied training program, document analysis and memo-writing as instruments. A schedule of data collection is illustrated in Table 1.2, which was divided into two phases: pre-program interview phase, and post-program interview phase. Semi-structured interviews with program presenters were conducted based upon their availability. Documents related to the program and themes emerging from interview data were analysed. Literature searches occurred throughout all stages of the research, and were used to reach theoretical framework for this study.

Table 1.2 *Schedule of data collection and analysis*

Stages	**Data collection and analysis**	
Pre-program phase 15 Oct – 30 Oct 2014	Participants' interviews (15 participants) Presenters' interviews (3 presenters) Document analysis	Memo writing Literature search Data analysis
Program in action (15 Nov 2014 – 25 Feb 2015) at MK University		
Post-program phase 07 Mar – 25 Mar 2015	Participants' interviews (15 participants) Presenters' interviews (2 presenters) Document analysis	Memo writing Literature search Data analysis

1.6 Significance

The study provides findings on:

- The potential conceptual changes on teaching and learning in higher education by participating the compulsory teacher training program in Vietnamese higher education context, and

- Conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education under the "supercomplex" time of higher education (Barnett, 2005) and the higher education reform in Vietnam.

The study provides theoretical and practical implications that could benefit the following stakeholders: early career or new higher education teachers, academics developers, higher education administrators, curriculum designers, faculty or department leaders and policy makers. Implications could be used to inform policies and practices to better higher education quality teaching and learning in Vietnam. Specifically, the study provides insights on some aspects of impacts of the compulsory training program for higher education teachers in Vietnam, which had been scarcely researched as indicated in the literature. Implications for the restructure of the program to MOET, curriculum designers, academic developers, and presenters (trainers) of the program therefore can be drawn, taking context and participants' voices into account. A new understanding of conceptions of teaching and learning, from a bottom-up perspective (through self-reports with current higher education teachers and prospective higher education teachers in the studied program) within the Vietnamese context is presented, suggesting gaps that current higher education policy and practices need to fill and implications for the design of similar training programs or even in-service higher education teachers' professional development activities. The study will be of significance to current higher education teachers, especially new and early-career ones because it will stimulate their reflections on their current conceptions of higher education teaching and learning and the modification of their current practice.

Theoretically speaking, this has been an under-researched area in both higher education teachers' professional development and higher education teaching and learning conceptions and even the context in which the study was carried out. The study was the first investigation into the program's impacts on participants' conceptions of teaching and learning since its implementation. Similarly, conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education, investigated from a bottom-up perspective (from teachers' voices), rather than top-down perspective (government and leaders), were also rarely researched in this context and therefore, this research makes an original contribution to the knowledge of higher education conceptions of teaching and learning, and compulsory higher education teacher training policy and practice in Vietnam. Apart from contributing to current research on conceptions of teaching and learning and academic development in higher education in Vietnam, the findings from the study also support the current research agenda considering higher education teaching and learning under the socio-cultural perspective, taking higher education values and teachers'

standards into account (Alexander, 2008; Dall'Alba, 2005; Kreber, 2013a; Leibowitz, 2016). Similarly, the findings of the study provide empirical evidence to support the consideration of treating teachers' conceptions through short-training programs for higher education teachers, rather than focusing on their teaching skills and approaches as argued by Ho et al. (2001).

1.7 Limitations

Grounded theory cannot be used to generalise findings to other contexts and therefore, it is not my intention to jump to any conclusion that impacts found from the program participants' change in their conceptions on teaching and learning in higher education can be applied to other contexts. However, this research can potentially deepen the understanding of (1) the program participants' conceptions of current higher education teaching and learning in Vietnam, their possible conceptual changes by participating in the program and the expanding conceptions of higher education teaching and learning and (2) the possibility of restructuring the current teacher training program according to the perceptions of teaching and learning and the conceptual changes found from this study.

Furthermore, unlike some research on impacts of compulsory higher education teachers' training program, this study did not measure the degree to which participants changed their actual teaching practice as a result of participating in the examined training program. It is unwise to conclude that a change in conceptions could lead to a change in teaching practice as warned in the literature. However, it is necessary to investigate the conceptual changes as a result of participating the training program for two reasons. Firstly, this examination on conceptual changes supports the current research agenda on the feasibility of changing teachers' conceptions through training, and extends the notion of higher education teaching and learning to a broader level, embracing philosophies underpinning teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning. Secondly, it provides initial theory on conceptions of teaching and learning in Vietnamese higher education and on the impacts of compulsory teacher training program for higher education teachers, upon which future studies can be built and developed.

One more limitation of the study which might lead to further follow-up studies is the lack of investigation into individual change of participants' conceptions of teaching and learning as a result of participating the program. It is acknowledged that cross-case analysis of the diverse pools of participants might provide solutions to better scaffold conceptual and potentially practical changes of program participants regarding their disciplines, work experience, and institutions. Since this study aims to investigate the general construction of teaching and

learning experiences in two phases (pre-program and post-program), to see if there are any possible conceptual changes, and also attempts to broaden the understanding of teaching and learning from a specific context. It is also hoped that the findings from this study provide initial theory for future follow-up investigations that look into individual differences and changes of participants as a result of participating the program.

1.8 Key Concepts and Key Words

The study uses a few key concepts and key words that occur frequently throughout the thesis.

- Higher education (HE): As stated in Vietnamese Higher Educational Law (08/2012/QH13), higher education in Vietnam involves colleges, universities, academies and research institutions.

- The teacher training program (the program). While the study uses "teacher training program in higher education" to refer to activities or training programs higher education teachers need to undergo, other researchers might use other phrases to denote the same meaning, such as "higher education teachers' professional development", "early career academics' development". It was decided that "teacher training program" specifically be used in this study to describe the investigated program, rather than using "pedagogical training" or "academic development" or "post-graduate teaching certificate" because of the compulsory and structured nature of the examined program, rather than the flexible, diverse and collegial forms of higher education teachers' academic development activities.

- Higher education teachers: Higher education teachers will be used, rather than "academics" or "lecturers" because the term reflects the nature of the study participants, who could be either in-service higher education teachers, employed by a university or any vocational or technical college or prospective teachers participating in the program with the aspiration to become a higher education teacher. It is, however, acknowledged that different terminologies referring to those who work in higher education institutions in a variety of countries as discussed in a Leibowitz (2016) or Goodyear and Hativa (2002) may be used interchangeably in the literature.

- Pre-program and post-program phases: The program studied lasted for three months and two rounds of interviews with program participants were conducted. Pre-program interviews with participants were conducted before the program started and post-program interviews were conducted immediately after the program ended, as indicated in Table 1.2.

- Conceptions/beliefs/perceptions: Teachers' beliefs, according to Pajares (1992), are "a messy construct that travels in disguise and often under alias" (p. 2). Those might vary from

"conceptions" (Kember, 1997; Varnava-Marouchou, 2010; Watkins, 1998), "perceptions" (Schulz, 2001), "implicit theories" (Clark & Peterson, 1986), to "maxims" (Richards, 1996). Some might argue a clear distinction between "conceptions" (which are considered as cognitive constructs, underlying frames of concepts) and "beliefs" (personal theories with a strong affective and evaluative component). However, in this study, those terms are used interchangeably, implying a complex system of thinking that is shaped by teachers' experience, education, values and assumptions.

- Conceptions of teaching and learning: Conceptions of teaching and learning, used in this study, do not restrict in the understanding to just activities related to "teaching" and "learning". On the other hand, all factors that are reported as relevant to teaching and learning are considered. This study relies on Leibowitz's (2016) critique on the restricted view of conceptions of teaching and learning, in which it is considered as a phenomenon of just "teaching" and "learning". Conceptions of teaching and learning, in this study, are viewed at a broader level, embracing all factors that influence higher education teaching and learning, including the purposes of higher education and teachers' roles.

- Program presenters: Some studies might use "program trainers", "teacher trainers" or "academic developers". Due to the nature of the training program in this study, presenters of the program must follow the curriculum and guidelines designed by MOET. Although presenters have some power to design and adapt the teaching materials, they need to follow the framework as MOET requires, and therefore, cannot be addressed as "academic developers".

- Morality: Due to the nature of description from participants, and cultural values in the study context, morality in this thesis is defined at a broad level, including manner, behaviour, character, and even attitude. Morality, according to Knights (2016), is broader than ethical behaviour in the sense that it exceeds the strict rules of codes of conducts. Moral education can be a contested concept that is governed by political influence as indicated by Kim and Taylor (2017). Morality is used in the study because what participants shared is more related to daily behaviour that a group of society is imposed upon individuals, and in this study, Confucius values and the political system might exert different influences in the ways participants explained morality. It is noted at this stage that using Western framework on understanding moral dimensions in this context could be not accurate for this reason. Due to the complex nature of the term "morality" and its varied dimensions based upon history and cultures, in the scope of this thesis, it is decided that morality used in this thesis is related to many aspects morality, including behaviour, manner, attitude, and not just understood as promiscuity. The

thesis does not try to analyse and compare differences in the ways participants perceive "morality" and moral role of teachers across cultures.

1.9 Structure of the Thesis

There are seven chapters in this thesis. The first chapter is the **Introduction**, which introduces the background to the research, the research purpose, its context and the research significance. The second chapter, **Literature Review**, provides a summary of recent research and theories related to this research, focusing on three areas: Higher education teachers' training and teachers' conceptual changes in teaching and learning, conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education, higher education purposes and higher education teachers' standards and roles. Chapter three, **Methodology**, introduces the philosophy which underpins the research and the constructivist grounded theory approach, with its principles and methods of data collection and analysis. Chapters four and five present the research **findings** which emerged from data analysis throughout the two phases of the study, and are structured according to the emerged themes. Chapter six, **Discussion**, provides an in-depth elaboration on the findings and the relevance to current research literature. The final chapter, **Conclusion and Recommendations** concludes the thesis, and provides suggestions for current policy and practice of higher education teacher training activities and research in this area. Limitations of the study are also addressed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In grounded theory it has been debated whether a review of literature should be conducted before or following the data collection phase. Traditional grounded theory has suggested the literature should be reviewed after data is collected so that researchers' interpretation of data analysis will not be influenced and biased by extensive literature findings (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Constructivist grounded theorists (Charmaz, 2014, 2006; Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006), however, regard a literature review an essential part of the researcher's knowledge construction (rather than an objective observer) which strengthens argument and credibility. The purpose of this literature review, therefore, is congruent with Charmaz (2006, p. 168) and aimed:

- to demonstrate an initial understanding of relevant works,
- to identify gaps, research problems and questions
- to design the research interview guide, and
- to make connections between themes emerging from this study with relevant works (Discussion chapter)
- to make claims from this grounded theory

Although the study attempts to investigate the possible changes in participants' conceptions of teaching and learning as a result of taking part in the program, it does not try to evaluate the impacts of the program based upon certain program evaluation frameworks. The study adopts a qualitative approach to its research methods, focusing in participants' understanding of their contexts, experiences, and does not try to incorporate quasi-experimental design of the pre-test and post-test approaches to reach any conclusion regarding impacts of the program. Therefore, it must be noted that this study was not an impact evaluation of the investigated compulsory higher education program, which would focus mainly on measuring effectiveness based upon targeted outcomes of the program. On the other hand, this study aims to investigate program participants' conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education, and their (possible) conceptual changes through their self-reports before participating and after completing the program to shed lights on the understanding of

teaching and learning in Vietnamese higher education, from which recommendations for academic developers and administrators of the training programs are suggested

The literature review of the study links directly to themes emerging from the findings of this thesis. Section one presents the current profile on compulsory higher education teacher training programs, the impact of such programs, especially on teachers' conceptual change, broadening the conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education. A general introduction to Vietnamese higher education and the compulsory training program for higher education teachers in the examined context are also introduced. Section two discusses conceptions of higher education teaching and learning and section three presents higher education purposes and teachers' roles in the context of global higher education reform and the implications on higher education teacher training programs.

2.1 Teacher Training Programs for Higher Education Teachers – Changing Teachers' Conceptions of Teaching and Learning

As the number of higher education students is increasing and the society is requiring a more qualified workforce, higher education is facing an urgent demand to provide quality and excellence in education. To enable student learning, it is essential to create conditions for teacher learning and improvement to take place. As such, many studies have supported the compulsory higher education teacher training policy for higher education teachers.

2.1.1 Compulsory teacher training in higher education: a general overview

Training for higher education teachers has become common practice in many countries, such as the UK, Scandinavian states, Australia, New Zealand and Holland (ICED, 2014). In most countries, the model for an accredited teaching development program for new higher education teachers is a part-time year-long course, popularly known as the Post-Graduate Certificate of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. In some cases, the program is named "pedagogical training on teaching in higher education" (Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne, & Nevgi, 2007) or "instructional development for teachers in higher education" (Stes, Coertjens, & Van Petegem, 2010). In this study, however, I use the term "training" program to refer to the investigated program due to the induction nature of the program.

The programs for higher education teachers are usually led by experienced teacher trainers who work in the educational development unit of universities, or the faculty of education, or centre of teaching and learning (ICED, 2014). The training courses are diverse from one country to another in terms of scale and duration. For example, national standards for teacher

qualifications exist in the UK and teacher training is required for tenure at some UK institutions but this is not implemented in the whole of the UK, whereas in Norway, for the past 20 years, training is compulsory for university teachers who must undergo basic pedagogical training of about 100 hours (3-4 weeks) (Varnava-Marouchou, 2010). The approaches used vary, but according to ICED report (2014), the dominant approach of delivery is face to face while some other participative approaches are also incorporated such as workshops, projects, portfolios, teaching observation, and individualised consultation.

2.1.2 Core concepts in higher education teacher training programs

Goals and rationales for higher education teacher training programs also vary but in general, the four following are identified as popular by Gibbs & Coffey (2004):

- The improvement of teachers' skills
- The development of teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning
- Consequent changes in students' learning
- Other goals (teachers' ability to self-reflect, self-improve, teachers' increasing confidence, self-efficacy...).

In discussing broader issues related to current trends in higher educational teaching and learning development programs for teachers, Gibbs (2013) summarised some of the latest foci which have been paid more attention by academic developers. The following changes in higher education teaching and learning academic development have been observed: from a focus on the classroom to a focus on the learning environment; from a focus on individual teachers to a focus on course teams, departments and leadership of teaching; from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning; from small, single, separate tactics to large, complex, integrated, aligned, multiple tactics; from change tactics to change strategies; from a focus on quality assurance to quality enhancement; from a focus on fine-tuning of current practice to transforming practice in new directions (Gibbs, 2013). Gibbs' observations are useful for academic developers to reflect on their current practice and see how it responds to current trends in developing training programs for higher education teachers. Those observations are even more useful in the case of countries where, according to Gibbs (2013, p. 4) academic development is still in its early stages.

Contents of higher education teachers training programs also vary, depending upon the goals set by educators. Some studies have shown strong emphasis on pedagogical content such as teaching methods (student-centred), student assessment, curriculum development, and

electronic learning environments (Postareff et al., 2007; Stes et al., 2010). Kandlbinder and Peseta (2009) contributed to the field of professional training for higher education teachers from a different perspective. Unlike most impact studies on such programs on the quality and students' outcomes, this study explored the key concepts of higher education teaching and learning programs from course coordinators in three countries: Australia, New Zealand and the UK. Five core concepts were mentioned most by course coordinators. The first concept was the "reflective practitioner" (Schon, 1983), which requires the teachers to learn how to manage complexity, drawing on their pre-existing elements to adapt to new situation. The second concept was that of "constructive alignment" (Biggs, 2003, 1996), which argued that the planning system needs to be aligned with cognitive level goals. The third was "student approaches to learning", which was introduced by Marton and Sajlo (1976), who differentiated the deep and surface approaches to learning. This concept has been used as a theoretical framework in a number of higher education teaching and learning studies, mostly in relational or phenomenographical studies (for example, Trigwell, 2003; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999). Concept four was related to the notion of "scholarship of teaching" (Boyer, 1990), which was later expanded to "scholarship of teaching and learning" (SoTL). Boyer (1990) argued that the framework for academic development should be centred around four scholarships: discovery (original research and knowledge advancement), integration (idea connection across disciplines), application (knowledge and practice) and teaching. SoTL is also considered a key element to academic development, as in the case of Sri Lankan higher education, where teachers have to go through a series of learning agreements that help them implement and evaluate evidence informing changed practice in their teaching (ICED, 2014). The last concept was "assessment driven learning" which suggested ten conditions under which assessment supports learning. Kandlbinder and Peseta's (2009) study, therefore, provides the theoretical base of what constitutes core elements for a higher education teaching and learning induction program. Some of the concepts found from this study were also confirmed by Kandlbinber's (2013) recent review on signature concepts on higher education teaching and learning research. In reviewing and analysing those higher education teaching and learning key concepts, Kandlbinder (2013) answered the questions that early career lecturers usually pose about the relevance of those higher education teaching and learning concepts to their practice and help them better justify their choices for one concept over another. However, although Kandlbinder's studies have provided preliminary empirical evidence and implications for the design and implementation of academic development

training programs, the studies were undertaken within Western contexts (UK, Australia, and New Zealand, specifically). It is arguable whether those key concepts to higher education teaching and learning are perceived of equal importance in other contexts, Asian, for instance. Different historical and social contexts might influence the direction of higher education teaching and learning concepts that are introduced in higher education teacher training programs in a completely different way. Researching what concepts underlie those training programs in other contexts should add diversity to the current higher education teacher training literature.

2.1.3 Impacts of the higher education teachers' training program

Findings on higher education teachers' training program impacts on institutions and students' study approaches and outcomes were present in the literature (Butcher & Stoncel, 2012; Hanbury, Prosser & Rickinson, 2008; Knight, 2006; Rust, 1998). Similarly, research on impacts of those programs on teachers' development, especially their teaching approaches was also reported. An extensive longitudinal research by Gibbs and Coffey (2004), which looked at training courses for teachers at 22 universities in eight different countries, concluded that training can improve various aspects of teaching, and importantly improve students' learning. The study found that training improved higher education teachers' approaches to teaching, teaching skills, and approaches to learning of the students. Trowler and Bamber (2005) also supported compulsory teacher training for higher education teachers. They believed that making courses compulsory for university teachers would lead to "better equipped learners, who are able to use a wide range of methods to develop the competences of a new type of student for a post-industrial society" (Trowler & Bamber, 2005, p. 83). Later studies, for example, Postareff et al. (2007) and Stes et al. (2010) further revealed the influence of training programs for higher education teachers, which they believed to be closely related to student learning approaches. For example, Postareff et al. (2007) showed that instructional training could increase the chances for participating teachers to adopt a more student-centred approach than those who did not participate, while findings from Stes et al. (2010) concluded there were differences in teaching approaches between teachers who participated in the instructional development programs and those who did not, emphasising that the participating teachers were more willing to take a student-centred approach.

On the other hand, one limitation raised from those studies was although the effect of higher education teacher training program was positive, it was small, even with large-scale

quantitative studies (Stes, De Maeyer, Gijbels & Van Petegem, 2012; Trigwell, Caballero Rodriguez & Han, 2012) and that changes took place slowly (Postareff et al., 2007; Gibbs & Coffey, 2004). Despite the fact that clear impacts of teachers' training programs on teachers' approaches to teaching can be drawn from those studies, it was noted that no significant differences were found between two groups of teachers (experimental and control group) after the training took place in terms of teaching beliefs and intentions (Norton, Richardson, Hartley, Newstead & Mayes, 2005). Although the study found no impact from the training program, it suggested that genuine teachers' training programs need to address underlying teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning, which according to Trigwell and Prosser (1996a, 1996b), was counted as a determinant of teachers' teaching approaches. Altering teachers' conceptions about teaching, however, is not an easy task (Kember & Gow, 1994) and might require long-term instructional training for teachers to reflect on their conceptions and associated practices (Willcoxson, 1998).

In the wider teacher education field, teachers' beliefs or conceptions have been recognised as influential in orienting teachers' beliefs and behaviour (Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Pedder & Opfer, 2013). Studies of teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education, however, have only emerged since the 1990s and the relation to teachers' professional development programs has only been examined lately. Multiple studies have now recognised the powerful influences of teachers' beliefs and situated social learning in shaping teachers' practice (Fitzmaurice, 2013; Kahn, Young, Grace, Pilkington, Rush, Tomkinson & Willis, 2008; Stes et al., 2007). Consequently, academic developers have endeavoured to investigate and challenge the underlying conceptions of teachers rather than solely focusing on their teaching approaches.

2.1.4 Changing teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education teachers' training programs

Higher education teachers' beliefs were researched during the 1990s and it was pointed out that teaching in higher education and classroom behaviour is strongly influenced by a theoretical framework that is belief-driven (Marland, 1998; Clark & Peterson, 1986). A new approach to academic development that brings out fundamental changes in teaching excellence in higher education was suggested: focusing on developing teachers' understanding of the nature of teaching and learning, instead of developing teaching methods and skills (Åkerlind, 2008, 2004; Gibbs, 1995; Kember, 1997; Prosser & Trigwell, 1997;

Trigwell & Prosser, 1996a). As Ramsden (2003) put it: "Changing lecturers' understanding of teaching is a necessary condition for improving teaching in higher education" (p. 113). This approach to academic development is underpinned by a growing body of research on teachers' conceptions of teaching (teacher-centred and student-centred), student learning (deep/surface approach), and empirical relational studies on the relationship between teachers' conceptions of teaching and students' approaches to learning (Kember & Gow, 1994; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999). Conversely, a teacher-centred understanding amongst teachers is believed to be associated with a surface approach to learning amongst their students and a surface approach to learning is related to less meaningful understanding of course material than a deep approach (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999). Those studies have contributed to shape a new direction to higher education teachers' professional development initiatives, which steers the focus towards changing teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning.

The conceptual change approach to academic development in higher education, which relies on the logic that teachers' prior conceptions of teaching need to be modified and changed to student learning facilitation was introduced in a number of studies. Prosser and Trigwell (1997) and Trigwell (1995) presented two examples of teaching development workshops which attempted to change program participants' conceptions of teaching by increasing their awareness of their own existing conceptions to other conceptions that are more relevant to better student learning. Kember and Kwan's (2002) study also concluded that fundamental changes to conceptions of teaching need to be addressed if quality teaching is to take place, as teaching approaches are driven by teachers' conceptions of teaching. Hativa (2002) and Radloff (2002) provided empirical evidence for this conclusion by proving that extensive treatment on teachers' thinking about teaching has significant effects on their performance. Hativa (2002) looked at two instructors who had been given bad teaching ratings from students, through observations and students and teachers' interviews. These two professors then underwent a four-month intervention of instructional consultation treatment to address their problems in teaching (characteristics, aptitudes, pedagogical knowledge, detrimental thinking and beliefs) and results after the intervention showed positive student satisfaction with the teachers' performance. Attention to teachers' beliefs/conceptions is therefore strongly recommended from the study. Similarly, in a longitudinal study on technical college teachers' beliefs about learning and teaching over a two-year teacher education program, Radloff (2002) found that more sophisticated learning strategies were evident at the end of

the two-year training program. The implication for professional development of higher education teachers, from Radloff's study, highlights the consideration of challenging participants to confront and modify their previous learning experiences and to provide psychological and cognitive support to facilitate the development of self-regulation. Radloff's study also has important implications for initial training of higher education teachers regarding the necessity to evaluate the success of such programs, being realistic in its effects or outcomes in a short period of time.

The studies discussed above, however, were conducted in the West, and lack valid evidence to address teachers' conceptual change in other contexts. It should also be noted that although changes in higher education teachers' conceptions and teaching behaviour were possible through participating in training programs, student learning outcomes as impacts of those changes were not clear. Ho (2000), and Ho et al. (2001) constructed a model for university lecturers' professional development program, targeting to change their conceptions of teaching, instead of focusing on training teaching approaches to respond to this gap. The conceptual change model for this academic program consisted of four elements: self-awareness process (self-reflection and clarification of conceptions), confrontation process (inadequacies in existing conceptions/practice and awareness to change), exposure to alternative conceptions, and commitment building process to engage in changes and development (Ho, 2000). The results of this four-week non-award program showed detectable conceptual changes in two-thirds of the sample group and subsequent evaluation from students' rating of this sample group showed better ratings compared to the control group, and positive impacts on this group's students' studying approaches were also found. The study suggested that conceptual change was, in fact, feasible in short-course programs if appropriate program design was taken into account. It also confirmed the likelihood of changed teaching practice and student learning as the result of changes in teaching conceptions.

On reviewing empirical evidence on this direction in the past literature, Åkerlind (2008) found this line of research was still sparse, and suggested further elaboration and investigation. The current thesis responds to call for this research area by looking at possible conceptual changes of participants after completing the compulsory teacher training program in Vietnamese context. The review on studies on higher education teacher training program indicates some research gaps that this thesis will address. Firstly, studies accommodating teachers' conceptual change as presented above have been designed with the clear aim in

addressing conceptual change of participants. If the main goal of the training program focuses on teachers' pedagogical skills and approaches, can any change in conceptions take place? Secondly, another challenge for higher education teacher training is the identification of which parts of conceptions should be focused on in the process of improving teaching and learning quality in 21st century (Varnara-Marouchou, 2010). It had become clear in recent literature that higher education training program for teachers should pay more attention to program participants' differences and individuality in their own cultures and contexts. The consideration of individual differences helps direct academic developers to adapt their professional development approaches according to their own settings (Mathieson, 2011; Peddar & Opfer, 2013; Steward, 2014; Trowler & Bamber, 2005). If this argument holds true, there is no compelling reason to argue that investigating program participants' conceptions of teaching and learning responsive to current higher education contexts is important. This thesis also attempts to broaden the conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education, embracing the contextual influences on teaching and learning conceptions.

2.1.5 Recent approaches to higher education teacher training programs – Broadening conceptions of higher education teaching and learning

The main conclusion from section 2.1.4 is that the facilitation of changes in conceptions of teaching and learning is feasible through short-course training programs. Most of the research reviewed has been drawn from phenomenographical perspectives, underpinned by the idea of researching teaching as a phenomenon from teachers' understanding and experiences. This has been observed as Leibowitz's (2016) review on dominant approaches to academics' professional development programs. According to Leibowitz (2016), a phenomenographic approach to academic development is based on extensive research on the learning experiences of students and teaching experiences of teachers, and the relationship between surface/deep approaches to learning and student-focused/teacher-focused teaching (Trigwell, 2003). Although this approach has challenged teachers' investigation into student learning, it runs the risks of stereotyping students into types and groups of behaviour, and overlooks the learning contexts and key values that underlie those teaching and learning conceptions. The practice-based approach (Knight et al., 2006; Trowler & Cooper, 2002) emphasises the practice in specific work settings and allows the examination of contextual influences, and how culture influences teaching. The third approach is drawn on critical realism (Archer et al., 1998), which allows the investigation of how individual's response to contexts in influencing change as agents. This approach sees cultures and statements made by

universities as having huge impacts on teachers' teaching approaches. The two latter approaches (practice-based and social realistic) to academic development, therefore, will offer greater implications for professional activities because they allow greater analysis on how learning and teaching occur and are shaped by contexts. Leibowitz's reasoning for the adoption of the third approach to higher education teachers' professional development has been derived from the dramatic influences of social changes and influences on higher education recently. She has argued that higher education has been experiencing uncertain times of development and cannot escape from social influences, and the design of professional development programs must make sense of those social or institutional demands. Leibowitz (2016), therefore, made a strong claim:

> I would still argue, nevertheless, that a more scholarly turn to the field of professional academic development, which includes theorising on teaching and learning, and a strong assessment on the purpose and value of higher education is highly beneficial. (p. 165)

Similarly, recent studies on the scholarship of teaching and learning have lately called for the extended form of professionality which requires a broader vision of SoLT, and a consideration for what higher education teaching is for (Cranton, 2011; Kreber, 2013a; 2013b; Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2016). In its endeavours to foster learning to create a better world, for example, Cranton (2011) argued that it is time to expand the notion of teaching and learning beyond solving problems related to teaching effectiveness. Teaching and learning that encourages critical reflection and action on contexts of teaching (Cranton, 2011, p. 75) such as disciplines, institutions, community, state, and society in which teaching practice takes place should be encouraged. extended sense of higher education professionality is characterised as teachers who not only consider their experiences and intuition on daily classroom practices but also theory underpinning those practices, and question and respond critically to the context in which their teaching takes place (social, institutional norms or expectations). Thus, Kreber (2013a) posited, a broader vision to higher education teaching and learning should incorporate emancipatory elements, and she continued:

> Scholars of teaching, thus construed, are still concerned with exploring and improving learning within their own classrooms and disciplines, but at the same time, they recognise the importance of exploring and deliberating the purposes of university education in our times, of what preparing students for

> meaningful participation in society means and what this demands of their own role as academic teachers. (p. 13)

Alexander (2008) suggested a new definition of pedagogy, which should not be constrained only as a matter of teaching technique, just as Kreber (2013a) or Leibowitz (2016) have argued. Alexander (2008) emphasised the three levels to the alternative definition of pedagogy, which include: classroom level, policy/system level, and cultural/societal level. In his view, teaching is not itself a stand-alone activity, on the other hand, it needs to be placed in a system or policy that formalises and legitimates it, at the same time it must be located by the third level (community, culture, self), which stresses and explains the identity of humans and purposes of teaching. This broader concept of pedagogy has encompassed multi-roles that teachers need to play, and does not separate the art of teaching from the community, culture and the self, and might infer a different approach to professional development programs for teachers.

This new definition of pedagogy by Alexander (2008), and strong argument to reconsider the institutional and cultural influences on higher education teaching and learning in recent times (Cranton, 2011; Kreber, 2013a; Leibowitz, 2016) has significant implications for higher education teacher training programs. Those scholars accentuate that teaching itself should not be the only component to be considered in such training. Other higher levels that enable teaching (policy/school/contexts) and locate teaching (self, culture, community) must be considered as important elements that need to be introduced in higher education teacher training program as well. Therefore, the understanding of teaching and learning, should be placed under the investigation of the purposes of higher education in current times and academic roles in achieving those purposes.

2.1.6 Higher education teacher training program in Vietnam – Why researching conceptions of teaching and learning as impacts of this program?

Vietnam higher education – an overview

Vietnam has a long tradition of higher education, dating back in 1076, the Temple of Literature (Van Mieu Quoc Tu Giam) became one of the oldest universities in Southeast Asia. Its long history of higher education was marked with the influence of the Confucian norms during the Chinese one-thousand-year dominance under the feudal period. Western influence on its higher education system was also strong during the French colonial period, the separation of the country during 1945-1975, with the Soviet influence in the North and

the US influence in the South of the country. When the country became independent and unified, it underwent a crisis with the centralised economy policy and education suffered a period of underdevelopment. In 1986 the Doi Moi (Revolution) policy revitalised the country's economy and reforms in education took place. A fairly complete higher education system was progressed and higher education management, government and its finance were realised as important challenges that need addressing. Privatization of the higher education system was believed to help reduce the burden of the state budget and widening access to higher education system and started to expand. Contemporary private higher education in Vietnam has experienced almost three decades of development featured by an impressively rapid expansion in the 2000s, as a response to economic demand for highly educated workforce. However, issues of governance and policy are putting their existence at its edge and affecting its learning and teaching quality (Nguyen, 2015). Other forms of partnership or foreign higher education institutions started to find its success and popularity in Vietnam but the questions of its success and sustainability are still debated (Tran et al., 2014). MOET introduced the normative Higher Education Law (which came into effect since 2013), and proposed education development strategy (higher education is included) to 2020. Decision 37/QĐ-TTg (26/06/2013) on the adjustment of planning universities and colleges network to 2020 was added together with important modifications of higher education law. The country is experiencing a period of constant changes in both its economy and educational development as a result of globalisation. Its higher education system is unique, judged from the influence of historical development and measures to effectively respond to the uniqueness of its higher education are proposed, both to deal with the challenges and take advantage of its uniqueness.

Higher education reforms

The Doi Moi policy and reforms in higher education have been reported to have significantly changed Vietnamese higher education in positive ways, but at the same time left numerous challenges for the country. Higher education reform is taking place in Vietnam in the context of the country facing opportunities and challenges under the influence of globalisation and the market-driven knowledge economy. Unlike some other Asian countries (such as China, Taiwan, Korea, Singapore), where the Confucian model of higher education promises great achievements in university quality due to strong nation-state structures, funding and priorities, universal participation and accelerated public investment, Vietnam is considered an exception (Marginson, 2011). Policy problems in higher education are yet to be addressed

(Harman, Hayden, & Pham, 2010). Internal efficiency and the quality of teaching and learning in higher education in Vietnam remains a challenge and some reform plans introduced have produced poor outcomes (Dao, 2015; Harman et al., 2010). Modernisation in higher education has just started recently and research languishes (Marginson, 2011). The country's higher education system is highly centralized in management and governance, and even in curriculum (Dao, 2015; Dao & Hayden, 2010; Phan, Lupton & Watters, 2016; Tran, Le & Nguyen, 2014;). Decentralisation and greater autonomy would be one solution in the process of modernisation of higher education in Vietnam (Dao & Hayden, 2010; Tran et al., 2014;) but the transition to autonomy is ongoing and students' voices in curriculum construction continue to be unheard (Phan et al., 2016). Assessment in higher education has often been designed to test students' knowledge and their rote memory and reproduction of knowledge, rather than challenging their capacity to analyse situations and develop creativity (Nguyen, 2012). Contemporary higher education is concerned with behaviourist theory, cognitive constructivist approaches, social and situated learning (Steward, 2012, as cited in Tran et al., 2014), focusing on student-centred approach but the most popular form of pedagogy in higher education in Vietnam is the traditional transmission of knowledge, with teachers considered as the knowledge transmitters (Tran et al., 2014). Both the curriculum and pedagogy of Vietnamese higher education therefore are out of tune with current educational developments of the rest of the world, and seem to be experiencing crucial paradoxes that need to be addressed. Research recently undertaken by a Vietnamese higher education institution found that the understanding of curriculum was predominantly "product focused, teacher focused and textbook driven" (Phan et al., 2016, p. 1).

Recent years, however, have seen the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET)'s determination to reform higher education. MOET is attempting to reform curriculum in higher education into a more responsive credit-based curriculum (National Assembly, 2012) and is reforming pedagogy with a focus on shifting towards a student-centred approach (Pham, 2012) to promote active learning and creative thinkers to respond to social demands and market needs. Under the new credit-based curriculum reform, students are expected to be autonomous, responsible for their learning pathways. In addition, MOET has started to allow the establishment of privatised higher education, and international and transnational higher education. A lack of highly qualified higher education teachers, however, has been reported to be a chronic problem of non-public higher education institutions, and could pose serious threats to quality standards of the entire higher education system (Dao & Hayden, 2010). The

practices of international cooperation and transnational education activities in higher education, although dynamic and growing fast, need long-term strategic plans, and systematic monitoring and evaluation (Tran, Marginson, & Nguyen, 2014). The newly introduced credit-based curriculum has caused potential issues due to the lack of professional development and quality assurance, insufficient research on innovative pedagogies, and limited facilities (Tran et al., 2014).

Despite those inherent issues, higher education in Vietnam is still undergoing strong reform, especially of the curriculum in a way that better satisfies labour markets and social demands (Pham & Tran, 2013; Tran, 2012). The commitment of the government to reform the higher education system is reflected in a few government documents (Resolution 14/2005/NQ_CP or the Vietnamese Higher Education Law, June 2012). The government promulgated Resolution 14 on the reform for higher education of the country 2006-2020 (Higher Education Reform Agenda, HERA), addressing a vision for higher education until 2020. By 2013, there were 203 universities and 215 colleges across Vietnam and the number is increasing rapidly, and it is projected that by 2020 the enrolment rates will be 450 students per 10,000 people. In the HERA document, it was forecast that by 2020, Vietnamese higher education will be advanced to international standards, highly competitive, and appropriate to the socialist-oriented market mechanism (Pham, 2010).

Compulsory higher education teacher training program

The pressure on higher education institutions to employ teachers and improve their quality of teaching and learning was great because higher education is considered the key pillar in producing skilled personnel to promote the country's development. Transforming teachers' pedagogy into a student-centred approach and enhancing students' employability became a central issue. Guidelines on standards for higher education teachers were suggested (Circular 06/2011/TTLT-BNV-BGDĐT) and those standards are considered an impetus for higher education teachers to improve their professional practice and act as a guideline for Rectors and Department Heads to recruit, monitor and evaluate teachers' outcomes. In Decision 61/2007/QĐ-BGDĐT, it is stated that a pedagogical training certificate must be the first requirement of a higher education teacher, together with their disciplinary degree. The main aim of the program is to enhance teachers' pedagogy and improve quality of teaching staff of universities, colleges in the context of industrialisation, modernisation and international integration (Decision No. 61/2007/QĐ-BGDĐT).

The expansion of higher education institutions, including private institutions, in Vietnam has led to the need for an increasing number of higher education teachers. Therefore, the Minister of Education and Training made a few modifications to the original program (2007). The new program (2013) is now open to in-service teachers as well as prospective higher education teachers who are either graduates or professionals in other fields. The main aim of the program is still based on pedagogical knowledge and skills, providing professional pedagogical knowledge and skills to those who do not have a background in education but are aspiring to become higher education teachers (Circular 12/TT-BGDĐT, 2013). For those who have already been employed by a higher education institution, it is important that they are sent to this training program as soon as possible. The program certificate cannot guarantee participants' future tenure or promotion within their departments, but participating in the program for in-service higher education teachers is still strongly encouraged by their departments.

The official program curriculum (Circular 12/2013/TT-BGDĐT) states that the program aims to improve participants' pedagogical knowledge and skills in higher education. A strong focus of the program on pedagogical knowledge and skills, and teaching practice manifests well the expectation from MOET to improve participants' teaching practice. However, no explicit expectations on the conceptual change about teaching are stated. Apparently, MOET aims at changing the teaching practice of participants by arranging modules which build up knowledge and skills related to teaching in higher education, without considering what beliefs participants were holding before commencing the program. Considering the importance of measuring program participants' conceptual change (discussed in 2.1.4), researching higher education teachers' conceptual change will be helpful to reflect on the compulsory higher education teacher training policy in Vietnamese context.

2.2 Conceptions of higher education teaching and learning

Section 2.1 summarised studies on current higher education teacher training programs, the impacts of those programs on participants' conceptions and practices and suggests a broader understanding to higher education teaching and learning that embraces teachers' differences, diversity and local contexts. A snapshot on Vietnamese higher education and its compulsory introduction teacher training policy was introduced. This section presents literature on areas related to conceptions of higher education teaching and learning, which is not only restricted

to just "learning" and "teaching" approaches, but involves curriculum and course design and assessment activities.

2.2.1 Higher education teachers' conceptions of teaching

Higher education teachers' conceptions of teaching have been explored in a few papers, especially during 2000s and 1990s (Dall' Alba, 1991; Dunkin, 1990; Kember & Kwan, 2000; Kember & Kwan, 2002; Gow & Kember, 1993; Prosser, Trigwell & Taylor, 1994; Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001, 1992; van Driel et al., 1997) but the conclusions drawn have not always been consistent. In a reviewed interview-based research, Kember (1997) concluded there might be some variations in terms of terminology of teachers' conceptions of teaching; however, similar to Samuelowicz & Bain (1992), he suggested that conceptions of teaching range on a continuum from a "teacher-centred" (content-oriented) to "student-centred" (learning-oriented) with the "in-between" orientation as the bridging conception from the two extreme categories.

Table 2.1 *Conceptions of teaching (Kember, 1997)*

Content-oriented	Teaching as imparting information
	Teaching as transmitting structured knowledge
"In-between" orientation	*Teaching as an interaction between the teacher and the student*
	Teaching as facilitating between the teacher and the student
Learning-oriented	Teaching as bridging about conceptual change and intellectual development in the student.

Nonetheless, in an effort to extend the framework of academics' conceptions of teaching, Samuelowicz & Bain (2001) found some overlapping categories of conceptions of teaching and added two more orientations to teaching based on an interview-based research of a range of academics from different disciplines. The paper emphasised the fundamental differences between "teacher-centred" and "student-centred" teaching orientations and argued the "in-between" conception of teaching by Kember (1997), positing that the boundaries between the

two conceptions of teaching are "hard" to cross and might require an accommodative process or conceptual change to teachers' professional development to cross this boundary (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 *Conceptions of teaching and learning (Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001)*

Teaching-centred	Imparting-information
	Transmitting structured knowledge
	Providing and facilitating information
Learning-centred	Helping students to develop expertise
	Preventing misunderstanding
	Negotiating meaning
	Encouraging knowledge creation

Arguing with Kember (1997) who posited "interaction" between teacher-student as a soft bridging boundary between two teaching conception extremes, Samuelowicz and Bain (2001) challenged this bridging conception due to the different nature of interaction between student-teacher (i.e. interaction can only be maintaining students' attention, rather than constructing understanding).

In a nutshell, as extensively researched in the literature in the 1990s, higher education teachers' conceptions of teaching are broken down to two main categories: teacher-centred conceptions (naïve beliefs) and student-centred conceptions (sophisticated beliefs) (Kember, 1997). As such, a teacher-centred conception of teaching is the one where teachers transmit knowledge to students, whereas in the latter teachers facilitate to encourage students' responsibility for their own development. The question as to whether it was easy or difficult to cross the border that distinguishes these two conception mainstreams was raised.

Conceptualising teaching conceptions in studies in late 2000s

Carnell (2007), however, argued that the past literature on conceptions of teaching was not adequate and added another level, based upon constructivist and co-constructivist theory. This extended view of higher education teaching supports a co-constructing knowledge process between teacher and student, in which teaching and learning was seen as a

responsibility shared by both teachers and students, rather than solely relying on just teachers' activity. The new conception of teaching was in line with the third theory of higher education teaching as theorised by Ramsden (2003). Ramsden (2003) introduced three theories to higher education teaching. Theory one sees 'teaching as telling or transmitting knowledge'. Theory two views 'teaching as organising student activity', where teachers see teaching as a process of organisation of activities and techniques to keep student actively involved in learning. Theory two resulted in the 'active learning' principle which became a central idea for staff development programs (Ramsden, 2003). Theory three, on the other hand, is more complex as it sees teaching as "a process of working collaboratively with learners to help them change their understanding" (Ramsden, 2003, p. 110). Ramsden (2003) emphasised the collaborative nature of teaching and the speculative and reflective stance of teachers under theory three. According to the third theory, higher education teachers must bear in mind that activities of teaching are context-related and must be continuously improvable to satisfy students' individual differences**.** A summary of the three theories of university teaching, in terms of focus, strategy, actions and reflection is provided in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3 *Theories of university teaching (Ramsden, 2003, p. 115)*

	Theory 1: Teaching as telling	**Theory 2: Teaching as organizing**	**Theory 3: Teaching as making learning possible**
Focus	Teacher and content	Teaching techniques that will result in learning	Relation between students and subject matter
Strategy	Transmit information	Manage teaching process, transmit concepts	Engage, challenge, imagine oneself as the student
Actions	Chiefly presentation	Active learning, organizing activity	Systematically adapted to suit student understanding
Reflection	Unreflective, taken for granted	Apply skills to improve teaching	Teaching as a research-like, scholarly process

Theory three of university teaching is what Ramsden believed quality teaching is about. This theory supports Carnell's (2007) view in supporting co-constructing of knowledge between

teachers and students and therefore insists that a thorough investigation of obstacles to student learning be conducted so that special attention is paid timely to encourage students change in their understanding. An understanding of student learning and reflection practice is required to make learning possible.

2.2.2 Conceptions of learning in higher education

Earlier research on higher education student thinking about learning was rooted by a study by Perry (1970)'s model of intellectual development, who found a clear progression of recognition from "seeing knowledge as right or wrong" (dualistic) to "reasoning, reaching conclusions, opening to challenging and uncertain constructed" (relativism). Subsequent research has supported Perry's development scheme, trying to show differences in how students think about learning nature (Enwistle, 2009; Marton, Dall'Alba & Beaty 1993; Sajlo, 1979b), and a summary to conceptions of learning from this line of research is illustrated by Enwitsle (2009) in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4 *Conceptions of learning in higher education (Entwistle, 2009)*

- Increasing one's knowledge
- Memorising, and reproducing
- Applying and using,
- Understanding what has been learned
- Seeing things in a different way
- Changing as a person/sense of identity

Research into approaches to studying in higher education has concluded that the approaches students exhibit depends on content, context, and demands of tasks (see Richardson, 2005). It has also been revealed that approaches to learning perceived by students vary according to the quality of teaching and assessment (Richardson, 2005). Appropriate course design, teaching methods and assessment types were therefore suggested to contribute to better study approaches for students (Richardson, 2005). Research into teachers' approaches to teaching in higher education, as Richardson (2005) put it, was derived from concepts and findings of research into students' approaches to studying. Apart from forming the base for research into approaches to teaching, students' conceptions and approaches to learning in higher education were also used to provide evidence for the design of powerful learning environments, and

high-quality learning (Biggs, 1999; Entwistle & Peterson, 2005). Drawing on a burgeoning literature on student learning (Biggs, 2003; Entwistle, 2000; Prosser & Trigwell, 1990), Entwistle and Peterson (2005) suggested a list of guidelines for learning environments to support deep approaches to learning, constructing the basis for Biggs (2003) to argue for the adoption of constructive alignment to teaching for enhanced learning, presented in the following section.

2.2.3 Curriculum, course design, and assessment in higher education

According to Biggs' alignment theory to teaching and learning (2003, 1999) a higher order learning process of students can be achieved when all components: curriculum objectives, teaching and learning activities, and assessment tasks, are aligned. Drawing from a constructivist perspective, Biggs highly valued the idea of helping teachers to reflect on their teaching in a way that best produces higher order learning processes from students. In his later book, Biggs and Tang (2007), insisted changing course objectives to intended learning outcomes (ILO) since ILO emphasises what students have to do rather than what teachers have to teach. Biggs (1999) suggested a list of verbs to be used parallel to structured observed learning outcome (SOLO) taxonomy to help design ILO at course level and adjusted Bloom's (1956) taxonomy (Figure 2.1), and the revised version by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), to categorise a list of verbs that help in the designing courses and teaching and learning activities, moving from the bottom to the top the taxonomy, as shown in.

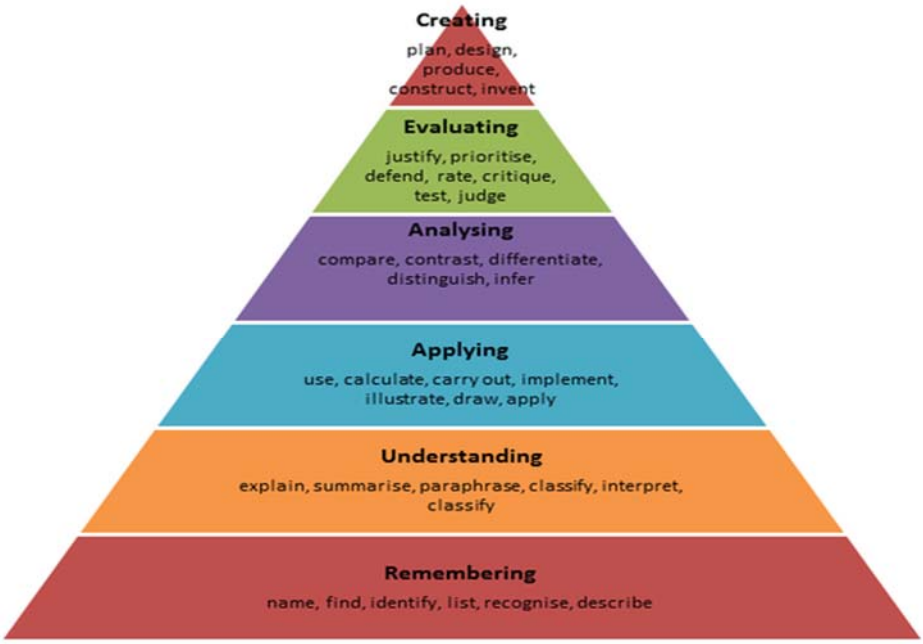

Figure 2.1 Bloom's taxonomy revised and the suggested verbs

Biggs (2003) also suggested using the SOLO taxonomy to guide assessment and claimed that the underlying principles of assessment tasks should be a representation of the course's intended outcomes. Strategies and activities to design learning/teaching activities and assessment types and standards are suggested in a few good textbooks for higher education teachers (Biggs, & Tang, 2007; Dart & Boulton-Lewis, 1998; Ramsden, 2003).

Biggs's model of constructive alignment is widely used through aligned phases of curriculum and implementation to assist students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. According to Biggs' ILO, young graduates need to be prepared a set of standardised competences which are translated as outcomes that are job-relevant in the new era of higher education. Learning strategies promoting a student-centred approach to achieve standards of competences are suggested and so are assessment types (performance-based evaluation) (Biggs, 1999). In a recent review of literature on curriculum construction in higher education, Annala, Linden, and Makinen (2016) conceptualised a framework of four models of curriculum construction in higher education. In Annala et al. (2016), higher education curriculum approaches were categorised into two orientations: knowledge and ownership. Knowledge, on one end of the framework is seen as the amount of static content to transmit to students whereas the other end sees knowledge constituted of dynamic entity, encouraging student's critical reflection and creating knowledge. Ownership, which is referred to as the agency that drives curriculum thinking and development, is divided into two spectrums: one is derived from the interests of university or society that influences students' outcomes and the other end allows students ownership in participating in developing the curriculum. The figure, adapted from Annala et al. (2016) is presented in Figure 2.2.

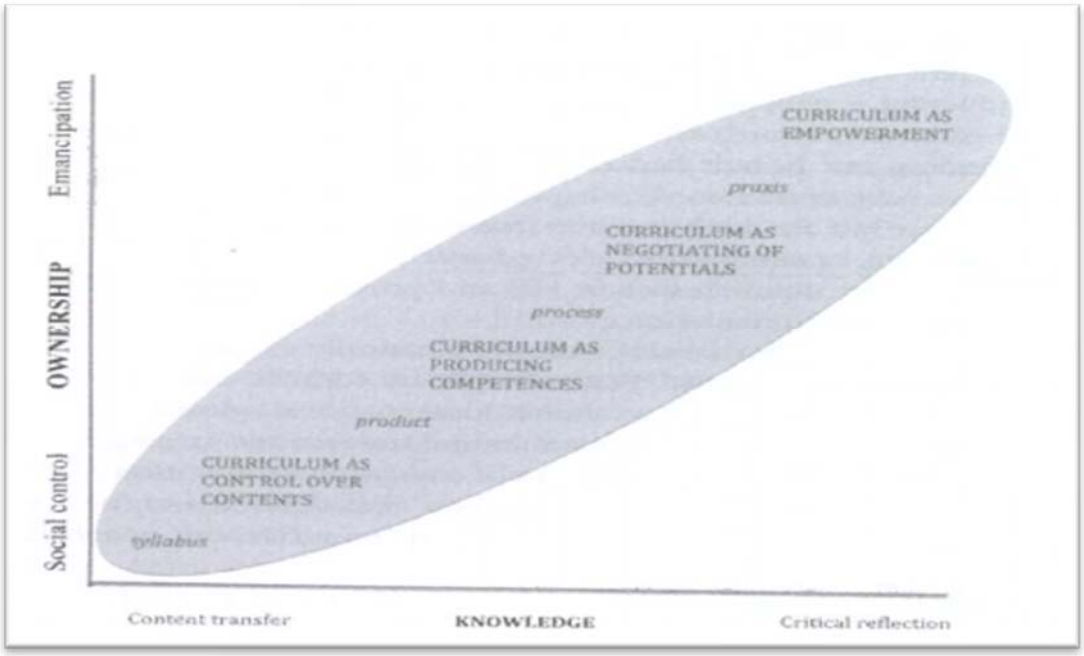

Figure 2.2 Conceptualising curriculum approaches (Annala et al., 2016, p. 174)

The first model of curriculum is *curriculum as control over contents*, where contents of the curriculum was decided by administrators. Biggs' (2003) constructive alignment was listed as the *curriculum as producing competences* in the framework from figure 2.2, which concentrates on producing standards of competence that drives teaching and learning activities and requires careful design of defined learning objectives, effective teaching methods. However, it has been claimed that competence-based curriculum overlooks students' roles in defining their ownership of their learning and pathways of development. Similarly, teachers' roles in contributing to curriculum design and decision making was marginalised the power in curriculum depended on the experts (Annala et al., 2016). In addition, the role of higher education institutions in producing and creating new inventions declines and is replaced by the role of fulfilling economical requirements, based upon expected outcomes from employers and society. A consideration for designing curriculum that involves more student ownership and inspires students' critical reflection is proposed to focus on developing students' full potential in different situations or competency (rather than competences). *Competency-curriculum (curriculum as negotiating potentials)* is suggested to allow the negotiation of both knowledge and ownership in curriculum design and implementation. *A curriculum as empowerment*, which is positioned the highest in Annala et al.'s (2016) figure of curriculum framework, is believed to help students to take ownership of their learning and turn them into co-creators of curriculum in higher education.

Annala et al. (2016) advocated for a new insight into curriculum and course syllabus design that is in line with the current argument for curriculum reform in higher education. Recent literature on curriculum development in higher education has also challenged the drawback of Biggs' outcome-based approach in designing curriculum and course syllabus due to the overwhelming disregard in students' agency in curriculum and pedagogy development, which, if considered, could stimulate more creativity, empathy and democracy from the student (Stoller, 2015, 2013). Argument for the reconsideration of students' authorship in co-constructing curriculum has gained increasing favour in recent higher education curriculum research (Bovill, 2014; 2013; Bovill, Cook-Sather & Felten, 2011; Brooman, Darwent & Pimor, 2015;). Built upon "student voice" theory that encourages students to become active agents in curriculum, analysis and revisions of higher education curriculum design through students' insights on teaching and learning experiences have been argued for (Cook-Sather, 2010, 2009). Such an invitation to engage students' voices in co-constructing curriculum will support collegial partnership between faculty members and students through empowering and engaging students, benefiting their motivation, commitment, and sense of shared responsibility. Other results include a deeper understanding of learning from both students and academic staff (Bovill et al., 2011), enhanced student performance and teachers' satisfaction (Bovill, 2014), and improved students' perceptions of modules, and attendance (Brooman et al., 2015). There are significant values in listening to students' voices (Brooman et al., 2015), and implications on the forms and approaches of student participation in pedagogical planning, including curriculum and course design co-creation, have been suggested (Bovill et al., 2011). In the same line of thought, based upon Barnett's (2005) view on higher education during the age of supercomplexity, a higher education curriculum that incorporated three domains: *knowing, acting and being* (Barnett & Coate, 2005), and challenged the so-called technical learning outcome convention of curriculum and course design in higher education should be developed. A broader purpose for curricula in higher education was proposed: engaging students in the wider community as active and global citizens, and cultivating humanity, with an emphasis on their ethical role within society.

To conclude, this section has reviewed research on theories on teaching and learning conceptions in higher education. In general, studies on conceptions of teaching and learning in the past decades have proved to be substantially important to provide a theoretical base for the development of higher education teachers' professional development programs. However, most theories related to teaching and learning conceptions in higher education are derived

from phenomenological or relational approaches, which seem to be focusing on certain students' types and teaching behaviour. As such, learning and teaching contexts are eclipsed and values that underline those conceptions of teaching and learning were not explored (Leibowitz, 2016). Examination of the conceptualisation of teaching and learning from a socio-cultural viewpoint, is therefore needed, to fill in the gaps of this kind of research into teaching and learning, especially in the age where higher education is believed to be the objective of policy directives by governments but at the same time, expected to define its own identity in response to social trends. Research by Mathieson (2011) and Trowler and Bamber (2002) on institutional impacts on teachers in developing an authentic voice in a complex environment validates this view. Aligned with the research line on values of higher education (Leibowitz, 2016) in the context of uncertainty and the constantly changing higher education context is the shift in challenging higher education teachers to question their being, rather than knowing, when they participate in professional development activities. Dall'Aba (2005) argued that models and approaches to academic development initiatives have been dominantly driven by epistemology (theory of knowing), which, she insisted, have not been adequate for transformative education teaching and learning to happen. For the consideration of ontology (theory of being) in which teachers enable transformative learning, higher education teachers' professional development needs to accommodate not only methods of teaching, learning and teaching knowledge and skills, but also challenge ways higher education teachers think about themselves as teachers. This lack of ontological element in teachers' professional development programs is believed to instrumentalise, corporatise and technologise higher education according to certain framework (Dall'Alba, 2005) and overlooks who higher education teachers are. Therefore, it would seem that the sense of being for higher education teachers needs to be incorporated in those training programs. This is further supported by Barnett's (2005) theory of teaching in the supercomplex world where both epistemology and ontology were considered equally important in higher education teaching and learning, especially in an uncertain age, full of changes, as argued by Barnett (2005). The conclusion from this argument does not deny the necessary emphasis on epistemology but stressed the usually overlooked part, the ontological perspective (the being of higher education teachers), through a reflexive stance on their teaching practice during the challenge of changing contexts. This idea was further supported by Harris (2005) and Clegg (2008), for example, who also insisted that the reconsideration of academics' identity

construction in current higher education reform was necessary, especially with academics new to higher education.

It is based on those arguments that a broader understanding of higher education teaching and learning, involving higher education purposes and teachers' roles, needs to be further developed. Investigating teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning should therefore not only be limited to the classroom practice perspective, but include the underlying influences on those conceptions under social-cultural changes, especially in a time of uncertainty and constant changes within higher education.

2.3 Researching purposes of higher education and higher education teachers' roles

This present thesis contributes to broadening the conceptions of teaching and learning, by incorporating the conceptions of purposes of higher education and higher education teachers' roles, besides addressing teaching and learning at the classroom perspectives.

2.3.1 Higher education purposes in the age of globalisation

Neoliberalism and human development approaches to purposes of higher education

Higher education is currently challenged by human capital or neoliberal approach, which considers the education of humans as an investment to boost economic returns by producing competent graduates with employability skills. Neoliberal approach to higher education has promoted free-trade, privatisation, and competition in teaching and researching agenda (McLean, 2006; Rizvi, 2007). Higher education roles in prioritising human capital to enhance economic competitiveness have become popular under the knowledge-based economy (Altbach, 2007). Under the neoliberal influence, graduates are considered the investment to help improve economic turnover through strong employability, promotion possibility, increased earnings and eventual contribution to the economy. Neoliberal approach to higher education policy has been criticized for overlooking its roles in developing the public good and human development (Boni & Gasper, 2012; Singh, 2001; Unterhalter & Carpentier, 2010; Walker & McLean, 2013).

In recent years a social reform agenda to higher education role has been mooted. A discussion on the transformative potential of higher education roles, not only in investing in graduates' employability, income generation and national economy, but also in transforming equality, differences, respect, and concerns for social contribution, has been put forward (Deprez & Wood, 2013; Kreber, 2013b; Nussbaum, 2010; Marginson, 2013; Walker, 2009, 2006). It was

also noted in the literature that the pivotal role of higher education in maintaining moral and ethical dimensions in human life and global urgencies have been overlooked (Cortese, 2003; Cortese & Hattan, 2010; Walker & McLean, 2013). While in most literature, it is evident that neoliberal discourse tends to be dominant, intrinsic values of higher education persist, as indicated through the human development approach (Boni & Walker, 2013; Leibowitz, 2012; Nussbaum, 2011; Sen, 2009; Walker, 2006) to higher education policy and practice. According to the human development approach, the main focus of higher education should be on students' authenticity, democracy, social justice, global sustainability, and public good. Underpinning the human development approach are the principles of empowerment, equity, security and sustainability of human's achievement and opportunities. The human capabilities index (Sen, 2009) or the public-good professional capabilities index (Walker & McLean, 2013) or capability approach to higher education pedagogy (Walker, 2006) have been suggested as providing different directions for higher education policy and practices in many countries, including developing countries, such as South Africa, where most research on the capability approach was conducted.

In response to the debate on higher education roles in contributing to humanity and public good, Watson (2014) suggested a set of ten purposes to higher education in contemporary times, drawn upon a historical and philosophical perspective. The ten purposes include religious (confirming faith and inspiring), personal development (self-discovery, self-creation, individual authenticity), social relationship with the world (world citizenship), technical know-how, professional acculturation, networks, maturation, interval on the carer-driven part, love of discipline, mental gymnastics. These roles are structured around five sets of questions of higher education purposes to both students and the society at large:

- Question of Conscience (faith and doctrinal instruction)
- Question of Character (behaving well, living and learning together, being useful)
- Question of Calling, Competence, Craft (higher skills, professional knowledge, skills)
- Question of Citizenship (civil citizen, state and global responsibility)
- Question of Capability (life-skills, including employability)

By presenting the variations and development of those sets of questions to higher education, Watson (2014)'s conclusion was quite positive about the potential of higher education's role in contributing to the public good and improving moral and technical judgements or public reasoning. Central to this book is the idea of higher education in promoting personal

responsibility, which is found to be strongly related to Sullivan and Rosin's (2008) view towards higher education purposes in developing a sense of community engagement, where students are encouraged to participate in "meaning-giving practices" (p. 124). In this view, Watson shared similar views with Nussbaum (1998) and Sullivan and Rosin (2008) towards purposes of higher education in cultivating students' moral commitment and responsible community engagement.

Although Watson (2014) is optimistic about higher education teaching and learning, his conclusion on its role in developing varieties of personal responsibility has encouraged further research into the social roles of higher education in different contexts. Drawing mainly on historical and philosophical perspectives from the UK and the USA, the set of questions to higher education purposes of Watson's (2014), however, might not be applicable in other contexts, due to historical, political and cultural developments especially in developing countries' higher education contexts.

Higher education purposes in developing countries

Castells (1993) asserted that roles and function of universities change over time, according to the society's history, ideology politics and cultures. Castells has made a substantial contribution to the body of literature in higher education functions from the perspectives of developing countries. As cited from Welch (2011, p. 2), Castell's (1993) taxonomy of roles and functions of universities involves four broad categories:

- Train skilled labour as demanded by the society
- Cultivate elites
- Generate and transmit ideology
- Create and apply new knowledge

Later, Castells (2001) added that higher education has a role to play in both the development of the economy and society as well, arguing that the university system should not only be responsible for educating a good quality labour force, but also for the equalisation and democratisation of society. Based upon Castells' taxonomy to developing countries' purposes of higher education, Welch (2011) posited that this would be a challenging task for the government of these countries because higher education was considered as the supply of highly skilled personnel in the new knowledge based economy, and springboards to catch up with (and leap ahead of) developed countries, especially in ICT, engineering, technology. It is the change in the so-called technological revolution and the rise of a network-based economy

that has motivated more research in the roles of higher education at national and regional economic development (OECD, 2008; Pillay, 2010a). A case study of two OECD countries (Finland and South Korea) (Pinheiro & Pillay, 2016) attempting to investigate the role of higher education in economic development casts light on the outstanding implications for developing countries in terms of research and development. The study pointed out that although governments of developing countries are aware that research and development play important roles in their economy, actual investment for research in higher education is an issue that needs to be addressed.

To conclude, higher education in contemporary times is challenged by the effects of neoliberal globalisation (Marginson, 2007). Underpinned by human capital theory, the idea of investing in individuals to gain direct economic benefits, the roles of current higher education as presented in their discourses and practices, is to enhance economic competitiveness and efficiency in the global knowledge-based economy (Boni & Gasper, 2012; Marginson, 2007; Singh, 2001) and from perspectives of certain agencies (e.g. OECD, 2007; World Bank, 2002). It has been argued, however, that broader objectives of higher education such as social good or students' authenticity are overlooked (Boni & Walker, 2013; Kreber, 2013b). Developing countries have been observed to be influenced by the neoliberal approach to higher education functions judged from the huge expectations on roles of higher education creating labour force and the nation competitiveness in technology and the economy (Altbach, 2007). There is a danger, however, that the effects of globalisation on higher education are likely to increase wealth gaps between rich and poor countries (Unterhalter & Carpentier, 2010) and the social functions of higher education in contributing to individuals' authenticity and public good (serving societies in the crisis era) will be overlooked (Kreber, 2013; Walker, 2010). A small but growing body of literature has turned its attention to argue for the human capabilities approach to higher education (not only in policy but also in curriculum, pedagogy, teaching and learning) to support the roles of higher education in facing the current problematic and changing world (environmental issues, social injustices, armed conflicts, intolerance, human rights, sustainability) (Boni & Gasper, 2012; Walker, 2006).

In response to the overlooking part of higher education roles in contributing to the public good and human development, Kreber (2014) suggested that contemporary higher education needs to reconstruct core graduate attributes, taking the complexity theory of higher education (Barnett, 2005) and community engagement and moral commitment (Sullivan &

Rosin, 2008) into account. Higher education, as viewed from the perspective of UNESCO (2004), "is also a vital component of cultural, social, and political development, of endogenous capacity building, the consolidation of human rights, sustainable development, democracy, and peace, in a context of justice" (cited in Walker, 2010, p. 27). Literature on the implications of a human development approach to higher education policy and teaching practice is available in a few developing countries contexts, predominantly in South Africa, through research analysing government policy and its influences and the impacts of the adoption of a capability approach. In Asian higher education contexts, the influence of neoliberalism into the curriculum and teacher education policy is pervasive (Tang, 2015), however, few studies have provided insights into higher education purposes under the lenses of the capability approach or human development. Recently, it is, however, noted that in Asian contexts, the roles of moral education are governed by political context and education that tries to promote patriotism or virtuous citizens are found to be popular in some Asian countries (Kim & Taylor, 2017). It is necessary, therefore, to further investigate the extent to which moral education is valued as a purpose of higher education in this context, and to a broader sense, a human development approach to higher education is interpreted and perceived in the context that neoliberalsm is found to be dominant in higher education nowadays.

2.3.2 Higher education teachers' roles in the 21st century

This thesis is also involved the exploration of how, through the compulsory teacher training program, participants changed their conceptions of their roles as higher education teachers. Early-career academic identity is a new area of research which, according to Fitzmaurice (2013), involves not only professional roles but also moral endeavours.

On professional roles of higher education teachers

Tatto (1998) emphasised that the purposes of higher education may shape teachers' beliefs as to what is appropriate in teaching, and even their conceptions about their professional role. Investigating teachers' conceptions of higher education teaching and learning, therefore, would be incomplete without further exploration of how they conceptualise their roles under the influences from higher education policy and practices. In addition, Dall'Alba (2005) also made a claim to support an ontological (theory of being) approach to higher education teaching certificates for teachers and criticised the focus on the purely epistemological perspective (theory of knowing) of such programs, which results in an instrumental or

technologised education. The conclusion drawn from Dall' Alba's study was that a balance is necessary between addressing epistemology and ontology, integrating **knowing, acting and being**, to enhance higher education teachers' "knowing about teaching, breadth in what they can do when they teach, and who they are as teachers" (Dall'Alba, 2005, p. 371). A reflexive stance of teachers within the context their teaching practice is encouraged from this conclusion. Dall' Alba's study has important implications for academic developers and their approaches to professional development activities, and within this research scope, it provides robust support for the consideration of teachers' understanding of their own roles in a specific context. From this identification of role conceptions under higher education changes and reform, it will also shed important light on the restructure of teachers' professional development training in a way that addresses both epistemology and ontology. This argument is consistent with Badley and Habeshaw (1991)'s statement on the emphasis paid to higher education teachers' roles: "teachers will have to examine and develop far more carefully their roles as teachers rather than continue to rest on their strengths as subject-experts or practitioners" (p. 213). The authors went on to criticise the traditional role of higher education teachers which was based on a philosophical view (enlarging minds of students as scholarly companions, but failing to develop critical thinking and study skills) and scientific view (inculcating knowledge but undervaluing social purposes of higher education). A list of implications for teachers' roles was suggested from Badley and Habeshaw's (1991):

- Teachers should be managers of learning,
- Teachers need to be good at interpersonal skills,
- A teacher must be a good networker, a strong self-helper, involved in multi-disciplinary interactions and links, and
- Teachers must be practical researchers.

Similarly, in a study aiming to identify roles of HE teachers in medical science, Harden and Crossby (2000) summarised HE teachers' roles according to the six following functions: information provider, role model, facilitator (mentor/advisor, learning facilitator), examiner), planner and resource developer.

In this summary of higher education teachers in the beginning of the 21st century, it can be seen that roles of teachers are leaning more towards planning, facilitating, and developing, rather than just information providing (traditional roles as presented earlier). Roles of teachers in managing student learning are still valued, and the stress for modulating roles

across individuals, groups, and cultures has been highlighted. It was also stressed that teachers' roles in higher education should involve supporting students to set both long- and short-term goals for their lives (Smittle, 2003, as cited in Buskirk-Cohen, Duncan, & Levicoff, 2016). From this perspective, roles of higher education teachers are not just restricted to the classroom, within institutional contexts but extended to developing visions and passion for students' developments in the long run.

Some studies, however, strongly emphasised that higher education teachers need to be well-prepared for the global knowledge economy in 21st century technology (Kivunja, 2014; Moore, 2009; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). A 4Cs (critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration, creativity and innovation) framework for 21st century teaching is in high demand. In general, technology development and economic competitiveness have exerted certain influences on the redefinitions of teachers' roles in the 21st century. A strong expectation of a guiding, facilitating role of teachers (rather than the traditional role as authority of subject expert) has become more popular.

On moral roles of higher education teachers

In tune with the identification of higher education purposes within the context of a neoliberal and consumer-driven culture, conceptions of teachers' roles currently focus on the complex changes of the global knowledge economy in the 21st century. However, there is a growing number of voices calling for a repositioning of higher education towards democracy and civic life (Walker, & Boni, 2013; Walker & Nixon, 2004), as outlined in 2.3.1. Such positioning must have certain influences on the conceptualisation of teachers' roles as academics and this has been addressed in Fitzmaurice's (2010, 2008) studies on the moral practice of higher education teachers. The paper explored academic voices through analysing their teaching philosophy statements and the results indicate a broader view of teaching, focusing not only on teaching strategies and technical knowledge but moral values, which teachers base their work on. The empirical findings highlight the moral element of learning and teaching in the context of higher education reform and expansion. Using Aristotle's distinction between the *techne* (guiding and directing actions enhancing skills and craft towards effectiveness) and *praxis* (moral disposition in realising ethical values and goals), Fitzmaurice (2008) challenged current academic staff development in the efforts of promoting just teachers' effectiveness while the moral and ethical dimensions of teaching are almost neglected.

Fitzmaurice (2008) argued that "it is important to maintain a concept of teaching in higher education that focuses on teaching both as pedagogy of substances and a moral activity" (p. 350). The suggestion here mainly is supportive to the conception of professionalism that is built around standards, competences, care and responsibility. Fitzmaurice's study is outstanding compared to other studies on good higher education teaching as no evidence on meeting targets or efficiency were found from teachers' perspectives, instead, it was found that good teaching involves passion, responsibility, professional values and ethical and moral issues. Five main themes emerged from the analysis of higher education teachers' teaching philosophy statements which include: A deep obligation to help students learn, a desire to create a space for learning and encourage student voice, caring for students and developing the whole person, reflection on practice, professional values and morality (Fitzmaurice, 2008, p. 345).

The importance of professional morality and striving to improve practice through reflection were highlighted as implications for the reflection and addition of moral practice as a professional standard for higher education teachers. Morality is defined as a process of constructing understanding and meanings related to social interactions (McCadden, 1998). Nixon (2004) stated that research, teaching and scholarship are parts of academic practice and they are dependent on and simultaneously help to "sustain, a moral framework the pivotal points of which are truthfulness (accuracy/sincerity), respect (attentiveness/honest), and authenticity (courage/compassion)" (p. 7). Attending to students' aspiration and needs and acting to resolve is also called upon. Moral integrity, judging from this perspective involves not only rational virtues of fairness and justice, but also virtues of love and caring. Fitzmaurice's study (2008) fits in well with the line of research that is arguing for a more democratic potential to higher education values for it strives for the consideration of human beings' ethical and moral values in the context of globalisation.

Fitzmaurice's later study on new academics' professional identity (Fitzmaurice, 2013) further stressed the moral endeavour in early career academic identity construction, which is believed to be a field of research that needs more attention (Archer, 2008a), especially the under-explored dimension of morality in identity construction (Kreber, 2010). This research highlighted the significance of morality in the formation of academic identity, which Fitzmaurice (2013) posited as: virtues of honesty, care and compassion. It is suggested from this study that "becoming a good academic related to caring for the students, being research active and finding joy and contentment in this work" (Fitzmaurice, 2013, p. 621).

In summary, those lines of research strongly advocate the implementation of academic development pathways that are devoted to develop a public good and moral society. It is however, rare in higher education literature to find further support to illustrate how morality is conceptualised as standards for teachers at the present time in other contexts other than the USA, and the UK. An investigation of teachers' conceptions about their roles in the new era of higher education development is another focus that will be answered in this study.

2.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the literature review revealed an extensive body of research on compulsory higher education teacher training programs, their impacts on teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education, and the introduction of higher education teacher training in Vietnam. A call for further investigation into purposes higher education and teachers' roles in the changing context was suggested, relying on arguments made by Leibowitz (2016) and Dall'Alba (2005).

This literature review covers three dominant lines of research: conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education, higher education purposes, and higher education teachers' roles, and attempts to link those areas with early career higher education teachers' training programs. Testing the relationship of three themes might be an issue of time and only longitudinal research can fulfil that attempt. However, research conducted to gain understanding of teaching and learning, within a broader perspective, considering social, and global influences into this understanding will provide a clear picture of how teachers conceptualise their ideas on teaching and learning under the so-called human capital and the dominant student-centred teaching approach, especially in under-researched areas like some Southeast Asia countries (Welch, 2011).

This current study is not an impact evaluation of the MOET teacher training program but aims to shed light on the understanding of teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning under social influences in the age of globalisation, and their conceptual changes after they completed the training program. Teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning were extended to what is believed to influence their classroom practice and involves the conceptualisation of higher education purposes and their roles in achieving these purposes. Considering the growth of higher education in Vietnam, and the influences of globalisation which Vietnamese teachers and students are a part of, it was realised that conceptions of teaching and learning should be considered from a socio-cultural perspective. Examining

teaching and learning from a socio-cultural perspective (higher education purposes, teachers' roles), and a classroom level (teaching conceptions, teaching approaches, learning conceptions, assessment, curriculum and course design) would address the gaps of overlooking social influences on teachers' conceptions, but at the same time would not ignore micro culture and the values that underlie those conceptions to teaching and learning.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the underlying philosophy for the adoption of constructivist grounded theory. A description of the context of the study, participant selection, recruitment, data collection, generation and analysis through open, focused coding, constant comparison and theoretical sampling, is presented. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the choice for research design and how challenges experienced were resolved.

3.1 Underlying Philosophy of the Research Paradigm

Epistemology is "a way of understanding and explaining how I know what I know" (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), epistemological inquiry looks at the relationship between the knower and the knowledge, and asks "how do I know the world?" (p. 183). An epistemological inquiry can be objectivist, subjectivist or constructivist, and underlies the entire research process and governs the research's theoretical perspective (e.g. interpretivist, post-modernist, feminist). The theoretical perspective will guide methodological decisions and procedural choices (Crotty, 1998). This study followed the constructivist epistemological paradigm and interpretivism theoretical perspective, which informed all stages of the study from its conceptualisation, research questions, interviewing, data analysis, to discussion and conclusion.

3.1.1 Constructivist Epistemological Paradigm

According to the constructivist paradigm, meaning is created through an interaction between the interpreter and the interpreted (Crotty, 1998). The interpreter, though not entirely objective, is separate from the phenomena to be observed and the meaning-making interaction is strongly influenced by the phenomena and society. However, meaning which is investigated by a constructivist paradigm is not subjective and personal but is socially generated within the interplay of consciousness and the object of experience. In other words, knowledge is not just created by the researcher's interpretation but involves a whole process of social exchange. The researchers' interpretations are shaped by the phenomena and societal influences, and the researcher is well aware that those interpretations are influenced through

the interaction between the researcher and the interpreted.

In this research, I acknowledge that the conceptualisation of the program participants' understanding of teaching and learning in higher education was a subjective process of interpretation and interactive exchange between participants and myself, through which the co-construction of teaching and learning in higher education was formulated. This qualitative approach is rooted in the constructivist epistemology with the assumption that knowledge, meaning and understanding are "individual constructions of reality" and that "knowledge is constructed rather than discovered" (Stake, 1995, p. 99).

3.1.2 Interpretivist Theoretical Perspective

A major sub-category of constructivism paradigm is interpretivism, which looks for "culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world" (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). A distinction that is frequently made regarding research philosophies is between positivism and interpretivism (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Travers, 2001). Positivism believes that researchers can take a scientific perspective when observing a phenomenon with an objective stance. Research based on a positivist stance is conducted in a deductive way, where a number of hypotheses are generated for testing, with empirical verification then sought (Babbie, 2005). In contrast, interpretivism requires researchers to take a different approach. As Bryman and Bell (2007) stated, interpretivists agree that the subject matter of the social sciences, in other words, people and their institutions, is considerably different from that of the natural sciences. This logic leads the researchers to the use of inductive theory process, reversing the deductive process by using data to generate theory. Grounded theory, which is a qualitative inquiry methodology, is one example, in which theory is formulated by data through constant comparison analysis. Charmaz (2006) asserted that constructivist grounded theory is "squarely an interpretive tradition" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 330). Unlike the positivist research, interpretivists believe people create and associate their own meanings through the interactions with objects around them. An interpretivist position was adopted in this research. That is, the meaning is constructed, not discovered, so participants construct their own meaning in different ways. Hence, researchers can only seek to understand real-world phenomena by studying them in detail within the context in which they occur.

Following the interpretivist perspective in conducting research I travelled back to Vietnam to conduct the study to explore the context that the program took place and study how the context might influence the construction of participants' understanding of teaching and

learning. The interaction with participants helps to reveal and associate meanings related to the research phenomenon on conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education in Vietnam.

Gray (2009) categorised interpretivism into five main approaches: symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, realism, hermeneutics and naturalistic inquiry. This study followed the symbolic interactionism approach as it values the process of **meaning-making** and interpretation and focuses on peoples' conceptions and lived realities. The essential tenets of symbolic interactionism, according to Gray (2009, p. 22) are that:

- People interpret the meaning of objects and actions in the world and then act upon those interpretations,
- Meanings arise from the process of social interaction,
- Meanings are handled in, and are modified by, an interactive process used by people in dealing with the phenomena that are encountered.

This research satisfies three central characteristics of symbolic interactionism. Firstly, it aimed to interpret the meanings of participants' conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education, and from this interpretation, implications for higher education teachers' professional development program have been suggested and acted upon. Just as the other two tenets of symbolic interactionism, which centre around the "meanings" of the studied phenomena, this study was built upon the philosophy that meanings, in this case, the conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education, are investigated through the lens of the program participants' perspectives, via the interaction among them and myself, as a researcher. I went to the field to collect data and observed what participants constructed as teaching and learning in higher education prior to participating the program and at the end of the program. My background and experience in higher education and in the context where the study took place, and as a former participant of the program helped to facilitate the research data collection through social interaction with participants (See 3.3.5 Role of the researcher). Also, those experiences are reflected in and influenced the analysis of data through memo writing and interpreting participants' conceptions. The meanings of conceptions of teaching and learning in this study, in this research, are inclined to follow symbolic interactionism paradigm, because they were not fixed, but changed through the influences of the teachers' training program and the social interactions and experience that participants of the program encountered during the participation of the program. Therefore, these conceptions were

inherently modified as the third tenet of symbolic interactionism, by an interactive process of participants through their interaction with program presenters and their peers.

3.2 Research Design and Rationale

The present study adopted a qualitative inquiry process. Qualitative inquiry involves the process of understanding and interpreting phenomena through words and representations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Qualitative research tries to uncover multifaceted interpretations of human experience, and determine how these are related within social and cultural variations. Qualitative inquiry places emphasis on the understanding of how people make sense of their world from different perspectives, and positions the researcher as the main instrument of data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2002). The thick descriptions of data through the use of qualitative inquiry reveal participants' views and their intentions as well as the influence of the program on their views or lives (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007). Thus, qualitative inquiry grounded in participants' contexts and views, was most appropriate for this study, which was to investigate participants' conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education, and how their conceptions change by participating in a compulsory teacher's professional development program.

The study investigated teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education and how these conceptions changed as a result of participating a teacher training program. A grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2014, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), was used because this approach allows the generating of a "theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analysed through the research process, informed by data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 12). In this study, using grounded theory revealed the experiences of participants' perspectives on teaching and learning in higher education. The development of grounded theory identified and explained the original viewpoints of participants prior to participating in a teacher training program structured by MOET for higher education teachers, and further identified the changes in their views of teaching and learning by the end of the program.

Grounded theory focuses on process, structure and context and as such it is appropriate to explore issues or phenomena that are socially constructed such as conceptions of teaching and learning. To some extent, this study could be viewed as a case study if the MOET higher education teachers' professional development program was treated as the main unit for analysis (Stake, 1995). However, the focus of the study is on conceptions of teaching and

learning of participants and their changes in conceptions. A process of change under its contextual influences on the program implementation was key to this study, not the analysis of the program itself, as such, case study could not have provided in-depth experiences of participants' understanding on teaching and learning in Vietnamese higher education. It does not fit in the phenomenology approach either because this study did not seek the commonality of human experience (Johnson & Christensen, 2004, p. 365) and did not focus on the essence of participants' experience of teaching and learning or invariant structure of their experience (Creswell, 2007, p. 62). Phenomenology has been used popularly in higher education teaching and learning conception research (Enwistle, 1997; Kember & Kwan, 2000; Prosser et al., 1994; Samuelowicz & Bain, 1992), which aims to find out the experiences of teachers in the teaching and learning phenomenon. If this study had considered the experiences of program participants in teaching and learning, and insights into the "meanings or essences of experiences" (Creswell, 2007, p. 52) on this program, it would have fit into the phenomenography approach. Nonetheless, this study aimed to firstly construct a theory about a conceptual change process, and secondly it relied on methods of making and analysing data reflecting the understanding in which reality is socially constructed (Creswell, 2007, p. 59), it did not aim to investigate just the essence of teaching and learning as a phenomenon. In other words, it has attempted to develop a theory on conceptual changes in participants' conceptions of teaching and learning and has focussed on the process of change and its underlying reasoning. Grounded theory, therefore, has been the best fit for this study.

3.3 Grounded Theory

3.3.1 Grounded Theory – An overview

Grounded theory, developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), is used to elicit and analyse qualitative data to identify important categories so that ideas are generated and the theory is grounded in the data. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990):

> A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship to one another. (p. 23)

Grounded theory research is open to emerging concepts and relationships gained from the

data rather than being influenced by preconceptions of what the data should be like. Grounded theory methodology advocates the process of **generating theory** rather than testing a theoretical content (Patton, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In grounded theory, the emphasis is on steps and processes for connecting induction and deduction through a constant comparative method, comparing research sites, doing theoretical sampling and testing emergent concepts with additional fieldwork (Birks & Mills, 2011; Patton, 2002). A study adopting grounded theory approach does not aim to achieve statistical generalisation but instead aims to invent theory grounded from data. Data collection encompasses in-depth interviews and might be endorsed with documents, memos, and even research literature review and quantitative data (Charmaz, 2014, 2006).

3.3.2 Positivist and Interpretivist Grounded Theory

Grounded theory was originated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and evolved into two different main approaches: the classical systematic approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and the constructivist approach (Charmaz, 2014, 2006). Glaser followed a positivist approach, believing there was only one single objective truth to be discovered and grounded theory discovers what people do naturally. Strauss, on the other hand, was influenced by interpretivists, who posited that truth was subjective and knowledge was gained through interaction (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Charmaz, 2006). Strauss's viewpoint expects researchers to actively obtain theory from data by focusing on different aspects of data collection depending on their backgrounds and beliefs.

Throughout the years, however, these grounded theory traditions have been criticised for being too methodologically rigid and neglecting the stance of the researcher. It is argued that "fracturing the data" used in grounded theory methods just aims for a final analysis instead of understanding the subject's experience at its best (Conrad, 1990). Charmaz (2000) insisted that this "fracturing the data" method ends up "separating the experience from the experienced subject, the meaning of the story, and the viewer from the viewed" (p. 521). Indeed, Glaser's methods of developing codes and categories from data did not encourage the interpretation of data from the researcher' view. Charmaz (2006), however, developed the constructivist approach to grounded theory and emphasised the roles of researchers in constructing interpretations of data through different channels of interactions. This study has adopted the constructivist approach to grounded theory because it aimed to develop an in-depth understanding of conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education through the

perspectives of individuals (through their interactions with one another and with me). All participants involved constructed personal conceptions through their interactions with others in a particular setting and through the influences of their educational background and social experiences.

3.3.3 Constructivist Grounded Theory

In her first edition of the Constructing Grounded Theory book, Charmaz (2006) insisted:

> Grounded theory serves as a way to learn about the worlds we study and a method for developing theories to understand them. In classic grounded theory works, Glaser and Strauss talk about discovering theory emerging from data separate from the scientific observer. Unlike their position, I assume that neither data nor theories are discovered. Rather, we are part of the world we study and the data we collect. We construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices. (p. 10)

The constructivist paradigm, therefore, views the research as constructed rather than discovered and, therefore, "fosters researchers' reflexitivity about their actions" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 13). Charmaz's constructivist approach to grounded theory is strongly aligned with the social constructivists such as Lev Vygostky (1962) and Yvonna Lincoln (2013), who believe the process of knowing and learning takes place under the influence of social contexts, interactions, and interpretive perceptions. This approach to grounded theory stresses the flexible stance of the researcher and avoids the criticism of traditional grounded theory as discussed earlier (Charmaz, 2014). Using Charmaz's approach to grounded theory is flexible and the researcher constantly interacts with data and is simultaneously immersed in the analysis of data (Charmaz, 2006):

> Researchers can use basic grounded theory guidelines such as coding, memo writing and sampling for theory development and comparative methods in many ways are neutral. Grounded theory guidelines describe the steps of research process and provide path through it. (p. 9)

One central tenet of constructivist grounded theory is the sense of reciprocity between participants and the researchers in the co-construction of meaning and ultimately creating a theory grounded in the participants and researcher's experience (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006). Constructivist grounded theory advocates the interpretations of the co-construction of a theory informed by the shared reality of the participants' voices and researchers' views. As

Charmaz (2008, p. 133) put it: "Entering the phenomenon shrinks the distance between the viewer and the viewed". This approach allows a better understanding and mutual respect between the researcher and participants and encourages the development of a reality through social, cultural interactions and social relationship with participants in a certain context.

My decision to adopt the constructivism grounded theory approach was influenced by the constructivism epistemology and inspired and led by the aforementioned principle. The aim of this study was to generate a theory on the co-construction of meaning through the voices and experience of both the participants and myself, to generate new perspectives and conceptions (of higher education teaching and learning) that can represent the specific group of participants in a particular context (Vietnam). I, myself, used to be a participant of the studied program and have had five years' work experience in Vietnamese higher education in this region, as such, my theoretical sensitivity could facilitate the process of construction of the shared meaning on teaching and learning in higher education. The study was initiated by my own interest in the topic of teaching and learning in higher education, and encouraged by peers and trainers of a teacher training program. The shared understanding of conceptions of teaching and learning was then developed through subsequent interviews and interactions with participants. Unlike the classic approaches of grounded theory, I focused on conceptions of participants and noted how their given contexts influenced their views, and changes. The investigation of participants' conceptions, in this study, did not follow an objective stance, but instead, was socially constructed through an interactive process with stakeholders, and participants under diverse cultural and contextual influences. The constructivist approach to grounded theory, therefore, fits in the constructivist epistemological paradigm chosen for the study.

Grounded theory was appropriate for this study according to three following dominant principles, as listed by Birks and Mills (2011, p. 16):

- Little is known about the area of the study.
- The generation of theory with explanation power.
- An inherent process is imbedded in the research situation that is likely to be explicated by grounded theory methods.

Those principles have all been applied in this study. Firstly, little has been reported on Vietnamese higher education teachers' conceptions of and approaches to teaching and

learning and how the professional development programs might influence these conceptions. In addition, there has been no study, if any, conducted in Vietnam to explore, explain and discuss the necessity or impacts of the compulsory teachers' professional development programs for higher education teachers. Since MOET issued the decision to require higher education teachers to compulsorily attend the training program in 2007, no study has been formally published on impacts of such a program or on participants' reflections on the program. A study addressing these issues will be a valuable contribution to program adjustment, modifications and to better influence teaching capacity. Secondly, one of the intended outcomes of the study was to generate a theory on teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning and approaches to teaching in higher education contexts, therefore grounded theory best fits the study (Birks & Mills, 2011). The study also adopted an interpretive theoretical perspective, explicating the studied phenomena, i.e. what influences participants' views on teaching and learning and what leads to their conceptual change. The study aligns with Marshal and Rossman's (1990) characteristics of using grounded theory approach: focusing on everyday lived experiences, valuing participants' perspectives, inquiry as an interactive process between the researcher and participants, and relying on peoples' words. Finally, the study involved an ever-developing process of constant comparative analysis and was modified from time to time, as emphasised by Charmaz (2014). In this study, the process was indicated throughout the analysis phase, which will be later explained in the 3.6 Data Analysis. The process of developing a theory for this study relied on Charmaz' s (2014) framework, which is presented in Figure 3.1.

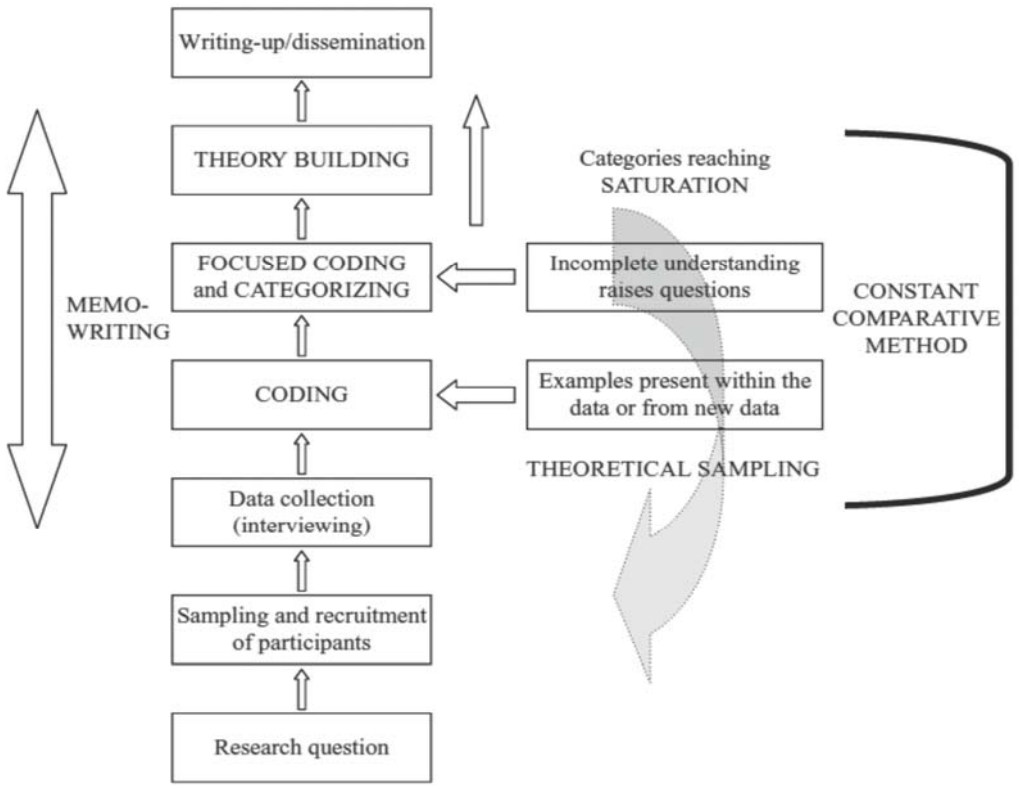

Figure 3.1 Constructivist grounded theory process (Charmaz, 2014, p. 18)

Consistent with Charmaz's (2006) philosophy of constructivist grounded theory, this research aimed to develop a detailed understanding of the underlying social or psychological processes within a certain context by exploring in more detail conceptions held by participants of a professional development program through under the influence of social contexts and interactions. The studied phenomena, participants' conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education, was discovered through the interview process with research participants in the context where one higher education teacher training program for these participants was taking place. Their conceptual change through the interactions with peers and program presenters, and the knowledge transferred to participants was explored using a constructivist grounded theory approach. This approach allowed me to focus attention on the participants' conceptual change that might occur in a given context (Charmaz, 2006), which may not be immediately apparent but emerged over time as the data was analysed and theory began. In addition, this study supports the view that the research must be portrayed in an interpretive manner in which the researcher and the participants share the co-construction of reality (Charmaz, 2006). This study emphasised my own experience, knowledge and how I constructed my view of reality. The grounded theory in this study, was socially constructed

by me and the participants, and all empirical evidence was interpreted within the research context.

3.3.4 Theoretical Sensitivity

Theoretical sensitivity is "a multidimensional concept that includes the researchers' level of insight into the research area" (Mills et al., 2006, p. 28) such as experience or knowledge about the studied phenomena. Traditional grounded theorists require researchers to enter the field of inquiry with little prior theoretical knowledge as possible to remain unbiased by predominant theories (Glaser, 1978). Traditional grounded theory also rejects the reviewing of literature as a result. Strauss and Corbin (1998), however, supported the engagement of literature from the beginning of the inquiry process as a means to interweave information from the literature during the process of grounded theory as a source to reach theoretical reconstruction.

Constructivist grounded theorists (Charmaz, 2014, 2006; Mills et al., 2006) also support using a literature review as a part of knowledge construction and that this knowledge should be woven in into the project (Charmaz, 2006, p. 167). For this reason, I did review some literature on conceptions and approaches to teaching and learning in higher education before conducting interviews. However, this review served the purpose of constructing knowledge in this particular area, without framing and restricting the research alongside with predominant theories about the studied phenomena. This constructivist grounded theory uses a systematic approach to foster "integrating subjective experience with social conditions in our analyses" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 510). It allowed me to be more flexible in methods than objectivist approaches and reject the objectivity in data collection and analysis. Indeed, the literature review intensified my knowledge before going into the field, provided ideas for interview guides and helped me to come up with some assumptions and perspectives. Later, from preliminary analysis, I constantly came back to the relevant literature as new categories emerged to support or contradict with assumptions and conclusions made, and this fostered the theory development process.

3.3.5 Role of the researcher

In this study, I carried out data collection, recording, transcribing, data sorting and analysis. My experience as a former participant of the program and my reflections motivated this investigation. I used to be a higher education teacher in MK University (pseudonym), where the program took place. I also took part in the program in one of the 2010 cohorts at MK

University as a program participant. I took part in the program when I had two years teaching experience in higher education and two years interacting with Australian and European higher education institutions through project management and post-graduate study. In my case, the program did not change what I really perceived as teaching and learning as principles of teaching and learning transmitted in the program were not new to me by the time I was a program participant. I was wondering if my colleagues who did not have the same experience would benefit from the same program. Furthermore, the program structure was changed and the program of study had undergone a certain degree of restructure. Whether the structure was useful in changing participants' understanding of teaching and learning, especially new and early career higher education teachers and what is the missing element in the restructure of this program is something that motivates me to do this research when reflecting on the program.

Although I did not experience any changes in my conceptions as a result of participating the program from the 2010 cohort, the experience of this program and my educational background helped me to establish a good relationship with participants and facilitate the collegial conversation in interviews with participants and presenters of the program of this studied cohort. I followed Strauss and Corbin's suggestion (2008) in adopting the reciprocal shaping in the knowledge construction between the interviewees and me. Constructivists believe it is impossible to separate the researcher from participants in data generation (Charmaz, 2014; Clarke, 2005). Indeed, the establishment of the reciprocity between me and participants "ideally includes a reflexive consideration of existing power differentials" (Birks & Mills, 2011, p. 56). This relationship and shared understanding of contexts and backgrounds can lead to the construction of knowledge, information generated with depth, and reflexive thoughts and insights. From my background and shared experience, I was able to have access to rich data and trust from participants and conduct an open interchange by engaging with interviewees and being willing to understand their responses in the interview context (Collins, 1998). Charmaz (2000) proposed to "change our conception of it from a real world to be discovered … to a world made real in the minds and through the words and actions of its members" (p. 523). This approach, therefore, allowed me to continue making sense of what we were saying to one another.

My background and experience working in the Vietnamese higher education context have shaped a certain degree of theoretical sensitivity in the researched area. My expertise, together with the constructivist epistemology position, has influenced my thoughts about how

knowledge is acquired. Grounded theorists recently have supported the analysis of your subjective "self" within the grounded theory process. As Charmaz (1991) stated, self is "the organised set of internalised attachments, commitments, attributes, images, and identification with which a person creates a concept of self" (p. 72). This idea of self is later supplemented with Charmaz's viewpoints in considering we are "part of our constructed theory and this theory reflects the vantage points inherent in our varied experience, whether or not we are aware of them" (p. 149). Therefore, this research has incorporated the multiple perspectives of "self" on grounded theory research design by taking a reflexivity stance through the use of memo writing (see 3.6.3 Memo). Critically analysing reflexive writing as supported by Birks and Mills (2011) is an active process of systematically developing our insight into our work and it is becoming an imperative for grounded theorists to incorporate reflexitivity in their research design (Charmaz, 2006; Clarke, 2005). In this research, reflexitivity was undertaken in the form of memo writing, a record of my written feelings, thinking, comparison, and reflections which influenced how the researcher incorporated an analysis of data and research outcomes. Using memos as a way to promote reflexitivity in the research, according to Birks and Mills (2011) will assure the quality and ethical integrity as it shows the researcher's history and how one researcher identifies herself or himself in the research procedures. Prior experience of participating in the same program and working in higher education in the Vietnamese context, therefore, assisted me to enhance sensitivity in the development of data meanings, which could be observed from one example memo in Appendix H (Memo 9).

As a novice grounded theory researcher, to avoid pitfalls of newcomers to this approach, I extensively researched this approach through the literature and used Charmaz's (2014; 2006) guidelines and framework (Figure 3.1) to constructing grounded theory for this study to ensure a balance of objectivity and sensitivity. Sensitivity helped me to "perceive the subtle nuances and meanings in data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 42), and led me to identify connections among emergent concepts. A level of objectivity was also maintained by, following Strauss and Corbin's (1998) recommendations in giving voice to participants, encouraging an open dialogue and willing-to-share attitude. This was strictly followed during the research process, from recruiting to interviewing participants. Furthermore, objectivity was improved through constant comparison between data, and multiple data collection methods, and multiple representatives from cohort of participants.

3.4 Participant Selection

3.4.1 Sampling Strategies and Criteria

The technique used to identify and select participants for this research was purposive sampling. Qualitative researchers often use purposive sampling to extend knowledge through seeking participants who are known to provide rich sources of qualitative data (Roberts, 1997; Ryan, 2006). Purposive sampling allowed me to decide in advance the specific criteria for participants for the study and made it easier to target and locate participants. The aim of the research was to explore possible changes of conceptions of teaching and learning on higher education of participants of a teacher training program. The following criteria were used. Participants must:

- be either a higher education teacher, or a recent graduate aspiring to be a higher education teacher,
- enrol in the November 2014 cohort of the training program for higher education teachers at the Centre for Teachers' Professional Development, MK University, and
- complete the program without dropping out halfway.

Each year, the Centre for Teachers' Professional Development organised about three to five program cohorts, depending on the number of participants enrolling. I chose the November 2014 cohort as this cohort was open when I had officially prepared for data collection and received ethics approval for the study to be formally conducted in Vietnam. I also selected program presenters (teacher trainers) as a source of sampling, to intensify data and elaborate on the possible changes on participants' conceptions. The following criteria were set for program presenters. They must:

- be senior lecturers and have participated as presenters in the November 2014 cohort program, and
- had taught at least **FOUR** cohorts of the program at the Centre for Teachers' Professional Development, MK University.

The second criterion was set so that information on experiences of program changes, and data on how the presenters modified the program could yield information on participants' conceptual change and their reasoning.

Unexpected changes in participant selection

Initially, my intention was just to select participants that were higher education teachers. However, I had to change the sample to include recent graduates who participated in the training program, apart from participants who were early career or new higher education teachers. The chosen cohort was open to all participants and the number of higher education teachers alone who participated in this cohort could not reach the expected sample size. The change in selecting the participants, although beyond my control, was necessary for two reasons. First, as MOET decided to popularise the program to a wider cohort of participants, it was essential to investigate conceptions of teaching and learning of the new participants of the program (recent graduates or professionals). Because the program targeted those future prospective higher education teachers, their voices needed to be heard as well. Secondly, methodologically speaking, as Morse (2001) has suggested, a broader demographic of participants can produce a well-rounded and balanced explanation of the phenomena studied (Morse, 2001).

I first sought permission from the Director of the Centre for Teachers' Professional Development (MK University) to conduct the study in the Centre and with the participants of the November 2014 cohort. Through the Director, an invitation (recruitment) letter was sent by email to all participants who registered to enrol in the program. The Participant Information Statement (Appendix A) and Consent Form (Appendix B) were also attached in the initial email. Only when participants agreed to participate in the study by contacting me via email or phone (provided in the recruitment letter) would I arrange further emails or face-to-face meetings for the participants to sign the consent form.

Based on the consent given by the prospective participants, purposive sampling was used to select the participants from a range of departments and disciplines to allow the collection of rich data from multiple perspectives (Neuman, 2006). The Participant Information Statement was read and agreed to by participants before any interview was conducted. According to Charmaz (2006), the constructivist grounded theory data generation process reaches theoretical saturation through data diversity generated from at least **ten** participants. There were thirty-seven participants in the cohort, and from the twenty-one consents the researcher received, fifteen participants were finally chosen based on their availability, disciplinary diversity and teaching experiences. Although ten participants should be adequate for grounded theory, the researcher wanted to avoid a possible "drop out" phenomenon, so

fifteen participants were chosen. In addition, fifteen participants could help to diversify data generated and therefore facilitate theoretical saturation. It was stressed that in grounded theory, the process of selecting participants might continue until a point of data saturation is reached, but due to ethical permission granted during the fieldtrip, selecting more participants might not be feasible due to time constraint of seeking for another ethical clearance. To mitigate this limitation, fifteen participants were purposeful pre-determined to allow diversification of data generation and in addition to analysing data from fifteen participants' interviews, document analysis and literature search were constantly conducted until data reached its saturation as discussed in data analysis (3.5.2) and data triangulation (3.5.4). Those fifteen participants were selected purposefully in a way that best diversified the data generated.

Similarly, the same procedures of initial contacts applied to program presenters. There were eight presenters in the November 2014 cohort. Five other presenters met the selection criteria, and were supportive of participating in the research. Interviewing program presenters aimed to illuminate the differences (if any) of their conceptions of teaching and learning compared to those of participants of the program, and how their conceptions and teaching modifications contributed to the participants' possible conceptual changes.

3.4.2 Sample profile

Participants of the program

There were two groups of participants: higher education teachers, and prospective higher education teachers who were recent graduates or professionals of industries. Teachers who participated in the program were generally in their early careers, ranging from three-month to four-year teaching experience. Some of the participants were early career teachers, and had extensive experience in certain industries before becoming teachers. Their ages varied significantly. As the study did not aim to investigate age influence on conceptions of teaching and learning, and due to its ethical factor, age information was not collected. In addition, abiding by constructivist grounded theory approach, the study seeks to find the general construction of program participants' understanding of higher education teaching and learning, rather than focusing on case analysis of individual or disciplinary differences, which can be further investigated as follow-up studies. Consequently, original ethical preparation was not planned to collect data for further follow-up interviews of participants, apart from two rounds of interviews (pre-program and post-program), which might yield further data for

individual analysis. The highest degree obtained by participants was Masters degrees. Due to the diversity of disciplines, I categorised various disciplines into three major categories: Humanity and Social Sciences, Education, and Natural and Applied Sciences. Besides teaching positions, two other participants worked as trainers for departments of their provinces, one in political training and one in food assurance training. The study also involved one export clerk, one provincial officer and three other recent graduates. The majority of the participants had graduated from one central university, and from a university of medicine in the Mekong Delta river region, where the program was conducted. A few others had different educational backgrounds, graduating abroad or from universities in Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam). A summary of participants' information, including gender, occupations, degrees and their locations, discipline, work experience, and their organisation is attached in Appendix I.

Presenters of the program

All program presenters selected for this study had been actively involved in teaching in the program since it was first introduced since 2010. They, therefore, satisfied the FOUR cohorts experience, as each year at least three cohorts are organised. All presenters were senior lecturers and held very important positions in the Faculty or Departments. Demographic information of the presenters is presented in Appendix I. One of the presenters was the former Dean and one was the current Dean of the Faculty of Education of MK University. One of the presenters was the current Director of the Centre for Teachers' Professional Development and one had just resigned from this position but was still acting as a presenter of the program. The other two used to be heads of their departments. All participants had at least fifteen years of teaching experience and been active as presenters of the program since 2010.

3.5 Data Collection

This study used individual semi-structured interviews with program participants, and program presenters. The semi-structured interviews with participants took place twice: before the participants attended the training program (pre-program phase) and right after they completed the program (post-program phase), so as to examine two sets of participants' conceptions of teaching and learning prior to participating and after completing the program. Collecting and analysing single participants' changed conceptions would be useful to provide differences in individual changes based upon disciplines and work experiences but because the focus of the study was placed on the general construction of participants on teaching and

learning in two phases of the program (pre-program and post-program), cross-case analysis of conceptual changes was not conducted. Follow-up studies on disciplinary or institutional differences would benefit from the generation of teaching and learning conceptions found from this study. Interviews for program presenters, however, took place only once to compare some of their conceptions on some categories which emerged from the initial analysis of participants' data, and to investigate how they implemented and modified their modules.

In addition, public documents related to the compulsory teacher training programs at higher education level from the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) were analysed to support, compare and justify lines of reasoning or concepts emerging from interviews with program participants and program presenters. Documents used in this study include the Decision Sixty-one (Decision No. 61/2007/QD-BGDĐT) on teacher training for university and college teachers, and Circular Twelve (12/2013/TT-BGDĐT) on teacher training for university and college teachers. The curriculum modified in the context of the study was analysed and compared to the one suggested by MOET guideline (Circular 12) to shed light on how the program had been modified in this particular context (Appendix E). Further documents (Decision 711/QĐ TTg; Joint Circulars 36/2014/TTLT BGDĐT-BNV, and 06/2011/TTLT-BNV-BGDĐT) which emerged in the later stage of data analysis were added and compared with categories and dimensions developed (Appendix H, memo 8). Although those documents were not initially planned to be analysed, they are directly related to the two themes which emerged from those studies (purposes of higher education, teachers' roles) and were later decided to be studied apart from documents related to the training program as described above.

3.5.1 Interviews

Interviewing was the main method of data generation in this research and it is a common method of data collection in grounded theory research (Charmaz, 2014, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Mills et el., 2006a). Interviews were best suited for this study because it aimed to identify participants' conceptions on higher education teaching and learning, or specifically, on the purposes of higher education, roles of teachers, teaching conceptions and approaches in higher education contexts. Changes in their conceptions of those issues were identified through post-program interviews, by comparing themes which emerged from the pre-program interviews with those emerged in the post-program interview phase. All of the changes in participants' conceptions and experiences on the program could only be best

illustrated through individual interviews. A semi-structured interview approach was chosen because it allowed me to decide what to ask according to the interview guide, with room for open and responsive questions to unexpected issues (Gillham, 2000) or to return to a point or question discussed earlier. Interviews in this study created opportunities for participants to express their viewpoints, the context where they work, and their educational background and experience, all of which might influence their perspectives on teaching and learning in higher education. The interview guidelines for grounded theory by Charmaz (2014) and Birks and Mills (2011) were used. The familiarity of the context and the shared experiences with participants assisted me to lead the interviews in a co-constructing manner through the conversational exchange of viewpoints and experiences with participants.

In line with constructivist grounded theory approach, I designed the indicative questions for interviews with program participants and presenters (Appendix D), listing all open-ended questions as a guide but allowing room for flexibility in conversation as suggested by Charmaz (2014). I prepared an interview guide with some probes to increase confidence and focus participants' concentration during interviews (Charmaz, 2006). The initial interview guide was informed by the research problem and based on theoretical sensitivity conducted during the first investigation of literature in the specific area and my experience as a higher education teacher and a former participant of the program. However, during the interviews, some questions were formulated through the responses of participants to elicit their further definitions, as constructivist grounded theory approach encourages (Charmaz, 2006, p. 32). For example, when one participant answered the question on what he thought teaching in higher education should be like, his response was student-centred and he made a short justification of it. Wanting to know more on how specifically he applied his conceptions of "student-centred" in his teaching, I continued to ask: "Tell me more about how you used student-centred approach in your course?" and I kept going: "How did you find students' reactions to student-centred teaching?". Such unprepared probes help better clarify participants' justification and experiences on a particular issue.

Constructivist interviewing techniques as suggested by Charmaz (2006, p. 30) was strictly followed. I made sure that the participants were comfortable, that I was being an active listener to their experiences so that I could elicit the rich data from participants' sharing. I elicited participants' views on specific areas, on their experiences and how they arrived at their views and sought implicit meanings through their responses. I bore in mind that questions posed needed to be open-ended, rather than closed, to allow rich data collection and

avoid preconceived concepts (Charmaz, 2006). For example, instead of asking "Do you think the purposes of higher education should be educating human resources?", I changed it to "Tell me what you think about the purposes of higher education." Or "Could you tell me more about other purposes of higher education?".

The interviews were conducted in Vietnamese and lasted from forty-five minutes to one hour and recorded, uploaded on computer as voice files and then transcribed verbatim immediately. I played each recording many times during the transcription process at slow speeds and paused many times. This process helped me to stay close to the data and recognise patterns as they emerged from the data through the iterative data collection and analysis process. Only when all transcripts were completed was the translation into English conducted and peer-checked.

Interview procedures with program participants

Pre-program interviews

The pre-program phase interview with program participants took place from mid to the end of October 2014. The pre-program phase was conducted to search for preliminary concepts and themes on higher education teaching and learning. The interview guide was translated into Vietnamese and then checked and revised by a language teacher. The questions and protocol were then pilot tested with two higher education teachers who had participated in the program in the same setting but from a previous cohort. Those two piloted interviews were used to offer feedback on the nature of the questions, the clarity in the translation of the questions, and the interview process and techniques. The pilot interview helped to refine the word choice used in translation to prevent misunderstanding and helped me familiarise myself with interviewing and facilitating techniques in posing questions in a constructive approach as suggested by Charmaz (2014).

The Participant Information Statement (Appendix A) was read and agreed to by participants before any interview was conducted. It was stressed that the interview would be recorded, but would not be shared or published without participants' authorised consent. In addition, the participants were ensured that their real names would not be used under any circumstances and they had the right to withdraw at any time if they wanted to.

All participants agreed to have their interviews recorded. The interviews were conducted in Vietnamese and audio recorded for transcriptions, translation and analysis. The interview consisted of general questions as stated in the interview guide (Appendix D). I intentionally

encouraged the answers and elaboration of participants' viewpoints and experiences and listened to their sharing. I was non-judgmental and open to all responses from the participants. Before starting the interview, I asked participants a couple of questions about their background, motivations for participating in the program to help break the ice and facilitated a co-constructive and friendly interview environment.

After the first round of the interview, (pre-program phase), I transcribed verbatim the interviews and translated them into an English version. All translations were subject to peer review and back-translated into Vietnamese by a lecturer who teaches English as a Second Language. Initial coding started at this stage. The emerging themes formed the basis for future interviews and modification of questions for subsequent interviews (Memos on preliminary theory on pre-program phase, Appendix H, memo 4). Initial categories generated from the data analysis of this interview phase show that data was saturated as no new category could be found after comparing and conducting abductive analysis.

Post-program interviews

The post-program interview phase with program participants was conducted immediately after the program completed, from early to end of March 2015. The same participants were selected and interviewed, with questions related to conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education, their perceived conceptual changes, and plans for teaching after completing the training program.

Soon after the participants finished the program, the interview guide was sent out by email two weeks before they were interviewed. Fifteen participants were invited for the post-program phase and no participant dropped out of the study. Interview data on conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education were sought to be compared with the preliminary findings of the first round to highlight explicit or implicit changes compared to the results developed from the pre-program phase.

The interview question guide for post-program interview was used. Based on the preliminary findings from the pre-program phase (Appendix H, memo 4), the questions used in the post-program were straight to the point, focusing more on categories developed from the pre-program data. However, as the post-program phase aimed to identify changes in participants' conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education, the wording of the questions was changed to ensure it would best provide the comparison of conceptual change and best facilitate responses from participants. For example, if asked: "After the program, how have

you changed your view on the purposes of higher education?", the participants would try to remember what they shared during the first interview, and pause for a long time before remembering what they had said. Therefore, I just asked questions like the first pre-program phase: "Tell me what you think about the purposes of higher education" to tap in to natural response from participants. Participants, may or may not have recognised the changes in their conceptions, therefore, it was not important to ask them whether they thought their changed compared to the pre-program phase interview. This enabled the interview to be natural, friendly and open and thus, yielded a greater variety of experiences about conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education, which are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Interview with program presenters

Similarly, a participation invitation letter (Appendix A) was sent to the program presenters of the training program, and only presenters who gave consent to participate in the study were contacted for individual interviews. Five presenters were selected upon their giving consent and interviews were conducted in Vietnamese at the convenience of the presenters. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews provided in-depth information on their conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education. The emerging themes of the pre-program phase interview with participants and theoretical sensitivity (Appendix H, memo 9) informed me that it would be necessary to interview some presenters who had leadership positions, specifically those who had power to modify the program in this context. At this stage, another supplementary criterion emerged for recruiting presenters: leadership view towards the program and reasoning for the implementation of the program. Interviewing the current Director of the Centre who coordinated the program was decided to be essential. In addition, one presenter who was the former Director of the Centre (but was still actively involved in teaching and designing curriculum for the program) was also selected for her insights on program restructure. Interviewing those presenters helped to shed much light on the contextual changes of the program in the study context and how the changes might influence participants' conceptions. Those interviews also provided data on how the program was tailored according to this specific context but at the same time adhering to MOET's guidelines (Appendix H, memo 9). The interviews with those two presenters, as a result, were scheduled last, after all interviews with participants were finalised.

The interviews were audio recorded, translated into English and transcribed for analysis. Their expectations on what changes participants could gain from participating in the program

were asked. Furthermore, information on the presenters' approaches to teaching in the program, how they designed, implemented and modified their teaching over different cohorts was collected to provide data on program implementation and modification to provide an in-depth investigation on the possible effects presenters have on conceptual changes of participants. Interviews with program presenters were conducted from November 2014 to April 2015. Just as for the interviews with participants, interview questions were sent by email two weeks before. Prior to the interview, information about the research was read and the consent form was signed. The presenters were aware that only pseudonyms would be used and they agreed to be recorded. The interview lasted from thirty to forty-five minutes. Transcripts were completed and translated into English and peer-checked (discussed in 3.6).

3.5.2 Document Analysis

As Charmaz (2014) put it: "…documents provide a major form of data" (p. 45) in grounded theory. Charmaz's view on including documents in qualitative inquiry is consistent with Patton (2002), who believes records or documents are a rich source of information about organisations and programs. In this research, although conceptual change of participants on higher education teaching and learning was the main focus, it also attempted to provide suggestions for program modifications, therefore it was critical that documents related to program guidelines were studied.

In this research, public documents including Decision and Circular on Program Curriculum for higher education teachers' professional development issued by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) (Circular Number: 12/2013/TT-BGDĐT, and Decision No 61/2007/QĐ-BGDĐT) were used to support interview findings (Appendix E). Documents were translated into English and peer checking was sought to verify the reliability of the translation by a lecturer who teaches English as a Foreign Language. In particular, the objectives, the audience of the documents and the guided framework of the curriculum for the training were analysed to provide further data on how the document was translated in this particular context. In addition, exploring objectives of those documents also encouraged me to seek more data from other sources (Charmaz, 2014). As a result, public documents did not only provide information relevant to program, but they were also stimulus for paths of inquiry in interviewing or observations (Patton, 2002). In this research, analysing the modification of program documents (Appendix H, memo 10) provided starting points for me to ask questions about the change in how presenters modified the program in their context

and thought about how participants might be influenced by this change.

Some documents, although initially were not planned to be used for this study, were later included because they were important to support interview data from participants (Appendix H, memo 8). Those documents emerged as theoretical sampling of documents (seeking and collecting pertinent data to elaborate and refine categories in emerging theory) (Charmaz, 2006, p. 96). They were used to further elaborate on categories constituting the emerged theory analysed from data. Together with memo-writing, these document analyses led to theoretical sampling and helped to delineate and develop properties and saturate properties of emerged categories. Documents on Vietnamese higher education purposes (Vietnamese Higher Education Law 08/2012/QH13) and higher education teachers' standards (Joint Circular on code titles and standards for teachers in Vietnamese higher education institutions; 36/2014/TTLT BGDĐT-BNV; 06/2011/TTLT-BNV-BGDĐT) were analysed to support sub-categories and properties found from interview data, as presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

3.5.3 Memo

A memo is a note about ideas or deductive or inductive thoughts related to concepts, cases, categories and their relationships or properties emerging during data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Memos can "catch your thoughts, capture the comparisons and connections you make, and crystallise questions and directions for you to pursue." (Charmaz, 2014, p. 162). Writing memos, therefore, is the pivotal step between data collection and writing drafts step. It helps to construct analytic notes to explicate or fill out categories by helping the researcher to make constant comparisons between data and data, codes and category and concepts (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Memo writing encourages the reflexivity stance of the researcher and helps to keep engaging in the research process (Charmaz, 2014). Memos are then used to move through the process of coding, categorising to identify leads to follow through saturation and development of theory.

I started writing memos at the commencement of the study and this was continued to the completion of the Findings Chapters. After each interview, I jotted down some notes about each case interviewed, my questioning, my doubts or comparisons. In the analysis phase, notes of thoughts related to the codes, emergent theories, the interaction between categories and literature review were written. Memos, in this study were flowing and free as suggested by Charmaz (2006) to record the mass of reasoning ideas emerging from the data analysis phase. I also used clustering, diagramming and comparative analysis to assist memo writing

(Charmaz, 2006). Clustering and diagramming allow visible identification of how the phenomena fit together and identify the interrelation of categories (Appendix H, memo 2 and memo 5). Constant comparative analysis, on the other hand, was utilised to compare incident with incident to identify similarities and differences to develop possible concepts, and as such, the process helped to group concepts into higher order of categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

3.5.4 Triangulation

Triangulation has been known as the combination of multiple observers, theories, methods, and data sources to reduce bias or possible vulnerable errors linked to a single method or observer, or theory (Denzin, 1989; Patton, 2002). Unlike quantitative studies, where triangulation is treated as a means to ensure the study reliability, in qualitative research, triangulation is used to capture multiple realities and improve the discussion among those realities. Patton (2002) lists four types of triangulation that are essential for the verification and validation of qualitative analysis: methods triangulation, sources triangulation, analyst triangulation, and theory/perspective triangulation. It is noticed that triangulation does not mean all different data sources or inquiry methods should yield the same results, but in contrast, inconsistencies among data through triangulation in qualitative research can be considered illuminative (Patton, 2002). In this study, I used triangulation of data sources: interviews, documents, and observation notes (in the form of free-writing memos as presented in Appendix H) to compare different perspectives of stakeholders (participants' views, presenters' view and policy makers' views). Conceptions of teaching and learning themes, emerged from those three perspectives were compared and presented in Chapters 4 and 5. It was expected that triangulation of methods would not lead to the same results as Patton (2002) reminded, but the aim of using triangulation was to understand the differences from diverse perspectives and to find reasons for those differences in order to finally contribute to the overall credibility of the findings. The multiple perspectives through the dynamic of triangulation used in this study will be evidently presented in Chapters 4 and 5, where I, as the researcher, under the influence of constructive grounded theory perspective, seek patterns across multiple sources to achieve robustness for the reliability claims of the studied phenomenon.

3.6 Data Analysis

All transcripts were translated into English, and two lecturers who are teaching English as a

foreign language, were invited to help check the wording and accuracy of the translation. These two English teachers have Masters degrees in Translation Studies and Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

Grounded theory uses several coding techniques at different levels and the starting is open coding analysis (Charmaz, 2014). In this analysis, detailed and meticulous line-by-line coding (for example, see Appendix F) was conducted manually, providing a good starting point to identify initial phenomena and create a list of important themes. Conceptual labels were attached to almost every line in the transcripts to capture participants' views (Charmaz, 2014). The first initial analysis informed a revision of data generation process and procedures before starting the second phase of data collection and analysis. Central themes and sub-concepts identified in the open coding step were further developed, combined or removed in the second step of focused coding, where a thorough identification of codes was constructed (Appendix G). Focused coding was applied to several lines or paragraphs and I had to choose the most telling codes that represented the interviewees' views. It helped to verify the adequacy of initial concepts. Codes were then compared and relationships among them were studied to form categories. Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggested axial coding as the next step of coding, which is the act of relating categories to subcategories along the lines of their properties and dimensions. However, Charmaz (2006) warned that using axial coding might restrict the study to one formal frame of data analysis. The highest level of coding is theoretical coding, which looks at the relationships that have been formed between categories. Glaser (1978) developed many rules to help researchers with this advanced analysis.

This study adopted the constructivist approach to data analysis outlined by Charmaz (2014, 2006). As mentioned earlier, data generation and data analysis were conducted concurrently in grounded theory methodology using early findings (interview data in phase one) to shape the on-going data collection and analysis. The pre-program phase in which participants were interviewed prior to the start of the training program was conducted and simultaneously data were collected and analysed. After the program finished, I interviewed the participants the second time, used the interview guide questions, but had some preliminary theory already, based upon the analysis of the pre-program interview. Therefore, although the interview guide questions were not changed significantly, themes identified in preliminary interviews became central issues for further discussion and analysis in the post-program phase of this study. In addition, memos written on each participant's interview helped remind me of some

important points to reflect on from each participant's perspective, assisting to clarify the possible changes in their conceptions and enabling the creation of further questions based upon those changes to be asked during the post-program phase interview.

This study employed the two-step process of open coding and focused coding to both phases of the program (pre-program and post-program). Axial coding and theoretical coding were not used in this study because of their prescriptive nature in identifying properties and dimensions for each category. Instead, in line with a constructivist approach to data analysis (Charmaz, 2014), I made careful comparisons between respondents' statements, codes, and categories and went back to the initial analysis frequently to investigate possible links between categories, and the emergent categories in the second phase. I tried at best to limit the interpretation of participants' response within a framework of properties and dimensions. This was consistent with the theoretical perspective adopted for the study, interpretivism, in which the meanings of the studied phenomenon, is constructed (not discovered) through the interaction between the researcher and the respondents in one particular context. The focus of the study was on participants' conceptions based on their experiences, and therefore, actions and languages used by participants in their contexts were studied rigorously during analysis. From the coding, categories emerged through iterative process of constant comparison methods and diagramming. I constantly returned to the words of the participants, and used previous data collection in the pre-program phase analysis to probe and facilitate data analysis in the post-program phase analysis. Further categories and their links were later constructed through the process of theoretical memoing. Memos about interpretations and analysis of participants throughout the process helped to track, question and examine the whole process of interpretations. Some examples of memos are illustrated in Appendix H.

3.6.1 Open coding

In the pre-program interview phase, in which data interviews with fifteen program participants took place, both open coding or line-by-line coding was conducted simultaneously. I transcribed all recordings and did line-by-line coding manually. Manual transcribing was beneficial because it allowed more data to be seen and codes to be identified simultaneously. Aligned with constructivist grounded theory data analysis, I remained close to data frequently through the iterative data collection and analysis process. I listened to the recordings several times and transcribed them verbatim to capture the participants' voice and meanings. Only when the transcripts were completed did the translation take place after

which it was cross-checked by peers.

Open coding is the analytic process through which labels are assigned to data to identify categories, properties and dimensions (Charmaz, 2014). Initial coding was kept very close to the words of participants. The labelling of data in the open coding process was synonymous with the code creation. The labels consisted of participants' actual words or words which reflected understanding of the data. Initial coding therefore, was descriptive and examples can be found in Appendix F. In this open coding stage, the following key guiding questions were used to help me develop initial themes and categories: What are higher education's purposes from the participants' viewpoints? What do they think their roles are? What do they conceptualise teaching and learning to be in higher education?

3.6.2 Focused coding

In focused coding, the codes are more directed, selective and conceptual than the initial word by word, and line by line coding in open coding (Glaser, 1978). This coding was used to synthesise, and understand the main themes in participants' statements. Some examples of focused coding included: "Higher education is for providing expertise, knowledge and skills", "Teaching is knowledge sharing", "Integrating moral lessons in lectures". Focused coding allows for a second view of codes developed from open coding or from things that could be missed in open coding. As codes were compared and potential relationships between codes were identified, categories arose.

During the coding process, I always kept the research questions in mind as many interpretations can be made from data (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This was done by asking, "What does this mean?" or "What is going on here?" and led to the case that sometimes the same section of one text was assigned more than one code. For example, one statement from one participant, which reads: "I teach Business Ethics in business discipline, where people keep using tricks to earn more profits nowadays. I need to organise teaching activities, using situation-based approaches to orient them to a well-behaved manner in business setting". In focused coding, this statement was placed under both focused codes "moral teaching" and "teaching approaches". Impressions and questions about codes were documented throughout with memos.

The open and focused coding categories were then entered into Nvivo for further analysis. The majority of open coding and focused coding was done manually. Nvivo software (version 10) was later used but the main aim was to store information (codes and categories), and

visualise relationships between memos, categories, participant's quotes and research articles and literature. Thanks to Nvivo, I could easily and constantly come back to earlier data to test and check dimensions and sub-categories to consolidate the three themes which emerged from the pre-program phase, and their sub-categories.

Instead of using axial coding, I followed Charmaz (2006) and explored the possible relationships between categories and how they related or contradicted one another in a different way. This was done by using both Nvivo, and diagramming relationships between categories identified in Focused Coding, and writing a summary memo that described the categories and their relationships at each phase. The summary on preliminary findings from Phase one (Appendix H, memo 4) became the earliest emerging theory and was used during supervision meetings to discuss modification for interview guides in the later phase. These early categories formed the basis for themes discussed in the Findings Chapters.

Similar to the pre-program phase, interview transcripts in the post-program phase were translated, and coded line-by-line. Focused coding was then conducted and themes and subcategories were identified through constant comparative analysis of data and memoing. When the final themes and their sub-categories in the post-program phase emerged, I compared these with the themes and categories formed from the pre-program phase analysis to find out similarities and differences between those categories and their sub-categories. It must be noted that the preliminary theory which emerged from the pre-program phase influenced my focus in developing further probe questions for discussion in the post-program phase interview and analysis. Although I kept the original questions as in the interview guide, based upon theory generated in the pre-program phase, the interview in post-program phase focused on some categories and their properties raised from the pre-program analysis and further tapped into participants' interpretation and experiences in those categories. However, the analysis of interview data with participants was kept exactly as the analysis procedures in pre-program phase, without assuming to categorise groups of nodes as indicated from the pre-program phase. Analysis in the post-program phase was done separately, to make sure categories which emerged from this phase reflected exactly participants' experiences of teaching and learning in higher education and their conceptual changes. Those two sets of themes and categories (in pre-program and post-program phases) were then compared to track changes in participants' conceptions. The use of Stick-it notes (Appendix H, memo 2) was useful in this stage to compare categories from the two different interview phases.

The use of memo, diagramming, and literature review was helpful in the final stage of data analysis as they helped me reach data saturation and theory development. The literature was reviewed firstly before data collection to provide ideas for the interview guide but it was revised constantly to reflect findings from the pre-program phase of the study. The literature review progressed based upon preliminary findings from the pre-program phase and I returned to search more literature related to themes and categories found from participants' data generation. New and updated literature was interwoven into the later phase and helped the theory development for the study. The use of literature as a method of constant comparison to achieve category development is consistent with grounded theory constructivists, who posit that constantly using literature throughout the research process (without delaying it) helps researchers to draw attention to details in data (Dunne, 2011; Stern, 2007). Furthermore, an early revisit of the literature reveals how the phenomenon investigated can be up-to-date (Dunne, 2011) to avoid earlier conceptual and methodological pitfalls (Dunne, 2011; McGhee, Marland & Atkinson, 2007), and ensures theoretical sensitivity (Dunne, 2011; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

3.6.3 Saturation and theory development

Theory development in grounded theory involves an inductive and iterative process of constructing categories that can be explored through theoretical sampling in data generation (Charmaz, 2006). According to Charmaz (2014), theoretical sampling refers to the collection of concepts from focused coding. Data analysis in grounded theory is completed when category saturation is reached (when no new patterns of theoretical insights can be found) through the use of theoretical sampling. In this study, preliminary theory on conceptions of teaching and learning was formed after analysis of the pre-program phase was conducted, and then I revisited this earlier data to analyse against new codes and categories which emerged from the post-program phase data generation. Memos and literature were revisited to help finalise themes and construct theory based upon theoretical development (for example, see Appendix H, memo 6).

After the categories and theory of each phase were constantly compared against each other and with one another, the use of the ongoing literature review and analytic memos helped me to be sensitive to data and reconstruct themes, categories and sub-categories. Through constant sampling of literature and policy documents emerging from data in phase one, I reached category saturation as no new properties could be found (using literature as

theoretical sampling, Appendix H, memo 6). This preliminary theory on conceptions of teaching and learning provided insights to modify interview questions in the post-program phase, based upon the main categories constructed. The revisiting to the literature review was helpful as it posed more abstract contents to be used in the post-program interview phase (Thornberg, 2012). For example, although the interview main questions remained unchanged in the post-program interviews, additional questions related to morality, neo-liberal influences on higher education purposes, moral standards of teachers or intended learning outcomes (emerged from pre-program analysis) were also posed to help explain some categories which had developed. When analysing data in the post-program phase, the literature review also helped to interpret an empirical description of some categories which emerged. I continuously used the literature to contribute to my emerging theoretical sensitivity and as Strauss and Corbin (1990, pp. 51-52) emphasised, literature was used as a supplementary validation for themes emerging from participants' experiences. However, I was also mindful that the search of literature was to support my theoretical sensitivity and theory development, and did not attempt to force data from participants' interviews into any theoretical framework. A second set of conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education was constructed in the post-program phase. The two sets of conceptions were then compared, theme by theme, category by category, and constant reflexivity through memos was useful in constructing a model of conceptual change. According to Thornberg (2012, p. 254):

> Constant reflexivity together with reflective memoing help the researcher to explicitly compare and contrast multiple theories and extant concepts with each other and with data and substantive concepts, to uphold a theoretical agnosticism, to stay grounded, and to document all these ongoing processes for further analysis and conceptualisation. (p. 254)

The use of memos, for example *Memo on the development of teachers' roles category* (Appendix H, memo 3) in this study, therefore, guided me to document my theoretical development process, influenced by emerging data, constant comparison of different data sources, and relevant emerged literature through constant theoretical sampling. It was therefore, useful in the drafting of theoretical framework and for the consolidation of themes through the interplay between emerged grounded data categories and exploration of relevant literature in each construct.

To conclude, adopting the constructivist approach (Charmaz, 2014; Dune, 2011; Mills et al.,

2006), this grounded theory has used literature throughout the all stages of the study. When new themes and categories emerged, I revisited the literature and policy documents, and this theoretical investigation took place simultaneously while writing the first draft of the thesis. The iterative process with a quite substantial body of literature relevant to the themes emerged helped yield a higher level of abstraction for the theoretical framework of this study. Analytic memos were used in this analysis to help me reflect on the interpretation of data. When the pre-program analysis was done, emergent grounded data categories and the exploration of relevant literature for each construct led to the pre-program theory on participants' conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education. Similarly, through constant comparative memo analyses, a theoretical framework on conceptions of teaching and learning in post-program was developed, based upon the interplay of interview data, memos, and the literature.

3.6.4 Presenters' interviews analysis, document analysis and triangulation

Presenters' interviews transcripts were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, translated, peer-checked and analysed, using initial and focused coding to identify categories. These categories illuminated presenters' beliefs on general issues in teaching and learning in higher education, their teaching philosophy, and approaches for the module they were in charge of and its modification. However, as a supplementary source of data, an analysis of presenters' transcripts was used to support participants' emerging categories. In this study specifically, presenters' conceptions related to the themes emerged from participants' interview analysis (higher education purposes, teachers' roles and teaching and learning in higher education) were used to support participants' conceptions of teaching and learning and their conceptual changes. In addition, presenters' ideas on how they translated the MOET guided curriculum for their module into the program context were analysed to discover any possible influence of the presenters' module modification on participants' conceptual change.

The use of documents in grounded theory enhances data collection, and at the same time theorises data collected from interviews. Although policy documents were secondary data, the use of "textual analysis" helped deconstruct, interpret, and reconstruct language, contents and indicate themes or conflicted analysis found from the participants' interview data. Analysis of public documents used in this study is also in line with Day (2001), who stressed that document insights are viewed as "media through which social power is expressed" (Day, 2001, p. 183). The use of document analysis therefore facilitated reflection on current policy

and practice in this specific context. It also served as a means to develop theoretical sampling and saturation. Preliminary theory emerged from interview data, resulted in my searching for relevant documents which I had not planned to analyse at the beginning (memo on theoretical samplings of documents: Appendix H, memo 8). The use of those documents helped to explain and confirm the categories and theory developed. Semi-structured interviews with presenters also helped to probe the reliability resonance of themes developed from previously emerging themes from the participants' first round of interviews. These themes were revisited when I analysed presenters' transcripts, and documents related to each theme, using constant comparative methods. I compared, the themes, categories and dimensions from participants' and presenters' interview transcripts and then compared those with the analysis from documents. Memo was written to help conceptualise the three perspectives (Appendix H, memo 7 on presenters' views on Bloom's Taxonomy and the formation of Morality category). Emerging themes from presenters shed some new perspectives on teaching and learning conceptions, which will be presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

3.7 Evidence of quality

As a novice to grounded theory, I used Charmaz's (2006, pp. 182-183) question guiding criteria to evaluate constructivist grounded theory research. The guiding questions reflect the interpretivist constructivist grounded theory approach and those criteria were used to guide the study through reflection and memo during the whole study: data generation, data analysis, and theory development. The evaluation of this grounded theory will be presented in detail in Chapter 7. Conclusion and Recommendations.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

Approval to conduct this study was sought and obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Sydney (Australia) (2014/609). Access to potential participants was gained through the approval of the Director of the Centre for Teachers' Professional Development where the cohort of the participants chosen for this study took place. Only when approval to access participants and presenters of the program was granted did recruitment and data collection start.

I made sure that all information related to the study was explained to participants in plain Vietnamese and documents sent to them were also translated into Vietnamese. A written consent form (Appendix B) was obtained from participants before they started their interviews. Participants were reminded many times that participating in the study was

voluntary and they had the right to withdraw from the study any time.

Anonymity and confidentiality were addressed during the study. Recordings of participants were saved on my laptop with password and only I had access to those files. Pseudonyms were used to refer to all participants, even from the transcripts. Participants were assured that in the case of presentations, or publication of this study, anonymity would be respected.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the methodological approach to the study, explained why the constructivist grounded theory approach was adopted, and described the ontological and epistemological underpinning of the study. Data sampling, methods of the study, analysis through coding, constant comparison and memo writing, using literature review as theoretical sampling and theory development were presented. The next two chapters present the study findings constructed from the data analysis.

CHAPTER 4

CONCEPTIONS OF PURPOSES OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TEACHERS' ROLES

4.0 Introduction

The previous chapters have provided an introduction to the study, the literature related to the study, the setting where it took place, and the design and methods used to conduct the study. This chapter presents findings related to themes which emerged from interview data with program participants: Higher Education Purposes, and Roles of Higher Education Teachers. An explanation of each theme, with subcategories and dimensions is illustrated. In addition to participants' interview data, documents related to these two emerging categories and program presenter's interview data relevant to the two categories were also analysed. In particular, documents regulating to the specific purposes of higher education and roles of higher education teachers are considered, and an examination of program curriculum and guidelines documents relevant to those categories is undertaken. Presenters' perspectives on those categories will be presented and their ideas on modifying their modules to address participants' conceptual change will be highlighted to infer contributions that may lead to the formation of participants' conceptual change when comparing two sets of data (pre-program and post-program conceptions).

4.1 Higher Education Purposes

4.1.1 Documents on Vietnamese higher education purposes

As stated in Article 7 of the Vietnamese Higher Educational Law (08/2012/QH13), higher education in Vietnam involves colleges, universities, academies, and research institutions. No matter how different higher education institutions may be, public or private, colleges or universities, the general purposes of higher education in Vietnam must be two-fold:

a) Training human resources, improving people's knowledge, fostering talents; researching scientific and technological innovations, new products in order to meet the requirements of economic and social development, protecting national defence, security and joining international integration;

b) Training students with political qualities, and moralities; having knowledge,

> professional skills, research capacity and scientific application development commensurate with the level of training; having good health; being creative and having professional responsibilities, adaptability to work environment; and awareness to serve people.
>
> (Article 5, p. 2)

As stated, the ultimate goal of higher education is to educate and train competent human resources to serve society and contribute to the international integration process of the country. Competent human resources are defined to possess knowledge, skills, good qualities (politics, creativity, adaptability, research), morality and desire to contribute. These two-fold roles are to be made clear and transmitted to future higher education teachers through the compulsory training program examined in this study. It was demonstrated in one of the knowledge aims as stated in the program guideline (Circular 12/TT-BGDĐT, 2013): providing basic knowledge of higher education principles; roles and mission of higher education, and the development trends of modern higher education.

In particular, two modules of the program well address the Vietnamese higher education aims, as expected from the government policy: Higher Education in the World and in Vietnam (1 credit) and Introduction to Educational Science (3 credits). The former aims to provide an overview of Vietnamese and global trends in higher education development while the latter partly addresses the roles and mission of education (general) to the society. These two modules, therefore, reflect the translation of government expectations, as indicated from the Vietnamese Higher Education Law, into the program to raise participants' awareness of the current roles of higher education in Vietnamese society in the process of global integration.

4.1.2 Presenters' conceptions of higher education purposes

Program presenters' conceptions of higher education purposes can be synthesised into four groups, which reflect the goal expected by the government in many aspects: contributing to labour force or human resources, improving individual competence (knowledge, skills, qualities such as critical thinking), educating morality, and improving research capability.

The general aim of higher education, according to the program presenters, is to contribute to a strong and competence human resource that the country is asking for, as the following quote conveys:

> Higher education purposes should focus on training graduates with knowledge, skills

> serving all fields in the society, which is what I mean by macro-level. Higher education should produce labour force for all aspects of our country like economy, production, social development. (Dr Minh)

This goal as suggested by presenters is identical to the general purpose of Vietnamese higher education, which is to develop a strong labour force, as stated in the Vietnamese Higher Education Law (2012). Building a strong labour force was most talked about by presenters. Those qualities consist of knowledge, skills and new qualities that are required by the demands of global integration and the 21st century.

> There are many purposes of higher education but the most important is to develop students' competences and their expertise for 21st century. I mean … to develop their creativity, critical thinking, and what I think is no less important is morals and collaboration skills with peers. (Dr Nhung)

The quote further examines the expected goal in educating a "competent human resource" in the Higher Education Law (2012), adding critical thinking as an important element for the development of individuals. However, at the same time, presenters' conceptions of higher education purposes on what aspects of individual competence to educate closely follow the government's document. Research competence, the ability to drive individuals to further scientific innovation and new product creations, however, was emphasised by only one presenter:

> The general purpose of higher education should not only be producing highly-skilled labour force but also encouraging research or innovative ideas. Higher education must provide students with scientific knowledge from which students have the foundations to further study and develop themselves; to involve research and contribute their creative ideas to new developments. (Dr An)

This exception signals the third group of aims: research competence. Dr An's perspectives do not, however, prove to be contradictory with what is stated in national documents, as although he puts much emphasis on innovative research aims, ultimately, this goal is to help push the nation forward through scientific innovations and new product manufacture, as the law identified "researching scientific and technological innovations, new products" (Higher Education Law, 2012, p. 3).

The last group of higher education aims, from presenters' perspectives, is the morality aim,

which was highlighted by the majority of presenters. One presenter suggested that higher education goals would not be complete without the consideration of moral education:

> Higher education needs to require graduates to meet moral values and professional standards… In Vietnam, when we mention individual standards, we usually categorise these according to two criteria: moral and professional competence. Moral values are comprised of ideology, lifestyles, viewpoints, and their communication behaviour. (Dr Minh)

Educating a generation with good morality is also reflected in other presenters' interviews, who believed that morality education should focus on teaching graduates to be well-behaved and to advance to being a country with ethical citizens.

> Educating morals, however, is inspiring others' passion or teaching them the values of morality. That means we orient students to do the right thing. (Dr Hoang)

Morality, as such, was understood by presenters as a very broad concept, including ideology, manners and ethical behaviour or practice. However broad the conception of morality, as defined from presenters' perspectives, it well matched the government's requirements in "training students with political qualities, and moralities" (Vietnamese Higher Education Law, 2012, p. 2).

4.1.3 Participants' conceptions of higher education purposes and their conceptual changes

The first theme which emerged from participants' interviews relates to the concepts of higher education purposes. The sub-categories of the Higher Education Purposes remain unchanged throughout the two phases of the study, however their dimensions and properties changed significantly, as can be seen from the illustrated summary in Figure 4.1. Details of each sub-category, examples and identification of changes are presented in the following section.

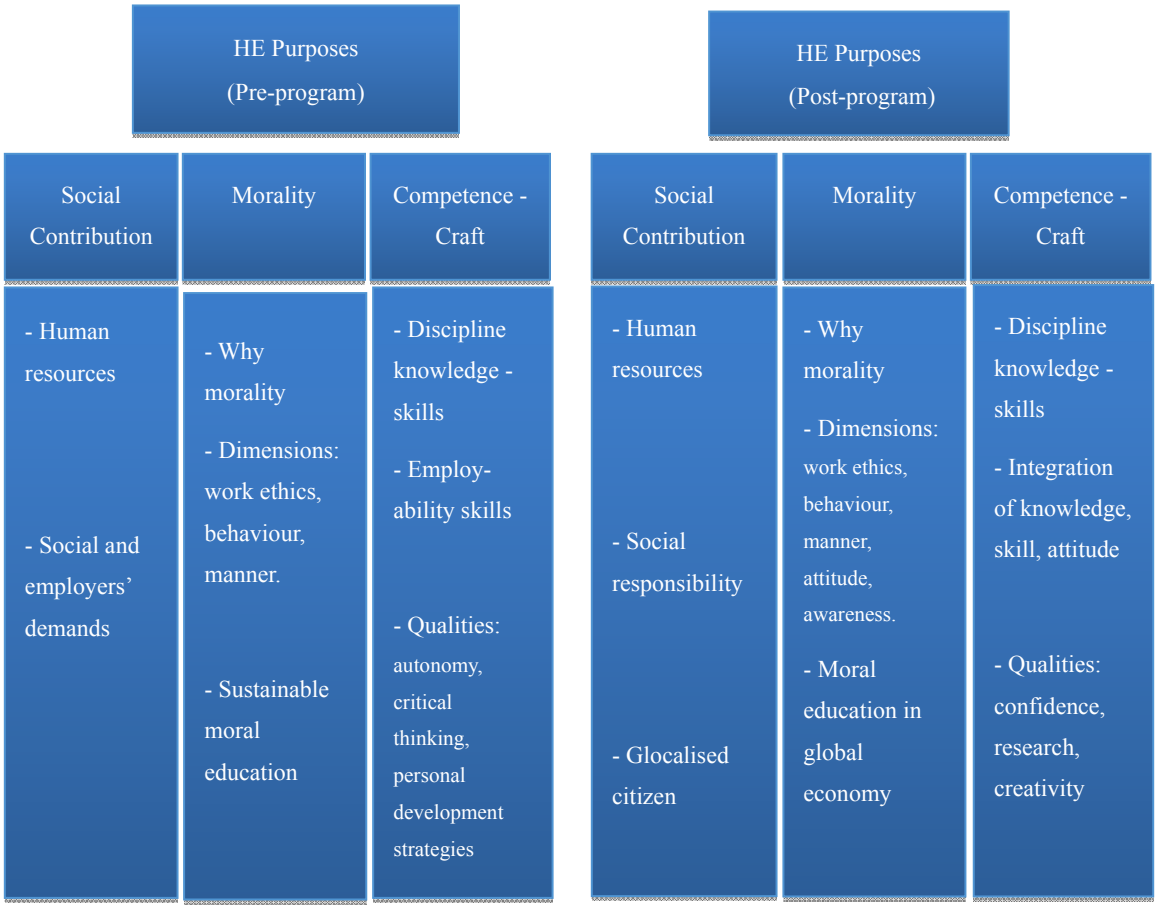

Figure 4.1 Participants' conceptions of higher education purposes – Pre- and post-program

PRE-PROGRAM

In the pre-program phase, three categories emerged under Higher Education Purposes: social contribution, morality, and competence and craft.

Social Contribution

Social Contribution emerged as a sub-category of higher education purposes, together with Morality, and Competence and Craft. The term social contribution underlies the expected aim of serving the community of higher education, as mentioned in the Vietnamese Higher Education Law (2012). Specifically, it covers the following goals: human resource development, and fostering talents for the ultimate purpose of evolving the nation. It also includes the possibility to meet social demands in the age of globalisation. In the pre-program phase of the study, participants emphasised the ultimate purpose of higher education should be dedicated to the development of the society by building up capable human resources for future generations.

Human resources

Higher education, according to participants' viewpoints, should aim to provide human resources for the development of the society, partly *improving the general standards of education* for the country, and partly, *educating and nurturing talents* for all purposes of the nation, from financial integration to security and defence, as best reflected in the following excerpt from one participant:

> The main purpose of higher education is to educate human resources, with experience, and skills to apply directly in the job market. It also aims to raise the level of the nation's intellectual standards. (Khang)

In general, participants tend to consider the umbrella purpose of higher education should be educating human resources for the country. For this reason, the sub-category "human resources" was placed under the Social Contribution category, instead of Competence and Craft, which describes skills and expertise for students to get employment and personal professional development. Participants, on the whole, perceived that each graduate was an individual in society and once they finish their degree, apart from having a career, students should be able to utilise their expertise to contribute to the development of economic, cultural, and social aspects of society, as Trang conceptualised:

> Because people live in the society, working efficiently means we need to bring benefits to society, so higher education should aim to help students contribute to the development of social welfare and economy. (Trang)

Social and employers' demands

During the pre-program phase of the study, in addition to the purposes of educating human resources, most participants highlighted higher education as a means to meet social needs, which includes both employer's demands and market demands, as can be seen from one quote below:

> Higher education study makes students meet the requirements of the employers and society. (Ninh)

As a result, it was reasonable that for a few participants, higher education needed to provide an environment and facilities for students which exposed them to a workplace environment with social contacts which were up to date with the current social market's demands for their kinds of jobs. One example can be found in Dung's statement:

> The purpose of higher education is to educate students in a certain major, meeting the demand of the market. Higher education must simulate conditions and the environment just as the real-life environment to expose students to certain market experience. (Dung)

From this perspective, it can be concluded that some participants conceptualised higher education as a means to respond to the needs of the market. By educating students to meet those needs, higher education can serve its ultimate purpose as contributing to the production of a labour force for the nation.

However, during the pre-program interviews, one participant did not agree with the view that higher education should aim to guarantee the fulfilment of pursuing employers' or market's demands.

> I disagree with the view which people consider higher education just as a means to get a job. After graduating, students will use knowledge learned in higher education to serve well for themselves, their families, and society and from that will make the society a better place to live. (Nga)

Although Nga refuted the view that higher education should achieve general employment purposes or follow employers' potential demands, she believed higher education purposes should aim to contribute to social development. In her view, higher education has broader aims to guarantee social development, by educating students to be positive, to discover their potential rather than follow general requirements demanded by the society.

Morality

Morality emerged as the second sub-category of higher education purposes. Morality was identified as a separate purpose of higher education, which infers all related dimensions of ethical conduct and general moral behaviour of human beings. Details of what was conceptualised as morality from participants' perspectives are presented in the following section, preceded with an indication of why morality should be considered an aim of higher education.

Why morality

Morality was perceived an important purpose of higher education, as generally evidenced from the pre-program interview round. One participant suggested that if higher education did not consider educating morals as a purpose of higher education, this would influence social

justice of a society. As a rule of thumb, in Vietnamese society, educating knowledge must go hand in hand with educating morality, and this was reported in one participant's view:

> It (Higher education) must train expertise and skills for students and then, not less important, educate their morals. The morals I'm talking about should be higher education's purpose... Some issues related to morality, ethic values are raised in workplace environments nowadays, and higher education needs to address those. (Diem)

Another rationale to include moral education in higher education is due to the new and independent environment that students face when studying in higher education. Most students have to live by themselves by the time they enter higher education institutions. This was apparent in Ninh's statement:

> Students' morality is affected by different sources: from the society or family or friends (when students live away from home). Therefore, moral education should be considered in higher education. (Ninh)

This section presents just a few reasons why participants thought morals needed to be included in higher education purposes. What they exactly meant by "morality" will be discussed in the following section.

Dimensions of morality

When asked what specific morals should be taught in higher education, participants raised issues of students' inappropriate behaviour and unethical workplace conduct. As such, it was suggested that moral education should include first of all ethical protocols in the workplace environment and second, appropriate behaviour. To be specific, firstly, morals should be reflected in how ethical graduates work, not working for self-interest or to benefit themselves, placing the company's interest in the forefront.

> Morals in the workplace are getting worse nowadays. Thus work morals or corporate ethics need to be introduced in higher education. (Diem)

The other dimensions of teaching morals in higher education go beyond ethical issues of workplace environments. Participants conceptualised morality with the inclusion of two more dimensions: behaviour and manner. Participants stressed the cultural factors of standard behaviour in Vietnamese contexts: such as behaving politely with adults or teachers, and respecting others. This applies to the education of social manners, including good manners,

honesty, and caring.

> Higher education has to educate the morals of a person. In Vietnam we need to guide students to behave according to Vietnamese moral standards, living in a proper and courteous manner. Higher education must aim to educate caring and honest people. (Ha)

What Ha expressed is important to note because she considered teaching morals is culturally-rooted. According to this point of view, Vietnamese has certain moral standards in terms of appropriate behaviour, and manners. Honesty and caring are two qualities she thought to be essential in Vietnamese culture.

In addition, according to one participant, it is important to include teaching appropriate social and public behaviour for students, such as "walking not running", "littering" …

> Teachers can teach students courteous behaviour like how to walk up and down the stairs, turn off the lights when leaving the classroom. I highly value the teaching of being a human and teaching morals. (Nga)

Sustainable moral education

One participant supported other participants' conceptions about morals as a purpose of higher education, agreeing that moral teaching needs to deal with educating good behaviour. However, he perceived educating morals as a long-term journey. Morals education in higher education should make sure students have proper ethics but also manage to sustain their moral values, as indicated by one participant:

> We need to educate morals for students but moral education is a long-term procedure. As morals is associated with behaviour, it can change and is affected by many factors. The important role of higher education is to help maintain students' good morality and drive it to a sustainable level. (Quan)

In general, morality appears as one of the three central tenets of higher education purposes. Moral education was conceptualised as important due to the appearance of unethical misconduct and inappropriate behaviour in society, the requirement of moral values as a cultural aspect of Vietnamese society, and the influence of various influences during students' development. Morality was perceived to cover both workplace ethical values and norms of appropriate social behaviour and manners.

Competence and Craft

The Competence and Craft category was formulated from data in response to the commentary on higher education purposes in shaping students' capability in doing something well. Analysis indicated that this sub-category covers a range of expertise and competence, employability skills and other graduate attributes which develop students to their full potential, apart from work-related expertise, professionalism, and skills. The conceptualisation of competence and craft was reflected in three dimensions: discipline knowledge and skills, employability, and qualities.

Discipline knowledge and skills

In the pre-program phase of the study, participants perceived higher education was to introduce students to an occupation, with expertise, knowledge and skills. This was expressed by a number of participants', such as:

> Uhm, in general, higher education needs to train people, with profound expertise and skills. (Trinh)

Another outstanding feature of expert knowledge training in higher education is the ability to apply knowledge into practice. Participants believed that knowledge is best taught in practical circumstances or experiences so that students can apply it directly into their future work.

> First, it (higher education) is to help students perceive discipline knowledge. At the same time, it is to help students to use this knowledge in their lives. (Tien)

In addition to discipline knowledge, as presented earlier, participants thought that skills development which related to the discipline or expertise was also necessary. The skills under this category were defined as expertise skills, which are specifically related to working in an area of expertise:

> Higher education deepens students' discipline expertise. It depends on the disciplines the students are studying that the knowledge and skills might be different, for instance, education students must possess excellent professional teaching skills. (Khang)

Employability: Job skills, and other skills

According to participants' conceptions, "Employability" was categorised as all skills related to job market demands or other life skills. Some participants conceptualised higher education

as a means to get a job or earn a living "students want to pursue higher education to easily and quickly find a job" (Dung), or "a higher education institution should perfect and develop a student's competence and guarantee a job placement when she/he graduates" (Tong). Therefore, skills related to occupation and market's needs were listed as the first dimension under Employability.

"Social network and communication skill" emerged as another sub-category under Employability. This was perceived to be useful for students in extending their networks, with peers or external recruiters and future employers. Examples of communication and network skills include public speaking skills, persuasion skills, negotiation skills, building relationships skills. The experience of participants indicated that such skills are helpful to expand students' networks as shared by Khang:

> Apart from those, we need to train students with necessary communication skills, exchanging with students from other disciplines, participating in workshops… to have networks with recruiters, researchers in the field. (Khang)

In addition to those communication and networking skills, language skills were also perceived as necessary to supplement students' prospective future.

> Well.... at the present I see foreign language skills as very important. And if teachers have opportunities to exchange with other institutions, with other countries, to learn from the positive experience to apply in their practice, then it will be more useful to students. (Thoa)

Additionally, skills related to the workplace environment were discussed. Participants used the term, "soft skills" in general to share their conceptions about work skills. Examples of those skills were teamwork skills, problem solving skills, task analysis skills, cooperative skills, job application skills, and organisational skills… Examples like this were abundant:

> In addition, higher education needs to provide students with soft skills such as communication skills, teamwork skills, adaptive context skills, planning, organising skills, ability to work under pressure. (Trang)

Finally, participants perceived that work-related skills only were probably not adequate because there were other skills that could be important to fully develop an individual. As one purpose of higher education was perceived as "perfecting oneself" as one participant shared, then developing other skills, or life skills were required. Such life skills included problem-

solving skills, information-searching skills, and task prioritising skills. The justification for the inclusion of life skills was indicated in the following excerpt:

> Life skills, on the other hand, can be reflected in social interactions, problem-solving situations, uhm…so that when facing challenges, graduates have the proper skills to overcome those challenges. (Ha)

All in all, perspectives related to employability range from the variety of skills necessary for employment prospects, from discipline-related skills, to social communication skills, or work-related skills or soft skills.

Qualities

The sub-category "qualities" emerged describing certain necessary qualities that participants thought higher education should be aiming to provide. Unlike discipline knowledge and skills, and employability skills, this dimension was described by participants as a higher level of individual development, with the potential to professionally improve students' future prospective, which is not limited to their work environment only. Those qualities, as emerged from interview data, included autonomy, critical thinking and long-term development strategies.

Students' autonomy was raised as a role of higher education, defined as inspiring students' own learning, without depending on teachers' directions. Although it was not mentioned by many participants, this dimension added more qualities for students' development as a purpose of higher education. This was best illustrated as in Tam's statement:

> Higher education should inspire and encourage students' autonomy, while in other levels of education teachers tell them exactly what to do. (Tam)

Apart from autonomy, students' critical thinking ability was considered important by some participants. Participants believed the training of critical thinking would facilitate students' choices of personal development plans, and assist decisions in everything they want to pursue:

> Once finishing higher education, students' critical thinking must be more mature, so that they can analyse an issue thoroughly from their own perspectives. We need to educate critical graduates. This is essential for their future personal development. (Thoa)

Also, participants highlighted the role of higher education in assisting students' development

pathways, forming a positive outlook, or optimism and career orientation. Those qualities, were mentioned as important elements to a student's long-term development goals:

> Higher education is to help students orient their goals and paths of development for the future, through which, students are able to earn and live by themselves and make their outlook in life positive and meaningful. (Ngan)

The Competence and Craft sub-category, as such, does not simply indicate participants' conceptualisation that is restricted to just disciplinary and workplace knowledge, or skills. It indicates the expectation on the purpose of higher education in developing students' competence that involves the development of critical thinking, autonomy, long-term development strategies alongside discipline knowledge and employability skills.

POST PROGRAM

Three sub-categories remained similar in the post program phase but the dimensions on participants' conceptions of higher education purposes changed. The changes are visualised in Figure 4.1.

Social Contribution

Human resources

The conceptualisation of Social Contribution as a purpose of higher education was slightly different after the participants finished the program. In the post-program phase of the study, the participants again mentioned the purposes of higher education in social and communal development, through the training of competent human resources, and meeting social needs, which is similar to the conceptualisation at the pre-program interviews.

> I think the purpose of higher education is to educate high-quality human resources. (Dung)

Social responsibility

In this phase, however, it is noted that no participant emphasised the need to follow employers' demands as a purpose of higher education. Instead, the emphasis was placed on the social responsibility of students.

> Once they graduate, they must be aware of their responsibility with the community. I mean they not only are experts in their field, but also know how their work influences others and how others might influence them… To make it short, students when

> graduating, need to be good in their discipline, and second, must be responsible for the society they live in**.** (Trang)

Participant Quan thought similarly, advocating the social responsibility of students, categorising it as the broader level of graduates' success.

> They must prove to have deserved what they are educated for in higher education institutions. Deserving can be understood on a broad and narrow level. At a narrow level, they must be able to do what they are trained for. At a broader level, students can use the knowledge and passion to contribute to social changes. It is more about community development. (Quan)

Glocalised citizen

Once finishing the program, one significant note was recorded regarding participants' conceptions about higher education purposes. In the pre-program phase, there was no conception that a purpose of higher education is to educate global citizens, but in the post-program phase, participants were aware of this issue and it became a topic for critical debate. Accordingly, it can be surmised that somehow the program had stimulated the participants to look at educational purposes in a broader perspective, at a global scale.

In particular, one participant identified the role higher education should play to better prepare Vietnamese human resources to be equal in competition with other ASEAN countries. On criticising the inefficiency of communication and language skills, the participant stressed the role of catching up with other countries in these areas in terms of human resources development:

> I think the purpose of higher education is to educate high-quality human resources, including competence, morals, and social skills. The two most important things at the moment are social skills and language, I think, as we are integrating into ASEAN human resources but our human resources do not meet up to the standards of the region. (Khang)

Nonetheless, regarding the purpose of higher education in educating human resources for the globalisation process, one participant was not in full agreement with this purpose. The participant insisted that educating skills and values that are locally relevant should be higher education first priority. He strongly supported higher education purposes in educating students to be aware of cultural preservation, valuing local identities and values in the international and

regional integration process of Vietnam:

> Higher education needs to make sure our cultural and national values survive under the global integration process. What I mean is we need to educate good Vietnamese citizens for the society, open-minded and ready for global integration but at the same time, higher education has roles to play in preserving local cultural values. (Tai)

From the findings presented in the discussion above, it is apparent that the program had certain influence on participants' conceptions regarding social contribution as a purpose of higher education. Although Social Contribution remains a central theme under Purposes of Higher Education, the dimensions of Social Contribution were slightly changed as a result of participants' attending the program. Although in general, in both phases of the study, the participants reported the ultimate purpose of higher education should be educating human resources to meet social needs and contribute to the general development of the society. In the pre-program phase, some participants were concerned more about the market or employers' demands whereas post-program, no participant considered following employers' demands as a purpose of higher education. In the post-program phase, however, the issue of educating global citizens to better integrate into the social global economy was discussed.

Morality

The dimensions of morality, according to participants' conceptions, were different between the two phases of the study. The post-program phase identified more dimensions of morals, which will be further examined in this section.

Why morality

One rationale for including morals as a purpose of higher education, as indicated from participants' observations, is the inappropriate moral behaviour of students. This was found in the majority of participants' complaints about the bad morals of students, as one example illustrates:

> What's also important is I still observe immoral behaviour, which is degrading gradually. Higher education needs to pay attention to morals, just as I discussed in the previous interview because morals create a foundation for students' positive thinking, which stimulates their learning. (Nga)

Some participants believed higher education was to blame for neglecting the education of morals to students. They, therefore, suggested that higher education institutions reconnect

with achieving this purpose:

> In high schools, students are taught moral lessons, but this is rarely seen in higher education. We, the business discipline, have business ethics courses. And I see there is a need to teach ethics and morals to students. (Tien)

Just as in the pre-program interview phase, participants revealed that educating morals in higher education would lead to social development. To be specific, one participant explained the balance between educating "knowledge" and "morals" and raised concerns about educating graduates without morals, which would result in social evils and the deterioration of society.

> In our society, there are lots of talented people and if they have morals, this would benefit the society, otherwise, talent without morals will negatively affect the society and other people. (Ha)

It can be seen that in the post-program phase, participants shared more reasons to consider morals as a purpose of higher education. Their conceptions were raised from a reflection of Vietnamese higher education issues and students' behaviour deterioration.

Dimensions of morality

Participants' conceptions of what to educate as "morals" for students in the post-program phase did not change in the three following dimensions: work ethics, manners, and behaviour.

First of all, morality must be reflected in the workplace environment and needed to be identified in higher education, as Tai pointed out:

> Nowadays students tend to neglect the ethical part, and they do not know what morals are expected of their work or in their major. For example, in my area, which is food quality assurance, only a few quality assurance staff members know the qualities required for his/her job: accuracy, honesty, and speed. (Tai)

Secondly, issues related to students' behaviour were discussed and it was identified that the behaviour of students needed to be focussed on and they must be educated:

> Students nowadays... they tend to live in a fantasy world, buying smart-phones, avoiding manual jobs and difficult tasks, behaving like they do not care. What I mean is the deterioration of the young generation, or I am too harsh? I mean respect and behaviour; I do not see those taught at university. (Nga)

Thirdly, moral education should aim to develop proper manner, as educating discipline expertise alone is not sufficient, according to Tien's statement:

> Higher education needs to educate people regarding two aspects: expertise and manners. After the program, I sustained my conceptions about these two purposes. We need to focus more on manners because the main purpose is to educate a person with both expertise in the disciplines and moral values. (Tien)

Apart from these three dimensions, in the post-program phase, two other dimensions emerged from data under the moral category: attitude and awareness. Attitude involves a positive and passionate learning attitude, understanding the purposes of learning, being responsible for learning. One specific example is as follows:

> And attitude, of course, higher education needs to be responsible for educating a positive, active, and passionate attitude in their study and work. (Quan)

The idea of educating students to have good learning attitudes is further supported by Thoa who advocated the necessity of teaching students to be aware of their own learning purposes, knowing what they should learn and why they need to learn it.

> Also, regarding students' attitudes, students need to be guided to have purpose of their own learning, realising the importance of their expertise, and their career choice. I think our higher education is ignoring that purpose. (Thoa)

On criticising higher education for not fulfilling its role in guiding students' learning attitude, participants raised awareness of the importance of involving teaching attitude in higher education. Awareness was another emergent dimension under the "morality" category in the post-program phase of the study. Awareness was perceived as the ability to do the right thing without being guided or warned. It was considered as the highest level of moral education, requiring critical development and a sense of responsibility from students.

> I think higher education should not only teach students morals but teach them the awareness of the right thing to do. It means we cannot force them to do exactly what we want, but teach them to distinguish between right and wrong, how to figure out what they should do… (Diem)

In brief, more dimensions were conceptualised under "morality" category post-program. Apart from work ethics, manners, behaviour, attitudes and awareness were added as dimensions of morals in the post-program phase. This indicates a minor change regarding

moral purposes as conceptualised by participants. It can be inferred from this finding that participants became aware of more sophisticated levels of morals, which should combine elements related to the inner drive of students' learning attitude with a sense of responsibility when deciding to act on something.

Educating morals in the age of global economy

While in the pre-program phase, sustainable moral education was the concern, in the post-program phase, concern was raised about educating morals in the global market economy era. One participant was worried that negative foreign factors might influence the younger generation, as this became unavoidable when Vietnam joined the global market. The issue here therefore was how to maintain the cultural morals or behaviours that belong to Vietnamese standards.

> In addition, we are influenced by other cultures, so the youth tend to ignore our own culture. Integration is necessary in the globalised market economy but we cannot lose our heritage in the process of integration. (Ha)

In the post-program phase, according to participants' conceptions, how to maintain the teaching of morals that best reserves the cultural factors in an age of global integration had become an issue. This dimension shows a strong relevance to the Glocalised citizen dimension under Social Contribution sub-category. It is obvious that participants were more aware of the influence of globalisation on higher education purposes at the post-program phase.

In summary, it was evident from the findings that participants' conceptions about morals as a purpose of higher education remained similar. However, in the post-program phase, two more dimensions to moral teaching: attitude and awareness were added. One significant finding is the concern about educating morals in the era of global integration.

Competence and Craft

Participants' conceptions on competence and craft as a role of higher education in the post-program phase tended to be different with the pre-program interview data with. Details of each dimension, property presented in Figure 4.1.

Discipline knowledge and skills

In the post-phase program, participants still insisted that a purpose of higher education was

knowledge and skills enhancement for students. Ideas similar to the following quote were popular in the post-program interviews.

> Just as the previous interview, I think the aim (of higher education) is to provide students with discipline knowledge and skills. (Ninh)

While participants agreed that knowledge and skills should be developed in higher education, most participants reported that skills development was not appropriately addressed, as the following quote indicates:

> What's more, an important purpose of higher education is to teach skills. Discipline knowledge is a must, but students need to develop skills, the skills that can transfer knowledge into practice. (Ha)

It therefore became clear that participants were concerned about the development of expertise, in this case, all skills: generic to specific skills in higher education. It was inferred also from the interviews that skills training was not adequate to prepare students well to enter their future careers and participate in global integration.

Integrating Knowledge, Skills, and Attitude

"Knowledge, Skill and Attitude Integration" became central under the Competence and Craft category in the post-program interviews. The outstanding difference in participants' conceptions was reflected in this sub-category. Compared to the pre-program phase interview, where the participants reported more about employability, in the post-program, participants did not mention employability skills much but focussed on the integration of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Almost all participants raised issues about the integration of those three elements, as illustrated below:

> In higher education, you need to educate students to blend well the three following elements. First, it's the knowledge of their discipline, second, their skills which they need time to practice, as it takes some time to formulate certain skills, and finally it's attitude which allow students to be serious in what they do. (Tai)

In the same line of thought, however, Tien's statements indicate the overlook of educating students' attitudes, which she perceived as crucial factors constituting a good society:

> In general, in higher education, we need three things: knowledge, skills and attitude. Attitude is important, without it, the students will be no good to the society. (Tien)

As explained in the morality sub-category, "attitude" involves passion, attitude to learning, responsibility to learning and community. However, what is notable is how participants conceptualised the purposes of higher education in forming the three parallel elements: knowledge, skills and attitudes. No participant had thought of this combination in the pre-program phase interview.

Other qualities

In the pre-program phase, participants shared many ideas about the development of other purposes of higher education, i.e. autonomy, critical thinking and long-term development strategies. In the post-program interview, participants shared some ideas about other 21st century qualities, however, they focussed on: confidence, research and creativity.

Confidence of students in the 21st century was indicated as necessary. Confidence, according to participants should be evident in their "global" communication skills as in Tien's statement:

> We have to integrate into the global economy, so students need to be good at communication, and be confident at themselves not only in our society but also with other cultures and countries. (Tien)

Moreover, in the post-program phase, participants also identified that research skills were important, as creating new products was also a purpose of higher education. Contrary to the pre-program interview, where participants did not raise any concerns about the research role of higher education, in this phase this role was mentioned as an important one as it helps the society evolve and individuals to think outside the box. This became apparent in one participant's statement:

> The purpose of higher education shouldn't only be knowledge… Higher education involves research, which means graduates need to have certain insights into the art of research... At this level of education, research needs to be given a central emphasis. Also, higher education needs to train students to be creative, having innovative ideas and creating new products. (Tai)

Tai went on to argue that higher education should do more than "teach knowledge". He made an argument that scientific research skills should be considered the core of higher education, to be able to boost the creation of new products and creative ideas.

To summarise, three main categories emerged as purposes of higher education throughout the two phases of the study: Social Contribution, Morality, and Competence and Craft. There

were changes in participants' conceptions of the dimensions of each category, however. In general, in the post-program interview, participants perceived higher education in a broader and deeper level, looking at issues of higher education in Vietnam in the context of globalisation, reflecting on current issues of Vietnamese society and suggesting the inclusion of some new elements that higher education needs to aim for. For example, glocalisation emerged as the new sub-category of Social Contribution, and awareness and attitude were added as two new dimensions under Moral category, and Integration of Knowledge, Skill and Attitude as a separate sub-category of Competence and Craft. Creativity and Research were also added as important competences under this third sub-category, which were not present in the pre-program interview phase. One interesting finding was that when they had completed the program, participants became more of the opinion that rather than higher education create a labour force to follow social demands, it should indeed create the new social demands. Participants' conceptions of the post-program phase supported research role of higher education and integration of skills, knowledge and attitude to grow professionally and responsibly rather than focusing on employability skills of graduates.

In general, three sub-categories of higher education purposes emerged from participants' perspectives which align well with the articulated document (Vietnamese Higher Education Law, 2012), in shaping competent human resources to serve the economic and social integration of the country. Social contribution became the umbrella purpose as seen from both phases of the study. The pre-program phase interviews revealed participants' pragmatic conceptions about the goal of higher education in educating human resources to meet social and employers' demands. The post-program phase, however, saw a minor change in participants' conceptions about this dimension as they became more aware of a sense of personal responsibility to serve society, and they put forward issues related to global citizenship and regional standards. The latter was found to be more related to the stated purposes in Article 5 of the Vietnamese Higher Education Law (2012) in attempting to train human resources with competence to join "economic and social development" and "international integration", and "awareness to serve people". Presenters' conceptions on higher education purposes were categorised into two dimensions: developing human resources for national integration and development, and improving individual competence, qualities and morality; participants' perceptions were found to be similar in this respect. Two other dimensions under higher education purposes emerged from participants' perceptions, matching well with presenters' perspectives, highlighting the two-fold aims in developing a

higher education graduate's competence: morality and competence-craft. Data from the post-program interviews showed participants' conceptions of morality in a broader sense, indicated through more properties, including awareness and positive learning attitude, apart from behaviour, manners, and ethical values. The program also changed participants' perspectives in conceptualising competence and craft for a higher education graduate. Rather than stressing the employability skills, as indicated in the pre-program interviews, participants showed more interest in the formation of a student with an integrated set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, which show strong relevance to the nurturing of morality expected for this level of education. In addition, qualities such as creativity and critical thinking were perceived to be unique as a purpose of higher education, as this level was expected to create, rather than following current market or social demands.

4.2 Roles of higher education teachers

Standards and roles of higher education teachers will be presented from the government perspective, through document analysis, program presenters' perspectives and participants' conceptions.

4.2.1 Documents on higher education teachers' standards and roles

According to the new Joint Circular on code titles and standards for teachers in Vietnamese public higher education institutions (36/2014/TTLT BGDĐT-BNV), teachers are categorised according to three grades: Senior Lecturer (Grade I), Senior Lecturer (Grade II), and Lecturer (Grade III). As participants of this study were in their early careers and yet-to-be teachers in higher education institutions, the standards and roles of lecturer (Grade III) were closely analysed. A combination of the new modified Joint Circular (36/2014/TTLT BGDĐT-BNV), for public higher education teachers and the Joint Circular regulating roles and standards for other governmental and ministry-run higher education institutions, and political colleges (06/2011/TTLT-BNV-BGDĐT) were used to illustrate expected standards and roles for higher education teachers (grade III) from public universities (run by MOET) and other private universities or colleges (either run by MOET or other ministries). The 2011 Joint Circular specifies four different roles that higher education teachers need to embrace: professional role, research role, professional development role and other roles (administrative management, unions and other student advising or supervision activities). While the 2011 Circular provides a very general overview of standards and roles for higher education teachers of all institutions, the 2014 Joint Circular is more prescriptive in categorising general roles of a teacher in a

public higher education institution into specific sub-roles, and applies the language standard of teachers according to the new policy frameworks (European CEFR language). A general combination of those documents determines the following specific qualifications for a higher education teacher:

> a) A university degree or higher, in line with job placement in the specific discipline;
>
> b) A professional training certificate to teach at higher education institutions;
>
> c) Language proficiency level 2 (A2) as defined in the Circular No. 01/2014/TT-BGDĐT. For foreign language teachers to be qualified to teach a second language must achieve level 2 (A2) as defined in the Circular No. 01/2014/TT-BGDĐT;
>
> d) Qualified computer skills for using basic information technology as stipulated in Circular No. 03/2014/TT-MIC March 11, 2014.
>
> (Article 6.2, 36/2014/TTLT BGDĐT-BNV, p. 7)

Those standards and roles were translated into the training program for higher education teachers very clearly, as indicated in the program aims. Apart from aiming at professional knowledge and skills, one aim of the program is to address future higher education teachers' attitudes to their career, which reads:

> - Establishing a sense of professional ethics and behaviour, making a good example of teachers in institutions of higher education.
>
> - Stimulating the passion and excitement in teaching activities, and scientific research.
>
> - Demonstrating an objective and scientific attitude in the organisation and management of the teaching process.
>
> (Circular 12/TT-BGDĐT, 2013)

An investigation into the eight compulsory modules in the studied higher education teachers' professional development program (Circular 12/2013/TT-BGDĐT) reveals that two modules are related to teachers' standards and roles: Introduction to Educational Science (which is made up of 3 credits), and Educational Psychology in Higher Education (1 credit). The aim of the former module is to equip learners with a basic knowledge of educational science, the role of education for society and individuals, basic knowledge about teachers, teaching and characteristics of teachers while the latter focuses on the formation and development of the psychology of adult learners; and the psychological basis of the process of teaching and

education: characteristics of teachers in higher education; the qualities and personality of teachers in higher education institutions.

4.2.2 Presenters' perspectives on higher education teachers' standards and roles

When asked what presenters perceived to be the desirable attributes of a higher education teacher, the dominant response was the discipline expertise, plus pedagogical skills in classroom practice.

According to one presenter, the roles of a higher education teacher include all that are described about teaching, professional participation in academic environment in Article 6, Joint Circular 36/2014.

> We can divide the roles of teachers into two groups. The first group of roles is assigned to legal tasks of a teacher, while the other group is related to the morals they need to execute. Legal tasks are activities that are stated in legal documents about roles or responsibilities of a teacher: like teaching, joining workshops, designing curriculum… (Dr Lam)

Other presenters had similar ideas on the professional roles of a higher education teacher. An analysis of some presenters' perspectives shows unique expectations for higher education teachers' professional roles, which diverge from the traditional school of thought about the role of teachers as a knowledge transmitter. To be more specific, it is expected that higher education teachers need to perform teaching and academic roles but at a higher level of professionalism, inspiring student's self-learning, creative and critical thinking, developing long-term vision for students' development. For example, one presenter highly valued the role of teachers in inspiring student learning and helping them to learn by themselves:

> The real role of higher education teachers is to teach students how to learn… Teachers need to teach students how to learn, how to self-study, how to self-improve knowledge… I mean they need to help students develop a long-term vision for their own development and get updated knowledge, and develop learning skills. (Dr Hoang)

In addition to teachers' role in inspiring student learning, their role in designing curriculum and implementing the curriculum in a way that best stimulates students' creativity and critical thinking was added:

> A higher education teacher must know how to construct a curriculum, design a

> syllabus aligning the curriculum, implement it and evaluate students' performance to develop students' creativity, critical thinking. During the process of teaching, teachers must design exercises and tasks to give students opportunities to develop critical thinking. (Dr Nhung)

Apart from the professional role, the moral role of the teacher was mentioned as an essential element that higher education needs to focus on. This was previously illustrated in Dr Lam's quote on the two main roles of higher education teachers.

> Moral tasks however, mean teachers need to do their best in their job, which requires their self-study attitude to constantly improve their professional development knowledge and skills. (Dr Lam)

As seen from Dr Lan's statement, the moral expectation for higher education teachers is the drive to move forward in their professional role. This becomes evident as specified in the government regulations for the professional development role of teachers.

On the other spectrum, the moral role of teachers was expected to be reflected in their moral behaviour, by acting as role models and in the moral education that they provide to students.

> The best way to teach morals for students is to teach with passion and do our best in our teaching. It's hard for teachers to be the model, though, I admit. But we can be serious in what we do, what we teach and how influential our roles will be for students. (Dr Nhung)

One role of higher education teachers, however, was overlooked, and highlighted by only one presenter: the research role. Although stated as one of the four main roles of teachers in higher education institutions in the 2011 Joint Circular, only one presenter who teaches Research Methodology, expressed his views towards the need for teachers' research responsibilities:

> I think the quality of teachers' research competence is really weak, indicated by the index of article journals publications. The index of published articles by higher education teachers in Vietnam, compared to other countries in ASEAN area, is low, and this amount is even worse in Social and Humanities disciplines. (Dr An)

Presenters' adaptation into their modules to scaffold participants' conceptual change related to higher education teachers' roles.

Out of five presenters, two were noticed to have updated their teaching materials, responding

to the current updated program (Circular 2013), and recent government documents on higher education teachers' standards. This is best illustrated in the Educational Science in Higher Education module. As the presenter noted:

> MOET recently updated their changed for standards for higher education teachers. So our program should update those changes to make sure our participants will be aware of those standards. (Dr Minh)

All presenters, when asked about their modification of their module, expressed that they wanted more balance between theory and practice, making it more interactive to program participants. Regarding content, only Dr Minh and Dr Lam identified that the modification of certain materials related to changes in government documents in their modules. While Dr Minh chose relevant parts of the teachers' standards and roles to introduce, Dr Lam was more concerned with the latest documents of MOET's vision for higher education to 2020. His concern, illustrated in Memo 8, highlighted how he adapted his teaching materials into the current program according to the government's expectations.

Presenters' conceptions of higher education teachers' roles strongly emphasise the professional role of teachers, which include not only competence in their discipline, but pedagogical knowledge and skills. Professional development responsibility was also counted as a drive to push teachers forward and to reflect teachers' moral values in their career to fulfil the purposes of higher education. Teachers in higher education were also expected to be moral models and responsible for the education of moral standards for students. The research role, however, was not found to be critical from the presenters' perspectives. Compared to the four main groups of higher education teachers' roles as stated in the 2011 Joint Circular (professional, research, professional development, and other roles), presenters' perspectives aligned well with what was expected about higher education teachers' roles in carrying out academic roles and professional development responsibilities. The research role, however, was not popularly discussed. Other duties of higher education teachers, such as academic advising or administrative roles were not considered as main roles of teachers either as indicated from the presenters' interview data. This does not indicate the rejection of such roles for higher education teachers, however, it shows a concentration on professional academic roles which include both competence of the discipline and pedagogical knowledge and skills. Administrative roles and student advising roles perhaps were not mentioned because they were not really relevant to the purpose of providing pedagogical knowledge and skills of this

training program. However, although not explicitly suggested as a role for higher education teachers, one presenter who was in charge of the Introduction to Educational Science module, made clear that her module did introduce advising or consulting activities and even went further to analyse the advising role of higher education teachers.

> I provide learners with the most general ideology about educating people, enabling them to understand the basic philosophy of **educating** students' ethics in higher education contexts, information about teachers in higher education**, consulting or advising activities** and educational activities. (Dr Minh)

Therefore, the advising role of higher education teachers, although not explicitly appreciated, was subtly considered a necessary element in the whole package of what is expected of teachers' responsibilities and roles. Presenters' perspectives about teachers' roles and what they presented in the program through their aim, implementation, and update show a similar idea to that found in governmental documents about teachers' roles generally.

4.2.3 Participants' conceptions of higher education teachers' roles and their conceptual changes

Roles of Higher Education Teachers emerged from participants' interview data with three sub-categories: Standards for Higher Education Teachers, Roles of Higher Education Teachers, and Roles of Students' Advisors. In Vietnamese higher education institutions, student advisor's positions are common and they have responsibilities for students' welfare and academic progress. Usually, some higher education teachers, especially the young ones, are appointed as students' advisors besides their role as an academic. In some cases, academic advisors are staff from the administrative team of the Faculty. The position is important, especially for first year students who might need a lot of assistance during their transition from high school to college/university. Figure 4.2 summarises categories and dimensions of Roles of Higher Education Teachers throughout both phases of the study.

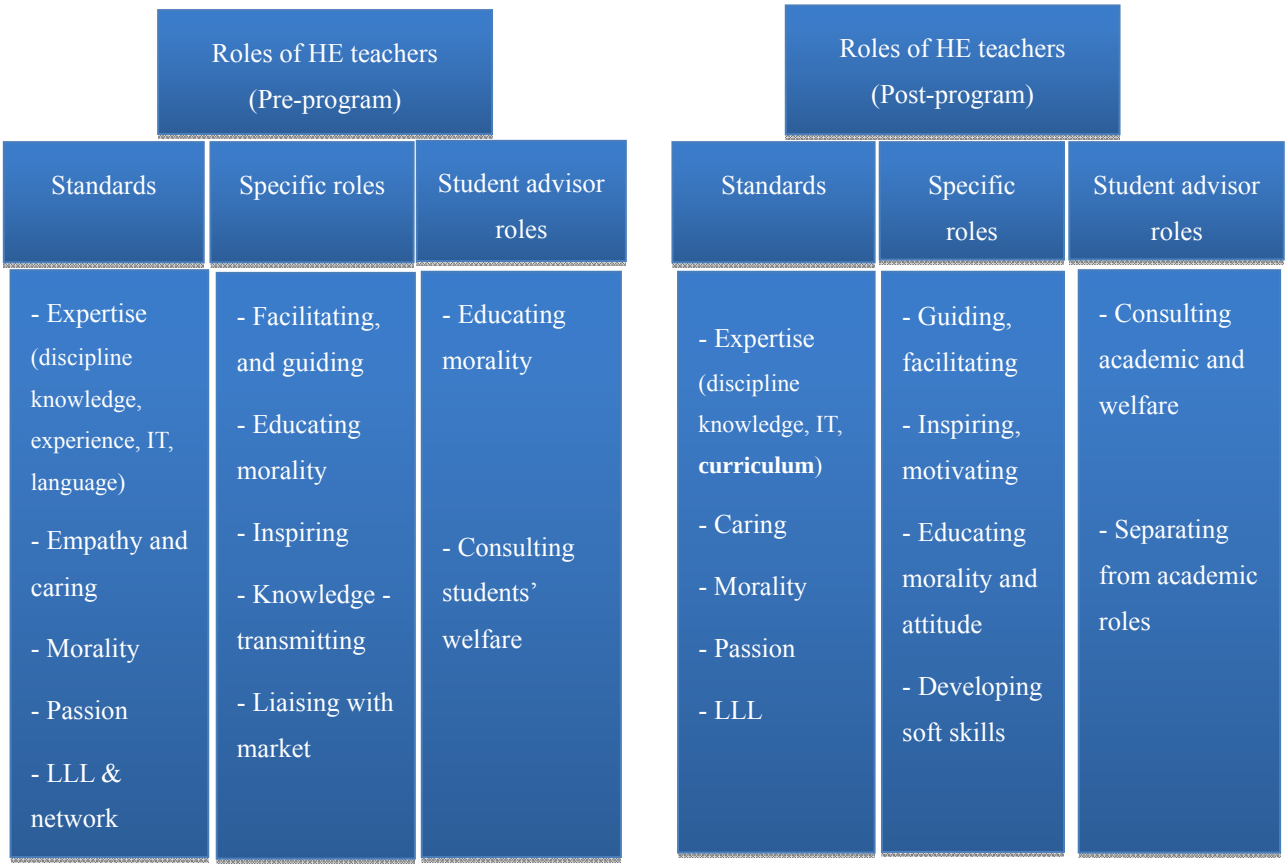

Figure 4.2 Conceptions of roles of higher education teachers – Pre- and post-program

PRE-PROGRAM

Standards for higher education teachers

Expectations of higher education teachers arose as a consideration when participants outlined the high standards which they expected higher education teachers to meet. Standards for higher education teachers emerged as a separate category because data yielded were more relevant to what qualifications or standards higher education teachers should have, rather than their specific roles. Participants also expected good qualities from teachers such as passion, morals, empathy and caring, and a lifelong learning attitude. Each of those sub-categories is described in the following sections.

Expertise

The first standard that was expected is related to *expertise*. Expertise was conceptualised as covering many aspects, from professional knowledge in the discipline, to specific knowledge of ICT applications, and language, to professional work experience.

Professional discipline expertise was the first standard expected for higher education teachers. They were expected first to be excellent in their areas of expertise and have relevant background knowledge in order to teach students in the same discipline.

> First, teachers need good expertise to teach students and further answer students questions related to their expertise. When teachers have good knowledge, the lessons are more interesting and motivating to students. (Ha)

Teachers were believed to be more efficient if they had rich work experience in the field they teach. Relevant work situations and examples were thought to be helpful for their students, as shared by Tien:

> Even teachers who have good expertise in their area need to have experience in the industry too. Only when teachers have real working experience and working conflicts can they perform an accurate and resourceful lecture. (Tien)

Coupled with knowledge in teachers' disciplines was the expectation to be proficient in ICT. Most participants were aware of the influence of ICT developments on students' life and expected teachers in higher education to take advantage of the positive side of ICT advances in their teaching practice. In addition, language competence (English) was mentioned to be another standard that teachers needed to meet. Ability to use English was thought to help improve professional knowledge for higher education teachers in the context where most materials and articles are published in English as illustrated in the following excerpt:

> Higher education teachers must be competent in IT applications, using technology in classrooms now proves to be so widespread and effective. Teachers need language skills because we adopt many foreign teaching materials. (Tong)

All in all, expertise was the first standard expected of higher education teachers, from participants' conceptions. However, it was understood that expertise emerged as a combination of professional knowledge and experience in the field, and ICT and language skills also.

Empathy and Caring

"Empathy and caring" emerged as the second category under Standards of Higher Education Teachers. Empathy was perceived to be the ability to understand students' circumstances, and the availability to help them to overcome their difficulties.

> Teachers need… well, well, the ability to empathise with students' learning challenges. (Quan)

Caring also emerged as a sub-category of higher education teachers' standards. In general, participants believed teachers should care about students, which would encourage a mutual understanding and open relationship between them and the students. Understanding and caring for students become one central discussion in the pre-program phase on higher education standards, as the following quote shows:

> Teachers should be a friend to get to know students' expectations… like trying to understand what students want to learn… It has to do with students' psychology. Moreover, if teachers become students' friends, the relationship between teachers-students becomes closer. (Duyen)

Morality as a standard

Apart from the aforementioned standards, higher education teachers were expected to set an example in morals, first of all, morals in their work. Participants expected ethical teaching, teaching with responsibility, doing the right thing in regard to their position. There was criticism of unethical behaviour in teaching such as teaching for financial purposes under the current higher education expansion reforms in Vietnam. Morality of teachers, therefore, was raised as crucial in the reform process of higher education in Vietnam where private and other diverse forms of higher educational institutions are expanding.

> Teachers must have expertise and good moral standards plus a passion for their job to be able to guide students on the right track. To me, teachers' morals in their teaching is the most influential to students. (Khang)

In addition, participants also expected that teachers must be role models in behaviour and manners as they are the mirrors that students look at to better themselves. Even teachers' everyday lifestyles or words they use to communicate were believed to have certain influence on students' ethics, as one participant shared:

> Teachers should set an example in terms of morality. Wanting students to have good manners, teachers need to have good manners. (Trinh)

The excerpts from participants presented above, provide insight into the expectations of higher education teachers. It is clear from the data that participants' expectations about teachers were not limited to expert knowledge only. Expertise of teachers is expected to

involve knowledge of ICT, language, and professional experience, and the ability to learn throughout their life as well. Furthermore, higher education teachers were required to have empathy, caring, and passion; important elements to drive their career to another level. Teachers' morals were also expected to be examples for students' manners and lifestyles, and it was believed that only with morals can the quality of higher education in Vietnam be maintained in the age of higher education expansion.

Passion

Passion was suggested to be a standard for higher education teachers by a number of participants. Passion was perceived to drive teachers' devotion for teaching and directly influence their quality of teaching. A clear explanation of why passion should be a standard for higher education teachers is illustrated in the following excerpt:

> In addition to teaching, teachers must first have the passion for his/her job. This passion is unconscious but it stimulates the teacher to do his/her best. (Quan)

Some participants even discussed how passion became neglected in the context of higher education massification in Vietnam, where teachers have to teach many classes, and lack time to invest in their lessons and teaching quality. Teachers who, however, have more passion, were believed to be better teachers:

> Teachers need to meet certain standards but some teachers with good hearts and devotion seem to have higher chances to win students' hearts. (Tai)

Lifelong learning (LLL) and networking

Teachers were expected to continuously improve their expertise, update knowledge and proactively participate in professional training courses to make themselves better.

> With the development of science, teachers must continually update the latest information and knowledge for students so that they can learn and grow with the latest development trends of the world. (Trinh)

Commitment to lifelong learning was also proved to be of pivotal importance for teachers' career advancement, as further evidenced in one participant's statement:

> Higher education teachers must improve their professional knowledge by participating in on-going training in foreign countries and they need to make teaching more real or practical, thus inspiring students. (Khang)

Networking also emerged as teachers' ability and willingness to network with peers, with colleagues from the same or different institutes, to learn from one another, to contribute to the community of learning and to grow professionally. "Networking" is more appropriate than "sociability", because the concept here refers to exchanging professional knowledge and communicating with peers, rather than socialising with the whole community as a whole, as one participant shared:

> And if teachers have opportunities to exchange with peers from other institutions, with other countries, then it will be more useful to students. Also, …when we exchange with others in different environment, communicate well with others, it is much better than working alone, I believe. (Thoa)

Roles of higher education teachers

Before participating in the program, participants conceptualised teaching roles encompassing guiding and facilitating, educating morals, inspiring knowledge and creativity, transmitting knowledge, and liaising students with job markets.

Guiding and facilitating

Participants first identified the role of higher education teachers in "guiding and facilitating" students' learning and future directions in their disciplines. The guiding and facilitating role was justified as slowly orienting and assisting students from time to time in the new discipline, promoting self-learning and even career orientation. Participants generally perceived that the facilitating role outweighed the lecturing role, with the latter believed to be inadequate for efficient teaching and effective self-learning to take place. The lecturing role was criticised as being too passive and not satisfying the demand to deepen knowledge and intensify students' interest in their discipline, as clearly demonstrated by one participant:

> Lectures cannot be simply delivered or teachers cannot just give speech and students copy it down but they need to guide students to explore further knowledge. If teachers just give boring lectures, students get bored and passive. (Khang)

As reflected in Khang's quote, higher education teachers need to play an active role in guiding students to self-study and develop a thirst for knowledge exploration and development. Implicitly, Khang advocated the role of teachers in facilitating students to develop interest and motivation for their self-learning journey without depending on lectures by teachers. This was strongly supported by other participants, for example:

> First, teachers must be the person who guides and facilitates student learning. Apart from teaching, they need to elicit and expand students' knowledge, and facilitate their self-learning and research. (Duyen)

A lot of participants expressed awareness of the teacher's role in facilitating students' knowledge discovery and self-learning procedures. Although participants did not clarify in detail why they thought teachers should be responsible for facilitating student learning, the fact that most of them identified facilitating and guiding as important roles reveals that participants were leaning more towards the **student-centred paradigm**, which focuses on the facilitating role of teachers, rather than dominating in lectures.

In addition, the guiding role of higher education teachers was indicated to involve career orientation, which was thought to be useful for students' future development in their disciplines. As experienced academics in the fields, teachers were expected to deliver professional orientation to help students study well.

> Teachers need to guide them (students) in career orientation so that they can have a general idea what is expected of them in their field and what they need to prepare for it. (Tien)

As can be seen from Tien's ideas, teachers' roles in guiding and facilitating should also include career orientation and future development for students, which should contribute to shaping students' future career. In general, the guiding and facilitating role should be two-fold: guiding how to learn, how to self-study in a new academic environment, and guiding future pathways for self-development in their disciplines.

Educating students' morality

Another role perceived to be important was educating morals for students. Moral education need not to be something too abstract but can be limited to everyday behaviour and courteous manners, as Nga indicated:

> Teachers can teach students courteous behaviour such as how to walk up and down

> the stairs, turning off the lights when leaving the classroom… Teachers who teach each course need to emphasise the psychological part, gender, and human morals. (Nga)

Broader than behaviour, participants also believed shaping students' manner was important to define who students are and to contribute to social development. It was also stressed that teachers must be the ones who set good examples if they want to educate good characters.

> We need to shape students' proper behaviour. Because proper behaviour helps to build a momentum for a good and moral society. (Trinh)

Simply, moral education constituted an important role for higher education teachers. This sub-category validates higher education roles in educating morality for future graduates, as presented in the previous section on higher education purposes.

Inspiring passion and creativity

Roles of higher education teachers were thought to inspire students' passion and their creativity, according to participants. Besides guiding students in their disciplines, teachers were perceived to have a role to play in motivating students' passion for the discipline:

> Teachers need to inspire students' passion in their chosen industry. (Thoa)

I used the term "inspiring" for this sub-category because unlike the two previous roles, this role emerged as the one going beyond an educating function as normally conceptualised for teachers. It identified a new and advanced level of function for higher education teachers, which relating to the ability to motivate student learning and create new knowledge. Apart from inspiring passion, teachers were expected to stimulate students' creativity, as described in the following quote:

> That means they have to guide students to do research, think outside the box. As higher education teachers, we are responsible for teaching students to think critically and creatively, not simply following what is presented in textbooks. (Tha)

As clearly stated in the quote, first of all, teachers were perceived to stimulate students to develop to a higher level than knowledge understanding or analysis, and evaluation: knowledge creation. Teachers were expected to inspire students' ability to create new knowledge or new things. The level of participants' conceptualisation about teachers' roles escalated to passion stimulating and knowledge creation, and was not limited to pure

facilitation of knowledge.

This finding indicates positive perceptions of participants regarding teachers' roles as it seems to be associated with a student-centred approach, stressing the facilitating and motivating role of teachers. Although this was not supported by participants' actual teaching practice observation, their conceptions of the roles of teachers encompassed the inherent change taking place in the roles of higher education teachers, who had previously been thought to be the masters of knowledge and knowledge transmitting.

Transmitting knowledge

Although teachers' roles had been identified to be associated with a student-focussed approach, with support for teachers' role in facilitating learning, some participants still thought the main role of teachers was to transmit knowledge and skills in a certain discipline. Transmitting knowledge and skill, according to one participant, should account for 90% success of a higher education teacher, as illustrated below:

> For teachers, they only need to propagate knowledge and skills in the major, and that is already achieving 90% success. (Diem)

Another participant also indicated that knowledge transmission should be the main role that teachers needed to perform:

> No matter which approach it is, traditional or modern, as long as teachers get the knowledge transmitted to students, that should be ok. (Tong)

The two quotes infer that knowledge transmitting is still thought to be the dominant role for higher education teachers. Some participants, in this pre-program phase, still believed that teachers' roles were more about knowledge explicating and disseminating.

Connecting students and market

One interesting role of higher education teachers which emerged from the data was that of connecting students with their future working environment. In other words, teachers were thought to play an active role in introducing students to their internship placements or job opportunities, as Tha suggested:

> We (higher education teachers) participate in management tasks, administrative tasks, social tasks, consulting students, and contacting internship placements for students. It means teachers need to be the connection between the organisations and students.

> (Tha)

This role seems to be challenging for teachers, as it was perceived to have nothing to do with teaching and facilitating, or inspiring. Instead, it turns teachers into a "service supplier" as Tha stated, meaning they have the role of a liaison, ensuring students' possibility to secure their job internship in the market.

This sub-category was not mentioned by only one participant, on the contrary, it was advocated by quite a few participants, who highlighted the roles of teachers in assisting students to find job opportunities or internship placements. While participants were aware that this role was demanding for teachers, they still wanted teachers to introduce students to future job markets:

> I think it is too demanding for teachers. But during their teaching, if teachers have network with some organisations, they can introduce students to those potential workplaces; facilitate students in their internship or job opportunities. (Tong)

This finding validates a strong link between the conception of higher education teachers' roles in connecting students with the market, and the conceptions of roles of higher education in meeting employers' demands, in the pre-program interview phase. It can be concluded that the pre-program phase saw a strong influence of the job market demands and pressure on both higher education purposes and teachers' roles.

To sum up, conceptions about higher education teachers' roles before participants entered the program fell into two extremes: from knowledge transmitting to knowledge facilitating and passion inspiring. In addition, moral education was stressed to be an important role of higher education teachers. Teachers were also believed to be a liaison to assist students to find internship or job opportunities.

Roles of students' advisors

The preceding sections outlined expectations of the standards of higher education teachers, and roles of higher education teachers. The roles of students' advisors were mentioned during the two phases of the study. Although their roles, in general, were not strongly related to students' academic success, they were perceived to be essential and contribute to improve the student learning experience. In the pre-program phase, participants described the role of students' advisors as a moral educator, and an academic and life consultant.

Educating students' morals

Just as participants expected teachers to play a role in educating students' morals so this was believed to be an important role of students' advisors too. Data shows the interplay between teachers' and students' advisors' roles in co-educating students' morals. Similar to teachers' roles, consultants were expected to encourage teaching students to behave well too, as indicated by one participant:

> Even when we are the (student) advisor of a class, apart from our role of teaching, we can integrate moral lessons into our teaching. (Diem)

There appeared to be a stronger demand for educating students' behaviour in higher education contexts, especially in daily situations, such as manners of communication. As mentioned in the preceding section, students' inappropriate behaviour was criticised when participants further explained in detail what specifically students' advisor needed to teach students regarding morals.

> I think student advisors should teach students how to communicate; where and when they can make jokes, and where and when they should not. (Nga)

Consulting on issues related to study, and social life

Besides educating morals, students' advisors were perceived to be responsible for consulting students on all issues related to their academic and social life. In general, just as the roles that form-teachers play in secondary education, students' consultants were perceived to pay attention to students' learning progress and provide timely assistance. This perception is clear as illustrated by the following quote:

> I am a students' advisor and during the time I've been in charge, I have come across different praise and criticism from their teachers, so I need to advise them, encourage them, and keep an eye on them. (Tam)

One more reason why participants thought the role was to advise students on their social and academic life is related to their development age.

> But I think students' advisor at the university needs to pay more attention to students. Why? Because they are 18 years of age, they have just entered a new independent life. (Trang)

Participants agreed that the higher education environment is something new and adventurous

for students if they immediately transfer from secondary school to a university or college. Assistance when being new to the learning environment and at a new age in their development was, as such, requested to be available.

POST-PROGRAM

The three sub-categories remain the same as shown from interview data with program participants, however, in each sub-category, some dimensions changed. Although the category names were similar, perspectives of participants about roles of teachers upon the completion of the program were found to be slightly different in each sub-category.

Standards for higher education teachers

Expertise

Conceptions of higher education teachers' standards on expertise in the post-program phase are similar to those emerged from the pre-program phase, however, one more dimension was added: curriculum. Overall, participants persisted in believing in the presence of standards on knowledge expertise, skills and ICT competence. When explaining about the guiding roles of teachers one participant indicated that:

> Higher education teachers are the guide who orient students to their learning. To better orient students, teachers must have excellent knowledge of the discipline because teachers need to guide the knowledge of their expertise, to encourage them to a higher level of learning. (Ha)

ICT proficiency, once again, as in the previous interview, emerged as another requirement in the technological era. One participant related her experience on how ICT competence can bring about quality teaching and learning:

> I feel like we need to keep up with ICT developments. Teachers cannot lecture and ask student to copy or write like the old days. Using proficient ICT is another thing that teachers can do to prove they are good, otherwise their lectures can be boring and then easily detract from students' learning (Ha).

The one dimension of standards for higher education teachers that was not present in the pre-program interview is related to curriculum design. The course on Curriculum Design and Development in the program, as Diem emphasised, broadened her perspective on teachers' standards. Diem had thought curriculum development should be the work of administrators.

Completing the program, she felt each teacher must be able to design a curriculum.

> I never thought I'd have to design a curriculum as a teacher, maybe because I do not have teaching experience. Curriculum development is a part of a teachers' job although this is a task of many individuals. Being a teacher, I must be able to develop syllabus or curriculum. (Diem)

Diem's ideas on standards about curriculum knowledge and experience for teachers might seem strange in the context where syllabus design and curriculum development are regularly conducted by teachers. however, in Vietnamese higher education institutions, private and public alike, curriculum and syllabus are designed by a group of teachers or experts and must be followed exactly. Teachers, as a result, have very little voice in designing curriculum, and as such, curriculum competence of teachers is not considered. Diem's statement on curriculum design standards for teachers, adds a new perspective about teachers' standards related to knowledge of curriculum design, and this confirms the positive change of participants' conceptions about teachers' standards.

Although clearly stated as a specific role of higher education teachers "participating planning content and curriculum" (Article 6, 36/2014/TTLT BGDĐT-BNV), the confession of one participant highlights the lack of expectations of teachers' competence in curriculum development in the pre-program. The post-program data show~~s~~ the change in how participants perceived their competence in curriculum and syllabus design.

Caring

A caring attitude towards students was also perceived as a necessary standard of higher education teachers, as perceived in the pre-program phase. Caring for students' academic and social life was highly regarded.

> Teachers in higher education need to be a friend to students. As students live far from home, they end up seeing their teachers and friends more often as their family members, and their same-age friends cannot always give them proper advice in many circumstances. (Trang)

This sub-category, although not new, again shows high expectations of participants towards a caring attitude and an open relationship with students. Professional knowledge and skills alone are not adequate; caring for students' development both academically and socially should be considered equally important.

Morality

Participants, on completing the program, also expressed their opinions on teachers' morality, expecting teachers to meet certain moral standards. They were even expected to be examples in terms of morals and lifestyle. As one participant stated:

> Higher education teachers have to be the example for students, teachers are good at knowledge and teaching skills but if they fail to meet certain moral standards of a teacher, they will be mirrored by students. For example, if we communicate impolitely, or turn distant to students, students might not respect teachers and do the things that teachers do too. (Tam)

Setting an example of moral behaviour was expected not only in class, but in their social life too. Teachers were expected to live morally even when they were not at work.

> I also think higher education teachers must be models in morals. When they are outside an academic environment, teachers must lead a moral lifestyle, only by doing that, can they persuade students. Only when they respect teachers will students listen to their teaching or advising. (Ha)

Passion

Similar to the pre-program phase, participants agreed on the role of passion in teachers' careers. Participants felt that passion was influential and provided a plethora of reasons to consider passion as a standard that teachers need to have. For example, Khang said:

> In my opinion, first regarding teaching, teachers need to have good knowledge of their expertise, presentation skills and above all, their passion for teaching, only with this passion can they invest their efforts in teaching, without it, quality teaching is impossible. (Khang)

Or even bolder, Tam showed a strong belief in having a passion to teach, which to her, is not something easy to do:

> In general, first higher education teachers must be passionate in teaching. Passion comes first in the teaching career, and it decides teachers' future development. (Tam)

Lifelong learning (LLL)

In general, in the post-program phase, lifelong learning was also required as a standard for higher education teachers; however, participants became more aware of how lifelong learning

might directly drive their teaching improvement. They expressed more about their plans to keep learning than expected. This desire to learn is reflected in the following excerpt from Nga:

> First, it is my thinking about teaching, teaching approaches and desire to continue learning that changed. My further study in the past was derived from a practical purpose (having good job) but now I want to study to improve myself, to make me worth being a teacher, a useful one. (Nga)

Lifelong learning, as indicated, is no longer a means to secure a teaching position, but to provide the conditions for personal professional development. Instead of considering lifelong learning as expectations or standards of teachers that need to be met, lifelong learning in the post-program phase became the means for teachers to excel. In other words, the program had influenced participants' reflections on their past practice. By looking at lifelong learning not as an external force, but rather, an intrinsic motivation, participants seem to have become open to lifelong opportunities to better themselves.

It is clear from the findings identified in this, and the preceding, sections that there is not much difference regarding participants' conceptions about teachers' standards. Higher education teachers' expected standards, as the pre-program findings indicate, can be grouped into the following dimensions: knowledge (professional knowledge, ICT, language), passion, empathy, lifelong learning, and morality. In the post-program phase, although participants did not share any ideas on empathy, their perceptions on passion for their jobs and a caring attitude to students stayed the same, stressing that passion should be the motive that drives teachers' careers. Also, their perspectives on lifelong learning tended to be more critically reflective, showing an intrinsic interest in lifelong learning standards, rather than being forced to follow what is regulated by government standards. One noted difference was the expectations of curriculum development ability of teachers raised by one participant. The participant, although not a teacher yet and therefore possibly with different conceptions about expectations of higher education teachers, indicated positive changes on what she thought to be important standards that higher education teachers need to have.

Roles of higher education teachers

After completion of the program, participants' conceptions about the roles of teachers differed from those prior to the program, as indicated in the data analysis. Indeed, participants' conceptions of roles of higher education teachers shifted to the facilitating extreme without

any participant mentioning the knowledge transmission role as pre-program data had shown.

Guiding and facilitating

As in the first interviews, post-program, the participants still supported the role of teachers in guiding and facilitating student learning and career orientation.

> In higher education, teachers guide students, consult about their learning and help them in their learning. We do not prepare everything or make everything available for students but stimulate and help them to do their own learning. (Trinh)

As articulated in Trinh's excerpt, teachers must be active in guiding students to learn by themselves, rather than providing everything for them as in secondary education. It is important to stress that in the second phase of the study, when participants completed the program, transmission knowledge was no longer perceived to be a role of higher education. No data analysed provided perceptions of transmitting knowledge as a role of teachers in the post-program phase. Instead, most participants perceived facilitating, guiding, and orienting knowledge to be the main roles for higher education teachers, as Tha stressed:

> Teachers play important roles and students need to be active, that doesn't mean teachers must transmit a lot of knowledge to students but they need to guide them, orient them how to learn, how to get more knowledge and look into an issue from different perspectives. (Tha)

From what was shared by Tha, it can be inferred that the program changed participants' views on the roles of higher education teachers. On comparing knowledge transmission and knowledge orienting, participants seem to opt for the latter option, stressing the role of teachers in facilitating the learning process rather than controlling student learning.

The guiding role of teachers, similar to the pre-program phase, apart from facilitating learning was seen to also involve career orientation and motivation.

> Higher education teachers need to orient students to have the right attitude to their career, and contribute to the development of society. Inspiring them to love their jobs is the teacher's role, what I mean is teachers must show students how their job will contribute to make things better, that will certainly make them develop a passion for their job. (Trinh)

Inspiring and motivating learning

According to participants' conceptions, higher education teachers should be the ones who motivate students' learning and inspire them in their learning journey.

> Teachers are the ones who stimulate student learning and inspire their passion to learn. (Tong)

Inspiring students to learn emerged as another role of higher education teachers, coupled with inspiring their passion for the discipline they chose. How to motivate and inspire student learning emerged as an issue of interest to most participants. One participant, particularly, admitted the impact of the program on her conceptions about teachers' roles in guiding students how to self-study:

> Finishing the program, I know what teachers need to do and how to guide students. We need to encourage them to explore more by themselves, from different resources, like the Internet, open resources, articles…and based on these, students will improve their research skills and can evaluate the quality of what they find and from this, they are inspired to learn. (Tha)

Educating/teaching morals and attitude

Participants also perceived that educating morals was necessary as a role for higher education teachers. Educating students' morals, once again became an issue that was believed to belong to the role of teachers.

> Just as I assume, teachers do not teach knowledge but orient students to develop their full potential including their morals such as behaviour, their use of words, their mail checking and replying, their behaviour with teachers and other students. (Thoa)

Before the program started, participants advocated the integration of teaching moral into teachers' teaching practice, and many participants agreed upon the roles of teachers in shaping students' morals. In the post-program phase, however, there was more concern raised regarding teachers' roles in shaping an appropriate learning attitude from students, as well as educating/teaching morals.

> Also, teachers can form students' proactive learning attitude to make students interested in studying (Khang)

An attitude to learning alone was not adequate; a positive attitude to life, to keep motivated

under any circumstances, was further added:

> Decisive roles of teachers can be interpreted as the ones who guide students in their pathways of development, form their motivation, and instil positive attitudes to life. (Ha)

Helping students to have the right attitude was another attribute added under this category, which was clearly not present in the previous phase. The formation of this sub-category indicated the possible influence of the program on participants' conceptualisation of students' attitudes, which was reflected previously in higher education purposes, under the Competence and Craft category, and in this section, roles of higher education teachers.

Developing students' soft skills

In the post-program phase of the research, although participants did not conceptualise knowledge transmitting, and connecting students with the market as roles of teachers, they still highly valued teachers' role in helping students to develop highly demanded work skills.

> In addition, we need to equip students with soft skills, communication skills, problem-solving skills… Students need to be guided how to search information apart from their textbooks, and experience real-life circumstances. (Trinh)

In line with higher education purposes, under the Competence-Craft sub-category, as perceived by participants in this study, knowledge, skills and attitude are the three components that go hand-in-hand. The roles of higher education teachers, therefore, as indicated in this section can be summarised into three components: facilitating knowledge discovery, educating morals and attitude for students, and improving social skills.

In brief, what constituted participants' change in perceptions about the roles of teachers, as some participants admitted, can be attributed to the possible changes resulted from the program. In general, participants' conceptions about teachers' roles shifted to the student-centred pole, and added substantial properties and dimensions to the emerged categories with sophisticated explanation of student-centred teaching, rather than expressing it as going just beyond the dominance of lecture teaching, as in pre-program data revealed. The interwoven knowledge-skill-attitude purposes of higher education, as perceived by participants and illustrated in the previous section (Purposes of Higher Education) help to reflect the roles of teachers in achieving these three elements, as indicated by one excerpt:

> But the program makes it clearer for me regarding roles of teachers. We should be the

> consultant and guide. Consulting should be three-fold: knowledge, skills and attitude. Having knowledge without skills seem to be useless, I assume. (Trinh)

This is not only a reflection of the program, but it is a reflection of how one participant the program changed her ways of thinking about higher education teachers' roles. Knowledge transmitting was no longer perceived to be a role of teachers. Instead, motivating, inspiring career development, and student learning, coupled with educating students' morals were perceived as new and challenging roles that higher education teachers need to think about.

To summarise, participants during the two phases of the study confirmed the roles of teachers in eliciting knowledge, guiding study and orienting students' study and career. Educating/teaching morals was believed to be an essential role too, besides the inspiring passion and motivation role. The findings also infer some changes in participants' views on what they conceptualised as teachers' roles. On completion of the program, participants were inclined to shift their views to the facilitating role of teachers, rather than a combination of both knowledge transmitting and facilitating roles, as previously perceived. The post-program interview data analysis supports the need to educate a proper learning attitude besides educating students' morals. Attitude was also considered a separate sub-category which emerged as participants' conceptions about roles of higher education changed. It is, therefore, obvious that the program stimulated the participants to think further on issues related to morals, involving "attitude" as another attribute that needed to be considered. The post-program data also indicate that participants no longer perceived helping students to liaison with the market as a role of higher education teachers. Instead, participants perceived that improving students' social skills should be the role that helps students to secure a job and succeed in their own future development, without depending on teachers in the long run.

Roles of students' advisors

During interviews in the post-program phase, participants again expressed beliefs on the consulting role of students' advisors on issues related to academic and social life. Their role in educating morals, however, was not discussed as no data emerged from the second interview. On completing the program, participants tended to discuss more about the separation of the teaching role from the student advising role.

Consulting on issues related to academic and social life

In the later interview phase, participants still believed the main responsibility of students'

advisors is to observe and assist students in their academic and social life. Specifically, advice on their new academic life, their chosen discipline and its directions, and their social skills should be provided.

> Student advisors have to guide students' soft skills, answer students' questions related to their studies, academic life, and other life living skills. (Tai)

There was also a discussion on frequent communication between students and advisor as this was felt to create more trust from the students' side to better express themselves.

> And regarding the advising role of teachers, I think students' advisors should communicate more often with students through emails, making sure to help them with their situations. They can even ask students to come and share their problems face-to-face. (Diem)

Separating students' advisors' roles and academic roles

What stood out in participants' conceptions about roles of students' advisors in the post-program phase was the idea of a clear separation between teaching roles and advising roles. Many higher education teachers are expected to be students' advisors too, but it was not believed to be efficient because higher education teachers generally do not have time to provide assistance appropriately for students. It was suggested that teaching roles and advising roles should be separated, as indicated in Ha's quote:

> If we want to refer to this responsibility for students' advisors, then I think we need to separate the job of an advisor with teachers. Students' advisors should focus on consulting students on academic affairs. Reducing this duty for academics is necessary so they can concentrate on their teaching. (Ha)

As can be seen from the experience above, it becomes essential to separate the two roles: teaching and advising, with the former related to academic achievement while the latter to paperwork and general advice on academic matters and well-being.

Participants interviewed in the study believed that students' advisors roles were necessary and should focus on advising students' academic and relevant life issues. Moral education was mentioned in the pre-program interviews as part of their role, however, this was not present in the post-program interviews. Data analysis also indicate that participants prefer students' advisors to be separate from teaching positions, to allow effective observation and consultancy for students regarding matters related to academic assistance or paperwork.

To summarise, findings from this section have elaborated on three dimensions of the Roles of Higher Education Teachers' theme: standards, roles of higher education teachers and student advisors' roles. In general, standards expected for higher education teachers ranged from professional expertise (discipline, ICT, language) to morals (empathy, passion and lifelong learning attitude). The expectations from participants were generally aligned with presenters' views on teachers' standards which focussed on both professional expectations and moral values of teachers. Moral standards of teachers were also highlighted as norms from Joint Circular 06/2011/TTLT-BNV-BGDĐT "have firm political qualities and good moral lifestyles" (Article 3.2, p. 2). This indicates an emphasis on the standards of morality in higher education teachers, viewed from a triangulated perspective: educational leaders, practitioners and teachers. Moral standards were perceived to be demonstrated not only in behaviour, attitude, and lifestyle, but also in career passion and the desire to improve professional competence. Moral expectations for teachers remained high throughout both phases of the study. The post-program phase of the study, however, showed more concern about the curriculum design competence of higher education teachers, which was highlighted as one specific role of higher education teachers that needs to be executed. The inclusion of a Curriculum Design module as a compulsory component in the program shows the potential opportunity to change participants' awareness about the importance of curriculum design and development and even initiate their changes to future curriculum restructure and teaching activities. The possible impact from the program on participants' perceptions of the role of teachers in designing curriculum was revealed in the post-program phase. In addition, the lifelong learning attitude of participants in the post-program phase tended to be perceived through a more reflective approach, with a desire to improve professional development with an intrinsic motive to thrive in their careers. Lifelong learning attitude, therefore, can be considered as a moral commitment to advance in their teaching career, just as assumed by the presenters who also believed that morals standards of higher education teachers should be reflected not only in their behaviour but in their commitment to improve their professional life.

With regard to specific teachers' roles, participants perceived teachers to be the guide for students learning and career development orientation throughout both phases. One significant change identified when comparing two sets of data (pre-program and post-program) indicates participants shifted to a pure facilitating role, rather than combining both transmitting knowledge and a facilitating learning role as shared in the pre-program phase. Apart from the

facilitating role, participants in general agreed on their role in educating morals for students and also inspiring passion role. Although the documents from the ministerial level did not articulate the ways in which teachers transmit knowledge to students, just making it "teaching, guiding" generally (Article 6.1a, 36/2014/TTLT BGDĐT-BNV), what participants presented in both phases show a dominant choice favouring a guiding learning role, rather than knowledge transmitting or controlling what students should learn. It was clearer in the post-program phase that teachers' roles were described to have moved to a student-centred pole, with less focus on the teachers' knowledge transmission role. Instead, roles of teachers were perceived to be inspiring and guiding student's self-learning experience. On the other hand, none of the sub-categories under Roles of Teachers highlight the research role, or at least expectations for research standards for teachers in higher education, which is clearly indicated as requirements and roles of teachers in Joint Circular 2014: "Organising and participating in scientific research activities; reporting writing and participation in scientific conferences and symposiums; participating in activities to implement technology transfer" (Article 6.1đ, 36/2014/TTLT BGDĐT-BNV, p. 7). There was a positive change in conception related to the professionalism of teaching standards, with a more expanded approach to teaching and moral education becoming evident in the post-program phase. However, research expectations and the research role of teachers were not commonly perceived from participants' perspectives. Although the module Research Methodology was included in the curriculum of this examined training program and research was acknowledged as a purpose of higher education and a role of teachers as shown in MOET documents, no awareness about teachers' research roles was mentioned, even in the post-program phase of the study. This shortcoming could be a result of the focus of the program, which was orientated to train participants' pedagogical skills and knowledge, rather than improving their research competence.

With regards to students' advisor's roles, there was not much difference in participants' conceptions related to specific responsibilities of a student advisor, however, the post-program phase saw a clear preference for a separation of the teaching role from the advising role as combining the two was believed to be a burden for teachers. While presenters did not consider the advising role a really dramatic role, participants' perspectives of this role were different, supporting the necessity of the related counselling activities and the role's significance for the development of student academic, which was aligned with government's expectations on teachers' roles: "participating in academic advising roles, assisting students in their academic study, discussion, lab experiment and internship" (Article 6.1g, 36/2014/TTLT BGDDT-BNV,

p. 7). However, no matter how supportive participants were of this role, at the post-program phase they believed the counselling roles should be separated from academic roles and that there needs to be professional staff who should responsible for students' advising services. This does not, however, reject the advising role of higher education teachers because advising is very important in discipline teaching. What participants suggested is that the administrative burden for higher education teachers should be reduced.

4.3 Conclusion

By examining participants' conceptions of higher education purposes and higher education teachers' roles and standards, together with the intricate subcategories and dimensions in two phases of the program, it is possible to trace conceptual changes related to those themes upon the completion of the studied program. It can be concluded that participants' conceptions of higher education purposes differed significantly after the program finished. The related program modules and presenters' perspectives were believed to drive those changes as evidence shows sophisticated perspectives on higher education purposes, judging from the comparison, analysis of international trends towards higher education from participants' quotes. Conceptions of higher education teachers' roles were found to be slightly changed during two program phases, although the main sub-categories emerged remained similar in the post-program phase. Standards on curriculum design and research competence were mentioned by participants after completing the program, and an orienting role of higher education teachers was emphasised.

CHAPTER 5

CONCEPTIONS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

5.0 Introduction

Chapter 4 discussed the findings on two separate themes of higher education purposes and higher education teachers' roles, as perceived through participants' views, and how they relate to presenters' perspectives and relevant official documents. The following sections will focus on the findings related to the conceptualisation of learning, teaching in higher education, and the changes found after participants' completion of the program.

5.1 Learning conceptions in higher education

5.1.1 How "Learning" is addressed in the program curriculum

As stated in the Circular regulating curriculum for the program (Circular 12/2013/TT-BGDDT), the main aim is providing professional pedagogical knowledge and skills for those who want to become higher education teachers. Although a strong emphasis is placed on "teaching" as a specific objective of knowledge and skills, a "student learning" element can be subtly identified in the following program aims:

- The basics of psychology, principles of teaching in higher education, theories, and methods of teaching. (Knowledge aim)

- The skills to design teaching plan, organise lesson plan, guide students to self-study, and self-research. (Skill aim) (Circular 12/2013/TT-BGDĐT)

Theories related to knowledge about student learning and their characteristics are reflected in some compulsory modules. The first module, "Introduction to Educational Science" where learning and teaching principles are introduced, focuses on the general study of roles of higher education, and teachers' standards, areas related to human development, classroom influencing factors, and educational theories. The two modules on psychology, namely, General Psychology and Educational Psychology in Higher Education, also gear the focus towards learning elements with the introduction of students' psychological development and their characteristics. Application of theories of students' psychology and their learning

development is evident in modules Principles and Methods of Teaching in Higher Education, where program participants are expected to research factors influencing student learning and incorporate them into the design of lesson plans or classroom management techniques. The application of such learning theories is also found in the optional module Teaching Practice, where participants are asked to plan, design and micro-teach their lesson plans using theories of teaching and learning under the supervision of a peer. A summary of some modules in the curriculum that are directly relevant to educating participants on student learning is presented in the following figure.

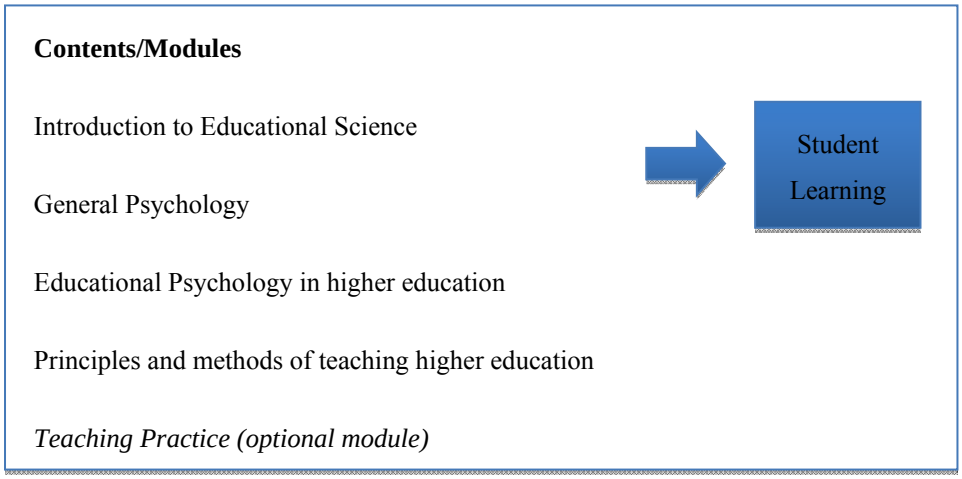

Figure 5.1 Modules addressing student learning

5.1.2 Presenters' perspectives on participants' conceptual changes in learning

Presenters were asked to what extent they believed conceptions about teaching and learning in higher education of participants might change, and how the program and they, as presenters, might influence those changes. In this section, presenters' perspectives and expectations on participants' possible change in their conceptions of learning are discussed, followed by the presenters' initiatives to modify their module materials to scaffold conceptions of learning of participants.

Presenters' expectations on participants' conceptual changes in higher education learning

When specifically asked to share the extent to which presenters believed the program might lead to participants' change in their conceptions of teaching and learning, generally, all

participants were positive about a certain degree of conceptual change. One answer best illustrates this viewpoint:

> I think they (participants) will change their conceptions of teaching and learning to a certain extent…, but of course this does not apply to everyone and their levels of changes vary as well. (Dr Nhung)

Another presenter, on the other hand, raised concerns over the focus of the program on its psychological elements and teaching techniques, rather than educating participants both the teaching part and learning part. The presenter, although admitting the values of these modules, was worried that the program might have overlooked the learning elements or contextual influences that affect the choice of teaching techniques. Indeed, he expected the philosophy of teaching approaches should be made clear to participants in a way that best tailors students' ability and learning development rather than just introducing names and procedures of teaching methods.

> And when we talk about professional development for teachers, we need to train higher education teachers to choose and use appropriate teaching approach, not just tell them the names or procedures of approaches as such. And this means teachers need to master good both teaching and learning principles. Whatever teaching approach we aim to design, we need to tailor it to the students based on their learning needs and strategies. (Dr Hoang)

The quote indicates a perceived lack of strategies regarding student learning diversity. Indeed, the learning part was overlooked as indicated from the data analysis of presenters' conceptions of teaching and learning. More focus was placed on teaching, teaching approaches and teaching skills, and even more expectations of participants' conceptual change of teaching were mentioned than those of learning. Only a subtle idea of what presenters expected to occur with learning conceptual change was identified.

Presenters' perspectives on their module adaptation to facilitate conceptual change of learning

As discussed in the previous chapter, most presenters believed the program in general would benefit participants to a certain degree, providing them an overview of the necessary

knowledge and skills of a higher education teacher, just as the overall aim of the program stated.

One presenter expected the program to bring about a necessary "knowledge and skill" package for participants, and further explained how all modules might supplement one another to contribute to the so-called "active" learning and teaching in higher education.

> Participants also know more about educational philosophy, psychology, students' psychological development in this context, and curriculum design, assessment, scientific research, introduction about higher education of Vietnam and the world. Regarding skills, in some modules, the presenters need to emphasise syllabus design skills, assessment, public speaking, presenting, communication skills in educational contexts, all that can turn teaching and learning into a more active approach. (Dr Lam)

Two presenters, however, showed clearer intention on how to target issues to better scaffold learning conceptions for program participants. They explained in-depth how they modified their teaching to target learning in higher education because of their modules' relevance to educational science and learning strategies and diversity of students.

As indicated from the program analysis, the modules Principles and Methods of Teaching in Higher Education, and Introduction to Educational Science were considered to be relevant to learning theory in higher education. The presenters of those modules were interviewed as a result. The presenter of the module, Principles and Methods of Teaching in Higher Education, believed the recent change in program curriculum was necessary, as the new modules, such as General Psychology and Introduction to Educational Science, helped to provide participants who have no teaching experience with an overview of important knowledge before moving on to specific higher education teaching and learning. The consequence of this change has influenced her modules, she admitted and she modified and updated her teaching materials according to the guidelines of MOET. For example, she used a variety of "new" teaching techniques to encourage a motivating learning environment to best illustrate to participants how to use learning principles in their teaching practice:

> I guide learners to research information, write assignments based on theory presented and facilitate them to apply the theory in their teaching practice. With those who do not have teaching experience, I encourage them to think about some possible pedagogical scenarios they might encounter… My viewpoint is to support the modern teaching techniques and inspire or motivate program participants and encourage them to do the same with their (future) students. (Dr Minh)

The approaches Dr Minh described, was strong evidence that she adapted her teaching according to the new updated program, to tailor to the differences among participants (with and without teaching experience). Her teaching was supportive of the student-centred approach, as she believed it would show participants how to organise teaching activities that best involve students' participation in learning activities.

Another presenter, who was in charge of the optional module Practice of Teaching also expressed her concerns over issues of applying sophisticated levels of student learning principles within teaching practice. She explained how she modified her teaching materials and techniques with a view to better customise participants' diverse learning needs and address their weaknesses in teaching and learning. Although the module focussed on eliciting participants to practice their teaching, the presenter tried to embed the constructivist approach to enhance an active learning environment:

> My teaching materials include contents related to constructivist learning, learning by doing, Bloom's Taxonomy, situation-based teaching, group discussion facilitation, project-based teaching. My teaching materials and techniques change every cohort as the participants are different every cohort. For example, one thing I learned from previous cohorts of participants is that I can improve their ability to ask and elicit good questions for students. So I added Bloom's taxonomy in the materials to help participants construct better questions at a higher level in this taxonomy. (Dr Nhung)

Overall, an investigation into the program guidelines, curriculum and presenters' perspectives on possible changes in learning conception from participants and their teaching modification, provides evidence on the inclusion of some theories and even the practice of learning principles into the program. Participants were expected to be competent in understanding learning principles, planning an active learning environment, and applying it into their future

practice. A closer look at how participants conceptualise learning in higher education and how their conceptions change will be presented in the following section.

5.1.3 Participants' conceptions of learning and their conceptual changes

"Learning conceptions" emerges as one category describing participants' views towards learning in higher education. Figure 5.2 represents sub-categories of learning conceptions during the two phases of the study.

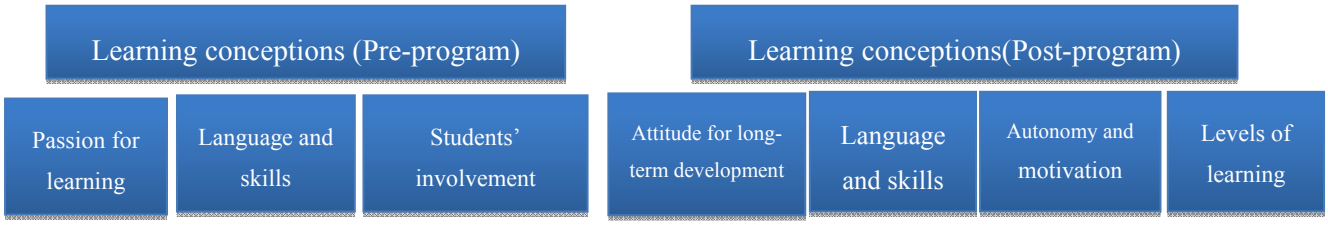

Figure 5.2 Participants' conceptions of learning in higher education

PRE-PROGRAM

As can be seen from Figure 5.2, "Learning conceptions" in the pre-program phase is categorised into three sub-categories: passion for learning, language and skills, and students' involvement. Details of each sub-category are described with examples of participants' quotes below.

Passion for learning

Most participants believed learning in higher education should be rooted in a passion and great enthusiasm for knowledge discovery. Students' lack of passion for their study was criticised, and as a result, passion for learning was suggested first as one stand-alone sub-category, as the following quote shows:

> Some students simply pursue a bachelor degree to avoid military training or choose a certain discipline due to its easy intake. If they do not study with their passion, it is certainly not good for their future. (Khang)

The implication suggested for higher education was, therefore, to make learning an exciting journey for students:

> Higher education is to create enthusiasm for learning, having the enthusiasm, students are motivated to learn. (Thoa)

Language and skills

Learning in higher education should also involve the acquisition of language and other skills such as IT, and soft skills, which according to participants, was not a strength of higher education students in Vietnam in the context of globalisation, as can be seen in the following example:

> As the demands of the society keeps changing under the globalisation process, students need to learn IT, English. (Dung)

Students' involvement in study

Apart from passion. and language and skills, students' involvement in their study constitutes a third sub-category that was talked about by most participants. This emerging sub-category was strongly linked to "passion in learning", but it is more descriptive of the degree of responsibility and proactive attitude students should have to take charge of their own learning journey in higher education. In particular, it was expected that learning in higher education was only effective if students are well aware of their own responsibility, without depending on what they are told to do, as shown in one extract:

> Students need to be aware of the importance of studying for themselves, and need to take responsibility for their own learning. (Nga)

In a specific quote, one participant also clearly described what was expected of students in terms of showing their involvement in learning in a classroom context.

> Students in higher education should study in that way; I mean they must search information for their own lessons and have a drive for learning, without waiting for the knowledge to be transmitted. (Tai)

As shown from the quotations, when asked about learning in higher education, participants tended to view learning as an activity that requires students' responsibility and passion. An addition of skill and language learning was added to better students' potentials in job seeking. No identification of how teachers could better improve student learning, such as improving their enthusiasm, motivation, or how to actively engage students in their learning was found. Learning, as such, was conceptualised as purely the students' responsibility, which differentiates higher education learning with other levels of education.

POST-PROGRAM

Judging from the sub-categories emerged from the post-program interviews, participants tended to produce more logical justifications for their conceptions of learning, and extended their perspectives on learning in higher education to a more sophisticated approach. Four subcategories emerged include: attitude for long-term development, language and skill, autonomy and motivation, and levels of learning.

Attitude for long-term development

Unlike in the pre-program phase, where participants were more concerned about students' passion in learning, in the post-program interview phase, participants were concerned about the lack of vision and learning strategies of students, as one participant shared:

> Students do not have long-term development strategies for their life, they are not aware that they are learning for themselves, not for teachers or anybody. (Khang)

Just as in the pre-program phase, students' learning attitude was criticised, but in the post-program phase, participants highlighted the lack of passion for learning and expressed concern that this might hinder students' future development. In other words, instead of seeing the facts at present (students' lack of passion), participants raised issues regarding student learning that might affect the long-term development for students, which they thought needed to be addressed to better improve students' long-term career.

This first emerging sub-category under "Learning conceptions" was different from the pre-program phase (passion in learning). It is more related to students' attitude in learning and how this attitude drives their long-term personal development.

Language and other skills

Similar to pre-program conceptions on learning, participants perceived language and other social skills important post-program, as stated below:

> Learning in higher education requires the knowledge and skills to survive in a society. (Thoa)

There was no difference in the ways participants perceived what should be incorporated in higher education learning regarding language and skill learning.

Autonomy and motivation in learning

Just as in the pre-program interviews, participants raised issues related to students' own initiative in learning. In general, students were believed to be quite irresponsible about their own learning:

> Regarding students' learning, we need to educate students to be responsible for their learning… They learn to have the degree rather than preparing themselves for their future. (Khang)

The use of the technical term in education "autonomy", indicates the influence of the program on participants' technical or pedagogical knowledge.

> In higher education learning, I highly emphasise the autonomy of students, but students in Vietnam are generally not autonomous. (Tien)

In addition, rather than just listing what they perceived as higher education learning, in the post-program phase interview, participants' quotes show a connection between student learning issues and teaching practice or ways to improve student quality learning through raising students' autonomy or using motivational teaching techniques, as indicated in the following extract:

> I think firstly, higher education teachers need to clarify the necessity of learning autonomy, and explain the importance of autonomy. Secondly, they have to give students the opportunity to develop their own learning experience. (Trang)

The impact of the program on participants' ability to turn learning into a motivated environment was further supported:

> From this training program, especially from the Curriculum Development, and Teaching Practice modules, I have a general perspective to better design our lessons, in a way that better approach students, and make our class more interesting by using motivational strategies. If we can motivate students, they will actively well-prepare the lesson without teachers' lecturing too much theory in class. (Kha)

As such, it might be concluded that participants' conceptions of learning, in the post-program phase, did not emerge as a stand-alone category but were pushed to another level of conception, linking learning issues to current teaching practice. It also led to solutions for

practical teaching approaches that could better increase student's participation or involvement in classroom practice. Motivation techniques were mentioned and autonomy strategies were discussed, showing some degrees of change in program participants' conceptions. Learning conceptions were understood in a way that was relevant to their teaching practice, rather than blaming their students as they had in the pre-program phase.

Levels of learning

In the post-program phase, participants perceived learning in a hierarchy, according to Bloom's Taxonomy, extending to higher levels of learning. This must be the result of participating in the program because from the presenters' interview data, a strong emphasis on the introduction of Bloom's taxonomy and educational science was presented. Many participants shared ideas on understanding and applying what they had learned in real-life, as one example shows:

> And, learning must mean **understanding** and **using** what is learnt… That is what I want to share: learning must take place the same time with its application/use. (Quan)

A few other participants, however, were even more meticulous in describing what learning students need to embrace in the hierarchy, such as comparing, explaining, and analysing, as indicated in Thoa's statement:

> Learning higher education is not as simple as the previous levels of education. They are specialised in a discipline, they need to have the ability to explain an issue, relate with different subjects, and in general it is increased to other levels of learning in the Bloom's taxonomy. (Thoa)

The fact that Bloom's taxonomy was discussed only in the post-program phase clearly shows that this perception had arisen as an impact of the program as it was not present in the pre-program data. Learning was explained in an intricate way, with levels and layers of strategies to motivate autonomous learning. More technical terms were used in the post-program phase such as "autonomy" and "motivational strategies", and participants' clarification of their perceptions of learning were strong evidence of the pedagogical influence of the program on their perceptions about learning.

In brief, participants' conceptions shifted to more extended perspectives related to learning in higher education. A higher level of learning was expected of student learning, according to

Bloom's taxonomy. It can also be concluded that participants showed a greater critical insight into the understanding of learning, evidenced by the fact that they conceptualised learning in relation to teaching practice and orientation. A change on participants' knowledge of pedagogy was evident in their use of the correct technical pedagogical terms (i.e. motivation, autonomy).

Although all presenters did not explicitly expect participants to change their learning conceptions (as already discussed in 5.1.2), some changes on participants' conceptions of higher education learning regarding learning theories, students' characteristics and psychological influence on their learning were identified in the post-program interview. Changes identified in participants' conceptions of learning illustrate the possibility that some modules (Psychology, Principles and Methods of teaching in Higher Education, Teaching Practice) had directly influenced participants' conceptions of learning in higher education.

5.2 Teaching conceptions in higher education

5.2.1 How "Teaching" is addressed in the program curriculum and guideline

The official program curriculum by MOET (Circular 12/2013/TT-BGDĐT) states the construction of "pedagogical knowledge and skills" as the main aim of the program. All of its modules, therefore, are underpinned by this aim, embracing the knowledge and skills relevant to teaching philosophy and teaching approaches. A general introduction to educational science, higher education policy, and psychology provides a general picture of the higher education context. The other modules, on the other hand, are related more to teaching knowledge or skills. Curriculum Design, Educational Psychology, Principles and Methods of Teaching, Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, and even Use of ICT all illustrate the focus of the program on improving participants' basic knowledge of teaching strategies.

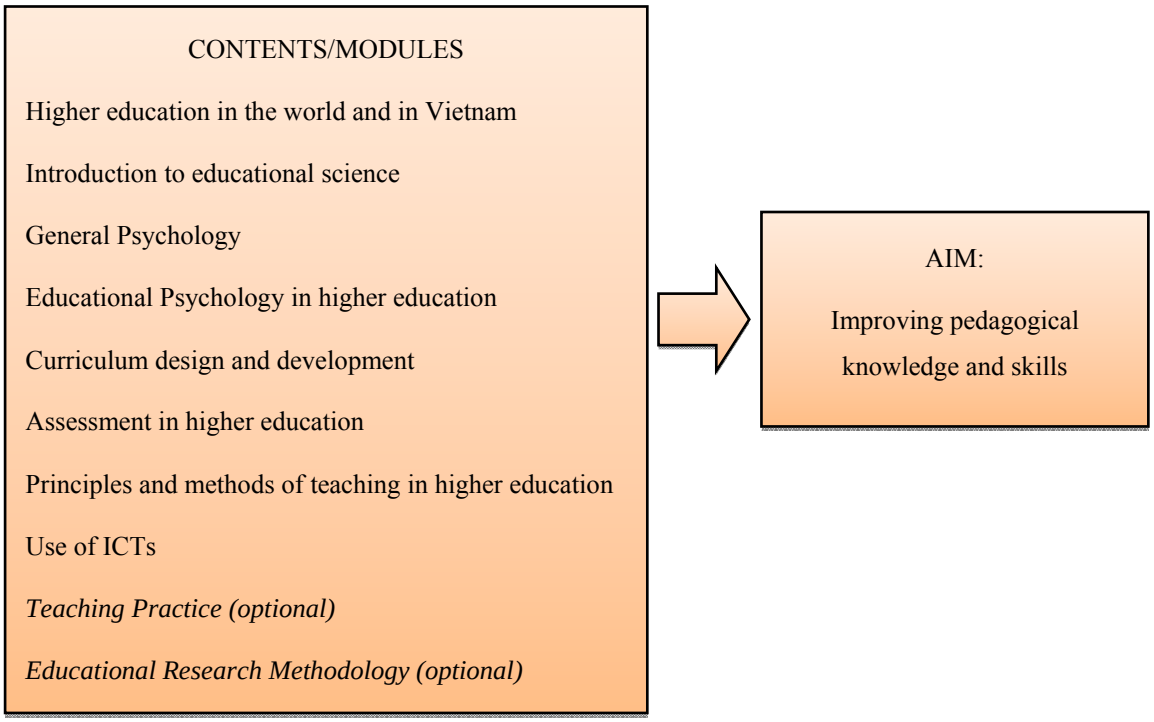

Figure 5.3 Program contents and its overall aim (Circular 12/2013/TT-BGDĐT), adapted from MK University, cohort November 2014

When restructuring the program guidelines, MOET added general theoretical modules (General Psychology and Introduction to Educational Science) to cater for the recent graduates or professionals without teaching experience it had extended the program to. A focus on psychological elements as indicated in Figure 5.3, and principles of methods of teaching in higher education, best indicate the program's desired outcomes: knowledge and skills of teaching, as found in the specific expected aims stated in program guidelines*:* "The skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation of the teaching process; the skills to design teaching plan, organise lesson plan, guide students to self-study, and self-research" (Circular 12/2013/TT-BGDĐT, p. 3).

Those modules clearly aim to provide participants with necessary teaching strategies in their future practice, which fulfil the expected teaching skills and strategies as stated in the Circular and program guidelines. In addition, all aspects of classroom practice such as Curriculum Design, Assessment and Evaluation, and Use of ICTs are included as compulsory modules to support the aims in fulfilling factors relevant to teaching. The inclusion of one

optional module in this studied institution: Teaching Practice, also indicates the emphasis on improving teaching skills of participants. As described, it is obvious that the central aim of the program is **improve participants' pedagogical knowledge and skills in higher education**. A strong focus of the program on pedagogical knowledge, and skills and teaching practice well manifests the expectation from MOET to improve participants' teaching practice. High expectations of mastering pedagogical knowledge and skills are indicated from the program aims, however, no explicit expectations of participants' conceptual change about teaching were found. In the Vietnamese higher education context, it would appear that MOET aims to change the teaching practice of participants by arranging modules which build knowledge and skills related to teaching in higher education, but an explicit aim to change participants' conceptions was not clear. However, when asked if participants might undergo a conceptual change about teaching, most presenters of the program seem to be positive that this might occur.

5.2.2. Presenters' perspectives on participants' conceptual changes in teaching

Presenters generally held a positive belief that participants would change their conceptions of higher education teaching. This section will provide examples of presenters' beliefs in participants' conceptual change, followed by their views on whether these conceptions of teaching could lead to change in teaching practice. A complete transformation of what participants think about teaching is illustrated, from the observation of one presenter:

> I think they will change their conceptions of higher education teaching to a certain extent. When I started teaching them, I asked them what they think teaching in higher education should be like, their answer was to transmit knowledge. After the program, their answer is: teaching is a process that involves activities that can help develop students' knowledge, skills and attitudes. (Dr Nhung)

Dr An also expected a certain degree of conceptual change, and supported the idea that the program might improve the pedagogical knowledge and skills of participants. This turned out to be true for participants who were foreign to educational disciplines.

> I think there must be some kinds of change. Some participants, who have even a Master degree, do not seem to have a "proper" conception to teaching and learning in higher education. For example, Economics and Agriculture Master graduates, they might not know what motivating learning is and how to lead a motivating class. But this program offers professional pedagogical knowledge and skills so that participants can have their views on teaching challenged. (Dr An)

Presenters made generally positive comments concerning possible conceptual changes around teaching. Student-centred focused conceptions of teaching were seen to be a result of the program. Other than that, presenters believed that participants had gained a more thorough understanding of all issues related to teaching and this understanding was driving their teaching practice. However, presenters hesitated when asked to predict if the program would lead to participants' changing their teaching practice:

> We cannot say because up 'til now, no research has been done to investigate the impacts or changes of the participants' teaching approaches when they finished the program. I personally think the program has a certain impact on their ways of teaching. (Dr An)

Changing participants' future teaching practice to a more student-centred approach was believed to be dependent on a number of factors. First, was the quality of the presenters. Half of the presenters thought the teaching approaches which presenters themselves used for the program would set good examples for participants who could benefit from best practice if demonstrated by presenters, as indicated from the following quote:

> I think it might change their teaching practice dramatically if we (presenters) can create a good example, which is easy to do and to imitate, then participants can apply these in their practice. What the presenters should do must be considered "standard" teaching in higher education, and this standard will help participants of the program develop their teaching skills in their teaching context. (Dr Hoang)

The second factor influencing the likelihood for participants to change their teaching practice was the lack of opportunity for program participants to turn what they learn from the program into practice. Although the Teaching Practice module was not a compulsory module according to the MOET suggested curriculum, MK University decided to add this module as

an option, starting from this cohort of the program. Presenters argued that the practical module was necessary for participants to be able to use the knowledge and skills learned in all the modules to design and teach in their own disciplines, resulting in feedback from peers and experienced presenters. For participants who were not education discipline teachers and those who had no teaching experience, this module seemed to be useful, providing a chance for them to have teaching practice with observations and feedback from their peers:

> I did not do research on that issue, but the weakness of our program is the lack of a Practicum module…The general curriculum of MOET is quite flexible. Therefore, the restructure of this program would include the addition of the Teaching Practice module. In this module, participants would learn how to design a syllabus, a lesson, a curriculum, and it's important to allow them use what knowledge and skills they learn into practice. There must be Teaching Practice module and I'd suggest those participants without teaching experience to observe real teaching practice. (Dr Lam)

To summarise, in relation to changing teaching practice, presenters seemed less convinced of any dramatic change occurring since they believed teaching practice change depended on a few factors, such as the quality and best practice of presenters, and the opportunities for participants to apply theories learned. Apart from that, follow up studies on teaching practice were suggested as measuring teaching practice change could only be possible over a longer period of time, as one participant claimed: "it's hard for us to access how this program changes their practice as the implementation of new approaches cannot be completed within a few days" (Dr Nhung). However, it is obvious from the interview data that presenters had a firm belief that the program would have positive influence on the initiation of participants' conceptual changes in teaching, leading them towards a more student-centred approach.

Presenters' modification to facilitate participants' conceptions of teaching

The program offers great flexibility for implementing institutes to choose optional modules, depending on their resources and local needs, as indicated from the program guideline. The program suggested by MOET is tentative and indicative. Interviews with presenters show a general support for recent changes of MOET.

> In general, there are positive changes. For example, with the recent change in the program curriculum, they added 2 general modules for those who do not have educational qualification. And, they added many other optional modules to allow the flexibility of each institution and learners. (Dr Minh)

In this case, the modules, Teaching Practice, and Educational Research Methodology were chosen. The selection of teaching materials, content, and approach depends on presenters, especially their teaching philosophy. How they modify their teaching will be described to explain their influence on possible changes to participants' conceptions about teaching and teaching approaches.

First and foremost, presenters tended to be very supportive in updating materials and tailoring the module materials they were responsible for. Basically, module materials could be updated but the aims of each module, were kept similar to those outlined in MOET guidelines.

> I first need to locate the aim of my module in the whole curriculum, to what extent my module contributes to the final aim of the program. It means my module needs to meet certain learning outcomes… I keep my main teaching materials but constantly get it updated… (Dr Lam)

Presenters interviewed described their teaching approaches as very supportive of the modern active student-centred approach. Project-based teaching, group-work activities, and situation-based discussions were listed. Presenters, as already mentioned, believed that how they presented would be an example for participants' future practice. As such, this motivation drove their teaching practice to a very student-centred approach.

> I think I need to make the program participants' learning more active, so I teach with project-based, situation-based, organising groupwork. I think those are more relevant and practical. (Dr Nhung)

Just as Dr Minh' previous stress on promoting the "active learning" environment as a focus of her module, it is clear in Dr Nhung's case that she also wanted to encourage participants to get familiar with the active learning teaching and learning techniques. "Active learning" therefore, became a central concept that was highly valued by the program presenters in this context.

Some other presenters, however, argued that the time for each module was restricted and therefore their teaching focussed on participants' critical thinking and self-study ability, rather than teaching them exactly the strategies or methods of teaching.

> I cannot ask them to do more research on this issue at home as the meeting hours for my module are limited. I encouraged participants to think critically and judge an issue from exercises in class. (Dr Hoang)

This was, however, not contradictory to other presenters, who believed in presenting best practice of their teaching methods so that participants could learn from them. These views on the other hand, support the endorsement of knowledge dissemination in a way that best stimulates participants' curiosity for self-learning and critical thinking. It goes a little bit further than just expecting participants' change in teaching orientation, by creating a fun, active and motivating classroom environment. In fact, the presenters expected participants to develop their cognitive and evaluating competence, to judge things with their competence, and analyse best practice from their own learning experience, based upon what was taught. Presenters, therefore, did not only expect program participants to change their conceptions about teaching, apply new teaching approaches, but also desired participants to become aware of the rationale for their choice of teaching philosophy and approaches they decide to use, rather than following exactly the best practice learned from the program.

5.2.3 Participants' conceptions of teaching and their conceptual changes

Perspectives on teaching change during two phases of the program are summarised in Figure 5.4, with basic themes remaining similar.

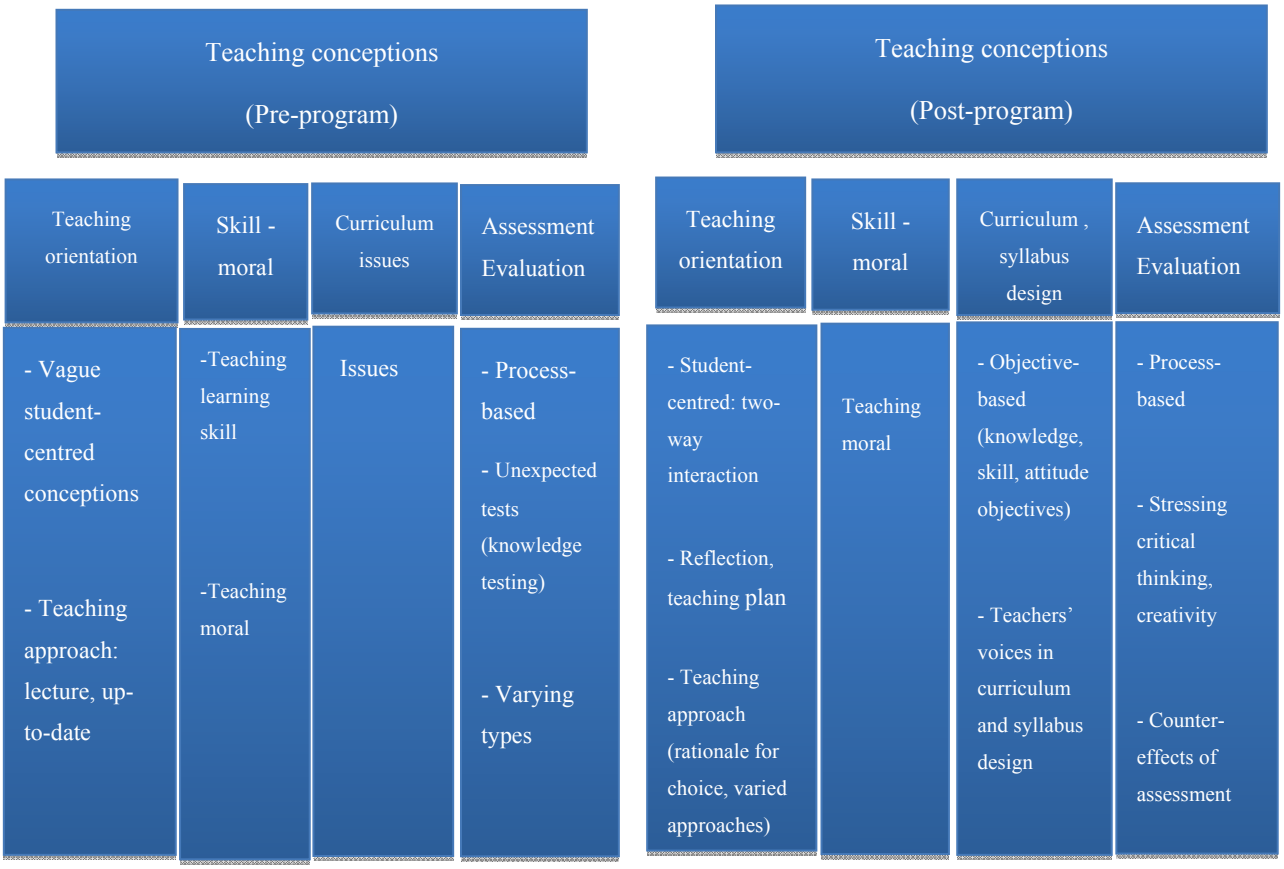

Figure 5.4 Participants' conceptions of teaching in higher education

Participants' conceptions of teaching in higher education emerged as a theme that covered all aspects related to the orientation to teaching (student-centred or teacher-centred), and teaching practice: assessment and evaluation, curriculum and syllabus design. Specific teaching approaches were previously arranged as a stand-alone sub-category under the Teaching theme, but later were sub-categorised under "Teaching Orientation", as teaching approaches were found to be strongly influenced by teaching orientations. Although basic sub-categories of teaching remained similar during two phases, the dimensions and properties of each theme changed significantly as presented in the following sections.

PRE-PROGRAM

Teaching orientation

Vague conceptions of "student-centred"

In general, participants predominantly believed that teaching should follow the student-centred approach. The term "student-centred" was repeated several times in participants'

responses to what they thought teaching in higher education should be like, as the following quote demonstrates:

> It (teaching) has to be student-centred. It needs to research what students need, what they want to study in a certain major and how to help them easily apply in practical fields. (Ha)

In many responses, when asked to clarify further what exactly they meant by student-centred teaching, participants seemed to be supportive of making teaching practical or making students turn knowledge into practice. The student-centred approach to teaching was supported with a perception that teaching needs to be practice-driven to allow opportunities for students to be actively involved in the realistic context in their own disciplines.

> I think our teaching needs to be more practical and create more real-life situations for students. Teaching theories should take place simultaneously with teaching how to apply theories into practice, not just learning theory… Take my major as one example (Biology Education), there needs to be some activities, uhm…like doing surgery on animals, rather than just learning how their bodies are functioned. (Tha)

However, no matter how much they discussed the idea of "student-centred" teaching participants made little reference to its justification, nor was there supporting evidence regarding any elements of a student-centred curriculum - lesson plans or implementation strategies of this conception of teaching - in teaching practice. On the whole, participants seem to be aware of the importance of a "student-centred" approach, recognising that this approach needs to be implemented, but conceptions of its logistics and implementation were absent. Some participants, however, considered teaching a knowledge discovering and sharing activity, initiating from basic knowledge and deepening to hierarchical levels of knowledge assumption application. One participant assumed:

> I think the teaching needs to emphasise the basics of their discipline knowledge. First, it helps students remember the knowledge; second, it helps students apply the knowledge in specific fields. (Ha)

Similarly, one participant even stressed knowledge transmission as the key to teaching in higher education. No information as to what particular approaches or educational factors

might contribute to a student-centred approach was given. The final goal of teaching, to this participant, was apparently one-way knowledge transmission:

> Teachers might give spontaneous tests, multiple choice quizzes or essays so students can have greater amount of knowledge transmitted by the teacher. (Diem)

Data collected from participants prior to the program indicate a gap in their knowledge and understanding of the principles and implementation techniques to facilitate a student-centred teaching approach. It can be concluded that participants thus perceived teaching in higher education, predominantly, to be within the confines of limited norms of knowledge transmission from teachers to students. This was further supported through the explanation of specific teaching approaches participants were asked to describe.

Teaching approaches

When asked to describe what teaching approaches they observed to be used by higher education teachers, most participants perceived the dominance of traditional lectures, a one-way transmission of knowledge. One recent graduate, who had no teaching experience, when asked about his past experience of teaching approaches during his graduate studies, criticised:

> Higher education teaching methods look just like high schools, which means it is one-way transmission of knowledge. (Tai)

Another participant strongly supported the idea that lecturing was popular but added that due to the demand to change teaching methods to a student-centred approach, some teachers tried to supplement their knowledge lecture with group work discussion:

> Teachers usually lectured and students noted what important, group discussion was then used. That's it. (Dung)

Similarly, one higher education teacher who was trying to use a modern approach to increase student's talk time by organising group discussion, eventually turned out to be driven by the dominant lecture approach of teaching, with the main purpose being to transmit knowledge:

> During my lecture presentation, I remind students of the previous part and then I lecture new knowledge so that students are able to use both already learned and new knowledge. (Nga)

As can be drawn from the above statements, participants made a dominant use of lectures but attempted to supplement this with groupwork activities for students to avoid the lecturing dominance. However, the main approach to teaching used as described was still underpinned by a knowledge transmission orientation to teaching.

Two participants pointed out the influence of disciplines, age and even gender on the teaching approaches teachers use. In particular, it was believed that older teachers tend to prefer using lectures, and sticking to textbooks and their materials without considering new suggestions of up-to-date teaching approaches and tools. This perception was also supported by a number of participants, as the following quote shows:

> In some disciplines, teachers still speak and lecture lot, maybe due to the nature of their majors and the faculty, and the students just listen and take notes... Some teachers might still prefer the traditional teaching method and it may be because of age and gender. (Quoc)

The popularity of the lecture method of teaching, according to one participant, can be blamed on cultural factors, which she thought would be hard to change in the short term. The participant shared:

> I found that passive lecture is still very popular but as our education from the lowest level is rooted in the passive nature, higher education should be the same. (Tam)

The observations and sharing from participants validate the fact that although the dominant conceptions of teachers are starting to move forward to a student-centred approach to teaching, the reality in teaching is that approaches do not stay in line with what teachers want or perceive. Lecture-driven and a very passive learning and teaching environment were noted in the pre-program interview, from the participants' perspectives.

However, on the other end of the spectrum, ideas on teaching approaches were not completely negative. Irrespective of the complaints about lecture-dominant teaching orientation, some participants showed critical arguments on the selection and adoption of teaching approaches they used or experienced.

Besides the clear dominant influence of the traditional lecture approach, some modern teaching approaches and techniques were raised by a few participants. Groupwork activity was mentioned as an option to eliminate the boring classroom atmosphere.

When asked what participants perceived as "new" teaching approaches, compared to the traditional lecture method of teaching, most answers highlighted that new approaches of teaching should involve ICT tools, visual aids and images, and be more relevant to industry examples or experience. One example is:

> New teaching approach requires teachers to renew their lessons, not depending on the theory. Teachers need to invest more in visual aids, video clips, updating knowledge of the expertise and society demands. Then students can get the most from this approach. (Khang)

The majority of participants held a perception that to facilitate student-centred learning, groupwork and discussions should be considered. Many times, participants proposed groupwork as an ideal approach which they used in their teaching to limit their talking, and encourage students' participation.

> Through groupwork, students developed skills: assigning tasks to members, making decisions, collaborating, and since then improving teamwork skills. Also, learning through group work can help students with presentation, which makes them more confident. (Diem)

On the other hand, however, a few participants preferred to use role-play simulations to supplement their teaching. Although admitted to be time-consuming, those participants believed this approach to help students develop their critical thinking skills, interactive skills, self-learning skills, and self-confidence.

> For our biology discipline, we usually use situation-based teaching. It stimulates students' learning. Students need to be proactive in searching for materials to support their learning and solutions for certain situation in class. (Tha)

The following example of how two teachers organised role-play activities to facilitate a modern approach to teaching, motivating students' involvement in active learning demonstrates in detail the benefits of role-play use.

> When I teach, I make some model video clips, then give students the situation, and they have to make storylines, scripts to role-play the situation and suggest solutions record their own video clips. Once students role-play themselves, they are more focused on the situations become active. A lot of interaction between groups, individuals also takes place… (Ninh)

Overall, participants' perspectives of approaches to teaching in higher education can be categorised according two extremes: traditional approaches and new approaches. The new approaches most talked about were situation-based and role-play projects, which were found to be of benefit for some participants in their classrooms. In general, participants were aware of the need to adopt a student-centred approach, allowing students to construct knowledge on their own, limiting the dominance of teachers' knowledge transmission. Nevertheless, the descriptions of their approaches show a restricted knowledge of the kinds of approaches available. Some participants still thought that adding groupwork to lectures was a combination of using traditional lecture and modern teaching approach. Another popular perception of modern teaching approaches was the application of ICT tools and visual images to eliminate the pure lecturing-note-taking method of teaching.

Teaching learning skills and morals

There was evidence that apart from knowledge transmission, teaching in higher education needs to involve teaching students learning skills and educating the morals of students.

Teaching learning methods or strategies became important for students, according to some participants' perspectives, as shown in the following example:

> In addition, we must guide the students how to study. Teachers should show students the learning resources, the learning method that is effective, not just the theory itself. (Tien)

There was also a perception of organising higher education learning skills module before students actually start their formal study:

> In some countries, they have the "higher education skills" module or necessary knowledge before students start university... If we can offer this module, students can be well prepared and do not waste their first year in higher education learning how to study… What is needed is teaching students learning skills. (Tai)

From the emergence of this sub-category, it appears that participants had well thought through the challenges facing students when entering higher education. Participants showed vague yet constructive ideas on how to better prepare students for their studies in higher education institutions.

In addition, the teaching of morals, which was identified as a purpose of higher education (4.1 Purpose of Higher Education) was again emphasised as an important element of teaching in higher education, according to participants' conceptions. The inclusion of teaching morals was emphasised, as one participant pointed out: "I would emphasise the teaching of being a human and teaching morals" (Nga).

To be more specific, one participant (who was a university teacher) also shared her view on how she integrated morals teaching in her practice:

> Also during lectures, teachers may relate things to relevant real-life contexts, thereby teaching the students of moral behaviour. (Trang)

The evidence confirms the added values of other parameters, apart from professional knowledge and skills, that teaching should embrace. Learning strategies and moral education were perceived to be integrated into higher education teaching. Without these two, teaching in higher education could not fulfil its purpose.

Curriculum issues

Curriculum emerged as a sub-category in the Teaching theme and its dimensions changed significantly during the two phases. In the pre-program phase, curriculum was not mentioned

by many participants. Only in a few circumstances was curriculum discussed and these will be presented below.

Firstly, curriculum in higher education was perceived to be simple. One participant who did comment pointed out that conflicting ideas on curriculum issues and implementation existed and this was a threat to quality teaching and learning due to ineffective design and management.

> The first issue influencing teaching quality is our curriculum... Most institutions design curriculum and course outlines, but the detailed outline and the implementation are decided by the teachers. We can't immediately ask for teachers' excellent design and execution of curriculum or syllabus because it is a long-term process, requiring detailed routes of development and time. (Quan)

The discrepancy in designing and implementing curriculum was further supported by a young teacher participant:

> In terms of curriculum and syllabus design, the Faculty has made it uniform to teachers, but the contents of each course and the implementation of teachers are different… (Thoa)

The main issue of curriculum stated was a lack of uniform implementation, and teachers' knowledge of curriculum design. There was also evidence that curriculum needed to be student-driven, and supplemented with practical modules, as one participant shared:

> Curriculum design has to be student-centred. It needs to research what students need, what they want to study in certain major and how to help them easily apply knowledge in practical fields. The curriculum needs to cater both knowledge and the application demand of students. (Ha)

This example shows a lack of student's voices in curriculum development in the Vietnamese higher education context. The fact that curriculum implementation and modification were not much discussed, and the small amount of teachers' contribution to construct curriculum suggested that participants' conceptions about curriculum design were not clear, and inferred the insignificant role which teachers play in the design of curriculum. Some perspectives of curriculum implementation, however, were useful to reflect the problems of curriculum construction in Vietnam and the need to raise teachers' awareness of their role in constructing

and implementing curriculum.

Assessment and Evaluation

Participants' perspectives of assessment in higher education, shown in the pre-program phase were categorised around these properties: the need to evaluate student' progress according to a process, the unexpected assignments or tests, and the types of assessment.

Process-based

Several participants showed support for the implementation of process-based assessment, dividing assessment into phases, without depending totally on the final assessment.

> For assessment, the best is to assess students' learning process, not their final exam because it only reflects students' ability in a certain time, and ignore students' progress in class, their contributions, creativity in class. (Ha)

Many ideas were expressed in favour of dividing evaluation of students into a few phases to allow a better evaluation of students' progress and help students to constantly consolidate knowledge.

Unexpected tests

There was a popular perception that unexpected assignments and tests are not only one way of testing students but an approach to teach students too.

> When I give them unexpected tests, students feel under pressure. But when they come to their final examination, they feel at ease because the mini unexpected tests, have helped them with the huge theoretical knowledge over the course. (Tien)

Unexpected mini-tests or quizzes were considered by some participants as effective methods to help students absorb theoretical knowledge without leaving it a burden for them at the end of the program.

Varying assessment types

Variations in types of tests were perceived to be helpful to evaluate students' different knowledge, skills assumption and progress. An example of test types suggested by one participant is presented as one example:

> I think it is best to combine multiple choice tests, essays and reports. Combining different types, teachers can assess better each student' progress, judging from their presenting skills, argumentative analysis, other skills. (Khang)

Test types were suggested based on the nature of disciplines as well. For instance, science disciplines were thought to focus on logical and mathematical ability, as a result, evaluation and testing should be built around these foci.

> And I think… it should depend on majors. We put more focus for logical thinking for Natural Sciences, and emphasise more on critical and argumentative skills for Social Sciences. (Tong)

Briefly, participants' conceptions of teaching were clearly rooted in the traditional lecture-based or knowledge-transmission orientation, and this orientation influenced their conceptions about teaching approaches, curriculum, and assessment and evaluation. Although some participants were clear that student-centred teaching should be conducted to ensure a higher education teaching quality, their justification for the implementation of a modern teaching orientation was vague, as they were rooted in the knowledge transmission approach. A few modern teaching approaches were raised, however, ideas about the implementation of specific approaches in teaching were not well articulated or justified, indicating that pedagogical knowledge of the participants in general was not strong. The conception that using ICT, visual aids or groupwork meant using new teaching approaches was popular. As such, assessment must be influenced by participants' conceptions of approaches to teaching. Types of assessment in general were believed to aim at testing knowledge or divided into phases to help students to minimise the stress of memorising too much knowledge over the course of one semester. Although process-based testing was favoured, the main purpose of assessment, drawn from the pre-program interviews with participants, was driven by a knowledge-testing orientation.

POST-PROGRAM

The post-program interview data show a considerable change in participants' perceptions on three sub-categories: teaching orientation, assessment and evaluation, and curriculum and syllabus design. The Moral and Skills sub-category remained similar. Dimensions of each sub-category are explained in detail with full justifications in the next section.

Teaching orientation

Student-centred and two-way interaction

In the post-program interview phase with program participants, it was found that participants were more driven by a student-oriented teaching approach with an in-depth justification. While in the pre-program phase interview, some participants shared expectations and awareness of student-centred teaching without a clear understanding or justification of how it should be executed, in the post-program phase, participants' conceptions of student-centred teaching became clearer with critical reflections on their own discipline's practice. This is illustrated in the following example:

> I think teaching should be student-oriented. Just as in my discipline (Food Microbiology), it is quite theoretical, but if I just give students one-way lecture, they will get bored. I need to involve students in my teaching practice, give them space to get involved and encourage their problem-solving skills in this discipline. (Thoa)

Teaching conceptions, driven by the ideas of applying theory into practice were again, thought to be significant in a student-centred classroom.

The integration of teaching theoretical knowledge and practical skills, together with attitude was further clarified by one participant. In his teaching conceptions of higher education, this participant agreed that a one-way lecture teaching with the aim to maximise knowledge accumulation should not be the only method of higher education teaching.

> If we can, our teaching needs to cut down on some unnecessary theoretical knowledge, avoid lecturing too much, but instead integrate knowledge of the discipline with attitude and living experience for students. (Khang)

The examples above are good evidence of the changing conceptions of participants regarding teaching in higher education. Unlike the unclear and mixed conceptions of a student-centred approach in the pre-program phase, the post-program phase showed a change in participants' conceptions of student-centred orientation. The student-centred orientation was described in detail, with full explanation of its underpinning perspectives. Teaching techniques to facilitate student-centred learning, and even factors influencing student learning and teaching practice were described by participants in the post-phase program interview. To be specific,

the two-way interaction between teacher-student in teaching was emphasised as one substantial impact of the program on participants' conceptions of teaching.

> After this program, I see teaching in higher education should be a two-way interaction. And what we teach does not only include knowledge of the discipline, but also how to stimulate students to self-study. Vietnamese students are generally passive and they rarely pose questions and raise our ideas or opinions and fear that we are wrong. Teaching needs to be more active to eliminate students' habit of passive learning, like teachers might ask questions to stimulate students' curiosity, give situations for students to encounter. (Dung)

Other participants' opinions, like Tha's quote, further provide convincing evidence of the changing conceptions regarding teaching philosophy, in other words, their philosophy of knowledge transmission was gradually changed to a two-way process of knowledge construction and application.

> I think my thinking about teaching and learning changed… First, teaching is not as easy and simple as I thought. I think it's complicated and demands good competence to arrange, modify constantly their teaching. At first, I thought teaching is one-way transmission of knowledge, not a two-way learning and teaching process. (Tha)

In addition, when presenting conceptions of student-centred teaching, participants also supplemented their support for this approach with ideas of how to use specific techniques to facilitate a student-centred classroom, rather than describing it as they had in the pre-program phase, in a general way without any specific examples of student-centred teaching. Examples like the following quote were common in the post-program phase:

> In higher education nowadays, teachers use many modern approaches: situation-based, group discussion, role-play, project-based… There used to be only lecture. I think we need to promote new teaching approaches and limit lectures to promote student-centred teaching in higher education. (Thoa)

Reflections on past conceptions of teaching – Determination to change

A significant change was found in the data which emerged in the second round of interviews regarding participants' conceptions of teaching approaches. In the first interviews, participants expressed concerns about the dominance of a lecture-based and teacher-centred

approach, in the post-program phase however, participants reflected on past conceptions or teaching practice, prior to participating in the professional development program, and conceptualised their intentions to modify their teaching approaches.

One Law teacher, for instance, expressed the critical effect of the program on his teaching practice, reflecting that prior to participation, it was quite "spontaneous", not based on any pedagogical philosophy. The program changed his conceptions of teaching:

> From this program, I can see what I applied in teaching before was quite not pedagogical. For instance, I used some teaching approaches without knowing the pedagogical procedures of them. When I finish this program, I know the technical names, the procedures to implement those classroom techniques. I am more confident when using those approaches pedagogically. (Quan)

A more experienced teacher, majoring in Chemistry, explained her previous lecture-dominant approach. She also considered that what she had perceived about teachers' roles affected her teaching approach.

> I used to learn in a passive environment; mainly lecturing, and this approach did not promote students' active learning. With my discipline (Chemistry), we have to learn by heart many chemical products and substances, or medication use. It's theoretical in nature. In the first year of my teaching, I used lecture a lot. I provided knowledge for students, without asking students to search information. I took it wrong regarding teachers' roles and neglected my consulting and facilitating role as a teacher. (Trinh)

In Trinh's case, in confessing her past conception of teachers as experts transmitting knowledge, rather than facilitating student learning, she was clearly influenced by the program in reshaping her conceptualisation of a teacher's active role in facilitating students to learn. In addition, she was also motivated to change her teaching approaches to a student-centred practice. The examples of participants' comments support evidence of the program's influence on participants' reflection on their past practice. A determination to change teaching approaches and employ new teaching techniques was mentioned straight after the critical reflection on participants' past experience.

In general, most participants showed enthusiasm to change their teaching to a more interactive approach, limiting transmission of knowledge by lecture or supplementing their

active approach with student-centred classroom development techniques such as group-work activities, as one example showcases:

> Regarding my teaching, I need to change a lot. I should avoid lectures. I will encourage active learning, ask them to work in groups and answer questions posed by groups. I will ask students to think, explain and evaluate or argue their peers' comments. I will teach them to think. (Nga)

The assurance to try new classroom activities is also expressed in the following extract, but with some consideration to make sure what is applied will best work for students.

> I will change my teaching. I will adopt teaching approaches learned in the program but changed it slowly so that I can see what is suitable and what is not. I also learned a lot about classroom organisation. As I told you earlier, I lectured a lot as I did not know how to manage group learning. But I can teach using group work and manage group work after participating in this program. (Trinh)

These examples, although inferring some hesitation to apply new teaching approaches immediately, however, indicate that program participants became aware of the student-centred teaching approaches and were conscious of the counter-effects should they immediately change their teaching without considering external factors or students' reactions. The positive influence of the program, indicated through the quotes, can be attributed to the drive to try new things and the critical reflection on what is most suitable to their classroom practice. The most influential impact, as presented from this evidence, is not what approaches or techniques participants will use in their future but their ability to consider the learning environment, students' proficiency and the nature of their major to decide what strategies to employ.

The program therefore offered a chance for teacher participants to reflect individually on their teaching practice, from which, they could decide how their future teaching might be modified, as one example shows:

> My teaching conception is restructured. Before I already knew about lesson aims, teaching principles and skills but they are not connected to one another as a system. But the program has helped me reflect on my previous knowledge of teaching and from then, restructure them scientifically. (Ninh)

Furthermore, data from the interviews also revealed that participants in general are more aware of factors which influence their teaching and student's learning. This was not present in the pre-program interview phase. Reflections on teaching again appear to have been stimulated by the program and those reflections encouraged the changing ideas on participants' conceptions of what teaching strategies and approaches they should implement, as indicated in this quote:

> Teaching reflections help us decide what factors influence student learning, from these factors teachers might draw and make inference on what they can do to adjust the influential factors on students to help students learn better. (Trang)

From another participant' sharing, it was clear that his understanding of teaching and learning was improved, aware that students should be the priority of teaching and learning process:

> I have a broader perspective on teaching and learning, and am aware what influences teaching and learning. I need to research students, learn about them first: who they are, what they need. (Tai)

Teaching approaches

Considering factors influencing classroom quality

In the post-program interview phase, many participants, before starting to describe what teaching approaches they would use, clarified factors that might influence the teaching approaches they wanted to use. In other words, they became more aware of factors influencing classroom teaching and learning effectiveness, and the logical rationale behind a certain approach they aimed to use.

In the following example, one participant shared the importance of considering students' ability before choosing a teaching approach:

> Teaching approaches need to change constantly and it's obligatory that teachers wisely choose the most effective teaching methods for their students. I'll follow the new teaching method and the methods I choose will be based on students' levels and proficiency. (Ha)

Ha's idea was not unusual as it was supported by a few more participants, who added the influence of subjects in choosing what approaches to use. As disciplines vary and some disciplines are more theoretical, methods of teaching cannot remain the same. Similarly, the perspective of analysing learners' demands and experience was stressed in deciding the approaches teachers might use:

> I don't necessarily follow any approach, not the traditional method or modern but combine two of them. Depending on the subjects we teach and the learners that we have to choose the appropriate methods of teaching. (Khang)

In addition to students' ability, and subjects, the environment and curriculum play decisive role in teaching approach adoption, as one participant shared:

> The use of what approach depends on the aims of each course, the students, and the learning environment also affects teaching approaches we choose. Like in my discipline (biology) so it needs certain extent a practical approach. (Tha)

It became clear that participants, not only turned to be more pedagogically aware of different teaching approaches, but they were critical of the rationale behind the use of certain approaches. The doubt of the success of certain approaches was raised due to the nature of their discipline, students' variations and the surrounding environment. This shows the significant influence of the program's impact on participants' perspectives of teaching approaches. In other words, the program not only helped participants learn which approaches are available to them to facilitate student-centred, but also stimulated participants' critical choice of what will suit their classroom best.

Specific use of teaching approaches

In both phases of the program, situation-based approaches were perceived to be effective to facilitate students' learning development and necessary skills. One participant, who had never taught before, expressed her intention of choosing situation-based and project work in her future teaching career:

> I learned quite a lot of teaching approaches like situation-based teaching, through which students learn about problem-solving skills, analysing, evaluating an issue. We can design situations for group work and then allow students to do fieldwork projects to make them observe, take notes, and write reports. (Ha)

A combination of various approaches, even lectures, followed by tutorials, and group discussion was highly favoured by quite a number of participants, as shown in the following quote:

> After this program, I'll combine different approaches as each has its own good and bad points. The combination will enhance the strength and avoid the limitations… And I also plan to organise group work, discussion in groups to motivate students' active learning. (Tha)

Specifically, in the post-program interview phase, participants did not think of lectures as completely bad, in contrast, some supported the use of lectures but supplemented the negative side by combining lectures with more student interaction and involvement approaches. Once again, it was stressed that discipline and contents of lessons play a decisive role in deciding how effective any one teaching approach could be:

> But the program helps me clarify clearly the purposes of higher education, and how to facilitate student learning with varied teaching approaches that best suit certain contents or disciplines. (Trinh)

For many participants the idea of using a lecture approach was also changed, as described in the following quote from one participant. In her teaching, she will redesign the lectures in a way that will limit teachers' talk. The amount of lecture was to be reduced and visual aids added to minimise the potential bad effects of lecturing while still guaranteeing the amount of knowledge students should have before exploring further on their own.

> I will redesign my lessons. I used lectures a lot, although I allowed them to discuss sometimes, as I did not know how to organise group and class activities. I'll use more visual aids and examples in my lectures, which can be used in the second part of my teaching as situations for them to discuss. I will change as well because situation-based teaching needs to be based on groups. (Thoa)

It is indicated from participants' perspectives about student-oriented teaching conceptions that their conceptions on teaching approaches changed. In contrast to the pre-program phase interview, where participants showed great interest in student-centred teaching but failed to provide evidence that they knew what it should be like, the post-program phase showed participants' deep understanding of student-centred teaching. This was indicated through their perspectives on a two-way interaction classroom environment, potential approaches to promote student involvement, and their enthusiasm and intention to bring those perspectives into practice. Teaching orientations were clearly turned towards the student-centred end, without the mismatch of only a knowledge-transmission orientation to teaching. The program also stimulated reflections of past practice for those participants who had teaching experience and motivated other participants to conceptualise their future teaching practice: classroom management and teaching approaches that are based upon a student-centred orientation. Critical choice for the adoption of certain teaching approaches became clear in the second phase, selecting teaching approaches based upon a number of factors such as discipline, students' ability, and classroom environment. It implies a higher level of cognitive and critical thinking to the selection of teaching approaches than some presenters expected from participants, as presented in 5.1.2. It can be concluded that not only were participants clear about the basic knowledge and skills of teaching theories in higher education, as stated in the aims of MOET guidelines (Circular 12/2013/TT-BGDĐT), they were also more aware of the critical choice of their teaching approaches, or to put it more simply, participants' conceptions of teaching and learning changed. Post-program data also showed the program was likely to encourage participants to become more reflective learners, looking back on past experience of teaching and seeing mistakes that needed to be fixed. Many changes to participants' conceptions of teaching and learning were identified.

Moral teaching

The pre-program phase of interviews showed that a huge concern of participants was about the teaching of learning strategies and skills in higher education, however, in the post-program interview phase, teaching morals was discussed more frequently than teaching-learning strategies. One participant even criticised the lack of integration of morals into higher education teaching:

> Teachers need to integrate morals in their subject teaching. I seriously think it needs to be promoted. (Nga)

The teaching of skills, on the other hand, although was not mentioned as much as in the pre-program interview, was still perceived necessary for students' future career and development, as shown in this quote:

> Teachers do not do good jobs by focusing too much on lectures without integrating teaching learning skills and teaching morals into their lessons. (Khang)

Participants' conceptions of teaching morals remained high in the post-program interview with more focus on the inclusion of teaching morals. This was clearly one influential impact of the program on participants' perspectives.

Curriculum and syllabus design

Outcome-based (knowledge, skills, and attitude outcomes)

It became clear that participants' conceptions of curriculum had changed upon completion of the program. Their vague conceptions about curriculum as presented in the pre-program phase were replaced with changing perspectives on diverse elements of curriculum and syllabus design. One of the outstanding change was the perceptions of the outcome-based curriculum and syllabus, as found in one participant's comment:

> The program has influenced me on issues like knowledge skills, attitudes as outcomes of a curriculum and course design. The program explains why our course design must align with the overall curriculum for our discipline. (Tai)

With the same line of thought, one participant was concerned about the course design, its lesson plans, with the overall higher education curriculum.

> We need to design the curriculum first, and design lessons meeting each criterion regarding knowledge and skills development as set out in the curriculum. (Khang)

Data from the discussion of curriculum during the post-program phase of the interview, therefore, show interesting changes in the way participants conceptualised what constitutes an outcome-based curriculum and course outline accordingly. Three elements of a curriculum and course outline were raised: knowledge, skills and attitude. Also, the post-program phase saw more ideas presented on the responsibility of teachers in designing and facilitating the outcome-based course outline that best fits the curriculum. This changing perspective matches with conceptions of higher education purposes regarding the three combining elements of higher education: knowledge, skill, and attitude. One example can be illustrated by a participant (without teaching experience) who, in the first phase of the study, did not seem to be very clear what a course outline was:

> I'll set the aims for my course, and then consider the contents and teaching materials, teaching approaches, which one is the dominant approach I should be using. Besides knowledge, I'll consider what should be the skill and attitude outcome for the course. (Dung)

Teachers' voices in curriculum construction

It was found that in the post-program interview phase, more care shifted to teachers' contributions to curriculum construction, rather than just criticising the inefficiency of curriculum designers and teachers' implementation. Teachers' active participation in curriculum design was perceived to be pivotal. The data shows that participants realised they had not been active in curriculum and course design and now it was important that not only they needed to be able to design a syllabus but should be active contributors to curriculum and course development. This explains why teachers' perceptions of curriculum were vague in the pre-program interviews:

> It is essential to have teachers' voice in this (curriculum construction) but most teachers do not have the power to design curriculum. So another issue here is the quality of curriculum designers and teachers' contribution in designing it. They need to have good knowledge in curriculum development. (Quan)

To conclude, the post-program phase saw the training program's strong influence on participants' conceptions of teaching in higher education. Although no difference was found in terms of morals and skills teaching at the post-program phase, compared to pre-program data, it highlights the need to include the training of morality and study skills for students. On the other hand, perceptions of the two other sub-categories: student-centred orientation, and curriculum and syllabus design were significantly changed. Perspectives on student-centred teaching became clear in the post-program phase, without the perception that teaching meant transmitting knowledge, as found in the pre-program interview. A clear understanding of student-centred learning was illustrated, supplemented with strategies and approaches to support the interaction between teachers and students. Reflections and intentions on how to promote a student-centred classroom were put forward. Curriculum and syllabus design, on the other hand, was perceived according to the outcome-based approach and suggestions for the involvement of teachers in designing and constructing curriculum were raised, indicating the awareness of teachers' involvement in curriculum construction and the need to embrace teacher's expertise in curriculum design in teacher training programs. Critical choices for the adoption of certain teaching approaches became clear in the post-program phase, and the selection of teaching approaches were believed to be driven by a number of factors such as discipline, students' ability, and classroom environment.

Assessment and evaluation

Process-based assessment

As in the pre-program interviews, participants spent much of their time discussing issues related to process-based evaluation and assessment, and the combination of various methods of testing. What seems to have been advanced in participants' perceptions is the fact that they considered assessment as a means to adjust their teaching, rather than just simply testing students' progress and outcomes. One typical example is presented below.

> I'll avoid one-off assessment. We can divide into different phases of assessment to evaluate students' development of certain stage, what they achieve so far. In so doing, we make proper and timely adjustment in our teaching. (Ha)

No pre-program data show participants' perceptions of critical reflection on their own teaching but it was clear in the post-program phase that participants had become aware that evaluation is necessary for teachers too, not only for their students' sake.

Stressing critical skill ability and creativity

Showing a preference for combining different methods of testing and evaluation, participants post-program, indicated that they would opt for assessments which encourage the argumentative and critical thinking development of students, rather than testing knowledge transmission, as indicated in pre-program interviews.

> Regarding assessment, the main form of test in my discipline is multiple choices. But multiple choices test general knowledge but it is not objective. I'd prefer the combination of multiple choice and critical essays as the second, ask students to write down their arguments and their supporting statements… (Thoa)

One participant shared a similar vein of thought, advocating the evaluation of students' creativity, rather than testing their knowledge:

> To me, I have different thoughts about assessment compared to my first interview, I think students need to be assessed from different perspectives: their attitude in study, their competence, their teamwork, especially their creativity… (Diem)

Although not negating the importance of judging students' attitude to learning, the examples above show the shifting perspective of participants towards the support of approaches that are more capable of evaluating students' critical thinking, and creativity, rather than the conventional understanding of knowledge, and a serious, hard-working attitude to learning.

Counter-effects of assessment

Another interesting perception of assessment in the post-program phase was the critical argument against the adoption of testing and evaluation as tools to force students to study. One participant expressed concerns over the abusive use of testing as a means to make

students study, which may destroy their interest in learning and studying. Motivational strategies to evaluate students' progress in learning were therefore preferred.

> Assessment in higher education needs to be outcome-driven. If we give them too much tests or exams stress, it can be counter-effective… When it comes to evaluation, it must be fair and objective, based upon our objectives stated in course outline, reflecting the right competence of students. (Trang)

Trang's perception was unique in this study but critical, as it is a warning that no matter how effectively assessment types are designed, the main purposes must be made clear, without crossing the line which makes assessment counter-productive to students' learning progress, causing them to be stressed and demotivated.

Overall, participants' conceptions about assessment and evaluation in the post-program phase were leaning towards a critical stance, with an emphasis on the evaluation of the critical and creative ability of students, rather than testing knowledge, which was the perception in the pre-program interview. The issue of how to make testing and evaluation a means to motivate students' learning was also raised, criticising the popular trend in the adoption of assessment to force students to study.

5.3 Conclusion

In summary, conceptions on teaching and learning were impacted positively by the completion of the teachers' professional development training program. Significant changes were clear in participants' views of teaching orientation towards a facilitating approach, considering students as the centre of classroom practice. There was evidence of critical reflections on past views on teaching approaches and intentions to change or modify approaches to teaching across the investigated sample. Frequency, intensity and determination in implementing teaching plans were evident throughout the post-program phase of interviews. Furthermore, the post-program phase saw an interwoven relationship of teaching to other themes: higher education purposes, teachers' roles, and student learning. Participants, in general, had a tendency to view teaching (orientation, specific approach use, assessment, curriculum design) in a bigger picture, under the influence of higher education purposes, teachers' roles, curriculum, and other factors influencing classroom practice, which

was not indicated clearly in the pre-program interviews, where participants' perceptions on teaching approaches were quite separate from other educational or contextual influences.

Regarding conceptions of learning, notwithstanding the similar themes constructed, the post-program phase data demonstrate an in-depth pedagogical knowledge of participants. Participants' understanding of learning throughout the two phases was not significantly changed, but their attempts to use the precise pedagogical terms and explain their justifications on learning constructs were recognised. The added sub-category of *Learning at higher levels*, was, on the other hand, supportive in illustrating participants' maturity in regarding learning with a more extended perspective, which was strongly relevant to extended perspectives on purposes of higher education in the post-program phase.

Conceptions of teaching, on the other hand, in the pre-program phase, show tensions around the rhetoric and practice, ideal, and reality of the idea of a student-centred approach. The support for student-centred teaching was raised but subtle understanding and implementation of a logical student-centred approach was not perceived. However, these tensions were found to have diminished in the post-program phase, where participants' understanding, explanation and intentions of student-centred teaching were illustrated, with the addition of the supportive perceptions in the adoption of an objective-based curriculum. Conceptions of curriculum also changed positively towards the support of a less centralised approach to allow room for contribution from teachers. Evaluation and assessment was perceived to be moving towards motivating creativity, and critical thinking of students, rather than testing knowledge as previously perceived. These findings, therefore, suggest a series of implications for policy makers, teacher trainers and practitioners, which will be discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

6.0 Introduction

Findings from this study were presented in the previous chapters. Chapter Four presented participants' conceptions of higher education purposes and teachers' roles, and their changes after completing the training program. Chapter Five identified categories related to conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education and their changes in those conceptions as they impacted on participants' conceptions. This chapter will discuss three areas of participants' conceptions emerging from the findings. Each theme will be discussed in light of the context in which it was manifested and compared to relevant literature to extend understanding in the areas investigated. Impacts of the training program will be discussed.

6.1 Conceptions of Vietnamese higher education purposes and teachers' roles

In the literature review (2.1.5), it was described that a broader view to understanding teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning should be considered, embedding contextual elements that influence teaching and learning conceptions such as the purposes of higher education and teachers' roles. This was acknowledged as equally important as researching teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning as they offer recommendations for the designing and implementation of academic development activities (Cranton, 2011; Leibowitz, 2016; Tatto, 1998) and redefinition of education pedagogy (Alexander, 2008). Drawing on this research, this study was implemented with the inclusion of program participants' conceptions of higher education purposes and teachers' roles before examining their conceptions of higher education teaching and learning. Findings from this study, therefore, add to the understanding of higher education teaching and learning under the influence of higher education values and higher education teachers' standards and roles in the age of complexity.

6.1.2 Conceptual changes in the purposes of Vietnamese higher education

First, the study has provided emerging insights into the purposes of higher education from an under-researched context: Southeast Asia (Welch, 2011). Three categories emerged as purposes of higher education from participants' conceptions: Social Contribution, Morality,

and Competence and Craft. Table 6.1 describes the major changes of participants' conceptions of higher education purposes. As can be seen from Table 6.1, the post-program phase identified changes in the dimensions of those sub-themes, indicating a more sophisticated understanding of higher education purposes from participants' perspectives. Social contribution refers to the ability to contribute for state/society development, which is crucial in developing countries like Vietnam (Castells, 1993; Welch, 2011). Morality, on the other hand, was constructed as moral values, manners and attitudes both in the workplace and in social behaviour. Competence and Craft addresses knowledge, skills in students' professional choice and their soft skills and other required qualities in the new era of globalisation and a knowledge-based economy. Each of those conceptualised purposes and participants' changes after they finished the compulsory higher education teachers' training program will be discussed with regard to current literature on higher education purposes.

Table 6.1 *Participants' conceptual changes in HE purposes and underpinning philosophies*

HE purposes	**Pre-program conceptions**		**Post-program conceptions**	
Social contribution	Neo-liberal	Human resource Employers' demands	Neo-liberal and Capability Approach	Human resources Social responsibility
Competence and Craft	Neo-liberal	Expertise knowledge, skills Employability skills and other qualities	Neo-liberal and Capability Approach	Expertise knowledge, skills Knowledge-skill-attitude Creativity, confidence, research
Morality	Civic function	Work ethics, manner	Civic function	Work ethics, manner, attitude, awareness Moral in the global economy

The purposes of higher education, as found from the analysis of the thesis, have illuminated the understanding of higher education purposes in the Vietnamese context through different perspectives: government, program presenters and program participants. The triangulation of three perspectives has emphasised the significant missions of higher education in making a social contribution to the social and economic development of the country in creating strong and competent human resources. As clearly stated in the Vietnamese Higher Education Reform Agenda 2006-2020 (Harman & Nguyen, 2010), a strong focus of Vietnamese higher

education has shifted to educating graduates with industry-ready skills to undertake the demands of industrialisation, modernisation, global integration and society demands. In general, the findings support the literature on higher education purposes in developing countries as outlined by Castells (1993) and Welch (2011). The two first roles of higher education identified by Castells (training skilled labour as demanded by societies and cultivating elites) were reflected in the data of this study, while Welch's analysis on the general trends in considering purposes for higher education as a means to strengthen personnel in worldwide competition in the Southeast Asian contexts was also confirmed to be true. It becomes clear from this Vietnamese case that providing skilled human resources for the country is an important mission, as stated by Tran (2012). Perspectives analysed from MOET documents, and presenters' and participants' interviews in this study support this viewpoint, indicating that producing competent human resources to serve social demands in the transitional period of the country to modernisation is considered a dominant purpose of higher education. Therefore, it is obvious that Vietnamese higher education is highly influenced by neo-liberal values, judging from the missions of higher education and the data which emerged on higher education purposes. The main purpose of higher education has been stated to increase the stock of human capital to meet the needs of the global economy and ensure the competitiveness of individuals and economic well-being (Boni & Gasper, 2012; Marginson, 2007; OECD, 2007; Singh, 2001; World Bank, 2002). A strong innovative higher education reform with a focus to satisfy the labour market and social demands in Vietnam (Pham & Tran, 2013) has been observed and validated through government documents and presenters' and program participants' perspectives as shown from this study findings. Social contribution has become a dominant purpose of higher education. Nonetheless, participants' conceptions of social contribution as a purpose of higher education changed slightly in the post-program phase, in which they recognised the roles of higher education in educating social and community responsibility and glocalised citizens. The conceptualisation of communal responsibility is in tune with Sullivan and Rosin's (2008) viewpoints on the *moral purpose* and *community engagement* purposes of higher education. Social contribution (in the post-program phase) theme, was conceptualised in this manner, indicating that participants were aware of the public-good roles of higher education functions in the post-program phase. Purposes of higher education from the participants' conceptions, therefore, were viewed from a broader, deeper level, reflecting both the influence of neoliberal philosophy (producing competent human resources), and community engagement (social responsibility and regional engagement and integration) on higher education functions.

Second, the emergence of morality as a category under the Higher Education Purposes theme is unique to this study. Morality emerged as a separate category and was highlighted as a culturally-rooted factor that is special in higher education in Vietnam. Educating graduates with good morality has also been addressed as one mission of higher education, identified by Watson (2014) (Question of Character), who stressed higher education's role in producing graduates' qualities other than academic performance, including behaving well, living and learning together with others, and being useful. Educating an individual with good morals, as such, in this study, as perceived by participants, seems to match well with Watson's cluster of character. Specifically, this purpose stands on its own as a unique goal of higher education, through two phases of the program (although the post-program phase saw an increase in the dimensions contributing to morality), and this category matches with the government expectations in creating a moral society, parallel with producing human resource: "Educating learners with political qualities, and moralities" (Article 5b, Vietnamese Higher Education Law, 2012, p. 5). This is also further supported by the program presenters' conceptions of higher education purposes. The findings, therefore, indicate the education of moral, responsible and courteous citizens is highly valued in Vietnamese higher education. It became apparent from this thesis that education for economic participation would not be complete without a consideration of nurturing moral behaviour, even in the case of higher education. The study, therefore, supports Kim and Taylor's (2017) statement by confirming that moral education is highly valued in Asian context. The patriotism value of morality is reflected in the Vietnamese Higher Education Law (educating students with political qualities) but from participants' conceptions, higher education needs to fulfil its role in educating virtuous citizen and specific moral values, rather than the instilling political belief or transmitting ideology (Castells, 1993).

As such, moral behaviour and ethical dimensions, which were criticised as being overlooked in neo-liberal higher education policies (Walker & McLean, 2013), turned out to be not true in this context as morality was emphasised to be a dominant purpose of higher education throughout this study. However, the conception of morality as a purpose of higher education found in this study does not offer strong validation to conclude that Vietnamese higher education is embracing a human development approach to higher education. In other words, the pre-program phase saw program participants' emphasis on moral dimensions such as work ethic and social behaviour and norms. The post-program phase data reconfirmed those values but more dimensions to morality were added: *attitude to study* and *awareness of*

students' moral behaviour. The post-program phase also emerged sub-category concerning higher education's role in educating morality in the global economy context, which was argued to contribute to threaten the conservation of cultural values. Nonetheless, no evidence related to global urgencies was addressed, from participants' conceptions. The conclusion drawn is that the moral purpose of higher education, as it emerged in this study, was understood at a surface level, constrained in national issues: cultural conservation. The *question of citizenship* (global responsibilities) as Watson (2014) pointed out was not suggested as a purpose of higher education. It has been acknowledged in the recent debate on higher education's mission that higher education needs to increase students' awareness on global issues and a sustainable future (Cortese & Hattan, 2010; Cortese, 2003) and improve students' soft-citizenship attributes (Watson, 2014) in the context where global insecurities are challenging human safety, including developed and developing countries alike. Therefore, the lack of conception on *moral urgencies* (such as human insecurity, environmental deterioration, cross-cultural ignorance) as stated by Walker (2010) or *citizenship* (Watson, 2014) in this study offers red flags for policy makers, curriculum developers, and textbook designers to consider. In Chapter 2 (2.3.1), is was highlighted that the need to build up "ethical global orientation, global perspective and a recognition of human interconnectedness and vulnerability" (Walker, 2010, p. 498) is central issues for university policy makers.

The final purpose of higher education conceptualised in this study is Competence and Craft, which refers to graduates' both professional expertise and other qualities (including employability skills). The dimensions of competence and craft as purposes of higher education are in line with two of Watson's (2014) clusters on higher education missions: the question of calling, competence, craft (professional formation and relevant skill) and question of capability (life-skills and employability) of higher education. Participants' views regarding those sub-categories also support the government perspectives in embracing higher education roles in "educating learners with good knowledge, and professional skills, ability to research and develop scientific and technological applications" (Article 5b, Vietnamese Higher Education Law, 2012, p. 2). There is a strong connection between this sub-category and Social Contribution sub-category. In the pre-program phase, where participants viewed higher education functions as producing human resources and meeting employers' demands, their perceptions towards competence of graduates were strongly influenced by this perception: educating professional knowledge and skills plus employability skills. Although other competences (life-long learning, goal-development) were mentioned, the majority of

conceptions towards graduates' competence focused on their professional knowledge skills and job-related skills. The conceptions on higher education purposes in the pre-program phase, thus, were strongly dominated by the neo-liberal philosophy of higher education, which views higher education as a powerhouse, producing labour forces for the competitive global market. The post-program phase, however, saw positive conceptualisations towards Competence and Craft sub-theme. This broadening perspective indicates participants' in-depth understanding as a result of having participated in the training program. In particular, participants emphasised the qualities necessary for graduates in the 21st century (e.g. the 4Cs: critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity) (Kivunja, 2014; Moore, 2009) and the desired outcome of graduates with an integration of knowledge, skill, and attitude, rather than considering higher education as a ticket for graduates to get employment, as conceptualised in the pre-program interview. Confidence, research and creativity were formed as dimensions under "qualities" sub-category of Competence-Craft, rather than just transferable or generic skills, and employability, as expected by the markets' demands.

It is thus obvious that graduates' competence as perceived by participants in this study is a combination of both human capital (employability) and some personal capabilities development (developing confidence, critical thinking). However, participants' conceptualisation of higher education purposes in educating students' competence was still trapped in the "doing" nature (what graduates should be able to do), rather than focusing on the "having" (emphasising who students are becoming), which Kreber (2013a) argued to be more necessary. Kreber (2013a) proposed the theory of students' "authenticity" or "having", positing that higher education should not only allow students to develop academically, intellectually, but also personally and interpersonally (Kreber, 2013a). Although students' authenticity, the ability to understand and commit to one's own interest and to other interests, has been lately claimed as important purpose of higher education, the "authenticity" or "having" nature of graduates was not perceived as one of the higher education purposes in this study. One way to help achieve students' authenticity rather than focusing on their competence is the development and adoption of "capabilities" as understood by Nussbaum (2011), and Walker (2010, 2006). Fostering these capabilities is believed to help students achieve their authenticity, influence students' engagement in social environment after their graduation, and create a just and sustainable society (Kreber, 2013a; Walker & McLean, 2013; Walker, 2010).

In brief, as summarised in Table 6.1, it is clear from the findings that participants' conceptions on Vietnamese higher education purposes do not escape the impact and effects of neoliberal values. The study, therefore, now addresses the issues of the contending debate on the influence of neo-liberalism on higher education graduate attributes. It has become common for developing countries to opt for the investment of its human capital as Castells (1993) highlighted; however, it is argued that neoliberal globalisation could lead to greater gaps of social injustice and threats to poverty reduction (Walker, 2010, 2009, 2006). The pre-program phase showed the dominance of neo-liberal philosophy on the understanding of participants' construction of higher education purposes, reflected in how they clarified the social contribution and competence and craft sub-categories. The conceptualisation of higher education as a means of preparing graduates for future employment runs the risk of diminishing (1) students' critical thinking and genuine relevance in their learning journey (who they want to be and what they want to do), and (2) curiosity, learning capacity and independent thinking, which might shape future new trends and job descriptions (Deprez & Wood, 2013, p. 146). The post-program phase, however, indicates a deepened conceptualisation of higher education purposes, which moves a step further away from job-market demand perspectives, embracing social responsibility and community engagement as purposes of higher education, taking educating capabilities of students into account. Developing individuals to their full dignity and capabilities, according to Walker (2006), and Sen (2009, 1992) should be the goal of higher education, rather than running after economic productivity and employment. Walker (2006) insisted the necessity of developing a just higher education system that can help students gain the freedom in making their choices and valued identities so that they might go even beyond what is expected of their careers.

Although the post-program findings on participants' conceptions of higher education purposes, do not show a full interpretation or examples that are directly relevant to the capability approach to higher education as suggested by Walker (2006), it does show positive changes in how participants gradually moved their conceptions away from the neo-liberal extreme. Some qualities such as confidence, research and creativity were addressed as qualities that higher education should be targeting. An integration of knowledge and skills would not be complete without the education of attitude as reflected in participants' conceptions of competence and craft. From a social justice viewpoint of higher education purposes, not just purely skills or competence should be targeted but "opportunities for human functioning that enable a fully human and dignified life" (Kreber, 2013a, p. 8) need to

be addressed as well. These suggestions have important implications for developing countries like Vietnam, in the context where the main purpose of higher education is still grounded in pursuing economic turnover and expecting graduates to fulfil those expectations, rather than discovering themselves at their full potential, as reflected in this study. A strong focus on following and responding to social and market demands of roles of higher education also is believed to lead to inefficacy in matching economic growth. This has been observed by one Vietnamese educator:

> Universities are responsible for more than simply training highly qualified specialists for socio-economic development. They also have an important role to play as vanguards in intellectual exploration, the generation of knowledge and the inculcation of democratic values. (Pham, 2010, p. 56)

The study also highlights the significant role of higher education in contributing to a moral society, with virtuous citizens abiding by the cultural norms and virtuous values of the country in the globalisation age, as indicated in the morality sub-category. It confirms the significant role morality plays in higher education in Vietnam, which is believed to have a similarly important role with educating professional labour force for the nation. The conceptualisation of morality, as theorised in this study, is still confined to the surface level, focusing on behaviour and social manners, and an awareness of global ethical issues or global citizenship is absent. The study, therefore, on one hand, indicates a great expectation towards educating a both **competent** and **moral** graduate in this context, which means the ethical dimension is not overlooked as has been criticised in the literature (Walker & McLean, 2013), even under the neo-liberal philosophy applicable to Vietnamese higher education. On the other hand, the findings highlight that ethical dimensions on human life and global urgencies are not present under the conceptions of morality. Considering that integration into the global economy is strongly expected in Vietnam, an awareness of global ethical issues and the significance of global citizenship (Watson, 2014) should also be taken into account as purposes of higher education. The ethical aspects of educating graduates with awareness and competence to live and conquer in a world full of global urgencies: cultural conflicts, environment, climate change, global diseases, as argued by Walker (2010) or Cortese and Hattan (2010) are absent from this study, and therefore need to be addressed.

Pinheiro and Pillay (2016) criticised the lack of higher education investment in research and innovation in developing countries, which developed countries seem to do well. In this study innovation and research did not emerge as a purpose of higher education and rarely were

innovation or research mentioned. Graduate ability to undertake research was conceptualised in the post-program phase (Competence and Craft sub-category) but on the whole, it was not popularly perceived as a role for higher education in Vietnam. Rather, it was just a quality expected of students and perceived by only one participant. Participants' conceptions on higher education purposes, reflected from the findings, are in contrast with the government expectations on higher education functions in "training students with political qualities, and moralities, having knowledge, professional skills, **research capacity…**" (Article 5b, Vietnamese Higher Education Law, 2012, p. 2), and with presenters' expectations of research competence as a higher education purpose. As already mentioned in the literature, research funding and research competence of Vietnamese higher education institutions is low (Harman & Le, 2010) and unlike the Confucian higher education system in some Asian countries, research capacity in Vietnamese higher education languishes (Marginson, 2011). The lack of the program participants' awareness on the research role of higher education clarifies the research gap that Vietnamese higher education needs to fill. The thesis, thus, supports previous research by reemphasizing the lack of research functions in Vietnamese higher education. The research role of higher education was not perceived as key to the development of the country, as clearly indicated from this study.

6.1.2 Conceptual changes in Vietnamese higher education teachers' standards and roles

This study also presents findings related to higher education teachers' roles and standards in the Vietnamese context, which is unique compared to other locations. The understanding of how teachers construed themselves as being a teacher (ontology), rather than knowing how to teach (epistemology), is presented, in response to Dall'Alba's (2005) and Barnett (2005)'s calls for researching teachers' construction of their identity as higher education teachers.

The findings generally support the views of the separation of teachers' standards and roles into two categories: *professional knowledge and skills*, and *moral values*, just as Aristotle distinguished between the *Techne* and *Praxis* of teaching. In the context where the teaching technique (*techne*) is greatly valued (Fitzmaurice, 2008; Walker, 2001), the emergence of morality category under the theme Teachers' Standards and Roles proves both dispositions are perceived equally important in the Vietnamese context. Teachers' standards and roles are bound to concentrate on both the professional skills, competence of teaching, and the responsible and ethical values of higher education teachers, which according to Fitzmaurice (2008) should be promoted, maintained and sustained, especially in this era when a consumer culture of higher education is growing. A summary of participants' conceptual changes in

higher education teachers' professional and moral standards and roles is illustrated in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2 *Participants' conceptual changes in HE teachers' standards and roles*

Standard-roles	Pre-program conceptions		Post-program conceptions	
Professional standards and roles	Mixed conceptions (underpinned by neo-liberalism)	Knowledge-skill (expertise, ICT, language), LLL Guiding, liaising with market, knowledge transmitting	Less market-driven, more student-centred	Knowledge-skill (**curriculum**), LLL Guiding (facilitating), skill developing, inspiring future developments, passion
Moral standards and roles		Morality (good behaviour, passion, caring) Educating morals		Morality (example, morality, passion, caring) Educating morals and **attitude**
Academic advisors		Counselling academic and welfare		Counselling academic and welfare/Separating with professional roles

On professional standards and roles of higher education teachers in the 21st century

As stated, this study provides empirical evidence on the "*techne*" standards and roles of higher education teachers in the examined context. Analysis shows the influence of the global knowledge economy, the ICT era and the aim of higher education in producing competent and skilled human resources for the global integration process of the country on participants' conceptions of professional standards for Vietnamese higher education teachers.

ICT and language skills are considered important as higher education teachers' standards, as stated in the regulated standards by MOET and from participants' perspectives. Professional standards analysed in the pre-program phase from participants' conceptions, however, were more inclined to the professional practice of the discipline, stressing experience in the field as an important standard for teachers as was their role in connecting students to the market (liaising) as illustrated in Table 6.2. This is closely associated with program participants' conceptualisation of purposes of higher education in producing a labour force to satisfy employers' and market's demand as showed in the pre-program phase of the study. The post-program phase of the study saw a transition in the conceptualisation of participants of the

understanding of their professional standards and roles. The study, therefore, acknowledges the influence of government and social expectations on higher education teachers' standards in the 21st century in a developing country, demanding teachers to excel in ICT and language skills to prepare well for 21st century technology, as argued by Kivunja (2014) and Moore (2009). Curriculum Competence emerged in the post-program phase as a necessary standard for private or public higher education teachers alike, marking the changing conception regarding expectations of participants upon their involvement in curriculum construction. This is parallel with the change in their conceptions about "curriculum and course design" dimension under the Teaching and Learning theme (discussed in 6.2.4). The study highlights the changes of participants' conceptions regarding their involvement in curriculum and course design, which is considered as a planner role of higher education teachers (Harden & Crosby, 2000) or the manager role of learning in charge of course designing (Badley & Habeshaw, 1991). This identification also stresses the influence of the program on the reconsideration or self-reflection of participants on constructing their roles or being (Dall'Aba, 2005; Cranton, 2001). A comparison of the study findings in the post-program phase with the clusters of higher education teachers' roles by Harden and Crosby (2000) shows the interconnection of all higher education teachers' roles from participants' perspectives: managers of learning, curriculum designers, facilitators, counsellors (academic and administrative), evaluators, and disciplinarians. A passion for lifelong learning as a required standard for higher education teachers, which is believed to help develop them professionally in an age of rapid change remains strong throughout both phases of the study.

Higher education teachers' roles in both phases were perceived as guiding student learning and orienting their career development and long-term professional pathways. A guiding and facilitating knowledge role was perceived in both program phases, but the post-program phase saw an orientation towards a student-centred approach of teaching whereas in the pre-program phase, roles of teachers were perceived as a mixture of both knowledge-facilitating and knowledge-transmission. Therefore, participants' post-program conceptions on teachers' roles best reveal the changing conception of participants towards the student-centred paradigm, escaping the dominant teacher-as-authority of knowledge transmitter, which has been criticised as a dominant practice in Vietnamese higher education classrooms (Tran et al., 2014). In addition, conceptions of participants of teachers' roles in developing students' soft skills and real-life experiences, inspiring their learning experiences, and developing an integration of knowledge-skill-attitude, as indicated in post-phase program, also imply a

conceptualisation of roles that goes beyond the classroom practice roles of the higher education teachers, as argued by Smittle (2003).

The findings from this study also indicated that higher education teachers' research role was not one of participants' perceptions. While MOET states research as an important role of Vietnamese higher education teachers (Article 6, 36/2014/TTLT BGDĐT-BNV), the majority of participants did not express any concerns regarding this role. The study, as such, provides further evidence to support the criticism on the lack of research competence of Vietnamese higher education teachers (Harman & Le, 2010). Not only was the research function of higher education neglected, research roles of higher education teachers were not perceived from this study either. Previous research has identified the lack of funding for higher education research in developing countries (Pinheiro & Pillay, 2016), and the lack of strategies/incentives to support teachers' research in Vietnam specifically (Harman et al., 2010; Marginson, 2011), but this study indicates that a research role is not even recognised as an important standard and role by individual teachers themselves. The findings, therefore, provide evidence for policy makers and teacher trainers to determine ways to increase awareness of the research role for teachers. Only when teachers are cognisant of their roles in becoming research-driven will higher education fulfil its expected role to boost research and technology transfer for the nation.

Regarding the academic advisor roles, the study suggests the burden on teachers' responsibility not only in academic counselling or professional counselling but also in administrative procedures related to students' welfare, the transitional phase to higher education, and academic advice as "student counsellor" or "advisor". This role is specifically unique in the Vietnamese higher educational context, and although participants generally believed this role was helpful to students, it should be separate from the professional role of a higher education teacher.

The findings also provide evidence on the role of teachers in educating students'/graduates' morality besides facilitating their knowledge discovery and learning process. This evidence is aligned with the participants' conceptions of higher education's purpose in educating moral citizens and moral society. The role of teachers, found in this study, is not restricted from an academic or professional angle, but extends to social morality as well.

On morality as an essential standard and role for higher education teachers

As mentioned earlier, this study emphasises the moral role of teachers to be just as important as the professional role, which is interesting in this context because the literature found moral education and moral practice in higher education are usually neglected (Fitzmaurice, 2013, 2008). The study, consequently, confirms the clear policy of the Vietnamese government regarding the ethical values of higher education teachers, both in their lives, and in their careers as teachers. Regarding participants' conceptions, in general, throughout the two program phases, morality was defined as responsibility/passion in the teaching career, being moral in one's social life, playing an exemplary moral role and having a caring attitude to students (considering them as co-learners). Although this study did not attempt to investigate higher education teachers' conceptions of moral values in higher education in detail, its findings support Fitzmaurice's (2008) moral stances of *honesty, respect, responsibility, care* and *compassion* as fundamental in higher education teaching, apart from professional knowledge and skills. Good teaching in higher education research has been found to be focused too much on the understanding of teaching strategies, methods, and professionalism (Biggs, 2003; Ramsden, 2001). Nixon (2008) argued that good academics should have also strong moral dimensions and be dependent upon the practices of virtues (cited in Fitzmaurice, 2013, p. 615). The inclusion of moral values and practice towards higher education teachers' identity has been further supported by Fitzmaurice (2013, 2010, 2008).

> To conceive of teaching in higher education as a practice moves us beyond a narrow and mechanistic view of teaching built around the adoption of effective strategies to one that is broader in scope and takes into account the complexity and contextuality of the work, and the importance of virtuous dispositions and caring endeavour in teaching. (Fitzmaurice, 2010, p. 54)

Reflecting on participants' conceptions of morality as important higher education teachers' standards and roles, it can be concluded that teaching in higher education in the Vietnamese context is understood at a broader level, and the virtuous positions and caring attitude of teachers are taken into account, as the above quote indicates.

The findings also support the roles of higher education teachers in educating morality, which is a significant role conceptualised by participants. Participants remained constant in how they perceived higher education teachers' roles in educating morality for students, in addition to developing their professional knowledge and skills. This finding is strongly related to how

participants perceived higher education purposes and how they justified the need to include teaching morality in the other theme Teaching and Learning Conceptions. Morality, once again, emerged as a significant unique category from this study. Morality was not only perceived as a purpose of higher education, but also teachers' standards as well. The study, therefore, asserts the support for moral practice of higher education teachers, which not only values teachers' professional competences but also their responsibility and care (Fitzmaurice, 2008). This has significant implications for the compulsory training program for higher education teachers because it provides evidence to suggest that instructing higher education teachers how to implement their moral roles in their practice should be incorporated in the program.

The post-program phase data suggests a more in-depth understanding about the dimensions of higher education teachers' roles in educating students' morals and attitudes. In contrast with the simple definition in educating students' proper social behaviour as illustrated in the pre-program phase, participants thought of educating moral roles at a broader level, including even educating the right attitude in their future careers, long-term development, and a passion for students' future work. The post-program phase findings, therefore, were related to Fitzmaurice's (2008) identification of "developing students a whole person" as significant to teachers' roles or Smittle's (2003) argument for the role of higher education teachers in developing students' long-term vision and passion. Higher education teachers' role, therefore, as conceptualised in the post-program phase, goes beyond the classroom duties which are conventionally perceived as teachers' roles. Research in the literature has shifted its concentration toward the encouragement to help higher education teachers to discover their "self" (Knight, 2002), or "reflective practice" (Cranton, 2011, 2001; Ramsden, 2003; Trigwell, 1998). A professional development training program that challenges early career teachers to step back and reflect on their roles both professionally and morally will be of use for the reflections of teachers in identifying their "nature, preferences, experience, and values" (Cranton, 2001, p. 41). It is not the purpose of this study to present a theory on the conceptions of morality dimensions as studies on the construction of academic identities, or moral identity of higher education teachers. On the other hand, the study provides initial grounded theory on the conceptions of program participants in a Vietnamese context on the moral expectations of higher education teachers' standards, which are in line with government and presenters' expectations. Thus, it provides evidence for future research

agenda on constructing a theory on moral identity of higher education teachers in other contexts.

6.2 Conceptions of Vietnamese higher education teaching and learning

The previous section has presented a discussion on the findings on two of the themes emerged from this study: conceptions of higher education purposes, and higher education teachers' roles. This section will particularly focus on the discussion on teaching and learning conceptions. The significant conceptual changes in teaching and learning conceptions are summarised in Table 6.3 and will be discussed in detail.

Table 6.3 *Participants' conceptual changes in higher education teaching and learning*

	Pre-program		Post-program	
Learning Conceptions	Learning is students' responsibility	Students' lack of attitude and motivation. Learning as their own problem (blame the students)	Higher level of learning	Students' higher order of thinking (Bloom) Teachers' responsibilities for students' learning and motivation
Teaching conceptions	Vague understanding on teacher-centred	Teacher-centred (knowledge transmitting) Teaching, assessment, curriculum as separate duties	Student-centred Outcome-based curriculum	Student-centred (active teaching), considering students' diversity into teaching Reflection on past conception Alignment of course outcomes, teaching, learning activities and assessment Assessment focusing on creativity and critical thinking

6.2.1 Conceptual changes in higher education learning

Learning emerged in this study as a category describing participants' expectations towards students' high levels of independence and academic professionalism in higher education study, rather than the learning approach (deep/surface) that is predominantly discussed in the literature (Ramsden, 2003). Participants' conceptions of learning in higher education reflect

the necessity of improving Vietnamese students' language and generic skills in the context of globalisation, which is in line with Harman and Nguyen's (2010) debate on higher education students' demands for graduate skills in the fast-changing demands of an expanding economy. A language and skills sub-category was perceived equally important under the construction of the Learning category during the two phases of the study. This finding emphasises the strong expectations of participants towards students' future integration into the global economy. Similar to how the participants conceptualised teachers' standards on their expertise, language together with ICT and other soft skills were also strongly expected.

Furthermore, in the post-program phase of the study, the findings show another emerging sub-category that relates to higher order thinking skills for student learning in the 21st century, as discussed in the literature by Kivunja (2014). It has become popular for Western academics to consider developing students' intellectual/thinking skills, analysing ideas critically as educational outcomes (Ramsden, 2003), while in the Law of Higher Education in Vietnam (2012), higher order thinking as an essential graduate attribute is not explicitly stated. However, a few presenters did mention that the role of developing students' critical thinking was important and the post-program findings show quite supportive evidence of participants' conceptions of higher order thinking in higher education. The findings in the post-program phase illustrate a shift towards learning conceptions that are considered a process of using knowledge and skills and applying them, rather than just rote learning or memorising, which clearly indicates the qualitative change in participants' conceptions of learning. Compared to Perry's (1970) framework of conceptions of learning, the findings show a limitation in the understanding of participants about higher education learning as it stops at the threshold of "reproducing" extremes where no conception related to "seeking meaning" or considering learning as seeing things in a different way and then changing as a person (conceptual change) was identified. As Biggs (1999) put it: "Good teaching is getting most students to use the higher cognitive level processes that the more academic students use spontaneously" (p. 58), this study reflects the fact that participants became more aware of learning orientation that develops a higher level, from memorising, describing, explaining, to relating, and applying. Nonetheless, participants' perceptions of student learning ceased at the threshold related to a dualistic understanding of knowledge construction (Perry, 1970), rather than moving to the relativism, identifying things in different ways and conceptual change, which Biggs (1999) considered what education is about, rather than information acquisition.

Presenters' ideas on facilitating participants' understanding of higher education learning do support the construction of students' higher order of thinking, introducing constructivism and Bloom's taxonomy to education. However, although participants did perceive that learning needs to focus on higher order thinking skills, they did not perceive the top levels of what higher order thinking involves. Reflecting on Bloom's (1956) taxonomy or Entwistle's (2009) recently modified framework on learning conceptions for higher education students, learning conceptions found in this study are still limited to the middle of the learning hierarchy. Bloom's higher order of learning conceptions such as *analysis, evaluating or creating* were not present. Higher conceptions of learning, as summarised by Entwistle (2009) such as "seeing things in a different way", "changing as a person", were not identified from participants' conceptions or even presenters' expectations of participants' conceptual change. More conceptions were found to be relevant to "applying and using" knowledge learned, which shows participants' change in terms of awareness of the current critical issues of the Vietnamese higher education dilemma: the dominance of rote learning, which fails to stimulate students' creativity and apply academic into real-life situations, as Harman and Nguyen (2010) observed:

> Passive rote learning methods are no longer appropriate if Vietnam is to embrace the demands of the global information-knowledge economy and move more comprehensively to a market economy. Neither do "ivory tower" curricula that stifle creative thinking and fail to produce students who can apply academic knowledge to real-life situations meet the urgent economic and social needs of the new economy. (p. 84)

The pre-program findings show the dissatisfaction of teachers towards students' lack of motivation and attitude to higher education study. Those views were found to change at the end of the program when participants proposed strategies to improve students' autonomy and motivation to study, rather than showing dissatisfaction and criticism. Participants acknowledged their responsibility for student learning, rather than viewing learning as the students' sole responsibility. Therefore, the study indicates the participants' conceptions of learning can be changed participating in the program, not only in a way that encourages a more sophisticated order of thinking, but evokes participants' other conceptions of student learning: students' motivation, autonomy and attitude to learning as well. The changing conception from *blaming students' lack of attitude in higher education learning* (pre-program) to *the consideration of teachers' responsibility to improve the students' attitudes*

and motivation towards learning (post-program) reflects participants' awareness of their roles in stimulating student learning. This conceptual change in the post-program phase therefore tends to be related to the changes in how participants perceived their roles in inspiring students' learning and developing a whole person, as found in the post-program phase (6.1.2).

6.2.2 Conceptual changes in higher education teaching

The findings also confirm the significant change in participants' conceptions of teaching, teaching approaches, curriculum and syllabus design and assessment. With regards to teaching orientation, changes were found in three aspects: a move towards "student-centred" orientation, rather than a mix of "student-centred" and "teacher-centred" conceptions to teaching, a reflection on past practice and course of future actions, a changed conception of teaching approaches, integrating students' learning into teaching.

Compared to theories of Samuelowicz and Bain (1992) on conceptions of teaching, findings suggest a transition in participants' conceptualisation of teaching to a higher level, from "information presentation" to "facilitation of student learning". In other words, conceptions to teaching are found to be changed from a "teacher-centred" orientation to a more "student-centred" orientation according to Kember's (1997) theory on conceptions of teaching in higher education. However, the study also finds that participants' conceptions of teaching are grounded in "facilitating learning" without moving to the higher order of Kember's conceptions of teaching continuum, which are "changing students' conception and intellectual development". "Student-teacher interaction" was mentioned in the post-program phase, which relates to the "in-between" bridging orientation of teaching conceptions as Kember (1997) argued. Therefore, the study findings strongly support the possibility of the existence of a boundary between two extremes of teaching conceptions (teacher-centred and student-centred). It shows the gradual conceptual change of participants through participation in the compulsory program with regard to their teaching conceptions. However, a closer look at how participants perceived student-centred teaching shows that their conceptions were not totally shifted to a learning-centred extreme, as categorised in Samuelowicz and Bain (2001). Looking back on the ways participants perceived higher education teachers' roles in facilitating students (6.1.2), it is obvious that the nature of the facilitation is to help students gain knowledge and information to develop discipline expertise, rather than the facilitation that encourages a co-construction and negotiation of knowledge and knowledge creation. For that reason, although teacher-centred conceptions of teaching progressed towards student-

centred approaches, those conceptions were still on the surface level of the "student-centred" extreme, as categorised by Samuelowicz and Bain (2001). To be more specific, conceptual changes on teaching found in this study were relevant to Ramsden's (2003) theory of "active learning" (Ramsden, 2003), and this indicates the underpinning theory of active learning on participants' epistemology. If we refer back to Ramsden's (2003) theoretical levels of conceptions of teaching, it is clear that participants' conceptions of teaching moved from "knowledge transmission" (theory 1) (in the pre-program phase) to "organising student activity and engaging student in learning" (theory 2) (post-program phase). Consequently, no conception that views teaching as "making learning possible" (theory 3: working cooperatively with students, imagining oneself as students to change their understanding) as suggested by Ramsden (2003) or "co-constructive collaboration knowledge approach to teaching" by Carnell (2007) emerged from the study.

It can be concluded from this discussion that the construction of participants' conceptions of teaching and learning in the two phases was different and the conceptual changes found from the post-program phase can be attributed by their participation in the program to some extent. This conceptual change, although present, was much more related to knowledge facilitation in nature, and to helping students develop expertise, rather than the higher sub-categories of Samuelowicz and Bain's (2001) conceptions of teaching continuum. The findings conclude that participants did not perceive knowledge as a co-construction of knowledge (Carnell, 2007) or encouraging students' creativity (Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001). The study, consequently, provides further evidence to support Samuelowicz and Bain's (2001) argument that boundaries between two extremes conceptions of teaching (student-centred and teacher-centred) are hard to cross, and indicates that to cross this boundary, a conceptual change framework to teachers' professional development programs such as Ho et al. (2001) suggest might be necessary. By comparing conceptual change found in this study with categorisations of higher education teaching conceptions found in past literature, it was identified that there was a change in participants' conceptions of teaching, moving from a transmitting-knowledge conception to a facilitating teaching orientation, but the study also highlights the lack of conceptual development of participants in relation to challenging students' conceptual change and development, which is believed to be the highest level in the teaching conception hierarchy (Kember, 1997). The findings on participants' conceptions of teaching, thus, show a strong relevance to conceptions of learning as presented earlier (6.2.1). While participants' conceptions of learning showed positive changes to a higher order of

thinking (moving towards relativism), no evidence on viewing learning in higher education as "seeing things differently" and then "changing a person" was found. Similarly, participants' conceptions of teaching were found to move towards the student-centred end of the continuum but no conceptions viewing teaching as a process of encouraging knowledge creation or students' conceptual change were identified. It is evident that there was an inherent relationship between participants' conceptions of teaching and those of learning. Participants' learning and teaching conceptions, in this study therefore, are grounded in the middle of the continuum as proposed in the literature (Biggs, 1999; Entwistle, 2009; Entwistle et al., 2004; Kember, 1997; Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001). To move those conceptions to another level, program developers and presenters might need to scaffold this threshold by designing a conceptual change approach to facilitate more significant changes in how participants perceived teaching and learning in higher education.

A positive change was found in conceptions of teaching approaches as participants tended to consider classroom and students' differences in choosing teaching approaches and activities, and listed many approaches like project-based or group-work activities. However, teaching approach conceptions, although varied and tailored to students' characteristics, were related to the "active learning" (Ramsden, 2003) focus (the attempt to build an active, interesting, motivating classroom environment) rather than challenging students' learning and constantly adapting to their understanding. Teaching in general was viewed as techniques for improving student learning, not a scholarly research-like activity (Ramsden, 2003). It is, therefore possible to conclude that the program presenters made great efforts to improve participants' capacity to create an active learning environment in the Vietnamese higher education context where teachers have been criticised for using a dominant lecture-based approach and are viewed as dominant knowledge givers (Harman & Nguyen, 2010; Tran et al., 2014).

However, although data from the post-program did not show changed conceptions related to higher education teaching, it stimulate~~d~~ participants to consider their past practice or past teaching approaches used by other teachers (for those who had no teaching experience) and think about how they would modify or design their teaching methods. The emergence of the sub-category *Reflection and teaching plan* indicates the influence of the program on encouraging participants' reflection on their conceptions and practices of associated teaching, which Willcoxson (1998) argued to be possible only with long-term instructional training. Additionally, the post-program interview data with participants highlighted the emergence of "teaching approaches" incorporating student learning into their teaching practice, which was

not present in the pre-program phase. Another positive change in participants' conception therefore was added, emphasising on the changes in how participants viewed teaching approaches, in a way that is more critical towards the adoption of certain teaching approach. Although both phases of the study showed participants' preference for using a combination of varied approaches to teaching, the post-program phase saw a more logical justification of approaches choice and use, taking students' disciplines, proficiency, development and needs into consideration when choosing their approaches to teaching. This change may also be linked to the emphasis of the recent program curriculum (Circular 12/2013/TT-BGDĐT) on psychological modules, which aim to improve participants' knowledge of higher education students' psychological development. This finding shows some association between *teaching conceptions* and *learning conceptions* because the way participants perceived teaching approaches was generally related to promoting students' active learning through engagement of knowledge discussion (role-play, situation-based teaching method, or group discussion), rather than challenging students' criticism, knowledge creation, or changing as a person.

6.2.3 "Moral and skill teaching" as a sub-category

The study also found an emphasis on "moral and skill" teaching, under the "Teaching and Learning" theme in both phases of the program. However, the post-program shows more emphasis on *generic skill development,* and *moral teaching*, which is associated with the emergence of "morality" as one of the purposes of higher education (6.1.1), and "educating moral" as a role of higher education teachers (6.1.2). The post-program phase shows a greater focus on teaching morals and specifically, how teachers can incorporate teaching morals into their usual practice. This indicates the positive impact of the program on how participants perceived morality, from purposes of higher education in general, to how they considered it in their roles and implemented it in normal practice. It is clear that conception of morality, as grounded from participants' data in this study, is not limited at the conceptual level, but was considered a moral practice of higher education teachers as stated by Fitzmaurice (2010, 2008).

6.2.4 Conceptual changes in curriculum, course design and assessment

Biggs' constructive alignment theory influence on participants' conceptions

The results on participants' conceptions of curriculum and assessment, in the post-program phase, also indicate another impact of the program as they reflect the influence of the constructive alignment to teaching/learning activities, assessment and curriculum outcomes

(Biggs, 1999) on participants' conceptions. Positive changes found in the post-program findings show a connection of all elements related to teaching, from curriculum construction and course design to teaching approach, activities and assessment, which are underpinned by the constructive alignment. The outcome-based curriculum (with an integration of knowledge, skill, and attitudes) was the outstanding conceptual change found in the post-program phase. It has been argued that teachers' voices in curriculum construction have been overlooked in the highly centralised management and governance of higher education in Vietnam (Phan et al., 2016; Tran et al., 2014). Curriculum was perceived as an issue of administrators, as indicated from the literature, and participants had little idea on how they might make a contribution for curriculum and syllabus design in the pre-program phase. In the post-program phase, participants were aware of their roles in designing outcome-based curriculum, linking course outcomes, teaching activities, and assessment methods. Unlike the pre-program phase, where participants showed no awareness of Bloom's taxonomy and higher levels of student learning, in the post-program phase, participants suggested a collection of assessment types and curriculum/course design ideas that could better facilitate students' higher level of thinking skills. The shift towards student-centred instruction integrated with assessments has been suggested to embrace more quality products, discussion and higher application skills on Bloom's Taxonomy (Buskirk-Cohen et al., 2016). The findings suggest that the "Curriculum Development" and "Assessment and Evaluation" modules have impacted on participants' understanding of the outcome-based curriculum and aligned teaching, learning and assessment.

Additionally, there was greater focus on the contribution of teachers in curriculum construction, especially in their individual course design and the consideration of designing an outcome-based course outline with teaching and learning activities and assessment best aligning student learning outcomes. Few standards and roles of teachers in curriculum and course design were mentioned in the pre-program phase (under Teachers' Roles and Standards), which resulted from the perception that teachers played little or no role in curriculum construction. The post-program data, however, accentuate the recognition of participants of higher education standards regarding curriculum and course design competence, which influenced how the participants perceived teachers' involvement in co-designing curriculum and course syllabus.

Participants' conceptions of teaching and learning, in the post-program phase illustrated the fact that Biggs' model of constructive alignment was important for their teaching process,

which was not present prior to their participation in the program. This finding has important implications for the key concept that is underlying the program in this study context. First, it is possible to conclude that Biggs' constructive alignment model of curriculum and course design is one of the foci of the training program in this context, and one which presenters tried to pass on to participants. According to this model, graduates are expected to satisfy a set of standardised competences according to market or social requirements, which explains why program participants conceptualised knowledge-skill-attitude as one dimension of Purposes of Higher Education theme and as the integrated outcome of curriculum and syllabus. The introduction of this model has successfully driven the conceptual change of participants, not only in how they perceived graduates' competence and craft (as higher education purposes), but also what they thought should be the backbone of curriculum and course design. The perceptions of higher education purposes and teaching conceptions, as such, can be related as both themes emerged with an emphasis on outcome-based teaching and learning, or constructive alignment philosophy.

What are the implications for curriculum and course design in Vietnamese context? And what are the implications for the training program?

According to the approaches to curriculum in higher education, proposed by Annala et al. (2016), the outcome-based conceptions to teaching and curriculum design, emerged in the post-program phase interviews of the study, can be categorised as the second approach (producing competences curriculum) which concentrates on producing competences, driving teaching and learning activities and assessment, according to the defined learning outcomes. As the need for a job-relevant and flexible curriculum is in high demand in the reform of the higher education context in Vietnam, the introduction and implementation of this model to curriculum is recommended so that standards of competence can be achieved. Findings in the post-program phase on participants' changed conceptions on curriculum also demonstrate that their conceptions were moving higher according to the hierarchy of Annala et al. (2016). Specifically, curriculum conceptions in the pre-program phase were not driven by the outcome-based logic, as participants perceived curriculum was designed and regulated by policy makers and experts, which showed little recognition of the roles of teachers in the construction of curriculum. This conception was relevant to the first approach to curriculum by Annala et al. (2016): curriculum as control over content. Participants' conceptions of curriculum in higher education changed to the next level on the curriculum hierarchy of Annala et al. (2016), as shown in data in the post-program phase.

As presented in the literature review (2.3.1), higher education curriculum framework nowadays should pay more attention to developing the "being", which to Barnett and Coate (2005), is the development of students' engagement in identifying themselves and commitment to society they live in. This "being" denotes the identity of individuals in a world full of uncertainty, and asks how we live amid supercomplexity (Barnett, 2009). Judging from this viewpoint of curriculum and course design perspective, it can be concluded that the "being" part was not present in participants' conceptions of higher education curriculum and teaching, in general. This is consistent with the findings on participants' conceptions of higher education purposes, which seem to overlook the "civic" and "global" responsibility of graduates. Thus, although showing visible and even positive changes in how participants perceived higher education purposes and teaching and learning by participation in the training program, the study indicates that more needs to be done to provide a multi-angle awareness of current trends in higher education research and development in the program. In this case, it is argued that new models to curriculum development and course design in higher education that better promote the "being" of students need to be incorporated in the program. Recent literature on curriculum development in higher education has challenged intended learning outcomes in designing curriculum and course syllabus because it overlooks students' agency in curriculum development, which can stimulate more creativity, empathy and democracy from the student (Annala et al., 2016; Stoller, 2015, 2013). Therefore, argument for the reconsideration of students' authorship in co-constructing curriculum has gained increasing favour in recent higher education curriculum research (Bovill, 2014; Brooman et al., 2015). However, it is important to acknowledge that co-constructing curriculum and course design is a risky process that requires contextual consideration (Bovill, 2015), especially in contexts where academic staff and students are comfortable with the dominant teacher-centred curriculum and teaching (Shor, 1992). To encourage more students' voices to be heard, teacher training needs to familiarise teachers with this new concept and then train them how to facilitate students' authenticity and co-authorship in teaching and learning, as framework suggested by Cook-Sather (2010) or Bovill (2014). Considering the lack of awareness of students' voices in the construction of curriculum and course design, as indicated from the study findings, and the dominant teacher-centred approach to teaching in Vietnamese contexts, Shor's (1992) or Bovill's (2015) suggestions on the warning of co-constructing curriculum needs to be taken seriously. It might take time to find strategic approaches to include students' voices in curriculum construction in Vietnamese higher education contexts and it might be a long journey before

co-constructing encouraging students' voices or developing the being of students can be successfully developed in Vietnam. However, it is not impossible to introduce elements that can improve higher education teacher training program participants' understanding towards student-teacher partnerships in syllabus design or curriculum construction. Once they are aware of students' voices in syllabus design, there is more chances that their course is more authentic and relevant to students' needs.

6.3 Impacts of the program on participants' conceptual changes – The relation among the three emergent themes

Table 6.4 summarises participants' conceptual changes of teaching and learning in higher education, as found from the findings of the study.

Table 6.4 *A summary of participants' changes in conceptions of HE teaching and learning*

Conceptions	Pre-program	Post-program (changes)
HE purposes	Underpinned by neoliberalism (social demands, **market-driven)**	Less-market driven but still social contribution Individual development (creativity, innovation)/ and **skill/knowledge/attitude as competence**
Teachers roles	Professional and moral standards/roles Role: facilitating, knowledge transmitting, **market liaison**	Professional standards: **Curriculum competence** Professional roles: **guiding and facilitating, moral roles**
Learning	Students' lack of attitude and motivation, blaming the students	Students' higher order of thinking (Bloom: applying) Teachers' responsibilities for **students' learning**
Teaching	Teacher-centred (knowledge transmitting) and mixed conceptions Teaching, assessment, curriculum as separate duties	Student-centred (**active and logic teaching**) Reflection on past conception and practice Alignment of course outcomes, teaching, learning activities and assessment

6.3.1 Impacts of the program on participants' conceptions of higher education teaching and learning

From vague and mixed conceptions of teaching to student-centred conceptions of teaching and learning

The study found evidence of the possible impacts of the program on participants' conceptions of teaching and learning, as summarised in Table 6.4. Significant changes were noted in participants' views of teaching orientation towards a student-centred approach, rather than seeing teaching as dominantly knowledge transmission process, as pre-program data show. Positive changes in participants' conceptions reflect the fact that although aiming to improve participants' pedagogical knowledge and skills, the MOET program curriculum and presenters' modification of their teaching have also changed participants' conceptions of teaching, an important element that is usually overlooked (Åkerlind, 2004; Ho et al., 2001; Postareff et al., 2007; Stes et al., 2010; Varnava-Marouchou, 2010). The inclusion of a variety of Educational Principles, Psychology and Teaching Methodologies modules of MOET might have important roles to play in shaping a positive change in the ways participants view what teaching and learning should be like in higher education. To be specific, the post-program phase results show interrelated changes in participants' conceptions of teaching and learning. With regards to learning, findings show that they perceived learning as not only the students' sole responsibility, but Bloom's taxonomy, and learning, must be supported with motivational and autonomy strategies. This is further supported by data on post-program conceptions of teaching orientations, which show the consideration of student learning and diversity in the adoption of teaching activities, promoting an active student-centred learning and teaching environment. Teaching and learning conceptions of participants, in the post-program phase as presented, are related to their conceptions of higher education teachers' roles as well, as data indicate a shift from a combination of teachers' roles in both "knowledge-transmitting", and "knowledge-facilitating" to just a "guiding and facilitating" role in the post-program phase.

There was evidence that the program encouraged critical reflections on participants' past conceptions of teaching orientation and intentions to change or modify their approach to teaching. Participants' critical choice of teaching approach based upon the nature of their discipline and students' ability also support the fact that participants' conceptions of teaching and learning were shifting from a "simple" to a "sophisticated conception" (Entwistle, 2009; Kember, 1997). Therefore, it might be concluded that program curriculum and guidelines

(Circular 12/2013/TT-BGDĐT) as well as presenters' focus on psychological elements and an "active learning" teaching and learning model of higher education (Ramsden, 2003) have yielded quite positive changes in how participants changed their conceptions about teaching and learning. This change suggests that the underpinning philosophy of the program might not be in tune with current trends of higher education teaching and learning principles (which are supposed to move to a co-constructive model of teaching and learning as argued by Carnell, (2007). However, it changed participants' simple conceptions of teaching and learning to a more sophisticated level. This finding addresses a gap in the literature which questions the impacts of the compulsory pedagogical training for early-career higher education teachers (Norton, 2005). It also provides theoretical support to further encourage lines of research that target changing teachers' conceptions as an outcome of professional development programs, such as Ho et al. (2001) or Radloff (2002) and Hativa (2002). Although the basic aims of the program, as indicated from MOET documents are not targeting changing participants' conceptions of teaching and learning, the conceptual change found in this study argues that this change is possible even without a conceptual change approach to the design of the training as Ho et al. (2001) adopted. It is not possible to conclude those conceptual changes will be turned into practice due to the self-report nature of this grounded theory research. The study, however, presents changes to conceptions of higher education teaching and learning from participants' self-reports after they finished their program, which offer insightful implications for future research on academic development activities and policy.

*From **market-driven** conception to **combination of neoliberal and capability approach** conceptions of higher education purposes and teachers' roles*

The implementation of the program in the context of the study was found to be successful in changing participants' conceptions of teaching and learning: from the way they constructed the purposes of higher education, to their roles as teachers, and the conceptions of learning and teaching. The change in participants' conceptions, in this study, did not involve just pure teaching and learning orientation, but involved what influenced their orientation on higher education learning and teaching as well. Unlike phenomenographical studies on teachers' conceptions of teaching, where the conceptual frameworks underpin the analysis of teachers' conceptions or categories of teaching and learning, this grounded theory study, provides a theory of conceptual change of participants from a specific contextual perspective, analysing diverse experiences of participants regarding their understanding of teaching and learning.

This thesis also argues to broaden the view that teaching and learning conceptions, which in many cases are constrained just to the classroom perspective, by addressing their conceptions of purposes of higher education and teachers' own construction of their roles rather than what is expected of them (Cranton, 2011, 2001; Knight, 2002; Kreber, 2013a). As such, the study concludes with findings regarding participants' construction of higher education teachers' roles and standards, stressing the significant moral values in higher education contexts in Vietnam. Both the capability approach (Walker, 2006, 2001) and the neoliberal approach were evidenced to have roles to play in Vietnamese higher education purposes, as shown in the changes in participants' conceptions. The study shows the gradual change in participants' conceptions of higher education purposes, from a dominant neoliberal influence in the pre-program conceptions on higher education purposes to a combination of both neoliberal and human development in the post-program conceptions.

The study also highlights unique conceptions regarding moral values and teachers' roles in educating morals and advising students' welfare and academic life. This reflects the social and contextual influence on the development of participants' conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education as well as the construction of higher education values and teachers' standards and roles. Although the MOET program aims to develop participants' teaching skills, certain modules, for example, Introduction to Higher Education, Psychology in Higher Education, and, Educational Sciences, also seem to have an influence on participants' conceptual change of higher education purposes and their roles as teachers in higher education. It is therefore can be concluded that those modules are essential in contributing to participants' changes of broader issues that might underpin their teaching and learning conceptions, for example purposes of higher education in the global-economy integration of Vietnam or the constructions of teachers' standards and roles in the society.

6.3.2 Possible links of the three emergent themes

The three themes of teaching and learning conceptions which emerged in this study (higher education purposes, teachers' standards and roles, and teaching and learning) show a strong link to one another. In particular, as indicated in the pre-program phase, the influence of neo-liberalism (human capital) was reflected in the ways in which participants conceptualised the role of higher education in producing 21st century labour force to follow employers' demands, and higher education teachers' roles as liaising students with their prospective job markets. The ways participants emphasised the focus of their teaching on the application of knowledge into workplace and getting professional knowledge and skills transmitted also

indicate that their conceptions of teaching were directly related to their conceptions of higher education purposes, which were underpinned by neo-liberal higher education development. Similarly, the post-program data show a change in conceptions of participants in their views towards higher education purposes, which resulted in a change in their conceptions on higher education teachers' roles and teaching and learning. In fact, in the post-program phase, participants' conceptions were driven under the influence of the outcome-based approach towards teaching and learning, and the capability approach (personal and community development) towards higher education purposes. Those underpinning philosophies were reflected in participants' conceptions in the three themes in the post-program phase.

Under the Higher Education Purpose theme, graduates' competence (with a combination of knowledge-skill-attitude) and their awareness of social contribution was more frequently mentioned. The similar changes in how participants viewed their roles, from knowledge-transmitter to knowledge-facilitator and inspirer of individual's competence in the post-phase program data show the strong relationship in the conceptions of higher education purposes and teachers' roles. The way they perceived learning, acknowledged their roles in helping student learning (motivating, developing autonomy) and considered student development and diversity in teaching orientation and approaches, in the post-program phase, are strongly related to their conceptions of higher education purposes in developing individual's competence and craft, with knowledge-skill-attitude as outcomes. Conceptions of the alignment of teaching, learning, and assessment with course outcomes in curriculum and course design, as found in the post-program phase, further supported the influence of the outcome-based approach towards higher education on participants' conceptions. To summarise, the post-program phase conceptions of teaching tended to be attentive to developing individual's competence, rather than just focusing on market demands, and the constructive alignment to teaching and learning became a significant concept that drove participants' conceptual change on three themes: higher education purposes, roles of higher education purposes and teaching and learning higher education.

The relevance of these themes provides supportive evidence for the consideration of broadening the current conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education, as argued by Alexander (2008), Kreber (2013a, 2013b), Leibowitz (2016). Despite the conceptions of higher education purposes in gaining knowledge and skills, the study also shows higher education purposes is also reflected in students' ethical values. Therefore, Vietnamese higher education, through the lens of this study, proves not to be neglecting its role in reproducing a

moral society, for which it has been criticised in past literature (Peters, 2004; Walker, 2010). Judged from this perspective, the study once again shows a consistency of participants' conceptions of morality as a purpose of higher education. Nonetheless, the construction of morality as a "purpose of higher education" and "moral teaching", is limited in its nature, which emerged as moral behaviour and cultural norms in Vietnamese social life, rather than globalised ethical standards or the global concerns related to human development perspectives. For this reason, it can be concluded that higher education purposes, as perceived in this study, from the government, presenters and program participants, are dominantly underpinned by the neo-liberal pedagogy, and not the capability approach to human development pedagogy as suggested by Walker (2006). Elsewhere in this chapter, it has been argued already that morality standards of higher education teachers and the teaching of morals for students, as perceived by program participants, were consistently present, but morality dimensions related to equality, social justice, sustainability, differences respect or students' democracy, which are argued to be necessary elements in constructing a public good society (Boni & Walker, 2013; Nussbaum, 2011; Sen, 2009), were absent. In accordance with Altbach's (2007) statement on the neo-liberal ideology influences on policy and practices of higher education in developing countries in the pursuit of economic outcomes, the results indicate globalisation and economic pressures have indeed influenced how participants perceive higher education purposes, teachers' roles as well as teaching and learning activities. The study so far has gone beyond the deconstruction of teaching and learning conceptions, restricted to classroom perspectives, and provides a picture that addresses the influences of higher levels (policy and societal level) of higher education (Alexander, 2008) on the conceptualisation of Vietnamese higher education teaching and learning. It shows conceptions on higher education purposes are related to what drives participants' understanding of teaching and learning in higher education, and similar attempts to uncover this relationship are therefore encouraged in this age of uncertainty (Barnett, 2009) and rapid worldwide higher education reforms.

6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, conceptual changes in higher education teaching and learning, from perspectives of participants in a compulsory higher education teachers' training program in Vietnam, have been discussed by comparing the construction of two sets of teaching and learning perceptions constructed by participants. It can be concluded that conceptual changes could have been resulted from participating in the program, despite the fact that it was not

explicitly stated as an expected aim of the program. In addition, findings of the study show how participants' conceptions of higher education purposes and teachers' roles and standards can be related to their conceptions of teaching and learning. The findings on conceptual change drawn from this study can inform the practice of similar programs for early or prospective higher education teachers or academic development activities. The next chapter, will present a conclusion for the study, an evaluation of this grounded theory study, address limitations, highlight the study implications and suggest future research directions.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.0 Introduction

The previous chapters have presented the degree to which participants' conceptions of teaching and learning changed after participating in the investigated training program and discussed the findings in light of conceptions of higher education teaching and learning, and participants' conceptual changes in teaching and learning. This study used constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014), and highlighted the process of data collection, analysis, and the co-construction of meanings from a specific context in Vietnam in extending the understanding of teaching and learning in higher education. This chapter presents a summary of the findings, addresses the research questions raised, presents a discussion on the evaluation of this grounded theory study and its limitations, provides suggestions for future research, and states the implications to be drawn from the study.

7.1 Key findings

As stated in Chapter One, Introduction, the study aimed to investigate the degree of change in participants' conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education by comparing the two sets of theories of teaching and learning constructed before and after their participation in a compulsory teacher training program for higher education teachers. It is concluded that significant changes were found in the participants' conceptions of teaching and learning in the post-program phase. Not only were changes in how program participants perceived teaching and learning in the classroom found, but changes related to their conceptions of higher education purposes and higher education teachers' standards and roles were revealed. Changes related to each theme will be summarised according to the sub-questions of the research.

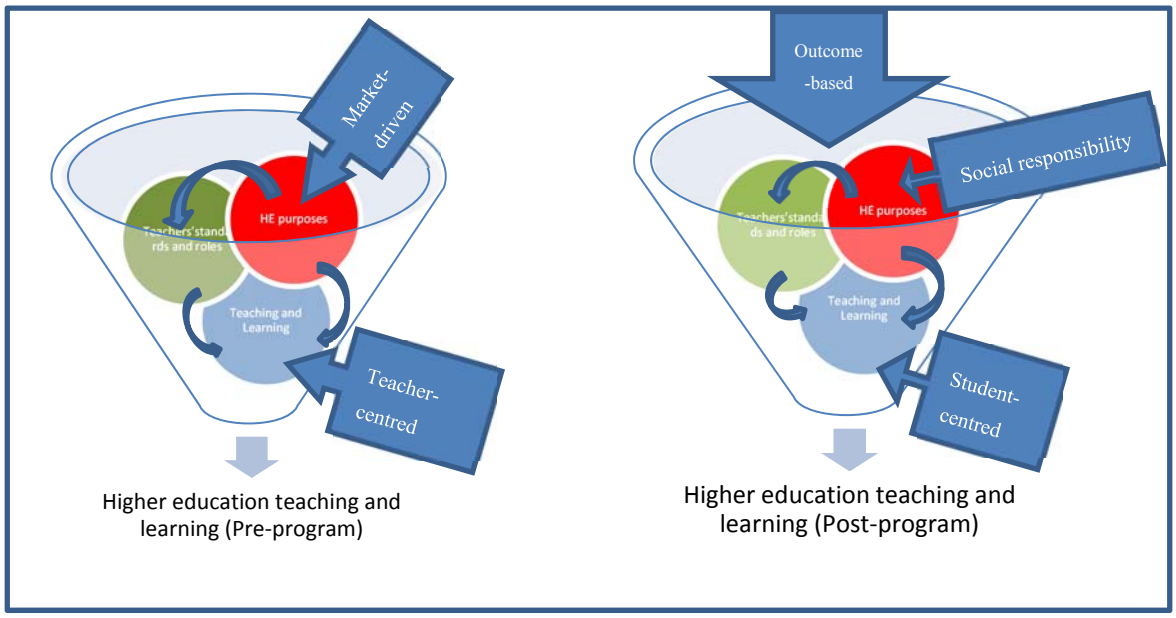

Figure 7.1 Changes in conceptions of teaching and learning and underlying influences

Research question one

To what extent did participants change their conceptions of the purposes of higher education and teachers' standards and roles in it?

Findings from this grounded theory study provide an interpretation on the conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education which is broader than the conventional perspectives of teaching and learning associated with teachers' work with students in the classroom. The literature review has provided salient influence on this extended perspective towards teaching and learning (Alexander, 2008; Kreber, 2013a; 2013b; Leibowitz, 2016; Walker, 2006). Specifically, Leibowitz (2016) stressed the contextual influences on higher education teachers' professional development policy and strategy and advocated the social-realistic approach to professional development, which takes contexts of teaching and learning into account. Under current higher education reforms in Vietnam (HERA 2006-2020), and the current policy in making pedagogical training for prospective and higher education teachers compulsory (Decision 61/2007/QĐ-BGDĐT), it is important that contextual influences on higher education purposes and values be considered when researching higher education teaching and learning in this context.

This grounded theory, firstly, portrays an initial theory on the current understanding of higher education purposes and teachers' standards and roles, from the various perspectives of program participants, program presenters and the government policy. It is clear from the study that the conceptions of higher education purposes and teachers' standards and roles are interrelated,

reflected in the simultaneous changes in conceptions under three themes in each program phase (6.3.2). The overall findings indicate the influence of conceptions of purposes of higher education and the construction of higher education teachers' roles and standards on conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education in Vietnam nowadays.

Findings on the conceptions of higher education purposes at the post-program phase reflect that participants were gradually moving away from the influence of neo-liberal values on higher education purposes, i.e. producing human resources and labour force for the country, and focusing more on graduates' competence and craft as well as morality. The changes found in the post-program phase, as indicated in each sub-category under the "higher education purposes" theme, have resonances of support in recent literature on current higher education functions in developing countries (Castells, 2001, 1993; Welch, 2011). The pressure for higher education to produce trained skilled labour as demanded by society was perceived to be dominant in this study, as Welch (2011, p. 2) stated. This was clear in the pre-program phase where program participants' conceptions of the roles of higher education saw them as meeting employers' demands, and producing competent human resources for the country's global integration process. Participants' post-program conceptions of higher education purposes, however, turned to shift more to the social responsibility of graduates. It was found that participants' conceptions of higher education purposes, in the post-program phase, were starting to move towards the public good functions of higher education. The shifting awareness of program participants towards the "community engagement" functions of higher education as Sullivan and Rosin (2008) challenged was also recognised in the post-program phase.

Similarly, findings on the conceptual change under the "competence-craft" sub-category of higher education purposes found at the post-program phase indicate a focus on educating "knowledge-skill-attitude" and "creativity, confidence, research", which is more relevant to Watson's (2014) cluster of "competence and craft" in higher education purposes. Before participating in the training program, participants perceived employability skills and qualities as necessary under the "competence-craft" of graduates, which was relevant to how they viewed higher education's role in meeting the employers' demands. "Morality", in the context of the study, was perceived as *proper work ethics and social manners*, and expanded to *attitude* and *awareness* of one's behaviour in the post-program phase. The emergence of more dimensions of "morality" at the post-program phase implies more attention was paid to the moral role of higher education, which is consistent with Fitzmaurice's (2010, 2008) argument on moral practice in higher education teaching. On the other hand, the changes found with

regard to higher education purposes strongly suggest that a moral role of higher education was perceived from a restricted angle, without the consideration of global urgencies (Cortese & Hattan, 2010; Walker, 2006) or civil responsibilities (Watson, 2014) and public reasoning (Sen, 2012) as moral outcomes that Vietnamese higher education needs to be achieving. This finding motivates further research on exploring the conceptions of morality in Vietnamese higher education contexts and how they might be differed from other contexts.

Similarly, the second theme of the study: "Higher education teachers' standards and roles", was found to be perceived differently at the post-program phase, and these changes were influenced and connected to the changes of participants' conceptions of higher education purposes. The conceptions of *professional standards and roles* of higher education teachers in the post-program phase were less market-driven, and less teacher-centred. A pure facilitating role of teachers was perceived, rather than a mixed conception of a knowledge transmitting role and knowledge facilitating role as identified in the pre-program phase. Conceptions of this theme were found to be relevant to the "teaching and learning" theme, reflected in how participants perceived their roles in curriculum and course design in the post-program phase, which has been classified as one significant role of higher education teachers by Harden and Crossby (2000) and Badley and Habeshaw (1991).

Findings on this theme also confirm its relationship with "higher education purposes" theme because both phases of the study highlight educating for morality as a role of higher education teachers. "Educating attitude of students and their morals", as well as "inspiring their learning" emerged as dimensions of "roles of higher education teachers" in the post-program phase, and those dimensions are parallel with the emerging of "the integration of knowledge-skill-attitude" under "competence and craft" of higher education purposes. The findings of this study indicate that teaching in higher education in the Vietnamese context is not conceptualised as a pure adoption of teaching strategies to help students achieve knowledge, but the virtuous and moral dispositions are also recognised as equally important (Fitzmaurice, 2010, 2008; Nixon, 2008). As a result, when the morality of students was perceived to be a graduate attribute, this raised the bar for teachers' moral standards. As well as having 21st century expertise knowledge and skills (Kivunja, 2014), higher education teachers in Vietnam, as shown from participants' interview data, are also expected to have good moral standards, which are defined as good behaviour, passion for learning, and a caring attitude towards students in this study. This conception was unchanged during the two phases of the study.

Research question two

To what extent did participants change their conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education?

The study found significant changes in how participants perceived teaching and learning in higher education in the post-program phase. An awareness of the importance of Bloom's higher order thinking was greater at the end of the program, and more teacher's responsibility for student learning was stressed in the post-program conceptions. This change was found to be related to the change in "teaching orientation" as a student-centred approach to teaching was perceived, taking students' learning and diversity into account when choosing teaching approaches. In contrast to pre-program conceptions of teaching, where participants were confused between the two extremes of teaching conceptions (student-centred and teacher-centred), as categorised in the literature by Samuelowicz and Bain (2001) and Kember (1997), conceptions of teaching in the post-program phase was leaning towards the student-centred orientation. However, the construction of this orientation stopped at the threshold in the middle of Samuelowicz and Bain's (2001) framework on conceptions of teaching.

The study also found significant changes in the ways the participants conceptualised curriculum and course design, according to Biggs' (1999) constructive alignment theory (outcome-based curriculum). A conception of an outcome-based curriculum or course design targeting three aspects of knowledge-skill-attitude, parallel with teaching, learning, and assessment activities, was perceived in the post-program phase. This change shows one key concept underlying the construction of the program in this context: constructive alignment. This grounded theory, as a result, provides both a theory on conceptual change on participants' conceptions as a result of participating in the compulsory training program, and presents some concepts underlying the construction of this program, which has not been studied previously in this context. The study, therefore, offers potential implications for policy makers, administrators, academic developers and program presenters, and researchers in similar fields.

7.2 Implications of the study

7.2.1 Implications for higher education policy makers and administrators

From the findings of this study, it is obvious that some shortcomings of higher education in Vietnam need to be addressed. If a reform of higher education with an aim to enhance quality of teaching and learning is to be enacted, the following recommendations will be of use to

policy makers and curriculum developers, judging from the theory on teaching and learning conceptions constructed in this study.

First, it is clear that participants' conceptions of teaching and learning were found to be quite significantly changed as a result of the program. The student-centred teaching and learning conceptions at the post-program phase were better justified and were found to be related to conceptions of teachers' roles regarding their role in knowledge facilitation. What is absent from this study is the lack of data from participants' conceptions regarding higher education research roles and teachers' research roles. This is already noted from Marginson's (2011) observation on the lack of research fund for Vietnamese higher education, compared to other Confucian-driven higher education contexts examined in his analysis. In China or Japan, for example, funding for research in higher education has proved to be substantially influential for the higher education growth and development (Marginson, 2011). It is suggested that research funding for higher education in Vietnam needs to be increased. Raising awareness of the role of research in higher education and enacting encouraging policies to support research competence of higher education teachers are recommended so that higher education can contribute to the creation of new trends in society, rather than following the existing trends, and in the case of developing countries like Vietnam, help to boost global integration more successfully.

The conceptions of student learning in the post-program phase illustrate an awareness of higher levels of student learning based upon Bloom's taxonomy, however, the data indicate those conceptions are limited at the application level on Bloom's taxonomy. Teaching approaches, therefore, were perceived to help students apply knowledge and skills in practice, rather than developing students' critical thinking, creativity through research participation. Compared to Samuelowicz and Bain's (2001) model of teaching conceptions, changes in participants' conceptions lie in the middle of the teaching conception continuum. Co-constructing knowledge and knowledge creation were not perceived as conceptions of teaching in the present study, indicating a gap in teaching conceptions that needs further attention. Similarly, the importance of students' voices in curriculum construction and their contribution to knowledge construction were not perceived, highlighting the fact that conceptions of teaching and learning in this context were restricted to the idea that teachers should be the masters and facilitators of knowledge, and teaching should be an organising process, which according to Ramsden (2003), is still restricted at theory two of teaching (refer to Literature Review, 2.2.1). In other words, in this study, teaching conceptions, from the participants' perspectives, were

grounded in the focus that emphasises teaching techniques, managing teaching strategies, and organising active activities and skills, rather than challenging students' understanding and developing students' learning authenticity. Students' learning authenticity (their awareness of what learning is about, why they are learning what they learn) is not fully addressed. More focus on student learning, with an emphasis on developing students' conceptual change needs to be adopted. At the same time with addressing teachers' teaching competence, a focus on student learning and how best to turn their learning into higher levels of thinking (evaluating, creating), and student authenticity needs to be emphasised as pivotal in higher education development policy and initiatives.

Thirdly, the study highlights the influence of the *human capital* influence on Vietnamese higher education policy, and simultaneously on program presenters, and participants' conceptions. Graduates' capability and competence were also acknowledged as an important purpose but there was a lack of emphasis on students' authenticity or capability development. In the literature review, there was already warning of this for developing countries, where the emphasis on economic growth has led higher education to focus its role on producing a competent labour force for the country. Although this study does not try to argue against this viewpoint, the adoption of a capabilities approach (Walker, 2010, 2006) to contribute to the development of the students' full potential and a just society (Kreber, 2013a) is highly recommended. As a result, it is suggested that higher education policy makers and curriculum designers think of how to embrace the possibility to develop the full potential of human beings as a pivotal function of higher education, rather than focusing on the expected outcomes of the administrators and social demands. Consequently, teachers and students' voices in designing curriculum is necessary. A model to develop curriculum as "negotiating potentials" (competency) or "empowerment" (Annala et al., 2016) should facilitate more emancipation from teachers and students' interactions and go beyond the neo-liberal influence towards employment, thereby equipping students with full potential in a range of circumstances and understanding, to resolve the critical challenges of our time, addressing global issues. Curriculum design, in addition, should not focus just on academic outcomes, but needs to make sure graduates are well aware of national identities, moral and cultural values, and the necessity of maintaining a just society. The introduction of global awareness into the curriculum to enhance graduates' contribution to not only national but global security and sustainable development is therefore necessary. A restructure of the higher education curriculum should

place its emphasis on global issues, students' capability and consider students' voice in curriculum construction.

7.2.2 Higher education teachers' professional development: Which avenues for Vietnam in the reform context?

This study has uncovered possible on participants' conceptual changes in one context in Vietnam as a result of participating a compulsory teacher training program and the findings suggest useful implications for the restructure of similar professional development programs or in-service teachers' professional development for higher education teachers.

Firstly, to address the limitation of the threshold conceptions of teaching and learning, which is restricted at the border of "teacher-centred" and "student-centred" as discussed earlier, theories of higher conceptions to teaching, for example, "theory three" of university teaching (teaching as making learning possible) by Ramsden (2003) and "co-constructing knowledge" by Carnell (2007) are strongly recommended to be introduced in the higher education teacher training program. The two theories share the collaborative nature of constructing knowledge between higher education teachers and students. Teaching methods which teachers choose are informed by the critical barriers that students' experience, therefore, encourages teachers' efforts in listening to students and others to continuously improve their professional knowledge to help scaffold diverse students' learning journeys. Teachers, consequently, need to be aware that teaching is complex and multi-faceted, and a context-related activity. Professional development programs need to address this issue, preparing teachers to work in this uncertain environment where they are always challenged to improve their teaching continuously to meet individual differences from students' learning diversity and obstacles. One way to encourage this is to include modules that can help teachers reflect on their past teaching and speculate and plan for better teaching practices (Ramsden, 2003). Another way is to consider the introduction of a co-constructivist approach to understanding teaching, which emphasises the roles of both teachers and students in constructing knowledge (Carnell, 2007). Therefore, rather than focusing on teaching skills or techniques, elements related to learning, community learning (through co-constructive dialogue), and meta learning (making sense of one's experience of learning) should be included in professional development programs for teachers. As this study only investigates changes in participants' conceptions of teaching, of which learning conception emerged as a supplementary part, it encourages future research into studying participants' change in how they conceptualise student learning and the relationship between

conceptions of teaching and conceptions of learning, especially how participants implement meta-learning in their classroom practice.

Secondly, there has been no study published on how the curriculum of the compulsory MOET training program was constructed, so it is unclear what conceptual framework guided its construction. However, it is clearly stated in the program outline that coordinating institutions assert certain authority and flexibility to redesign and adapt the curriculum according to their contexts. It is, therefore, strongly recommended that the institutions take an initial step to research participants' expectations and needs before implementing the program, to better respond to each program cohort. The development of a professional development program curriculum that is more authentic to program participants' needs according to their disciplines, competence, and cultures need to be recognised. Similar studies, addressing participants' conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education, will respond to this research gap and provide informative data on participants' voices which could be pivotal for the reconstruction of the program curriculum. The opportunity for program participants to define themselves as higher education teachers, challenge their roles under contextual influence, and learn from peers (not just follow what is expected of them) (Cranton, 2011; Knight, 2002; Kreber, 2013; Leibowitz, 2016) could provide insightful perspectives on the redesign of some modules involved in the curriculum of the program.

Recent scholarly studies aiming to investigate impacts of such compulsory training programs (such as Pedder & Opfer, 2013; Stes et al., 2007; Trigwell et al., 2012) or to examine presenters and administrators' perspectives on key concepts of higher education training programs (such as Kandlbinder & Peseta, 2009) are also believed to be useful to shed light on potential directions for similar training endeavours. This study, by addressing this research gap in a Vietnamese context, identifies significant theory on the underpinning concepts that influence the design and implementation of such a program. Firstly, it provides a theory of conceptual change as an impact of the examined program. It presents a model of conceptual change that is quite positive, supporting the initiative of the program but at the same time, addresses issues which need to be reconsidered as already highlighted in the previous section. Furthermore, the study provides an initial understanding of the underlying concepts that are driving the implementation of this program. Judging from the government documents, and presenters' interview data, supported with a significant change on how participants perceived three themes emerged from the study, it can be concluded that the "active learning" model (teaching as organising theory) (Ramsden, 2003), and the "constructive alignment" to higher education

teaching and learning (Biggs, 1999) constitute the basic philosophy underlying the implementation of the program in this context. The study, as such, offers preliminary evidence on the concepts underpinning compulsory pedagogical training for higher education in Vietnam in this particular context, and thus, encourages curriculum designers and presenters in similar program to step back and reflect on their current practice. Looking back on signature concepts of higher education teaching and learning research by Kandlbinder (2013), the study indicates many of these concepts are overlooked in this Vietnamese context, which shows the inconsistent development of academic training in Vietnam with current worldwide practice. Considering the policy and implementation of academic development programs is still a new field of research in Vietnam, the conceptual changes found from this study are quite encouraging, but if more impacts are to be achieved, a general introduction to scholarly literature into higher education teaching and learning as suggested by Kandlbinder (2013, p. 1) would be essential.

Moreover, as indicated from the findings data, no evidence on the "scholarship of teaching and learning" (SoLT) conception was found to be present from participants' and presenters' conceptions. SoLT has been found to be a key concept for early-career higher education teachers' pedagogical development (Kandlbinder & Peseta, 2009), and also in recent reflections on the changing nature, from unscholarly to scholarly, of approaches to educational development (Gibbs, 2013). The inclusion of the scholarship of teaching and learning (Boyer, 1990) (addressing four maxims: discovery, integration, application and teaching) needs to be introduced as it will help to fill in two shortcomings of Vietnamese higher education teachers' competence: research competence and reflection, and evidence-based teaching. Those two drawbacks are also reflected in how participants conceptualise their teaching and learning conceptions, and their standards. In the competing era of higher education, where research has become an exclusive proof, not only to showcase higher education research innovation, but also to inform teaching practice, the role of research and teachers' participation in research in Vietnamese higher education, is too limited. Higher education teachers in this study, therefore, are constructed as teachers, not scholars or academics, whose job is just to transmit knowledge, rather than transforming learning and extending learning, which is the logic which underpins scholarship of teaching and learning (Boyer, 1990). The research module in the program curriculum, can shift its concentration from evidence-based action research to encourage a more reflective practice, community learning, and research participation from participants. The implementation of a professional development program that supports the use of action

research/learning projects has been found successful with a group of educators from Southeast Asia (Laws, Harbon, & Wescombe, 2013). It is therefore, strongly suggested that action research be introduced, and nurtured in higher education professional development programs. Research needs to be embraced as a way of enhancing teaching, as argued by Leibowitz (2014):

> For me, 'teaching and learning' itself would also include the teaching and learning of academics as well as students. We learn partly by teaching, and vice versa. Similarly, we learn by conducting research, and our research, including research on teaching, should enhance teaching. This is the nexus of 'academic development'. (p. 359)

Finally, the support for a broadened view towards the understanding of teaching and learning and the design of higher education teachers' academic development is argued for and supported to be included in the program curriculum. Recent literature has called for a broader view towards understanding the scholarship of teaching and learning, encouraging researchers to investigate not only teaching and learning, but questioning the influences of social or institutional norms or expectations that might inform or constrain teaching as well (Cranton, 2011; Kreber, 2013a, 2013b; Leibowitz, 2016). It becomes apparent from this study that the way participants perceived higher education purposes influenced how they perceived their roles in teaching and learning. It is posited that academic developers for higher education teachers' training programs take this on board, embedding broader elements that can influence teaching and learning into the program for higher education teachers. Besides addressing learning and teaching techniques, social norms, and values that underpin teachers' conceptions and practice need to be considered. Studies that examine teachers' views of their local higher education purposes, values and what they believe their roles are under the influence of social norms will shed light on the restructure of professional development programs according to cultural contexts. A look back on the program structure, and its modules suggests that training activities for program participants are still focused on enhancing teaching strategies and methods, rather than helping them to reflect on their thinking and practice, and to challenge their individual learning or passion. Elsewhere in this study, it has been suggested that investigation of early-career higher education teachers' identity needs to be conducted, although this is not a new field of research. It is, accordingly, argued that the complex and disparate nature of higher education institutions has led to different co-construction of academic identity (Harris, 2005, p. 425). The local context plays a significant role in the developing academic identity in the

current higher education reforms (Clegg, 2008). Taking this into account, it is necessary to research new and early academics' ontology on their roles so that implications for useful and effective training activities could scaffold their identity construction under certain influences of political, social, and economic contextual constraints. Training programs for higher education teachers, in-service or even new or early-career teachers, thus, should create opportunities for program participants to reflect on their roles in their own experience, and context, and challenge themselves. In suggesting this, it is also worthwhile to recommend that approaches to the training program need to vary, including coaching, mentoring, group-teaching, peer review, follow-up and individualised consultancy. Apart from a face-to-face workshop training approach to delivery as shown in this program, other approaches which encourage participants to have their own assignments peer-reviewed, micro-teaching practiced, and even evaluated through evidence-based teaching or research are helpful in constructing participants' adaptation of their teaching according to their contexts and identities.

In terms of moral standards and a moral role in higher education, conceptions of participants in fact, were congruent with the policy documents and presenters' expectations. The study, therefore, provides a theory on the inclusion of moral standards and the moral teaching role, apart from discipline standards and roles of teachers. As Kreber (2010) put it, the moral dimension is usually neglected in the plethora of academic identity construction research. This theory on higher education teachers' roles and standards shed new light on the verification of the significance which morality plays in the Vietnamese higher education contexts. However, the theory on higher education teachers' roles and standards in both phases of the study do not provide strong evidence to support moral dimensions as theorised by Nixon (2008), or in-depth notion on virtues that underpin teaching practice as suggested by McIntyre (1985). Considering the main purpose of the study, this finding is supplementary in supporting the consideration of teachers' roles in higher education teaching and learning, and thus, though it does not investigate in-depth the construction of teachers' identity, it provides evidence to encourage future research that taps into deeper levels of teachers' construction of their identities, especially on moral virtues and their dimensions, as insisted on by Kreber (2010).

7.2.3 Theoretical implications

Participants' conceptual changes in higher education teaching and learning in this study have addressed areas that have scarcely been researched in Vietnam, and at the same time, responded to some theoretical research gaps in the areas of teaching and learning in higher education, and higher education teachers' training.

The study fills the gap of the current literature on higher education pedagogical development training for higher education teachers by revisiting teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning (Åkerlind, 2008; Hativa et al., 2002; Ho et al., 2001; Trigwell, 2006), rather than attempting to focus on teaching techniques and skills. The study concludes that changing participants' conceptions is possible, even in this case where a conceptual change approach to program training was not adopted. It confirms the conclusion made from past literature that a teacher's conceptual change is feasible, however, it might occur quite slowly (Gibbs & Coffey, 2004; Stes et al., 2012; Trigwell et al., 2012), and requires accommodative measures to bring about, as indicated by Ho et al. (2001). The findings indicate that conceptions of teaching and learning at the post-program of participants changed but did not move to the sophisticated levels which is similar to Radloff's (2002) study. Thus, the thesis conclusion is in agreement with Radloff (2002) that initial training of higher education teachers might be potential in changing participants' conceptions but realistic outcomes for short-training program should be targeted. In order to achieve significant conceptual changes, participants' previous learning and teaching experiences need to be confronted, scaffolded and the development of their self-regulation needs to be facilitated during the implementation of the program. Those suggestions can develop further conceptual changes from participants. Future research can shift the focus on research that investigates how to improve program participants' conceptual changes to more sophisticated level, considering those suggestions into account.

The theory grounded from this study findings further provides initial empirical evidence on the construction of higher education purposes and teachers' standards and roles, and teaching and learning orientation from the perspectives of program participants in one specific context in Vietnam. Under the centralised management and governance of the higher education system in Vietnam (Dao, 2015; Phan et al., 2016), these conceptions from participants' perspectives illuminate the significant voices (teachers) that are often unheard (Phan et al., 2016). Future studies on Vietnamese higher education on the aforementioned themes could be examined based on the findings found from this study. Modification of the compulsory pedagogical training program is proposed from the findings from this study, in a way that is more responsive to students' needs and which scaffolds teachers' voices under the supercomplexity of this age. The findings of the study indicate more efforts need to be done if a change from teacher-centred to student-centred conception is to be achieved from the program. This finding resolves the argument occurring lately between Samuelowicz and Bain (2001) and Kember (1997) with

regards to validating that the border between the two extremes of teaching conceptions, from teacher-centred to student-centred, is present and as data in this study shows, is hard to cross.

The study also responds to the call for a research agenda that tries to broaden the view of teaching and learning in higher education beyond the classroom level (Dall'Alba, 2005; Kreber, 2013; Leibowitz, 2016; Tatto, 1998). It is clear that conceptions of higher education purposes and teachers' standards and roles are related to teaching and learning conceptions, therefore, it is strongly argued that an understanding of higher education teaching and learning cannot be separated from the conceptualisation of higher education values that govern teachers' roles, and teaching and learning activities. Curriculum development for students should take this issue into account and the design of the curriculum must be viewed from a social-cultural perspective as well, rather than just the competence perspective, which is aligned with Annala et al.'s (2016) suggestion for curriculum design framework. Also, the study points out that although Vietnamese higher education values its role in educating a moral nation, it has neglected its role in contributing to global issues, human development and the social good, which has been warned of in the literature (Boni & Walker, 2013, Kreber, 2013a; Walker, 2013, Walker, 2010).

Finally, the study provides implications on the underlying key concepts of "constructive alignment" (Biggs, 1999) and "active learning" (Ramsden, 2003) that are driving the design and implementation of the studied program. It differs from Kandlbinder and Peseta's (2009) study because the thesis does not explicitly aim to investigate the concepts underlying the program implementation in this Vietnamese context. However, the thesis findings provide the first theoretical evidence on the underlying philosophy that drives such a program in a completely new field of study in Vietnam and responds to the lack of literature on the key concepts underpinning a compulsory teacher training program for higher education in developing countries. Future studies that aim to examine key concepts of higher education teacher training in Vietnam can be built upon this grounded theory research.

7.3 Evaluation of grounded theory research

The writings of Charmaz (2006, pp. 182-183) outlined in Chapter 3 of this thesis, identified criteria to assure quality of constructivist grounded theory research. The following criteria were addressed.

7.3.1 Credibility

The research has achieved familiarity with the setting and topic, and explored the conceptions of teaching and learning throughout detailed descriptions in Chapters 4 and 5. Fifteen participants were selected and in-depth interviews have provided extensive data for both phases of interview (pre-program and post-program). Based upon Charmaz's (2006) principle that a minimum of ten participants is needed to achieve theoretical saturation, the number of participants should be sufficient for theory development in constructivist grounded theory. Triangulation with different sources of data also helped enhance in-depth analysis of the study phenomenon in multiple perspectives. During the data analysis phase, constant comparison technique helped check emerging categories against memos from field notes and my interpretation of data. The categories also cover a wide range of empirical observations from interview data, with participants with a conceptual model of change having three main categories, which infer different interpretations on aspects of teaching and learning in higher education. A strong logical link between data and argument was formed throughout the revisiting of data analysis, theoretical sampling and literature. Memos (Appendix H) and category development helped to confirm the link. Participant quotations were used to provide examples for each major category and their subcategories to allow readers to form independent assessment.

7.3.2 Originality

The themes and sub-categories are original in this context, considering no published study has ever been found, until now, which report on the investigation of the compulsory training program since it was first introduced. Findings on participants' conceptual change inform initial possible changes brought about by participating the program in this particular context and general findings on participants' conceptions of areas of teaching and learning in higher education yield essential and unique findings compared to other research on conceptions of teaching and learning. The findings also provide evidence to support a new line of research that could investigate the influence of factors underpinning teaching and learning conceptions: purposes of higher education and teachers' roles. From a theoretical perspective, this research therefore, offers insights into a broader sense of teaching and learning conceptions, taking socio-cultural perspectives into account, and highlights the uniqueness of conceptions of higher education teaching and learning from an under-researched area in Vietnam education, and provides initial sketches to evaluate impacts of the compulsory higher education teacher training upon participants' conceptions of teaching and learning.

The study also offers practical implications for the restructure of not only compulsory teachers' professional development programs, like the one examined in this study, but provides helpful hints for continuing professional development activities for higher education teachers in general. The study pinpoints gaps in teachers' professional development initiatives in the Vietnamese context, and implications are made to policy makers and administrators considering the uniqueness of teaching and learning conceptions emerged in this study. The study extends current support to address teachers' thinking and conceptions as recommended in previous research, but at the same time, from a more social-cultural perspective, extends the understanding of teaching and learning in higher education outside the classroom environment, taking conceptions of teaching and learning to a higher level, embracing teachers to proactively reflect the purposes of the field they are working in and their roles in fulfilling those purposes in a progressing world. The study has drawn on theory from different areas: human development to higher education and social cultural development on higher education roles, morality, students' authenticity, conceptions and approaches to teaching and learning, teacher' conceptual change, and teachers' professional development. It was not my intention to cover many aspects of higher education teaching and learning literature but the new literature emerged together with data analysis and helped compare data and reach theoretical development. The study findings, however, can be used to infer directions for not only research and practices of higher education teachers' professional development in other contexts in Vietnam but will be useful for the reflections of individual higher education teachers, academic program developers and administrators to step back and consider the drive and motivation behind the teaching philosophy and approaches they have been using.

7.3.3 Resonance

The study meets the resonance criteria because categories not only represent the studied experience: teaching and learning in higher education, but also describe the influencing factors on teaching and learning experience: higher education purposes and teachers' roles. The relationships between societal, institutions and program participants' experiences are portrayed in the findings, shedding light from different perspectives and from how those perspectives are linked to one another, which are presented in Findings in Chapters 4 and 5. The study is also resonant because its findings offer implications for future or in-service higher education teachers to reflect on their conceptions of teaching and learning, and on their experiences in their roles and the area they work in: higher education, and what their roles are really for.

7.3.4 Usefulness

Findings of the study, as a result, offer interpretations for higher education teachers to reflect on their teaching activities, and philosophy and insights on their roles which might influence and change the way they teach. The study may assist academic development designers to reconstruct the program in a more efficient way, and policy makers to reflect on their documentation and consider teachers' voices in the reconstruction of those documents. All categories suggest processes and interactions, which recommend potential research directions into the relationship among those categories, for example, how purposes of higher education might influence teaching and learning approaches, both in conceptions of teachers and in their practice. Further research is also recommended to consider a shift to move beyond the phenomenography approach to studying teaching and learning conceptions and explore socio-cultural perspectives of teaching and learning, especially in developing countries. The study also offers evidence to support a compulsory training program for higher education teachers as policy, but at the same time, raises issues that need to be addressed, which more case study research or longitudinal research can help to resolve. The study, in general, makes a contribution to higher education teaching and learning, considering the broad perspective taken into account when reconsidering purposes of higher education, and teachers' roles when studying teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning. It offers implications for policy makers, academic development designers, and administrators to reflect on current practice of the policy and program they are implementing to better improve teachers' quality teaching. It also identifies the neglected areas in such teacher training programs and the higher education system in general.

7.4 Limitations and suggestions for future research

This thesis concludes that conceptual changes in teaching and learning in higher education are feasible but more research is needed to reach further conclusions that the program leads to participants' change in their actual teaching practice. Classroom observations and longitudinal studies, involving students' reports on teachers' changed practice are needed to determine both conceptual change and actual changes to teaching practice as long-term impacts of the program. In addition, quantitative studies researching students' use of learning approaches and teachers' use of different teaching approaches, and their relationship after finishing the program are needed to validate the impacts of programs in classroom practice.

It is recommended from the results of this thesis that future research into conceptions of teaching and learning of different types of higher education institutions (public or private universities and vocational colleges) be undertaken to validate the disparities of conceptions of issues related to teaching and learning in higher education in Vietnam. Due to the restricted context and the nature of this research, the differences in the conceptions of specific groups of program participants, according to their disciplines, or higher education institutions (public, private) and two separate groups of participants (in-service higher education teachers, and prospective higher education teachers who are professionals or graduates) have not been illustrated. As the number of private higher education institutions and international higher education institutions in Vietnam are increasing, the conceptions of teaching and learning, and these of higher education aims and teachers' roles might be different from those who work in public higher education institutions. For academic development programs to better customise for the needs and diversity of groups of teachers, the investigation into different groups of teachers' conceptions are necessary.

The thesis provides a theory on conceptual change regarding teaching and learning in higher education, which was based upon interview data with one cohort of participants. The results, therefore, cannot be used to generalise to other cohorts of the same program in this context, or similar programs in other Vietnamese contexts. However, the findings offer insightful implications for academic developers of similar programs, and program presenters. Studies into key concepts constructing the pedagogical training program for higher education teachers, focusing on both presenters and participants' voices in co-constructing such a program will be justified because academic development is a completely new field in Vietnam and no published studies have ever been found to investigate the construction of academic development programs, from participants and trainers' perspectives. Studies investigating key concepts of such a training program, for example, (Kandlbinder & Peseta, 2009) will provide insights for the restructure of academic development journeys for higher education teachers, taking resources and local contexts into account. Similarly, case studies, examining impacts of the program in other contexts will be useful to compare differences in the degree of impact of the program's influence on participants' conceptions of teaching and learning, and therefore provide empirical evidence to reconstruct the program in a way that better targets participants' conceptions and even practice.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet

Faculty of Education and Social Work
The University of Sydney
NSW 2006 Australia

Participant Information Sheet (for program participants)

Research title: Conceptual Changes in Higher Education Teaching and Learning: Insights from a compulsory teacher training program for higher education teachers in Vietnam

This study investigates the impacts of the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) compulsory teacher professional development program for higher education teachers on their conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education. You have been invited to participate in this study because you are about to undertake such a program. Participation in this research study is voluntary. You will be given a copy of this Participant Information Statement to keep.

NGUYEN THI VAN SU is conducting this study for the degree of PhD at The University of Sydney. This will take place under the supervision of Dr Kevin Laws.

By participating in the study, you will be interviewed individually two times: before the program starts and immediately when it is finished. The first interview will be conducted prior to the program starts and lasts about 30-45 minutes. When the program finishes, another 30-45 minute interview will be conducted.

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney (Australia) and the university in Viet Nam.

If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind later, you are free to withdraw at any time. You can do this by informing the researcher through email: tngu3559@uni.sydney.edu.au or mobile phone (+84 0903 960557). Withdrawing from the study, will, in no circumstances, affect your relationship with the researchers and will definitely leave no consequences on your program training or career. You are free to stop the interview at any time. Unless you say that you want us to keep them, any recordings will be erased and the information you have provided will not be included in the study results. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview.

When you have read this information, *Dr Kevin Laws* and *Nguyen Thi Van Su* will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact Nguyen Thi Van Su (tngu3559@uni.sydney.edu.au). If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the university using the details outlined below. The Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney:

Telephone: +61 2 8627 8176

Email: ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au

Fax: +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile)

Faculty of Education and Social Work
The University of Sydney
NSW 2006 Australia

Participant Information Sheet (for program presenters)

Research title: Conceptual Changes in Higher Education Teaching and Learning: Insights from a compulsory teacher training program for higher education teachers in Vietnam

This study investigates the impacts of the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) compulsory teacher professional development program for higher education teachers on their conceptions of teaching learning in higher education. You have been invited to participate in this study because your insights and perspectives as a program presenter will help shed light on teachers' conceptions of teaching and be able to provide constructive feedback on the impacts of the courses you are offering in the training program.

NGUYEN THI VAN SU is conducting this study as the basis for the degree of PhD at The University of Sydney. This will take place under the supervision of Dr Kevin Laws.

By participating in the study, you will be interviewed ONCE. The interview will last for approximately 30-45 minutes. The interview time and place will be arranged to suit you and at your convenience.

It is noted that the results of this study may be published, but these publications will NOT contain your name or any identifiable information about you. Participating this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney (Australia) and the University in Viet Nam. If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind later, you are free to withdraw at any time. You can do this by informing the researcher through email: tngu3559@uni.sydney.edu.au or mobile phone (+84 0903 960557). Withdrawing from the study, will, in no circumstances, affect your relationship with the researchers.

You are free to stop the interview at any time. Unless you say that you want us to keep them, any recordings will be erased and the information you have provided will not be included in the study results. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview.

When you have read this information, *Dr Kevin Laws and Nguyen Thi Van Su* will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact Nguyen Thi Van Su (tngu3559@uni.sydney.edu.au).

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the university using the details outlined below. Please quote the study title and protocol number.

The Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney:

Telephone: +61 2 8627 8176

Email: ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au

Fax: +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile)

Appendix B: Participant Consent form

THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

ABN 15 211 513 464

School of Education and Social Work
The University of Sydney

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR (SUPERVISOR) NAME

Dr Kevin Laws

Room 913
Education Building A35
The University of Sydney
NSW 2006 Australia

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, ... [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

- ✓ I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.
- ✓ I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.
- ✓ The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.
- ✓ I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney (Australia), any University (in Viet Nam) now or in the future.
- ✓ I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.
- ✓ I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don't wish to answer.
- ✓ I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project (university/college, faculty and department I work for, courses I teach, teaching experience or my degree and majors) will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.
- ✓ I understand that the results of this study may be published, but these publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

I consent to:

- **Audio-recording** YES ☐ NO ☐

Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study (one-page lay summary)?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

☐ Postal: _____

☐ Email: _____

Signature

.....

PRINT name

.....

Date

Appendix C: Permission Letter to conduct the study in the field

The Letter was requested by Ethical Committee as a requirement for ethical approval to conduct the study in the field. The original letter was sent with real names of the University and Centre where the study was completed but due to the ethical procedures, in the Letter presented here, names of the University and Centre were removed to protect its confidentiality.

LETTER HEAD OF THE UNIVERSITY

25 April 2014

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir/Madam,

I have read through the overview of Ms Thi Van Su Nguyen's doctoral research proposal, titled "Changes in Higher Education Teachers' conceptions of and Approaches to Teaching – The Impacts of a Compulsory Teacher Training Program". As the Director of the Center for Professional Development and the Dean of the School of Education of [redacted] University (Viet Nam), where her research will take place, I am happy to give permission for Ms Nguyen to conduct her project in the Center. This letter serves as formal approval.

Yours faithfully,

Dr [redacted]

Director of the Center for Professional Development

Dean of the School of Education

Appendix D: Indicative Interview Questions for Participants and Presenters

Indicative Interview Questions for Participants (Pre-program)

What do you think about the purposes of higher education in Vietnam?

What is the role of higher education teachers in achieving those purposes?

What's teaching and learning in higher education like?

For recent graduates who intend to be higher education teachers

Please describe the teaching approaches you experienced during your higher education studies.

Which approaches did you find most helpful and interesting?

For higher education teachers

What courses are you teaching?

Could you describe your teaching approaches in your classroom practice?

Do you have any comments or suggestions you would like to add?

Indicative Interview Questions for Participants (Post-program)

What do you think should be the purposes of higher education?

What do you think about the roles of higher education teachers?

What do you now think about teaching and learning in higher education?

For recent graduates:

How are you planning to adopt different teaching practices to those you experienced in this program in the future? In which ways?

For higher education teachers:

Are you planning to change your teaching practice in the future? In what ways?

How did the program meet your expectations? In what aspects?

Do you have any comments or suggestions you would like to add?

Indicative interview questions for Program Presenters

What do you think are the purposes of higher education nowadays?

What are the roles of higher education teachers in achieving these purposes?

In what ways does the training program you are teaching might contribute to the development of higher education teachers?

In what aspects do you think the program might help change participants' conceptions of teaching and learning? And their practice?

How has the program changed since its first implementation, in your opinion? What do you think about the change?

What module(s) are you responsible for? Please describe your module aim and how you deliver it.

Please describe in what ways you modified your module (if you have)? And why?

Would you like to add further comments or suggestions for the development of higher education teachers' professional development program?

Thank you for taking your valuable time to participate in this research project.

Appendix E: Program Circular (12/2013/TT-BGDĐT)

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM
Independence - Freedom - Happiness

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Number: 12/2013/TT-BGDĐT
Hanoi, April 12, 2013
CIRCULAR
Professional Development Training for university and college teachers

Pursuant to the Education Act June 14, 2005, the amending and supplementing rules of Education Act November 25, 2009 and the Higher Education Act June 18, 2012;
Pursuant to Decree No. 36/2012 / ND-CP of April 18, 2012 of the Government regulating the functions, tasks, powers and organizational structures of ministries and ministerial-level agencies;
Pursuant to Decree No. 32/2008 / ND-CP of March 19, 2008 of the Government regulating the functions, tasks, powers and organizational structure of the Ministry of Education and Training;
Pursuant to Decree No. 75/2006 / ND-CP of August 2, 2006 of the Government detailing and guiding the implementation of some articles of the Education Act; Decree No. 31/2011 / ND-CP of May 11, 2011 of the Government amending and supplementing a number of articles of Decree No. 75/2006 / ND-CP of August 2, 2006 of the Government; Decree No. 07/2013 / ND-CP of January 9, 2013 of the Government to amend point b, Clause 13, Article 1 of Decree No. 31/2011 / ND-CP of May 11, 2011 of the Government;
Based on evaluation results of Program Evaluation Committee for the professional development training for higher education teachers in tertiary institutions established in Decision No. 388 / QD-BGDĐT 29 May 01 2013 of the Minister Ministry of Education and Training;
At the request of the Director of Teachers and Education Managers Bureau, the
Minister of Education and Training issued the Circular on professional development training program for higher education teachers.
Article 1. To promulgate together with this Circular, the details of the Professional Development program for Teachers in higher education.
Article 2. This Circular replaces Decision No 61/QD-BGDĐT dated 16/10/2007 of the Minister of Education and Training issued the professional training program for pedagogical universities and colleges; This Circular takes effect from June 16, 2013.
Article 3. The Director of Teacher and Educational Managers Bureau, heads of relevant tertiary institutions under the Ministry of Education and Training and the heads of educational institutions coordinating those programs are responsible to implement this Circular.

On behalf of the Minister
Deputy Minister

Bui Van Ga

Appendix F: Program Curriculum and Guidelines (Circular No. 12/TT-BGDDT)

PROGRAM CURRICULUM
Professional development training for university and college lecturers
(Issued together with Circular No. 12/TT-BGDDT
April 12 2013 of the Minister of Education and Training)

I. OBJECTIVES

1. The overall objective

Improving professional pedagogical knowledge and skills for those who do not have education background, aspiring to become higher education teachers in a standardized and modernized way with the aim to *strengthen human resources* and *enhance teachers' capacity* for teaching staff of universities, colleges and meet the educational requirements in the context of industrialization and modernization of the nation and the international integration.

2. Specific objectives

a. Knowledge

The learners in those programs will be provided with:

- The basic knowledge of higher education principles; roles and mission of higher education (HE), the development trends of modern higher education.
- The basics of psychology, principles of teaching in higher education, theories and methods of teaching.
- The basic methods of assessment and evaluation of learners.

b. Skills

Learners are provided:

- The skills to design teaching plan, organize lesson activities, guide students to self-study, and self-research.
- The skills to design and develop curriculum, course syllabus, use ICT in teaching, to do research, evaluate students' outcomes.
- The skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation of the teaching process; skills of reading, writing, presentation and communication in the teaching process.
- The organizational and management skills (department, faculty), managing students according to regulations and teachers' accountabilities.

c. Attitude

Help learners:

- Establish a sense of professional ethics and behaviour, making a good example of teachers in institutions of higher education.
- Form the passion and excitement in teaching activities, scientific research.
- Demonstrate objective and scientific attitude in the organization and management of the teaching process.

II. PARTICIPANTS OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM

Graduates of (at least) Bachelor degree, and have never participated in any compulsory teachers' professional development program for higher education teachers and have the passion to become a higher education teacher.

III. PROGRAM

1. Total amount of knowledge: 20 credits.

Which includes:

- Compulsory block of Knowledge: 15 credits.
- Elective block of knowledge: 5 credits

2. Content of the compulsory block of knowledge required: 15 credits

STT	Contents/Modules	Credits	Theory (hours)	Tutorial/Discussion/Pratice (hours)	Self-study (hours)
1	Higher education in the world and in Vietnam	1	10	10	30
2	Educational Psychology in HE	1	10	10	45
3	Principles and methods of teaching in HE	3	30	30	90
4	Curriculum design and development	2	15	30	60
5	Assessment in Higher Education	2	15	30	60
6	Use of ICTs in HE	1	15	7	22
7	General Psychology	2	15	30	60
8	Introduction to educational science	3	30	30	90
	TOTAL	15	135	180	450

IV. DESCRIPTION THE COMPULSORY BLOCK OF KNOWLEDGE

1. Higher education in the world and in Vietnam: 1 credit

a) Objective:

Help learners have an overview of the development of higher education in the world and higher education in Vietnam.

b) Contents:This module includes the following contents:

- A brief history of the development of higher education world and Vietnam;
- Development trend higher education world;
- Strategy for Higher Education Innovation Vietnam;
- Higher Education Management.

2. Educational Psychology in Higher Education (1 credit)

a) Objective:

Help learners understand the nature and the laws of the formation and development of human psychology; understand the psychology of adult learners; Psychological basis of the process of teaching and education; characteristics of teacher communication in higher education; form the qualities and personality of teachers in higher education institutions; solve the problems related teenagers and adult learners.

b) Contents: This module includes the following contents:

- The nature and the laws of formation and development of human psychology
- Psychological characteristics young people - students;
- Psychological basis of the process of teaching and education of higher education,
- Characteristics of higher education employees and standards of higher education teachers;
- Characteristics of communication in higher education.

3. Principles and methods of teaching at HE (3 credits)

a) Objective:

Help learners understand the rationale and knowledge, basic skills in teaching in higher education institutions, thereby improving the skills and capacity to teach in higher education.

b) Contents: This module includes the following contents:

- The basics of the teaching process in higher education;
- Contents of teaching;
- The principle of teaching;
- Methods of teaching, and classroom management;
- Planning for teaching;
- The techniques to engage students ‘ active involvement;
- Assessing and evaluating students.

4. Curriculum Design and Development (2 credits)

a) Objectives
Equip learners with the basic knowledge and skills of curriculum design and development in higher education institutions.
Help learners to design curriculum,syllabus, curriculum evaluation in higher education institutions.
b) Contents: This module includes the following contents:
- Overview of curriculum,
- Structure of the curiculum,
- Curriculum development,
- Decentralization of curriculum management,
- Organization of the training process in higher education institutions,
- The role of teachers in tertiary institutions in developing curriculum.
5. Assessment and accreditation in higher education (2 credits)
a) Objectives
Equip learners with principles of students' learning outcomes' assessment and the basic knowledge of quality assurance systems in order to improve operational efficiency in higher education institutions.
b) Contents: This module includes the following contents:
- The basics of evaluation and accreditation of education in higher education institutions;
- Assessment of students' learning outcome,
- Manage and ensure quality training in higher education institutions;
- Assess the quality of higher education institutions,
- Assess quality of curriculum.
6. Use of ICT in higher education (1 credit)
a) Objectives
Equip students with the knowledge and basic skills of the technological applications in teaching in higher education.
b) Contents: This module includes the following contents:
- Use of visual aids in the amphitheater;
- Use of laboratory equipment in teaching;
- Use of learning resources for teaching;
- Use of software, text editing tools and lecture presentations.
7. General Psychology (2 credits)
a) Objectives
To equip learners with basic knowledge of psychology, cognitive processes, the process human psychology, psychological properties of human beings and its applications in teaching and education, in ordinary life day.
To establish the skills to recognize the characteristics of human psychology in general and individual psychological characteristics in particular, in order to have proper attitudes to students.
b) Contents: This module includes the following contents:
- Common issues of Psychology;
- Cognition, emotion, human volition;
- Psychology development, educational psychology;
- Application of general psychology knowledge in the field of teaching and education of pupils and students.
8. Introduction to educational science (3 credits)
a) Objectives
Equip learners with basic knowledge of educational science, the role of education for society and individuals, the basic knowledge about teaching and characteristics of the teachers, thereby forming and developing professional capacity for learners.
b) Contents: This module includes the following contents:
- Education is a science;

- Factors influencing the formation and development of the human personality;
- The purposes and tasks of education;
- Teacher's standards, characteristics;
- The basics of educational theory;
- The basics of educational teaching principles.

V. OPTIONAL MODULES

1. Educational Research Methodology (2 credits)

a) Objectives:

Help students understand the significance of scientific research methods, understand the scientific methodology, logics and scientific research process; conduct a research project, procedure of publication and evaluation of scientific projects.

b) Contents: This module includes the following contents:
- Significance of scientific research;
- Science and the development of science;
- Methodology of scientific research;
- Logical process of scientific research;
- Outline and proposal of scientific research;
- Publication and evaluation of scientific projects.

2. Higher education teaching skills (2 credits)

a) Objectives:

Help learners understand and apply the principles of methodology of teaching into practice in higher education institutions.

b) Contents: This module includes the following contents:
- An overview of the skills and teaching skills;
- Lesson plan designing skill,
- Implementing lectures and lessons skills;
- Designing tests, evaluation skills.

3. Pedagogical practice (3 credits)

a) Objectives:

Help learners understand the basic knowledge, skills in teaching in higher education institutions.

b) Contents: This module includes the following contents:
- Pedagogical practice and initial meetings problems;
- Discussing issues related to teaching practice;
- Preparing for teaching;
- Performing teaching;
- Classroom management.

4. Autonomy development (3 credits)

a) Objectives:

Help learners to self-study, research learning materials, learning resources effectively.

b) Contents: This module includes the following contents:
- Learning and self-studing skills;
- Solving-problem skills;
- Materials researching skills;
- Planning for effective learning.

5. ICT and technical tool use in discipline teaching (2 credits)

a) Objectives:

Help learners understand how to use ICT or technical tools to teach in their discipline.

b) Contents: This module includes the following contents:
- The specialized teaching facilities;
- The techniques in using technical facilities and tools in teaching disciplines.

6. Communication Pedagogy (2 credits)

a) Objectives:

Help learners master the characteristics of pedagogical communication, objects, principles and pedagogical communication method to communicate successfully and efficiently, forming pedagogical skills in their professional activities.

b) Contents: This module includes the following contents:

- The basics of communication, pedagogical communication;
- Principles of pedagogical communication;
- Methods and skills in communication;
- Practice of pedagogical communication.

VI. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

The teachers' professional development program for participants who want to become teachers in higher education institutions is a tool for the Ministry of Education and Training to manage the training of teachers' professional development in higher education institutions.

1. Based on the curriculum, the higher education institutions accredited by the Ministry of Education and Training to conduct the program is responsible for designing the detailed modules (compulsory and optional) for learners.

   The participants who neither have educational degree nor engaged in teaching in in higher education institutions should be fully equipped with both compulsory and selective modules.

   The participants having educational degree but not a lecturer in tertiary educational institutions must study both compulsory and optional programs and can be exempted two compulsory modules 7 and 8 of this training program.

   The participants who have been teaching in higher education institutions should be participating 10 compulsory credits from Module 1 to Module 6 of this training program.

2. Methods of training: mainly self-studying, discussion, applying knowledge, practice.
3. Forms of program delivery: need to be flexible (in the form of accrued credits) to suit the type of participants and their disciplines.
4. After each learning module, the learners should be assessed through exams, essays or presentations of their work.
5. Participants' scores are the indicators for the Ministry of Education and Training to issue certificate for teachers' professional development training for higher education teachers.

On behalf of the MINISTER
Deputy Minister

(Signed)

Bui Van Ga

Appendix G: Examples of Open and Focused Coding

INITIAL CODING	***What do you think about roles of higher education teachers?***
Guiding and orienting students Having good expertise knowledge Having good morals Passion in teaching Teachers' moral is important HE is not business Passion is influential factor Educating role and job-orienting and networking role	Teachers have important roles, because students are new to the new disciplines and teachers need to guide and orient students. Teachers must have good knowledge of the expertise and good moral standards plus a passion for their job to be able to guide students on the right track. To me, teachers' moral in teaching is the most influential to students. If teachers just consider education is like a business, focusing on the finance of education and ignoring the quality of education then the teachers cannot accomplish their roles. With passionate teachers, both educating knowledge and helping students with opportunities to find jobs and network with recruiters, students will get more benefits.
Teaching knowledge is not enough Guiding students (not transmitting knowledge) Teachers must be example of good expertise knowledge and guiding knowledge to students	If teaching is simply just like fulfilling the teaching tasks only, imparting knowledge only, it is really ineffective education. But if teachers guide students, become an example themselves, making them good first with excellent knowledge, then it is easier for students to follow. When teachers just teach, the class will be completely bored and students get lazy, and their brains get stuck, slowing down their motivation for study and improvements and even their passion for their major.
Moral inclusion in lessons Integrating morality is more popular with senior lecturers Psychological knowledge in teaching	Apart from knowledge, some teachers also teach moral lessons, especially senior lecturers maybe because they are older and have more life experience and teaching experience. They know students' psychology and talk more about psychology in the classroom.
Teaching skill Organizing field trips to develop skill Varying activities to develop students' soft skills: report writing, presenting	Teachers might not need to necessarily teach soft skills but can indirectly integrated to teach those skills through the execution of field trips at certain companies, organization…Teachers might ask students to write reports, present and share information, answer questions from peers to train certain skills.
Designing curriculum and syllabus Training human resources to meet recruiters' demands Knowing students' needs and recruiters' demands Reporting students' issues to administrators	*Any other roles?* Teachers need to take an active role in designing the purposes or aims of their disciple curriculum and suggesting administrators certain criteria recruiters are asking for. We are training human resource and need to meet the recruiters' demands. The curriculum planning, design belongs to leaders but teachers have a powerful voice in this task because they are closer to students, know students' needs and even recruiters' demands.
FOCUSED CODING	***What do you think about roles of higher education teachers?***
Guiding and orienting	Teachers have important roles, because students are new to the

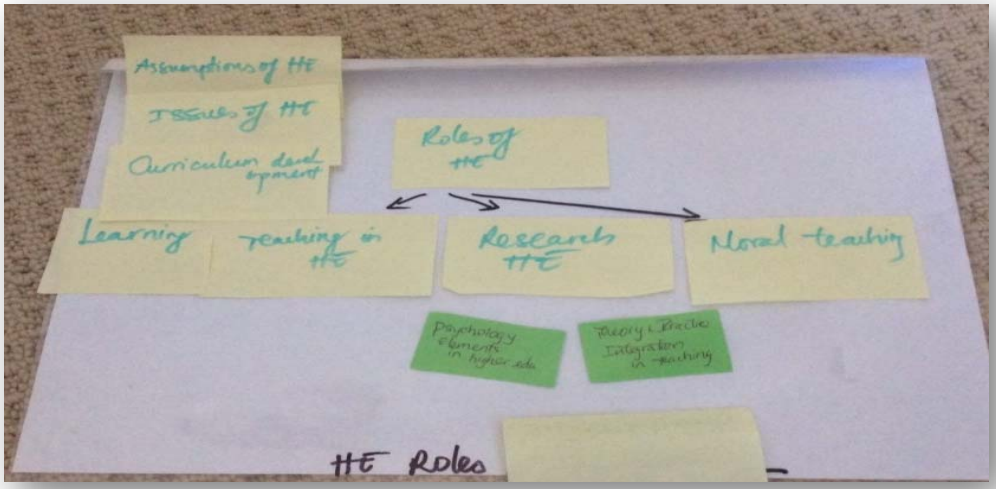
students Having good knowledge Having good morals Passion in teaching Job-orienting and networking role	new disciplines and teachers need to guide and orient students. Teachers must have good knowledge of the expertise and good moral standards plus a passion for their job to be able to guide students on the right track. To me, teachers' moral in teaching is the most influential to students. If teachers just consider education is like a business, focusing on the finance of education and ignoring the quality of education then the teachers cannot accomplish their roles. With passionate teachers, both educating knowledge and helping students with opportunities to find jobs and network with recruiters, students will get more benefits.
Guiding students in knowledge construction Having good expertise knowledge	If teaching is simply just like fulfilling the teaching tasks only, imparting knowledge only, it is really ineffective education. But if teachers guide students, become an example themselves, making them good first with excellent knowledge, then it is easier for students to follow. When teachers just teach, the class will be completely bored and students get lazy, and their brains get stuck, slowing down their motivation for study and improvements and even their passion for their major.
Integrating morals in teaching Having psychological knowledge Teaching skill development	Apart from knowledge, some teachers also teach moral lessons, especially senior lecturers maybe because they are older and have more life experience and teaching experience. They know students' psychology and talk more about psychology in the classroom. Teachers might not need to necessarily teach soft skills but can indirectly integrated to teach those skills through the execution of field trips at certain companies, organization…Teachers might ask students to write reports, present and share information, answer questions from peers to train certain skills.
Contributing to curriculum and syllabus design Suggesting students' needs and recruiters' demands for curriculum designers	*Any other roles?* Teachers need to take an active role in designing the purposes or aims of their disciple curriculum and suggesting administrators certain criteria recruiters are asking for. We are training human resource and need to meet the recruiters' demands. The curriculum planning, design belongs to leaders but teachers have a powerful voice in this task because they are closer to students, know students' needs and even recruiters' demands.

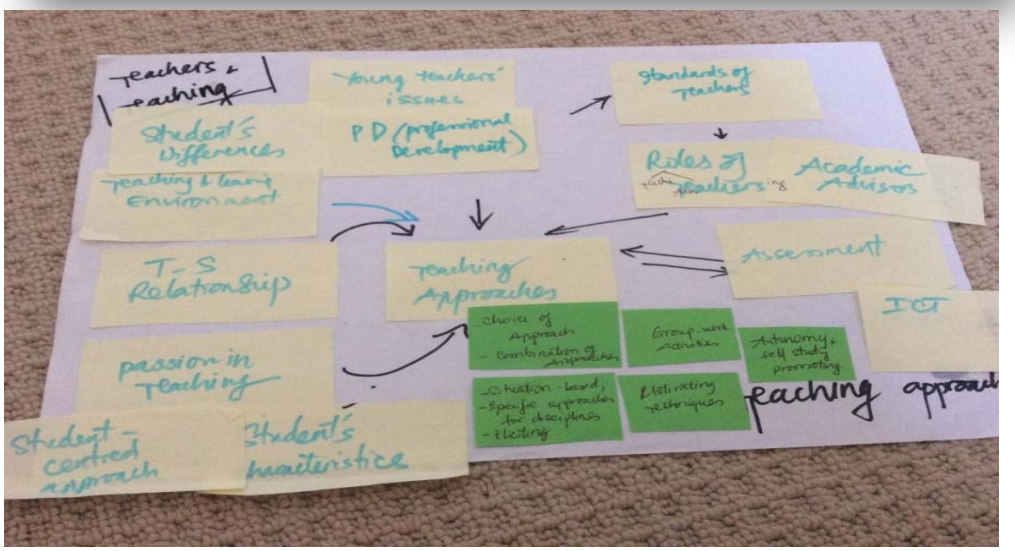
Appendix H: Examples of Memos

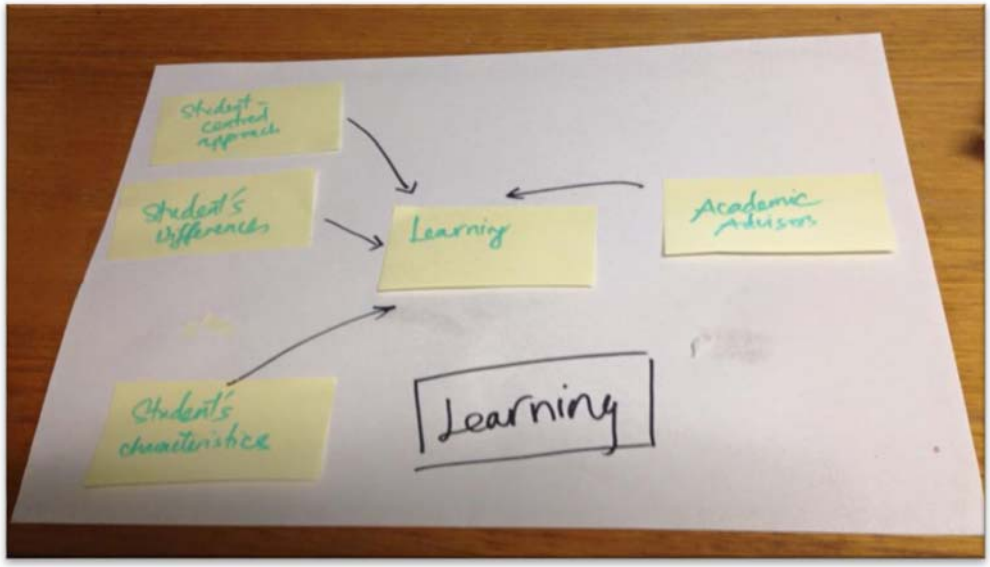
MEMO 1: List of focused nodes (Pre-program)

- Assessment in higher education
- Autonomy and self-study
- Curriculum development
- Student learning
- Groupwork activities
- Teaching in higher education and learning environment
- ICT integration
- Influence on higher education teaching and learning
- Learning in higher education
- Moral teaching in higher education
- Passion in teaching
- Professional development for teachers
- Relationship between teachers-students (Caring)
- Research in higher education
- Roles of academic advisor
- Roles of higher education
- Roles of higher education teachers
- Standards of higher education teachers
- Student-centred
- Student differences
- Teaching approaches
- Theory and Practice in Teaching
- Issues of higher education

MEMO 2: Sticky notes to categorize Focused nodes into themes (Phase 1: Pre-program)







MEMO 3: On the development of teachers' role category (why separating teachers' and teaching)

As the sticky notes diagram on preliminary theory show, 'teachers and teaching' was originally formed one big theme. Data under this theme became too overloaded and hard to manage. To avoid generalisation of data found, I came back to analyse each sub-category in this theme, finding out if it is possible to break this big theme into two possibly, maybe according to the research question guide groups of questions. It must be noted that when I started to analyse the first five interviews, I did not have any intention to analyse them according to each set of questions I raised and wanted to find out. The rationale for this is to make sure data flow was natural and analysis is not restricted to set of theme and naturally emerged from data interview and although I intended to search for three different areas of teaching and learning (higher education purpose, teachers 'roles and teaching and learning) as argued in the literature review (chapter 2). It became reasonable to me to come up with two big themes instead of three as the sets of questions in interview guides, as a result. However, to this stage, "teachers and teaching" theme need to be broken down to "Teachers and issues related to teachers' standards" and "Teaching and Learning" categories, otherwise data looks too condensed and might be difficult for categories comparison later on when I do the post-program interview. Sensitivity to the literature helps this decision, admittedly. The body of literature on ontological stance in addressing teachers' roles and identity in the current higher education reform contexts, rather than exploring just their teaching practices (Dall'Alba, 2005). Dall'Alba (2005) argued for including an ontological element into courses or programs for higher education teachers to avoid technologicalise such programs, and improve teachers' reflexivity in identifying their **being, who they are as higher education teachers.**

> my focus in the course is enhancing and transforming ways of being university teachers. This involves placing emphasis on ontology, while also addressing epistemology. This emphasis can be achieved by integrating knowing, acting and being, as discussed in the paper. The course is successful, then, when it enables participants to integrate enhanced knowing about teaching, **breadth in what they can do when they teach, and who they are as university teachers**. An essential aspect of this integration is continuing to be reflexive about teaching practice as the contexts in which we teach change. (p. 371)

From my experience, the structure of MOET program for higher education teachers in Vietnam was underpinned by the epistemological perspective (not ontological) and this is clearly stated in the current MOET document aims in improving participants' pedagogical knowledge and

skills. The purpose of this study, although is not to investigate which perspective is underpinned the program but any data emerged that is relevant to the construction of participants' construction of their being as higher education teachers before and after participating program will be useful in showing whether an ontological perspective to such program is present in this context and what factors might influence this change. Then best way to examine the construction of participants' perspectives on their being as higher education teachers is through an investigation into their roles in the constant changing picture of Vietnamese higher education. The breaking down of the big theme "Teachers and Teaching" into two, with one theme focusing on Teachers' Roles is therefore reasonable. "Teachers" theme will deal with the ontological perspective of participants' conceptions (on their being), and the other theme (Teaching and Learning) will focus on the epistemological (knowledge and skill) or the knowing.

MEMO 4: On preliminary findings

(base upon focused nodes and comparison of nodes and literature review)

The sticky notes (Sticky note memo diagram attached separately) initially focused on three themes: "Roles of Higher Education", "Teachers and Teaching" and "Learning". However, during discussion with my supervisor, we agreed that the second theme is too dense and it would be first clearer to break it into two themes: Teachers' roles (focusing on teachers' roles and their standards) and another theme covers all aspects of teaching and learning (although learning does not emerge as a very large sub-category from the interview data). Secondly, the formulation of those themes are related to the three major questions that I raised and therefore would be much useful for me to go back to the literature based on themes developed from the findings. The three separate themes intensify the validity for my three research questions and provide good start for the revisit of literature on those themes, but in a different approach, based upon sub-categories emerged from data. This decision influences the revision of some questions used for post-program phase of the questions and the categorisation of focused coding from the post-program phase.

1. Roles of higher education, which include multi purposes that participants of the program conceptualized
2. Teachers' roles and standards in higher education and issues related to teachers' professional development

3. Teaching and Learning: learning in higher education, teaching in higher education and teaching approaches that participants used or experienced

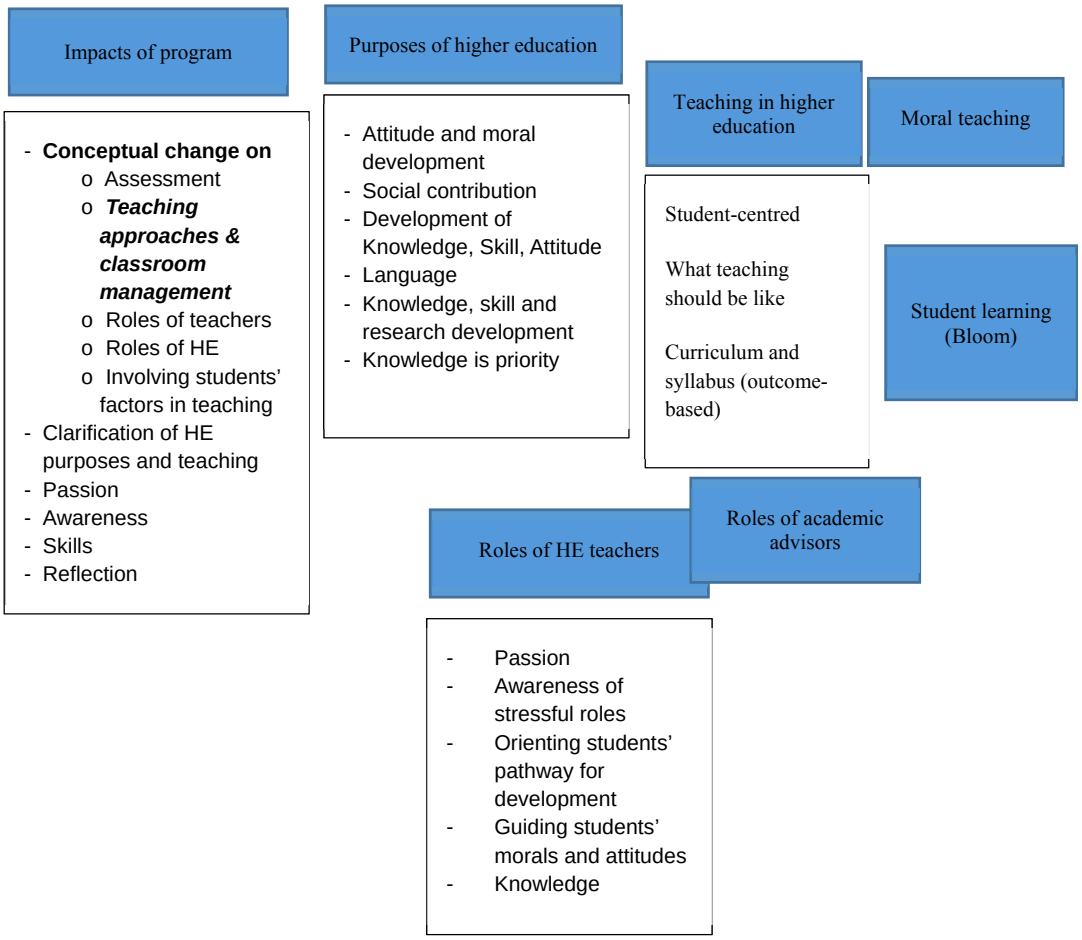
The following diagram shows the result of constant comparison of data emerged from the three themes identified:

Themes	Categories	Focused nodes	Note
Roles of Higher Education	Social contribution Morality Competence (knowledge and skill)	Issues of higher education Influences on HE teaching and learning *Curriculum development* Moral teaching in HE Research in higher education	Curriculum Development was found later to be related to Teaching in Higher education theme. Moral teaching in HE can relate to teachers' approaches of teaching
Teachers' roles	Teachers' standards Teachers' roles Academic advisors	Passion in teaching Relationship teachers-students (Caring) Roles of academic advisors Roles of HE teachers	Look at document on Teachers' standards in higher education to relate to this category
Teaching and Learning	Student learning (Passion, students' involvement, learning language and skills) Teaching in higher education (teaching orientation, moral teaching, curriculum design, assessment and teaching approaches)	Assessment Autonomy and self-study Curriculum development Student learning Groupwork activities Teaching in HE and learning environment ICT integration Moral teaching in HE Student-centred Student differences Teaching approaches Theory and Practice in Teaching	Compare Moral teaching nodes to decide which one belong to Theme 1 (Higher education purposes), which one relates to teachers' roles, and this theme. In Teaching Approaches category, categories can be broken down to sub-categories: Curriculum design, assessment, teaching practice.

MEMO 5: Focused codes and draft categories from post-program phase

A constant comparison data analysis in Post-program phase focuses on three themes developed from pre-program and this has led to the theoretical development in a more concise manner. Focused nodes reflect this situation and helps to keep track of possible changes in participants' conceptions. In contrast, new sub-themes were able to be identified due to the open-ended nature of semi-structured interviews and interactive exchange of experience through interviews. Some sub-themes emerged were not present in the pre-program phase and were used to clarify the possible impacts of the examined program.

Focused nodes were categorised in the pre-program phase were drawn in a diagram as follows:



Focused nodes emerged from pre-program phase strongly validate preliminary theme and category as identified in the pre-program phase as no new theme emerged. Theme saturation was reached at this stage. Although some sub-categories emerged in each theme, those were

the changes from participants' conceptions and still belong to the three themes identified. The emerging of new sub-categories in each theme was again constantly compared with literature and I came back to some memos on individuals in the pre-program phase, and presenters' modification of their module and the program guideline to identify the possible explanation for the emerging changes in those sub-categories. "Impacts of the program" category, emerged as a separate category in this draft analysis, however, each sub-category was compared with relevant sub-category found in pre-program interview data to compare possible changes in participants' conceptions on teaching and learning. For example, "assessment" categories were later grouped under "Teaching and Learning" theme to better compare the ways participants conceptualize assessment before and after program completion. Another round of data comparison and the theoretical sampling of literature helps to finalize themes and categories for each phase.

The guiding questions for post-program data analysis are:

What are the changes in conceptions about teaching and learning?

Do the participants realize their changes? (subconscious changes)

How are they going to turn what they learn into practice?

What can be implied about the program?

MEMO 6: On Morality as sub-category in all themes (Definition of Morals and theoretical sampling of literature on Moral in higher education)

In the preliminary analysis of focused nodes in Phase 1, I was intrigued to see how many times the word 'moral' was repeated in three different set of questions. When focused nodes were formed and family nodes were structured by using Nvivo software, I came back to the idea of Moral and came to decide under which theme Moral will best fit. To do this, I kept theoretical sampling of literature on Morality in Teaching and in Higher Education, which was not at all present at the beginning of the project. Not much literature on Teaching in Higher Education was written on Morality, to the best of my knowledge when I used database to search this theme.

Morality must have some roles in education in Asia due to the influence of Confucians, I believe. Not only in higher education that students are expected to be properly moral, behaving morally according to certain cultural standards have been recognized. Moral definition, however, must be defined in this context, and I came to wonder, moral, usually, is referred to

ethical behaviour in this context and from my best understanding is conceptualized the same in other contexts. A review of definitions on morals is needed.

Through a look back on definition of moral, discussion between me and my supervisor focuses on naming the categories, making it "moral" or "ethical". Dictionaries were used. However, due to the nature of description from participants and the interpretation I have from listening to them and from my experience, I find Knight's definition when he writes about Ethical Leadership (2016, p. 3) reflects best the connotation of what participants shared:

Ethical Behaviour: Acting in a way that is consistent with one's own principles and values which are characterized by honesty, fairness and equity in all interpersonal activities, be they personal or professional. And by respecting the dignity, diversity and rights of individuals and groups of people.

Moral Behaviour: Understands there are Rules of Conduct of any group or society, which may differ from one to another, but are based on conviction rather than proven evidence and which may or may not be ethical as in the definition above (Knights, 2016, p. 3).

Moral behaviour, according to Knights (2016) is broader than ethical behaviour in the sense that it exceeds the strict rules of codes of conducts. Morality is used in the study because first of all, what participants shared is more related to daily behaviour that a group of society is imposed upon individuals, and this might be impacts from Confucius influence, where moral obligation and expectation is on in a hierarchy nation. To find out what morality in higher education teaching and learning are defined and what constitutes moral dimensions, a literature review is sought and a memo on literature on Moral in Higher Education teaching and learning is presented.

Now that I have the definition, and move onto the analysis of those nodes containing the word moral in open coding to decide which code belongs to which focused coding. Some of the codes related to higher education in general, considered as graduate attributes will be grouped into the "roles of higher education" family focused nodes (HE is to teach morality in a sustainable way, HE is to train professional and moral graduates, HE is to promote good learning attitude from students). Moral codes which describes teachers' standards will be left out in a separate group (e.g. teachers must have good morals, Teachers should be example in behaviour…), and the remaining groups of moral codes are to do with teaching practice were grouped into "moral teaching" (e.g. Integrating moral lessons in lectures, benefits of teaching morals).

Some nodes are not easy to group, for example, groups of nodes related to "Benefits of moral teaching in higher education". I found it could be categorised in both "Higher education purposes" or "Teaching and Learning". I delayed the decision to finalise this category to come back to literature on moral teaching in higher education. Two kinds of literature clarify my understanding: document on standards of higher education teachers in Vietnam, and Fitzmaurice (2008) on considering moral practice as important in higher education teaching. Those sources help me to further understand the dimensions of moral teaching in higher education. This led me to explore a completely new area of research in higher education purposes, which aims to enhance human development (Boni & Walker, 2013; Walker, 2006) in the context neo-liberal higher education is expanding. Originally, Watson (2014), and Alexander (2008) were used to guide the interview questions related to higher education purposes and argued for the need to consider roles of higher education in different context and its possible effects on teaching and learning. Due to the merging moral nodes, related to higher education purposes, (not expected earlier), a growing literature on the non-neoliberal purposes of higher education was found to guide my theoretical development in the pre-program phase. After going back to literature on morals and morality in higher education purposes, I decided to group this node group under "higher education purposes" as data is more relevant to the benefits of moral teaching in higher education for future society, rather than limited in the classroom environments. This further validates the literature argument for the consideration of teachers' being rather than having. Groups of nodes with "moral" related to teaching activity will be categorised under "Teaching and Learning in higher education". It becomes evident moral nodes related to teachers' standards, like "teachers should be moral examples for their students" were grouped into Teacher's roles theme.

MEMO 7: On Bloom's taxonomy in learning and teaching and the formation of "Levels of Learning" sub-category

The post-program saw the emerging idea on Bloom's taxonomy when participants discussed on their conceptions of teaching and learning in higher education.

"Levels of learning" means the higher degree of learning students in higher education should be aware of instead of the passive nature as knowledge recipient. Bloom taxonomy was mentioned in two different categories: in how students are supposed to learn in higher education and in how it should be used to guide teachers' design of their course design and teaching

approaches. Therefore, the first group of categories was assigned to belong to "Learning" category as it describes participants' conceptualizing on the differences between learning in higher education and other levels. It matches with current literature by Entwistle (2009) in depicting a need to shift students learning to higher level of the described hierarchy of learning in higher education. However, what is found from data in this study is grounded in the middle of the hierarchy of student learning, with much focus on theory application, rather than higher level of learning suggested by Entwistle: seeing things in a different way, changing as a person. Deep/surface or strategic approaches to studying (as found abundant in literature on higher education learning such as Biggs (2003) is not to be found in both stages of the program. The constant comparison of data from interview with participants and with literature helps to survive theoretical sensitivity to make sure data really emerged from interviews. Therefore, learning category in this study might look differently to learning conceptions in the literature as it came straight from the cohort participants' perspectives. I then came back to compare all participants who mentioned using Bloom Taxonomy to help students develop higher level of learning, their situations, their statements and the presenters' ideas and modification relevant to learning in higher education, and how they introduced Bloom taxonomy in the program.

Presenters' views on Bloom taxonomy

Bloom taxonomy was mentioned directly by one presenter. This presenter introduced Bloom Taxonomy in helping program participants design their courses, which is related to course and curriculum development, rather than student learning. The presenter is in charge of the Micro-Teaching module, which was first introduced in this cohort as an optional module as an initiative from the Director of the Centre due to the complaint of the lack of practice from previous cohorts of participants' feedbacks.

> The subject is assigned by MOET and they give us outline what to teach. But for me, I use different teaching materials in English, Vietnamese, I ask somebody to help me with English materials. The teaching materials include contents related to Bloom Taxonomy, situation-based teaching, group discussion facilitation, project-based teaching…

A part of this module is to design a lesson plan and then participants will teach that lesson plan and receive feedbacks from their peers. Apparently, the practical element from this module has impacted the way participants' competence in curriculum and course design, but also their perceptions of learning in higher education, the need to raise the bar to higher level of learning according to Bloom's taxonomy.

Due to the nature of this module, I came back to the presenter who taught Curriculum and Course Development to find out aims and contents and modifications of this module and noted the significant quotes from this presenter.

> … The aim of this module is to help participants understand the procedures of designing a curriculum, credit-based curriculum in higher education contexts, focusing on the design and implementation of syllabus development. In terms of skills, learners can develop their curriculum developing skills. And they need to know how to analyse contexts, their students, deciding on the contents of programs, selecting the right teaching approach, and assessment based upon the outcomes of the subjects. (Dr Lam)

Information from those two presenters made it clear to me that the outcome-based approach to curriculum and course-design is underpinned the structures of these two modules and greatly influences the way participants possibly change their conception on how to construct curricullum and courses, following the outcome-based approach. This is congruent with the intended learning outcomes (ILO) (Biggs, 2003). Although presenters did not spell out what theory is underpinning their curriculum construction and implemetation for this program, a cloaesr look at participants'sharing on their modules aims and implementation clearly identify Biggs'theory to teaching and learning is having big influence on their design for the program in this context. As a former participant of the program, I remember being given an outline stating each module outcomes at the begining of the program, and then assessments are linked to those outcomes. This experience warrants the conclusion I have just made from presenters' interviews. This finding analysis can be related to Kandlbinder and Peseta (2009) on key concepts in postgraduate certificate for higher education teachers and aligns with one of the five major key concepts by Biggs'(1996) constructive alignment. I then came to this article for futher theoretical sampling on academic development activities and its underlying philosophy. Ideas from sampling more literature on this area further validates the research findings and find out what concepts appear to be dominant in this context, compared to others.

MEMO 8: Thereotical Sampling of documents

Dr Lam's quotes:

> So my teaching starts with the outcome of the program. Second, I must know who my learners are. Therefore, I do not teach too much theory, but instead, focus on how they can use the theory I teach to actually design a syllabus in their own subject.

> I keep my main teaching materials but constantly get it updated such as recently I updated the part on Human Resource, and add it into the materials for participants' reference, or the legal document of the government on strategies to develop education to 2020 or current changes on human resources of Vietnam and the world….

Those two quotes from presenter Lam are helpful in identifying "Teaching and Learning" theme, especially the "Curriculum and Course Design" sub-category. The presenter's clarification on updating his material related to human resources needs of the nation. And legal documents for higher education development 2020 leads me to the further sampling of documents on teachers' standards and national strategies to develop higher education in Vietnam till 2020 (Decision 711/ QD TTg; Joint Circulars 36/2014/TTLT BGDĐT-BNV), and (06/2011/TTLT-BNV-BGDĐT). Although those documents, when studied, were not directly related to curriculum development or teaching and learning in general, they are directly influences higher education purposes, teachers' roles (the other two themes emerged from those studies) and relate to how the program fits in the higher education reform agenda.

MEMO 9: Documents in program guidelines and program curriculum: Theoretical sensitivity

Professional Development Training Program for tertiary teachers by MOET:

- Initial Circular: Decision Number: 61/2007/QĐ-BGDĐT (Decision 61/2007/QĐ-BGDĐT) on
- Second version with modification: Circular Number: 12/2013/TT-BGDĐT (Circular 12/2013/TT-BGDĐT)

The second version is different to the first version in four main aspects:

- Participants are expanding to prospective higher education teachers who are recent graduates or professionals in all industry. This change is logical in the context private higher education in Vietnam is developing unexpectedly and qualification of higher education teachers become a critical issue.
- The compulsory block of knowledge is increasing to 15 credits (8 modules), with some additional modules which are not present in the first document (General Psychology, Introduction to educational science). The addition of two modules must emerge due to the expansion of program participants. For prospectus higher education teacher participants, who have no educational background nor teaching experience in higher education, those two modules serve as basic educational knowledge for them.

- The focus on some modules (indicated by the increasing credit assigned for them) are stressed, such as Principles and methods of teaching in higher education (3 credits) and Curriculum design and development (2 credits) whereas more theoretical-looking modules are shortened down to 1-credit module (Higher education in the world and in Vietnam, Educational Psychology in HE).
- The guidance on aims and contents for some optional modules. (Educational Research Methodology, Higher education teaching practice, Micro-Teaching, Autonomy development, ICT and technical tool use in discipline teaching, Pedagogical Communication).

As a participant of the program when the first program curriculum was implemented, I found the program very theoretical. Although presenters tried to include some groupwork activities, such as how to organize motivating classroom, how to organize groupwork… the aim of the module is very theoretical and does not actually help me to reflect on what I can improve on my teaching practice. There was a disconnection among all modules.

In contrast, after the post-program phase of the interview with participants, I found positive feedbacks from participants commenting on the practical part of the program. The most talked-about module is the optional Teaching Practice module, which asked participants to use most knowledge from other modules to plan lesson, teaching activities and even micro-teach 15 minutes of their lesson plan. Through interviews with presenters, the assessment types also reveal more focus on discipline and practical part, which usually expects participants to write assignments on their discipline (e.g. design a course syllabus in the major you teach, design a research proposal in your discipline, design a problem-based teaching situation). The practical part of the program is stressed by the Director of the Centre:

> ... the design of the program curriculum, which is updated with current trends of higher education developments in the world and the real applications at local contexts.
>
> … the curriculum must guarantee that when the participants finish the program, they are able to apply what they learn in higher education teaching context, especially, the professional skills block of knowledge.

Examples of the combination of some modules are reflected by a few presenters:

> …I also use the teaching approaches that are mentioned in the module “Teaching Skills” and use assessment methods participants learn in module “Assessment and Accreditation in higher education”. (Dr Lam)

…with the Curriculum Development module, they have to design a curriculum, and in my module, Teaching Skills and Teaching Practice, they have to design situation or project-based lesson plans …and the assessment methods… (Dr Ninh)

N	Contents/Modules	Credits	Theory (hours)	Tutorial/Discussion /Practice (hours)	Self-study (hours)
1	Higher education in the world and in Vietnam	**1**	10	10	30
2	Educational Psychology in HE	**1**	10	10	45
3	Principles and methods of teaching in HE	**3**	30	30	90
4	Curriculum design and development	**2**	15	30	60
5	Assessment in Higher Education	**2**	15	30	60
6	Use of ICTs in HE	**1**	15	7	22
7	**General Psychology (new)**	**2**	**15**	**30**	**60**
8	**Introduction to educational science (new)**	**3**	**30**	**30**	**90**
	TOTAL	**15**	**135**	**180**	**450**

The modified program curriculum (From Circular 12/2013/TT-BGDĐT)

N	Contents/Modules	Credits	Theory (hours)	Tutorial (hours)	Self-study (hours)
1	Higher education in the world and in Vietnam	**2**	35	10	45
2	Educational Psychology in HE.	**2**	35	10	45
3	Principles and methods of teaching in HE.	**2**	35	10	45
4	Curriculum and syllabus development	**1**	15	7	22
5	Assessment and Accreditation in HE	**2**	35	10	45
6	Use of ICTs in HE	**1**	15	7	22
	TOTAL	**10**	**170**	**54**	**224**

The original program curriculum (From Decision 61/2007/QĐ-BGDĐT)

Appendix I: Program participants' and presenters' demographic information

Overview of participants of cohort November 2014

Total number of participants	15
Gender	5 males and 10 females
Occupations	8 teachers 3 recent graduates (01 Master student) 2 industry trainers (regional departments) 1 provincial people's committee officer 1 private export clerk
Degrees	7 Bachelor 8 Master
Institution backgrounds	1 graduated from a USA university 2 graduated from Ho Chi Minh city universities 2 graduated from University of Medicines in Mekong Delta River region. 10 graduated from MK University
Disciplines	**Humanity and Social Sciences:** Literature, Economics, Human Resource, Business Administration, Law **Natural and Applied Science:** IT, Environment, Aquaculture, Biology, Food Technology, Chemistry, Pharmaceutics **Education:** Biology, Language
Work experience	Teaching experience: 3 months – 4 years Work experience: none – 3 years
Institutions/Organisations that participants worked for	Private universities: 05 Public universities: 02 Both public and private (as guest lecturer): 01 Regional and Provincial Departments: 02 Provincial People's committee: 01 Private company: 01 Others: 03

Presenters' demographic information

No	Pseudonyms	Disciplines	Modules
1	Associate Professor Dr Minh	Educational Psychology and Educational Science	General Educational Science, Principles and Methods of Teaching in HE
2	Associate Professor Dr Nhung	Principles of Vietnamese Literature Teaching	Teaching Practice
3	Dr Lam	Curriculum Development, Principles of English Language Teaching	Curriculum Development
4	Associate Professor Dr An	Principles of French Language Teaching, Research Methodology	Educational Research Methodology
5	Dr Hoang	Assessment and Accreditation, Higher Education Policy	Higher Education Developments in the World and in Vietnam