



THE INFLUENCES OF 'POWER DISTANCE' ON PRE-SERVICE TEACHER LEARNING IN VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

Globalisation has moved nations to take steps to meet the demands of an increasingly competitive employment market. The Vietnamese Government has introduced a number of initiatives to equip its labour force with the necessary knowledge and skills, one of which is requiring teachers to change their teaching methods toward constructivist pedagogies. This study focuses on pre-service teachers' learning in Vietnam, where a 'large power distance' is widely practiced in education. This article reports on part of the action research study, showing the influences of 'large power distance' on pre-service teacher learning in Vietnam. The findings show that the 'large power distance' in Vietnamese culture generated both negative and positive influences during the teacher learning process. The findings contribute to the discussions about the role of teacher educators in promoting change for better education in Vietnam.

Keywords: *Constructivist pedagogies, power distance, pre-service teachers, teacher learning, Vietnamese teachers.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Globalisation and the knowledge economy have resulted in a competitive and demanding world employment market. Therefore, in order to be employable, one needs to be well-equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills. This has made human capital the most important output of higher education (Schriwer, 2003; Wende, Little, & Green, 2009). Every nation in the world has to upgrade the knowledge and skills necessary for this rapidly changing world and sustainable development.

The Vietnam government has placed great emphasis on the importance of education and the need for teachers to change their teaching methods towards constructivist pedagogies which focus on the learners to promote their independent and cooperative learning skills (Government Portal, 2012). While the government has made a number of attempts to meet these increasing international demands, there are conflicting opinions which express doubts as to the benefits of adopting constructivist pedagogies. Many of the tenets of these innovations are based on Western ideologies, therefore, embracing constructivist pedagogies is unlikely to be successful in such a historically and culturally embedded context like Vietnam (Pham, 2008; Le & Barnard, 2009; VietnamNews, 2009a; 2009b; Nguyen, 2013).

1.1 The constructivist views of learning

Although constructivism is not a unified theory containing different viewpoints and various emphases, the common belief holds that knowledge is constructed in the mind of the learner and learning is the process of construction (Bodner, 1986; Cunningham & Duffy, 1996; Tynjälä, 1999; Karin, 2009). Constructivists reject the idea that knowledge is passively received. According to Karin (2009), research on learning in different situations and different cultural settings suggests that “knowledge is not an independent phenomenon, but situated in the activity, context and culture in which it is developed” (p.57).

As such, learning is not a passive reception of information but an active process of constructing and reconstructing knowledge carried out by the learners. This is the process of interpreting and understanding to internalise knowledge rather than memorising and reproducing information. The internalisation takes place via interactions, idea negotiation and cooperative work in the learners’ learning context. The learners interpret new information from their own views based on their schemata – the existing knowledge, pre-conceptions and beliefs. Therefore, constructivism is grounded on the learners’ previous experiences and understanding about what is to be learnt.

In the teaching and learning environment, Tynjälä (1999) states that, “teaching is not transmitting of knowledge but helping students to actively construct knowledge by assigning them with tasks that enhance this process. This does not mean that lectures should be entirely removed from constructivist learning environments. Rather it means that lectures should be accompanied by assignments in which learners must reflect on and use the information given them in the lectures” (p.365). This comment suggests that learning by doing and learning by reflecting on the learning experience is considered important in this knowledge construction from the constructivist point of view.

1.2 Hofstede’s cultural framework and the power distance dimension

Cultural differences between nations or groups of people and ways to manage them have been widely discussed in a large body of research (Nisbett & Miyamoto, 2005; Fuhrman & Boroditsky, 2010; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; Varnum, Grossmann, Kitayama, & Nisbett, 2010; Vasalou, Joinson, & Courvoisier, 2010; House, Hanges, Javidan, Koester & Lustig, 2012; Matsumoto & Juang, 2013). The influence of culture on learning and on people’s thinking has also been recognised in many studies. Nisbett and Miyamoto (2005), for example, found that perceptual processes are influenced by culture. After analysing the mechanisms of these processes, they suggested that there is a dynamic relationship between the cultural context and perceptual processes. This research indicates that although culture generates a lifelong ‘chronic perception’, a change in a cultural context can also change a default pattern.

Other work examines the relationship between cultural contexts and thinking styles. Lun, Fischer, and Ward (2010), for example, agree that cultural thinking styles have an important influence on certain psychological and behavioural differences between Asians and Westerners (Lun et al., 2010, p. 605). As such, this relationship between culture and the human mind is reciprocally influenced. This understanding of the relationship between culture and the mind is central to the work of Hofstede and Hofstede (2010). In this book, Hofstede and his colleagues use the analogy ‘software of the mind’ to exemplify how he sees this working relationship. What probably made his work so popular is its practical applications and its visible dimensions (Bing, 2004). Hofstede created six dimensions which

are linked to specific areas in the society such as workplace, family, religion, social community, healthcare or education. In this article, the author focuses on the first dimension, 'power distance', and its influences on teacher learning.

Power distance is defined in Hofstede's framework as "the extent to which less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 61). This dimension deals with the fact that there is inequality among the members of a society and sees how that society handles this inequality. In large power distance countries, people tend to accept a hierarchical order in which everyone is assigned a position without the need for further justification. In societies exhibiting small power distance, people strive for equality, and unequal distribution of power needs to be justified. This unequal distribution of power is manifested in general norms, family, workplace and school. For example, in countries exhibiting a large degree of power, the obedience of young people towards old people is expected, and teachers are treated with respect or even fear. On the other hand, equality is sought in a small power distance country and students tend to be independent of their teachers.

In school environments in large power distance cultures, the inequality between teacher and student is manifested by high respect for teachers and the dependence of students on them. This inequality is well established in the students' minds. The education process is teacher-centred, which means that teacher leads all the communication in class, and he is the fountain of all knowledge. Students need to follow the intellectual paths that the teacher outlines for them. The students often do not speak up until they are singled out by the teacher. In such a system, the quality of students' learning depends heavily on the teaching of the teachers. Conversely, in a small power distance country, teachers and students tend to be treated as equals. The education process in class is student-centred, which means students take the initiative and are independent of teachers and of teachers' knowledge. They are supposed to find intellectual paths of their own. They are active in class, asking questions or arguing with teachers if they disagree with them. They do not necessarily have any particular respect for the teacher outside school. The quality of students' learning is largely determined by the excellence of students (Hofstede et al., 2010).

The extent of inequality acceptance, or in other words, the level of power distance, is measured by a score index assigned for each nation along the dimension. Most Asian countries including Malaysia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, China and Singapore, scored high on the scale of Power Distance Index Values (Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 57–59), making them large power distance countries. The USA, Great Britain and the white parts of its former empire (New Zealand, Ireland, Australia, and Canada) were assigned low values for this dimension, and are ranked as small power distance cultures. At a score of 70, Vietnam sits in the higher ranking scale (at 22nd-25th among 76 countries) which suggests that Vietnam is a large power distance country. This also implies that Vietnamese people generally think that hierarchy, centralisation, and inherent inequalities are acceptable, and that subordinates are expected to obey and do what they are told.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Using the dimension of power distance, I would like to discover the influences of this dimension on teacher learning in which constructivist pedagogies were applied. This article reports on part of an action research cycle conducted in a major teacher training institution in Vietnam. In my set of data there are two groups of teachers – pre-service teacher training

students (student teachers) and a cohort of experienced teachers (tutors). However, the main focus of this study is on the student teachers, who experienced the intervention, to examine changes, if any, to this particular group of student teachers. The experienced tutors, who are the teachers of these student teachers, were approached for the pre-intervention data, but did not experience the intervention.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following section discusses the findings obtained from the study.

3.1 The influence of ‘power distance’ on teacher learning in Vietnam

According to Hofstede et al. (2010), Vietnam is ranked at 22nd-25th on the power distance index among 76 countries, sitting in the higher ranking scale. This ranking suggests that Vietnam is a large power distance country. My study supports this view. A hierarchical relationship between teachers and those they taught was clearly evident, especially at the pre-intervention period. However, there were signs showing that this hierarchy became blurred as the intervention progressed.

It was found from the pre-intervention data that both tutors and student teachers accepted a hierarchical relationship. They both viewed the tutor as being in a dominant role. The student teachers relied upon their teachers to tell them how to improve their teaching. In the replies to the closed questions, the overwhelming majority (94%) of the student teachers maintained that their tutor often told them what to do to improve their teaching. The teacher’s dominant role as a knowledge source was also expected by the student teachers. In their replies to open-ended questions, they expected the tutors to give them explicit feedback; or to point out their wrong teaching techniques and mistakes, to provide explanation to them, or to elaborate on their strengths and weaknesses. The student teachers’ view of the role of their tutors was confirmed by the tutors’ responses to their questionnaires. The tutors considered their role to be of someone who directed the student teachers’ learning, and therefore ‘with feedback given, students know what they have done is good or bad’ (Tutor 1), or someone who was to give ‘specific and precise comments’ and ‘to show them [student teachers] the ways to improve the weaknesses’ (Tutor 2). Thus, they corrected their student teachers, identified weaknesses, pointed out mistakes, gave immediate feedback and criticised their performance. When asked whether or not the micro-teaching feedback was beneficial, none of the tutors viewed feedback sessions as opportunities for student teachers to explore new areas of learning. Conversely, they regarded student teachers as needing to embrace a passive role, for example; ‘listening to peers’ feedback and taking notes’ (Tutor 3, Tutor 4); listening to the tutors’ feedback and taking notes (Tutor 2, Tutor 3). This is how Hofstede et al. (2010) describe a large power distance culture, where ‘the educational process is teacher-centred; teachers outline intellectual paths to be followed. In the classroom, there is supposed to be a strict order, with the teacher initiating all communication’ (p.69).

However, an interesting note from the findings was that both the tutors and the student teachers felt contented with these hierarchical roles. 77% of the student teachers thought that they were given a chance to explore possible ways of working on areas for improvement although they admitted that they spent most of the time listening during the feedback session. They did not appear to feel oppressed as commented upon by Saito, Tsukui, and Tanaka (2008, p. 98). This demonstrated what G. Hofstede et al. (2010) had indicated, namely that, in a large power distance culture ‘the need for dependence is well established in the student’s

mind' (p.69). The tutors, in their responses, also thought that they gave their students this chance of learning. This suggests that both the student teachers and the tutors 'expect and accept' that the power of the tutors is large.

Nonetheless, the tutors' and student teachers' expression of the hierarchical relationship was not the practice that they necessarily wished to apply in the current educational context. In fact, with the implementation of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) educational reforms, these hierarchical roles were likely to have been regarded by both student teachers and tutors as something backward-looking, related to the traditional teaching approach and needing to be eradicated. There had been conferences, workshops, seminars, and staff meetings both at the national and university level which emphasised the importance of learner-centred approaches, active learning, cooperative learning, peer work or group work. The student teachers had been taught that they needed to be active learners. The tutors were the ones who conducted these lessons, so they had been introduced to and had often spoken about all those terms related to learner-centred teaching, cooperative learning, peer learning and group work etc., where they needed to facilitate the student teachers' learning and encourage them to work in groups in order to move away from the traditional style of teaching. Consequently, the tutors, if asked directly about their classrooms, would say that they applied these pedagogies in lessons given to the student teachers. However, it is questionable whether or not the tutors, as well as the student teachers, understand what they say or actually do as they say.

In the pre-intervention questionnaires, for example, when asked about the student teachers' roles, some student teachers stated that their role was to be active. However, being active for them meant actively asking for the tutor's clarification. One of the responded:

“Students are not passive. They are active in group work. If there is anything that they don't know, they can ask the tutor”.

(Student 8)

Thus, they did not seem to be able to grow out of the unequal relationship, in which they continued to consider the tutor as a source of all knowledge. The concept of group work, according to a respondent to post-intervention question 15, was extended to include individual members of the group working alone and then connecting with other students by e-mail. There was scant collaboration in producing the final work, which comprised a collection of individual submissions.

According to Michael (2006), the fundamental tenet of constructivism is that “learning involves the active construction of meaning by the learner” (p.160). The active role of the learner is manifested by the process of relating his/her prior information to new information and reflecting on this new information to absorb it into his/her own knowledge. Therefore, to be active learners, the students need to have 'intentional learning' (Grabinger & Dunlap, 1995, p.15), to possess self-questioning and self-reflection skills, to be able to regulate their own learning and acquire the knowledge for themselves. How the student teachers described their role is far from the role of an active learner in this sense. It actually suggests that they tried to be independent, but could not wean themselves off the dependence on the tutor, or at least the contextual factors are not present to allow this process to happen. Their learning lacked group interaction, in which language needs to be used to mediate the meaning among the group members (Vygotsky, 1978), lacked reflection on the work they did (Schön, 1983), and lacked the regulation of learning through experience (Kolb, 1984). As such, although

they used the word 'active' to address their role, there is evidence for a lack of deep understanding of the notions of active learning, group work or learner-centred approaches.

The mismatch between what was said and what was actually done was also found in the tutors' responses. For example, the tutors stated in the questionnaires and in the staff discussion that they provided the student teachers with opportunities to be active in 'peer feedback' and 'group work'. Tutor 3 and tutor 4, for example, suggested peer feedback as one of the most effective feedback methods. However, evidence from their other responses reveals that tutor 3 understood the term 'peer feedback' as uni-directional feedback from classmates to the presenter, and tutor 4 asked her students to do peer feedback in written form without discussion. Tutor 2 seemed to be well aware of the importance for the students to work in groups and to give them space for critical thinking and reflection. However, in her other responses, it was evident that tutor 2 was keen on giving 'detailed feedback' and did not have enough time for it. Tutor 2 found it difficult to 'cover all the requirements that they [student teachers] needed to conform to for a whole lesson. It should be noted that the terms 'peer learning', 'collaborative learning', and 'group work' are not unfamiliar to the tutors. In fact, these terms have become 'fashionable' in the context of the MOET educational reforms, which place a great emphasis on constructivist learning and learner-centeredness.

Peer learning, collaborative learning and group work, whose tenets are based on Vygotsky's social learning theory, are important in promoting a meaningful student learning environment and developing the social, cultural, and intellectual capability for students. According to Boud, Cohen, and Sampson (2001), peer learning is "a two-way, reciprocal learning activity. Peer learning should be mutually beneficial and involve the sharing of knowledge, ideas and experience between the participants" (p.3). Keppell, Au, Ma, and Chan (2006) also maintain that peer learning "involves students teaching and learning from each other" (p.453). The unidirectional feedback from classmates without sharing or discussion among the peers, which tutor 4 and tutor 3 conducted in their classes, cannot be called peer feedback in this sense. In my view, that way of working in class, conversely, does a disservice to students, giving them a false understanding of the nature of their roles in peer learning and collaborative work. Also, tutor 1's 'detailed feedback' and tutor 2's asking the student teachers to 'conform' to the criteria of a lesson, on the one hand, is time-consuming, and on the other hand, deprives the students of the opportunities for 'teaching and learning from each other' and reveals the dominant role towards teacher-centeredness. As such, the tutors and the student teachers alike have been introduced to and are trying to move towards a student-centred approach, but this can only be seen on the surface. Without a deeper understanding the move towards adopting constructivist pedagogies makes no real sense, especially if the implementation of these approaches has not been from a constructivist pedagogical stance.

3.2 Respect for teachers as a positive factor for learning

The effect of a large power distance in Vietnam – hierarchical relationships between teachers and students - is marked. According to Hofstede et al. (2010) in the culture that expects and accepts hierarchy, the teacher is a 'guru', a term meaning 'weighty' or 'honourable' and therefore, is 'treated with respect or even with fear (and older teachers even more so than young ones)' (p.69). As such, this hierarchy causes two levels of the attitudes from the 'less powerful members' towards the more powerful ones, respect and over-reliance on the teacher.

This is the strongest and the most influential factor found in my research. Respect for education is a deep-rooted tradition of the Vietnamese culture. It comes along with the respect for teachers and teachers' wisdom. Respect from the student teachers towards the tutor is documented in student teachers' journals. A huge number of comments from the journals offered their gratitude towards the tutor simply for teaching them. Some of them include: "Thank you for choosing our class to teach" (student 16), and "Thank you for the time we had together" (student 5).

The respect can also be demonstrated in the student teachers' admiration of the tutor's knowledge. The student teachers looked up to the tutor as 'an image of a model teacher' (student 16). When expressing their expectations of the course, a student shared her admiration for the tutor's experience: 'Could you [the tutor] tell us some tips about your way to succeed as a teacher like you?' (Student 14).

According to Phan and Le, 2013 (p. 224) this respect is gained through two roles that Vietnamese teachers are supposed to take – as a knowledge guide and a moral guide:

The philosophy in Vietnamese teaching is imbued with moral codes that developed nearly three thousand years ago ... Teachers are given the highest status because they are expected to be role models and knowledge guides.

(p.244)

This respect from student teachers towards their tutor was seen to have brought positive consequences, such as fostering the student teachers' motivation in their learning, nurturing their dreams to become a good teacher, as noted in these journal comments:

We always receive your [the tutor's] encouragement and complements. That has motivated us to improve ourselves.

(Student 7)

I love what you did and I would like to become a qualified teacher like you in the future.

(Student 5)

This dream of becoming a teacher would nurture belief in the student teachers that they would be able to succeed in the future and would strive for it. This belief could pave the way to develop the expectancy component of motivation including self-efficacy (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000), which was defined by Thoonen, Slegers, Oort, Peetsma, and Geijssel (2011) as "a future oriented belief about the level of competence that a person expects he or she will display in a given situation" (p.504). Thoonen et al. (2011) examined the role of teacher motivation, organisational factors and leadership practices, and claimed that "Teachers' sense of self efficacy appears to be the most important motivational factor for explaining teacher learning and teaching practices" (Thoonen et al., 2011, p. 517). Therefore, respect and regard for the teacher as a role model, or even as an idol, which can build up a high expectation of oneself, could contribute to the development of self-efficacy.

The respect for the teacher also generated passion for learning. The following comments were popular among the participants: 'I felt happy when I was instructed by you [the tutor] in this interesting subject' (student 16); 'you made us like learning this subject. I always feel happy when I go to school on Wednesday' (student 18); 'your encouragement always

motivates us to improve and try our best. Thank you for that' (student 7). These comments suggest that the student teachers' respect for the tutor motivated them to get involved in the subject area with passion. Hattie (2009) wrote about passion in education saying that 'the key components of passion for the teacher and for the learner appear to be the sheer thrill of being a learner or teacher, the absorption that accompanies the process of teaching and learning, the sensations in being involved in the activity of teaching and learning, and the willingness to be involved in deliberate practice to attain understanding' (p.23) and asserted that 'it is among the most prized outcomes of schooling'. As such, respect for the teacher is a positive factor that promotes learning.

3.3 Over-reliance as a negative factor for learning

Unquestioning respect towards the tutor can also generate an over reliance on the tutor. The student teachers in my study thought that the tutors were so good that they invested their total trust in them. In the pre-intervention questionnaires, 95% of the informants stated that they wanted to see the tutor modelling as an example to assist them with their learning. In the open-ended questions, quite a few student teachers thought that the feedback session provides an opportunity where 'the tutor gives solutions to the student teachers' problems' or 'instructs how to teach' or 'orients, navigates the student teachers' teaching'. Some considered that this is 'a chance for the tutor to judge, evaluate, review the student teachers' performance', to show them what an effective lesson looks like, or for the student teachers to listen to the tutor's comments. Even at the beginning of the intervention, some of the student teachers shared their total belief in the teacher's knowledge and experience stating that 'because the teacher [the tutor] has lots of experience and so she can give me correction of what we should and shouldn't do' or 'sometimes I feel confused about what is right and what is wrong without the tutor's feedback'. Although there were a few student teachers (before the intervention) who showed that they wanted a way of learning for themselves by discovery, given that feedback sessions are opportunities to share ideas to improve practice, the general impression is that the student teachers were overly reliant on the tutor. This finding supports Ta (2012), who found that 'the respect towards trainers' knowledge even turned some trainees into passive listeners who solely listened and did not make contributions to the collaborative task', but shows a divergence from the study by Littlewood (2000), who claimed that Asian students, including Vietnamese students, do not really want to listen to their teachers. Littlewood, however, maintained that 'if Asian students do indeed adopt the passive classroom attitudes that are often claimed, this is more likely to be a consequence of the educational contexts that have been or are now provided for them, than of any inherent dispositions of the students themselves' (p.33).

The question is 'can these educational contexts be changed?' Hofstede also posed a question about the future of these power distance traits: Will large power distance become smaller? I wonder if younger generations of Vietnamese students will have a different view of the roles of teachers and students or they will keep the belief that 'không thầy đố mày làm nên' (without teachers, you surely cannot be successful). In order to see if these deep-rooted cultural features could or should be changed, and in turn to bring about elements of change to the current educational contexts, I conducted the intervention.

The post-intervention questionnaires data indicated that the first factor, the respect for the teacher, remained firmly fixed, but the second factor, over-reliance on the teacher, slightly decreased. As indicated in the journals data, after the intervention, the student teachers still exhibited total respect for the teacher, her knowledge and experience. However, it was found that the student teachers appeared to be more independent in their learning after the

intervention. Although only 38% of the respondents thought they could learn from self-reflection without feedback from the tutor, up to 66% believed that they could learn from peers without the need to listen to the tutor. A further 90% of the informants approved the role of the tutor as a facilitator without the need to give explicit feedback. However, a smaller number of respondents still hold total belief in the teacher's knowledge or expressed their mistrust of their peers. This suggests that although the student teachers did not show great confidence in their ability to find the 'intellectual path' for themselves, the dependence of the student teachers on the tutor was demonstrated to be lower. However, in the first phase of the course, the student teachers were really struggling and felt that they could not learn without their tutor's teaching. They felt so strongly about this new approach of teaching that the entire class decided to write an e-mail to me about this. They expressed their discomfort at having no regular conventional tutor and said they wished to have more lectures on theories of teaching. The student teachers thought that without my lectures they would not have a good theoretical background. However, following an explanation and familiarisation session on the new approach, they gradually became convinced to work with their peers and with the tutor playing the role of a facilitator. The student teachers' response showed that they took responsibility for their own learning.

The above findings disclosed two things, first there was change in the student teachers' views about the role of the tutor, and second, they finally believed that the tutor did not have to be with them all the time to spoon-feed them. The student teachers were intellectually finally convinced about the learning mode, which encouraged more independent and active learning and put the learner in the center of the learning process. Nonetheless, culturally, the student teachers found it hard to bring themselves to the new learning mode because there was always a cultural pull caused by the traditional thinking about the role of the tutor.

Another change following the intervention was that there was a more equitable relationship between the student teachers and the tutor. At the beginning of the intervention, I deliberately expressed myself as an equal to the student teachers. I had hoped that this would have the effect of changing the attitude of the student teachers so that a more equal relationship would be practiced in the classroom. I hoped they would have more agency in their learning when working with me. The first evidence of success was the e-mail mentioned earlier that the student teachers wrote me, a class tutor. It should be noted that it is not a common practice for students in Vietnam to write to a teacher to ask for a change in the teacher's teaching methods. Therefore, it was quite daring of them to raise the issue directly with the tutor. The student teachers nominated the most confident peer to write to me on their behalf. Although they did not dare to write to me as individuals, the e-mail shows that they had found their voice and position in the learning journey. Although the e-mail asked for a more dominant tutor role, they knew what they wanted for their own learning. This made them become more independent and responsible for their study. The hierarchy, therefore, was disrupted to allow two-way communication between the tutor and the student teachers.

Through working in this learning space, the concepts of peer learning and group work, which were earlier misunderstood by some of the student teachers, became clearer. In this intervention, they immersed themselves in class activities that required a lot of peer work and group work. Although a few of them admitted that sometimes they worked individually because they did not have enough time to meet, the terms 'group work'; 'peer work'; and 'individual work' made the right sense to them. In the learning space, where the hierarchy was disrupted, the students discussed and shared teaching ideas while reflecting on their lessons. This space was for the student teachers to communicate with each other to comment

on each other's lessons and together construct teaching skills. The student teachers had opportunities to experiment with lesson planning and implement their own teaching plans. According to Hofstede et al. (2010), in a small power distance society, at school, 'teachers are supposed to treat the students as basic equals and expect to be treated as equals by the students' (p.69) and this equal relationship contributes to effective learning because 'effective learning in such a system depends very much on whether the supposed two-way communication between students and teacher is, indeed, established' (p.70). Thus, with this intervention, the cultural learning and teaching moved slightly from a large power distance to a small power distance.

4.0 CONCLUSION

From the findings on the influences of large power distance on teacher learning, it has been seen that the roles of teachers are very important. I argue that the focus of transforming education in Vietnam should be on promoting the role of the teacher educator. It is crucial for the teacher educator to change their role in the classroom and create a 'learning space' for the student teachers. This 'learning space' will promote the positive influence of students, respect for the teacher, and reduce the students' over-reliance on the teacher. In my view, it will assist Vietnam to gradually integrate constructivist pedagogies into its culturally embedded educational context.

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