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**Summary of the research titled “Investigation into Educational Philosophy in the context of Vietnamese higher education”**

***What were reasons for conducting the research?***

The research titled “Investigation into educational philosophy in the context of Vietnamese higher education” attempts to investigate the perspectives of educational philosophy from higher education teachers in an institution of Vietnam. The reasons to start this research involve (1) the chaos of Vietnamese society regarding the quests of finding or regenerating an educational philosophy during the last decade, and (2) the importance of educational philosophy for Vietnamese higher education.

The first reason for this study to be conducted is due to repeating inquiry by Vietnamese educators and citizens about the current educational philosophy. This inquiry started a decade ago when education encountered a crisis. Although the huge resources of philosophies were recognized during the complicated history of Vietnam, it seems to be not enough for various and often contradicting educational philosophies to be declared or referred to in official state documents. Problems arise only when many different versions are available and when it is hard to know which one is acceptable or perceived by the society and the current teaching and learning stakeholders. Currently, people have blamed for the chaos of Vietnamese education because of different perspectives about its philosophies involving Vietnam has inadequate educational philosophies, Vietnam does not have any philosophies, Vietnamese educational philosophy is not appropriate, and Vietnam must have an educational philosophy.

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

Furthermore, a number of researchers have suggested that teachers should be aware of philosophies of education (Martin, 1956; Vandenberghe, 1984; Croll, Abbott, Broadfoot, Osborn & Pollard, 1994; Gutex, 1997). As in their statements, teachers’ awareness about educational philosophy provide them with many benefits such as knowledge and the ability to identify between the gains and losses of educational innovations organizationally and instructionally, capacity of working in terms of satisfying both personal and professional goals, and significantly, motivate them to build and examine educational policies and programs which are main components for effective reforms and development. Because of the importance of teachers, this research studies their perceptions of educational philosophy through their teaching practice. From the findings of the study, some implications will be drawn out to help affirm teachers’ important role in being aware and knowledgeable about educational philosophy; since then, it contributes to reforming and developing Vietnamese education.

From the aforementioned reasons, a descriptive research was carried out to answer the question: *What are the educational philosophies of Vietnamese teachers?* The instruments of the questionnaire and interview used both quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to obtain relevant data. Four educational philosophies and ideology of Confucius, Herbart, Dewey and Ho Chi Minh were employed as a theoretical background for investigating the philosophy of education of teachers.

***Why were four following philosophies and ideology of education selected for the research?***

It was mainly due to the historical situations and the reality of Vietnam.

**+ Confucian** education appeared in feudalism has long been employed as a tool to politically and culturally govern Vietnam.

+ **Herbartianism** which was popular in Europe was brought to Vietnam by the French in mid-19th century and **still currently, widely, and officially applied** to control teachers and other issues in education though it is strongly criticized in Europe.

+ The appearance of **Dewey’s** philosophy in the South of Vietnam when along with the presence of American influence in education after the Geneva Accords.

**+ Ho Chi Minh** was propagandized as one of the greatest leaders in Vietnam who made a huge contribution in national liberation and in the war against illiteracy right after Vietnam gained independence in 1945.

***Who were the participants of the research?***

Due to the aim of the study, forty-two teachers from social sciences with variety of experience (less than 5 years and more than 26 years of teaching experience) from Tra Vinh University were accepted to take part in answering the questionnaire and seven of them were assigned to be the interviewees by the recommendation of school for their willingness to participate in the in- depth interviews.

After gaining data from the questionnaire and interviews, the Statistics Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 20 and Padilla’s (1994) technique named “The unfolding matrix” were employed to analyze the collected data quantitatively and qualitatively.

***What were the main findings from the research?***

*1. Teacher’s general awareness about philosophy of education*

Teachers were aware of the philosophy of education; from which, they displayed some diversified perceptions about different aspects of the investigation. Teachers paid attention to all four philosophies and ideology from the questionnaire rather equally, in which Confucius’s seemed to be less appreciated. Teachers with 11-15 years of teaching experience followed Herbart and Confucius when responding to the philosophies and ideology of the four proponents. Teachers with more than 26 years of teaching became less interest of the issue. However, they perceived their own philosophy of education mainly from Confucius’ and Ho Chi Minh’s from the interviews.

*2. Teachers’ perceptions about the goals of education and the roles of the curriculum*

Overall, they were mainly influenced by the ideology of Ho Chi Minh; the goals of Vietnamese education were still general because of lack of a guiding philosophy and autonomous roles of students

*3. Teachers’ roles in accordance with the recognizable educational philosophies and ideology*

Teachers’ roles were perceived from the combination of examined philosophies and ideology; BUT the features of Dewey’s educational philosophy are found in almost every teacher’s thought.

*4. The notions of teachers’ teaching*

Teachers seemed not to implement exactly what they declared or perceived about the philosophies and ideology of education in their teaching practice. They were mainly influenced by the traditional teaching of Herbart during stages of teaching in class and the beliefs of Confucius whereas they believed in what they did as in progressive education of Dewey.

*5. The relationship between teachers and students*

This relationship remained traditional although teachers had divergent thinking about their roles from different philosophies. As a result, students’ learning was still under the control of teachers.

*6. The notions of learning*

Students’ learning was primarily under the transmission process of teachers rather than came from students’ will or choice for their learning.

*7. What students should learn*

Teachers implied that they paid a lot of attention to assigned contents of the lessons more than to any other factors

*8. The center of educational decisions*

The most powerful ones in the top-down systems werethe Ministry of Education and Training, the Rectors, and parents. Teachers and students almost had no rights in their teaching and learning.

## *Conclusions from the findings of the study*

Teachers are found not to have a critical look at education. They don’t have much awareness that education is open beyond “formal” curriculum. In this sense, they don’t think about education critically; for example, as an oppressive system (i.e. cannot recognize the education as Paulo Freire), and especially, they don’t understand about the hidden curriculum of which they play an important role in carrying out. In addition, that they have been taught in over and over so they don’t know there are very many other possibilities and they don’t want to lose face by doing something seen as weird.

Teachers show mixed feelings and contradictory ideas about what they think and do in their teaching context. On the one hand, they want to remain in their traditional role as a master who controls everything in students’ learning. On the other hand, teachers are urged by students’ criticism for changing the existing education system; as a result of that possible change, the students would be given more rights in choosing what and how to learn as well as in identifying who their teachers are. This means students want to acquire knowledge more practically and the process of education must rely on their active learning rather than take their learning at face value from their teachers.

It can be said that the philosophy of education in Vietnam is in the stage of formation. It is extremely important to be aware of the impact of the ways of thinking about education in shaping an educational philosophy. Indeed, one of the objectives of this research is to begin to develop people’s awareness about the importance of an educational philosophy for Vietnamese education; from that, an educational philosophy can help the Vietnamese people have a critical look at the meaning of education. Consideration for reconstructing or redefining the educational philosophy is recognized as an immediate mission for Vietnamese education.

*From the conclusions*, *some implications were drawn out*

- Teachers should be listened and have real rights in their teaching for the purposes of non-authoritarian mode of education, less-Confucius’ influences, less-Herbartianism’s official modeling regulations and policies, and les- Ho Chi Minh’s ideology of building education for an Utopian Socialism.

- Instead, teachers should be provided with more thorough training and opportunities for learning, debating, dialoguing, and self-transforming from various educational philosophies rather than Marxist-Leninist philosophy and the ideology of Ho Chi Minh.

- Students should be listened, have rights, and powerfully voice their demands, and be fully aware of their roles, their growth, their own emancipation, and their learning process with proper conditions.