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**The review of doctoral thesis
by Nguyet Duy Khang, MA,
entitled "Problematizing Significant Learning at the University of Gdańsk.
The International Students' Perspective",
written under the supervision of prof. WSB dr hab. Teresy Bauman
(primary supervisor) and dr. Adama Jagiełło-Rusiłowski (secondary
supervisor)**

I include the doctoral thesis prepared by Nguyet Duy Khang, MA, written under the supervision of prof. WSB dr hab. Teresy Bauman (primary supervisor) and dr. Adama Jagiełło-Rusiłowski (secondary supervisor) to successful research project realised with great elan. Nguyet Duy Khang in his thesis focused on „teachers' orientations for student learning and information about how the embedded action research in a practicum process which can add values to teaching for the purposes of significant learning and to what extend the teachers influence that type of learning" (p. 47). That problem is extremely up-to-date in the context of changes of higher education, teachers' education and ways of adult learning, as well as increasing doubts and dilemmas concerning the way of teaching and learning, the status of knowledge and the role it plays in contemporary adults' lives. The research undertaken by the Author is inscribed in actual debate on the way of teachers' education, kinds of competencies important in their work, and increasing role of informal learning going on in the field of social sciences.

The thesis contains 344 pages in total, and consists of seven chapters (including introduction and conclusions), bibliography, list of figures, charts, tables, mindmaps and networks, as well as three appendix in which interview

questionnaires for teachers and international students, and the course of classroom management are included. Chapter one is an introduction. In chapter two the Author reconstructs different learning systems, the notion of significant learning adopted from Fink's taxonomy, the factors influencing students' learning, the role of teachers and their orientations for students' significant learning, as well as the concepts of good teaching. Those chapters are written very communicatively, competently, according to adequate literature.

In my opinion the most important there are two issues in those chapters. The first one is the comparison of Polish and Vietnamese context of thinking about education and the role of a teacher in the process of students' learning. The Author, according to Nguyen, describes Vietnamese education as far from employers' needs and labor market, low in quality with weak effectiveness, very theoretical, full of students' competitiveness with lack of their critical thinking. The teachers are overloaded with many tasks unrelated to teaching, making their students afraid of schooling and training them to be obedient. The most important in their work is to transmit values and knowledge of dominant culture (a paradigm of cultural transmission) rather than to inspire their students, support their development and learning. According to the Author, that situation should be changed and his dissertation is the one of possible way of reflecting the process of changes teachers' training towards being „a good teacher” (p. 7) in a sense of supporting students' significant learning, understand their needs, being flexible, creative, and permanently developing himself/herself as a person and a professional. This is the source of the main aim of His research – to answer the questions about what makes a teacher teach effectively, which means facilitate significant learning, what makes students learn significantly, and “what makes the differences among the teachers in (...) academic community” (p. 7).

The second issue which I found very important is the way Nguyet Duy Khang connects the theory of Fink's taxonomy of significant learning with the aims of His research project. This theory is well described in a second chapter as an introduction of theoretical framework of the research. Despite the fact that those two chapters, including extensive analyzes of the literature, precede the main research part of the thesis, they can themselves be considered as an

important research element of the dissertation, primarily because the Author not only reviews the relevant literature, but also tries to systematize the concepts He refers to. It is also worth emphasizing the fact that different concepts are confronted with each other in order to elaborate a justifiable thesis. The context of Vietnamese education both with the concept of significant learning by Fink are, in my opinion, important interpretative filters of research the Author undertook and presented in the dissertation.

Referring to that, following questions arise: what is the status of the theory in Authors' research and how does it indicate His thinking while conducting research, making analysis and interpreting the obtained results? What kind of role can theory play in different kinds of social, pedagogical research in comparison with His research?

The third and fourth chapter are the detailed description of research process. They are written in a good way, demonstrating the Author's 'theoretical and methodological consciousness'. I am convinced that the qualitative research strategy used by Him fulfills the criteria of scientific correctness, giving the possibility of a deep analysis of His research problems. The Author has conducted "a mix-type qualitative research with an empirical study and an action research using multiple design which aims to investigate the teachers' factors in facilitating students' learning and that from the practicum processes to formulate and problematize significant learning" (p. 44). To achieve the research aims He used the following techniques and tools:

- interviews with 8 international (Erasmus) students and 3 teachers of social sciences, as well as observation in four different kinds of classes organized by 4 different teachers to analyze how the teachers' knowledge and skills were applied during the teaching process (empirical part of the study)
- self-reflective journal entries, teaching materials and course description, 45 cases of students' expectations and 96 cases of students' reflections on the course in the practicum process (action research).

I found the most interesting the second part of the research that was mainly done to categorize and check if the Author's teaching in the practicum would

qualify to students' perception in relation to Fink's taxonomy of significant learning. He applied "an interpretative approach using the Padilla's unfolding matrix for the loop of categorizing the raw data before patterning them" (p. 105). I would like to point out that, in my opinion, Nguyet Duy Khang has made the right choice of research approach for His own research aims and research problems, and that they were achieved.

The next three chapters are the description of reserach results and final conclusions. The Author takes great care about the reliability of His narrative. It has very detailed quotes from the interviewees. At the same time, text saturation with these quotes, revealing frequency and repetition of views reflects their atmosphere and context, validating the conclusions. He also shows His attitude towards the analyzed problems, constructing propositions for educational practice.

The presented material is very interesting. This is a great contribution of the Author, who resist temptation to comment, judge, and explain, allowing the interviewees to speak in their own voice. This is a huge research material that was analyzed on 175 pages - the results were presented in a thematic order. This text is an extremely valuable source of knowledge about trying to become a "good teacher" (in the sense the Author presented in the first part of the dissertation), constructing relationships with students, and facilitating their learning. "The abundance" of this text I treat as a result of high level of Author's involvement in His research project. The question I would ask at the end of my review is about the meaning of the results of conducted research for developing the decription of significant learning phenomenon.

Summing up, I would like to say that I positively evaluate the doctoral dissertation by Nguyet Duy Khang. The reasons of my opinion are as following:

- logic and structure of the arguments are consistent,
- the language of the dissertation meets the criteria for scientific work,
- the research problems analyzed by the Author are valuable scientific problems,
- His considerations are ground in adequate literature,

- analysis of research results is convincing, both in the context of narrative manner and the presentation of particular fragments.

Conclusion

In light of the above-mentioned opinions, I conclude that the doctoral thesis by Nguyet Duy Khang, MA, entitled "Problematizing Significant Learning at the University of Gdańsk. The International Students' Perspective", written under the supervision of prof. WSB dr hab. Teresy Bauman (primary supervisor) and dr. Adama Jagiełło-Rusilowskiego (secondary supervisor) meets the statutory requirements for doctoral dissertation (both on basis of content and formally). I therefore submit the request for the admission to the further phases of doctoral procedure and to public defense.

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