

**“Everybody knows by hearing but not by seeing”:
Exploring the use of photovoice to document
challenges of some inter-provincial students at the
University of Danang, Vietnam**

By

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ABSTRACT

This research employed a Participatory Action Research methodology to work with minority inter-provincial students and unearth their lived experiences at the University of Danang in Vietnam. It focused on examining the undervaluation of inter-provincial students' voices in the university's policies – and to a wider extent, in most Vietnamese universities – by facilitating a process in which their challenges and ideas for change at university could be heard.

This research also sought to observe and analyse the influences of power dynamics within a Confucian-heritaged context on the participatory research process itself. Vietnam is believed to be a society in which hierarchical power takes its deepest roots due to the effects of Confucianism. By using Participatory Action Research with a variety of methods – photovoice, diagraming, group discussion, interviewing and exhibition – I sought to facilitate student voices and document some of the potential and constraints of the methodology within this cultural context.

The research involved eleven student participants and ten teacher participants over a period of six weeks. Data was collectively analysed and shared by student participants with invited teachers through an exhibition at the University of Danang. Throughout the process, I took extensive field notes of my observations and interactions with participants. Data analysis was then written and presented in this thesis based on what participants had provided. Key themes that this thesis explores are: (1) challenges that faced inter-provincial students, (2) the impact of Confucius hierarchical power on

participants' involvement and ownership in the research and (3) the role of language and emotion when undertaking Participatory Action Research in such a context.

The process generated clear evidence of the common challenges facing inter-provincial students associated with limited finances, mentality/spirituality, and poor living conditions. From analysis of these challenges, the research provides recommendations for teachers, university administrators and policy-makers. These recommendations promote a more holistic pedagogy that better encourages students to develop themselves throughout their time at university.

The thesis also concludes that the use of Participatory Action Research within higher education settings in Vietnam can serve as a research model for the betterment of disadvantaged minority students. It could help minimise the effects of neoliberalism on the country's higher education sector and foster better development outcomes for students and their home provinces.

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“Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.”

Albert Einstein

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
DAN	Development Analysis Network
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSO	General Statistics Office
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HERA	Higher Education Reform Agenda
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
PAR	Participatory Action Research
SEDS	Social-economic Development Strategy
UD	University of Danang
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WB	World Bank
WTO	World Trade Organization

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of study and research context

The University of Danang (UD) is located in Danang city, Central Vietnam (See Figure 1.1 overleaf). It was established in 1994 as a multidisciplinary university including the University of Engineering, University of Education, University of Economics, University of Foreign Languages, Junior College of Technology, and a University Administration Division. As of 2011, UD had 1,600 staff members (Ho, 2011 cited in London, 2011).

According to the university statistics, in 2013, there were 58,267 students from all over Vietnam enrolled at the university, particularly those from other provinces and cities in the central area. These students are categorised as “inter-provincial students” in the design and implementation of the higher education policies within the University of Danang. This group of students plays a key role in boosting the development of Vietnam upon completion of their studies since most of them come from small provinces and villages where the standard of living is still relatively low (GSO (General Statistics Office), 2012).

Figure 1.1 Map of major cities in Vietnam



Source: World Atlas (n.d.)

When moving to Danang to study, inter-provincial students anecdotally report a high cost of living, uncomfortable and unsafe accommodation, and homesickness among other challenges. Many of them try to find part-time work so that they can afford to live in the city. However, in some ways, this adversely affects their studies since they do not have enough time for studying. Moreover, as minority students, they often feel powerless to access or affect those who make decisions that directly influence their lives (Goodhart, et al., 2006). Despite this situation, little has been done to

formally document and analyse the challenges that these students face in order to inform effective practical and appropriate policies towards them.

In an educational system highly impacted by Confucianism, most of the research focusing on inter-provincial students has been conducted through surveys or questionnaires (Dao, 2011) and their voices are rarely represented in the policy making process. Therefore, this research aimed to empower inter-provincial students to speak for themselves through a photovoice process. This process formed part of a participatory research design with a goal of assisting the process of policy making to ensure that their needs could be adequately met through the development of future, more appropriate academic programmes, student services, teaching curricula, and so forth. Understanding inter-provincial students in higher education in Vietnam is of great importance since they are decisive factors in provincial development in the long term.

1.1.1 Research questions

As Creswell (2003) suggests, in qualitative research, research questions should be stated in broad terms and be open-ended as they are subject to change throughout the process. The research questions that I initially designed slightly changed as my study progressed. Nonetheless, the research questions I set up from the beginning of the research still played an important role in keeping my research focused. Ultimately, the questions that guided my study were:

- What are the main challenges that inter-provincial students deal with when studying at the University of Danang?
- How does hierarchical power in a Confucian-heritaged setting affect the research process?
- How does photovoice impact inter-provincial students' participation and ownership in the research?

1.2 Significance of the study

It is hoped that the result of this research will be beneficial to participants, to education practice, and to future academic research. Due to the lack of academic research on this topic, this research is intended to contribute to academia and to encourage Vietnamese academics to carry out further research on understanding students' lives at college.

Results of this research could suggest photovoice as an effective tool for policy-making in education, creating opportunities for usually silenced voices to be heard. Photovoice is also a pedagogical strategy that builds up a safe environment for students to share their experiences, stories, and knowledge or even improve collaboration between teachers and students. Apart from that, a profound analysis of power dynamics and ownership when doing participatory research in a Confucian-based society might help researchers better understand advantages and drawbacks when undertaking research in this context.

1.3 Introduction to Vietnam

Located in Southeast Asia with a population of over 80 million people and 54 different ethnic groups, Vietnam has been a rich cultural country which has been through ups and downs in its history. Periods of colonisation and civil conflicts between the North and the South could not discourage Vietnamese determination to restructure a unified and prosperous nation. The post-war reunification of Vietnam in 1975 followed by the Doi moi policy (socio-economic revolution) in 1986 have contributed to transforming Vietnam, one of the poorest countries in the world before 1986 into one of the most dynamic and rapidly growing economies in the entire world by 2007 (Hayden & Thiep, 2007).

The Vietnamese Government has been highly committed to the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) by integrating MDGs into its periodical socio-economic development targets and tasks including the 10-year socio-economic development strategy 2001-2010 and the 5-year socio-economic development plan. As a result, Vietnam has been praised for its development success story, which is far better than other countries in similar situations.

Vietnam has completed two thirds of the MDGs. The average Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth per year from 2001 to 2010 was 7.2 percent and GDP per capita reached 1911 USD in 2013 (National Report, 2010). The increase in GDP per capita coincided with the decrease in poverty. By the end of 2002, Vietnam had managed to halve the poverty rate

from 58.1 percent in 1993 to 28.9 percent. This poverty rate continued dropping to 14.5 percent in 2008 and poverty alleviation and reduction have been seen in both urban and rural areas among all demographic groups (UNDP, 2013).

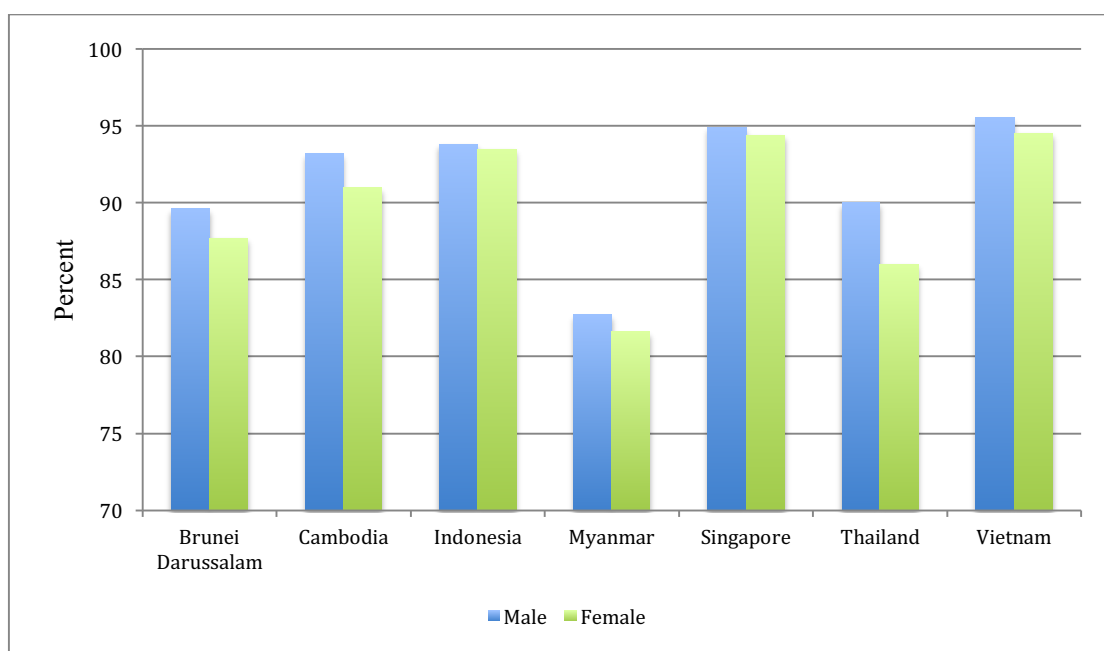
Alongside domestic development has been improvement in international and global arenas. Vietnam has cemented sound development partnerships with other nations in the world. Vietnam's voice has gained much more weight as an active member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Vietnam also successfully carried out its role as a non-permanent member of the United Nation Security Council (2008-2009) and Chair of ASEAN in 2010.

1.3.1 Higher education and development

As Bloom (2003, p. 140) purports, "higher education is essential to promoting sustainable human development and economic growth. It is no longer a luxury that only rich countries can afford, but an absolute necessity for all countries, and especially for poor ones". Indeed, even though higher education is not mentioned in the MDGs, its significance should not be underestimated, especially when the number of students enrolling in higher education has dramatically increased recently. There was an estimated intense increase from 28.6 million in 1970 to 152.5 million in 2007 in the number of students at tertiary level. Particularly, the period 2000-2007 witnessed a remarkable five-fold increase in gross enrollment rate worldwide (UNESCO, 2009).

This unprecedented increase in higher education enrollment however is the inevitable consequence of equal access and higher enrollment rates at lower levels. According to UNDP (2013), the net enrollment rate grew to 90 percent in 2011 from 83 percent in 2000 and the number of out-of-school children decreased by nearly half – from 102 million to 57 million worldwide. Vietnam is among countries that have made significant progress in achieving universal primary education. According to Vietnam’s Ministry of Planning and Investment (National Report, 2010), in 2009 alone, the net enrollment rate in primary school was 95.5 percent, the school completion rate was 88.2 percent, and the literacy rate of people aged 15-24 was 97.1 percent. As seen in Figure 1.2, by 2011, the net enrollment rate in primary school in Vietnam surpassed that of many countries in the region.

Figure 1.2 Net enrollment rate in primary school of selected ASEAN countries



Source: Vietnam Census (2011)

One of the main reasons for this success is because the Vietnamese Government had seen education as the top priority for the development of the country after devastating wars. As Ho Chi Minh declared in his inauguration at the inception of the newly-formed independent government in 1945, “an ignorant nation is a weak one. Therefore, I propose that a campaign against illiteracy be launched” (Pham & Fry, 2002, p. 306). From then on, Vietnam has been working on eliminating illiteracy. Adopting the MDGs goal of universal primary education is more like the continuation of what the country had been doing already.

However, as the MDGs deadline is fast approaching, it has been reported that the goal of universal primary education is not likely to be met in many

countries (UNDP, 2013). The progress was seemingly good at the beginning, yet with time it has slowed down noticeably. Around one out of four children who enter primary schools will probably give up half way through before they can make it to the last grade, making the dropout rate go up (UNDP, 2013). This has led to an argument that universal primary education, while necessary, is not sufficient to develop a more educated and less poor society (Beall, 2013). Beall also points out that more focus on education is needed and education should be seen as a “series of connected phases, from primary through secondary to higher levels of learning”. Primary education alone is not enough. As Tilak (2007) points out, concentration on basic education only pushes the poor just above the poverty line and then leaves them in danger of falling below it again.

Meanwhile, to achieve sustainable socio-economic development, there is a need to focus on human capital and human development. As for Vietnam, the country needs highly-skilled workers more than ever since foreign investment is increasingly flowing to Vietnam. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow into Vietnam increased to about US\$4.0 billion in 2005 from only \$0.32 billion in 1988, with 28 percent annual growth rate (GSO, 2007 as cited in Anwar & Nguyen, 2010). Without a well-trained and educated workforce, Vietnam is less likely to keep up with the rapid change. Therefore, Vietnam’s Socio-economic Development Strategy for 2011-2020 (SEDS, 2011) mentions in Clause 9, Section IV that:

[...] developing and improving the quality of human resources, especially high-quality human resources, is a strategic breakthrough, a

decisive factor for economic restructuring and growth model shift and a long-term competitive advantage, thereby ensuring rapid, efficient and sustainable socio-economic development.

1.4 Research approach

I decided to conduct research at the University of Danang (UD) in Vietnam where I worked as a teaching assistant from 2011 to 2013. I chose this university because it plays a key role in training people to support the socio-economic development of Central Vietnam and the Western Highlands. As a member of the teaching staff of the university, I found it necessary to do research on issues that help reinforce this development.

My experience of working at UD for nearly two years taught me that in education, students' position should be in the centre of the university's support policies, course design, and other activities. However, in reality, little focus has been placed on students' development process at university, especially disadvantaged students such as inter-provincial students. Therefore, I decided to conduct research with this group of students to explore their everyday realities and difficulties.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) informed by feminist epistemology is used to undertake this research. PAR is based on collaborative data collection, reflection, and action by involving disadvantaged people who, throughout the research, take control by speaking for themselves and taking action to improve their situations. PAR affirms the importance of experience

as a way of knowing and generating knowledge. PAR includes a variety of research methods. This research project adopts photovoice together with group discussion and interview to work with participants. Photovoice is an empowering method that allows participants to reflect upon their strengths and their concerns about the community that they belong to in a photographic way. The photos they have taken lead to critical group discussions and actions for positive changes. PAR and photovoice will be discussed further in Chapter Three, followed by the analysis of main findings by using this methodology in Chapter Four.

As an employee of UD, it has been crucial for me to examine how my positionality such as geographic location, social status, ethnicity, gender, age, education, and interpretation has shifted between an “insider” and an “outsider” in relation to student participants. While we all spoke the same Vietnamese language, my strong Danang accent which was different from theirs led them to assume that I was born and brought up as an urbanite. As a post-graduate student still under contract with UD, I was older and, therefore, had a higher social status in society than them. Moreover, while being female enabled me to approach female participants, it was hard for me to build rapport with male participants. These were just a few of the elements that generated power imbalances among us throughout the photovoice process. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five, Section 5.2.

1.5 Thesis structure

This research focuses on exploring the challenges that some inter-provincial students faced in 2014 and how using photovoice as an empowering method worked well with them in a hierarchical society. The thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter One generally provides an introduction of what the thesis is about. Chapter Two follows with the examination of higher education, Confucianism, and minority students in the Vietnamese context. The methodology that this thesis is based on will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three. Chapter Four focuses on collective data analysis and discussion of the main findings. Chapter Five provides a reflection on power and participation when doing PAR in a Confucian-heritaged context. The thesis concludes with implications for development research and practices in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER 2 HIGHER EDUCATION, CONFUCIANISM, AND MINORITY STUDENTS IN VIETNAM

2.1 Higher education in Vietnam

Vietnam has recently witnessed a rapid expansion and growth in the tertiary education sector, particularly after the launch of Doi moi policy in 1986 together with the issuance of Decree 90 in 1993 and Higher Education Reform Agenda in 2005. The policy of Doi moi came into being after the sixth Congress of the Communist Party and its declaration of replacing the existing centrally-planned economy with a market-regulated economy. The open-door policy was the result of the adaptation of Vietnam to the constant changes in the world that placed every existing nation in a position that they were not able to survive by themselves without integrating with others. Such a policy aimed to meet the urgent need of producing highly-skilled human resources for a knowledge-based society to keep pace with global economies that have grown as fast as “a tidal wave sweeping over the world, crushing local – including national – uniqueness” (Robertson & Khondker, 1998, p. 30). This policy highlights Vietnam’s serious commitment to the reunification and restructuring of its higher education sector. 1993 marked a turning point in Vietnam’s higher education when the central government issued Decree 90/CP which declared the equal right of access to higher education for every citizen. This clearly reflects in the Law of Education (2005) of Vietnam, which emphasises:

- All citizens have the right and responsibility to pursue education.
- All citizens, regardless of ethnicity, religion, gender, family status or economic circumstances, are equal in terms of access to education.
- The government is responsible to maintain the equity of access, to create favorable conditions for disadvantaged people in access to education.

Accordingly, two national universities (Ha Noi National University and Ho Chi Minh National University) and three regional universities (Thai Nguyen University, Danang University, and Hue University) were established. Prior to the Doi moi policy, the old Soviet educational model was predominant in Vietnam as Vietnam was intellectually and financially supported by the Soviet Union during the war periods. Small mono-disciplinary educational institutions were then replaced with large multi-disciplinary and research-based institutions. Moreover, non-public higher education institutions were also allowed to be established, paving the way for the emergence of many other forms of higher education later (Nguyen, Oliver, & Priddy, 2009).

In Vietnam, public higher education institutions (HEIs) refer to institutions that are completely owned and run by the officials appointed by the state in the top-down manner. Non-public HEIs are privately funded by organisations, associations, or individuals. There was no non-public institution in Vietnam in 1987. By 2009, there were 81 non-public universities and colleges (Ministry of Education and Training, 2009). A fully-subsidised higher education system is

no longer available, but the Government has implemented encouraging policies such as fee deductions or exemptions for poor, ethnic minorities or for veterans' children. This strategy is based on the philosophy that assistance and facilitation should be provided to the poor and the talented respectively (Tran & Nguyen, 2000). This financial support has brought about significant benefits for these groups of people. It is estimated that in 2006 alone, about 22 percent of disadvantaged university students were benefiting from significant fee deductions of up to 50 percent of tuition costs (Gropello et al., 2008, p. 106).

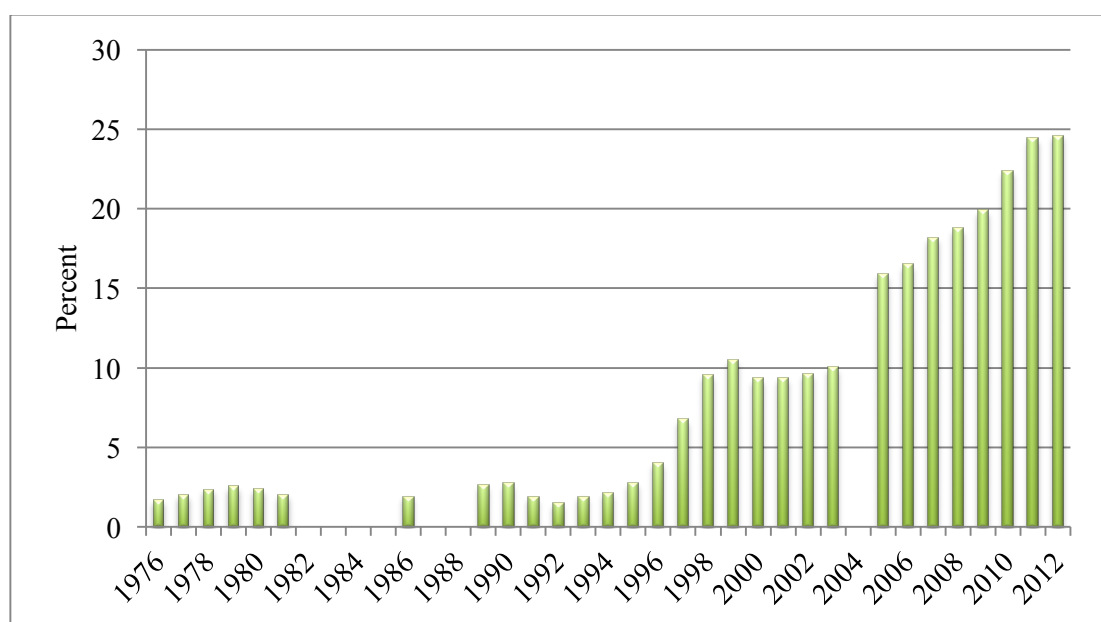
With lessons learnt from a variety of reforms after Vietnam gained its independence, the Government finally developed a master plan of renovating the higher education system known as the Higher Education Reform Agenda 2006-2020 (HERA, 2005). Its aims include:

- Increasing the enrollment rate in universities with a proposed rate of 450 students per 10,000 persons by 2020, with 20-30 percent of students in research-intensive programmes and 30-40 percent of students enrolled in the private sector;
- Enhancing both the quality and efficiency of the higher education system, expanding research capacities in universities with the goals of improving the quality of teaching and providing a research base for the development of industry and enterprises – three quarters of all university lecturers were expected to have PhDs, and at least one university is to be a top 200 “world-class” university and the ratio of university students to teaching staff reduced to 20:1 by 2020;

- Providing equity of access for all socio-economic, regional, and ethnic groups and multi-tiered system, initiating and promoting better linkages between education, skills training and the labor market (i.e. society needs-based education).

These concerted efforts have led to an increase in the number of students enrolling in universities and other higher education institutions. In 1992-1993, there were only 162,000 students in higher education institutions. This number soared to around 1 million in 2002 (Hayden & Thiep, 2007) to over 1.7 million in 2009 (Do & Ho, 2011). Figure 2.1 shows the number of university students in Vietnam during the 1976-2013 period of time as percentage of all people who finished secondary schools within the last five years.

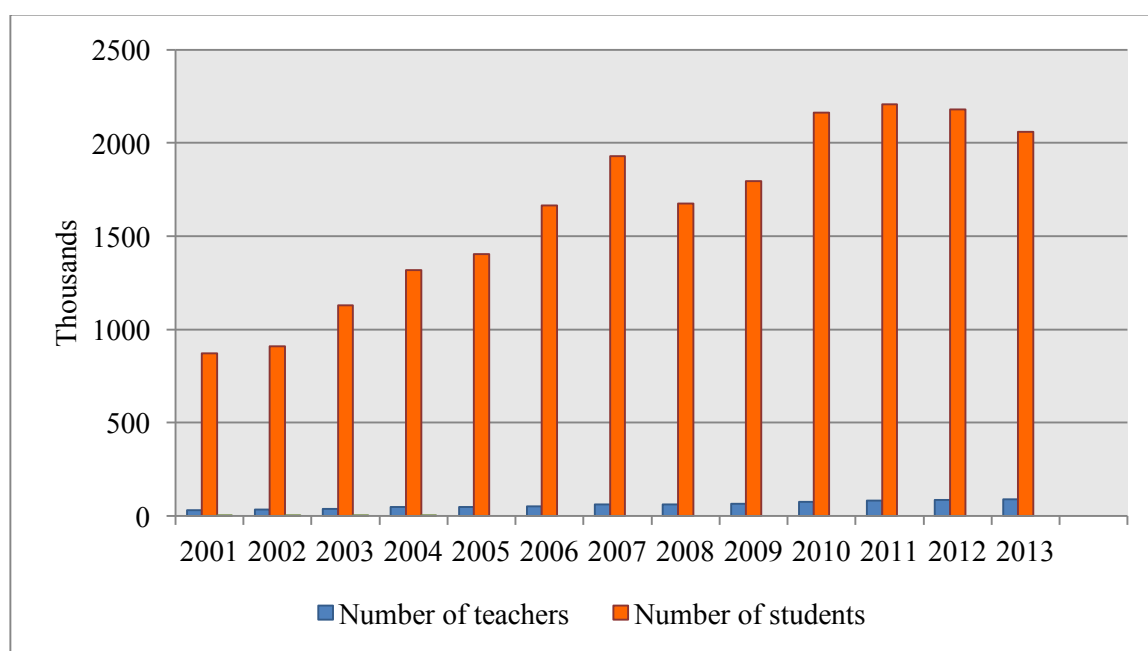
Figure 2.1 Tertiary school enrollment in Vietnam from 1976-2013



Source: The Global Economy (2013)

Nonetheless, just because the expansion has been rapid in number this does not necessarily mean that it has expanded deeply in quality. When it comes to equal access to higher education between urban and rural areas, problems remain. Despite the burgeoning enrollments, it is less likely that people from poor backgrounds or rural areas are included (Hayden & Thiep, 2007). The student-teacher ratio still hovers around 30:1 (McCornac, 2012), which is much higher than that of other countries in the world and is the highest overall in the region as indicated below in Figure 2.2. While the number of students goes up rapidly and constantly, little change has been seen in the number of teachers both throughout Vietnam in general and Danang city in particular (See Figure 2.2 and Figure 2.3).

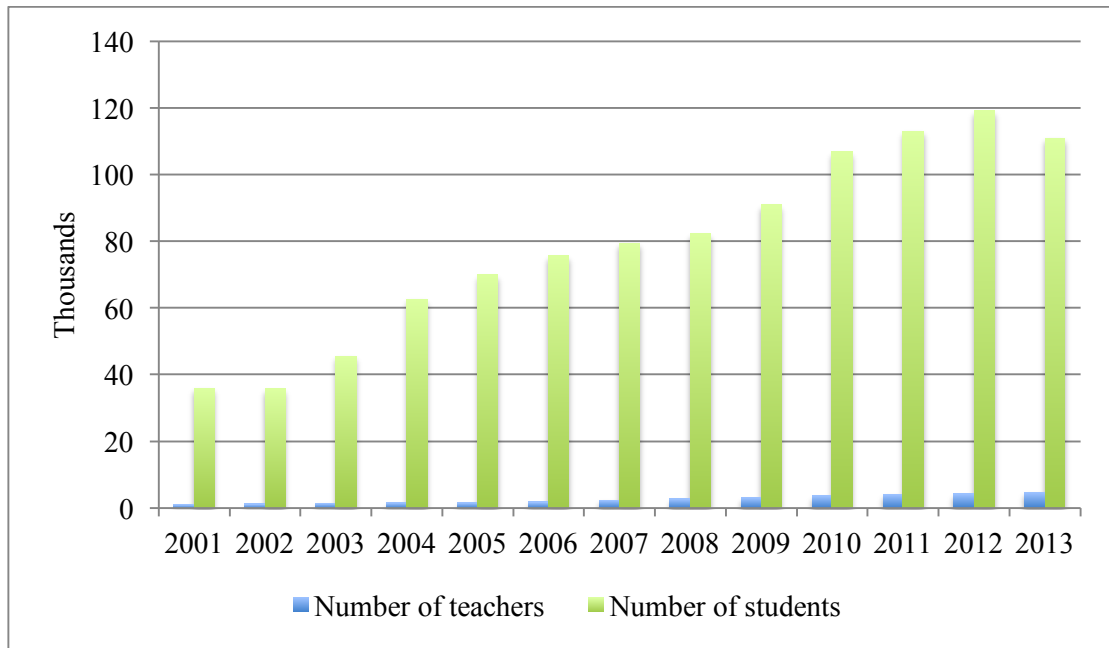
Figure 2.2 Increase in the number of teachers and students in Vietnam by year



Note: Private universities were not available during the two years 2001-2002 and before. Thus, only teachers and students from public universities were counted in the statistics for those two years. From 2003 onwards, the statistics included the number of teachers and students from both public and private universities all over Vietnam. However, in 2005, the number of teachers from Gia Lai province was excluded from the statistics.

Source: Adapted from data provided by GSO (2013)

Figure 2.3 Increase in the number of teachers and students in Danang by year



Source: Adapted from data provided by GSO (2013)

High student-teacher ratios also means that heavy workloads will be placed upon teachers. Despite this, salaries for teachers are still low compared to other non-educational sectors (Nguyen, 2013). Estimates show that the average salary in 2011 for higher education professionals was at less than 4 million VND (around 200 USD) on a monthly basis (McCornac, 2012). It is not surprising that most teachers have to find other extra jobs outside universities to supplement their meager incomes so that they are able to support their own families (Altbach, 2005). As a result, it is difficult for them to have enough time and energy to stay professionally committed to their academic job at university.

Beside this, the management process in Vietnam tertiary education is still severely constrained by regulatory controls with poorly developed legislative and management systems to support the development of HEIs. Hence, in comparison with the current low ranking and slow development of Vietnam's tertiary education system, some argue that the goals and targets laid in the Higher Education Reform Agenda are too ambitious (Harman, Hayden & Pham, 2010).

It should not be forgotten that throughout its history Vietnam's higher education has been highly influenced by many different teaching-learning philosophies and ideologies from external big powers (Nguyen, 2011). Indeed, it could be said that changes in Vietnam's higher education have reflected the country's political situation at a certain period of time (Kelly, 2000). Vietnam's higher education has experienced highs and lows through different historical development stages. Under China's domination for nearly 1000 years, Confucian-oriented education was dominant and exclusively established for educating royal family members and other elites in the society. Thus, access to education was strictly limited to the privileged and powerful minority. The later half of the 19th Century witnessed France's colonial regime over Vietnam's territory. Higher education therefore was shifted from a Confucian to a French model. It was soon replaced by the former Soviet education system with small specialised educational institutions before the Doi moi policy took place. With such a broken and scattered approach to higher education, undoubtedly it will take an enormous amount of time and effort for Vietnam to restructure its own forms of successful higher education.

Tertiary education reforms are of paramount importance for the sustainable development of Vietnam. However, after many reforms and changes in educational policy-making, the current Higher Education Reform Agenda that Vietnam is working on is considered to be unachievable and does not mention much about the main stakeholder of education – students. It seems that these higher education reforms have paid too much attention to achieving “numbers” rather than the core value of education – that is, to focus on “developing full human beings, which extend beyond academic outcomes to include self-esteem, self-knowledge, respect for diversity, etc.” (Olsen, 1995, p. 225).

According to Vietnam’s country report for DAN9-II¹, as the direct recipient of educational policy, students still “remain excluded from the policy making and educational planning process” (Nguyen, Tran & Do, 2014, p. 36). This report also emphasises that there has been neither an effective “bottom-up” approach to educational planning and policy-making nor any tools to facilitate this. As Levin (1999, p. 2) argues, “education reform cannot succeed and should not proceed without much more direct involvement of students in all its aspects”. Including young people in the process of identifying and developing solutions to improve their own educational experiences and others in their community is of paramount importance to create an effective educational setting for 21st century learners (Gilbert, 2005). However, the involvement and participation of poor and marginalised groups in such a grassroots approach are still ignored in Vietnam. The educational policy making or planning are assumed to be

¹ DAN9 (Development Analysis Network) programme is divided into two stages with the main objective of presenting recent study findings in the Greater Mekong Subregion’s development. Stage II focuses on examining the performance of administrative institutions and policies in achieving inclusive development in health and education sectors.

“relatively closed affairs” and the exclusive “business” of government authorities (Nguyen et al., 2014, p. 36).

The socialisation (*xa hoi hoa*) of higher education does exist in Vietnam, yet its definition and practice are far different from what other countries perceive them to be. In Vietnam, socialisation does not represent the whole process of learning throughout the life course that plays a central influence on the behaviours, beliefs, and actions of people. Instead, it means mobilising the whole society in the implementation of education and encouraging everyone to make contributions to the nation under the State guidance (Bui, Vo, & Nguyen, 1999). Such a socialisation process that purports to redistribute the expenditure burden on tertiary education to households is argued to be a “soft” landing of neoliberal ideology (Harvey, 2005 as cited in Dang, 2009) that the World Bank (WB) introduced into Vietnam. Through direct and indirect ways, WB has manipulated Vietnam’s policy and connected it with WB’s practices and norms to carry forward its neoliberal ideology. Since education has become private goods, the socialisation *outcomes* of higher education at which Vietnam’s policy is aiming are not “the resultant changes (values, beliefs, and knowledge) that occur in students” (Conrad & Serlin, 2006, p. 255). Student experiences and development are therefore under-valued in the country’s educational reform policies.

2.2 Confucian power in Vietnam’s higher education

In addition to the above changes, Chinese influences on Vietnam persist. These can be traced back to the time when Emperor Han Wudi declared that China’s

territory included the north of current Vietnam and designated Confucianism as the dominant ruling principle over its territory (Welch & Cai, as cited in Ryan, 2011). Vietnam was then under Chinese imperial rule for approximately one thousand years (from 111 BC to AD 938). During this time, a massive number of Chinese people started migrating to North Vietnam and settling there, particularly after the Western Han dynasty collapsed and Chinese aristocrats fled to Vietnam. These Chinese people fostered their Confucian cultures within the indigenous Vietnamese cultures. Nonetheless, its effects were still not strong enough to compete with Buddhism and Taoism. However, even when Chinese annexation and colonisation of Vietnam ended, a considerable number of Vietnamese people still adopted Confucian education together with Chinese culture (Marginson, 2011).

The three dynasties Ngo, Dinh, and Early Le (939-1009) did not pay much attention to education, and the role of Confucianism in the development of Vietnamese feudal society and regime was marginal. It was not until the Ly dynasty (1009-1225) that Confucianism began thriving with the construction of the Temple of Literature in present Ha Noi to worship Confucius and study Confucianism. The Temple of Literature was the first higher education institution in Vietnam (Pham & Fry, 2002). This led to the wide spread of Confucianism through:

Every area of society, from government institutions and political activities, to economy, military affairs, literature, architecture, morality, education and the system of civil service examinations.

Confucianism touched people from different social strata...influenced their habits, and become part of their customs (Confucianism, 2007 as cited in Welch, 2011, p. 198).

In *Không giáo phê bình tiểu luận* (Short Critique of Confucianism), Dao Duy Anh (cited in McHale, 2002, p. 422) noted:

For more than two thousand years, Confucianism has existed in China and in our [Vietnamese] society without changing, and thus from the past to now, all through society, not only the ranks of Confucian scholars, but the common people as well became imbued with the Confucian spirit. We can say that throughout one's life, whether in Chinese society or in Vietnamese society, one breathed a Confucian atmosphere, fed on the milk of Confucianism, ate Confucianism, and even died with Confucian rites. From thought, language, and the actions of individuals to learning and the social system, nothing escaped the control of Confucian philosophy and ritual teaching.

Thus, China casts its Confucius influence over many facets of contemporary Vietnam (King & Wilder, 2003; Woodside, 2006). Such an influence waned later on after turbulent periods of domination by France, the Soviet Union, and the United States of America. Despite this, the legacy of Confucianism remains profoundly influential and deeply rooted in present-day Vietnam (Truong, 2013; Drummond & Rydstrom, 2004), particularly in education and in social behavioral norms.

Confucianism is based on five cardinal virtues – xiao (filial piety), xia (justice), zen (benevolence), zhong (loyalty), and li (propriety/rites) – which symbolise the five natural elements – wood, fire, earth, metal, and water respectively. It therefore placed much importance on building up a society that values hierarchy in social relationships in terms of inferiority and superiority based on wealth, power, and social status (Drummond & Rydstrom, 2004; London, 2011).

The stability of society is maintained only based on the concrete foundation of unequal relationships between people (Phuong-Mai, Terlouw & Pilot, 2005). Accordingly, it is unacceptable or inappropriate to question the privileged power of superiors, elders, parents, and teachers. Obedience to these people is taken for granted (Ramburuth & McCormick, 2001). These moral values are even legalised in the State's educational documents, in which it is clearly mentioned that primary schools should "teach students to respect, love and show good behavior towards grandparents, parents, teachers, older people; to love brothers and sisters, and friends; to be sincere, confident, eager to learn and appreciative of nature's beauty" (Ministry of Education and Training, 2004, as cited in Truong, 2011).

Hence, children obtain these Confucian teachings at the very early stages of their lives at school. It is common that every public school in Vietnam has a large banner with a motto saying "*Tiên học lễ, hậu học văn*". It means that learning how to behave properly in human relationships is the top priority, and

knowledge comes second. It is expected that when teachers come into class students stand up to greet them and to show respect towards them (Phuong-Mai, et al., 2005). This practice comes on throughout a student's education journey from elementary school to university in Vietnam. Teachers are "treated with deference even when no longer at school" (Phuong-Mai, et al., 2005, p. 406). The founder of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh, whose life is highly respected and considered by most Vietnamese people to be a shining example to follow, always saw Confucian philosophy as an asset and teachers are especially honored (Brocheux & Duiker, 2007 as cited in Welch, 2011).

Therefore, educational practice in Vietnam has been based upon a Confucian learning approach. Asian Confucian heritage cultures such as those in China, Singapore, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam are assumed to have passive learners who are too dependent on rote learning (Holliday, 1994; Flowerdew & Miller, 1995). Students "defer to the 'wisdom' of the teacher, expect them to provide all the answers, memorize what they are told and regurgitate this information when required" (Harman & Bich, 2010 as cited in Harman, et al., 2010). Students experience this style of learning in the school system and they continue to do so when they enter universities (Pham, T.N., 2010).

As Tran (1998) stated, up to now Confucianism has retained its vast influence on the Vietnamese higher education system in terms of teaching design, methodology and assessment. However, it would be over-generalising to say that current learning classrooms completely follow a teacher-dominated approach. Vietnam has recently attempted to apply the

new student-centred learning method and some teachers highly value and bring this into practice in their classroom. However, research has shown that these reforms, which were “introduced very impressively at the beginning” (Pham, T.H.T., 2010, p. 22), quickly ended up being a failure due to diverse local infrastructure conditions and cultural hindrances. Not only students but teachers are also affected by the Confucian ideology in higher education. Teachers have to follow pre-designed syllabi, textbooks or assessments that are provided by their administrators (Benson, 2001) to make sure that the delivery of a certain course is coherent and similar among teachers.

2.3 Minority students in higher education

With the “massification” of students in tertiary education (See Chapter 2, Section 2.1), higher education institutions and universities in the world are serving a more diverse group of students than ever. However, as UNESCO points out, traditionally under-represented groups continue facing great challenges. Underrepresented groups, as defined in the Declaration of the Regional Conference on Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNESCO, 2008, p. 4), encompass “the poor, those living in places far from major urban centres ... people with disabilities, migrants, refugees, those deprived of their freedom”. The diversification of the student body in higher education institutions requires new approaches in teaching and administrative structures in order to appropriately and effectively response to their needs.

Article 89 in Vietnam's Law of Education (2005) established policies in terms of scholarships and social subsidies pointing out:

1. The State shall elaborate policies on granting academic scholarships to pupils with excellent scholastic achievements at specialized schools, schools for gifted students...or to learners with good academic and training results at vocational education institutions and at universities; on granting policy scholarships to students enrolled by form of nomination, pupils at pre-university schools, boarding schools for ethnic minorities, vocational training schools for war invalids, disabled and handicapped people.
2. The State shall elaborate policies on subsidy and reduction or exemption of tuition for learners from social policy targeted groups, ethnic minorities in areas with extreme socio-economic difficulties, homeless orphans, disabled and handicapped people with economic difficulties, people who overcome their exceptional economic difficulties to gain excellent study results.

Accordingly, disadvantaged socio-economic minority students are categorised within the spectrum of a group of people that need supporting policies to pursue higher education. The persistence of rural-urban inequality in education is one of the reasons why this group of students needs preferential assistance. Research has shown that educational inequality has lately increased at a high speed in Vietnam (Aikman & Pridmore, 2001; Behrman & Knowles, 1999; Fritzen, 2002; Liu, 2001).

Inclusive education is one of the key educational policies that Vietnam has been aiming at in order to promote education for marginalised groups of people in the most disadvantaged regions. As UNESCO (2005, p. 13) defines, inclusive education as a process of “addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners by increasing participation in learning and reducing exclusion within and from education”. This literally means that children from all walks of life have the right to a quality education that caters to their individual needs as much as possible.

Despite being considered as a disadvantaged group of the population, rural minority students, compared to others in the same spectrum, do not get as much attention as they should. Literature has shown that rural students are likely to receive little attention in research (Schafft & Jackson, 2010). There has been a considerable amount of research focusing on education for minority students, yet most of them investigate issues or experiences of ethnic minority students who live in remote or poor areas compared to the majority Kinh students (Giacchino-Baker, 2007; Luong & Nieke, 2013; Truong, 2009; Truong, 2011).

More noticeably, these research projects have been conducted within educational settings before tertiary education. Little has been done to examine the lived educational experiences of majority Kinh students who live in rural or provincial areas. Issues or concerns related to this group of students in tertiary education are largely reflected in newspapers or online news through the objective lenses of journalists. Meanwhile, the fact is that the Kinh or Viet is

the largest group accounting for 86 percent of the population. In addition, over two-thirds of the Vietnamese population and 90 percent of the poor reside in rural areas (Pham, T.N., 2010, p. 51). In Vietnam, the term “minority” is usually favorably used to indicate a group of people whose size is smaller than the Kinh and Hoa ethnic majority groups (van de Walle & Gunewardena, 1999). However, in this research, the terms minority students or inter-provincial students are used to refer to a group of under-represented Kinh people at university who come from small provincial and rural areas or villages.

Minority rural students, whose needs and perceptions can be different than their urban and suburban counterparts, are often misunderstood (Schafft et al., 2010), and they face a variety of challenges at university. Unfortunately, the government or university policies tend to focus solely on financial and tuition fee subsidies. Clearly, there are more than just financial issues that make the university life of inter-provincial students difficult. Stumbling blocks for minority groups' success and involvement in higher education include linguistic and cultural barriers, geographic backgrounds (Jacob, 2006), cultural alienation (Freeman, 2006), unfamiliarity with the mechanisms of higher education, poor advice from teachers or student services, financial problems, psychological barriers (Forsyth & Furlong, 2003).

The first and greatest challenge that they face, right after the very first day of their university life, is an academic issue. The setting of university learning is far different from that of schools in terms of teaching styles, pace of learning

and so on (Hemmings, Boylan, Hill, & Kay, 1995; Yorke, 2000). Courses at universities are designed to build on the basic knowledge that students obtain at lower level schools. According to Meyer, Weir, McClure, Walkey, & McKenzie (2007), if students lack specific standards or basic knowledge on which a course is designed because their school at lower level did not include them, students tend to falter or fail to obtain advanced knowledge provided.

This is often the case in rural areas in Vietnam where high enrollment occurs consistently yet problems of poor quality still remain. Minority students attending schools in rural or mountainous areas are gaining education that is lower than the national standard (Ministry of Education and Training and Asian Development Bank, 2006) due to inadequate infrastructure, limited highly-qualified teachers, language and cultural hindrances, and inappropriate curriculum design (UNDP, 2013).

Inter-provincial students also struggle with cultural obstacles. As Guy (1999, p. 5) argues, “people who are socially, politically, and economically marginalized are most affected by the cultural mismatch between the learning environment and their cultural history”. In a diverse learning environment, it is likely that different and conflicting cultures brought into classroom will collide. Viadero (1996, p. 42) describes it as two distinct school and home cultures, “bumping up against one another, forming an invisible wall that stands in the way of learning and communication”. When this happens, if the cultures of minority students are ignored or discounted, they are inclined to experience cultural

discontinuity that results in alienation, diminished self-esteem, and academic failure (Irvine, 1990 as cited in Hutchison, 2009).

For instance, Vietnam is quite linguistically diverse with a variety of different accents throughout the country. Sometimes an accent is so strong and different from the mainstream Vietnamese that it does not sound intelligible. Those students who have such an accent normally receive giggles or even sarcastic laughter from their urban counterparts. This in turn makes inter-provincial students feel disrespected, marginalised, and isolated and sometimes silences their voices. Some even may choose to give up their own accents and try their best to pick up the mainstream accent so that they do not feel left out. Such a learning environment discourages inter-provincial students as research has shown that effective learning only takes place in positive learning settings where students feel a sense of belonging (Airini, et al., 2009; McMurchy-Pilkington, 2009) and where they can safely and comfortably share their experiences (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994).

Hence, to create a tertiary education environment where students can reach their full potential as human beings rather than just intellectual training, it is a requirement that teachers and institutions have the ability to understand their students' strengths, weaknesses, and differences. It is only by developing a culturally relevant pedagogy that teachers or educators can help students realise their potential skills and strengths and develop themselves.

2.4 Conclusion

All in all, Vietnam's higher education has gone through ups and downs with critical influences from many external forces since its birth. Despite its continuing efforts to reform the educational system, many hindrances get in the way, particularly the deeply rooted Confucianism and newly arising blooming neoliberalism introduced by World Bank. As a result, students, who are the main stakeholders, and their self-development are undervalued. This is likely to happen more frequently to inter-provincial minority students who live between two realities and cultures. To explore their challenges and address such an issue in Vietnam's tertiary education administration, particularly in Danang, this thesis employed a Participatory Action Research methodology which will be discussed in-depth in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

In this methodology chapter, I discuss the rationale for using Participatory Action Research informed by feminist epistemology. This is followed by a discussion of how I used PAR with inter-provincial students in an educational setting particularly focusing on photovoice. I also explain how I carried out data analysis and negotiated related ethical issues throughout the photovoice process.

3.1 Participatory Action Research informed by feminist epistemology

A qualitative approach to research generally allows participants to “tell the stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature” (Creswell, 2003, p. 40). PAR, as a qualitative approach, is grounded in the lived experience and developed in genuine collaboration (Reason, 1994) with people involved, to interpret the world and generate knowledge with them. It differs from mainstream research which tends to be carried out on people (Bradbury & Reason, 2003). Conventional research strategies for policy-making or advocacy are critiqued from a PAR perspective for fostering and maintaining dominant power relations by exploiting knowledge from the researched and monopolising knowledge as well as objectively speaking “for” the researched (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001).

PAR is a research paradigm that entails “doing research with and for people rather than on people” (Lofman, Pelkonen & Pietila, 2004, p. 333). Participants in PAR play the role of co-researchers and, throughout all

phases of research, actively investigate problems or issues that are of significance to their own lives as well as their community (Boog, 2003; Dold & Chapman, 2012). This contrasts to conventional research which takes participants as research objects. PAR highly values not only the products but also the whole process of research (Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007). It redefines what “success” means in research. It does not solely lie in the quality of final products but also in the personal development of participants throughout the research.

According to Brydon-Miller & Maguire (2009), PAR places its central goals on human self-determination, the development of critical consciousness, and positive social change, which is theoretically rooted in Paulo Freire’s philosophy that the key to social change is through dialogue and “conscientization” – a process that allows marginalised people to engage in critical analysis and organise action to improve their situation. PAR emphasises the paramount importance of indigenous experience: as Baum, McDougall, & Smith (2006, p. 854) suggest, the description of experience cannot be done separately from its objects since the world does not have only one single reality or truth to be “independently observed and measured” by researchers throughout all phases of research from start to finish.

PAR involves participants within a cyclical rather than a linear process of research-action-reflection aiming at positive social changes and their own future development. As Reason & Bradbury (2001, p. 1) state, it brings

“together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others in the pursuit of practical issues of concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and communities”. This cyclic process of research criticises and challenges dominant positivist social science research (Maguire, 1987). Therefore, PAR is a means of “remedying the power inequities through processes of knowledge production which strengthen[s] voice, organization and action” (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001, p. 70).

My research has taken itself to a PAR approach informed by feminist epistemology. The nature of a feminist approach to PAR is that it encourages participants to contribute to the generation of knowledge and challenges traditional epistemologies that often exclude the possibility of women as agents of knowledge (Harding, 1987). Moreover, a feminist approach is attached to the principles that no one but those who belong to a group can be in a position to study issues related to the group. Maguire (1987, p. 29) defined feminist PAR as a collective process of “social investigation of problems, involving the participation of oppressed and ordinary people in a problem posing and solving”. Feminist principles place paramount significance on promoting “equality, reciprocity, partiality and valuing the voices of ordinary people” (Kindon et al., 2007, p. 26). By using a feminist approach, researchers are not objective but engage themselves in interaction and collaboration with participants (Neuman, 2011). Thus, this on-going collaboration between researchers and participants ensures that participants take up a co-researcher position

in the study. This encourages participants to become actively involved in the research and take ownership of the research process. As a result, it reinforces three main types of change throughout the process – researchers and participants develop their critical consciousness; the lives of those who participate in the research are improved; and societal structures and relationships are transformed (Maguire, 1987). Also, the requirement of being constantly self-reflexive in a feminist approach is vastly important since PAR “inevitably changes the researcher” (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000, p. 90) and “self-reflexivity unmask[s] complex political/ideological agendas” (Richardson, 1994, p. 523).

3.2 Participatory Action Research in educational settings

PAR has recently become adopted as an effective research and teaching-learning practice that is frequently utilised with youth in grass-roots community organisations and in international development projects (Brydon-Miller & Maguire, 2009). PAR is considered to be a potentially empowering research process through which marginalised or disadvantaged groups of population, youth in particular, can take control over and create transformative changes to their lives (Minkler, et al., 2002). The praxis of PAR allows youth to investigate problems that are crucial to their lives and to come up with appropriate and sound solutions to these problems. This encourages youth to creative initiatives and actions to tackle ordeals and “produce realities better suited to meet their needs and interests (Camarota & Fine, 2008, p. 7). As Choudry et al. (2002, p. 76) propose, PAR emphasises the “legitimacy of knowledge that [youth]

are capable of producing through their verification systems, and it enables them to use this knowledge as a guide for their actions”. Schensul, Berg, Schensul, & Sydkim (2004, p. 5) also point out that PAR is a helpful methodology to work with young people as it integrates/incorporates “positive youth development, experiential education, prevention and service learning”.

PAR has been used at different levels – individual, classroom, school, and community – with the purposes of educating teachers and the wider public, of reducing intolerance and conflicts, and of setting up appropriately successful service delivery systems (Baum, et al., 2006). As Carr & Kemmis (1986) recommend, educational action research, as a form of PAR, is an effective approach to improve educational curricula and programmes, as well as policy development. It offers teachers, parents, administrators, and students a means to make concerted efforts and take collaborative responsibilities for the reform and development of education (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Participatory Action Research has therefore played a crucial role in education (Camarota & Fine, 2008; Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Harkness & Stallworth, 2013; Latz, 2011; Mulder, 2014; Zenkov & Harmon, 2009).

Nonetheless, despite its usefulness in empowering the oppressed and bringing about needed social change, the existence of power within PAR itself, photovoice in particular, is a critical issue that has only recently drawn much attention, particularly from post-structuralists. They argue

that no matter how properly participatory approaches are utilised, there is always a possibility that a form of power can emerge. As Kindon et al. (2007, p. 25) state, “We can no longer see PAR as a privileged, power-free mode of research and must see it as a situated, contestable work in progress”.

Kindon et al. (2007) summarise the collection of concerns over negative power effects of participatory research drawn from eight other sources (de-legitimising non-participatory research methods, romanticising or marginalising the production of local knowledge, legitimising local knowledge just because it is produced through participatory processes, and re-authorising researchers as experts in participatory approaches).

Cornwall & Jewkes (1995) argue that even with active and full involvement of participants throughout the entire process, local people may be skeptical about the research and question whether the benefits that they get from the research are worth their time and energy or not. As marginalised people can lead challenging lives, they are often too busy securing their material needs to take part in a time-consuming research process.

That being said, I decided that PAR was appropriate for this research because of its premise of emergence and openness to many realities during collaborative research with co-researchers or participants (Kindon et al., 2007). This enabled me to get to know inter-provincial student participants and build rapport with them throughout the whole process. Researchers in

PAR play the role of facilitators who see and understand how participants define what matters to them. This approach helps the research steer away from the distortion of accumulating data and fitting data into or testing a predetermined hypothesis.

3.3 Data generation

3.3.1 Participants

The data generation process was carried out with participants from the University of Danang. Snowball sampling was employed to recruit participants in the research. I directly contacted inter-provincial students that I had had a chance to meet two years previously and asked whether they wanted to join in the project or knew of anyone that was interested in it. Initially, thirteen participants were recruited into two gender-segregated groups from two university schools – eight women from University of Foreign Languages and five men from University of Technology. Student participants were aged 18–23 years old.

However, in the third week, two male participants withdrew from the project. One was doing his thesis and unfortunately had to make major changes, making it impossible for him to have time and energy to commit to the project. The other student, for personal and family reasons, could not continue studying and participating in the project.

Alongside work with the eleven remaining students, I managed to interview ten teachers (five men and five women) from these two

universities. Some of them were interviewed as a result of recommendations by student participants; some were chosen based on the faculty to which student participants belonged. These teachers' ages ranged from 25 to 45. They had had 2-10 years of experience working with students from these universities.

3.3.2 Photovoice

Photovoice, which is a Participatory Action Research method, was utilised in this research. photovoice, which was initially known as “photo novella”, was introduced and developed by Wang & Burris (1997) as a tool to work with rural women in the province of Yunnan, China. They positioned these women at the centre of their study and let them shape the research process. Their work paved the way for social change and/or transformation by involving disadvantaged women to safely express their needs and issues to the wider community or higher levels of authority. Their work, however, was theoretically rooted in Freire’s philosophy of education, feminist research, and photographic documentary practice. Since then, photovoice has been widely implemented in many fields of study (Hergenrather, Rhodes, & Clark, 2006; Hussey, 2006; López, Eng, Randall-David & Robinson, 2005; Streng, et al., 2004), one of which has been in education.

Photovoice is particularly ideal to use with students as it provides them with resources to document, analyse, and speak to their experiences and, thus, to potentially influence university policies (Goodhart et al., 2006). According to Goodhart et al. (2006), it is also a unique way to get

undergraduate students involved because its implementation can fit flexibly into the tight schedule of these students' lives.

During the photovoice project that I conducted with inter-provincial students, they collaboratively discussed and chose themes related to the main topic. Then they used cameras to take pictures and interpreted these pictures by themselves. My research design and questions also changed throughout the process as a result of their involvement in the project. Therefore, they were not simply participants but were analysts of the data, making the data they provided become meaningful and relevant. Such multiple activities within a photovoice process helped make the generated data more reliable and realistic, reflecting inter-provincial students' needs and knowledges.

This photovoice process included five phases as follows:

Phase 1: Orientation meeting

Student participants were contacted by email and informed about the orientation meeting about a week before it began. The meeting lasted three hours on 27 April. This meeting started with warm-up games as ice-breakers for participants and me as we first met each other. Then participants were given information sheets and consent forms (See Appendices A, B, C and D) before I generally introduced and explained photovoice and the research that we were going to conduct together. This

was followed by the distribution of disposable cameras and the instructions of how to use them. Ethical issues whilst taking photographs were also discussed.

After that, participants brainstormed in small groups about what challenges they were facing, followed by the selection of three main themes relevant to the given topic. Participants chose main themes by selecting the most frequently mentioned challenges that they discussed earlier in small groups. Participants also agreed that these were the most significant challenges to them. Subsequently, the first theme was discussed in-depth. Participants recommended some teachers that I should interview and invite to the photo exhibition we planned to hold at the conclusion of the project. The meeting ended with questions from participants and each participant choosing an interview time that fitted into his/her schedule.

Phase 2: Individual interviews

Individual interviews were carried out in the following week. Participants chose the interview time and location. This was to make sure that they felt convenient, comfortable, secure and that they had a sense of equity in the research process (Seidman, 2006). Each interview lasted 30-45 minutes. The interviews were mainly conducted to enable me to know more about participants' backgrounds and ideas on challenges that they were facing, and strategies they had to deal with them. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed with the participants' permission. Teachers were also contacted

during this time to prepare for the interviews conducted in the following weeks. Information sheets and consent forms were also given to teacher participants (See Appendices E, F, G and H). The time and location of these also depended on teachers' preferences.

Semi-structured interviews were used with both student and teacher participants (See Appendix I). Interviews with each student were done prior to photo-taking and with each teacher during the photovoice process. Questions asked in semi-structured interviews were carefully organised beforehand and were content-focused but flexible (Dunn, 2005). The flexibility of this interview approach allows researchers to discover information that is of importance to participants but has previously not been considered pertinent by the researchers (Chadwick, Gill, Stewart, & Treasure, 2008). Semi-structured interviews enabled me to learn more about inter-provincial students' different lived experiences, challenges, and insights. Semi-structured interviews also enabled the exploration of teachers' experiences, perspectives, and strategies to support inter-provincial students.

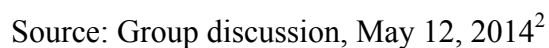
Phase 3: Photo-taking and group discussions

Students started taking photos on the first theme in the week of 4-10 May. We met up again on the 11th of June and participants had a detailed group discussion about the second and third themes, which they would be taking photos on in the next two weeks. These group discussions were aimed at

helping participants to collectively come up with ideas and share their creativity of capturing experiences through photographs. Participants used diagrams and note-taking during group discussions. Making diagrams and taking notes allowed participants to make the best use of their hands-on nature and innate ability to express their ways of understanding and sharing knowledge by using language or visual forms (Alexander et al., 2007 in Kindon et al., 2007).

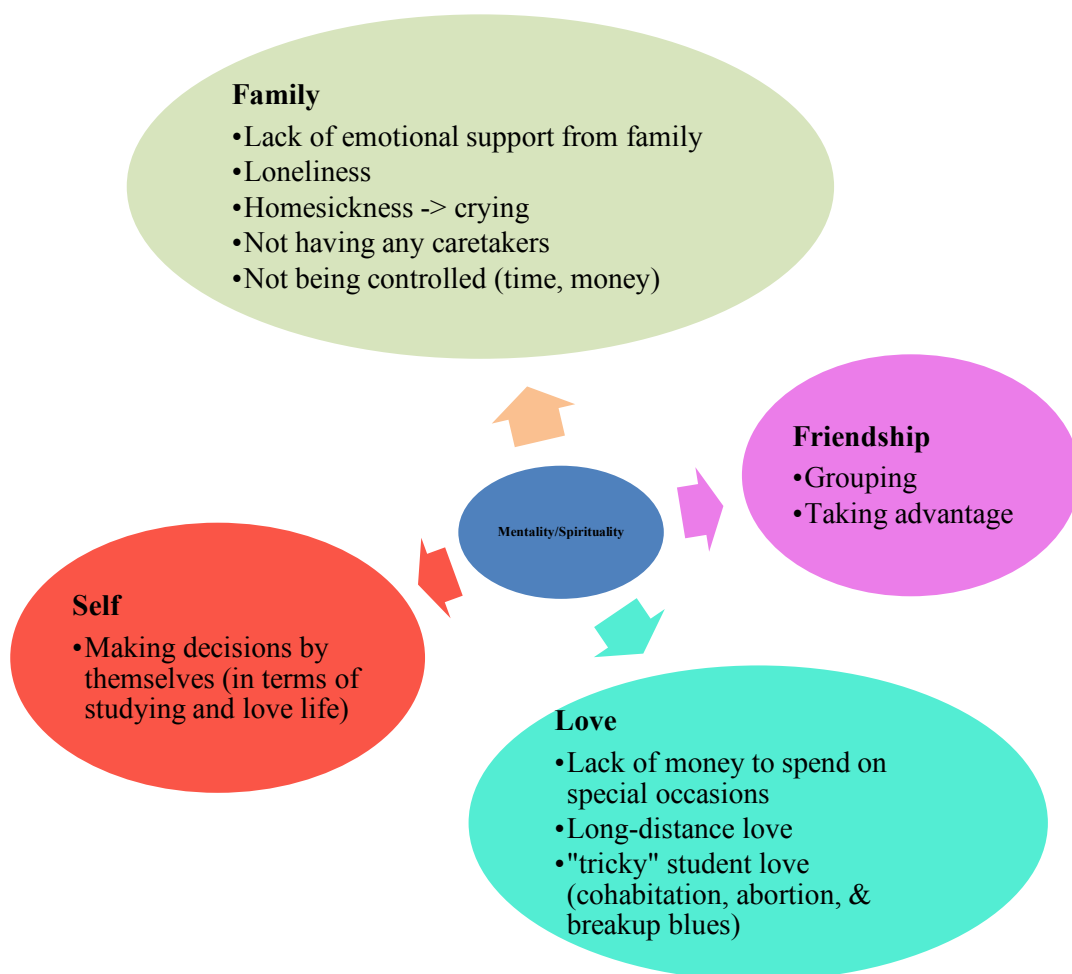
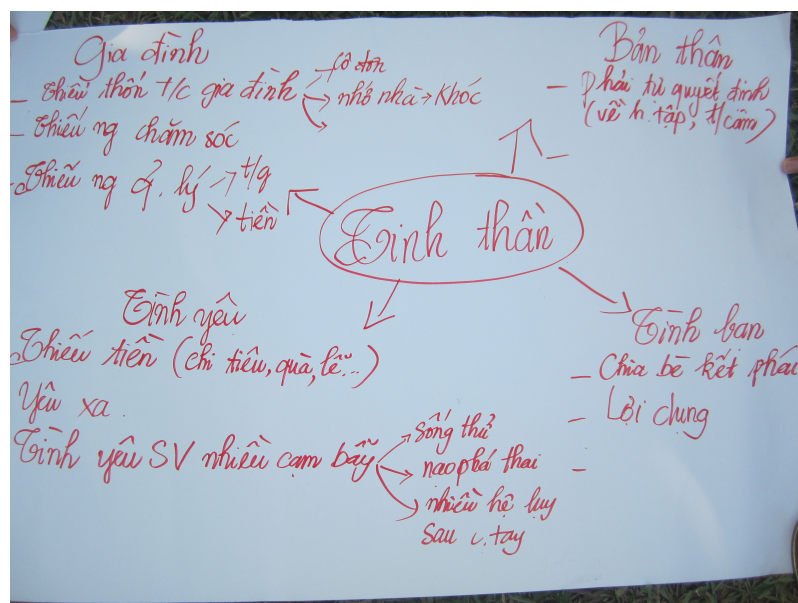
Through discussion, participants had the chance to deeply think and to brainstorm possible solutions to the issues they and their communities were facing as well as to realise their own roles in bringing about changes (Wang & Burris, 1997), be they small or big. Group discussion was a mutual learning process, encouraging interaction among participants to collectively generate useful and interesting information. In this research, right from the first meeting, participants were involved in exploring category-identified themes on challenges that they were facing as inter-provincial students. Discussion on themes continued until the last photo-sharing meeting. Below are some of the diagrams participants used to brainstorm key themes (See Figures 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3).

- Sinh hoạt phí $\leftarrow D^2$
 Thưa \rightarrow học chi chi trả \rightarrow Lưu trữ
 Lời k'k chi trả
 Đầu \rightarrow { học chi chi trả
 thưa }
 - Học phí \leftarrow Nạp học phí (bằng lái)
 { đúng 1 trong 2
 (BH TIE) }



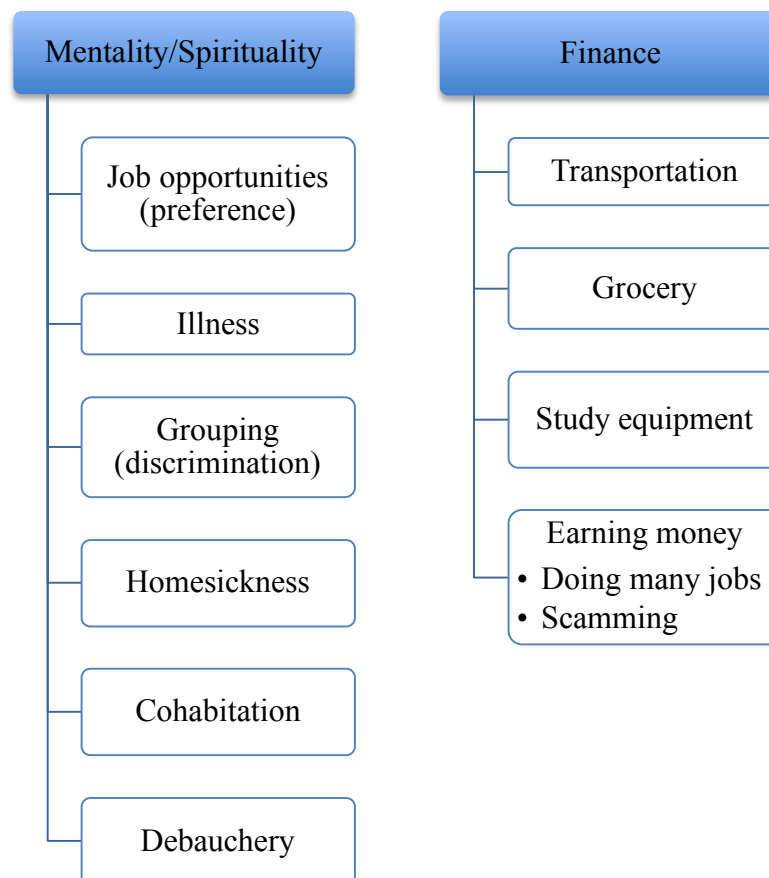
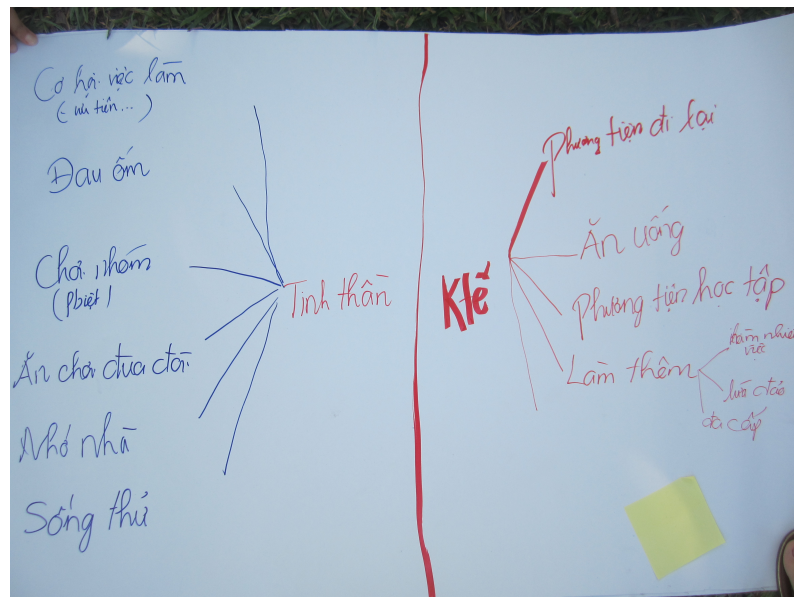
46

Figure 3.2 Group 1 – Analysis on the issue of mentality/spirituality



Source: Group discussion, May 12, 2014.

Figure 3.3 Group 2 – Analysis on the issues of finances and mentality/spirituality



Source: Group discussion, May 12, 2014.

During group discussions, I also used the participant observation method. Participant observation is a qualitative research method that is commonly employed in PAR (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). In every meeting I made field notes, recording my observations of their behaviours and emerging emotions. As Streubert and Carpenter (1995) suggest, the accumulation of these detailed field notes helps researchers have a more profound understanding of what is happening and what is implicit in every action in different situations. Hence, participant observation method produced a depth of information and helped me to gain an intuitive understanding of the photos taken and data collected.

Phase 4: Photo-sharing and caption writing

After photographs were developed, the participants and I met up at a coffee shop as suggested by participants to share photos and reflect on the whole process. Since it was already summertime and some students went back to the countryside for a few days to visit their parents, it was difficult to find a time when everybody could gather together. However, eventually, we managed to sort out a two-hour time one evening. Unfortunately, one student was not able to make it to the meeting but I then conveyed all the information shared or decisions made during the meeting to her via email, assuring her that she would not miss out anything from the meeting.

At first, this phase was mainly focused on participants sharing their photographs in small groups. Participants did not want to share with the whole group because they thought it would be less interesting to see the same photos and stories again on the exhibition day. They preferred sharing their photos within small groups that they would be working with for the exhibition. Then they collaboratively made a decision on how to present their photos on the exhibition day. Then a variety of ways to share their photos with teachers and friends were decided - some wanted to make a voice narrated video of pictures that they took and some chose to do an oral presentation in a small group of two or three. Participants spent most of the time choosing 10-15 photos that best represented the rest of their photos and finishing up writing captions for them.

Phase 5: Communicating the findings

After participants' photo-taking and group discussion, participants had an exhibition and shared their photos and stories with the teacher community. This was to raise awareness among teachers who had a say in the university's policy making process to improve policies supporting inter-provincial students. The research also gave teachers an opportunity to share their experiences and strategies – what worked well and what not – with others so that they would collectively develop effective ways to support inter-provincial students.

In a period of two weeks after choosing photos, we worked on getting the photographs mounted onto the walls in an exhibition room. The exhibition took place over three hours at Danang University Information Resource Center on the 15th of June, 2014. Around 15 teachers, including both those who were interviewed and those who were not, were invited to the exhibition. Student participants shared their photos and stories in about an hour and a half. Teachers were then asked to give their thoughts on how they felt after the exhibition by leaving a message in the room or emailing me.

On-going communication with participants was maintained throughout the process by email and phone to make sure that participants were well supported if any issue arose.

3.4 Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted by both student participants who took photos and myself as a researcher-facilitator. Our participatory analysis followed three steps – selecting, contextualising, and codifying (Wang & Burris, 1997). Selecting was the process of choosing photographs that most accurately reflected challenges facing inter-provincial students.

Contextualising was telling stories or narratives behind these selected photographs. Codifying was identifying and categorising photos in accordance with the issues and themes that had been “systematically gathered and analyzed in collective discussion” (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 381).

One of the striking features of qualitative research is that data analysis is a reflexive and iterative process. Together we started analysing data throughout the project rather than waiting until the end. Data analysis was conducted by my regular note-taking, reflexive journal writing, and observing the interaction with participants during discussion and interviews.

3.5 Writing and representation

As a researcher-facilitator working with participants on a topic that I chose to complete for my Master's degree, it is worth mentioning that I have the responsibility to interpret and represent the research findings in my writing here. I am aware that my interpretation is only one of many possible representations that could be done by participants themselves. Since this is a collaborative work, I depict my representation based on the main themes and analysis that participants provided. However, I systematically analyse them in comparison with the information that teacher participants gave me. Therefore, not all the photos that participants chose are shown in this writing, but only those who are related to the main points made out of my comparison and analysis. Participants freely wrote captions to describe their photos. Each participant has his or her own way of conveying the message through the photos. As a result, as seen later in Chapter Four, some photo captions include titles while others do not. The original Vietnamese texts of photo captions were displayed during the photo exhibition. These texts were then translated into English to add into this thesis.

3.6 Ethical issues

During the entire process of this research, ethical issues were taken into careful consideration to ensure that research participants and people in the wider community would be highly respected. The research was undertaken in the spirit of confidentiality. In practice, it is unrealistic to guarantee complete confidentiality to participants because most activities take place in a group of students. However, prior to their participation, participants were well informed about the ethical guidelines and ground rules in which it was clearly mentioned that what was discussed in the group was private to the group. I also assured the confidentiality of information given by participants during personal interviews. No personal information, details, or stories would be shared in public without the participants' permission. Their real names would also be used only if participants wished to do so, otherwise they could choose to use pseudonyms. Prior to photo-taking and group discussion, all participants agreed that their real names and all the information that they provided during group discussions and interviews could be represented in this thesis.

As a key aim of our project was to bring about changes in policy-making by exhibiting participants' photographs and captions, I had to manage the feeling of anxiety among students that what they spoke out about through photos could come back to personally affect them later in this hierarchical society. A wide range of options were used to protect their identities so that participants could choose to be anonymous in any kind of public exposure upon the completion of taking photographs. The photographs taken by participants during the research

exclusively belong to no-one but themselves. Therefore, participants will always be informed and engaged in any decision making related to the editing and use of their images. They retain ownership over their work. Photographs were developed in duplicate and one copy was given to participants. Participants also had the right to withdraw their usage permission and their images at any point without having to give reasons. This helped create a friendly and safe environment where research was conducted with them rather than on them. This was clearly stated in the consent form signed by participants in the very first meeting of the research process.

Photo ethics were also discussed with participants during the second group meeting prior to the distribution of disposable cameras, emphasising safety issues. This was to ensure that participants did not take any photographs that may have placed themselves or others in harm's way, or take photographs of someone without their permission. The research followed the official rules of Victoria University of Wellington's Human Ethics Policy. During this research, all written interview notes and photographs were kept in a locked file and all electronic information was kept in a password-protected file. The data will be destroyed two years after the thesis is completed.

3.7 Summary

The cyclical nature of PAR created an environment for both participants and me to work cooperatively and to be reflexive throughout the whole process. Photovoice method allowed us to use a variety of useful tools including interviews, diagramming, group discussion, and photo-taking. The photovoice

method brought about a continual learning process both for participants and for myself. The flexibility of photovoice enabled us to go back and forth in our research design and to make changes that were more suitable for the research context. The outcomes of the research process undertaken by participants as co-researchers and myself are discussed in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS

In PAR, student participants play the role of co-researchers. Therefore, all the themes related to challenges facing inter-provincial students were discussed and decided collaboratively by them. Data analysis was conducted by inter-provincial students prior to, throughout, and after photo-taking. This chapter summarises what inter-provincial students worked on and their findings. During interviews with teacher participants, there were some correlations between what they shared and what inter-provincial students discussed. Therefore, teachers' experiences of working with culturally diverse classes and their suggestions about how teachers and university administrators could do to better support inter-provincial students are also discussed in this chapter.

There was a total of eleven students participating in this photovoice research. It is worth mentioning who the student participants are before getting into detailed analysis of their experiences. The following is some personal information related to student participants that they gave me permission to present in this research:

- Ngo Thi Anh was 21 years old and came from Nam Dinh. She studied at Department of International Studies, University of Foreign Languages, the University of Danang. She had been in Danang for three years and had no relatives around. She had a brother who worked in Hanoi city.

- Nguyen Thi Cam Tu was from Gia Lai. She studied International Studies at University of Foreign Languages, the University of Danang. She was a third year student. She had two elder sisters who had graduated from university and worked in Danang. However, she did not live with them.
- Nguyen Thi Suong was a third year student majoring in English at Department of English, University of Foreign Languages, the University of Danang. She had been living in Danang for three years. She was born in a family of eight children. All of her brothers and sisters were working in the countryside and her only younger sibling was in grade 10.
- Nguyen Thi Thao was 21 years old and was a third year student. She was from Ha Tinh. Her major was International Studies at University of Foreign Languages, the University of Danang. She had a sister who also studied the University of Danang and lived with her.
- Nguyen Thi Thu Ngan originated from Quang Nam province. She was twenty-one years old and was a third year student at Department of English, University of Foreign Languages, the University of Danang. She had an elder sister and two younger siblings. She had been living in Danang for almost three years. She had some relatives residing in Danang and used to live with them before moving out to flat with her friends.

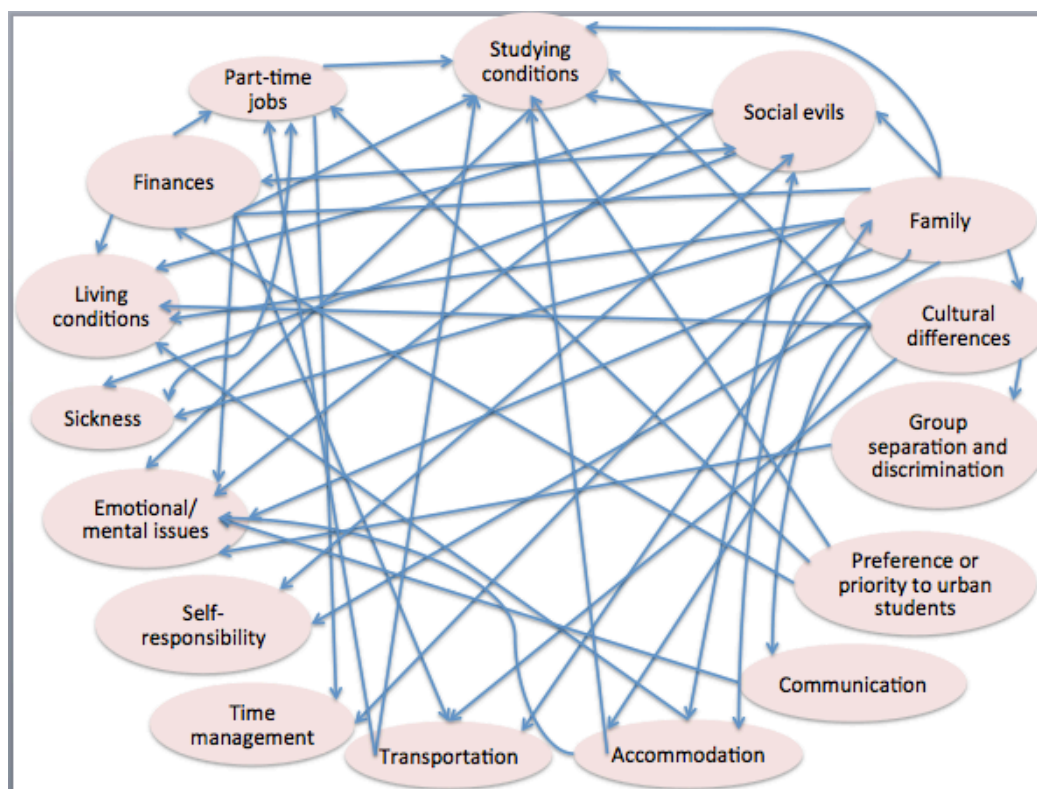
- Nguyen Thi Quynh Trang was a third year student at Department of International Studies, University of Foreign Languages, the University of Danang. She was 21 years old and came from Quang Ngai province. She was in Danang all by herself without any relatives or family members.
- Nguyen Tinh was a third year student majoring in Electrical Telecommunication, University of Engineering, the University of Danang. He was 21 years of age. He came from Hue city and had been living in Danang for three years. Most of the relatives from his mother's side were permanent residents in Danang. He had been living with his relatives since he started university.
- Le Thi Thu Phuong was 23 years old. She came from Quang Tri. She had just graduated with honors from University of Economics, the University of Danang. At the same time, she was a third year student majoring in International Studies.
- Le Thi Thuy Linh was a third year student at Department of International Studies, University of Foreign Languages. She was 21 years old and had an elder sibling. She had been living in Danang for three years and did not have any relatives in Danang.

- Pham Huu Anh Tuc was a fourth year student at University of Engineering, the University of Danang. He was 22 years old. His major was IT Management. He was from Quang Nam. He had many relatives living in Danang; however, he had been living separately from his relatives.
- Pham Van Binh was a first year student at University of Engineering, the University of Danang. His major was Civil Engineering. He did not have any relatives in Danang. He had three siblings who were all younger than him.

The first meeting provided the students with a space to get to know each other and talk about their challenges. During this first discussion, they came up with a whole lot of issues that they were dealing with. These can be seen in Figure 4.1.

These issues are inter-related and it is infeasible to analyse them separately. However, at the end of the meeting, we were able to sort out and agree to work on three main themes that the students found the most important. These included finances, living conditions, and mentality/spirit.

Figure 4.1 Some challenges that inter-provincial faced when living and studying in Danang³.



Note: The → arrow in this diagram refers to a one way “cause-effect” relation while ↔ indicates the reversible “cause-effect-cause” relation between issues.

Source: Discussion Groups, April 27, 2014, 29/3 Park, Danang city

4.1 Finances

Just as other students attending university, being financially independent was among the top concerns. However, compared to their urban counterparts, inter-provincial students were likely to face this issue more often because of their disadvantaged family backgrounds. Thao mentioned:

³ Social evils herein describe harmful and problematic matters in a society. Some of the instances are gambling, alcoholism, internet-addiction, and crime.

My biggest challenge is money. I am originally from the countryside which is far away from here. My father is a worker, my mother is a farmer and there are four children in our house. I am the first child. I was used to living on a tight budget even before I started university, now that my sister is also studying at university, it has become more challenging (Thao, personal interview, April 28, 2014).

Trang encountered the same situation, as her father had passed away so her mother was the only breadwinner of the house. "It is always tough when it is time for paying tuition fee" (Trang, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

Without enough money, inter-provincial students were unable to access necessary facilities for their studies such as a personal computer, a desk, or a means of transportation. Many students made the best use of what they had as shown in Figure 4.2.



Figure 4.2 Exam season – no tables, no chairs

When exam season comes, we inter-provincial students “crawl” on the floor and “cram” for the exam.

Vo Thi Cam Tu, June 8, 2014

While their urban peers used advanced technology, inter-provincial students lagged behind with their outdated learning support machines. Suong mentioned this in one of her photos (See Figure 4.3).



Figure 4.3

They [my friends] have laptops and tablets. I am just loyal to this radio which my father bought for me when I was in grade 10.

Nguyen Thi Suong, June 8, 2014

This situation was particularly challenging for inter-provincial students as the University did not provide good infrastructure or resources. As Anh noted:

The library at University of Foreign Languages does not provide many study materials and resources, so I have to go to the Centre of Information to look for them. But I do not have any means of transportation, so it is very difficult to go to there. I usually ask my friends to give me a ride and I have to depend on them when I need a book or want to join a seminar there (Anh, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

Financial difficulties also negatively affected inter-provincial students' diet and health. Struggling with finding enough money to pay for tuition fees and accommodation, inter-provincial students mostly had little left to spare for their daily meals. To prepare for a meal was sometimes to choose between whether they should spend more on food to survive or on extra classes to get more knowledge. Linh and Trang conveyed this situation when they said:

I took extra Korean class and I had to stop half way through because I could not afford it. I am now studying it again after I managed to save up a little bit (Linh, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

When it is about time to pay the tuition fee, I spend less to save some money or use the money that I have been saving up by working part-time. That is all I have (Trang, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

Their meals sometimes ended up being just a bowl of rice mixed with soy sauce or plain noodles several times a day as shown in Figures 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6.



Figure 4.4 End-of-month's delicious meal

Nguyen Thi Quynh Trang, June 10, 2014



Figure 4.5 Familiar friend

Just like other student generations, for us, noodles are the most familiar food that we eat frequently. I have experienced the feeling of being excessively exhausted after eating noodles for three meals a day for a whole week.

Nguyen Thi Cam Tu, June 8, 2014



Figure 4.6 Daily meal of three people

With a small limited amount of money provided by parents, many inter-provincial students (especially women) choose to live in a shared room with others to reduce living expenses. The food budget is 10,000 VND per day, so it is 30,000 VND⁴ in total for 3 students. Impoverished inter-provincial students therefore consume malnourished food daily and become skinny and weakened. This detrimentally influences their health and studies.

Nguyen Thi Thao, June 8, 2014

Even when they got sick, students chose to ignore the disease and only buy medicines as a last resort when it got worse. As Tinh noted:

We do not buy medicines right away when we get sick if we do not have enough money. We just wait to see if the illness is getting better. We just limit the money we spend on it as much as we can. If it does not get any better, then we will buy medicines. That may be also one of the reasons why the illness sometimes get worse and it takes longer

⁴ VND:NZD exchange rate: 17,000VND = 1NZD.

for us to recover from the illness (Tinh, group discussion, April 27, 2014).

Financial difficulties also stopped them from communicating with their family members. Getting connected with family members was central in inter-provincial students' lives. Nonetheless, there was only one way that they could talk to their family back in the countryside. This communication, unfortunately, was limited due to accumulating fees, as shown by Figures 4.7 and 4.8.



Figure 4.7 Communication fees

Nguyen Thi Quynh Trang, June 8, 2014

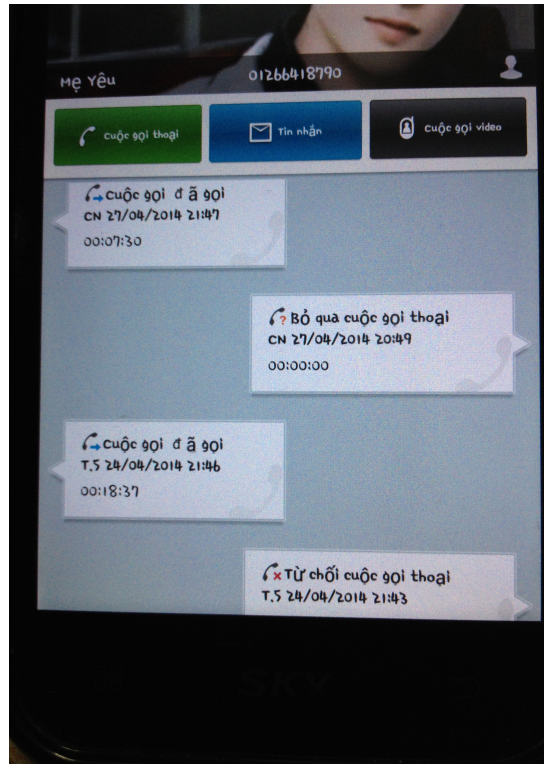


Figure 4.8

Phone call history between me and my mother – this is a way to make up for my absence which stops me from being physically nearby and talking to my family about my daily life.

Ngo Thi Anh, June 8, 2014

Being financially challenged also meant that inter-provincial students were more disadvantaged than their well-off urban counterparts in their pursuit of knowledge. As a requirement to enter the University of Technology, students were expected to obtain a B1 English certificate during their studies, otherwise, they were not eligible to graduate from university. This has created a demand among students to attend extra English classes outside university so that hopefully they can manage to get at least the minimum score required for

their B1 certificate. Binh was concerned that he could not meet this requirement. He said:

I want to attend extra English classes, but I cannot afford it. And I did not have a chance to learn English much at schools in the countryside. Most of the time we just spent on memorising grammar and vocabulary. I have been trying to learn by myself but it is hard to speak a language without any instruction (Binh, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

The majority of current research focusing mainly on ethnic students at below tertiary levels (See Chapter 2) has pointed out their difficulty in obtaining advanced knowledge and keeping up with their urban counterparts. The critical shortage of ethnic minority teachers, the students' inability to use Vietnamese for academic purposes and the financial hardship are some of the main causes. Through the pictures and stories shared by student participants in this research, it is noticeable that not only ethnic students are facing these problems but also disadvantaged Kinh inter-provincial students.

Due to the inequality between rural and urban areas, students in rural and remote places usually did not get the same level and quality of education as their urban peers before entering university. This made it harder for them to catch up with their urban friends in the same classes. They tended to feel

inferior to their urban classmates. As Suong said: “inter-provincial students are not as good as Danang students, so we have to try harder” (Suong, personal interview, April 29, 2014). Nonetheless, their battle of keeping up with their urban friends was challenging without having adequate financial resources. The university did have policies to support inter-provincial students such as tuition fee subsidies or student loans. However, the procedure to get it, as Thao described, was “quite tiring” and “I am not aware of many policies towards inter-provincial students” (Thao, personal interview, April 28, 2014) whilst Trang indicated:

The university currently does not have any policy supporting inter-provincial students. There was a time when the government had a policy on reduction or exemption of tuition fees. However, they got rid of it when I started my third year (Trang, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

Most teachers interviewed also showed their uncertainty about the existence of any type of support systems to help inter-provincial students. When asked “Does your university have any policy to support inter-provincial students”, most of them either hesitantly replied “hmm... I am not sure” or quickly said “I don’t really know”. It seemed that whether there were supporting policies of the university for inter-provincial students or not, students and teachers were not well informed about them.

In order to earn extra income to be less of a burden to their parents, inter-provincial students chose to find part-time jobs. All of the student participants in this research worked part time. However, there were not many trustworthy

part-time job search services or centres in Danang. Most of the existing services were small scale and privately owned. As a result, students sometimes got cheated when looking for a job. As Suong told me:

I went to a job search centre to look for a part-time tutoring job. I got cheated twice then. At first they told me a tutoring session would last from one hour and a half to two hours, three times a week. It turned out that the family told me to tutor their children four hours a day from Monday to Saturday (Suong, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

In addition, job opportunities for inter-provincial students also tend to be limited/restricted because of regional discrimination, which prioritises students who are from Danang. As Thao reflected on her experience when looking for a part-time job (as shown by Figure 4.9):

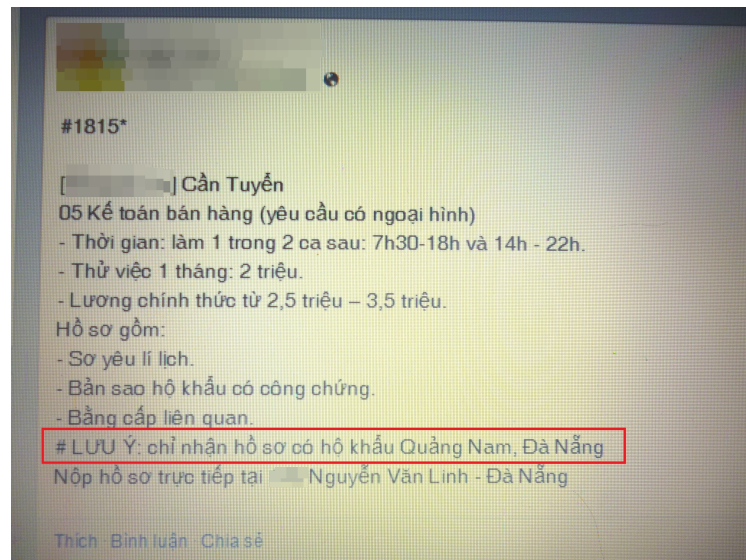


Figure 4.9 “Sad” notice⁵

There are still many companies recruiting human resources in Danang that require their applicants not to be from other provinces. Many reasons lie behind this eligibility criterion. However, in general, it is a discrimination against inter-provincial people. This provides limited job opportunities for these students.

Nguyen Thi Thao, June 8, 2014

4.2 Living conditions

For the students, one of their urgent needs after moving to Danang was to find a good place to live. Six out of eleven participants had relatives or family members living in Danang city, but only one of them lived in his relative’s house. At first, some of them chose to live with their relatives or family members, but then they decided to move out because they “don’t want to bother them” (Tu, personal interview, April 29, 2014) or they simply wanted to experience university student life and be independent. For first year students who did not have any relatives or

⁵ The photo shows an online recruitment notice, which reads “only those who are permanent residents of Quang Nam and Danang are eligible to apply for this position”. Quang Nam and Danang used to be one city until Danang was separated to become one of the five independent centrally governed cities in Vietnam.

did not know anyone in Danang city, it was very challenging for them to find appropriate accommodation. As Binh experienced:

At the beginning, I didn't know anything or anyone so it was tough to find a place to live; I had to go from one place to another. If a place was available, I either could not afford it or that place was terribly degraded (Binh, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

The security and quality of accommodation were the two most concerning issues for these students. They usually flatted with other students in low quality houses as it did not cost them much. However, this choice came with an insecure living environment because of cramped housing conditions and being surrounded by “social evils” (such as robbery, gambling, football betting, and alcoholism). They always “live in the fear of getting robbed” (Linh, group discussion, May 12, 2014). Tuc shared, “the living environment around me was very sophisticated such as social evils, in which football betting is very common” (Tuc, personal interview, April 20, 2014). Without their parents’ control, students were likely to be influenced by these social evils easily.



Figure 4.10 Being badly influenced

Living far away from home, without family control, inter-provincial students do whatever they want. They are easily influenced by bad friends and fall into social evils such as gambling, betting, or Internet addiction.

Nguyen Thi Thanh Ngan, June 8, 2014

Tuc admitted that he was once negatively influenced by these social evils and went on the wrong track. Fortunately, he said, he then got himself out of it and

became a better person. Tuc advised inter-provincial students coming to study at the University of Danang to find information and get to know the living environment they were going to live in: “For example, the living environment behind the university is way more complicated than in front of it. They [inter-provincial students] should ask senior students for detailed and accurate information” (Tuc, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

Binh and his flatmates went out one night and decided to come back half-way because he forgot something. What they found out when they returned was that a robber was breaking into his house. The robber was not caught but he was scared and ran away leaving one of his shoes behind and the footprints on the wall. Incidents like this meant that some students did not even dare to hang up their clothes to dry outside their homes because of the fear that they would be stolen away (as shown by Figure 4.11).

All activities such as cooking, eating, studying, and even hanging up wet clothes happened in the same room. This led to poor hygiene in the living environment which harmfully affected students’ health and well-being as shown in Figures 4.12 and 4.13.



Figure 4.11

The room is quite small, so we try to make the best use of it. But we are very scared of robbers!

Nguyen Thi Suong, June 8, 2014



Figure 4.12 Unspacious kitchen

Ngo Thi Anh, June 8, 2014



Figure 4.13

This corridor in our rented house is very narrow and lacks sunlight, but common activities take place there. It is also a place to store stuff or hang up clothes.

Le Thi Thu Phuong, June 8, 2014

Poor indoor lighting and lack of an adequate water supply are also common problems inter-provincial students have to deal with. As the demand for rental housing increased in areas around universities, there appeared the trend of building temporary student houses which were not of good quality. Binh described this trend as a “mass construction of substandard houses” that put students in harmful situations like those shown in Figures 4.14, 4.15 and 4.16.

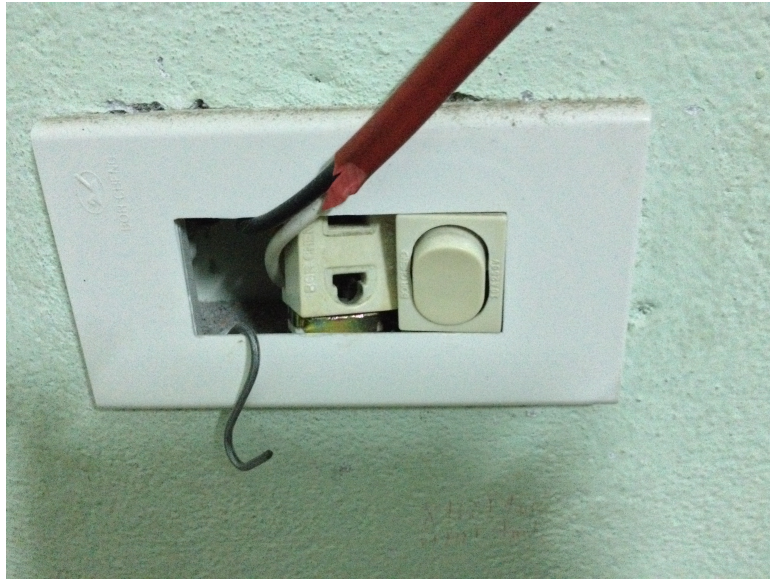


Figure 4.14 Unsafe

Ngo Thi Anh, June 8, 2014



Figure 4.15 Water scarcity in rented houses

Tran Van Binh, June 8, 2014



Figure 4.16

How to sleep in such hot weather? It is too hot in rented rooms for inter-provincial students. Only by using a bucket of water with a fan on can we manage to sleep.

Le Thi Thu Phuong, June 8, 2014

The search for a place to live was not easy and after many failed attempts, some students decided they might as well flat with their landlords. This caused them a variety of troubles because of their landlords' strict house rules as shown by Figure 4.17. Students found this inconvenient because some of them worked late at night and returned home late.



Figure 4.17 Where to sleep?

Inter-provincial students who live with their landlords are always given a curfew. Sometimes they are busy and cannot make it home on time, the door will be locked and they cannot get in. They can only ask their friends to sleep in for a night or find a hostel and will never ever go home late again.

Nguyen Thi Thao, June 8, 2014

Students also did not have much access to recreation opportunities. They could not even get outside for exercise. “Many friends of mine want to do sports, but they cannot find any playing ground, so they normally just play shuttlecock kicking in their own rooms instead” (Binh, personal interview, April 29, 2014). Some students took the risk of playing outside as shown in Linh’s picture (Figure 4.18).



Figure 4.18 **Entertainment space**

Le Thi Thuy Linh, June 8, 2014

Since two or more students flatbed together in a room, lack of privacy was also an issue. Their daily routines had to be designed in a way to accommodate others in the same room. Hence, sometimes they “want to stay up late at night to study but [they] cannot because it will disturb others” (Linh, group discussion, May 12, 2014). While Suong was lucky enough to flat with a senior inter-provincial student who helped her a great deal during her first stage of university life, others were not. Conflicts, due to personality clashes or differences in lifestyles, also occurred when inter-provincial students flatbed with others as Trang reflected:

I used to flat with people I didn't know, so sometimes conflicts happened, causing many obstacles. When I was at the first and second year, I was flatting with a girl whom I had not known before, and she did not originate from the same place, so there were many conflicts happening between us. It was hard to get along well with each other. After that, I moved out to live with my classmate and everything has been fine since then (Trang, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

Thao shared her experiences after three years of flatting. She said, "conflicts often occur amongst flatmates, especially the issue of losing assets" (Thao, personal interview, April 28, 2014). Apart from roommates, some inter-provincial students also had to deal with troublesome neighbours.

My neighbours are very grumpy and unfriendly. They do not respect us because they think we are just taken in by my father's friend. My father's friend is not often at home, so the neighbours try to make war with us... I get really distracted because of that. They even called my mother and talked bad about me, about things that I did not do (Linh, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

Linh then chose to be silent and avoid her neighbours. She sadly and disappointedly said, "my friends do not visit my place anymore, only me and my friend are living here. If my neighbours ask anything, I will just answer

their question. I just avoid communicating with them. I don't know what else I can do" (Linh, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

While the lack of money sometimes makes it unaffordable for inter-provincial students to buy tickets and visit their family back home, the limited availability of tickets makes it even more challenging for them. Each of the participants had at least once been in a situation when they had enough money to buy bus tickets, yet the tickets were sold out especially during the lunar new year holiday or other national holidays (See Figure 4.19, 4.20, and 4.21).

The universities had bus ticket giveaways for inter-provincial students on a yearly basis, but "the number is limited and they are only given to a few chosen ones", said Long Bui (personal interview, May 20, 2014), a teacher at the University of Technology. As a result, when the majority of people were happy reuniting with their family during holidays, those who were not lucky enough to get bus tickets were all by themselves in a big city.



Figure 4.19 Jostling with each other to go home sweet home

Pham Huu Anh Tuc, June 8, 2014



Figure 4.20

Looking for and buying tickets is always problematic when we want to return home (because our holidays are in summer or during lunar new year when the ticket price always increases by 40 percent to 70 percent). Hence, sometimes we really want to visit our family but we must stay here because the ticket is very expensive.

Ngo Thi Anh, June 8, 2014



Figure 4.21 Catching a bus

Transportation is always a big challenge for inter-provincial students. Sometimes we have enough money, but this doesn't guarantee that we are able to catch a bus home.

Nguyen Tinh, June 8, 2014

4.3 Mentality/Spirit

All participants, be they male or female, shared that they encountered mental health challenges when living far from home. According to participants, there were three factors affecting inter-provincial students' spirit – family, friendship, and personal relationships.

Family was of paramount importance to inter-provincial students' mental and physical health. This was especially crucial for first year students who had taken their first step out of the safe bubble of their family protection to live independently by themselves. “University life is far different from my life back home. Initially I was extremely homesick... I was crying a lot during the first week of living her”, Suong said emotionally (personal interview, April 29, 2014). “It was boring at the beginning because I did not know much about everything. I missed my family a lot when I was a freshman” (Tinh, personal interview, April 30, 2014). As a first year student, Binh shared that “I also felt very lonely because I did not have many friends here at the beginning” (Binh, personal interview, April 29, 2014). Their hearts ached more when knowing the truth that they could not be with their family members on their special days, as shown in Figures 4.22 and 4.23.

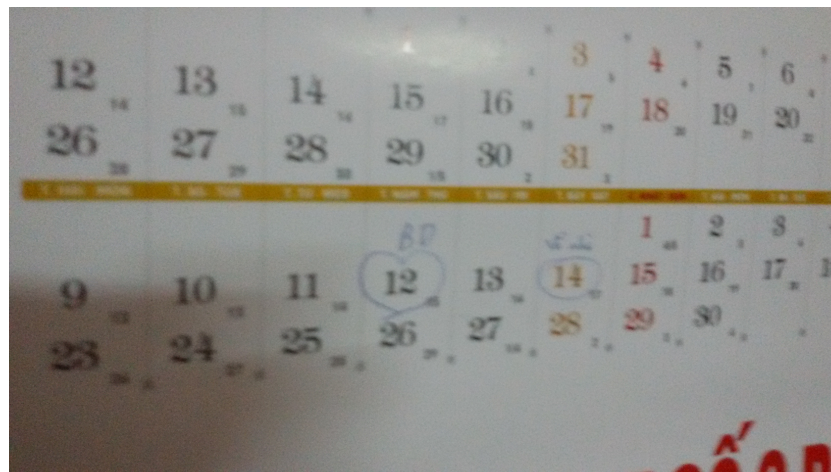


Figure 4.22 **Choice⁶**

Nguyen Thi Quynh Trang, June 10, 2014

⁶ (As written in the photo:
12 – Birthday
14 – Home-coming)

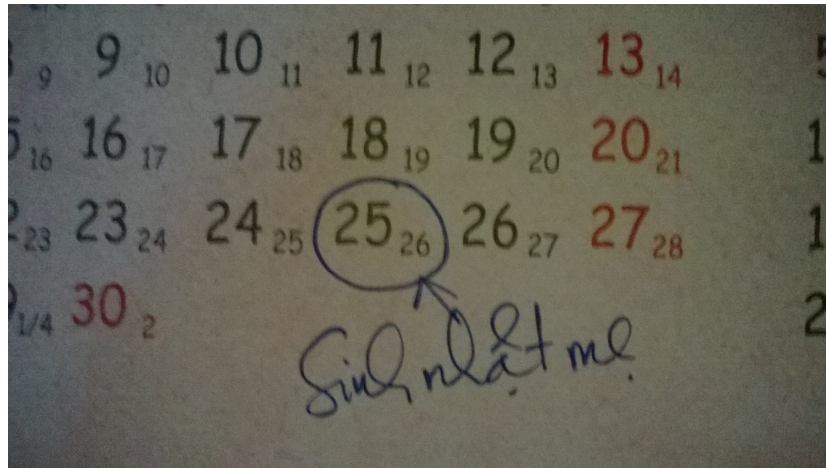


Figure 4.23 Being away from Mom on her special and happy days⁷

Pham Huu Anh Tuc, June 8, 2014

Even to those who were familiar with living independently from their parents prior to attending university, they also needed care from their family.

I am not really home-sick because I used to study geographically far away from home before, so for me it's normal. There was only a time when I was seriously ill without any beloved family members by my side. Some friends took care of me, and then only when I was required to be hospitalised, my Mom came and took care of me for a week (Anh, personal interview, April 29, 2014). See also Figure 4.24 and 4.25.

⁷ "Sinh nhật mẹ" means "mother's birthday".

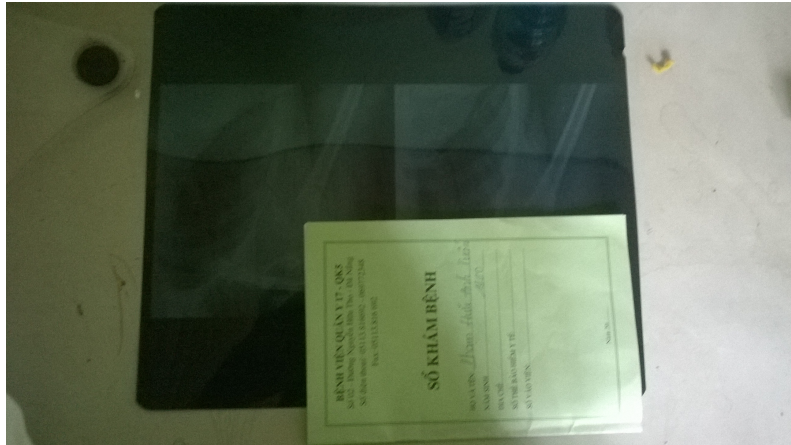


Figure 4.24 **Yearning for being taken care of by family when sick**

Pham Huu Anh Tuc, June 8, 2014



Figure 4.25 **Lonely**

Nguyen Thi Quynh Trang, June 10, 2014

Phuong also shared that “I have been studying away from home since I was a secondary student...I was independent when I was very young. But I have been flatting for so long that I am sick of it. Now I prefer staying with my family” (Phuong, personal interview, April 28, 2014).

With the distance from home, friends at university with whom students spend most of the time play a significant role in enriching their psychological needs. While Binh (personal interview, April 29, 2014) described it as “exciting and interesting”, Phuong found it “rewarding” to have known many friends from different parts of the country because she “learned a lot from different friends with different ambitions” (Phuong, personal interview, April 28, 2014). Friends also made these students’ university experiences more joyful: “With time, I have made heaps of friends at university and got closer to them. There are not many conflicts in my class. That is why I love studying here” (Linh, personal interview, April 29, 2014). Tuc also expressed his excitement of studying at university because of the opportunity to make friends with those who have the same interests. He said: “I love the learning environment here. Since my study is related to technology, my friends have a really logical way of thinking and invest enormous time in studying” (Tuc, personal interview, April 29, 2014). Nonetheless, despite this, many inter-provincial students also experienced negative relationships with their urban counterparts:

I had more friends when studying at the University of Economics. Most of them are inter-provincial students, so they are more compassionate. Students at the University of Foreign Languages mostly originate from Danang, so they are not really friendly to us [inter-provincial students] (Phuong, personal interview, April 28, 2014).

Group separation occurring in the classroom environment sometimes isolated inter-provincial students from their urban counterparts. This matter meant that inter-provincial students felt that it was hard to make friends with their urban classmates and to integrate with their lifestyles. As Binh noted: “In the classroom, students tend to play in groups – inter-provincial students usually make friends with inter-provincial students, urban students with urban students” (Binh, personal interview, April 29, 2014). Tu also reflected on this issue, saying:

Since my class members always follow the majority, I felt really frustrated. There is not any discrimination between outsider and insider students in my class. However, group separation does exist and they usually follow the crowd, so if one person stands up and speaks for his or her ideas, he or she won’t be supported (Tu, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

Interviews with teachers from the two universities also showed that group separation and discrimination among students do exist. Cong Luyen, a teacher at the University of Technology, said: “I still feel there is a distance between inter-provincial and urban students in class” (Cong Luyen, personal interview, 24 May, 2014), while My Hoang and Trang Vo noticed that group separation is “clearly seen” among these students. Long Bui, a teacher at the University of Technology, also observed that, “during break

time, inter-provincial students are likely to gather in groups based on their origins” (Long Bui, personal interview, May 20, 2014). Hang Vo, a teacher at the University of Foreign Languages emphasised:

There is a distance between inter-provincial and urban students. They usually form groups based on where they are from. This happens in every class that I teach...when inter-provincial students have difficulty integrating with their classmates, they are inclined to make friends only with those who originate from the same place (Hang Vo, personal interview, May 20, 2014).

During group discussion, participants explained that financial difficulty negatively affected the friendship bond between them and their classmates. Sometimes their classmates asked them to hang out after class, but they had to decline because of not having enough money. Once being declined, their classmates would not invite them next time. As a result, they had less and less friends.

Trang Vo shared her eight years of teaching university students:

My general feeling is that inter-provincial students are more marginalised ... There was a time when a student used the class email to send me a message and talk about his or her resentment in which the issue of being an outsider student was mentioned ... Inter-provincial students tend to have a sense of inferiority to other students

from Danang. For instance, all students in general have difficulty with money, but inter-provincial students struggle more with budgeting their expenses accordingly because they have to pay for rent and other expenditures. Inter-provincial students therefore end up having little money left to hang out with their peers and so they feel inferior (Trang Vo, personal interview, May 12, 2014).

The university however did not provide students with a variety of extracurricular activities for them to get to know each other outside classroom settings. My Hoang (personal interview, May 13, 2014) and Long Phan (personal interview, May 20, 2014) commented that “the university’s activities held for students are affected by ‘achievement disease’ or ‘formalism disease’”. *Achievement disease* is a widely used term in Vietnam to briefly describe the dominant phenomenon that universities crave for achieving high rankings at any costs in the national education ranking system. *Formalism disease*, in Vietnamese society, implies the over-emphasis on outward appearances and undervaluing of inner contents. These activities, as My Hoang put it, were not for the purpose of improving skills, nor did they bring any benefit for students (My Hoang, personal interview, May 13, 2014).

Furthermore, these activities were sometimes not affordable to students. Phong Nguyen pointed out that:

The university provides students with many activities, but some activities, such as the latest national festival, are not free of charge. So

it is quite hard for inter-provincial students to participate because they have financial difficulties, which I think the most challenging stumbling block for them (Phong Nguyen, personal interview, May 6, 2014).

Finance was not the only hindrance to inter-provincial students' participation in the university's activities. The time that these activities happened was also an issue. Anh explained in disappointment:

There is a very limited number of extracurricular activities and most of them take place in summer when we inter-provincial students are back to the countryside already, so we cannot participate even though we really want to...There are also activities that are only exclusively for students who are members of the Communist Youth Union at university (Anh, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

Binh experienced the same situation, saying:

Most events are held when we are going back home and normally only some students are chosen for these events. Most of them are students from Danang because they know this city better than us, so it is more advantageous for them. We don't really have a chance (Binh, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

Thus, for inter-provincial students, taking part in these social activities to

integrate with others at university also means that they have to give up returning home to visit their family. “Now I do take part in extra curriculum activities at the university. I did not often do that when I was in my first and second years because I usually went back to the countryside”, said Trang (Trang, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

The absence of family members caused inter-provincial students’ yearning for the feeling of being cared for and loved. Their loneliness, coupled with daily concerns and stresses, urged them to look for the intimacy with their partners. Some students, without being controlled by their parents day by day, were likely to accept cohabitation with their girlfriends or boyfriends to have somebody by their side and to save money on housing as well.

However, as Thao argued, “this in one way or another affected their studies, especially for female students” (Thao, group discussion, May 12, 2014). Cohabitation for the women also meant that they often sacrificed their time and effort for the well-being of their partners. Everyday activities such as cooking or cleaning the house were usually done by female students. In addition, when their relationships did not work, students noted that their chaotic emotions had impacts on their studies. In one case, a student (outside of the research) was thought to have committed suicide because she did not know who to bare her soul with.

Also, some male students were inclined to be “violent” after a relationship breakup. This led to traumatic consequences such as the alarming increase in the number of inter-provincial students killing their girlfriends in

dormitories or hostels in Danang city recently (VNExpress, 2014a; VNExpress, 2014b).

Apart from the three main challenges mentioned above, inter-provincial students also face the challenge of adapting to the new education system and local cultures. The academic transition from high school to university brings many obstacles. As Hang Nguyen stated:

Students from Danang start studying English together with other subjects at secondary school and continue throughout high school, so it is seven years in total, whilst inter-provincial students only study it for three years before attending university. Thus, inter-provincial students are surpassed by their urban counterparts right from the beginning. Plus, their rural accents are too strong and this affects their English speaking. This makes it hard for other students in the class to understand. Therefore, inter-provincial students don't feel confident when they speak (Hang Nguyen, personal interview, May 20, 2014).

Phong Nguyen, a lecturer from the University of Technology, also mentioned the difference in ability between inter-provincial and urban students:

Students originating from Danang usually have the ability to get knowledge faster and are more creative than inter-provincial students. It is basically because urban students have better access to

information or study materials (Phong Nguyen, May 6, 2014).

Thus, it is more likely that adjustment to the new education system and the obtainment of advanced knowledge are more tricky for inter-provincial students. Binh said, “the way of teaching at university is way different from that at high school and I feel very interested. At first I had no idea what the lecturer was talking about” (Binh, personal interview, April 29, 2014). Tuc experienced the same issue, saying “At the beginning it was hard because of the change in teaching-learning methods. I was supposed to actively self-study more and I was not used to getting information by myself” (Tuc, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

When it comes to local cultures, most inter-provincial students have difficulty adapting to them at the initial stage of their university life. This is less likely to cause them trouble once the first year is gone. Tinh said, “At the beginning I was facing a language barrier because of the difference in accents and I could not understand what they [my friends] were talking about” (Tinh, personal interview, April 30, 2014). While ethnic students struggle with comprehending and speaking Vietnamese as they have their own languages (See Chapter 2), Kinh inter-provincial students have to cope with shifting between their accents and the mainstream Danang accent. Having been unable to express themselves comfortably and communicate with others in their own accents, these inter-provincial students ended up feeling alienated. Meanwhile, Suong had a trouble with local cuisine, saying “the food tasted really different and so I often had stomach ache...and I did not know how to catch a

bus because I had spent all my life living in the countryside before coming here. So, I also got lost very often” (Suong, personal interview, April 29, 2014). These are a few examples of the many “cultural shocks” that inter-provincial students experienced, particularly in their very first year at university.

4.4 How inter-provincial students deal with challenges

Undergraduate students at the University of Danang have seven or more courses to take each semester, which means they spend most of their time with teachers and friends in class. Thus, teachers and friends are the ones that inter-provincial students meet on a daily basis, and who undoubtedly play a crucial role in helping them. However, Tu (personal interview, April 29, 2014) was the only participant that experienced multi-faceted support from her teachers in spite of having a sister living in the same city: “I got help mostly from my teachers. I have a sister but she is busy with her work, so she just sometimes gives me orientation on my studies and future. When teachers realise I have any problem, they help me a lot”. Linh, Phuong, and Suong also admitted that they sought assistance from their teachers, but only for matters about studying: “My teachers also said that if we have any problem, just tell them. I only ask them when it comes to studying. Just that, I never share anything else with them”, Linh said (personal interview, April 29, 2014). Nonetheless, Linh added “In fact, I have just felt like I am getting help from my teachers since I started my third year. I did not feel that when I was in my first and second years”. She then offered advice for other new inter-provincial students:

They should socialize more with teachers and other students. I wasted my first two years not doing that because at first we felt like teachers would not care much about us because there were too many students. But in fact if we ask the right person and at the right time, they will help us. (Linh, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

Binh, on the contrary, described a disappointing interaction with his teacher. He once looked for academic help from his teacher but what he got afterwards discouraged him to do it again:

I once emailed my teacher to ask about my study... Two days later, he replied to me, just saying he was sorry for his late reply and sending his best wishes for me but not answering my question at all. He said he would answer my question next time in class, but he gave a new lecture instead (Binh, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

Of all the participants, Thao, Tuc, Binh, and Tinh did not seek for help from teachers when they faced difficulties but preferred solving them on their own:

I find a way to solve my problems by myself. If the problem is too serious, I will go to the beach and listen to music. I don't come see my teachers to share with them about my problems. I have never had that thought in my mind (Binh, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

Binh also pointed out that:

It is hard to communicate with teachers at my university. Mostly teachers do not have much time for us; I can only see my former teacher for three or four times a year. Each meeting always lasts less than an hour. Teachers only give us directions but do not approach and care about us profoundly. The class is very crowded, so it's not convenient to speak in front of class (Binh, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

Tuc explained that he thought he could solve his own problems and did not want to bother his teachers because his teachers "had some other extra jobs to do except for teaching at university" (Tuc, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

According to Thao, she has loved all the teachers she met at university, except for one that she does not quite like because that teacher addresses students in a too impertinent and unfriendly way, using "*ta*" and "*mi*", which is usually used only between close friends of the same age. This, in one way or another, stops students from asking for help from that teacher when they are in need. Tinh also mentioned that, "most of my teachers are old, so they look very strict and serious. They rarely smile with students. So I just greet them when I meet them, no more no less" (Tinh, personal interview, April 30, 2014).

Discrimination against inter-provincial students among teachers does not often happen. However, some participants who took part in the same class conducted by a teacher from the University of Foreign Languages experienced a saddening moment when the teacher strongly claimed, “Danang city is limiting the number of migrant workers from other provinces. Migrant [or outsider] workers are causing too many social evils and do not do any good to Danang city”. Participants said they were all speechless, knowing that fact that the main reason was not because of outsider workers doing no good, but Danang local people needing to be given more job opportunities. By saying that in front of the class, the teacher indirectly made inter-provincial students feel, as participants put it, “discriminated” against.

The working attitude of the two universities’ Department of Training and Department of Administration towards students is also an issue worth mentioning as inter-provincial students from these two universities experienced this. “When I had trouble with registering for classes, I came and asked the Department of Training but the staff was very grumpy and unfriendly” (Anh, personal interview, April 29, 2014). Suong reflected: “The Department of Administration is always unfriendly and mean to us, so sometimes we are too scared to ask them anything” (Suong, personal interview, April 29, 2014). Binh and Tinh also shared that some administrative staff at their university are not dedicated to their work and are never friendly with students (Binh & Tinh, group discussion, May 12, 2014). During group discussion, participants also expressed their disappointment as they and their family had been saving up

every cent to get education, but how they were being treated sometimes made them feel it was not worth the effort.

Regarding how inter-provincial students think what teachers and the university should do to better support them, Linh shared:

I think if teachers are too good for students and care about them, sometimes students will take advantage of it... I think teachers should be strict but still show their caring in a way that we can feel it. It would be great if teachers talk to us. If we need any help, I hope they will help us. Or even if they can't, they still introduce us to someone that we can seek help from (Linh, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

Due to the time constraints of each lesson, teachers hardly have a chance to know students well in class. Therefore, Ngan believed that "beside lessons in the classroom, teachers should have more activities to get to know about their students" (Ngan, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

Their quest to be cared about did not mean anything big but even small acts would mean a great deal to them. As Suong shared:

Simple questions such as ‘where are you from?’ or ‘how do you go to class?’ or ‘have you got used to the lifestyle in Danang yet?’ mean a lot to inter-provincial students. We feel like we are cared about (Suong, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

As Anh suggested, “Creating a relaxing learning environment”, (Anh, personal interview, April 29, 2014), is also helpful.

Linh, Tinh, Suong, Anh, and Trang were inclined to call home when they were in trouble. Sometimes there were some issues that their parents could not help with such as studying or personal relationships. Despite this, calling home and asking for their advice made them “feel relieved and confident about making their final decision” (Anh, personal interview, April 29, 2014). However, they also emphasised that they only called home if the problem got serious since they did not want their parents to be too worried. Linh found it uncomfortable sharing her feelings with anyone because she did not trust them enough; hence, her family usually came first in her mind. However, she felt helpless when she always called home but her family rarely bothered getting in touch with her: “I just call my mother because my father is not alive anymore...Sometimes I just want to ring my Mom but she never cares about calling me. We rarely communicate, so I do not have anyone to talk to” (Linh, personal interview, April 29, 2014).

Ngan (personal interview, April 29, 2014) preferred sharing her difficulties with her close friends as, in her words, they were “in the same boat” and coping with similar issues. Hence, talking to her friends was always her first and foremost choice. Tinh said:

I usually talk to and share my feelings with my friends. By doing so, we will feel less homesick. If I get into troubles with my studies, I will ask a friend of mine who is also from Hue for a helping hand (Tinh, personal interview, April 30, 2014).

All participants also agreed that friends provide them with helpful and immediate help when it comes to minor issues.

4.5 Teachers’ feedbacks and recommendations

During personal interviews, teacher participants provided valuable suggestions for other teachers who work with inter-provincial students and for the university administrators and policy-makers as well. They also spent some time after the exhibition sharing their thoughts and feelings in written forms (notes and emails).

4.5.1 Teacher Feedback

The exhibition was not just solely a place where invited people came and saw the pictures. It was an open sharing and interaction space between student

participants and teachers.

All the teachers who left feedback said that the photos and stories shared by students were highly informative and touching. For instance, Chau agreed that she had an in-depth understanding of inter-provincial students' challenges after the exhibition. "I did know that inter-provincial students had to deal with many ordeals. However, what I knew before was very uncertain and vague." (Chau, feedback email, 3 July 2014). Meanwhile, Tien, a teacher from the University of Economics, said that these challenges are not new to him because they were exactly what his inter-provincial university classmates went through 10 years ago. What got him into thinking was that no one ever talked about it and nothing had been done since then to change the situation (Tien, feedback email, 17 June 2014). Oanh, a teacher from the University of Foreign Languages, emphasised that the photos reflected the reality and reminded her of her college years being away from home when looking at the photos (Oanh, feedback email, 18 June 2014).

The exhibition also provoked viewers into thinking about taking action to support inter-provincial students. Loan, a teacher from the University of Foreign Languages, said the message that these photos conveyed helped viewers deeply understand what affected inter-provincial students' emotional, mental and physical development throughout their university years. She said, "after the exhibition, I just want to open a job search centre to help introduce job opportunities for them [inter-provincial students], so that they wouldn't have to deal with scamming agencies" (Loan, feedback email, 17 June 2014).

Tien shared with me that "A question popping up in my mind "What can we do to solve these issues?" when I was looking at the photos and listening to students' presentations" (Tien, email feedback, 17 June 2014). Tien stayed for a while after the exhibition and talked to student participants with a hope to understand more about them. He said he was excessively happy to see how these students were so involved in the photovoice research, which, according to Tien, was an inspiration for his upcoming development projects as the curator of Global Shapers Hub in Danang. Trang also wrote a feedback note at the end of the exhibition for student participants, showing her sympathy and encouragement towards them.

4.5.2 Teachers' recommendations

- ***Monitoring session***

To promote connections between students and the university, both universities had class monitoring sessions between students and their former teachers. The frequency of this session at the two universities was, however, different even though the main activities were similar. In the University of Foreign Languages, it was compulsory that the monitoring session took place on a weekly basis with a written report at the end of each meeting. Meanwhile, this session was only required twice or three times per year in the University of Technology. Minh Nguyen, a teacher at the University of Technology, had a strategy of using the monitoring session to create a space for students at different levels to meet up: "Meeting sessions take place in the same room at

the same time so that junior students can learn from senior students' experiences. This is to build up a connection so that they can help each other out" (Minh Nguyen, personal interview, May 20, 2014).

Nonetheless, the effectiveness of these monitoring sessions was doubted by most former teachers as illustrated by Trang:

Normally the monitoring session between former teachers and students does not allow students to speak out all their concerns due to time constraints. What usually happens is class representatives reporting to former teachers...There are some former teachers who do not conduct any classes, but then they don't even have monitoring sessions with students. So they don't really know what is happening until it happens. I think former teachers should spend more time with students and let them know that they are always there to help students, or if there is anything former teachers cannot solve, they will help students find and ask those who can. By doing this, students will feel more relieved (Trang Vo, personal interview, May 12, 2014).

Trang Vo also critiqued the role of class representative and how this position affected students' voice:

The class representative plays an important role. This class

representative is actually elected in a top-down manner by the university in the first year and he or she continues to keep that role later on in the following years. So first-year students don't really dare to speak for themselves or to choose a representative for the whole class...In general, they are upset but they are afraid of speaking out. So I think inter-provincial students should show their opinions without any fear. My class has a common email address and if any student wants to share their matters anonymously with me, they just need to use that email address to email me. (Trang Vo, personal interview, May 12, 2014).

- ***Interaction with inter-provincial students in and outside the classroom***

Most teachers who were interviewed said that the student-teacher interaction within the classroom is of great importance. This gave them more time to have a grasp of the challenges facing inter-provincial students. These teachers utilised teamwork as a helpful teaching method to build up a sound relationship among students: "I just create a learning environment where they can get along well with their friends by letting them do group work. Groups are diverse and randomly chosen instead of letting them choose by themselves" (Hang Nguyen, personal interview, May 20, 2014).

Long Bui used group work strategically as a way to connect diverse students within classes. He said, "when doing collaborative work, I will choose group

members randomly instead of letting them choose by themselves. This is to avoid the issue of students choosing to work with those they have already known” (Long Bui, personal interview, May 20, 2014). The use of randomly chosen groups, however, does not always work. As My Hoang (personal interview, May 13, 2014) explained, “when being forced to work collaboratively with a group of people that students did not befriend before, they tend to do it unwillingly”. According to My Hoang (personal interview, May 13, 2014), this affects the outcome of group work.

Being sensitive and caring is also argued to be critical traits that any teacher should have. As Hang Nguyen said, sharing her thoughts:

If former teachers put effort and spend time caring about their students, students will feel cared for...They will be willing to bare their souls with and seek help from their teachers. For example, when my students went camping, I dropped by to say hi to them and see how things were going. They were really happy and we became closer since then (Hang Nguyen, personal interview, May 20, 2014).

According to Hang Nguyen, it does not need to be something big; a little bit of care from teachers will mean a lot to students. Trang Vo emphasised that “teachers should be caring and sensitive in the classroom and notice whether each student has any problem and be friendly and talk to them, like having a small talk with them” (Trang Vo, personal interview, May 12, 2014). Long

Bui, however, pointed out that “young teachers are better at doing this [talking to students] than experienced senior teachers; senior teachers usually keep a distance from their students” (Long Bui, personal interview, May 20, 2014). Hang Nguyen gave a typical example of how to deal with sensitive situation:

Initially, I will tell them to introduce themselves and reveal any difficulty they are having by writing on a piece of paper. By so doing, I will know more about them one by one. My department has a small foundation which grants one student 500.000 VND per semester. This student must be in the most disadvantaged situation in the class. I usually tell my students to write the name of the person who, in their opinion, deserves to receive this grant and the reasons why, because sometimes students are afraid of speaking in front of the whole class when it comes to sensitive matters (Hang Nguyen, personal interview, May 20, 2014).

However, it would not be helpful if teachers paid too much attention to these students, as Phong Nguyen argued:

There should not be too much concentration on any certain student in the classroom. From the students’ perspectives, I think if we pay too much attention to them, inter-provincial students may feel uncomfortable. This is because they may think ‘I am a student like any

other students, why do you [teachers] treat me differently from them’
(Phong Nguyen, personal interview, May 6, 2014).

- ***Improved role of the university’s administrative bodies***

Some teachers suggested that a counseling office for students should be established so that students will have someone to talk to when they are in need.

I think the Department of Student Affairs should have a person responsible for counseling on a fixed day. For instance, the Department usually just sends notifications of tuition fees, insurance and such things for students. They don’t really talk to students. I think the Department of Student Affairs should have a project or something like Student Learning Support Service to provide consultancy for students. There should be a person who gives psychological advice, someone that students can feel safe talking to or a hotline number that they can dial when they are in need (Trang Vo, personal interview, May 12, 2014).

Some participants believed that the university should also place a greater importance on the role of a student body. Chau Thai, a teacher at the University of Foreign Languages, pointed out that:

Students don't really have voices at my university. We do have Student Union. It has just been established recently, but this union seems to exist for nothing as the president of this union is a teaching staff and its activities are merged with the university's Communist Youth Union. In short, they don't really have their own forum to speak out for themselves (Chau Nguyen, personal interview, 22 May, 2014).

She also recommended that "there should be a student union or association independently run by students for the benefit of students themselves" (Chau Nguyen, personal interview, 22 May, 2014). Also, extracurricular activities, according to Long Phan and My Hoang, should be practical and beneficial for students to develop their skills. Long Phan also argued that, since students encounter the most difficulties when they first start their university life, particular attention should be paid to first-year students. He called for a simplification in the university's administrative system, saying: "the procedure to get financial support should be simplified as currently students have to go through such a long and tiring process" (Long Phan, personal interview, May 20, 2014). Trang Vo also placed emphasis on the connection between the university's administrative bodies, saying: "Actually the information network between my faculty and the Department of Student Affairs is not good enough and it is usually not directed to former teachers" (Trang Vo, personal interview, May 12, 2014).

4.6 Summary

All in all, throughout the photovoice project, participants shared a variety of challenges that they faced in their university life, in which finances, living conditions, and mentality/spirit were the most crucial of all. Their stories of how they could go through difficult stages when coming to study in Danang were also revealed. Interviews with student and teacher participants also proved that the university's administrators and teachers played important roles in supporting inter-provincial students. However, the question was raised over the effectiveness of the university's policies and teaching practices as little effort had been made by students to reach out for help from the university or teachers.

The depth of information that participants provided in this research was the result of using photovoice method as an approach to students' lived experiences. Examining how well this method worked in a hierarchical context was necessary to understand how power affected the research and generated knowledge. This is analysed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5 POWER AND PARTICIPATION WHEN DOING PAR IN A CONFUCIAN- HERITAGED CONTEXT

Being reflexive on the issues of positionality and power dynamics while in the field is of great significance to conducting ethical and participatory research. This chapter, therefore, will examine my positionality in relation to the student and teacher participants in this research project. This is followed by the analysis of how this positionality brought about power imbalances within a Confucian-heritaged context. Despite the hierarchical power embedded in everyday activities, student participants' active involvement in the research process was particularly remarkable. Therefore, this chapter explores in more depth the workings of PAR and photovoice in a society informed by hierarchical relationships and Confucian ideology. The influence of Vietnamese language and how PAR generates different emotional performances that foster participants' ownership throughout the project will then be analysed. This can help inform more participatory research in similar settings in East and South-east Asia.

5.1 Positionality and reflexivity in research

It was once long believed that being an outsider and looking at the researched from the distance managed to create an absolute neutral position from which the researcher can “comment on the reality of the subject’s view of their own situation, while not allowing the subject’s valid versions of reality” (Pile, 1991, p. 67) . It was not until feminist theorists paved the way

of challenging “the universality of objectivist social science and the strict dichotomy it maintains between subject and object” (Moser, 2008, p. 384) that social scientists started questioning the possibility of objectivity and neutrality. It was then obviously realised that we could never be anywhere near a perfectly or absolutely unbiased production of knowledge. A researcher’s knowledge is always partial due to his/her own gender, class, nationality, race, sexuality, and many other identities which are generally known as “positionality”. This so-called positionality has a great influence on the “maps of consciousness” of researchers when they do research (Haraway, 1991, p. 111) and is decisive for researchers to choose and implement particular fieldwork methodologies and on the process of interpretations (England, 1994). Hence, where the researcher stands in relation to the researched does matter because “we are also positioned by those whom we research” (Cupples, 2002, p. 383) and so, as McDowell says, “we must recognize and take account of our position, as well as that of our research participants, and write this into our research practice” (1992, p. 409).

Based on this nexus of researchers and the researched, positionality is therefore not fixed or static but can shift from time to time. As Narayan states (1993, p. 671–672):

the loci along which we are aligned with or set apart from those whom we study are multiple and in flux. Factors such as education, gender, sexual orientation, class, race, or sheer duration of contacts

may at different times outweigh the cultural identity we associate with insider or outsider status.

For instance, during a research in Jamaica, Mullings (1999) strived to constantly shift her positionalities in terms of multiple axes upon which her identity rested when interviewing managers and workers. However, this positional space was not stable, depending on the issues she was asking about and she found herself being in the state of in-betweenness at times.

Since positionalities and power relations exist all together throughout the research process, being reflexive has drawn much attention from social scientists, especially from those who do community-based research. The most widespread critique of reflexivity is that it is “narcissistic, self-indulgent and navel-gazing”, and as Caesara (as cited in Nelson & Wright, 1995) mentions, giving just a little insight into the people with whom the self was interacting.

Rose (1997) made an assumption out of her failure in interview-based research that reflexivity could only be partially achieved since flows of power are complex and unpredictable and it is likely that every now and then we cannot know every possible aspects of our position in relation to our research participants. This statement, nonetheless, has caused several arguments, one of which is that Rose is reliant on Butler’s conceptualization of performativity which rejects the feasibility of reflexivity (Nelson, 1999) and so mis-interprets feminists’ discussions that there is a possibility for

researchers and the researched to negotiate the “space of betweenness” (Katz, 1994, p. 72) . A more direct attempt by Rose to widen the base of reflexivity and to go beyond the research process as well as her personal discomfort might have helped her successfully pursue feminist research agendas and approaches.

Reflexivity is actually far from being indulgent and navel-gazing (Chacko, 2004) because it helps researchers have interesting insights and new ideas about their research questions and assumptions (D'Cruz, Gillingham, & Melendez, 2005). It also enables “reflection on self, process and representation and critically examining power relations and politics in the research process and research accountability in data collection and interpretation” (Sultana, 2007, p. 376) . Therefore, reflexivity brings the “self” and research process open to scrutiny (D’Cruz et al., 2005; England, 1994). Reflexivity is crucial in order to make sure that researchers keep being ethically committed to the research (D’Cruz et al., 2005; Sultana, 2007). As well as being reflexive about “the ambivalences, discomfort, tensions and instabilities of subjectives positions” and the contradictions in “positionality and in-between status” (Sultana, 2007, p. 377), reflexivity should exist right from the starting point and be constantly maintained throughout the process to the completion of the research and fieldwork.

5.2 My positionality in this photovoice research

My positionality in this research was not fixed as an insider or an outsider. Instead, I was shifting between the two due to my age, gender, education, and social status in Vietnamese hierarchical society.

When participants were first brainstorming on the main themes for photo-taking, one participant suddenly asked me, “As a university student coming from Danang before, do you see any differences in challenges that we are facing compared to yours?” I had not introduced myself as a Danang urbanite, but my strong Danang accent automatically differentiated me from them. This led to an assumption among participants that I originated from Danang. I then had a sense of distance among us after her question. I answered her question by sharing my personal mixed background. Doing PAR is not solely about extracting information from participants but mutually sharing thoughts and perspectives between researchers and participants. Having been aware of this, I explained to them that I might sound like someone from Danang, yet I was born and spent a few years of my life in a tiny village in Quang Binh province. I also told them how much I could relate to what they were sharing because I had a hard time integrating with urban lifestyle when my family moved to live in Danang. While giving my opinions on the disparity in difficulties facing inter-provincial students and urban students, I mentioned that my comparison was based on my personal experience, formerly as an intra-provincial student and my current international status in New Zealand. The disclosure of my personal information and “been-there-felt-that” moment of sharing was

invaluable to my shift from an outsider to an insider positionality. This laid the first brick to build up rapport between us.

Doing PAR in a setting where hierarchical power existed deeply and widely, it was important to pay attention to detail in interaction with participants.

Having realised that my way of dressing would potentially create a distance between us, I was careful with what I wore. From the outset to the end of the project, I chose to wear casual shirts and jeans rather than formal clothes. On the first meeting, some participants that I had not met in person before said they thought I was one of the participants because of how I dressed. This somehow built up a sense of closeness between us and minimised the first impression of teacher-student positional power. Apart from that, group discussions took place within a circle where everybody sat side-by-side. The practice of discussing in a circular space helped us to avoid any relational power that might arise due to my “privileged” positionality and the age differences among participants.

My female gender was both beneficial and detrimental during the research process. It was useful when it came to interviewing female student participants. They appeared to be open with their emotions when sharing their experiences. On the contrary, however, male participants seemed to be politely reserved towards me at the beginning. This distance was even greater when participants knew that I was a member of the teaching staff at the University of Danang. This emotional effect will be discussed in depth later in this chapter. Despite the fact that I was at that time a full-time

student at Victoria University of Wellington, my valid contract with the University of Danang placed me at opposite ends of the institutional power spectrum.

The relationship between teachers and students within Vietnam's Confucian-influenced society is hierarchically determined and the superiority that teachers possess is unquestionable. Students are expected to respond to teachers with respect, obedience, and even fear – the fear of potentially being regarded as disrespectful towards teachers (Drummond & Rydstrom, 2004). This unavoidable power, which was deeply rooted in the society, negatively affected participants' first perception and involvement in the project.

These power relations became apparent during the interview process. While I clearly explained to them that it was their choice to be recorded during interviews or not, when asked, some participants hesitated and worriedly replied: "Will it affect your research if I don't want it to be recorded?" Their concern derived from the fear that they might do something "wrong" or "unacceptable" that could be harmful to the research of me as powerful teacher.

Another example was when decision needed to be made on where personal interviews should take place. As an ethical strategy that I prepared for the research, I insisted on participants choosing any place that was the most convenient to them. However, most participants would say that they did not

mind anywhere as long as it was the most suitable for me even when they had to travel a long way to get there. Their willingness to give up their convenience to make it easier for me somehow made me feel like I completely failed at attempting to minimise inevitable hierarchical power between us. As I was older than all the participants and was a teaching staff member at the university, they respected me by giving me the privilege to make decisions over issues which could have been of their choosing.

Cooperation on our PAR project also meant I attempted to facilitate a negotiated process among us to explore a particular issue (Cahill, 2004). Therefore, the emphasis was on discussion in groups to make decisions together. It turned out that participants were more relaxed and gave their opinions through group discussion rather than in person with me. In a Confucian-heritaged society where a “yes” might not be a sign of agreement but of respect, letting participants discuss and make decisions together was better than face-to-face communication with me individually. Participants who picked the same date also actively sorted out how to arrange interview times and places in a way that was most suitable for each of them and me. This occurred at the first meeting when we were at the very first stage of getting to know each other. It contributed to building rapport and trust not only between me and participants but also among participants themselves. Negotiating in an open and friendly space where their voices counted, participants had a sense of collaborative participation and belonging in the project. They felt they were not just doing research with me, but also with other participants.

Initially, most of them, as explained later by Linh in her personal interview, were too shy at the orientation workshop to reveal themselves and ask questions. After my explanation about the photovoice project that they agreed to participate in, I asked whether they had any questions. All I got was a unanimous “no” from all participants. However, I found out later on that they all had a giant question of “what photovoice really is” left hanging in their mind since it sounded so strange and new to them. Their refusal to express their queries and confusion directly in public was common among students in class.

Giving questions in class was a newly introduced practice in Vietnam and not many students were used to it. Binh was a typical example. He shared in the interview that he and his friends mostly kept quiet about what they did not understand in class and found the answers by themselves at home or privately messaged the teacher instead of raising their hands and speaking out. Having been aware of this issue, I took advantage of the private space of interviews to find out whether they had any questions that they were too shy to ask earlier.

After some small talk over trivial issues with good laughs between us aside from prepared interview questions, the unequal power between us seemed to gradually subside. Their initial stress with red cheeks, stumbling voices, and serious straight backs was replaced by moving body language, jokes, and laughter as the interview continued. Small talk when doing interviews with these students worked well. Through this small talk, I shared with them stories about my life and they shared theirs. We sometimes found ourselves laughing

over the same course that we used to take at university. These small details, step by step, switched my positionality from an outsider closer to an insider to participants. That was why at the end of each interview, when I added the question “Do you have any question about the photovoice project that we are undertaking?”, they were open to letting me know their confusion and thoughts about photovoice. This could have not happened if there had only been group discussions throughout the process.

5.3 Power in Vietnamese language

The core virtues of Confucianism which were once dominant in Vietnam have been argued to gradually change and integrate with Western cultures in modern time. Young people, in particular, are more likely to adopt Western values and undervalue traditional norms inherited from previous generations. While this may happen unpredictably, what persists is the hierarchical power inherent within the Vietnamese language. According to the theory of linguistic relativity (Sapir, 1921; Whorf, 1956), language has an impact on our cognition and therefore decides how we behave accordingly with what we perceive. It is therefore important to consider aspects of linguistic relativity when trying to carry out PAR in Vietnamese context.

In Vietnamese, the use of proper nouns for self-reference is avoided. The simple reason behind this is that proper nouns are not able to indicate the hierarchy of power. Thus, they do not comply with the hierarchy of the speech contexts in social communication. This results in the sophistication

in Vietnamese pronouns. The self-referential pronoun in Vietnamese is not always as simple as the transcontextually invariant “I” in English but flexibly shifts based on the age and social status of the person being spoken to.

Kinship terms, which successfully convey the hierarchical meanings, are therefore used as suitable alternatives to proper nouns. The Vietnamese language, according to Laycock (1994), reflects a profoundly Confucian influence within its system of self-reference. This influence, as Ho-Dac (1997) argues, is the “Confucian doctrine of name rectification” in which role terms such as king or father must be appropriately used in association with the social roles of interlocutors (Tran, 1971; Walet 1938 as cited in Ho-Dac, 1997). Hence, interlocutors must behave in accordance with what the name of their roles entails.

There are numerous self-referential expressions in Vietnamese.

Figure 5.1 provides a few typical examples of frequently used terms.

Figure 5.1 Some examples of person pronouns in Vietnamese language

Interlocutor	1 st person pronoun	2 nd person pronoun
As old as your grandparents (male)	Cháu (‘grandchild’)	Ông (‘grandfather’)
As old as your grandparents (female)	Cháu (grandchild)	Bà (grandmother)
Younger than your parents (male)	Cháu (niece/nephew) or Con (child)	Cô (paternal aunt younger than your mother)
Slightly older than you (male)	Em (younger sibling)	Anh (older brother)
Slightly older than you (female)	Em (younger sibling)	Chị (older sister)
The same age as you (male/female)	Tôi (I, me)	Bạn (friend)
Slightly younger than you (female)	Chị (older sister)	Em (younger sibling)
Slightly younger than you (male)	Anh (older brother)	Em (younger sibling)
Teacher (male)	Em	Thầy
Teacher (female)	Em	Cô

The first person pronouns as shown above are usually distortedly translated as “I” in English, which does not correctly express their real, subtle meanings. These pronouns should be translated as “I-as-your-grandchild”, “I-as-your-brother”, “I-as-your-child”, and so on. There are sometimes exceptions regardless of age gaps. For example, when an older woman gets married to a younger man, she has to address him as “anh” and refer to herself as “em”. Another example is in the teacher-student relationship. No matter how old the student is, he or she has to address the teacher as “thầy” or “cô”. How teachers address their students, however, is

all up to teachers themselves. “Em” is a commonly used term, though at times they choose to use the term “anh”, “chú”, or “chị” to show their respect for their older students. This is, nonetheless, not strictly necessary. The hierarchical power that teachers possess is not intangible but expressed through language. Thus, teachers have a given privilege to define relational contexts in relation with their students.

During the initial communication with participants through emails, because they had not seen or known me before, some participants asked me whether I was a female and a teacher so that they would know how to address me in the right way. Some, on the other hand, addressed me as “chị” due to my initial self-introduction of being a post-graduate student at Victoria University of Wellington. They might have assumed that I was older than them because of my postgraduate status. After the first meeting, two participants still chose to call me “chị” during our personal interviews because, as they said, I looked like their sisters. Later, these two participants ended up calling me “cô” after hearing other participants use that reference term to communicate with me.

According to Ho-Dac (1997, p. 45), “the shift from one personal reference to another marks the change in the addressor’s attitudes”. However, in this research, these participants changed their way of addressing me mainly to “fit in” with the dominant reference that other participants used. This, however, happened half-way through the process after our relationship got closer. Therefore, it might explain well why these participants’ attitudes

towards me did not change that much. They did not keep a far distance away from me. The only change was that they used “*đạ*” and “*ạ*” (words added in after or before a sentence to show respect to people) more frequently.

Nonetheless, this issue seemed to affect the interaction between participants. When female participants realised that the participant *Phuong*, whom they used to refer to as “*bạn*” (friend), was in fact one year older than them, they changed it to “*chị*” immediately. This brought to the fore a kind of hierarchical power between participants and somehow influenced the connection between them. *Phuong* insisted on asking other participants to not call her “*chị*” as it made her feel so distanced and isolated from them. A one year gap, according to *Phuong*, was not enough to push her up to a higher position as an older sister. The change in personal reference somehow put *Phuong* in a slightly uncomfortable situation when interacting with other participants.

Since power is implicit in people’s everyday interactions, it is impossible to avoid power or to “hand over” power to marginalised people within PAR. Handing over power is still the exercise of power because when doing so, facilitators give themselves the privileged position from which to give or transfer power to others. This is still power. In addition, when much attention is paid to the negativity of power, its positive effects can be neglected, underestimated, or forgotten. This leads to the assumption that power is always bad and needs to be avoided in research. However,

instead of attempting to mitigate power, it is better to acknowledge its existence and negotiate power dynamics during the research process. Allen (2003) as cited in Kindon, Pain, & Kesby (2007) argues, resistance is not the one and only response to power in PAR but negotiation, persuasion, and authority among participants are in fact effective solutions to deal with power dynamics.

In this research, undoubtedly, as a facilitator going into “the field” to do research for my Master’s thesis, my dominant power lay in the “ground rules” or “consent forms” that I distributed to participants right from the beginning. Power was so obvious and undeniable in such an unequal starting point. Consent forms, according to Cahill (2007, p. 366) working in the U.S. with undocumented youth, “reaffirms the power imbalances inherent in the research encounter and belittles the experience of undocumented people whose everyday lives are ensnared in a web of legal binds”. I also had the power to design how many meetings we should have and how many photos would be chosen for the exhibition at the end of the project. These forms of power, nonetheless, if looked from the positive side, did not bring about detrimental influences but created respectful interactions and negotiation among those who were involved in the research. When I gave the form of ground rules to participants, they questioned why they could not take photographs of identifiable human faces because they thought bringing humans to pictures would make it more “real” than abstract objects. In response to their question, instead of telling them to follow the rules, we discussed in an open and friendly environment the ethical issue of exposing

human faces in pictures. Having been able to identify and accept the presence of power in research, power turned out to enable me to listen to participants' thoughts and to negotiate the situated power with them.

5.5 Emotions and photovoice

Feminist theorists' recognition of emotions as a way of producing knowledges has challenged the distanced mantle of traditional research. In this type of conventional research, women were excluded because of their association with emotions. Emotions were considered to be too feminine and femininity, in conventional researchers' perspectives, is not a form of knowledge. However, as Sieben & Wettergren (2010, p. 36) argue, "emotions do not 'happen' to people...but are part and parcel of the social and cultural world we live in". Emotions therefore highly reflect, and are inseparable from, our lived experiences and actions (Boler, 1999). Throughout human history, be it a wave of feminism or a civil rights movement, it always stems from the emotion of despair and anger. In reality, emotions instill the burning desire within the inner self and thus lead to action. In research, emotions are not only the side effect of our research progress or the fuel for our fire but also central to our inquiry (Cahill, 2004). In her research with young women of colour in New York city, Cahill (2004) also described how the participants used collective anger as a way to move forward and influence constructive social change.

One distinguishing feature between male and female participants in this photovoice research in Vietnam was that female participants were likely to

express their emotions more. Linh said she felt insecure sharing with others about her feelings, but she shared with me a great deal of in-depth information and let go of her painful emotions. Her exposure of real emotions and tears in that moment somehow proved that she put her trust in me as a facilitator. Noticeably, these emotional moments happened during my interviews with some other female participants and affected me emotionally. In a hierarchical society like Vietnam, men are usually highly conscious of the “the need to save face and put across a masculine identity” (Chan & Chan, 2005, p. 388). Hence, this might have prevented male participants from talking about personal feelings in a public or private environment, especially with an opposite-sex conversant such as myself. Male participants, therefore, tended to talk about their challenges in studies and housing conditions during interviews. Little was said about the emotional aspects of their university life away from home. While they admitted that at times they experienced negative feelings, they avoided verbally talking about it in detail or letting those feelings out. They chose to express all kinds of experiences with a simple smile instead.

Despite this gender disparity, it is worth mentioning that emotions are very personal and thus are not always easy to be shared. It might have been because of trust and my gender positionality that made it easier for female participants to be emotionally vulnerable with me and to share stories that they would rather keep a secret from anybody else. It might have been because of social norms and values that made male participants less emotionally expressive about their experiences, or it might have also been

because of their personalities. Whatever the reason is, when photovoice came into play, it became an effective method that enabled participants to visually reveal themselves without being limited by words. Participants effectively invited others into their own worlds of emotions, experiences, and thoughts through the photographs that they took. They did not need to explain anything to anyone – the photos said it all.

Alongside these emotional aspects, one of the challenges of PAR, according to Rosenthal and Khalil (2010), is how motivated participants are to participate in and take ownership of the research. In this photovoice project, participants' involvement increased with time. Their timidity that kept them from showing their creativity and knowledge at the beginning, was replaced by the confidence of expressing personal ideas to challenge others and tirelessly engaging in group discussion. They also actively expressed how they wanted to present their photographs. This led to diverse ways of photo presentation later at the exhibition. Some participants also enthusiastically asked whether they could help me get photos mounted on the wall for the exhibition before I even mentioned it.

Their excitement and involvement throughout the process might be the result of the process of “conscientization” that the photovoice method was able to bring about. The term “conscientization” was coined by Freire (1986) to explain an on-going process that has the strong emotional impact to eliminate the culture of silence. Photovoice allowed participants to reflect on their own emotions and express them in the pictures that they

took. Emotions, in this sense, were not only about their experiences but others' in the same situation around them as well. Thao described her experience of participating in the photovoice project as rewarding and invaluable.

If I had not taken part in this project, I would have never thought about challenges that I and other inter-provincial students are encountering – because I didn't think anyone would care about it. I love this project because it explores the challenges that we are facing – something that everybody knows by hearing, but not by seeing before (Thao, feedback email, June 15, 2014).

Phuong also pointed out that this photovoice project made her realise that she was not the only one who had to deal with those difficulties and challenges.

I thought my problems were the worst and I always felt sorry for myself. However, I took time to observe people who were “on the same boat” around me more when I took photos. It turned out that I was way more fortunate than other inter-provincial students (Phuong, group discussion, 12 May 2014).

Binh said he was struggling between the excitement to share his stories with invited teachers and the nervousness of never presenting in front of many people because he was just a first-year student. However, he had

such a great chance to overcome his fear and became more confident speaking out for himself with the “emotional” support from other participants. They were sitting in the audience and giving him encouraging hand signals. This gave him the courage to overcome his very first few tumbling moments and convey his messages behind his photos clearly. The strong emotional tie that connected them throughout the whole cooperative process made photovoice more interesting and engaging to participants. This, as far as I am concerned, was central to their motivation and participation in the photovoice project.

5.6 Conclusion

As power is inevitable even in PAR, to deal with it, facilitators are required to go through a continuous process of self-reflexivity. Only by doing this are facilitators able to scrutinise power dynamics implicit in personal positionality and social context, and negotiate it when interacting with participants. Throughout this project, PAR and photovoice were able to promote different gendered performances of emotions among participants. These emotions had an influence on participants’ engagement and ownership in the project. While discussion among participants went well without being disrupted by the trap of hierarchical power encoded in Vietnamese context, neither PAR nor photovoice was able to fully shift hierarchies expressed through pronouns. Nonetheless, acknowledging the existence of such power in Vietnamese language and tapping into the full potential benefits of PAR and photovoice in building up sound rapport,

trust, and collaboration would likely lead to an empowering research process for both facilitators and participants.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides answers to the research questions, limitations and recommendations for further research. This is followed by some recommendation for the university's administrators as well as teachers and parents to better help inter-provincial students overcome challenges of their student life. This chapter concludes with implications for Vietnam's education and development policy.

6.1 Discussion of research aims

1. What are the main challenges that inter-provincial students deal with when studying at the University of Danang?

In this research, participants came up with many challenges. However, due to time constraints, only three most important themes were chosen for photo-taking and detailed discussion. These inter-related and inseparable themes included finance, living conditions, and mentality/spirituality as shown in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1 Main inter-related challenges facing inter-provincial students when studying at the University of Danang



Source: Discussion group of 13 participants, April 27, 2014, 29/3 Park, Danang city

Financial insufficiency was common among inter-provincial students. It badly affected students' health and limited their access to knowledge compared to their urban counterparts. Inter-provincial students also grappled with severe living conditions. These ranged from the lack of security, to substandard quality of accommodation, to the lack of privacy, and the limited availability of transportation. Family, friendship, and personal relationships were critical elements that influenced students' spirit: this was intangible but, as participants explained, highly significant because it was central to students' motivation to successfully complete their studies.

Unfortunately, inter-provincial students were unlikely to seek for help from their teachers or university administrators. This tendency was due to students' negative experiences in interaction with teachers and administrative body. Family seemed to be the first place that inter-provincial students turned to

when they got into trouble in the first year at university. Once students became more experienced, they were inclined to ask for support from their friends or sometimes able to solve the problem by themselves.

Participants also developed strategies to overcome challenges by themselves. They suggested that other inter-provincial students who were facing the same difficulties should take the initiative and contact experienced seniors. They noted the importance of peer support among inter-provincial students. Besides, getting informative details about where they were going to live and study prior to their arrival in the city was a must-do. This helped them avoid unexpected troubles associated with living environment.

2. *How does hierarchical power in a Confucian-heritaged setting affect the research process?*

Through the discussion of my positionality in relation to student participants, power dynamics in a hierarchical context were explored. The power was implicit in my age, social status, gender, and education and was encoded in the use of personal pronouns in Vietnamese language. Confucianism with its core virtues put me in a position that I had privileged power over participants. This hindered my building close rapport with participants as students would always respect me and acted accordingly to their positionalities – from the way they addressed me to the decision-making process. However, power was also productive and the use of PAR enabled me to negotiate power dynamics within this context.

3. *How does photovoice impact inter-provincial students' participation and ownership in the research?*

This research demonstrated that photovoice was an effective PAR method for working with disadvantaged participants in an educational setting. The cyclical nature of photovoice allowed both participants and I to build sound rapport and trust to work with each other on a cooperative project. Photovoice gave spaces for participants to be reflexive as the research progressed. It also created a safe environment in which participants felt free to be emotionally expressive in both verbal and visual ways. Once they were emotionally attached to what they were doing, participants became more involved and motivated to do research on their lived experiences. They became active toward the end of the research when they took control over the photo-sharing session in front of teachers with their presentational ideas and creativities.

Their ownership over this photovoice process generated positive outcomes. It reinforced dialogue among invited teachers and opened spaces for discussion of strategies to better support inter-provincial students. The touching and informative photos and stories that participants shared at the exhibition raised awareness among teachers about untold emotional, mental, and physical issues that inter-provincial students were facing. This, in turn, may foster the development of helpful strategies and policies for inter-provincial students in the near future. Not only did this research affect invited teachers, it also changed the participants' attitudes and assumptions about themselves and

others around them. Thus, their participation and ownership in the research potentially contributed to their self-development.

6.2 Limitations of this research

In this research, participants came up with many challenges. However, only three main themes that student participants found the most important were chosen for photo-taking and detailed discussion. This was also due to time constraints.

The research took place during summer time in Vietnam when most participants had nearly finished their semester or had headed home to visit their home. Some chose to stay in the city to find a summer job but still visited their home back in the countryside every now and then. This led to the difficulty in arranging a time for group meetings and discussions that could fit in well with participants' varied schedules.

Student participants' roles and expectations were also open to discussion at the outset of the photovoice research. Participants understood that their participation in the research would mainly focus on exploring their challenges and raising awareness of those who involved in the research rather than leading to macro-structural changes at university level.

This research was first designed to be aimed at observing and analysing power dynamics between male and female participants when collaboratively working

on a photovoice project. In the project design draft, working groups were to be divided into males and females. Nonetheless, the number of males and females recruited was not balanced. After two male participants withdrew from the project, the total number decreased to eleven – eight females and three males.

6.3 Recommendations for further research

1. Research on hierarchical gendered power among participants

Due to the imbalance in the number of male-female participants, male participants were likely to be overwhelmed and it became hard to keep the original aim of examining gendered power among participants in research. Further research, based on feminist epistemology, with the involvement of gender-balanced groups may be potentially useful to explore the gender aspect of doing PAR with young people in a Confucian-heritage society.

2. Research on how photovoice could be adopted as an effective tool to explore the transition stage of first year inter-provincial students

It was noticeable from the research that all participants found it most challenging during the transition time from high school to university. However, only one male first year student took part in this research. Thus, how first-year students coming from a disadvantaged background grappled with adapting to the new urban lifestyle and educational system was not profoundly reflected in this research. The transition stage is very important since it is the time that inter-provincial students give up their closeness with

family and deal with huge adjustments to the new environment. Though most participants mentioned their difficulties in the first year, their memories were likely to be overlaid by what they had recently experienced in their senior year. Therefore, it would be interesting to use the flexible and empowering photovoice method to work with first year inter-provincial students and see how effective it is for understanding their new experiences.

6.4 Recommendations and implications for the University of Danang, teachers and parents

This research contributed to unearthing the lived experience of inter-provincial students at university, and the challenges that hindered their pursuit of higher education. The stories of their struggles and strategies were conveyed through their own lenses using photovoice method. These can be of great help for the university's policy-making process towards inter-provincial students. The following are recommendations for the university's administrative body and teaching staff based on the findings of this photovoice study:

The university should have more policy initiatives to support inter-provincial students instead of solely focusing on financial subsidies. The diversity of policies should also come with consistency in implementing them. For instance, the current on-and-off policy of financial support or loans has placed many inter-provincial students into a challenging situation. There is not any assurance or guarantee that the financial support students get from the university in one semester would be continued in the following one.

Furthermore, there should be a student support service that is beneficial to inter-provincial students. This service is not only for academic purposes but also for other personal related issues. In other words, it should play the role of a student counselling body of the university that is responsible for giving advice on every aspect of students' lives and experiences. It is also the responsibility of the university to provide students with friendly and helpful staff who are always willing to support students when they are in need.

Students' voices are also of paramount importance. The current lack of a "real" and strong student body that works independently from the university's governed associations leads to the culture of silence among students. It is doubtful that students' interests and preferences will be reflected in the university's policy-making until a student body is established and administered by students themselves. The university has been known as their leading role in providing human resources particularly in Central Vietnam. Therefore, students, as ultimate promised outcomes to the society, should have active voices throughout their university life.

Teachers interact with students in the classroom on a daily basis. Therefore, apart from their academic knowledge teachers should be well equipped with techniques and skills to teach in a diverse classroom. This is because education is not only about transferring knowledge from books to students' heads. It is more about the teacher-student communication and how teachers can successfully work in a classroom environment to bring students from diverse backgrounds together. After all, students are human beings with lived

experiences, feelings as well as educational and emotional needs. Only by doing this can teachers help to promote the “self” betterment within students. Without this, teachers are nothing but “teaching machines”.

University students are considered to be mature enough to live independently by themselves, at least in physical terms. However, parents should not assign their children to the university and avoid taking responsibility for taking care of them. This research has shown that inter-provincial students, despite enjoying their freedom, need care from their parents, especially during times of emotional suffering.

6.5 Implications for Vietnam’s education and development policy and future development research practice

Higher education was never explicitly involved in the MDGs as either a development goal in its own right, or as a potential agent to address other development goals. It is later, though, where we do find evidence of universities and research institutions playing a huge role in development terms (Roberts & Ajai-Ajagbe, 2013, p. 3).

With the recognition of how important higher education is to achieve main goals set forth by the UN, there has been a significant shift away from primary education towards secondary and tertiary levels in developing countries (UNESCO, 2010). The ability of universities to generate human resources with cutting-edge knowledge and advanced skills enables developing countries to find solutions and fight against issues such as food

security, poverty, infectious diseases, and climate and environment changes. This possibly makes a difference in people's lives in developing countries by using indigenous well-trained resources.

Improving and enhancing higher education is undoubtedly pivotal for the long-term development of Vietnam. The country clearly indicates that its perseverance of Education for All goals is to develop a knowledge-based society to serve its socialist-oriented market economy (see Chapter 2). Its commitment to achieve inclusive education demonstrates determination to address the issue of inequality in education. As an aid recipient country, Vietnam's educational development policies are much driven by neo-liberal ideology that was implicitly introduced and integrated into the country by big donors such as World Bank. The human capital thinking and trickle-down effect that World Bank puts as a core aim of higher education in Vietnam do not contribute to eradicating inequality as promised but, on the contrary, exacerbate it to a much higher level. This contrasts with the all-inclusive education targets that the country has set out to work on.

The current neoliberal approach employed by most universities together with the deeply rooted influences of Confucian values are doing more harm than good to their students, particularly disadvantaged inter-provincial students. Inter-provincial students usually struggle with negotiating and shifting between two different worlds – their original world in rural places and the world of university in urban areas. Moving back and forth between the two cultures and realities is tricky for them, let alone other stresses

associated with their academic studies partly due to their inadequate preparedness. Nonetheless, universities in Vietnam are still dwelling in the Confucian mindset that importance should be placed on administrators and teaching staff as they are crucial key actors in educational development. Thus, they end up not being responsive to students' academic, financial, social, cultural, and psychological needs. Most inter-provincial students decide to leave home to seek higher education with a hope to better their lives. However, they soon get demotivated after facing many of challenges without having any confidential student services or counselors to turn to when in need. Such a situation is likely to detrimentally influence inter-provincial students' performance at university and may lead to their dropping out of university. Those that give up half-way through university may end up falling into a worse situation where they are unable to pay the loan taken out in the pursuit of higher education.

Higher education is not only beneficial to individuals but also to the society at large. Some may argue that going to university and getting a degree does not guarantee a good life. However, higher education does provide more chances for the betterment of disadvantaged minority people's lives.

Universities which put students, particularly minority students, in the centre of their administration and operation policies help them battle with many challenges facing them. This also fosters the development within minority students themselves, which leads to the country's development in the long run.

Listening to students' voices and learning from their experiences is a useful approach to appropriately response to their needs. Participatory Action Research creates such an environment where inter-provincial students feel safe to do so thanks to its cooperative, empowering and self-reflexive nature. Even though this methodology is new to Vietnam, it appears to work well with minority students, at least in the University of Danang. It is of great help for researchers and policy makers to tap into the benefits that this methodology brings about to collaboratively work with minority students to develop supporting policies for these students. After all, nurturing the potential development of university students is not just solely about what we educators think they should have, but what they have within themselves. We have to provide them with a supportive environment for their inner development to blossom.



Figure 6.2 Participants on the last group discussion session

Duc Thi Van Tran



Figure 6.3 Participants and author at the exhibition

Duc Thi Van Tran

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APPENDIX A PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (IN ENGLISH)



“Everybody knows by hearing but not by seeing”: Exploring the use of photovoice to document challenges of some inter-provincial students at the University of Danang, Vietnam

Participant Information Sheet

**Researcher: Tran Thi Van Duc, School of Geography,
Environment and Earth Sciences, Victoria University of
Wellington**

Dear ...,

I am a Masters student in Development Studies at Victoria University of Wellington. As part of this degree, I am undertaking a “photovoice” project for my thesis. A photovoice project enables people to record and reflect on their strengths and concerns, promotes critical dialogue and knowledge about important issues through large and small discussion of photographs, and reaches policymakers to try and bring

about positive social changes. This photovoice project focuses on the lived experiences of “outsider” students at the University of Da Nang – how it feels to live far away from home and challenges you grapple with or overcome when studying at the university. This research project has received approval from the Victoria University Human Ethics Committee.

Should you consent to participate, the project will involve you in a photovoice process during April – May 2014. This means that you will be invited to a Sunday workshop (April 27) to meet other participants, get to know each other, decide together the specific focus of the research and then gain instructions on how to use cameras to take photographs. A camera labelled with your name will be given to you on this day. In the meeting, you will also be able to brainstorm themes related to the given topic to discuss in the following meetings. In the following week, along with taking photographs, I would like to interview you about your background and ideas on challenges that you are facing, and strategies you have for overcoming them. This will take approximately 40 minutes with me in a location of your choice, and be audio-recorded with your permission.

Photo-taking will take place for three weeks from 5 May to 25 May. In this period of time, a meeting to share and discuss chosen themes with other participants will be held on a weekly basis at weekends. These meetings take around 2 hours. In the week of 26 – 31 May, a final

reflection meeting will take place. The exact date is flexible. It will be decided based on your available times and preferences. All photos taken will be brought together and shared with other participants on this day. You will then be invited to choose which of your photographs best describe challenges and strategies of “outsider” students at the University of Da Nang and work on writing captions that you wish to attach alongside your photographs. This will also be a time for you to reflect on the entire process and share your feelings about participating in the photovoice project. In a workshop during 2 – 8 June, you will be asked to share your photos with associated captions and stories with invited teachers from the University of Da Nang. The purpose of this workshop is to raise awareness among the teaching community and those people who can affect the university’s policy makers to better support “outsider” students.

Your participation at each stage is completely voluntary. During interviews and photo-sharing meetings, any information and stories that you provide will be audio-recorded and transcribed later with your permission. If you do not feel like answering any questions in the interviews or discussions, that is absolutely fine. Also, you may request that the audio-recorder be turned off at any point. A copy of your photographs and transcript will be given back to you if you wish to receive them. Should you feel the need to withdraw from the project, you may do so without having to give any reasons until July 1, 2014.

I hope that you will give me permission to use your photographs, stories and transcripts in my academic Master's thesis which will be submitted to the School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences for marking and will also be deposited in the Victoria University Library as well as the library of University of Foreign Languages, University of Da Nang. During this research, all written interview notes and photographs will be kept in a locked file. All electronic information will be kept in a password-protected file. These data will be terminated two years after the thesis is completed.

Should you have any questions about the project, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor via the contact details below.

Yours sincerely,

Duc Tran tranduc2@myvuw.ac.nz

Supervisor: A/Prof. Sara Kindon sara.kindon@vuw.ac.nz +64-4-463-6194

APPENDIX B PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (IN VIETNAMESE)



THÔNG TIN DÀNH CHO NGƯỜI THAM GIA

**Người nghiên cứu: Trần Thị Vân Đức, Khoa Khoa học Địa lý, Môi trường và Trái đất, Trường Đại học Victoria
University of Wellington, New Zealand.**

Chào anh/chị,

Tôi là sinh viên cao học ngành Nghiên cứu về Phát triển học tại Đại học Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. Hiện tại tôi đang thực hiện một dự án có tên gọi là “Photovoice” cho luận văn thạc sỹ của tôi. Dự án photovoice giúp người tham gia ghi lại và phản ánh những điểm mạnh cũng như là các mối quan tâm của cộng đồng xung quanh họ, thúc đẩy các cuộc đối thoại và hiểu biết về những vấn đề quan trọng qua các buổi bàn luận về hình ảnh mà người tham gia chụp

và hướng đến các nhà làm chính sách để tạo ra thay đổi tích cực trong xã hội. Dự án photovoice này tập trung khám phá những trải nghiệm của sinh viên ngoại tỉnh tại Đại học Đà Nẵng – về những cảm giác khi sống và học tập xa nhà cũng như những thử thách mà các bạn gặp phải khi học tập tại đây. Dự án nghiên cứu này đã nhận được sự chấp thuận của Ủy ban Đạo đức Con người tại Đại học Victoria University of Wellington.

Nếu anh/chị đồng ý, anh/chị sẽ tham gia vào một dự án photovoice kéo dài trong vòng 2 tháng – tháng 04 – 05/2014. Điều này có nghĩa là anh/chị sẽ được mời tham gia một buổi hội thảo vào Chủ nhật (ngày 27/4) để gặp gỡ giao lưu với những thành viên khác cùng tham gia vào dự án, cùng nhau đưa ra quyết định về trọng tâm của nghiên cứu và sau đó sẽ nhận được hướng dẫn về cách sử dụng máy ảnh dùng để chụp hình. Anh/chị sẽ nhận được một máy ảnh có dán tên của mình tại buổi hội thảo này. Trong buổi gặp mặt đầu tiên này, anh/chị cũng sẽ cùng nhau phác thảo các chủ đề liên quan đến nội dung được đưa ra để bàn luận vào những buổi gặp mặt tiếp theo. Trong tuần tiếp theo, song song với việc chụp hình, tôi cũng sẽ phỏng vấn anh/chị về thông tin bản thân cũng như là những thách thức khó khăn mà anh/chị gặp phải và các giải pháp giúp anh/chị vượt qua những thách thức này. Buổi phỏng vấn kéo dài trong khoảng 40 phút tại một địa điểm do anh/chị lựa chọn và sẽ được thu âm với sự đồng ý của anh/chị.

Anh/chị sẽ thực hiện chụp ảnh trong vòng 3 tuần từ ngày 05/5 đến

ngày 25/5. Trong thời gian này, một buổi gặp mặt để chia sẻ và bàn luận về những chủ đề được chọn trước đó với các thành viên tham gia khác sẽ diễn ra hằng tuần vào cuối tuần. Những buổi gặp mặt này kéo dài khoảng hai tiếng đồng hồ. Một buổi gặp gỡ tổng kết sẽ diễn ra trong khoảng thời gian từ ngày 26 – 31/5. Thời gian gặp gỡ chính xác sẽ được quyết định linh hoạt tùy vào thời gian rảnh của anh/chị.

Những bức hình anh/chị chụp và chia sẻ với mọi người trong 3 tuần trước đó sẽ được tập hợp lại trong buổi gặp mặt tổng kết này. Sau đó, anh/chị sẽ chọn ra trong số những bức hình mình chụp những hình mà anh/chị thấy mô tả chính xác nhất thách thức và chiến lược của sinh viên ngoại tỉnh tại Đại học Đà Nẵng và viết lời tựa đề cho mỗi bức hình mà anh/chị chọn. Đây cũng là thời gian để anh/chị nhìn lại toàn bộ quá trình và chia sẻ cảm xúc khi tham gia vào dự án photovoice này. Từ ngày 02-08/6, anh/chị sẽ tham dự một buổi thuyết trình hình ảnh và chia sẻ câu chuyện ẩn sau những bức hình mình chụp tại buổi hội thảo với sự tham dự của một số giáo viên thuộc Đại học Đà Nẵng.

Mục đích của buổi hội thảo này là nhằm thúc đẩy hiểu biết và nhận thức của cộng đồng giáo viên, là những người ảnh hưởng đến các nhà làm chính sách ở trường để tạo ra những thay đổi tích cực trong các chính sách hỗ trợ sinh viên ngoại tỉnh.

Sự tham gia của anh/chị vào dự án là hoàn toàn tình nguyện. Bất kỳ thông tin anh/chị cung cấp trong các buổi phỏng vấn và chia sẻ bình luận hình ảnh sẽ được thu âm lại và sao chép dưới sự đồng ý của anh/chị. Nếu anh/chị cảm thấy không muốn trả lời bất kỳ câu hỏi nào

khi được phỏng vấn thì hoàn toàn không có vấn đề gì cả. Anh/chị cũng có thể yêu cầu tắt máy thu âm bất kỳ lúc nào anh/chị muốn. Anh/chị sẽ nhận được một bản sao chép hình ảnh anh/chị chụp và phần thu âm nếu như anh/chị có mong muốn nhận chúng. Nếu anh/chị không muốn tham gia vào dự án nữa, anh/chị có thể rút ra khỏi dự án mà không cần phải đưa ra bất kỳ lý do nào trước ngày 01/7/2014.

Tôi hy vọng anh/chị sẽ cho phép tôi sử dụng những hình ảnh anh/chị chụp và những câu chuyện mà anh/chị chia sẻ cho luận văn thạc sỹ của tôi. Luận văn này sẽ được nộp lại cho Khoa Khoa học Địa lý, Môi trường và Trái đất để Khoa chấm điểm và lưu trữ tại thư viện của Đại học Victoria University of Wellington và thư viện Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Đà Nẵng. Trong nghiên cứu này, tất cả những bản ghi chú trong lúc phỏng vấn và hình ảnh sẽ được cất giữ vào một tập tin được khóa cẩn thận. Tất cả những thông tin điện tử sẽ được lưu giữ trong tập tin riêng biệt có mật mã bảo vệ. Những thông tin này sẽ bị xóa sau hai năm kể từ khi luận văn được hoàn thành.

Nếu anh/chị có bất kỳ câu hỏi nào liên quan đến dự án, xin liên hệ với tôi hoặc giáo sư hướng dẫn của tôi qua địa chỉ đính kèm bên dưới.

Trân trọng,

Trần Thị Vân Đức tranduc2@myvuw.ac.nz

Giáo sư hướng dẫn: PGS.TS Sara Kindon sara.kindon@vuw.ac.nz

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APPENDIX C TEACHER INFORMATION SHEET (IN ENGLISH)



**“Everybody knows by hearing but not by seeing”:
Exploring the use of photovoice to document challenges of
some inter-provincial students at the University of Danang,
Vietnam**

Teacher Information Sheet

**Researcher: Tran Thi Van Duc, School of Geography,
Environment and Earth Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington**

Dear ...,

I am a Masters student in Development Studies at Victoria University of Wellington. As part of this degree, I am undertaking a “photovoice” project for my thesis. A photovoice project enables people to record and reflect on their strengths and concerns, promotes critical dialogue and knowledge about important issues through large and small discussion of photographs, and reaches policymakers to try to bring about positive social changes. This photovoice project focuses on the lived experiences of “outsider” students at the University of Da Nang –

how it feels to live far away from home and challenges that they grapple with when studying at the university. This research project has received approval from the Victoria University Human Ethics Committee.

Should you consent to participate, during May 2014, you will have a 45-minute interview about your experiences and thoughts about “outsider” students at your university and challenges that they are facing. The time and location of this interview will be decided based on your available times and preferences. After that, in the week of June 2 – 8, you will be invited to a workshop where “outsider” students taking part in the photovoice project share their photos and stories.

Your participation in the project is completely voluntary. During the interview, any information and stories that you provide with me will be audio-recorded and transcribed later with your permission. If you do not feel like answering any questions in the interview, that is absolutely fine. Also, you may request that the audio-recorder be turned off at any point. A copy of your transcript will be given back to you if you wish to receive them. Should you feel the need to withdraw from the project, you may do so without having to give any reasons at any time.

I hope that you will give me permission to use your opinions, stories and transcripts in my academic Master’s thesis which will be submitted to the School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences for marking and will also be deposited in the Victoria University Library as

well as the library of University of Foreign Languages, the University of Da Nang. During this research, all written interview notes will be kept in a locked file. All electronic information will be kept in a password-protected file. These data will be terminated two years after the thesis is completed. If you would like to withdraw your opinions or stories, please let me know by 1 July 2014.

Should you have any questions about the project, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor via the contact details below.

Yours sincerely,

Duc Tran tranduc2@myvuw.ac.nz

Supervisor: A/Prof. Sara Kindon sara.kindon@vuw.ac.nz +64-4-463-6194

APPENDIX D TEACHER INFORMATION SHEET (IN VIETNAMESE)



THÔNG TIN DÀNH CHO GIÁO VIÊN

Người nghiên cứu: Trần Thị Vân Đức, Khoa Khoa học Địa lý, Môi trường và Trái đất, Đại học Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

Chào anh/chị,

Tôi là sinh viên cao học ngành Nghiên cứu về Phát triển học tại Đại học Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. Hiện tại tôi đang thực hiện một dự án có tên gọi là “Photovoice” cho luận văn thạc sỹ của tôi. Dự án photovoice giúp người tham gia ghi lại và phản ánh những điểm mạnh cũng như là các mối quan tâm của cộng đồng xung quanh họ, thúc đẩy các cuộc đối thoại và hiểu biết về những vấn đề quan trọng qua các buổi bàn luận về hình ảnh mà người tham gia chụp và hướng đến các nhà làm chính sách để tạo ra thay đổi tích cực trong xã hội. Dự

án photovoice này tập trung khám phá những trải nghiệm của sinh viên ngoại tỉnh tại Đại học Đà Nẵng – về những cảm giác khi sống và học tập xa nhà cũng như những thử thách mà các em gặp phải hoặc vượt qua khi học tập tại đây. Dự án nghiên cứu này đã nhận được sự chấp thuận của Ủy ban Đạo đức Con người tại Đại học Victoria University of Wellington.

Nếu anh/chị đồng ý, anh/chị sẽ tham gia một buổi phỏng vấn kéo dài khoảng 45 phút với tôi vào tháng 05/2014 về ý kiến của chị đối với sinh viên ngoại tỉnh và những thách thức mà các em gặp phải. Thời gian và địa điểm sẽ được quyết định dựa trên thời gian và sự lựa chọn của anh/chị. Sau đó, trong tuần từ 2 – 8/6, anh/chị sẽ được mời tham dự một buổi hội thảo nơi mà các sinh viên ngoại tỉnh tham gia vào dự án photovoice sẽ chia sẻ những bức hình mà các em chụp và những câu chuyện liên quan.

Sự tham gia của anh/chị vào dự án là hoàn toàn tình nguyện. Bất kỳ thông tin anh/chị cung cấp trong buổi phỏng vấn và chia sẻ bình luận hình ảnh sẽ được thu âm lại và sao chép dưới sự đồng ý của anh/chị. Nếu anh/chị cảm thấy không muốn trả lời bất kỳ câu hỏi nào khi được phỏng vấn thì hoàn toàn không có vấn đề gì cả. Anh/chị cũng có thể yêu cầu tắt máy thu âm bất kỳ lúc nào anh/chị muốn. Anh/chị sẽ nhận được một bản sao chép phần thu âm nếu như anh/chị có mong muốn nhận chúng. Nếu anh/chị không muốn tham gia vào dự án nữa, anh/chị có thể rút ra khỏi dự án mà không cần phải đưa ra bất kỳ lý do nào.

Tôi hy vọng anh/chị sẽ cho phép tôi sử dụng những ý kiến, câu chuyện và bản sao chép các buổi phỏng vấn mà anh/chị chia sẻ cho luận văn thạc sỹ của tôi. Luận văn này sẽ được nộp lại cho Khoa Khoa học Địa lý, Môi trường và Trái đất để Khoa chấm điểm và lưu trữ tại thư viện của Đại học Victoria University of Wellington và thư viện Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Đà Nẵng. Trong nghiên cứu này, tất cả những bản ghi chú trong lúc phỏng vấn và hình ảnh sẽ được cất giữ vào một tập tin được khóa cẩn thận. Tất cả những thông tin điện tử sẽ được lưu giữ trong tập tin riêng biệt có mật mã bảo vệ. Những thông tin này sẽ bị xóa sau hai năm kể từ khi luận văn được hoàn thành. Nếu anh/chị muốn rút những ý kiến hay câu chuyện mà anh/chị chia sẻ khi tham gia vào dự án, xin thông báo cho tôi biết trước ngày 1/7/2014.

Nếu anh/chị có bất kỳ câu hỏi nào liên quan đến dự án, xin liên hệ với tôi hoặc giáo sư hướng dẫn của tôi qua địa chỉ đính kèm bên dưới.

Trân trọng,

Trần Thị Vân Đức tranduc2@myvuw.ac.nz

Giáo sư hướng dẫn: PGS.TS Sara Kindon

sara.kindon@vuw.ac.nz +64-4-463-6194

APPENDIX E PARTICIPANT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (IN ENGLISH)



Participant Consent to Participate in Research

I have had the opportunity to consider all the information presented to me in the information sheet and to have any questions answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I may withdraw my participation (or any information and photos I have provided) at any time up to 1 July 2014 without having to give reasons.

I give my consent to take part in the photovoice process and to contribute my photographic images and associated stories to group discussion and analysis.

I understand that I can not take photographs of identifiable people.

I understand that I will have an opportunity to check the transcripts of the interview before they are used in any way.

I agree/ do not agree [select one] to the interviews being recorded for later transcription.

I understand that the data and photos I provide will not be used for any other purpose or released to others without my written consent.

I understand that a copy of my images and stories will be given back to me and that another copy of them will be safely stored for two years.

I would/would not [select one] like to receive a copy of the recordings and transcripts of my interview at the conclusion of the project.

I would/would not [select one] like to receive a copy of the results of the research when it is completed.

I would/would not [select one] like to have my information connected to my real name in any documentation arising from the project.

Please use this name instead:

Full name:

Email:

Address (to send the report to):

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX F PARTICIPANT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (IN VIETNAMESE)



CAM KẾT THAM GIA DỰ ÁN NGHIÊN CỨU

Tôi đã có cơ hội xem xét những thông tin trong tờ thông tin và những câu hỏi tôi đưa ra đều đã được giải đáp một cách thỏa mãn.

Tôi hiểu rằng việc tham gia của tôi vào dự án là hoàn toàn tự nguyện và tôi có thể rút khỏi dự án (hay bất kỳ thông tin và hình ảnh nào mà tôi cung cấp) vào bất cứ thời điểm nào trước ngày 01/07/2014 mà không cần đưa ra bất kỳ lý do gì.

Tôi đồng ý tham gia vào dự án photovoice này và đóng góp những hình ảnh và câu chuyện liên quan của tôi.

Tôi hiểu rằng tôi không thể chụp ảnh trong đó hình ảnh khuôn mặt người có thể nhận diện được.

Tôi hiểu rằng tôi có cơ hội kiểm tra lại bản sao chép những buổi phỏng vấn của tôi trước khi chúng được sử dụng cho bất kỳ mục đích nào.

Tôi đồng ý/không đồng ý việc thu âm những buổi phỏng vấn với tôi để phục vụ cho việc sao chép lại sau này.

Tôi hiểu rằng những thông tin và hình ảnh mà tôi cung cấp sẽ không được dùng cho bất kỳ mục đích nào khác hay gửi cho bất cứ ai mà không nhận được sự đồng ý bằng biên bản của tôi.

Tôi hiểu rằng tôi sẽ nhận được một bản những hình ảnh và câu chuyện mà tôi chia sẻ nếu như tôi muốn và một bản sao chép khác sẽ được lưu trữ cẩn thận trong thời gian hai năm.

Tôi muốn/không muốn nhận một bản những thu âm và bản sao chép những buổi phỏng vấn mà tôi tham dự sau khi dự án kết thúc.

Tôi muốn/không muốn nhận một bản sao chép kết quả của nghiên cứu này sau khi nghiên cứu được hoàn thành.

Tôi muốn/không muốn tên thật của tôi được sử dụng vào bất cứ tài liệu nào liên quan đến dự án này. Thay vào đó, tôi muốn được sử dụng bí danh sau:

Họ và tên:

Email:

Địa chỉ liên lạc:

Ký tên:

Ngày:

APPENDIX G TEACHER CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (IN ENGLISH)



TEACHER CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

I have had the opportunity to consider all the information presented to me in the information sheet and to have any questions answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I may withdraw my participation at any time up to 1 July 2014 without having to give reasons.

I give my consent to take part in the interview and to contribute my experiences and thoughts.

I understand that I will have an opportunity to check the transcripts of the interview before they are used in any way.

I agree/ do not agree [select one] to the interview being recorded for later transcription.

I understand that the information I provide will not be used for any other purpose or released to others without my written consent.

I understand that a copy of interview transcripts will be given back to me and that another copy will be safely stored for two years.

I would/would not [select one] like to receive a copy of the recordings and transcripts of my interview at the conclusion of the project.

I would/would not [select one] like to receive a copy of the results of the research when it is completed.

I would/would not [select one] like to have my information connected to my real name in any documentation arising from the project.

Please use this name instead:

Full name:

Email:

Address (to send the report to):

Signature Date:

APPENDIX H TEACHER CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (IN VIETNAMESE)



GIÁO VIÊN CAM KẾT THAM GIA DỰ ÁN NGHIÊN CỨU

Tôi đã có cơ hội xem xét những thông tin trong tờ thông tin và những câu hỏi tôi đưa ra đều đã được giải đáp một cách thỏa mãn.

Tôi hiểu rằng việc tham gia của tôi vào dự án là hoàn toàn tự nguyện và tôi có thể rút khỏi dự án vào bất cứ thời điểm nào trước ngày 01/07/2014 mà không cần đưa ra bất kỳ lý do gì.

Tôi đồng ý tham gia phỏng vấn và đóng góp những kinh nghiệm và suy nghĩ của bản thân tôi.

Tôi hiểu rằng tôi có cơ hội kiểm tra lại bản sao chép buổi phỏng vấn của tôi trước khi chúng được sử dụng cho bất kỳ mục đích nào.

Tôi đồng ý/không đồng ý việc thu âm những buổi phỏng vấn với tôi để phục vụ cho việc sao chép lại sau này.

Tôi hiểu rằng những thông tin và hình ảnh mà tôi cung cấp sẽ không được dùng cho bất kỳ mục đích nào khác hay gửi cho bất cứ ai mà không nhận được sự đồng ý bằng biên bản của tôi.

Tôi hiểu rằng tôi sẽ nhận được một bản sao chép buổi phỏng vấn và một bản khác sẽ được lưu trữ cẩn thận trong thời gian hai năm.

Tôi muốn/không muốn nhận một bản những thu âm và bản sao chép buổi phỏng vấn mà tôi tham dự sau khi dự án kết thúc.

Họ và tên:

Email:

Địa chỉ liên lạc:

Ký tên:

Ngày:

APPENDIX I PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (IN ENGLISH)

Pre-interview

1 Personal Information

- Name:
- Age:
- Sex:
- Where do you come from?
- Major:
- University:
- Student status (freshman/sophomore/junior/senior):
- Years staying/living in Da Nang city:
- Do you have any relatives living in Da Nang? Yes/No
- Do you have any brothers or sisters? (Age, occupation)
- Accommodation (dorm/relative's house/flatting with friends)
- Are you working part-time/full-time while studying?
- Preferred contact (email/phone/etc.):

2 Personal experiences

- Why did you decide to come to the University of Da Nang?
- How would you describe your experiences as a student to date?
- What do you enjoy? What is working well?
- What has been or continues to be challenging? Why?
- What strategies have you develop to cope with or overcome these challenges?

- Did you get help from anyone?
- What lessons have you learned from these challenges?
- Do you have any advice for “outsider” students coming to study at the University of Da Nang?
- Do you have any advice for teachers?

Photo Interview

Photo interview questions are designed based on the SHOWeD instrument developed by Wallerstein & Bernstein (1988) and adapted for use in photovoice by Wang & Burris (1994).

S - What do you see here?

H - What is really happening here?

O - How does this relate to your life?

W - Why does this situation, concern or challenge exist?

e - How could this photo educate others?/How could this photo speak to the wider community?

D - What can we do about it?

- Can you tell us more about how these photos work together?/Why do you put these photos in the same category?

- Did you have any difficulty when taking photographs?

- Please write down a caption that, in your opinion, would best describe the photo.

- How do you feel after taking part in this photovoice project?

Do you have anything else that you would like to share with us?