

A Social Realist Analysis of Critical Thinking
in Two Vietnamese Undergraduate Programmes:
Knowledge, Symbolic Control and Identity

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Abstract

This study was a critical examination of how critical thinking was regulated in the context of higher education (HE) in Việt Nam through the process that Bernstein called *pedagogic recontextualisation*. The research had two main objectives (1) to understand how critical thinking is conceptualised and taught in two dual focus programmes called Business English Programme 1 and Business English Programme 2, and (2) to scrutinise socio-political factors that regulate the teaching of critical thinking in these programmes.

Guided by Bernstein's theory of the *pedagogic device*, specifically the concepts of *classification* and *framing*, the thesis examined how critical thinking curricular discourses were taken up and enacted in classrooms that served different social groups. Significantly, the ability of critical thinking to speak to alternative possibilities and to individual autonomy and its assumptions of a liberal social order were problematised in Việt Nam's socio-political climate.

Contextualising the teaching of critical thinking in the ideological framework of socialism, communitarianism and neo-liberalism, the thesis provided a whole picture of tensions and contradictions Việt Nam and its HE system have been facing in the era when the need for high status knowledge such as critical thinking has been claimed to be necessary for the knowledge economy. In the process of showing contradictions, the thesis also highlighted empirically possible spaces of action and interruption.

This qualitative case study research design relied on data obtained from the analyses of relevant documents, the literature and the researcher's personal reflection and insights as a university teacher. The richness of the thesis prevailed in the analysis of the twenty semi-structured interviews with teachers (lecturers), institutional leaders and work supervisors who were involved both directly and indirectly in the critical thinking discourses in the programmes under study. Findings from the thematic analysis revealed that although there were efforts to bring critical thinking, the powerful esoteric knowledge, into undergraduate curricula, at the classroom level, teachers still took control of pedagogic practices, namely the selection, pacing and sequencing of what they thought could help students develop critical thinking. These controls, together with the lack of rigorous and systematic evaluative criteria for critical thought, impeded the process of internalising critical thinking.

The findings implied that in the context where critical thinking is unfamiliar, and where conformity to authority is dominant, critical thinking curricula may be seen as disruption of social order and may not be welcome in the society, specifically in the workplace.

Through the lens of sociology of education, specifically Bernstein's theory of the pedagogic device, the study provided a sufficient understanding of what often goes on inside academic institutions and how classroom practices are systematically related to a broader social-class advantages and disadvantages. Thus, it contributed its part to research in sociology of education, which tends to focus mainly on issues external to schooling systems.

By focusing on the analysis of the teaching of critical thinking in HE institutions, the thesis addressed effectively the curricular question of who learns what and why in terms of the creation of identities that foster hegemonic and counter-hegemonic possibilities.

The limitation lied in the scope of the study. Due to the limited scope, the study excluded the voice of students as the key stakeholder.

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I also would like to play tribute to one participant who sadly died while the thesis was in process.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

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Signed




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Glossary

| | |
|---------|---|
| AUN- QA | ASEAN University Network – Quality Assurance |
| BE | Business English |
| BEP(s) | Business English Programme(s) |
| BEP1 | Business English Programme 1 |
| BEP2 | Business English Programme 2 |
| BG | Business Grammar |
| BR&W | Business Reading and Writing |
| BR | Business Research |
| CPVN | Communist Party of Việt Nam |
| CT | Critical Thinking (name of the course/ programme) |
| CR&W | Critical Reading & Writing |
| CO | Course Outline |
| CLIL | Content Language Integrated Learning |
| D. C. M | Decentred Market |
| D. C. T | Decentred Therapeutic |
| ELOD | External Language of Description |
| ES | English Studies |
| GI | Graduation Internship |
| HE | Higher Education |
| HEI(s) | Higher Education Institution(s) |
| HOT | Higher Order Thinking |
| L2 | Second Language |
| LO(s) | Learning Outcome(s) |
| QL/TS | Quality Learning and Teaching Strategy |
| MOET | Ministry of Education and Training |
| OBE | Outcome-based Education |
| PRF | Pedagogic Recontextualising Field |
| SRVN | Socialist Republic of Việt Nam |
| WB | The World Bank |

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Introduction

Introduction

This chapter introduces the research idea, the research purpose and its significance. It explains why the teaching of critical thinking was chosen for the PhD thesis. The chapter comprises three sections. The first section highlights some tensions related to curriculum reforms that the Vietnamese higher education (HE) system has been facing. It situates the tensions in the broader socio-cultural and political context of Việt Nam and from there examines how these contradictions may problematise the critical thinking discourse.

The second section explains why a study in critical thinking is needed. It does so by identifying some gaps in the literature, e.g. how the subject has been contextualised, conceived and taught disconnected from social, political and historical contexts. To this end, I imply that (critical thinking) curriculum efforts should turn attention to the inescapably socio-cultural and political contexts to examine the always contested ways in which official curricula function as a relay for social power relations and their set of dominant ideologies and how they work to socialise students into these ideologies (Apple, 2000; Bernstein, 2003; Young, 2007).

The writing then moves to the third section where I state the purpose of the thesis. There is also an explanation of the research significance. Finally, the chapter ends with a section outlining the structure of the whole thesis. The sub-sections below situate the research in its broader context.

0.1 Contemporary Vietnamese HE and Critical Thinking

Over the past decades, education reforms, specifically HE curriculum reforms have been high on the agenda of the Vietnamese state. Since the socialist-oriented market economy was introduced in 1986, HE in Việt Nam has been facing critical needs to educate and train the labour force to serve the demand of the fast-growing economy. There have also been pressures to reform HE for international integration as well as to bridge the gap of unemployability (Đỗ, 2014; Nguyễn and Trần, 2014, Nguyen, 2015a, Nguyen and Tran, 2018). At the state level, the Government has made policies to initiate changes from the national curriculum frameworks to teaching learning methodology with the desire that HE

will be able to equip graduates with competencies and skills they need for modernisation, standardisation and international integration (Vietnamese Government, 2012a).

However, despite the Government's resourcefulness and determination, the aspiration to prepare Vietnamese young people for a knowledge society in the era of globalisation seems still far from a reality (Trần et al., 2014b). There have been concerns about the effectiveness of the reform agenda in reference to the new values, competences and skills it has highlighted. Firstly, it has been argued that the knowledge that Vietnamese university graduates have received does not seem to match with what the society needs. Unemployment rates among graduates have been high; in many cases, they have had to work in jobs they have not been qualified to do or even had to change career (See for example, Tran, 2012; 2014; Le and Hayden, 2017).

Another concern probably lies in whether new values, competences and skills, including critical thinking that the HE reforms have aimed at clash with the existing democratic but authoritarian social structure and the traditional norms and practices. This is worth questioning, since any Vietnamese graduate may encounter the following dilemma caused by the social order division and its expected behaviours in the workplace:

Dear Teacher

I am having a problem at work and would like to seek advice from you. I did the translation my boss asked me to do, but he later changed it the way he thought would be right without considering the original text. He then blamed me for inaccurate translation. What should I do? If I argue back, I may lose my job. If not, I will be treated as an incompetent translator (Thu, personal email).

The above text message was from an ex-student of Thu, Head of the English department, which offers the English Studies (ES) – Business English (BE) programme I chose as one of the two cases for this study. I would call this programme ES1 for the purpose of a general introduction in this chapter. The quote reflects what Young (2007:27) contrasts as 'powerful knowledge' and 'knowledge of the powerful' or knowledge of people in authority. In a highly authoritarian country like Việt Nam, the teaching and application of critical thinking needs to take into the consideration what Apple (2013a, 2013b) may refer to as the relation[s] of dominance and subordination in the larger society. In a collective-based and Confucian heritage culture like Việt Nam (Phan, 1998), it can be argued that this need has been more urgent than in other more democratic and less hierarchical cultures.

In light of the above, the tensions Vietnamese HE has faced are twofold. On the one hand, in the interface of neoliberalism and socialist market orientation, Vietnamese universities need to ensure that the labour force they have trained fit in with the identities

prescribed by the MOET as ‘practical learners’ and the ones who hold ‘knowledge for Việt Nam’ (Trần et al., 2014a: 87). On the other hand, if education is to ascribe to successful knowledge training, critical thinking or the ‘powerful knowledge’ (Young, 2007: 27; Young and Muller, 2016: 116) of the discipline that graduates bring with them to the workplace may not be welcome. Indeed, it may be seen as disrupting the social order as the example above has illustrated.

I myself had taught and engaged in curriculum design and revision of an ES at a private university for seven years before I left to study for my PhD. However, it does not mean that I am currently disconnected from the programme. As a mainstream staff, I have been informed of all the activities related to the development of the programme through the departmental group mail. As an insider, I could feel clearly the tensions inherent in our programme and other ES programmes in general (indeed all undergraduate programmes in Việt Nam). We teachers, on a regular basis, have to revise curricula, expanding them to accommodate as many minor practical disciplines as we can offer, refining the selling points and taking part in enrolment campaigns to ‘sell’ our programmes. In promoting our ES programme, for example, we highlighted Twenty-first Century learning rhetoric, including ‘self-regulation’, ‘critical thinking’, and ‘international competitiveness’ as how our programme stood out from others (the university website) to target ‘elite’ customers.

Typically, an ES programme like the one I taught enrolls a fair share of nation-wide high school leavers, who come from a variety of economic and epistemic backgrounds. While the majority are economically advantaged, many still struggle to pay the very expensive training fees. Many are of less academic success (low English examination score), while others have a good command of English capacity. In the society that champions learning as a key to success (Trần and Marginson, 2014), these Vietnamese young people seek to secure themselves a place in a university and subsequently jobs that they themselves are not certain about. It is the everyday teaching of critical thinking and the revision of the curriculum toward high quality to serve these students that have shaped my view on HE and the politics of curriculum in a practical way. For me, it demonstrates the connections between the differentiation of knowledge on the one hand and the differentiation of power on the other. It opens up the opportunity to understand how curricular promises, such as ‘differentiated instruction’ (Tomlinson, 2001: 20) that often emphasise, for example, critical and creative thinking in *all* lessons for *all* students in reality often allow access to knowledge, skills and competences (and consciousness) that serve to maintain existing social inequality.

On the one hand, I may agree that the ES I have worked with has been successful in preparing its students for employability, as we have consistently seen steady enrolment rates at over 80 per cent. By mentioning this, I do not wish to suggest that it has been successful in preparing graduates to be critical language users or critical thinkers although I have seen a number of them getting accepted to work in leading organisations after graduation. While pervasive strategies and resources have been made available for teachers to promote critical thinking in the classroom (See for example Halpern, 1998, 2014; Davies, 2006; Paul, 2012), the realisation of critical thinking indeed depends on more than just instrumental techniques. As Lim (2016) emphasises, there are other socio-political contexts underpinning that process.

While a dearth of research has properly contextualised critical thinking and examined how it has been conceived and taught in HE, it has often been detached from the socio-political conditions of its existence (See more in Chapter Three, pp. 41-47). Instead, critical thinking literature has manifested itself with a rich development of abstract skills and a universal emancipatory thesis (Johnston et al., 2011; Lim, 2016). In doing so, it has ignored an important fact that all curricula, including critical thinking discourses, both constitute and are constituted, by deeply embedded socio-political theses and their ideological dimensions that work to fit students into a particular vision of society in which students are a part (Young, 1971; Apple, 2000). Given that socio-political contexts play a crucial role in curriculum development, a researcher in the curriculum field needs to be aware of and focus on the socio-political processes that transform and legitimate what counts as official curricular knowledge (Young, 1971, Young, 2007; Apple, 2000). Problematising the ideological assumptions of critical thinking is crucial in reorienting the literature of critical thinking, which has often been reductive and self-contained (Barnett, 1997; Barnett, 2015; Davis and Barnett, 2015).

To see that these issues are urgent, it is worth returning to the two issues I raised just above about Thu's ex-student and the workings of the ES programme I have had experience with. Paradoxes are not invisible. It is often agreed that higher education institutions (HEIs) are places for the development of rationality and consciousnesses and the acquisition of knowledge for social change (See, for example, Dewey, 2012). However, at least in Việt Nam, graduates have been consistently reported standing a high risk of being unemployed. They are recruited but often have to be re-trained or leave the profession for which they have been trained for other more financially secure jobs (Tran, 2012; Tran, 2014; Nguyen and Tran, 2018). Furthermore, as I mentioned above, while critical thinking is championed by the MOET and universities as a competence for the Twenty-first Century and international

integration, the potential of transformation of intellectual autonomy and rationality may be perceived as threatening to the social order. Bernstein (2003), Apple (2013a, 2013b) and Kliebard (2004) point out that by performing both regulatory and liberating functions, HEIs initiate students into a given social order. However, in that process and in attempting to legitimate the social order, HEIs also inevitably find themselves equipping students with the capacities to transform that order.

Taken all together, investigation into the construction and realisation of a critical thinking curriculum needs to consider some important issues. These include (1) why and how certain forms of critical thinking are selected, taught and evaluated as critical thought (2) how the conceptualisation and realisation of critical thinking (if being existed) in the classroom are affected by the ideological commitments of the society; (3) how the institutionalisation of critical thinking as both a form and a means of acquiring curriculum knowledge may disrupt the established social and moral orders of HEIs and societies.

0.2 Rethinking Critical Thinking

As I mentioned above, the thesis explores how critical thinking is conceptualised, taught, and regulated in two ES programmes at two different universities in Việt Nam. For this purpose, rethinking critical thinking means highlighting the emancipatory thesis of critical thinking rather than focusing on the instrumental aspect of it. This also means conveying ideals of Western liberal democracy, autonomy and engaged citizenship (Barnett, 2015). Rethinking critical thinking also focuses on the promise of critical thinking to enable individuals, in both their personal and public lives, to reflect, deliberate and engage in issues that relate to the common good. Such an ideal is often championed across most societies, especially those who pursue Western liberal ideologies. The transformative capacities of critical thinking also often open the space for an alternative consciousness outside the curriculum knowledge or what is often called ‘official knowledge’ (Apple, 2013b: 195). However, critical thinking with its emancipatory thesis may heighten the sense of conflict in societies in East and South East Asia, such as Việt Nam. In this sense, a look back into the history of development of Việt Nam is necessary.

0.2.1 Critical Thinking and the History of Việt Nam

The case of Việt Nam is unique, and it offers valuable insights into the inquiry of critical thinking curricula. Traditionally, the country espouses collectivism, rooted in the distant past of agricultural life and a tight archetypal role system associated with Confucian ideologies (Trần, 2001). While these values have helped maintain social order by promoting collective and harmonious thinking within a socially defined hierarchical system, they have hindered the emergence of emancipatory and liberal ideologies (Phan, 1998; Trần, 2001; Nguyen, 2016a; Pham, 2005).

Historically, Việt Nam experienced more than a thousand years being dominated by different powers. The key colonisers included the Chinese, the French and the American imperialists. In the era of globalisation, the engagement with neoliberalism continues to put the nation under a new type of colonialism, widely described in the literature as neo-colonialism (Altbach, 1971, 2004, 2014; Altbach and Knight, 2007) or post-colonialism (Hickling-Hudson et al., 2004). As sites of cultural production (Pennycook, 1994), colonialism and its related discourses can be argued to have left Việt Nam with a Confucian-rooted sense of obedience (Phan, 1998; Trần, 2001; Yao, 2000), the imposed mindset of the Orient (Said, 1978), the ‘captive mind’ (Alatas, 1974) and the communist instrumental education system (Harman et al, 2010) (See more in Chapter One, pp. 12-14). Similarly, the discourses of neo-liberalism and neo-colonialism, albeit not always imposing (Phan, 2017), have accounted for the Vietnamese state’s adoption of Western-style educational reform ideas such as privatisation and marketisation (Harman et al., 2010; Hayden and Dao, 2010; Đỗ and Đỗ, 2014), the teaching of new skills for employment and international integration (Nguyen, 2009; Tran, 2012; Tran, 2014) and the dependence on the English language as the medium of instruction (EMI) (Tri and Moskovsky, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2017). Teaching the adopted Western practices have been reported by these authors to be problematic in reference to contextual differences.

Politically, as a dominant one-party state, all power, ideology and policy making currently rest with the Communist Party of Việt Nam (CPVN), in accordance with the country’s path to socialism, based on Marxism–Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh’s thought (St George, 2005; Bui, 2014a). With a high degree of authoritarianism (Gainsborough, 2010a, 2010b), here, in Việt Nam, conventional Western liberal norms, such as open dissensions or

critical debates of social and political conflicts may be seen as threatening to the stability and growth of the state (Gainsborough, 2010a, 2010b; Bui, 2014a).

Against the above complex cultural, socio-political and educational backdrop, critical thinking has emerged as one of the State's frameworks of Twenty-first Century skills, alongside others such as information technology, research and the English language (Vietnamese Government, 2012a), presumably for the expansion of neoliberal agendas. Consequently, Vietnamese universities began to teach critical thinking, often under different names such as life skills, generic skills, creative thinking and higher order thinking skills (Phạm, 2015; Nguyễn, 2016, Nguyễn, 2017). Given that the Vietnamese way of thinking is traditionally rooted in agricultural collectivism and harmony and that the CPVN and its government have restricted public dissents, the effectiveness of the critical thinking curriculum needs investigation. My argument is that critical thinking may find little support within the Vietnamese educational system because the emancipatory thesis of critical thinking may challenge the Government's neoliberal and autocratic ideals as well as the definitions of the common good in the forms of economic and material wealth. Also, if the teaching of critical thinking is successful, the Vietnamese version of critical thinking may have to accommodate 'flexibility', a traditional identity of the nation (Nguyen, 2016a) that Vietnamese people internalised in the war times from living with the colonisers but finding ways to free themselves from them (Trần and Margison, 2014).

0.2.2 Examining Critical Thinking

To examine how critical thinking is taught in HE in Việt Nam requires an understanding of the processes through which the emancipatory essence of critical thinking may be displaced. It also requires an explanation of the complicated and contradictory way in which the curriculum achieves this while at the same time seeking to specify distinct competencies and consciousness that cater to the good sense of all students. For this to happen, knowledge needs to be lifted out of its original context and transformed by the political and social rules which govern its new setting. This process is theorised in Bernstein's (1977, 2000, 2003) pedagogic device as recontextualising rules. While the details of the pedagogic device theory are explained in Chapter Three (pp. 74-78), a brief description of it here will help understand how critical thinking may be selected and organised. According to Bernstein (2000: 27), the pedagogic device consists of an ensemble of three interconnected rules that in regulating

pedagogic communication, ‘regulates the ideal universe of potential pedagogic meanings in such a way as to restrict or enhance their realisation’. It is through the recontextualising rules- ‘rules for de-locating a discourse, for relocating it, for refocusing it’ (Bernstein, 2000: 32) that an inquiry into the process of pedagogic recontextualisation can be made possible. This, in turn, helps understand how curriculum meanings may be delineated and how the content of curriculum knowledge and educational experience are regulated.

Those who are involved in selecting and organising knowledge are usually ministries of education, curriculum designers, schools, and teachers. These agents all together take part in the field of reproduction of knowledge. While they may not act in a systematic order, their collective efforts ensure that ‘The text is no longer the same’ (Bernstein, 1986: 266-267). Consequently, when knowledge has been selected and realised into content for schooling, the new or ‘pedagogised’ discourse always contains cues to the dominant political and social ideologies of the given context. In addition, through the forms of knowledge, the new discourse relays, or not, the materialisation of the recontextualised text which inevitably reflects a given distribution of power and its symbolic or discursive control over the limits of what is thinkable and acceptable.

0.3 Research Objectives and Significance

0.3.1 Research Objectives and Research Question

The study uses case study to explore how critical thinking is conceptualised, taught, and evaluated in two different universities in Việt Nam. It also aims to find out how critical thinking is regulated by the broader socio-political ideologies. Specifically, it sets out to achieve the following objectives:

1. to explore how critical thinking is perceived, taught and evaluated in an undergraduate programme offered by a private university in the south of Việt Nam, called English Studies (ES)- Business English Programme (BEP)1, henceforth referred to as ES1 or BEP1
2. to explore how critical thinking is perceived, taught and evaluated in an undergraduate programme offered by a public university in the south of Việt Nam, called English Studies- Business English Programme 2, henceforth referred to as ES2 or BEP2

Following these two objectives, the research raises an overarching research question:

How is the teaching of critical thinking in BEP1 and BEP2 regulated by the unique set of the Vietnamese state's socio- political ideologies?

The research is significant because through the use of 'the pedagogic device' and its concepts of 'classification' and 'framing' (Bernstein, 1977, 2000, 2003), it has been able to analyse the local contexts of classroom interaction and draw a connection between the legitimate knowledge and power relations outside in the society. The next part will explain the significance of the research in detail.

0.3.2 Significance of the Research

The thesis situates itself in the field of critical and comparative curriculum study (See more in Chapter Three, pp. 67- 73). It explores how critical thinking is organised, defined, taught and evaluated in two Vietnamese undergraduate programmes characterised as content and language integrated learning (CLIL) (Coyle et al., 2010). Being guided by Bernstein's (2000, 2003) notion of pedagogic recontextualisation, the study of how knowledge (critical thinking) is transferred, being selected and organised across contexts, benefits the field of curricular studies in two important ways.

Firstly, it provides a framework for problematising how policy, curricular or pedagogical ideas are translated into particular pedagogical practices across ideological contexts and spaces. As Bernstein's (2003: 32) remarks, 'Every time a discourse moves from one position to another, there is a space in which ideology can play'. Since ideologies are differently constituted at different levels (national, local, institutional), researchers need to understand how a different field of power may reproduce and realise a new ideology within a new national and cultural context (Ball, 1998). As usual, efforts made to investigate processes and mechanisms of the always selective re-contextualisation of global models, ideas and policies often depend on diffusion models (See, for example Rodgers, 2003). These approaches, although important, overstress the transformative role of domestic actors and specific contexts and therefore may lead to a naïve optimism about agency (Takayama, 2012; Lim, 2016) and may miss 'the iceberg under the surface' (Anderson-Levitt, 2003: 18).

Secondly, the research is important because it highlights the need to understand how curricular and pedagogic meanings are necessarily regulated by contextual rules - the rules that provide an understanding of communication in context and therefore different across societies, histories and cultures (Bernstein, 2003). Such research as this one has become urgent now that Confucius-rooted authoritarian countries in Asia such as Việt Nam have

increasingly borrowed educational policies and pedagogic practices from Western liberal ideals (Dang, 2009; Ball, 1998). The insights of such research as this one shed light on how the curriculum works to establish discursive limits on ‘official knowledge’ and on a particular form of consciousness, which may already regulate a range of public discourse.

0.3.3 The Research Structure

The thesis takes the following shape. Chapter One maps out a framework of socio-political and educational ideologies to help explain why the teaching of critical thinking in HE in Việt Nam may or may not be successful. In this chapter, I also take an initial analysis of policy documents by the State to illustrate how the critical thinking discourse is conceptualised at the policy level. Chapter Two reviews the literature of critical thinking and contextualises this discourse in the context of Việt Nam and the Vietnamese HE system. Chapter Three discusses Bernstein’s theory and concepts. In this chapter, the politics and processes of the reproduction of knowledge mentioned above are further delineated. The thesis continues with Chapter Four, where I lay out the methodology of the research thesis. Chapter Five and Six analyse and interpret how critical thinking is actually conceptualised, taught and evaluated in the classroom based on twenty interviews (one was via email at the participant’s request) with teachers, leaders and work supervisors (employers) of BEP1 (private university) and BEP2 (public university). Chapter Seven synthesises the analysis and interpretation, and Chapter Eight illuminates the theoretical framework with the empirical data. Here implications on teaching and learning practices, policy- making and Bernstein’s theory are given. The thesis finishes with the conclusion remarks in Chapter Nine.

Summary

This short introduction has given an outline of the purpose of the research and its arguments. It has situated the teaching of critical thinking in the local context of HE in Việt Nam and in the broader context of the curriculum studies of critical thinking in the world. The chapter emphasises a need to rethink critical thinking in a way that takes seriously the real but often ignored relationships between knowledge, ideology, power and the curriculum.

In the next chapter, I will provide a fundamental understanding of Việt Nam as a state and the Vietnamese education system, highlighting cultural imperialism as being central in framing Việt Nam’s national identities. It then moves on to characterise the

dominant social political ideologies that the Vietnamese state has embraced and how these contradictory ideologies have impacted the HE system. The chapter also provides, through an examination of the State's policies, a discourse analysis of how critical thinking has undergone a recontextualisation that seeks to tie critical thinking to the official national consciousness.

Chapter One: Higher Education in Việt Nam and Critical Thinking Inquiry

Introduction

This chapter sets out the background for the thesis, which explores how critical thinking is differentially conceptualised, taught and regulated in two undergraduate Business English programmes (BEPs) in Việt Nam, set against the nation's unique set of socialist, democratic, and neo-liberalist ideologies. The chapter is structured to include five sections.

The first section describes briefly the history of development of Việt Nam as a state. This provides a stepping-stone for the discussion of the second section, where I detail the mutual interrelations of the three contemporary central ideologies – socialism, democracy and neo-liberalism. The reason for this is socio-political ideologies impact the selection and organisation of knowledge, which in turn, affect the process of knowledge acquisition and realisation (Apple, 2019; 2013b). The third section explains how these ideologies are translated into the rationalities of the HE system and the internal rhetoric upon which the Vietnamese HE curriculum is constructed. Section four investigates contradictions and tensions caused by the State's ideological eclecticism as they surface within the curriculum. The last section finalises the chapter by showing the State's efforts to ideologically position critical thinking in the curriculum to serve its own interests. It also shows how the promotion of critical thinking has functioned contradictorily as both a solution to as well as a continuing source of problems discussed in section four. By doing this, the section foregrounds the need to look into HEIs and classroom practices to fully understand how critical thinking is perceived, organised, taught and assessed.

Significantly, the discussion of this chapter represents a counterpoint to the claim made by the critical thinking movement that critical thinking is universal (Kaplan, 1991; Paul, 2011) (See Chapter Two, pp. 42-66). Since the chapter involves a pervasive analysis of the State's policies which are all written in the Vietnamese language, in exploring these texts, I will take responsibility for all the translation. Important as well is that this chapter is not a comprehensive exhaustive review of the Vietnamese HE as often seen in a typical thesis (See for example Nguyen, 2016b). Instead, the literature will be brought in where relevant to throughout the whole chapter.

1.1 Historical Background

Before I delineate the ideological framework that necessarily regulates the teaching of critical thinking, it is useful to give a sense of how the country has evolved to become what it is known today as the Socialist Republic of Việt Nam (SRVN).

Việt Nam is a small country located at the intersection of Northeast and Southeast Asia, known for its traditional paddy rice culture which embraces agriculture collectivism, harmony and flexibility (Trần, 2001). These traditional values, while putting strong emphases on community spirit, face keeping, adaptability and dependent behaviours, discourage individual roles and analytical thinking (Phan, 1998; Trần, 2001; Nguyen, 2015b). Despite sharing a similar political structure with China and other countries such as Singapore and Taiwan, Việt Nam is often marginalised in broad discussions of late and post-socialism in East Asia due to it being less prosperous. Under the impact of globalisation, the country has shown tensions and contradictions between dependence and growth or continuity and change (Pike, 2000). To understand these constraints, the best place to start is a brief look back into the history of development of the country.

Throughout the long history of development, from the colonial past to the contemporary era of globalisation, Việt Nam has engaged pervasively with foreign forces. Foreign interactions in the colonial past were all mainly about bloody wars against the world's powers, including the Chinese, the French and the American imperialists and their ambitions to assimilate Vietnamese people. On the contrary, in the contemporary era, engagements with Western powers have masked more under the rhetoric of economic advancement, through the involvement of multilateral actors, specifically the World Bank (Dang, 2009; Ball, 1998; Altbach, 2006). In both cases, the impacts they have left on the formation of Vietnamese people's identities and the education system have been profound.

Before French colonialism (1858-1954), which incorporated Việt Nam into the modern world, for nearly two thousand years, the country was ruled by Chinese dynasties (111 BC to early 10th century) and later the Vietnamese feudal monarchs (939 AD to the mid-nineteenth century). During these periods, there was a desire to assimilate Việt Nam by imposing the Chinese language and culture. However, Vietnamese people learned to adapt and even develop their own language based on the Chinese language. They also practiced their own version of Confucianism, which highlighted hierarchical authority relation, piety and self-cultivation (Phan, 1998; Trần, 2001; Trần and Margison, 2014). In the period under Vietnamese monarchs, due to the harsh selective elite education system, Việt Nam was proud

to develop a sense of passion for learning (London, 2011). Many scholars trained under this system became emancipatory thinkers and later led the country to fight for freedom (Kelly, 1977; Trần and Margison, 2014).

The establishment of the new colonial administration under French colonialism to serve different imperatives of assimilation also meant a mass destruction of Confucianism and its moral values. This historical period also marked the French colonists' effort to assimilate Vietnamese people by imposing on them the French language and an 'elite' educational system which indeed distanced local people from elite knowledge (Kelly, 1977). Unmistakably, this system served to secure the superiority of France and promote regional inequalities and class tensions instead of advancing national integration (London, 2011). Remarkably, Việt Nam learned how to adapt and developed the Vietnamese language in this period of time. A few progressive scholars combined the Confucian tradition and the progressive ideas learned from the French education system and used this critical knowledge to fight against the French and liberated the country. Among them was the first Vietnamese president Hồ Chí Minh (Kelly, 1977; London, 2011; Trần and Margison, 2014). This proved that Vietnamese people made Western knowledge useful for their context by separating the study of Western ideas from the acceptance of colonialism.

Việt Nam continued to be subject to the anti-colonial war with the return of the French colonists after the independence in 1945 and later the anti-imperialist war (Việt Nam War) in 1960s. Finally, in April 1975 the country was reunited. Due to the then heightened ongoing ideological and economic conflicts of the Cold War, and its invasion of Cambodia, Việt Nam remained internationally isolated and politically oppressed.

Although 'de-imperialisation' and 'de-colonialism' (Phan, 2017) have recently denounced the hegemony of the West on the perspectives and knowledge of the colonised (Chen, 2010; Mockler and Connell, 2017; Altbach, 1971, 2001, 2004, 2014), in the case of Việt Nam, as history proved, under each regime, the socio-political goals, values and standards were defined by the elitist ruling class. These ideologies were transferred readily into educational regimes (for example, the elitist ruling aristocracy and the French colonisers) although these were altered slightly to serve different purposes (Hastings, 2018). Each stage represented a type of cultural imperialism, e.g. 'linguistic imperialism' (Pennycook, 1994: 56), of domination and authority, and of social, cultural and economic control of the powerful countries over the Vietnamese people or 'the Orient' (Said, 1978). As the chapter gradually unfolds, this has not been altered significantly under the

contemporary socialist communist regime (Pike, 2000), although hegemony is more indirect and subtle.

However, this is not without benefits. While the above long periods of wars severely destroyed Việt Nam's economy and disrupted its educational system, they also nurtured the national characteristics of flexibility, practicality and a national spirit of togetherness. These national identities (Trần and Marginson, 2014), together with the traditional values of collectivism, harmony and flexibility, to a certain extent, affect how critical thinking, a 'Western' value, may be de-located, re-located and refocused in the national HE curriculum and later transmitted and acquired in the classroom.

1.2 Contemporary Việt Nam and its Ideological Eclecticism

The CPVN and its government since 1945 have worked vigorously to build and develop the north of Việt Nam and later since 1975 the whole united country almost from scratch due to the damage left by the wars and colonial periods (Hastings, 2018). The beginning of the communist regime was marked with total authoritarianism, the Leninist mode of governance which granted the State absolute power and recognised no realm outside itself (Nguyễn, 2008). Gainsborough (2010a) emphasises that under the CPVN, engaging in criticism or activities outside the confines of the Party structures put Vietnamese people 'beyond the pale, thereby surrendering any rights they might otherwise have had' (Ibid: 165).

The CPVN soon realised that the monopolised power and the central planned economy did not work. This self- realisation resulted in an aspiration towards democracy, social equality and neo-liberalism made possible with the 'Đổi mới' (Economic Renovation) reforms in 1986 – the reform that shifted the economy from being centrally planned to being globally integrated and socialist- oriented (Nguyễn, 2008; Gainsborough, 2010a). The policy changes are usually depicted in terms of better living standards, increased economic openness, attraction of foreign investment, enhancement of exports, encouragement of the private sector, alignment with the world's neoliberal-oriented policies, and establishment of relationships with international organisations (Nguyễn, 2008).

Growing integration with the world economy has brought the nation, over past decades, sustained GDP growth, while much of the world has struggled to recover from global economic crisis. Economic success has definitely served as a momentum for Việt Nam to continue with more rigorous and renewed reforms to fulfil its ambition to be a

modern, industrial, democratic and creative nation by the year 2035 (The World Bank Group & Vietnamese Government, 2016).

The above section has provided some fundamental insights into how Việt Nam has evolved through complex eras from pre-colonial to colonial to pre-reform and to what it is like today. To understand how the CPVN and its Government have developed policies to serve their economic and socio-political interests, it is important to look at the ideologies they have embraced. The next sub-section will delineate the socio-political framework that accounts for the economic success and the nation's stable social order. It also looks into the tensions between the 'traditional' and 'modern' values that the nation has always had to consider on the embarkation towards democracy and affluence.

1.2.1 Socialism

In Việt Nam, the aim of socialism is understood as 'to bring the people with freedom, prosperity, happiness, chances of education, medical care and good accommodation' (Hồ Chí Minh, as translated in Nguyen, 2018: 2). The realisation of socialism is therefore impossible without the realisation of equality. As early as 1945, in the Declaration of Independence, President Hồ Chí Minh highlighted the importance of equality, using a quote from Thomas Jefferson, "All men are created equal. They are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, among them are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness' (Dunn, 1999: 177).

Underpinned by Hồ's ideology of human rights, the CPVN has ever since worked hard to build a socialist political regime 'of the People, by the People and for the People' (Vietnamese Government, 2013a, Section I, Article 2). The 'Đổi mới' reforms have also aligned their aims with this ideology, aiming towards 'rich citizens, strong country, democracy, equality and civilisation.' (Vietnamese Government, 2013a, Preface). However, equality in Việt Nam is not without tensions.

One element of tension is the belief in equality, which can be broadly understood as equal opportunity (Cavanagh, 2002). Underpinned by the entrenched principle 'Educational development is the top national policy' (Vietnamese Government, 2005a, Article 9), the Party and the State have created opportunities for all Vietnamese young people to access education. Differentiated policies have been issued to ensure equality for less advantaged students, specifically ethnic groups and those who live in mountainous areas. However, the

concept and practice of equal opportunity contain several inherent contradictions, reflected in the co-existence of both egalitarian and elitist trends.

At a broad level, equal opportunity can be understood as ‘People with the same level of merit should have the same chance of success’ (Swift, 2003: 24). This egalitarian trend signals that equal opportunity focuses on ‘careers open to talents’ (Rawls, 1971). In the context of Việt Nam, with 54 ethnic groups and two thirds of the population living in villages, this egalitarian reading has been usually backed up with a principle of non-discrimination: opportunities or selection must be blind to ethnic, class or gender differences (Satz, 2007; Tannock, 2009). This is not blind to the agenda of the State’s reforms. For example, in the Law of Education written in 2005, the Central Committee promised to ‘create conditions for poor people to access education and talented people to develop their talents’ (Vietnamese Government, 2005a, Article 10).

However, despite the State’s continuous efforts, equality has not been tackled thoroughly since social mobility and opportunity trends have shown slow improvement. For example, a study of the social mobility trends in Việt Nam from 2004 to 2014 by Oxfam (2018) shows an overall slow move of Vietnamese unskilled workers into skilled workers and a notable disparity between the majority Kinh ethnic group and ethnic minority groups as shown in Table 1.1 below. The reason for the slow social mobility, according to the report, is that Việt Nam’s economic structure still mainly focuses on low value-added sectors rather than sectors that require high levels of education and skills.

Table 1.1 Social Mobility in Việt Nam Periods 2004- 2008 and 2010- 2014

Source: Oxfam, (2018)

| | Stay in unskilled work | | Move to blue collar work | | Move to white collar work | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|-----------|
| | 2004-2008 | 2010-2014 | 2004-2008 | 2010-2014 | 2004-2008 | 2010-2014 |
| Urban | 69 | 59 | 13 | 15 | 5 | 18 |
| Rural | 80 | 78 | 12 | 15 | 3 | 4 |
| Kinh/ Hoa ethnic groups | 75 | 68 | 15 | 19 | 4 | 8 |
| Ethnic minorities | 92 | 89 | 2 | 8 | 2 | 1 |

On top of that the pursuit of the socialist market economy has resulted in some contradictions in national policies, which obscure the authentic meaning of egalitarianism mentioned above. For example, one national policy states, ‘All economic sectors are equal,

in terms of law’ but continues ‘with state economic sectors playing the key role’ (Vietnamese Government, 2013b, Article 1). The socialist market economy has also resulted in blending a mixed system of public, private and international actors competing fiercely in all market sectors. While this free market has generated increasing demands for a high skilled labour force in business sectors, in education, the rapid expansion of the system and the cost transfer onto students have produced inequality besides inefficiency (Harman et al., 2010). I will return to inequality in education in Section 1.3.1 below.

1.2.2 Socialist Democracy

Besides equality, democracy is also a concern of the CPVN and its government. The notion of liberal democracy, to most Western political enterprises, has become a norm and it is often hard for them to visualise what a ‘non-liberal’ democracy may look like. However, as Gainsborough (2010a: 27) says, this ‘taken-for-granted assumption’ about Western-style liberal democracy does not apply in East Asian countries where democracy is often deployed differently. In these societies, democracy is often a combination of liberal economics and ‘a kind of paternalistic authoritarianism’ Fukuyama (1992: 238). These ‘democratic’ experiences have challenged the hegemony of liberal democracy and the liberal universalism of the West today. The misfortune the United States experienced in Việt Nam’s war was a vivid example of what Bell (2006: 4-5) called ‘blind faith in the universal potential of liberal democracy . . . promoting human rights and democracy abroad, regardless of local habits, needs, and traditions’.

In education, democracy from most Western approaches tends to highlight students’ freedom to think and express ideas even if they are unusual, unpopular or critical of prevailing practices and beliefs (Patrick, 2003). As long as one’s personal thoughts and ideas are not at the expense of another’s, they should be upheld and respected as a set of intrinsic rights (Dahl, 2000). In this context, liberal democracy and the social function of education make it fundamental and politically equal students’ ability to speak out their own standpoints on different public and private matters (Dahl, 2006; Sant, 2019).

This view of democracy should be translated with caution in East Asian countries, especially those that hold the values of non-liberal political traditions, such as Confucianism, collectivism or communitarianism. Here, ideologies redirect and move to foreground notions of community; individuals are discursively constructed as being ‘embedded and bound by the practices of the community which they reside and which constitute them as who they

are' (Chua, 2010: 200). Therefore, a political, social and educational discourse should consider interests of the social groups by which one is a part rather than individual priorities (Chua, 1999). In these countries, socio-political decisions and opinions are made with regards to interests of the community, often defined by the dominant party (Bell, 2006). More specifically, in Confucian-heritage cultures, hierarchical systems also require the representation of individuals to be related to others and the obedience to authority (Barkema et al., 2015).

Gainsborough and Fukuyama's claims above recognise a governance with a difference in Asia, where the 'universal' liberalism (Chua, 2010: 200) has not taken root despite rapid capitalist economic development. To understand how democracy in the SRVN is different, it is crucial to start with how Western liberalism visualises an individual. Fundamentally, an individual within Western liberalism is often conceptualised as 'an asocial individual' (Chua, 2010: 200). By this Chua means individuals who have the freedom to define what is 'good for oneself' without being constrained by the society and culture within which one enacts (Ibid: 200). She further mentions that in modern industrialised societies, the individual is becoming more and more assertive. They are gradually replacing the family and community to function as the fundamental unit of society. In Việt Nam, on the contrary, that conception of unconstrained individuals has not been foregrounded, although transformation towards a modern industrialised society has been on the State's agenda.

Since the reunion of the North and the South in 1975, the communist leaders have laboured hard to incorporate citizens within a bounded national space and inscribe upon them a 'national tradition' of loyalty to the Fatherland and the Party (Vietnamese Government, 2013a). This collectivist ideology has roots in the long history of the country establishment (See Section 1.1, p. 13). It has manifested as a consequence of the warfare and the subsequent insecurities of the process of development and also the Marxist socialist root of the CPVN's founding leader, Hồ Chí Minh (Ashwill and Thai, 2005). For example, in its first constitution in 1946 and the successive amended versions, the Government institute national values including 'sacred Fatherland', 'national cultural identities', 'loyalty to the Fatherland', 'racial and religious tolerance', 'gender equality' and 'community support for the individual' (Vietnamese Government, 2013a). Personal choice of cultural products is also oriented towards 'adherence to tradition and order' (Nguyễn, 2008: xii). These values stand in contrast with selfish desires, often masking themselves as 'rights', and the community-corroding consequences of liberal individualism.

Although the Constitution does not state explicitly what ‘national cultural identities’ are, scholars who study Vietnamese cultures commonly identify, among others, traditional values such as loyalty to the nation, benevolence and filial piety (Phan, 1998; Marr, 1984, 2000). These virtues, presumably rooted in Confucian ethics as with Hồ Chí Minh’s ethics, have been practiced throughout the history of the development of the nation (Phan, 1998). Decidedly, these traditional values elevate social ‘rights’ over individual rights. They aim to incorporate the relevant part of Vietnamese cultural heritages and the attitudes and values that have helped Vietnamese people survive and succeed as a nation (Phan, 1998) and that Vietnamese people are obliged to preserve and develop (Vietnamese Government, 2013a: 1).

The ‘Asian attitudes and values’ (Chua, 2010: 204) are not without contradictions. On the one hand, they have stabilised the politics in Asian countries and helped many Asian economies, including that of Singapore, develop successfully (Lim, 2016). In Việt Nam, these sub-cultural, ‘informal politics’ values (Pike, 2000) or what Williams (1961: 66, 1977: 3) calls ‘the selective tradition’, e.g. connection of the culture of the present with the culture of the past, have helped construct forms of social and political control (Pham, 2005). More about ‘the selective tradition’ will be discussed in Chapter Seven (p. 175). On the other hand, these traditional ‘Asian/ Confucian values’ have been critiqued for threatening the discourse of human rights (Barr, 2000). Indeed, they have accounted for the weak tradition of law under the governance of the CPVN (Pike, 2000; Bui, 2014a). In education, this may impact the teaching and learning of critical since they encourage resistance of change (Pham, 2005).

It is clear now that Vietnamese socialist legality doctrine places the collective interests over individual rights (Gillespie, 2010). When collective interests arbitrarily predominate individual rights, individuals’ legitimate interests and rights will be damaged (Bui (2014a). Significantly, the practice of a market economy and international economic integration have created pressure on Việt Nam to reinvent its governance. Toward this end, the CPVN and the State have expanded political spheres for civic participations in decision making both directly (through physical engagement at the local level) and indirectly (through voting for People’s Council and National Assembly members). In one of the reports, the CPVN made an explicit commitment that ‘Democracy has to be implemented fully and seriously in all spheres of social life; create security so that people can engage in all stages of the democratic process, making decisions related to their own benefits their own lives’. These ideologies are summarised in the two slogans, ‘Government of the people, by the people, and for the people’ (Vietnamese Government 2013a, Article 2) and ‘People know,

people discuss, people do, people monitor' (Phan, 2015: 113). Paradoxically, participation of Vietnamese people in social and political discussions is still not much heard. The reasons for this include lack of access to information for the citizens to exercise their voice to hold the state accountable (The World Bank Group & Vietnamese Government, 2016). Furthermore, the characteristic of the village structure ties the life of the majority of 'the People' to daily concerns and continuity rather than critical thoughts about socio-political issues, even among young Vietnamese elites (Bui, 2014a; Pike, 2000). Indeed, the way the CPVN has, through its authority, controlled actions they suspect to be 'against' the socialist ideology has discouraged personal voices and autonomy (Nguyễn, 2008). It is inherent in the most recent introductions of the sweeping cyber-security law (Vietnamese Government, 2018) and the law on establishing science and technology organisations (Vietnamese Government, 2009). These laws restrict deliberations against the CRVN's orientations, guidelines and policies. The overall socio-political climax in Việt Nam is what Fairclough (1999: 78) calls 'a crisis of the public sphere', e.g. an absence of effective spaces and practices where citizens can deliberate over common social and political concerns, which in turn can shape the policy decisions.

At the time the thesis was carried out, the world was experiencing the Covid-19 pandemic. Compared with other democratic liberal Western countries, the Vietnamese authoritarian style of governance allowed for aggressive and enforced containment policies that could be implemented without delay. 'Any behaviours or actions that went against the State's guidance during this period of time was severely punished to warn and educate' (Vietnamese Government, 2020). Significantly, although there was absolutely no room for public debates, civil liberties or privacy issues, the citizens generally sacrificed their selfish desires, placed high trust in the Government and supported its monopolised measures. The success of Việt Nam in controlling the pandemic 'war' may help understand why or what kind of critical thinking should or should not be taught in Việt Nam.

In summary, the brief understanding above has shown that socialist democracy in Việt Nam has woven into cultural forms, political practices and historical legacies. In the contemporary era, there have been signs of change towards more Western democracy and liberalism. At the same time there has still been evidence of the continuity of collectivism and socialist authoritarianism. Lear's (1985) analysis of Gramsci's (1971) cultural hegemony gives insights into understanding how ruling groups often combine consent and force to maintain hegemony and how the dominant group often plays upon the good sense of the dominated group by meting out the safest reforms.

1.2.3 Neoliberalism

The final key ideology that underpins the contemporary educational, socio-political and economic reforms in Việt Nam is neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism, from Western views, is often associated with an emphasis on ‘strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade’ (Harvey, 2005: 2). Political-economic practices under neoliberalism emphasise trade liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation, among others (Olssen & Peters, 2005). Within this framework, the state is required to withdraw, creating conditions for these economic and maintaining macroeconomic stability rather than ‘intervening’ ‘guiding’ or ‘distorting’ the market (Hoogvelt, 2001: 219).

While neoliberal theories are varied and diverse, the shared view is often that it is the ‘dominant ideology shaping our world today’ (Saad-Filho and Johnston, 2005: 1). Understood thus, however, the concept and practice of neoliberal economic strategy are not without ‘destructive’ flaws and contradictions perceived as threatening to the socio-political concerns of Asian states (Saad-Filho and Johnston, 2005: 4). Lim (2016) identifies four such flaws.

Firstly, driven by market freedom and the unlimited commodification, neoliberalism produces social incoherence and fragmentation. This leads to the second flaw where forms of social alienation emerge but are unable to be solved and also where new social frameworks for sharing productivity gains cannot be reinstituted. Thirdly, there is a tendency for swings in the business circles to be exaggerated, which, in turn, risks the tendency of crisis formation and macroeconomic crashes. Finally, it has become a norm that America is now using neoliberalism as a code word for domineering power and a preferred strategy of market domination over less developed economies. The manifestation and impact of neoliberalism (Western imperialism, indeed) on education reforms in developing countries in the era of globalisation has been discussed in the Introduction (p. 6).

Unlike Western states, many countries in Asia, especially the ones with histories of socialism have sought to pursue a different path of neoliberalism (Schwenkel and Leshkowich, 2012). The presumable reasons can be their bitter experiences with Western imperialism in the colonial past and their wish to avoid possible turbulent consequences of market swings on their fragile legitimacy.

Việt Nam is probably one of the Asian cases where the challenge to liberal economics has been differently deployed, taking advantage of external resources and reregulating the domestic economy to ride out of economic crisis (Schwenkel & Leshkovich, 2012). The ‘Đổi mới’ is the best place to understand how the neoliberalist ideology is deployed to reconfigure state-society relations. Since the economic reform in 1986, which marked the integration into the global economy, Việt Nam has engaged vigorously in multiple ideologies, including industrialisation, modernisation and marketisation, often masked as ‘socialisation’ (Bui, 2014b, Nguyễn, 2008; Harman et al., 2010; Đỗ and Đỗ, 2014). The ideologies of market economy and free trade discourses are proffered as a means to achieving a higher quality of life, discourses of privatisation and self-regulation for optimisation. These projects have emerged through complex interactions between state, non-state, and transnational actors. Significantly, within this framework, the State still remains an important direct player in the economy (Gainsborough, 2010a, Gainsborough, 2010b).

Through the established external relationship with international institutions, ranging from the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the World Bank (WB) to grassroots nongovernmental organisations, Việt Nam has sought financial aids to ‘bolster the country’s inner strengths and potential, making use of external resources and combining national strength with the contemporary power in place’ (Vietnamese Government, 2011). While this transnational integration has created pressure for better equality and democracy (Gainsborough, 2010a), engagement with international funding agencies has conditioned intellectual imperialism (Alatas, 2000), policy borrowing (Phillips and Osch, 2004; Phillips, 2015) and academic dependency (Alatas, 2003) to manifest. These neo-colonialist discourses are often disguised as financial aids offered by multilateral organisations, especially the WB to spread intellectual products to less economically developed countries and therefore maintain their intellectual hegemony. Consequently, developing countries, in seeking financial help, have to depend on Western countries for both finance and knowledge. Dang (2009) analysed in length the relation between the WB’s help and the outcome of Vietnamese HE reforms, which shadow the Western neo-liberal models. For Dang (2009), the complex relation with the WB has put Việt Nam under economic and intellectual dependence. This significance should not be glossed over, especially now that international funding agencies are playing a dominant role in the recontextualising field (Bernstein, 2000).

In summary, neoliberalism and a free market economy have earned Việt Nam rapid economic growth, lifting its people out of poverty and bridging the gap with other more advanced countries in the region. However, the socialist authoritarianism and the interwoven

traditional values confer on Vietnamese individuals a collective worldview that foregrounds individual forms of conduct within relationships, cultivation of personal virtues, loyalty to family, obedience to authority and education. Contemporarily, economic life in Việt Nam is still politicised. The essential ingredients of a decentralised market economy - separation of the economy from politics, clear property rights and the rule of law - are still absent.

1.3 Education System in Việt Nam

A further discussion of how the above ideological framework is translated into the HE system is useful for understanding how the broader system may facilitate or constrain it, through appropriate policies (Young and Muller, 2016). It also helps shed light on contradictions and tensions HE curricula may face in the development of new values such as critical thinking for the purpose of international integration.

1.3.1 Equality

In alignment with the national ideology of social justice, Vietnamese education has always considered equality as a primary focus of macro-policies. As early as 1993, the Secretariat Member of Party Central Committee set as a goal for education ‘to make policies that ensure poor people and those who are subject to these policies have the rights to access education’ (Vietnamese Government, 1993, Chapter II, Article 4).

Differentiated micro- policies have been made to create opportunities for the less advantaged to maximise their right to learn. The most practical measure includes the introduction of the grade privilege policy (Vietnamese Government, 2006). With lowering cut scores offered, students whose parents served in the wars or who live in mountainous areas can have more chances to be accepted to universities. However, this policy has been argued to maintain inequality (See Section 1.4, p. 30 below). Pham (2019) highlights that in Việt Nam inequality in education is inherent in the stratification between the rich and the poor and in the opportunity to access high quality education.

At the macro-level, equality orientation has been realised through changes in the institutional, organisational and epistemological framing of curriculum policies to expand the education system and to increase enrolment. It is achieved by allowing privately funded institutions to invest in HE, letting public higher education institutions (HEIs) compete

nationally with other public HEIs for students and state funds (Vietnamese Government, 1993; 2005a; 2001; 2012b).

This has resulted in continuous increases in the number of eligible candidates seeking admission to university (See Table 1.2 below). If in 2000s the HE education system could enrol approximately 700,000 students, by 2017–2018, the number of the students increased by one million. Of course, the enrolment aspiration does not stop there. The State has proposed a gross enrolment rate of 45 per cent more by 2020 (Vietnamese Government, 2012b).

Table 1.2 Growth in HE in Việt Nam since 2000

| | | 2000-2001 | 2004-2005 | 2009-2010 | 2011-2012 | 2017-2018 |
|--------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Universities | Total | 74 | 93 | 173 | 204 | 235 |
| | Public | 57 | 71 | 127 | 150 | 170 |
| | Non-public | 17 | 22 | 46 | 54 | 65 |
| Students | Total | 731,550 | 1,046,291 | 1,358,861 | 1,448,021 | 1,707,025 |
| | Public | 642,041 | 933,352 | 1,185,253 | 1,258,785 | 1,439,495 |
| | Private | 89,464 | 112, 939 | 173,608 | 189,236 | 267,530 |

Source: Compiled from Đỗ (2014) and MOET (2019). The statistics excluded colleges and their students

Another strategy is ‘encouraging socialisation of HE’ (Vietnamese Government, 2008a). It is important to note here that in Việt Nam, ‘socialising’ education refers more to discussing ‘budgets’ rather than involvement of different agents in education planning (Buasuwan & Suebnusorn, 2016: 303). Indeed, it is the ‘wording’ of the SRVN for marketisation (Nguyen, 2009: 90). Consequently, when marketisation is becoming an aim, education is viewed ‘not so much as a right, a joy or a tool for liberation and empowerment, but rather as an investment’ (Brock-Utne, 2000: 12). Not surprisingly, after years of reforms, the Vietnamese HE system is now a ‘field’ where private for-profit and private not-for-profit providers can enter and compete legitimately with publicly funded institutions. This trend has pushed education in the other direction. Access to HE is less among the poor than the rich (Evans and Rorris, 2010).

While socialisation has led to increases in enrolment and greater freedom of choice for students, in reality choice is very much constrained by ‘access to cultural capital and socio-economic realities’ (Furedi, 2011: 5). Similarly, the ideology of choice may also influence how students’ identities are shaped and the way they realise the potential of their intellectual engagement. Furedi (2011) critiques the paradigm of consumption in education:

Commodification inexorably leads to standardisation, calculation and formulaic teaching. It reduces quality into quantity and transforms an academic relationship

between teacher and student into a transaction dominated by concerns that have little to do with education (Ibid: 6).

Given that, in Việt Nam, public and private universities are now legitimated to operate as entrepreneurs with autonomous decision-making power, it is not surprising that flexible institutional policies have been put into use to attract students. Among them are extensive enrolment plans and curriculum changes (Kelly, 2008; Harman et al., 2010). The impact of these policies on education quality is discussed in Section 1.4 (p. 30).

Through these policy measures, ‘equality’ has manifested itself in curricula in the form of a highly stratified system of knowledge, dispositions and values. Buasuwan & Suebnusorn (2016) see this trend in developing countries in the South East Asia as failing to provide equality of access, equality of treatment and equality of result. In the context of the critical thinking curriculum, questions could be asked as to what knowledge is considered as ‘critical thinking’, who in the ‘mass’ can have the right to get access to this knowledge and how.

1.3.2 Collectivism

The above section has shown how equality is translated into the Vietnamese HE system and the contradictions it may pose to the critical thinking curriculum. This sub-section discusses how the collectivist ideology and its potential may impact on the critical thinking discourse.

The first collective response to the ‘deterioration of moral values among Vietnamese students caused by exposure to social media and acquisition of the material life of the market economy’ (Vietnamese Government, 1993) is a determination to reinforce morality education. In Việt Nam, [revolutionary] morality was cultivated by the first president Hồ Chí Minh as being inseparable from talent or intelligence (Duiker, 2000; Gillespie, 2007). Thus, in 1993 the State emphasised the need to prepare Vietnamese students with ‘deep compassion, love for the Fatherland, love for socialism, . . . internalised merit and morality’ (Vietnamese Government, 1993). This collective orientation has been translated into the compulsory civics/ morality (or ethics) education programme at all levels of the Vietnamese education system.

As Doan (2005) observes, in primary schools, morality is all about ‘respect, love and good behaviour towards grandparents, parents and teachers’. Central to the civic curriculum (Grades 6-9) is the cultivation of ‘love for community, love for learning, virtues and respect

for (former) teachers'. However, at upper levels, the moral curriculum (Grades 10–12) shifts its focus onto the development of the socialist citizen, ideally described as a nationalist who places benefits of the country and the community above personal advantages and aims for harmony in life. Marxist sciences and Hồ Chí Minh's thoughts continue to be internalised in HE through compulsory courses. This knowledge comprises 12 per cent of the total credit hours in the undergraduate and postgraduate curricula (See Chapter Five, p. 108 for more details).

The contradiction of this formal civics/ morality curriculum is instead of educating morality, it unilaterally internalises socialism in the CPVN sense. Through the 'morality' curriculum and other formal compulsory channels, the CPVN has promoted socialism as the only philosophy of life (Doan, 2005). While the socialist perspective promotes socialist principles such as collectivism and equal opportunities, the emergent neoliberal market economy has seemed to provide a different picture of individual values (Doan, 2005). Thus, as Nguyen (2004) observes, Vietnamese young people today are overly concerned about wealth, seeing it as one of the most important values in their lives. This mentality definitely affects students' attitude towards knowledge and career, as the analyses in Chapter Five and Six later will show.

The same collective emphasis comes from informal family education. In fact, family education is seen as intertwined with formal education. The concept 'family of culture' was introduced by the State in the Law of Education in 2005 (Vietnamese Government, 2005a) to reinforce 'harmony' among family members (Vietnamese Government, 2003). Historically, cultural norms, including respect and benevolence have been nurtured in Vietnamese families. Morality speaks through how a child observes and behaves their role. Parents are seen as role models in avoiding conflicts with their own parents and other older members to maintain harmony (Phan, 1998; Trần, 2001). In these families, good children are obedient children. While obedience and avoiding conflicts help maintain harmonious relationship, these traditional virtues discourage critical inquiry since children do not often have opportunities (and also do not see the need) to raise contradictory views or to contribute their voices to making important decisions. It is not surprising when in a report in 2016, Prudential, a British multinational life insurance and financial services company, featured Vietnamese people as 'the least deliberative' in Asia. It ranked Việt Nam's family relationship index at 83/100, the highest compared with other Asian countries, such as Singapore (68/100) or China (54/100). Given that Vietnamese families play an important role in shaping children's education, the negative impacts of obedience on the critical thinking curriculum is worth turning attention to.

1.3.3 Neoliberalism and Education

The two sub-sections above have given some understanding about how equality and socialist democracy have shaped the type of knowledge and the discursive practices embedded in HE curriculum reforms. This section discusses the impact of neoliberalism, retaining the same overall focus.

The emergence of the neoliberal market has brought about requirements for technology of information, creation and capacities to manage and interpret massive databases to inform decisions in the global marketplace (Harvey, 2005). Consequently, certain forms of knowledge, skills and attitudes need to be emphasised in the curriculum. These may include knowledge creation, information analysis and decision-making skills. As with Apple (2006), the neoliberal position visualises an intensively economically competitive world where students, as future workers, must be given ‘the requisite skills and dispositions to compete efficiently and effectively’ (Ibid: 32). Forms of knowledge, skills and attitudes required for neo-liberalism are also addressed by Koh (2002):

What is valued most in terms of knowledge and skills in the new capitalism is the ability to design niche products that targets specific consumer patterns. Creative and critical thinking skills are therefore important attributes for the symbolic analysts who design, implement and market profitable products and services in a global economy (Ibid: 255).

It should be obvious from these comments that such skills as problem solving, logic, data analysis or research skills contribute to organisational and managerial efficiency, capital accumulation and integration into the global ‘knowledge economy’. In the era when policy borrowing has become a norm (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; Phillips and Ochs, 2004; Phillips, 2015), it is hardly surprising these neo-liberal educational values have become an inevitable part of curriculum reforms worldwide (Deng, 2009), including in Việt Nam (Vũ and Marginson, 2014; Nguyen and Tran, 2018).

Moreover, as an ex-colonial non-English speaking country, the neoliberalist curriculum reform agenda in Việt Nam cannot be complete without some kind of education in the English language, which is often (wrongly) perceived as ‘a result of inevitable global forces’ (Pennycook, 1994) or a competitive edge (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

All this remains largely consonant with the curriculum aims set by Vietnamese leaders and the 2020 National Foreign Languages Project which claims by 2020 Vietnamese university graduates will be able to use English ‘independently’ and turn English into ‘a strength . . . to serve the nation’s mission of industrialisation, modernisation’ (Vietnamese Government, 2008b, Section I, Article 1). Shifting from ‘language of the enemy’ in the war time (Bui & Nguyen, 2016: 365) to the language of ‘industrialisation’ and ‘modernisation’ may not have been as simple as the State thought. Indeed, the Project was a failure. In 2017, the State officially extended the Project to 2025 (Vietnamese Government, 2017a). This ‘false hopes and promises proffered by an English education’ (Pennycook, 1994: 307) has significant implication on CLIL programmes (sometimes equalised as English as the medium of instruction (EMI) programmes) such as BEP1 and BEP2. Given that language and thought are two inseparable domains, to advance in these programmes, a certain level of English proficiency is needed to think, speak and write critically about disciplinary concepts and ideas (Cummins, 2008). However, empirical research in the field of CLIL and EMI in Việt Nam has consistently reported challenges such as inadequate English proficiency for disciplinary learning and lack of guidance or policies on how to teach content through English (Tri and Moskovsky, 2019).

To encourage intellectual curiosity, initiatives and creativity, the State has also launched projects, including ‘Vietnamese Students Start-up’ (Vietnamese Government, 2017b). In one of his speeches, the Deputy Prime Minister Vũ Đức Đam has emphasised the importance of critical thinking: ‘Schools have to provoke teachers and students’ creativity so as to conceive a generation who is able to create, dare to think and do the differences in science’ (Vũ, 2019). Vũ has further emphasised that it is the change of the mindset that helps Việt Nam avoid falling into the trap of average income and create a momentum for Vietnamese young people to ‘take advantage of all our strength to develop faster and more sustainably’.

It is important now to refer back to Section 1.2.3 (p. 22), where I pointed out Việt Nam’s neoliberalism has had its own commitments to traditional authoritarianism. It is also vital to recognise another idiosyncrasy of the regime: while the knowledge, skills and dispositions that Việt Nam’s national curriculum seeks to transmit are precisely those integral to Western neoliberal economic expansion, the socio-political order in which these are to be embedded remains markedly different from that of Western societies. Addressing the role of creativity, science and technology in the development of the nation, Vũ also states, ‘We [Vietnamese people] also have to combine the strength of the nation [traditional values] with the strengths of the new age, one of which is the continuous development of science’

(Vũ, 2019). The combination of foreign and local values for the benefits of the country has long been a tradition of Việt Nam (See more in Section 1.1, p. 13). It is useful here to draw in some comparison with Singapore, another Confucian heritage country in the same region. While the ruling party there appreciates the importance of Western models of inquiry to market economics, it insists on juxtaposing these Western modes of inquiry side by side with fundamental features of Confucianism called ‘the shared values’ (Lim, 2016: 90). These values aim to elevate the ‘society rights’ over ‘individual rights’ (Ibid: 90).

Fundamentally, Bernstein’s insights into pedagogic recontextualisation can be used to interpret these inconsistencies. This, as Chapter Three (p. 76) will show, involves the embedding of the instructional discourse (of skills and knowledge) in the regulative discourse (of conducts, social norms, manners and moral orders), which itself can be regarded as ‘the expression of the dominant political party of the state’ (Bernstein, 2003: 196).

Conceptualised this way, the challenge for Việt Nam’s HE curriculum lies in its attempt to dis-locate neo-liberal knowledge forms in the instructional discourse from its democratic social context and to relocate it instead within an authoritarian collectivist regulatory discourse. Yet, this manipulation, however skilfully practised, is not without problems. For a variety of reasons which I will detail in the next sub-section, students may resist or acquire the state-given regulatory discourse and thus resist or acquire the transmission of the instructional discourse. In case students acquire the instructional discourse but resist the imposed regulatory discourse, the outcome can be dangerous for any established moral order. Since certain forms of knowledge and their potential discursive gaps are more powerful than others (See Chapter Two, pp. 59-60), the newly acquired instructional discourse may be used in ways that threaten the state’s hegemony and the given order. This is a significant point that I will return to in Chapter Seven (pp. 189- 200).

1.4 Tensions and Contradictions

In delineating the scope and depth of the Vietnamese state’s dominant ideologies as well as their translation into the curriculum, I have implied a number of tensions and contradictions they have generated. This section and the section that follows detail predominant tensions caused by the ideological set of equality, neoliberalism and collectivism as they are expressed in the curriculum. In doing so, the sections will display a critical context for

understanding their relevance to the state and its related institutions' efforts at the selecting, organising, and teaching of critical thinking.

1.4.1 Egalitarianism vs. Elitism and the Issue of Quality

In Section 1.3.1, I discussed how promoting equality has eventually resulted in inequality in terms of educational quality. Despite this, the Government does not seem to devise effective policies to ease this issue. Recent measures to ease the concerns include efforts to monitor the quality of HE through the introduction of national qualification accreditation activities and outcome-based education (MOET, 2017). Within these paradigms, what counts to be knowledge is questioned since outcomes-based paradigms tend to proclaim transferability and promote generic skills rather than specialisation or critical thinking (Muller, 2016; Allais, 2010, 2012).

In the same manner, Madden (2014) warns that quality assurance (QA) policy development and implementation in Việt Nam have indeed generated a weak realisation of social accountability. In Madden's own words:

The centralised, bureaucratic control of the education system and the standards-based QA approach to measuring institutional quality constrains the role of competition and choice because all institutions are expected to conform to the same QA checklist (Ibid: 96).

As the data analysis in Chapter Six (pp. 140- 148) later will show, the curriculum practice of BEP2 reflects this behaviour.

It has also been reported that massification of HE in Việt Nam has led to 'easier' admission policies since students' ambitions are no longer a criterion of recruitment (Pham and Sai, 2020). Large class size, lack of qualified teaching staff and students' level of preparedness are commonly raised in the literature as factors contributing to the poor quality of the HE programmes (Harman et al., 2010; Trần et al., 2014b). HE curricula have also been criticised for its ineffective preparation for students' professional readiness and work competences (Trần et al., 2014a). Presumably, all of the above affect the teaching of critical thinking negatively to a certain extent.

1.4.2 Neoliberalism vs. Authoritarianism

Fostering critical thinking as one of the Western educational ideals for integration into the global economic market while at the same time maintaining national identities and local traditions may also invite contradictions. This is not unique to Việt Nam. Indeed, the ‘homogeneity in curriculum structures and pedagogic practices’ has become remarkable ‘around the world’ (Deng, 2011: 561). It constitutes the responses of various other countries to the pressures of modernisation (McEneaney and Meyer, 2000) and a set of common problems rooted in the global economy (Yates & Young, 2010). This convergence may pose challenge to the civic and political function of the HE system as a means of national socialisation, and I would argue that the issue is especially tense in Việt Nam where one failure of the HE system is the brain drain, e.g. increasing number of elite students seeking HE abroad and choosing to stay there for global opportunities (Welch, 2010; Trần et al., 2014b).

As I discussed in Section 1.2 (p. 14), Việt Nam is a country where authoritarian and collective ideologies are still promoted. These two ideologies together with the nation’s status as a war-battered country exacerbate the need to tightly embrace its citizens and to foster in them a collective national consciousness in the same way the national unity was fostered to help the nation win all the wars.

The flexibility to navigate through this problem has not always accompanied the Government’s every intervention. To prepare the Vietnamese elite workforce for the mission of international integration and modernisation, large national budgets have been invested in projects to fund thousands of cadres, lecturers and students abroad for advanced training (Vietnamese Government, 2000; Vietnamese Government, 2010). However, not all of these talents have returned to contribute back to the country. Those who have returned have reported uncritical working environments where capabilities are not fully recognised and novel ideas are not often supported from those in authority (Trần et al., 2014a). In Resolution Number 36, the Government self-reported bureaucracy, red tape and closed working environment as factors that have discouraged the return of successful Vietnamese professors, scientists and businesses living abroad (Vietnamese Government, 2004). Nevertheless, effective policies to respond to these limitations have not yet been heard. As the data analyses

later will show lack of high qualified teaching staff contributes a part to the failure of the critical thinking curriculum.

Finally, ideologically, HE in Việt Nam has been seen as a site of contradictions between the State's pursuit of Marxism and Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh's thought and the market-based behaviours or between 'the demands of socialism and the trend towards a vigorously growing market economy' (Welch, 2010: 204). While the Government has encouraged privatisation of the HE system, it still involves in all the important pedagogic and financial decisions, e.g. training programmes, curriculum frameworks, enrolment quotas, and tuition fees, to name just a few (Dao and Hayden, 2010: 134). This intensive intervention has resulted in other complex issues such as quantity- quality constraints, the rigid and outdated curriculum and the treatment of knowledge as being mundane and practical rather than esoteric and inward- oriented (Trần and Marginson, 2014). In the words of Sabour (2005: 191) Vietnamese HEIs are not treating knowledge as 'knowledge for its own sake'.

In summary, the above contradictions reflect an insecure HE system and Việt Nam's increasing desperation for HE curriculum reforms that would prepare its citizens for both global opportunities and local loyalties. In seeking the balance, the State and the MOET may make policies that pose challenge to the critical thinking curriculum.

1.4.3 Neoliberal Values and Traditional Values

One contradiction arises when Việt Nam's ideological background of socialist and traditional values is juxtaposed against its recent curricular and pedagogical reforms premised on Western liberal ideals.

As Section 1.3.3 (pp. 28- 30) delineated, through major reform policies, the CPVN and the MOET have made great efforts to speed up neoliberal values, such as critical thinking, creative thinking and the English language. What the CPVN and the MOET have not been aware of is probably the relevance of these Western values to the Vietnamese traditional norms, values and practices. The imperial studies by Nguyen et al. (2006, 2009) illustrates this point well. In studies that sought to determine how teachers reacted to and employed different Western models of student-centredness namely group learning and cooperative learning in Vietnamese undergraduate English classes, the researchers identified complex webs of 'cultural conflicts and mismatches' due to clashes between individualism

and collectivism, for example (Nguyen et al., 2006: 1; Nguyen et al, 2009: 109). Through a case study analysis, Nguyen and Tran (2018) emphasised the importance for HE curriculum reforms in Việt Nam to ‘look inward’ for Vietnamese traditional values rather than to borrow uncritically curriculum ideas of the West.

The findings in another study highlighted similar cultural conflicts that have discouraged Vietnamese students’ critical thinking:

The outdated educational management system, heavy learning curriculum, ‘rote’ teaching, learning and testing styles, limited access to other academic resources apart from textbooks and lecturers, family traditional thoughts, the study condition of university students, and common perception of student learning all lead students to be less active in their learning. Vietnam’s educational system in general and its HE system in particular do not encourage or even allow students to take up their autonomous learning style, to take responsibility over their own study, regardless they want to adopt it or not (Tran, 2013: 81).

To understand the above cultural contradictions, it is important to look at the relations between pedagogy and symbolic control. According to Bernstein (2000), pedagogy should not be seen merely as a neutral tool for transmitting a given curriculum content. Rather, it embeds in itself a set of social relations, order and consciousnesses. The reorientation of students as the foundational subject of pedagogic efforts as in the examples above stand in contrast with the State’s long-established traditional collectivist ideology. Within this ideology, as I discussed earlier, community, consensus and harmony are privileged over the individual whose thinking and actions are fundamentally decided by the hierarchical social relations.

Thus, despite the State’s aspiration for neoliberal Western values, contradictions are always there for it to deal with. To maintain its ideological hegemony, the State needs to secure Vietnamese young generations’ future prosperity through a HE curriculum that equips the latter with relevant knowledge and attitudes for rewarding careers. In the era of Western neoliberalism, these often include powerful disciplinary knowledge, individual autonomy, independent and critical thinking (Young, 2007; Barnett, 2009; Bernstein, 2000). Doing so, however, inevitably involves the inclusion of the regulative discourse that is oppositional, thus weakening the fundamental social and moral discourse underpinned the State’s governance.

The above sub-section has delineated the clash between the two regulative discourses, neoliberalism and authoritarianism. In the next sub-section, I will provide accounts of some final tensions arisen from the teaching of critical thinking in an authoritarian society. It

should be helpful to repeat that critical thinking is not only one of the foremost analytical skills championed in an information-dense knowledge economy but also both the form of and the means to esoteric emancipatory knowledge (See more in Chapter Two, pp. 61-65).

1.5 Critical Thinking and the Official Recontextualising Field

This section looks at the embedding of the instructional discourse of critical thinking characterised by both a neoliberal and liberal aspiration in the collectivist regulatory discourse. It examines the socio-political ideologies regulating the way the Vietnamese state has selected and promoted critical thinking. It also evaluates the tensions and contradictions these ideologies may cause against the literature of critical thinking.

1.5.1 A Neoliberal Approach to Critical Thinking

The need to reform the HE curriculum to include critical thinking was first articulated in the State's introduction of Resolution Number 4 in 1993. It emphasises the continuity of education reforms towards 'levitating intellectual capacities, nurturing students' talents and fostering professional skills' to meet the demands of 'industrialisation, modernisation and internationalisation' (Vietnamese Government, 1993).

'Industrialisation, modernisation and internationalisation', as the State has interpreted them, represent major strategies to respond to the challenges of 'the knowledge economy' - the economy which Powell and Snellman (2004) characterise as involving rapid technical and scientific breakthroughs and the high quality jobs but also obsolescence of knowledge. Consequently, the cornerstone that holds together and revitalises these new curriculum orientations consists in the inculcation in students' abilities to think critically, creatively and independently:

By the year 2020 . . . education quality will have to be comprehensively elevated, emphasising morality, life skills, creative competences, English competences . . . meeting the demands of the labour force, especially high-quality labour force to serve the missions of industrialisation, modernisation and the development of a knowledge economy (Vietnamese Government, 2012b, Section IV, Article 1).

As I mentioned in Section 1.1 (pp. 13-14), Việt Nam is a new state with recent success in economic growth, 'industrialisation, modernisation and internationalisation' in the above policy are overwhelmingly interpreted in an economic sense. They suggest an instrumental

connection between critical thinking (knowledge) and the economy (jobs), although ‘morality’ may also suggest some sense of human values. Dominant in the official recontextualisation field (ORF) in Việt Nam is the CPVN, its State and the MOET. Through policy announcements, these agencies take responsibility for the transmission of the official pedagogic discourse. Understanding their interpretation and subsequent dissemination of the discourse of critical thinking under the pursuit of ‘modernisation, industrialisation and internationalisation’ is crucial to my study of pedagogic recontextualisation.

In the ‘life skills’ curriculum applied in general education to prepare students for ‘vocation’ and ‘university learning’, critical thinking is translated into ‘decision making skills, problem- solving, critical thinking and creative thinking’ (MOET, 2015, Section III, Article 3). However, through pronouncements, such as ‘making it easy to understand and easy to remember’ or ‘No obligations are required’, this curriculum simultaneously invites a voluntary implementation (MOET, 2015). Predictably, such discursive gaps at the policy level will result in inconsistencies in practice at the classroom level. Adding to this can be the usual challenges of lack of resources, e.g. teachers, funding, and time. As a consequence, students may not be well-prepared for the critical thinking curriculum required in the HE curriculum.

At the tertiary level, the MOET’s guidance for selecting and organising critical thinking in the national curriculum frameworks has fallen under ‘meeting the demands of the economy in the process of international integration’ (MOET, 2004). Although it can be inferred that teachers interpret critical thinking in the same neo-liberal manner, Nguyen’s (2016b) investigation into the teaching of critical thinking in HE in Việt Nam reports that generally teachers lack understanding of critical thinking. They tend to perceive and teach critical thinking differently. Due to the abstraction of the guidance, more investigation needs to be carried out to find out how they actually understand and teach critical thinking and also what the impact of social political ideologies on transmission and acquisition of critical thinking curriculum can be.

1.5.2 A (Social) Constructivist Approach to Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is also inherent in how the Government has urged teachers, who traditionally gain high social respect in Việt Nam, ‘to innovate and modernise their teaching methods’ by:

shifting from the passive knowledge transmission and lecture methods to methods that guide learners to take initiatives in thinking . . . to learn to obtain information actively and systematically and methods that facilitate synthetic and analytical thinking, foster individuals' capacities and maximise students' autonomy in the learning process (Vietnamese Government, 2001, Section V, Article 5.2).

By promoting student-centredness, the State has embedded in the policy a (social) constructivist perspective to critical thinking. This approach to critical thinking is consistent in another policy where the State has also declared that HE needs to 'train citizens who internalise creativity, independent thinking, professional capacity, English capacity, ability to create their own opportunities, capacity to adapt unpredictable changes in the market and ability to stay competitive regionally and internationally' (Vietnamese Government, 2012b).

It is important to note now that the State's conceptualisation of critical thinking shares a significant similarity to the pronouncements of the critical thinking movement discussed later in Chapter Two (pp. 45-47). However, the supposed purposes of such skills as independent thinking or thinking analytically and systematically can be significantly different in two ways.

Firstly, there has been little official training or guidance at the policy level about how HE should teach and assess critical thinking except some abstract suggestion, such as 'transforming teaching methodology to promote students' self-regulation and group discussions' (MOET, 2004). There have been a few writings about methods HE teachers can use to enhance critical thinking in undergraduate classes (Nguyễn, 2017; Trịnh, 2018; Nguyễn, 2013; Bùi, 2016), in English learning (Phạm, 2015; Nguyễn, 2016), in literature (Nguyen, 2016c), and in politics classes (Vũ, 2015). However, these methods are generally instrumental, e.g. treating critical thinking as a set of abstract skills rather than highlighting its emancipatory thesis. More significantly, they have ignored the evaluative dimension of critical thinking. This may cause confusion and discouragement, especially when teachers have other concerns about the lack of resources (Harman and Nguyen, 2010; Trần et al., 2014a), the amount content to be delivered, the class size, students' lack of academic preparedness (Fry, 2009; Hayden and Lam, 2010; Bui, 2014b). In the English language context, it is students' lack of English proficiency for critical thinking (Pham, 2018; Tri and Moskovsky, 2019).

Secondly, little has been said about how Vietnamese students can use critical thinking to counteract forms of social injustice and/or deliberate on the common good. Of course, it can be argued that what is taught in the classroom is not all that is delineated at the policy level; this argument goes the same way for what is established is not all that is taught.

However, it should also be recognised that the curricular emphases of a programme are often shaped in alignment with the institutional curriculum ideas rather than the state's definitions to avoid any alternative or competing understandings (Wheelahan, 2007; 2010).

Despite all contradictions above, critical thinking 'skills' are still highly focused on the Vietnamese state's curriculum reform agenda, presumably for the future high skilled workforce to advance the local economic growth and to bring about international competition or at least to maintain the recently gained productive capacity. The recontextualisation of critical thinking into the HE curriculum also communicates the CPVN and its Government's attempt to materialise the nation's 2035 move towards a knowledge economy where advanced technologies, such as 'solar energy, social mobility, analytics, genomics and life sciences' (The World Bank Group & Vietnamese Government, 2016: 11). Most fundamentally, it can be interpreted as a way the MOET shows its commitment to address the HE quality issue, given that Vietnamese HE has not often been heard internationally (Trần et al., 2014b).

Besides the economic imperatives, there is surely significant political legitimacy to be gained in the decision to foreground the 'critical thinking' curriculum, which as Chapter Three will show, carries strong overtones of progressivism. Policies to foster 'developing intellectual capacities and dispositions' (Vietnamese Government, 2005b; 2012b) rather than 'reinforcing traditional forms of rote-learning and knowledge repetition' is definitely helpful in tackling criticisms that the authoritarian regime is 'filling the students' mind with knowledge and great learning' (Vietnamese Government, 2001; 2005a; 2012a). Indeed, the critical thinking curriculum can be understood as a strategy the CPVN and the MOET use to retain hegemony and gain support now that Vietnamese HE has been criticised for its content loaded curriculum and failure to prepare students for high skills jobs (Trần and Marginson, 2014; Đỗ and Đỗ, 2014).

Above are all good reasons to integrate critical thinking into the national HE curriculum with an ambition to develop Việt Nam into a prosperous, creative and democratic society. While the (critical) thinking curriculum has been rhetorically strong at the macro policy level, little has been heard of micro guidance of practices or implementations. Given that HE reforms are more about 'on-paper commitments' than 'practical transformation' (Marginson et al., 2014) and that quality issues, caused by the rapid expansion of the system and growth in enrolments, have been centre all of debates about HE in Việt Nam (Hayden and Lam, 2010; Fry, 2009; Đỗ and Đỗ, 2014; Harman et al., 2010), the integration of critical thinking into the curriculum needs to turn its focus to the classroom practices. The systematic

investigation also needs to take into consideration all the issues Vietnamese HE is facing, namely curriculum ineffectiveness, shortage of teaching staffs, teachers' professional capacities, teaching methodology, teacher-student ratio (Hayden and Lam, 2010; Fry, 2009; Trần et al., 2014a; Harman et al., 2010), disconnection between training and the business world (Trần et al., 2014a).

Summary

This chapter provides a fundamental understanding about Việt Nam as a state, its complex history of development and the national identities of its people. This understanding is essential for the purpose of the thesis, which is to investigate the critical thinking curriculum in the Vietnamese HE system. The chapter also delineates how the Vietnamese state's political and ideological framework and its constraints and limitations have impacted the HE reforms towards developing Vietnamese students to be more critical and creative in their thinking for the global knowledge economy. Against this background, the next chapter on the Western critical thinking movement and its ideologies will shed more light on how teaching and learning critical thinking, will or, will not be problematic in Việt Nam.

To be specific, I will review in detail the literature of critical thinking, highlighting its limitation and making a claim for a significance to situate critical thinking research in its necessarily socio-political context. After that, I will turn my focus on the division between 'esoteric' and 'mundane' knowledge originally developed by Durkheim (1995) and later expanded by Bernstein (1977; 2000; 2003) and draw the connection between critical thinking and esoteric knowledge. By doing this I emphasise that while 'mundane' and 'esoteric' knowledge division is essential in establishing the social and power relations of knowledge, this is not addressed satisfactorily by researchers in the field of critical thinking and in the broader field of curriculum studies. Finally, there will be a discussion of my position in relation to the overall research background and the organisation of the research chapters.

Chapter Two: Critical Thinking: A Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter reviews the scholarship of critical thinking for the purpose of my research, which explores how the subject is perceived, taught and assessed in two undergraduate programmes in Việt Nam and also how the transmission and realisation of critical thinking there are regulated by the State's social, political and educational climate.

The chapter is structured into three sections. The first section highlights the predominant approach in the literature that views critical thinking as an abstraction, detached from its social political context. From there, I argue for an adoption of a social political approach to critical thinking inquiry. Doing so is important because what educational institutions in a certain country teach often reflect the ideology and the economic interests of the ruling class of that specific country (Gramsci, 1971; Althusser, 1971). The second section furthers the discussion by digging into the field of production of critical thinking. It demonstrates that critical thinking carries with it a promise of a universal democratic engagement and autonomy. I also argue here that such a universal promise of democracy and autonomy is problematic when being translated into dissimilar contexts of 'democracy'. Finally, in the third section, I discuss the division of knowledge from a sociological perspective, and my justification for critical thinking to be positioned as esoteric knowledge, the knowledge that Young (2007) calls 'powerful knowledge' or 'powerful language' as in the words of Peckham (2010: 42) since it allows power discourse and generalisations (Bernstein, 2000).

2.1 Critical Thinking and Its Contradictions

As usual, a review of critical thinking often begins with a trace of its origin (see for example, Johnston et al., 2011; Lai 2011; Bali, 2013).

This review does not take the above genealogy of critical thinking as its focus. It concentrates instead on areas that have created deep impacts on education, especially HE. Even with this purpose, the review avoids exhaustive texts, for such texts can be found in Pithers and Soden (2000), Thomas and Lok (2015), Tew (2015), Nguyen (2016b) and Khan (2017), to name just a few. It focuses instead on the vagueness of the concept, e.g. how it

tends to count any possible skills and characters as critical thinking to be taught de-contextualised. This will be done by reviewing debates over concepts, pedagogies, assessment and the emancipatory thesis of critical thinking. Given that democratic values should be promoted in schools that educate future citizens (Dewey, 2012; Bell, 2006), the question that can be raised here is whether the Western democratic concept of critical thinking can be borrowed and taught unproblematically in Việt Nam, a different social and political context that embraces democracy with a difference (See more in Chapter One, pp. 18- 21).

2.1.1 The Conceptual Issues

This section demonstrates that conceptually, critical thinking has been developed by most Western philosophers and psychologists to contain a close connection with rationality or logical reasoning. This way of understanding critical thinking can be argued to be ahistorical and apolitical.

Despite great efforts made over the past thirty years or so towards concrete conceptions of critical thinking, it seems the scholarship has not reached a consensus on what constitutes critical thinking and what skills and/or dispositions make good critical thinkers (McPeck, 1981; Davies, 2006, 2013; Barnett, 1997; Moon, 2008). Different theorists have argued different ways. Each tends to refine their list both conceptually and theoretically to communicate what they believe an ideal critical thinker should sound like. The justifications of these different skills and aspects of critical thinking can be found in the works of well-known theorists, including Ennis (1989, 1996, 2016), Paul (1990), Lipman (1988), Bailin et al., (1999), Facione (1990) and Barnett (1997). While definitions of critical thinking have been pervasive, it may not be easy to find a clear and specific one. One example can be a classic and widely cited definition by Ennis (1989: 4), ‘Critical thinking is reasonable and reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or to think’. In this definition, what makes thinking reasonable and reflective is left undecided (McPeck, 1981).

Leading debates over critical thinking conceptions are two predominant but contradictory traditions: the ‘generalist’ and the ‘specifist’ (Davies, 2006, 2013). The generalist, figuring Ennis (2016), Paul & Elder (2006), Siegel (1988, 2010a, 2010b), Lipman (2003) and Fisher (2001) has promoted a conception of critical thinking that is universal, general and can be transferable. Critical thinking within this tradition is conceptualised based

on the principles of logic reasoning. For example, Ennis (2016: 167) identifies critical thinking with such skills as Deducing, judging unstated assumption, analysing arguments, and dealing with fallacy labels. On the other side of the debate represents the specifist, namely McPeck (1981, (x), 1990, 1992) and Moore (2004, 2011). These theorists have insisted that critical thinking is always ‘critical thinking about something’ (McPeck, 1981: 7) and that ‘Canons of logical validity are different, what may be fallacious reasoning in one context or domain might be perfectly correct in another’ (McPeck, 1994: 109). In fact, there is nothing called ‘a generalist discourse’ but ‘a quite specific one’ (Moore, 2004: 3). Critical thinking, for these theorists, involves ‘the different kinds of reasoning which are ingredient in, and characterise, the different domains of knowledge’ (McPeck, 1994: 109).

A close reading through the work of Moore (2004, 2011), Davies (2006, 2013), Ennis (1985), McPeck (1994) or Bailin et al. (1999) reveals that the debates between the two sides have essentially been conceptual debates, with proponents of both sides using abstract thought, experiments and philosophical arguments to promote their respective positions. Of course, it is not my intention to justify the soundness of one side over the other. What I want to conclude here is that while the debate is theoretically and conceptually useful, it does not end with any clarity on what critical thinking really is.

2.1.2 The Pedagogical Debates

Compared to the literature on epistemological debates above, the share of literature on critical thinking instructions is less theoretic (esoteric) and more oriented to the reality of the curriculum and the classroom. However, it does not necessarily mean that there has been a consensus in this area. Debates over the effectiveness of teaching critical thinking have centred around three predominant pedagogic approaches: explicit, infused (embedded) and immersed, originally developed by Ennis (1985). The explicit approach requires teaching critical thinking as a separate subject. It is most evident in textbooks which carry some combination of the words ‘critical’ and ‘thinking’ in their titles, such as *Critical Thinking* (Moore and Parker, 2009), *Critical Thinking: Consider the Verdict* (Waller, 2012), and *Critical Thinking: An Introduction* (Fisher, 2001). This method champions a set of logic skills through the study of logical modes of inference, argument analysis, and fallacies - the ones similar to those listed by Ennis (2016) mentioned above.

The infusion approach calls for teaching the same logical skills but emphasises the need to ‘infuse’ it across disciplines and contexts of teaching and learning, where subject

specific contents then serve as context for critical thought (Davies, 2006). Authoritative models developed to guide the teaching of critical thinking using this method include those of Swartz & Parks (1994), Ikuenobe (2001), Duron et al., (2006), Davies (2006), and Ong (2006), among others.

The immersion approach, underpinned by a different pedagogical principle, has fostered critical thinking development within the standards of the subject matter (McPeck, 1990; Prawat, 1991, Swartz, 2001). This approach does not make explicit the principles and procedures of critical thinking (Ennis, 1989). Instead, it assumes that they are developed and acquired as a consequence of engaging in learning to problematise issues relevant to the established areas of inquiry. The ‘philosophy of’ approach promoted by Scheffler (1989) can be seen as a strategy to immerse rationality or critical thought into courses. Halonen’s (1995) outline of a ‘problem-based’ model of critical thinking for curriculum design in psychology is another example of how critical thinking can be designed and taught on the immersion approach. Other contemporary writers who have critiqued the explicit approach also argue for an immersion of critical thinking development through problem-based teaching (Tan, 2004, Willingham, 2007; Zabit, 2010) and knowledge courses (Wong 2008; Katsioloudes & Tischio, 2001).

The three traditions above have hold contradictory assumptions regarding the pedagogical issues of transferability and contextual nature of critical thinking: whether critical thinking can be taught separately and directly and then transferred to other contexts or whether they must be infused into subject matter instructions. However, in debating their positions, the theorists tend to approach context as the prior condition for cognitive development. For them, as long as it is possible to determine a context conducive to critical thinking, such a context, whether subject-specific, generic, problem-based or inquiry based, is made out to ‘transfer across domains’ (Halpern, 1998: 449) and societies. These psychological or pseudo-psychological perspectives have decidedly left out much of the social and political dimensions which may influence the teaching of critical thinking.

2.1.3 Critical Thinking and Assessment

Given that the world has entered the Twenty-first Century, it is hardly surprising that researchers interested in critical thinking have also sought to connect critical thinking with generic abilities and/ or competences, measured against employers’ desires (See Lowden et al., 2011, for example). This ‘employability’ approach tends to understand critical thinking

loosely as higher order thinking skills, decision-making and problem-solving skills. The need for a transfer of a fixed set of thinking skills has been encouraged by institutional and political demands for graduates to obtain skills required by the labour market (Davies and Barnett, 2015; Pithers & Soden, 2000; Johnston et al., 2011).

Generally, this part of the literature takes two forms. The first focuses on demonstrating the efficacy of critical thinking instructions as a key approach in improving students' decision making and problem-solving skills and in real world applications, which in turn will help them become more employable (Butler et al., 2012; Halpern, 2014). International organisations, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (OECD), the World Bank (WB) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) began to chart a correlation between critical thinking/ problem solving as an inevitable skill/ competence for 'the knowledge economy' and thus sustainable employability (OECD, 2003, 2005, 2016; Arnal et al, 2001; WB, 2002, 2014; Banerji et al., 2010; Bodewig et al., 2014; UNESCO, 2012, 2014; Rieckmann et al., 2017). Switching teaching instructions from didactic to dialectic approaches is believed to allow teachers to tap into and engage students' higher order thinking skills that they can use for decision making and problem solving (Robert et al., 2008; Swartz et al., 2010, Wagner, 2008).

The second way in which this area of literature has attempted to connect critical thinking with employability is to lobby for the direct use of problem-solving skills as proxy for critical thinking in the workplace (Halpern, 2001). However, this area of literature has not clarified how employers or schools measure critical thinking through problem solving and whether problem solving skills taught in schools will transfer into the workplace (Halpern, 2001; Willingham, 2007). Presumably, critical thinking here shares the general measures of analytic thinking guides and academic achievement tests. Elder and Paul's (2007) *Guides to Elements of Thought* is probably the most authoritative. This *universal* guide claims to be helpful for students and teachers to assess their skills to reason 'through the decisions and problems inherent in any and every dimension of human life' (Elder & Paul, 2007: 4). In curriculum designing and classroom assessment for critical thinking, Bloom's (1956) original taxonomy and Krathwohl's (2002) revised taxonomy of learning objectives have been treated as the most authoritative tool although its effectiveness has been questioned (Paul, 1985; Case, 2013).

Clearly, the development centring around critical thinking and student achievement may raise many concerns such as the differentiation of students based on their supposedly

‘measured’ levels of rationality. Students who fail to solve problems logically or rationally or perform poorly in standardised tests may be treated unequally. For example, employers may unfairly refuse to recognise the knowledge and skills of less rational or logical graduates.

Of course, the above approaches are not without a good sense. For example, Halpern (2001) argues that teaching critical thinking through problem-solving means applying teaching instructions that move away from rote factual learning and place students at the heart of instructions which in turn, motivate active learning and student-centred approaches. However, it is important to note here that although competence-based and student-centred learning help promote intellectual emancipation in acquiring knowledge, the risk that anyone’s knowledge can be accepted as legitimate knowledge is there to turn the approaches into reductionist (Young, 2007). This may lead to the transmission of ‘vacuous and superficial curricular’ (Allais, 2010: 19) rather than critical thinking. More significantly, all of these ideas, like the conceptual and pedagogical concerns raised earlier, remain confined in the discourses of the school and the classroom. Consequently, researchers in the field of teaching and learning critical thinking continue to promote critical thinking in this reductionist sense (Wang, 2017; Singh et al., 2013; Thompson, 2011; Dwyer et al., 2014).

The current context of HE in Việt Nam reflects just these same issues now that HE reforms have urged teaching to move from memorisation to competences, abide to the national quality accreditation and promote English standardised tests as an indicator of international quality (See more in Chapter One, pp. 26- 29). Such curricula may not have place for critical thinking.

To sum up, real concerns of the literature on critical thinking have never been the socio-cultural and political contexts of the subject. The narrow focus on the practical application of critical thinking in the classroom may continue to shape critical thinking research paradigms in the future probably because (1) the increasing pressures from the workplace for critical thinking as one of the economically useful skills (2) the accountability and teaching learning quality overwhelming HEIs (Apple, 2006). Thus, it is important to acknowledge areas of the literature that have often been obscured by these more instrumental intentions. The next sub-section reviews just this last area of literature that has sought to connect critical thinking with a set of social and political considerations.

2.1.4 Critical Thinking and Its Emancipatory Thesis

The section above has highlighted that significant theorists have approached critical thinking with different pedagogical and epistemological positions. When emancipation is concerned, a number of writers, namely Newman (1996), Weinstein (1991), Lipman (2003) and Winch (2005) display their understanding of critical thinking as a need for democratic deliberation and engaged citizenry. Some writers have even established a linkage between the emancipatory thesis of critical thinking with curricular practices for democracy (Siegel, 1997; Nussbaum, 2004; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Westheimer, 2008). Through their published work, Nussbaum (1997, 2004), Siegel (1988, 1997), Westheimer (2008) and hooks (2010) also demonstrate the importance of critical thinking in education for healthy democracy. More specifically, within social studies and citizenship education, critical thought has been seen by Giroux, (1994), Kahne & Westheimer (2006), Stitzlein (2012) and Volman and Dam (2015) as an inevitable part of the curriculum.

Democratic citizenship, according to the above authors, involves the participation in civic issues and the willingness to exchange ideas about public problems using the relevant critical thinking skills. Most of the work in this area has centred on the development of citizenship/social studies curricula that encourage students to employ skills and dispositions for better judgements and evaluations (Newman, 1990; Parker 2003; Wright, 2002, Ogle et al., 2007; Molnar-Main, 2017). Unlike the instrumental ‘skills’ tradition, this view of critical thinking emphasises students’ ability to actually discuss civic issues and work across divides for the common good. Critical thinking, in this sense, goes beyond logical skills to connect with broader social and political commitments and thus promote meaningful deliberations. Given that education and curricula need to connect more to deep-seated social issues (Apple, 2019; Bernstein, 2003, Dewey, 2012), this body of literature has offered valuable insights into the critical thinking scholarship which has long been dominated by the de-contextual discussions. Despite all these emancipatory efforts, this part of the literature tends to assume that all societies desire the same ideals of Western liberalism, while this is not always the case. In Asian countries, specifically in Việt Nam, the national civics curriculum underpinned by the traditional values of respect and harmony and the imposed socialist doctrine (See more in Chapter One, pp. 15-20) have decidedly affected the way students interact with teachers and their peers as well as their attitudes towards the information they receive as well as the problems they are called upon to solve. Promoting emancipation by encouraging Vietnamese students to question social issues in a straightforward and to-the-point manner may not be easy.

It is now useful to relate the literature more broadly with the line of inquiry in my research. As I explained in Chapter One, the cultural, social and political climate of Việt Nam does not seem to favour the Western-style democracy and/or liberalism. As a socialist and collectivist country, Việt Nam practices grassroot democracy or socialist democracy (Duong, 2004; Zingerli, 2004). This ‘democratic’ discourse is of course completely different from Western liberal democracy in that it is a type of democracy but under the control of the CPVN and its Marxist-Leninist ideology. This distinction is characterised in the literature as between Western liberalism and Confucius- rooted South East Asian non-liberalism (Chua, 2010; Dahl, 2006) or ‘Western liberalism versus Asian value-relativism’ (Rüland 1999: 342, as cited in Dosch & Ta, 2004).

Pervasive empirical researchers have recently begun to turn their attention to problematise the impact of historical and socio-cultural differences on the teaching of critical thinking in Eastern countries such as Singapore (Tan, 2017, Lim, 2016), China (Wang & Seepho, 2017), Japan (Rear, 2008), Egypt (Bali, 2013), Korea (McGuire, 2007), Taiwan (Chen, 2015), Hong Kong and New Zealand (Lun et al., 2010) and Việt Nam (Nguyen, 2016b). Except Lim’s (2016) thesis, this body of research, however, has not been able to construct strong theoretical and conceptual frameworks to help address effectively power relation underpinning the critical thinking curriculum at both macro and micro levels (Bernstein, 2000). Therefore, such a study as this one is urgent.

In summary, given that the critical thinking literature has manifested itself under the assumption of Western liberal democracy, two implications for research in critical thinking can be made. Firstly, this paradigm discourages a more contextually sensitive analysis of how critical thinking may be taught in dissimilar contexts, especially the ones that may not encourage or even inhibit different thinking or overt ideas perceived as threatening the social and political norms and beliefs. The assumption also obscures the processes through which the teaching of critical thinking may be transformed in ways that shed its liberal underpinnings. Secondly, the assumption once again views critical thinking as universal and value-free. Even where it highlights the social political context of critical thinking, it paradoxically treats this as unproblematic by assuming their homogeneity as liberal democracies. To the extent that democracy in Việt Nam takes a different shape, it is urgent for a more contextual analysis of the ideological features of this different democracy as well as the tensions and contradictions it poses to the teaching of critical thinking. Such a nuanced analysis helps understand both the nature of critical thinking and the process of its transformation into the curriculum. This brings the discussion to the next stage where I will explain why this analysis is urgent.

2.1.5 The Need for a Socio-cultural and Political Approach to Research on Critical Thinking

Against the backdrop of the discussion above, this section emphasises the need to position critical thinking within its political and social contexts. There are three reasons for this.

Firstly, as the review of the four contested areas of critical thinking above has proved, the theorisation and curriculum development of critical thinking have for a long time been dominated mostly by the democratic Western approach. With support from empirical research detached from socio-cultural contexts, this approach continues to provide abstract formations of critical thinking as a set of universal skills that centres around principles of logic and argumentation. Needless to say, the literature has developed a number of positions and pedagogies on critical thinking. However, most of these avoid socio-cultural and political contexts of its implementation, focusing instead on refining lists of skills, dispositions and standards. When connecting to the notion of democracy in education, these positions and pedagogies presuppose a set of universal liberal democratic ideals transferred unproblematically to any curriculum. Little contextually detailed research has been done to problematise the ideological assumptions of teaching critical thinking in different contexts of democracy.

Secondly, and also paradoxically, this approach has established its possible dominance by separating implicitly and voluntarily the transmission of critical thinking skills and the transmission of critical thinking values. Hence, it presumes that critical thinking analysis can be possible with the examination of the conceptual and pedagogical issues of the transmission of the skills. For Bernstein, this view keeps the instructional discourse (of skills) apart from the regulative discourse (of values and identities), treating them ‘as if there are two [discourses]’ (Bernstein, 2000: 32). Because competencies themselves are necessarily culturally embedded and that ‘The manner of their transmission and acquisition socialises [students] into their contextual usages’, a researcher who attempts to make an inquiry into the transmission of competencies needs to consider as well ‘the structure of social relationship which produces these specialised competencies’ (Bernstein, 1977: 147).

These insights suggest it would be short-sighted to investigate critical thinking competencies detached from the socio-political context of their transmission. Indeed, Bernstein (2000) would argue that any curriculum knowledge is always subject to recontextualisation. This means the social and political discourses regulating the pedagogic

modalities also function to shape and distribute specified forms of consciousness, identity and desire. In other words, curriculum subjects themselves are not only indicative of prescribed competencies but implied as well as a set of implicit social, political and cultural norms and conventions. Therefore, research on critical thinking needs to take at its heart the relations of knowledge, power, and social order.

To summarise, critical thinking has long been conceptualised and promoted worldwide as a neutral educational idea, downplaying the historical, cultural and socio-political context of its practice. Therefore, the need for a new way of conducting research in critical thinking has become urgent. To refocus the unit of analysis (critical thinking) away from its universal competences and onto the structure of social relationships, it is important to look more into the relations within critical thinking curriculum and the deep rules that explain how critical thinking is converted into classroom talk and curricula (Bernstein, 2000). This is the focus of the sub-section below.

2.2 The Social Logic of Critical Thinking

As Section 2.1 (41- 49) showed, one key component of critical thinking is logic. However, not much has been discussed in the literature about the social logic of critical thinking. According to Bernstein (2000: 42), the social logic of a concept refers to ‘the implicit model of the social, the implicit model of communication, of interaction and of the subject which inheres in this concept’. Considering the social logic of critical thinking means considering social political relations within the curriculum, such as access to critical thinking, its perceived interest, the curriculum decisions, as well as standards of critical thought, the social political processes through which critical thinking becomes legitimated.

This section does so by digging into the root of the critical thinking movement to analyse the purpose of, the need for and the inner standards of critical thought. It argues that the critical thinking movement, inspired by critical theory and critical pedagogies, assumes an emancipatory focus that promises to enhance students’ deliberative abilities, which in turn liberate them from established forms of domination. However, this assumption, by separating the field of theory from the field of practice, fails to recognise the complex ideological relations HEIs operate under. Emphases on liberty and autonomy, therefore, may not find their way onto curriculum agendas of schools and the classroom.

2.2.1 Critical Thinking in the Field of Production

The field of knowledge production is probably the best place to look for accounts for the social logic of critical thinking since it is where “‘new’ ideas are selectively created, modified, and changed and where specialised discourses are developed, modified, or changed” (Bernstein, 2003: 191). Bourdieu’s concept of ‘field’ as a conceptual ‘space of conflict and competition’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 17) can serve as a point of reference here (See more on p. 58 below).

Critical thinking, as it is known today, has evolved through the development of two fundamental separate but overlapping waves (Paul, 2011). The first wave, led predominantly by philosophers and their interests, began in the 1970s with the intention to introduce formal logic into HE curriculum agendas. The driving force of this movement was to address the reality that HEIs at that time focused primarily on rote memorisation at the expense of the development of reasoning. In response to this call for an inclusion of ‘critical thinking’ skills, universities began to require students to take courses designed to develop skills of logic, reasoning and argument before graduation. Through formal and symbolic methods, these reasoning courses taught skills related to identifying and evaluating arguments, avoiding fallacies of reasoning and so on (Paul, 2011; Davis and Barnett, 2015). Significant theorists within this tradition are Ennis (1985, 1989), Norris (1995) and McPeck (1981).

The 1980s witnessed the second wave of critical thinking. It expanded the philosophical standpoint above to include much wider perspectives of cognitive psychology, critical pedagogy, feminism and other standpoints. This period of time also witnessed the emergence of discipline-specific approaches to critical thinking. Its wider agenda addressed concerns with the development of critical thinking in relation to attitudes of human beings rather than cognitive machines. Theorists began to address the importance of attitudes or dispositions as an indispensable domain of critical thinking (Ennis, 1996; Halpern, 1998; Bailin et al., 1999). They also went further to interpret critical thinking as an ideological issue, rather than validity and reliability of arguments (see for example Siegle, 1985; Paul, 1982). Members of this new wave raised concerns over issues such as class, race, gender, unequal pay and access to jobs and education. They critiqued the modes of analysis most logical courses taught at that time for their inadequacy to generate argumentative forms these everyday issues raised (McPeck, 1990). Consequently, they argued for an inclusion of everyday (informal) logic into reasoning courses (Paul, 1982; Siegel, 1997).

As I pointed out in Section 2.1 (pp. 39- 40), with a number of theorists coming from different traditions, it is not surprising that they hold different viewpoints over the

epistemological and pedagogical nature of critical thought and its standards, e.g. those of reasoning, formal symbolic methods, or informal logic (McPeck, 1990; Ennis, 1989). Despite this divergence, there is little disagreement when it comes to the underlying purpose of what critical thinking is for. In this concern, most theorists have worked towards seeking alternative ways to improve individuals' thinking in everyday critical situations and about social political issues they have genuinely been concerned about. Many scholars, including Brown (1998), Lipman (2003), Giroux (1994), Paul and Elder (2008), Elder and Paul (2008) and Siegel (1997) argue for the importance of teaching critical thinking for democratic societies. Benesch (1993: 547), for example, argues for the importance of critical thinking as 'a democratic learning process examining power relations and social inequities'. In the same manner, Walters (1994: 3) stresses the importance of critical thinking in 'preparing students for future participation in a pluralistic and democratic societies'. Most significant of all has been the call for universities to shift their attention from instrumental critical thinking skills to the state of 'critical being', e.g. training students to engage with the world, with themselves and with knowledge (Barnett, 1997: 1). This educational philosophy of critical thinking as a democratic orientation has continued to underpin researchers in the Twenty- first Century (See for example, Vandermensbrugghe, 2004; Bermingham, 2015).

The origin of this emancipatory view of critical thinking can be traced back to the ancient Greek philosophical tradition with Socrates' idea that one could not depend upon those in 'authority' to have sound knowledge and insight (Paul, 2011). Critical thinking at that time, through the Socrates questioning technique, was seen as a tool for democracy to reflect on its business in a more reflective and reasonable manner (Plato, 1968; Lim, 2016). More recently, the importance of critical thinking as an educational goal for democracy has been raised by Scheffler (1989), who emphasises an active participation of citizens in critiquing state decisions for a more democratic society. Such a liberal democracy, according to Scheffler (1989: 137), needs to structure 'arrangements of society . . . upon the freely given consent of its members' and 'the institutionalisation of reasoned procedures for the critical and public review of policy'. To participate critically in such a democratic society, individuals need competences to examine public concerns, judge social political issues facing the society, seek reasons for changes and assess them fairly (Siegel, 1997).

However, these possibilities of rationality and deliberation have not been translated easily to the public sphere even in democratic societies, such as the United States. One reason is the advancement of mass media and cultural consumption have produced information excess that has left 'modern democracies . . . prone to hasty and sloppy thinking and to the

substitution of invective for argument’ (Nussbaum, 2004: 44). Decisions in public discourses (Who stands out as rational figures and who should have a voice) are often made available to ‘sell’ to the general public (Habermas, 1989; Gillwald, 1993). Such information is often made to serve ‘vested interest groups, not the individual citizen nor the public good’ (Paul and Elder, 2005: 12). The public sphere’s ability to engage in rational democratic deliberation and participation has become limited (Habermas, 1989). This reality requires individuals to discern the rhetoric from the real and exercise rigor in evaluating a broad range of social concerns that would eventually affect their own lives (Paul and Elder, 2005). These circumstances have made teaching critical thinking more urgent than ever, since without this competence students won’t be able to navigate effectively in the public discourse filled with contradictory value systems, political ideologies, marketing rhetoric and alternative worldviews. This urgent focus on social issues of critical thinking has resulted in nearly every research paper about critical thinking now claiming teaching it to improve students’ ability to reason about everyday problems and issues (See for example, Bermingham, 2015; Behar-Horenstein & Niu, 2011; Dwyer et al., 2014).

I have discussed emancipation as a social nature of critical thinking. The importance of critical thinking is also related historically to the emergence of the progressivist ideas in twentieth century America. Within this educational paradigm, critical thinking also promotes individual autonomy but more through pedagogical relations, e.g. relations between teachers and students and among students than through logical reasoning. Under the ‘progressive’ paradigm, universities have been asked to move from traditional ‘banking’ model of education (Freire, 2012; Kliebard, 2004) to a learner-centred model of education (Allais, 2010). The ‘progressive’ paradigm also requires HEIs to recognise and cater to the moral and intellectual growth of *all* students (Walters, 1994) rather than merely producing a ‘skilled’ workforce (Brown, 1998). The concern about the industrial model of HE at that time decidedly lead many philosophers in the critical thinking movement to endorse the teaching of critical thinking as a way to guard against the impact of dominant authoritarian power on individuals’ social and political lives (Winch, 2005). The point is little has been heard about the success of the progressive educational paradigm in tackling inequality and social stratification (Allais, 2010).

Being inspired and informed by critical theory and critical pedagogy, the critical thinking movement shares their same concern: how to equip students with abilities to discern inaccuracies and falsehood caused by unreliable authority and enlarge their engagement with society and scope of their possibilities (Burbules and Beck, 1999).

The application of the ‘progressive’ paradigm in HE in Việt Nam requires both teachers and students to be conscious about their new pedagogical relationships. Given that Vietnamese HE is now beginning to embrace student-centredness, it is crucial to be critical about the endorsement of this pedagogic method. Getting rid of the ‘traditional’ side of the relationship may not be a good choice for the critical thinking curriculum in Việt Nam (indeed any curriculum which borrows Western epistemological values) since it will bring about failure (Nguyen et al., 2009; Nguyen and Tran, 2018). Morais and Nerves (2010) also emphasise critical thinking can only be internalised when a ‘mixed pedagogy’ (Ibid: 215) is applied, e.g. where direct, explicit instruction and especially evaluation are mixed with an open teacher-student relationship in the realm of ‘hierarchical rules’ (Bernstein, 2003: 65).

In summary, the critical thinking waves, through the emancipatory thesis, have sought to foster teaching critical thinking as a democratic learning process where students are provided critical competences to examine power effects of educational knowledge and cultural socio-political formations that legitimate the status quo.

2.2.2 Critical Thinking and Standards

It has been clear by now that there is a broad consensus among theorists regarding the emancipation of critical thinking. However, contradictions emerge when it comes to the standards of its realisation (Bailin and Siegel, 2003). This sub-section is now looking into the criterion dimension of the social logic of critical thinking to see how it has been set to be contradictory.

In Section 2.1 (pp. 43), I laid out the key epistemological differences between the two traditions: the specificist and the generalist and how they have generated different pedagogical approaches to teaching critical thinking. Despite their different stands, they both agree on a set of logical principles. However, this universal approach to critical thinking has been criticised as being narrow.

Firstly, critical thinking has been criticised for being ‘biased’ (Bailin, 1995: 191) with respect to culture. It is often associated with being aggressive and confrontational rather than harmonious and collaborative, the features ‘constructive thinking’ aims at (Thayer-Bacon, 1998: 123). It is also believed that in the quest for knowledge, the rationality that critical thinking privileges downplays imagination, personal values, emotions, lived experiences and contextual relationships. Finally, there have been claims that critical

thinking champions personal autonomy over sense of community and relationship (Bailin, 1995; Thayer-Bacon, 2000).

For the critics, in an increasingly plural society, critical thinking needs to acknowledge contextuality, ambiguity, creativity and tolerate heterogeneity (Toulmin, 2001). Kennedy (2000:40), for example, emphasises ‘thinking for oneself and with others’. Similarly, Nussbaum (2001) stresses that good reasoning needs to include subjective qualities, such as emotions, intuition and purpose besides intellectual work. Hooks (2010), on the other hand, argues for imagination as the centrality of the emancipatory thesis of critical thinking. While logic-centric views often ignore imagination, for hooks (2010: 59), ‘It is the crux of emancipation, illuminating those spaces not covered by facts, data and proven information’.

Accommodating such a variety of views on the criteria of emancipatory thinking may seem to be hard for the epistemological tradition, which sees critical thinking as a universal set of logic principles. Even within this tradition, agreements have been unsettled on what skills and dispositions are considered ‘standards’ of critical thinkers and critical thought (See Section 2.1 above). Indeed, a clear set of intellectual standards that can apply both within and beyond the academic environment and that can provide both universal elements in reasoning and within domain specific is still far from reach (Paul, 2011).

The contested and vague requirements for the emancipatory thinking may explain why universities worldwide, including in Việt Nam, continue to stick to the instrumental approach to critical thinking teaching it as a set of higher order thinking skills.

To sum up, the section has clarified that besides skills, critical thinking, as an educational ideal, has also been conceptualised with an implied universal democratic ideology, aiming at critical social capacities needed for democratic engagement and personal autonomy. Decidedly, this also means that the realisation of critical thinking involves other criteria, such as ethics and politics not just logical analyses and conceptual argumentation. The next section will show how both this perceived democracy and this standard of critical thinking distance themselves from the realities of universities and HE systems.

2.2.3 The Separation of the Field of Knowledge Production from the Field of Knowledge Reproduction

This sub-section argues that in moving the debates forward, the critical thinking movement has separated the field of knowledge production (theory) from that of knowledge

reproduction (practice). This may problematise the confident assumption about a straightforward translation of critical thinking into universities and curricular agendas. In this discussion, the critical thinking movement is viewed as an external power that is relayed by HEIs.

There has been evidence in the scholarship that the critical thinking movement has actually done good work on moving debates forward to serve its own interests. By doing so, it has highlighted the role of theoretical and conceptual experts, downplaying those of institutions, curricula and teachers. Siegel's (1988) delineation of critical thinking can be used as a starting point:

What is critical thinking? Despite widespread recent interest in critical thinking in education, there is no clear agreement concerning the referent of the term. But if that notion is to carry significant weight in our educational thinking and practice, it is essential that it be delineated with some precision, so that we will know what we are talking about when we talk about the desirability of critical thinking, or of educational efforts aimed at improving students' critical thinking ability (Ibid: 5).

In the text above, Lim (2016) argues that Siegel separates the theoretical aspect of critical thinking (the referent) from its practical aspect (improving students' ability). The latter emphasises the importance of the concept to be defined precisely *before* any efforts to teach it for students.

Similarly, in response to ambiguities of the notion of critical thinking, McPeck (1990: 3) states, 'How one interprets these notions determines in large measure the type of instructions one designs to promote critical thinking'. For him, questions relating to the curriculum implementation of critical thinking programmes such as '*When* should it be introduced and *how* . . . are closely connected [and] determined in large measure by *what* you are introducing' McPeck (1990: 3). In this argument, McPeck also emphasises the absolute role of the theoretical concept, seeing it as 'in large measure' determined the implementation of critical thinking in the classroom.

These two examples suggest that curriculum decisions are impossible without conceptual formulations produced by theorists. Hence, any conceptual definitions that come out as a result of the debates (For example, those of Bailin et al, 1999 and Facione, 1990) can be transmitted indiscriminately across all educational contexts and realised in the teaching practice of any classroom. This assumption obviously excludes the reality of the classroom practice, such as who are available and willing to teach critical thinking? who knows how to teach it and so on (Ennis, 1997). Indeed, none of the two waves have, on their

agendas, taken as a focus in-depth understanding of how critical thinking is actually taught in the classroom (Ennis, 1997; Paul, 2011).

The above confident assumption implies the dominance that academics, researchers and experts maintain over classroom teachers and practitioners. It may derive from the political economy of education. From this perspective, it can be argued that education is a part of the economy having with it tensions about class, gender, knowledge and power (Apple, 2019). From this view, the work of teachers, as contrasted with the work of academic experts, has long been assumed as subordinate. Teachers merely implement what is handed down for them, especially since technology was first used to rationalise and manage labour processes. In times of neoliberalism, more creative ways have been devised to control teachers to teach towards market values. These include competence-based training and outcomes-based curricula reforms (Allais, 2010).

The exclusion of teachers from the selection and organisation of knowledge (critical thinking) may be the case in the context of HE in Việt Nam. As I explained in Chapter One, Vietnamese HE reforms now takes outcomes-based national qualification frameworks at heart. By law, the MOET defines fundamental expected competencies and expected learning outcomes of each programme. Although each department has its own autonomy to refine these goals in the national curriculum framework, in this process, crafting curriculum goals and developing standards for key competencies such as language and critical thinking may not be considered the profession of classroom teachers. Rather, it should be the responsibilities of academic experts, e.g. department head or programme managers.

The implication of the above discussion is that critical thinking assumptions need to be considered in a wider social dynamics of class relations (and gender as Apple, 2019 would argue) as they are inherent in institutions. The division the critical thinking movement has established between conceptual theoretical inquiries and the perception of the largely applied atheoretical and unskilled labour of HEIs also implies an imposed identity division between agents in the two fields. Obviously, the ones who work in the conceptual field will be identified as ‘esoteric’ and teachers as the ‘unskilled’ or ‘mundane’ (See Section 2.3, p. 61 for the implication of these terms). Given that power always exists in classificatory relations (Bernstein, 2000), the boundaries it creates need to be monitored and maintained in order that their contradictions, cleavages and inconsistencies may be suppressed.

2.2.4 Critical Thinking and the Obligations of Universities

This section finalises the discussion of the social logic of critical thinking by reviewing the literature on ideological obligations of HEIs. It argues that the contemporary obligations imposed on universities make transmitting critical thinking into university curricula and classroom practices challenging.

As I have mentioned in Section 2.2.3 just above, the critical thinking movement, in serving its motivation to seek clear concepts and standards has created a theory-practice gap. What critical thinking curriculum studies is largely silent on is probably an analysis of ideologies that HEIs operate under. According to Bernstein (2000: 166), ‘The separation of field from discourse may well distort an analysis’. Such understanding helps to avoid an uncritical translation of critical thinking (as abstract universal skills and its emancipatory ideal) into universities and curricula.

It is worth unpacking here the notion of ‘field’ since it helps get to the heart of the chapter’s argument. For Bourdieu (1984, 1989), ‘field’ refers to a bounded social space in which different classes compete. Each field has its own distinctive ‘logic of practice’, and agents in spaces take up set positions and use these conventions to their advantages. Bourdieu’s ‘field’, according to Bernstein, is ‘immensely valuable’ to the latter’s own theoretical development (Bernstein, 2000: 202). Integrating Bourdieu’s idea into the analysis of the pedagogic device, Bernstein points out that because in practice the ‘activities of field mask the arbitrariness of their knowledge base, their patterns of dominance and legitimation and so their social base is misrecognised’. For a social understanding of knowledge, it is essential to separate conceptually the field of production and reproduction of knowledge. According to Bernstein (2000: 202), the former (research institutes, policy agents) is responsible for developing discourse, while the latter (universities, teachers) is responsible for ‘the selective reproduction of educational discourse’. Bernstein (2000: 188) also emphasises that ‘One can occupy only one position at any one time’. The promotion of theoretical and conceptual aspects by the critical thinking movement discussed above has illustrated well the work of the production field. It is now time to turn the discussion to the work of the reproduction field, analysing the rationalities and ideological obligations underpinning HEIs activities.

Traditionally, HEIs are complex places performing many different tasks, both regulatory and liberating (Tilak, 2008). The contradictory functions imposed on HEIs are often mentioned in the literature in terms of dichotomies: knowledge vs. skills, individual autonomy vs. economic productivity, social progress vs. social conservatism, etc. (Dewey,

2012; Kliebard, 2004). Of course, the interpretations of these terms are not necessarily the same across contexts (Apple, 2006; Fairclough, 2001). For example, Gandin and Apple (2003) observe that under neoliberalism and its economic ideology, the autonomy of an individual is often associated with the sphere of the market and its well-being, guaranteed through turning education over to competitive markets or economic capital. In this sense, preparing students for autonomy means preparing them for economic return by bringing the market into universities and having the curriculum more responsive to the needs of the market and establishing pedagogic relationship (Muller, 2000; Apple, 2019, 2006; Olssen and Peters, 2005). However, Furedi (2011) warns that market presence may also cause the pedagogic relationship to disintegrate. Students focus on degrees while teachers are concerned about securing satisfaction ratings.

The dominant market-driven ideologies, among others, have put contemporary HE under a fundamental clash of values, e.g. traditional versus modern and educational versus commercial (Tilak, 2008). This clash threatens the balance between marketable and revenue-generating knowledge and the basic fundamental values of any humane society, such as language and critical thinking (Tilak, 2008). Clearly, it is not just the generic pre-defined concepts and standards of critical thinking that will ‘determine in large measure’ (Siegel, 1988: 5) how critical thinking may be taught in the classroom. In reality, it may depend on how teachers and institution leaders understand critical thinking itself and other related concepts, such as individual autonomy, democratic participation as well as how they negotiate social ideologies to fit in the local belief system.

Given that ‘self-consciousness’ and ‘social consciousness’ are inseparable (Cooley, 1983: 5), in the context of Việt Nam, teachers’ understandings of the concepts above are necessarily bounded within the ideological framework (socialism, authoritarianism collectivism and neo-liberalism) that regulate not just the HE system but all the spheres of the Vietnamese society. Presumably, within this ideological framework, teaching critical thinking to students will invite inevitable tensions and contradictions.

Scrutinising critical thinking may also require some understanding about the role of HEIs as ‘ideological state apparatuses’ (Poulantzas, 2000: 28; Whitehead, 2017). This doctrine operates under capitalism and toward social efficiency. While critical thinking is needed to keep societies dynamic, critical capacities can simultaneously challenge capital (Apple, 1995: 13 -14). For Apple, these ideological conflicts permeate and manifest themselves every day in contemporary educational institutions. When HE takes social efficiency as an aim, the importance of industrial competency receives the emphasis. For

example, Dewey (2012) emphasises that when values of good citizenship become vague, they give way to vocational ability. Adding to that, Spring (2011: 239) says, '[U]nder the doctrines of social efficiency, the ideal was to socialise students for cooperation in large-scale organisations where each individual would be performing a specialised task'. Whitehead (2017) finalises the crux:

...[workers] need merely follow the new set of instructions in order to complete said job—a skill with which they are well-versed, having demonstrated instruction-following time and again. To question the existing systems of power and domination, much less the instructed procedure, requires the ability to think critically—an ability that has been systematically eliminated though decades of socially-efficient schooling (Ibid: 7).

Whitehead's remarks imply the impacts of dominant ideologies and their conflicts on curriculum decisions (both scopes and content) and decidedly affect decisions made on whether critical thinking should be taught or not and if so, how. It should be clear by now that the translation of critical thinking into HE curricula and classrooms does not depend solely on the understandings of the purposes and standards of the subject. It is useful here to repeat Bernstein's remark on ideology as 'not so much a content as a mode of relation for the realising content'. Ideology here obviously does not just mean a set of ideas to be inserted into the student's mind; it should mean the internalisation of a mode of relations founded in hierarchical authority that regulates how students are to relate, or not, to content.

Given that little research has treated the teaching of critical thinking in relation to the complex and contradictory ideological obligations of HEIs, the need for this line of inquiry is, therefore, urgent.

2.3 Critical Thinking, Mundane and Esoteric

This sub-section turns the literature review to the sociology of knowledge to discuss the distinction between mundane knowledge and esoteric knowledge, the two 'knowledges' that Bernstein (2000, 2003) expands from Durkheimian 'sacred' and 'profane' knowledges. The argument here, which is for the acknowledgment of critical thinking as esoteric knowledge, is based on Bernstein's social arguments for democratic access to disciplines.

2.3.1 Esoteric Knowledge

Bernstein argues that in all societies exist two classes of knowledge: esoteric knowledge and mundane knowledge. Esoteric knowledge is theoretical and conceptual knowledge, the site and means of knowledge production, while mundane knowledge is ‘knowledge of the other ... knowledge of how it is’ (Bernstein, 2000: 29). It is the mundane knowledge that is often selected to incorporate into curriculum as ‘official knowledge’ since it is ‘safe’ (Apple, 2019; Bernstein, 2000). Bernstein also emphasises that the distinction between esoteric and mundane ‘knowledges’ is universal, while the content of each is culturally and historically specific.

Historically, ‘sacred’ knowledge earned its status because it was related to the social reality of religion, an example of shared collective representations and the paradigm of all advanced forms of theoretical knowledge. As Young (2003) remarks, it is the ‘sacred’ knowledge that is arbitrary and crucially collective in its nature. Because each society in each epoch develops its own religion to express the general social relations of that particular society, religion is context-based (Durkheim, 1995: 33–34). However, it is the way that religion negotiates boundaries between the material and immaterial worlds that epitomises the nature of theoretical abstract knowledge.

Inspired by Durkheimian ideas of ‘sacred’ knowledge above, Bernstein develops esoteric knowledge as the means through which society navigates between the concerns of everyday life and a ‘transcendental’ realm (Bernstein, 2000: 29). This navigating function of meanings allows esoteric knowledge to ‘make connections’ between objects and events that are not obviously related’ and to ‘project beyond the present to a future or alternative world’ (Young, 2003: 102-103). For Durkheim, the capacity of such knowledge as well as the means of its acquisition is a precondition for the creation of the social bonds within and thus the existence of any society. On the contrary, for Bernstein, it enables individuals to transcend the limits of material (individual) experience, to see beyond appearances to the real nature of relations in the (natural and social) world (Wheelahan, 2007). In short, Bernstein (2000) insists that all societies need to connect the known and the unknown, the thinkable and the unthinkable, the here and the not here, the specific and the general, and the past, present and future. This capacity is a precondition for the existence of society.

2.3.2 Mundane Knowledge

Unlike esoteric knowledge, mundane knowledge is contextually specific. It is tied to particular social positions involving one's school and family cultures, or 'habitus' in Bourdieu's word (Apple, 2006; Maton, 2011). The meaning of mundane knowledge is only understandable within that specific context and the material base it rests upon. Because meaning is context specific, it is consumed by that context and cannot easily be applied elsewhere. This explains why it is difficult for mundane knowledge to be a driver of change beyond the context in which it is enacted. Indeed, Bernstein (2000: 157) emphasises that mundane knowledge is 'likely to be oral, local, context dependent and specific, tacit, multi-layered and contradictory across but not within contexts'. The principle through which knowledge is selected and applied is relevance to the local context - usually the site in which learning that knowledge (and how to apply it) takes place. This means that meanings, knowledge and competences acquired in one context (or segment) do not necessarily have meaning or relevance in another (Bernstein, 2000: 159).

It is important to note that Bernstein's primary concern is with social rather than epistemic relations of knowledge (Apple, 2002, Wheelahan, 2007). In order to stress the contextuality and relationality of meanings and connecting them to their material bases, Bernstein extends Durkheim's theory to posit that the classification of 'knowledges' as esoteric and mundane is fundamentally symptomatic of a society's given distribution of power and its social ideologies and relations.

By distinguishing between the two categories of knowledge, Bernstein argues that esoteric knowledge is the powerful knowledge constituting 'the site for the unthinkable, the site of the impossible and of the yet to be thought' (Bernstein, 2000: 30). A similar point is made by Bourdieu (1992): Because it has the potential to transform knowledge and its use to understand the world, esoteric knowledge carries the potential to change the social distribution of power, and in doing so, creates *other worlds*.

Because esoteric knowledge generates meanings that create and unite two worlds: the everyday world and the transcendental world, there must be an indirect relation between these meanings and specific material base. In this sense, the meanings themselves create a gap or a space, called 'a potential discursive gap' (Bernstein, 2000: 30). By 'a potential discursive gap', Bernstein means the gap/ space that can become a site for alternative possibilities, for alternative realisations of the relation between the material and the immaterial. In other words, it is the gap/ space for the unthinkable, of the impossible, the meeting point of order and disorder of coherence and incoherence, the crucial site of the 'yet

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to be thought'. It is the nature of being 'potential', 'beneficial' but 'dangerous' of the gap that gravitates the analysis towards the politics and struggles revolving around its fulfilment (or not) that the notion of the pedagogic device captures precisely. Because esoteric knowledge represents the key to 'the impossible', it carries with it power and status and is subject to being regulated by the distributive rules and recontextualising. The former regulates who to provide access to esoteric knowledge to (some students but not others), and the latter seeks to transform that knowledge in ways that contain its radical nature. (Bernstein, 2000: 31). The problem may lie in the process through which esoteric knowledge is transformed into and 'becomes' mundane knowledge as the data analysis in Chapter Seven later will illustrate.

2.3.3 Critical Thinking and Esoteric Knowledge

The review I have presented up to this point is to justify my argument for a new way of investigating critical thinking curricula. I have argued for a move beyond universal formulations of critical thinking to take seriously and challenge the dimensions of politics and social relations inherent in this subject. This approach to research on critical thinking can be made possible with the conceptual framework of mundane and esoteric knowledges, whose division is set out by Bernstein and Durkheim in the sociology of knowledge. This last sub-section justifies my argument for critical thinking to stand paradigmatically as a form and a means to the acquisition of esoteric knowledge. The reasons are two-fold.

Firstly, critical thinking is theoretical and conceptual subject knowledge, focusing on the development of a range of modes of knowing and reasoning rather than a specific and accumulated body of facts contained in particular academic or social domains. Evidence of this can be seen in the generalists' position delineated in Section 2.1 (p. 41). Even for the specificists who argue that critical thinking can only be developed through in-depth immersion in the various academic disciplines, their argument nevertheless focuses upon the cultivation of selected thinking skills rather than proficiency in the subject matter itself. Critical thinking and knowledge acquired from it has 'an unbounded quality' and therefore allows for effective responses to unlimited situations (Barnett, 1997: 81). This concept of critical thinking suggests the nature of being unconstrained by any direct relations to a material base, which characterises esoteric knowledge and meanings accrue from it, as explained above.

Secondly, in emphasising a set of skills that relate mainly to argumentation, analysis, questioning, reflective scepticism, etc., critical thinking introduces modes of experiencing the world that encourage individuals to probe and problematise what is often taken for granted. These essential competencies of critical thinking allow a ‘deep understanding of [theoretical] concepts’ which figure powerfully in opening up new ways of ‘taking up a stance against the world’ (Barnett, 1997: 1). These critical ways of acting remain ‘unthinkable’ with a command of mundane knowledge. In this sense, the teaching of the subject contributes to the creation of the potential discursive gap and indicates the possibility of ‘an alternative power relation’ (Bernstein, 2000: 30).

As I mentioned earlier in Section 2.3.1 (p. 61), esoteric knowledge is essentially contextually dependent; thus, viewing critical thinking as esoteric knowledge demands research to ground its object of analysis in its specific contemporary socio-cultural and political discourse. This also implies that critical thinking can be perceived differently in different societies, depending on the dominant socio-political ideologies of each country. Although addressing the significance of socio-cultural and political discourses is critical in research approaches, it has remained undertaken not only in the field of critical thinking, as being reviewed above but also in the field of curriculum studies. A few exceptions include Apple (2019), Young (1971), Goodson et al. (1998). What has often been taken is an understanding of curriculum as ‘theory of content’ (Deng, 2009; Doyle, 2009). In the context of developing countries in Asia, there have been works seeking and reporting how governments in these countries mobilise national curricula to respond to challenges and demands brought about by globalisation and modern socio-economic and socio-political environments (Mok, 2006; Harman et al., 2010, Marginson et al., 2014, Grossman, 2008; Tan, 2006). Unfortunately, none of these works foregrounds the relations between the organisation of curriculum knowledge and the production of social identities (Lim, 2016). By bringing this approach into discussion, I do not mean it is worthless to address critical but instrumental questions about curriculum subjects, such as what represents in the content; what its teaching involves; or what realisations it entails. Indeed, Deng (2009: 585) emphasises knowing the content of a curriculum subject should go beyond knowing the content per se; it should entail ‘an understanding of the underlying theory of content, which is necessary for disclosing and realising the educational potential embodied in the content’. However, what it has not been able to do is to consider ‘content’ in relation to the fundamental sociological distinction between mundane and esoteric ‘knowledges’. An absence of this examination yields incomplete insights into the socio-political dimensions of

the process of recontextualisation of critical thinking where pedagogic rules regulate and control who has access to what type of knowledge, by whom and how (Bernstein, 2000).

Since this thesis investigates the teaching of critical thinking in content and (English) language integrated learning (CLIL), the acquisition of esoteric knowledge in this discourse may involve the development of disciplinary knowledge and skills through an ‘access to the (English) language in which (disciplinary) knowledge is embedded., discussed, constructed or evaluated’ (Coyle et al., 2010). In other words, it requires teachers to be fully aware of the interrelated relationship between language and thought (Vygotsky, 1978; Halpern, 2014, Brown, 2007).

Summary

This chapter documents the formulations of critical thinking, the field of knowledge production of critical thinking and the position of critical thinking as esoteric knowledge in the division of sociology of knowledge. It looks at how the critical thinking movement has over time been involved in debates to promote a concept of critical thinking that consists of a set of generic logic skills, a universal formulation of standards and a promise for emancipation and autonomy. The chapter points out that this Western democracy-based assumption of critical thinking is detached from social and political contexts of its practice. Therefore, the transmission of critical thinking across contexts can be problematic. Finally, it argues for a need for research to approach critical thinking curricula from a cultural and socio- political point of view. The next chapter will establish a theoretical conceptual framework, which draws largely on Bernstein’s (1977, 2000, 2003) code theory and the key concept of the pedagogic device. This framework will be used to interpret the interview data later in Chapters Five, Six, Seven, and Eight.

Chapter Three: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Pedagogic Device, Classification and Framing

Introduction

This chapter lays out in detail Bernstein's code theory and the related concepts which I later depend on for the analysis of how critical thinking is perceived, taught and evaluated in higher education (HE) in Việt Nam. In Chapter Two (pp. 59-61), I introduced briefly some of Bernstein's key ideas and concepts, including recontextualisation and the pedagogic device. I also argued that educational research in curriculum content should acknowledge the distinction between mundane and esoteric 'knowledges' to address educational, social and political exigences. I justified in that same chapter, as well, the need to treat critical thinking as esoteric knowledge. This chapter delineates further those concepts to help the research foreground the transformation of knowledge (critical thinking) into pedagogic communication (Bernstein, 2000).

The chapter includes three sections. Together they justify and highlight the need to apply Bernstein's theory in educational research, especially in the curriculum field. The first section focuses on reviewing what critics have said about Bernstein's theory and proving how these views are limited. The second section outlines the theory development in the field of curriculum studies and where Bernstein's theory fits within that field. This serves as the base for section three where I lay out a full discussion of Bernstein's concepts, including the pedagogic device, classification and framing. The notion of the pedagogic device is highlighted here to justify that its constitutive 'rules' allow me to problematise the transmission of critical thinking across ideological contexts and spaces.

3.1 Bernstein's Code Theory and Its Critics

Before I foreground Bernstein's concepts in detail, it is important to highlight some criticism of Bernstein's work. Being aware of such criticism helps me avoid rewording his ideas without reflection. Theoretically and empirically, researchers often avoid using Bernstein's complex ideas for their projects probably because 'His ideas do not translate easily into simple formulae' Atkinson (2001: 37). It is understandable, for Bernstein develops his theory at the time when educational and social issues experience significant paradigm shifts, i.e.,

from positivism to interpretivism and academic to applied (Tyler, 2010). In this sense, much of his work represents ‘a search for the basic concepts themselves’ (Bernstein, 1977: 1). However, what makes this ‘search’ significant and influential is the insights he intelligently synthesises from essential theoretical orientations, including Durkheimian, Weberian, Marxist and interactionist (Sadovnick, 2010). While developing the theory from 1960s to 1990s Bernstein drew prominent ideas from significant theorists and writers working at different periods, including Michael Halliday, Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault, and Michael Apple (Bernstein, 1977; 2000; 2003; Cause 2010; Apple, 2002, Moore, 2013). These theorists and their emerging intellectual currents in sociology of education and culture, linguistics, political curriculum, and philosophy raise Bernstein’s awareness and continuously inform him during the process of constructing his own concepts. This, indeed, makes Bernstein’s work something that ‘deserves to be built upon’ (Atkinson, 2005: 382).

The structure of Bernstein’s concepts has also been critiqued as no more than simple dichotomies (Pring, 1975). This is, indeed, a misunderstanding, as Bernstein (2000: 23) clarifies, in his theory concepts ‘together perform’ the conceptual works.

The whole application of the theory has, from the beginning, been critiqued for being too ambiguous for operational levels. In Walford’s words, ‘The complexity is such that the original illuminative nature of the concepts has been obscured’ (Walford, 1995: 118). Walford echoes King (1981), who also critiques Bernstein’s concepts on the grounds of theoretical and empirical evidence. These criticisms are not necessarily true, since in most of his publications (See Bernstein, 1977, 2000, 2003), Bernstein supports his work with empirical research he himself and other researchers are involved in using his theory as theoretical foundation.

More recently, a large body of empirical research has applied Bernstein’s theory as a convincing way to explore teaching, learning and curriculum issues (Moore et al., 2006; Davies, 2010). Specifically, the concept ‘pedagogic discourse’ has been used to investigate how pedagogic practices in Portugal can be enhanced (Morais, 2002). McPhai (2016) applies the notion of ‘recontextualisation principles’ to look into the impact of constructivism on the formation of consciousness in New Zealand. The application of Bernstein’ ideas to educational policy and practice can also be found in the work of Sarakinioti et al. (2011), who look at the fundamental transformations in the production, transmission and acquisition of knowledge in Europe against the global, regional and national education policy contexts and their interactions. Setting his empirical research in Iceland, Geirsdóttir (2011) uses ‘pedagogic discourse’ to explore the role of university teachers as curriculum developers. In

the context of South Africa, Shay (2011) draws on the work of Bernstein and Maton to analyse the formation of an undergraduate history curriculum and identify the promotion of different student identities.

Another vast body of empirical research has used Bernsteinian analyses to address mainly two socio-political problems raised by Bernstein (2000) and Muller (2004): the effects of ‘economising’ educational systems on curriculum and pedagogy and the problem of whether educational systems relay or interrupt hierarchies in society. In the context of HE, pervasive research has been done to look into how university curricula and pedagogy in different disciplines are affected by contemporary complexities and contestations. These include contestations in credit-accumulation and disciplinary discourses (Ensor, 2004), moral issues (Rosie et al., 2001), the dynamic of curriculum development processes (Vorster, 2011), access to powerful knowledge (Wheelahan, 2007), the relationship between knowledge structures and curricula (Luckett, 2009) and the curriculum and pedagogic practice (Lilliedah, 2015). There have also been interests in structures of knowledge in intellectual fields. Maton (2006) elaborates conceptually the distinction between knowledge and knowers while Moore and Muller (2002) explore the conditions for the vertical knowledge structure to grow. Luckett (2009) focuses on the relationship between knowledge structure and curriculum structure, while McLean et al. (2013) look into how university knowledge, curriculum and pedagogy reproduce and interrupt social inequalities. Still other researchers have focused on the impact of neo-liberal values on HE identities. Specifically, Beck (2002) looks at the consequences of market-oriented curricula for identity change; Beck and Young (2005) analyse challenges to the formation of inwardness and inner dedication. Tyler (2010) investigates the relationship between knowledge, pedagogy and media. Finally, Abbas et al. (2012), through the analysis of the framings of ‘a high-quality undergraduate education’, shed light into how neoliberal HE policies have increased inequality in England.

While I agree that Bernstein’s ideas are complex and do not lend themselves easily towards providing an adequate and straightforward description, I suggest that they should be used as an analytical tool for curriculum studies, especially HE curricula that wish to realise social realities of schooling – how a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge (Bernstein, 1977; 2000). The justification for my choice of Bernstein’s theory to explore how critical thinking is taught and regulated by the social political climate in Việt Nam is fourfold.

Firstly, built on the basic structures and principles of the curriculum field, Bernstein's work provides a very convincing way to investigate how society, through the distribution of power, class relations and the principals of control, acts to reproduce difference and social status (Young and Muller, 2007; Cause, 2010). More significantly, the 'language of description' of the curriculum focuses on 'the structure of knowledge relations and boundary relations' rather than knowledge contents (Young, 2007: 152). Therefore, it is able to guide approaches to knowledge change in HE through identifying links between forms of knowledge organisation and learner and professional identities.

Secondly, a Bernsteinian analysis allows me to unpack the possible underpinning ideological assumptions and their social political discourses embedded into the critical thinking curriculum. This also means a break from the prevalent instrumental approach which curriculum studies and the critical thinking movement have, for a long time, been familiar with. However, I believe it is necessary to do so because, as Bernstein (1977) suggests, any educational researcher should develop certain understanding of differences within, change in and the organisation, transmission and evaluation of educational knowledge. In other words, educational research and an understanding of the very ways and processes through which the curriculum mediates the social order are indispensable.

Thirdly, the application of Bernstein's ideas in the context of Asia has still been limited, with a few contributors from Singapore and Taiwan (See Sadovnik, 2010, for example). The research trends reviewed above (pp. 68- 69) have mostly been carried out in the field of sociology, natural and social sciences in the contexts of the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Europe, Africa, New Zealand and Australia (Sadovnik, 2010; Vitale and Exley, 2016; Frandji and Vitale, 2016). Using Bernstein's ideas to investigate how critical thinking is transmitted and realised in HE has rarely been heard in Việt Nam and in other Asian countries which share similar social political frameworks. Grounding his thesis in the work of Bernstein (1977, 2000, 2003), Lim (2016) is able to develop a powerful analysis focusing on how critical thinking is transmitted and realised in the context of secondary schools in Singapore. Lim's work serves as a starting point for me to develop this thesis to explore how critical thinking is realised at the tertiary level in Việt Nam with its unique socio-political climate. In this sense, my work will contribute its part to the wide literature of critical thinking and curriculum studies and more specifically the application of Bernstein's theory.

Lastly, and most significantly, the development of Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse over the past two decades has held great, though largely unrealised, potential for

an understanding of contemporary issues such as market-oriented educational reforms where ‘The boundaries of educational institutions are continually eroded through the applications of technology-driven and neo-liberal reform’ (Tyler, 2004: 16). Tyler’s acknowledgement of Bernstein has been supported by empirical research. For example, Iverson (2011) comments that in a world where universities are required to service society and demonstrate their functional use, Bernstein’s sociology allows issues such as learning and the limits to the possibilities for knowing and contemporary anxieties about shifts in knowledge (esoteric to mundane, content to skills) to be realised. Given that massification and marketisation have, in past decades, been on the agenda of Vietnamese HE reforms (Vietnamese Government, 2001), Bernstein’s analysis is valuable for understanding the underlying socio-political ideologies that may foster or limit the transmission of critical thinking into curricula and classroom practices.

So far, by bringing in some criticisms about Bernstein’s ideas and critiquing them, I have made initial efforts to justify the benefit of using Bernstein’s analysis for research in critical thinking and curricula in general.

3.2 From Contemporary Curriculum Studies Theories to Bernstein’s Theory

Unlike the period before 1970s when curriculum studies mostly constrained itself to effective transmission of knowledge, over the past decades the curriculum field has seen a proliferation of research that has sought to address multiple discourses through which power relations have structured experiences and identities (Glatthorn, 2005). These post-modernist, post-colonialist and post-structuralist movements, inspired by the social constructivist approach, have engaged in wide theoretical approaches, including pragmatism, neoliberalism, cultural studies, feminism, hermeneutics and critical theory, to name just a few (Slattery, 2006; Young, 2007). The curriculum development in this postmodern era has taken to heart a commitment to ‘a robust investigation of cultural, ethnic, gender and identity issues’ (Slattery, 2006: 146).

Among these progressive theories, the theory on cultural reproduction by Bourdieu (1984, 1989, 1990, 1991) is probably one of the most significant. Through empirical research Bourdieu argues that the school system is an ‘institutional classifier’, whose culture is set by the dominant culture of or class in society. The cultural classes in school ‘mirror’ the classes within broader society, and students (agents) struggle for capital – credentials or values and styles of the dominant class in society (Cause, 2010). Bourdieu, like other cultural

reproduction theories, is pre-occupied with examining school discourses and their power to reproduce dominant social relations and consciousness. Such analysis is powerful in dealing with the problems HEIs and societies are facing (Pinar, 2004). However, there is a limitation. For Bernstein (2003), theories of cultural reproduction are concerned with messages of patterns of dominance but bias the codes of communication and the consciousness of the dominated groups within the institutions. In other words, they lack principles of description of their own objects. While Bernstein (2003) acknowledges theories of cultural production, especially Bourdieu's concepts of field, cultural capital and habitus (Bernstein, 2003), Bernstein critiques Bourdieu and Passeron (1977):

The only concepts available for the analysis of the forms, practices, and contents of educational agencies are concepts such as arbitrary authority, arbitrary communication, pedagogic authority, pedagogic communication, pedagogic work, habitus. There is no way, on the basis of such concepts that one can generate an empirical description of any specific agency of cultural reproduction. Thus, we have a cultural reproduction/ resistance and pedagogic discourse critique which cannot generate the principles of description of the agencies of their concerns (Bernstein, 2003: 171).

For Bernstein, a theory of cultural reproduction like that of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) appears to treat education as 'a relay for power relations external to it' (Ibid: 168). He critiques general theories of cultural reproduction for their primary concerns about what has been reproduced in, and by, education rather than the systematic analysis of the pedagogic practice as a cultural relay, e.g. the cultural practice inherent in the educational process. He puts:

It is as if pedagogic discourse is itself no more than a relay for power relations external to itself; a relay whose form has no consequences for what is relayed (Ibid: 166)

While Bernstein acknowledges it is essential that pedagogic communication is a relay for patterns of dominance external to it, he questions what, in these theories, has gone unexamined: a medium to make the relaying possible. 'It is as if', for Bernstein, means that these theories treat this medium as 'somehow bland, neutral as air' (Ibid: 169). This helps to explain why for so long, as Davies (2010: 6) puts it, 'Pedagogy had no voice of its own'. Drawing in an analogy of a carrier wave, Bernstein (2003) further illuminates the point:

One can distinguish between the carrier and what is carried. What is carried depends upon the fundamental properties of the wave . . . What of pedagogic communication?

We know what it carries but what is the structure that allows, enables it to be carried? (Ibid: 169).

The questions Bernstein has raised above challenge curriculum studies in a new direction. Rather than starting with the analysis of how power positions students in 'relation to' curriculum or 'privileging text' (Ibid: 173), Bernstein requests that researchers need to first inquire into the constitutive 'relation within' the curriculum. Doing so requires considering issues, such as how the curriculum knowledge is constructed, what rules regulate its construction, transmission and acquisition and what its relation to other discourses can be. Previous models developed out of those theories before Bernstein lack the language to do so. Specifically, they have no language to describe micro contexts, e.g. codes of transmission, pedagogic codes, modalities of elaborating codes and macro-contexts (Bernstein, 2003). It is these deficiencies that urge Bernstein to develop the code theory and its principles of classification and framing, which will be reviewed later in this chapter.

This new direction in curriculum studies is significant. It actually complements what the critical turn, marked by progressive theories of cultural reproductions or transformation, has not adequately addressed. Bernstein's theory, with a connection between *internal* and *external* relations, can help address the 'educational dilemma' that Young (2007: 28) raises: Either the knowledge embodied in the curriculum is objectively given, or it arises from the competing interests of powerful groups, who legitimate 'their' knowledge and exclude that of others. Since Bernstein's theory has a specified language of descriptions, which regulates the construction of curriculum and its relation to agents (relations within), it allows analyses of what knowledge to be transmitted or acquired and how. In other words, it allows researchers to specify or reveal the relations of curriculum to the consciousness of students as well as to the social and political order.

Despite all the above, it would be erroneous to assume by now that Bernstein's theory is perfect. Bernstein's approach to knowledge tends to create epistemological issues. On the one hand, Bernstein opposes content-dominated approach to curriculum knowledge for its impact on class reproduction (Tyler, 2006). On the other hand, in critiquing progressive education for its impact on reproduction of inequality, Bernstein assumes natural sciences as the only form of knowledge that has objectivity (Young and Muller, 2007; Young, 2007). Given that my purpose is to investigate knowledge production in a discipline located in social sciences (Business English Studies) and that inquiry in these disciplinary processes differently (Young, 2007), Bernstein's epistemological limitation needs to be bridged. Towards this end, Cassirer's (2000) notion of 'symbolic objectivity', which is open to the

potential of objectivity in all forms of knowledge (Young and Muller, 2007) becomes helpful.

To summarise, the sub-section has reviewed the key theoretical features of the progressive theories and also highlighted how Bernstein's theory complements their limitation with its unique 'fundamental grammar' of the curriculum. It addresses the need to complement Bernstein's theory with a Cassirer's idea of objectivity open to all disciplines. The next sub-section will lay out in detail Bernstein's concepts to be used in my research.

3.3 Codes and the Pedagogic Device

The above remarks have established a base for this section to foreground Bernstein's code theory (1977, 2000, 2003), which illuminates how HEIs, as a strong independent force, can act essentially to shape student identities and their views of the world. Specifically, the section will delineate the concepts of the pedagogic device, classification and framing as well as the concept of ideology in Bernstein's theory.

3.3.1 The Pedagogic Device

The section above has pointed out that most theories before Bernstein tend to focus on what is relayed in pedagogic communication but not the relay itself. This limitation gives rise to the development of the pedagogic device to give pedagogic discourse its intrinsic features. For Bernstein (2000), the pedagogic device constitutes rules by which knowledge is transmitted into pedagogic communication and converted into 'the privileging text' (curriculum). It regulates the pedagogic communication, which in turn, acts selectively on what knowledge is available to be put in the curriculum and taught. It also regulates the ideally potential pedagogic meanings in such a way as to 'restrict or enhance their realisations' (Bernstein, 2000: 27). To simply put, in teaching and learning, the pedagogic device guides the selection and organisation of what is to count as legitimate knowledge and its realisation.

The pedagogic device operates through three inter-related hierarchically rules: distributive rules, recontextualising rules and evaluative rules. Following this, the distributive rules regulate the recontextualising rules, which in turn, regulate the evaluative rules.

3.3.1.1 The Distributive Rules

As Bernstein (2003: 96) explains, the distributive rules ‘mark and distribute who may transmit what to whom and under what conditions and . . . attempt to set the outer limits of legitimate discourse’. In doing so they also ‘mediate the social order through distributing different forms of knowledge and consciousness to diverse social groups’ (Wong and Apple, 2003: 82).

In Chapter Two (pp. 61- 64), I discussed the division between ‘the thinkable’ (mundane knowledge) and ‘the unthinkable’ (esoteric knowledge) and the potential discursive gap for the unthinkable to be realised. In this division of the sociology of knowledge, the distributive rules control both the ‘unthinkable’ and ‘those who may think it’ (Bernstein, 2003: 183). They also specify ‘the unthinkable’ as ‘the possibility of the impossible’ (Bernstein, 2000: 29) and set the limits of ‘the possibility’ on consciousness, identity and social relations to ‘Where consciousness can change, where new material realities can be imagined, where new identities are envisioned and where new social relations might be realised’ (Au, 2009: 122). University mechanism, curriculum standards and syllabi, their ‘appropriate’ content and evaluative system are often subject to the scrutiny of the distributive rules. So are teachers’ curricular engagement, textbook publications, textbook adoption by educational institutions and the state mandated curriculum standards.

It may be useful to repeat here that in this thesis, the ‘unthinkable’ refers to critical thinking in language and content integrated learning programmes. In this context, it is the ability to speak, read and create new disciplinary knowledge through the language of English. The above features and functions of the distributive rules have implications for critical thinking curricula because critical thinking, through required logic skills, such as analysing and evaluating contradictions and drawing cautious conclusions, encourages individuals to look beyond the surface for alternative models of reality (usually covered). It is from this knowledge tradition that great thinkers and their progressive ideas in all fields over time have been born (Paul, Elder & Bartell, 1997). When critical thinking is engaged, it promises endless possible alternatives and also allows challenge of any established set of social relations. However, concerns should be raised over whether there are restrictions on what students may think critically about or how such restrictions (if there are any) may be constituted through the very discourse on critical thinking.

Significantly, in such countries like Việt Nam where democracy is defined as socialist and/ or grassroot democracy (See more in Chapter One, p. 46), the distributive rules need to address such issues as the right to access to critical thinking, the role of critical thinking to social and political order, as well as the way to separate out who does not develop these competencies and solutions for them. While these questions are not easy to address, they are fundamental to critical curriculum inquiries. Adopting the pedagogic device for my thesis, I need to be fully aware of these questions. Indeed, I dealt with some of these in Chapter One (pp. 14-22), where I considered the political consciousness of Việt Nam, particularly as it revolves around the ideologies (and tensions) of deep-rooted Confucianism, socialist democracy and neoliberalism.

3.3.1.2 The Recontextualising Rules

An understanding of the recontextualising rules requires an understanding of pedagogic discourse (pedagogic principle indeed). According to Bernstein (2003: 184), pedagogic discourse is the rule which embeds instructional discourse into regulative discourse. While the former refers to the transmission of specialised competencies (skills of various kinds) and their relations to each other, the latter refers to the transmission or creation of specialised order, relation and identity. In this relationship, the latter always dominates the former. In other words, the establishment of moral order of the classroom is a condition for the transmission of skills (Singh, 2002). What needs to be emphasised here is these two discourses should be treated as one, although most researchers continue to (mis)understand that they are two. The critical thinking movement and how it has promoted critical thinking as a set of universal de-contextualised skills (As discussed in Chapter Two, pp. 40- 45) is one example.

After the distributive rules have established what to be transmitted by whom, to whom and how, the recontextualising principle ‘selectively appropriates, relocates, refocuses and relates other discourses to constitute its own order’ (Bernstein, 2000: 33). The process of selecting and creating ‘specialised pedagogic subjects through its contexts and content’ (Ibid: 31) may involve moving knowledge from one place to another, e.g. from outside of education into it, and/ or from across different socio-political contexts. This is where space emerges for ideology to play. When being moved from its original site of production into the site of education, knowledge becomes text or the product of recontextualisation, the question can be raised is who writes the text or ‘voice’ (Moore, 2013: 164)?

To capture the dynamic of power relations in recontextualisation, it is important to understand the two fields that the recontextualising rules operate in: the official recontextualising field (ORF) and the pedagogic recontextualising field (PRF). Agents involving in the process of symbolic control in the ORF often include state officials, pedagogic agencies, ministries or other significant international funding agencies, while dominant in the PRF are curriculum planners, researchers, publishing houses and so on. It is important to note here that these agents, who have power in the new context don't produce knowledge. Rather they *reproduce* it by de-locating knowledge from its original location and relocating it into the new pedagogic discourse. In this way, knowledge becomes 'text', and since 'text' undergoes appropriation, 'text' is 'no longer the same text' (Bernstein, 2003: 60). It indeed reflects conflicts and tensions in interpretations, appropriations, implementations and political interests both *within* and *between* the ORF and the PRF. Also, because 'The PRF is strong and has a certain level of autonomy from the ORF, the discourse it creates can impede official pedagogic discourse' (Wong and Apple, 2003: 85).

Bernstein's (2000: 34) illustration of physics textbook writers who are 'rarely' physicists practising in the field of production of physics can serve as a point of reference for the teaching of critical thinking the Vietnamese Business English programmes. Given that HE curricula in Việt Nam are textbook-based (Đỗ and Đỗ, 2014), the questions can be raised here are who 'recontextualises' knowledge in textbooks in business, especially prescribed cases for problem solving practices; how close these prescribed cases are to reality; whether students after learning how to solve prescribed cases will be able to solve real problems in the workplace. Other concerns can be who teaches the specialised business knowledge; whether they are teachers practicing business themselves or they are teachers who 'reproduce' or imagine business and teach students to think critically in this imaginary world of business; what the impacts are.

The above account of recontextualisation goes against the common view in the literature that assumes critical thinking can be taught as a set of universal skills independent of social and political contexts. Based on Bernstein's idea that the instructional discourse and the regulative discourse are always hierarchically embedded, teaching critical thinking should be treated as a complex process. In the case of Việt Nam, for example, it needs to be first de-located from its Western liberal democratic ideologies and then relocated into the educational discourse of the Confucian-rooted hierarchy - socialist democracy and neo-liberalist social order. Here the discussion of classification and framing below (pp. 80- 82) is relevant. As the recontextualising rules suggest and my data analysis later will prove, a subject curriculum may in fact be recontextualised to foster dissimilar competences. It can

happen by varying the classificatory relations (ways subjects are positioned in the curriculum) and by varying the strength frames (modes of control over what is considered legitimate achievement). The distinction between the ORF and the PRF will guide the analysis in Chapter Six and Seven towards non-conformist even contradictory roles that universities, teachers and curriculum developers may play in translating official definitions of critical thinking into the classroom. Obviously, even in Việt Nam, a traditionally strong state (Lim and Apple, 2016) with its highly regulated national curriculum, pedagogic recontextualisation is never determined unilaterally.

3.3.1.3 The Evaluative Rules

The evaluative rules are the discourse where orders of meanings selected in the recontextualising discourse are translated into students' consciousness through pedagogic translation. At the classroom level, they 'define the standards which must be reached . . . act[ing] selectively on contents, the forms of transmission, and their distribution to different groups . . . in different contexts' (Bernstein, 2000: 115). The rules here have to contend with criteria that are specific to the transmission and acquisition of knowledge as they are represented in actual classrooms and internalised by students. While the distributive rules delineate the boundaries of consciousness and the recontextualising rules specify how knowledge is to be selectively appropriated into pedagogic discourse, the evaluative rules monitor the appropriate realisation of the pedagogic device by 'establishing the evaluation nodal points that are to be acquired, stipulating the specialized (sic) consciousness that should result' (Maton and Muller, 2007: 19). In the words of Bernstein, evaluation constructs consciousness. Due to possible contradictions, cleavages and dilemmas created by the three rules, pedagogic practices do not necessarily reproduce pedagogic discourse, and what is acquired is not necessarily what is transmitted.

Insights into evaluative rules are central to the data analysis discussed in Chapter Five (pp. 103- 134) and Chapter Six (pp. 135- 158). In these two chapters, the analyses of teachers' perceptions of critical thinking and their assumptions of students' readiness, cultural and linguistic backgrounds for its realisation will demonstrate essentially the discursive control that the pedagogic device has over identities and consciousness.

Taken all together, only at the micro level of pedagogic interaction is the pedagogic device able to embed power relations and specialised competencies into the curriculum and thus generate a 'symbolic ruler of consciousness' (Bernstein, 2003: 180).

3.3.2 Ideology in Bernstein's Theory

To Bernstein (1977), educational knowledge lies at heart of school experience and students' consciousness. Hence, his theory revolves around an analysis of educational knowledge as the major regulator of students' experience, identity and relation, through the three-message system: curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation. Specifically, it allows analyses of 'What counts as valid knowledge, what counts as valid transmission of knowledge, and what counts as valid realisation of such knowledge on the part of the taught' (Bernstein, 1977: 85). In this sense, Bernstein shares the same view with Bourdieu to claim that HEIs act as a social classifier or an agency to socialise and allocate students (Cause, 2010). However, Bernstein is more concerned about the intrinsic features of pedagogic discourse rather than the contents of any specific curriculum experience.

Bernstein (1977) sees education as an organisation of social and symbolic control. He seeks to understand how 'Different ways of selecting and putting curricular knowledge together produce different identities and relations in pedagogic contexts' (Singh, 1997: 120). Embedding in his analysis is the idea of ideology, which Bernstein (2003:14) believes is 'not so much a content as a mode of relation for the realising of contents'. Indeed, it is a way of making and realising relationships (Singh, 1997). In this view, how consciousness is organised is more important than what consciousness actually is (Apple, 2002). Therefore, Bernstein requests that curriculum studies should seek fundamental understanding of how the process of transmission and acquisition constructs ideology and how ideology manifests and regulates the modes of relations teachers internalise in students, through their perceptions of students' social backgrounds and pedagogic modalities.

It is important to note here that while Bernstein, through the use of language, establishes sound social, political and ideological grounds of 'the pedagogic device', this use of language also obscures 'the political and ideological position of his analysis' (Moore, 2013: 155). For Moore, Bernstein holds 'an ambiguous position'. In questioning progressive education, which is now also referred to as contemporary constructivist education, in its perceived relationship with traditional education, he does not explicitly declare which side he takes. This understanding is essential for me and informs me of the importance of stating my research position clearly (See Chapter Four, pp. 91- 92).

3.3.3 Code, Classification and Framing

3.3.3.1 Code

By now it is clear that it is the sociological big picture rather than the specific content of the curriculum that has motivated Bernstein to seek ways to develop the conceptual tools to describe the pedagogic communication, the curriculum structures and the identities they construct, as well as the knowledge transmitted and how students acquire it. Central to his undertaking is the concept of *code*. Bernstein (2003) defines code as ‘a regulative principle tacitly acquired, which selects and integrates (a) relevant meanings (b) forms of their realisation (c) evoking contexts’ (Ibid: 14). Codes must be understood together with the ideas of legitimate and illegitimate communication. This means codes, in selecting and integrating relevant/ legitimate forms of communication, presuppose inappropriate and illegitimate meanings. At the same time, they presuppose a hierarchy in forms of communication, their features and criteria. Thus, the unit for analysis of codes is the relationships not only *within* contexts but also *across* contexts to allow comparisons of their specialised meanings and forms of realisation. For Bernstein (2003), the concept of code regulates not only cognitive orientation but dispositions, identities and practices as well. More specifically, this ‘conceptual door’ (Hasan, 2002: 537) leads to an understanding of how these exigencies are differentially positioned and how and why social location constrains what is learnt and by whom. To clarify this meaning of codes even more clearly, a full explanation of the two concepts: classification and framing and the notion of boundary strength is required.

As I have mentioned before, Bernstein identifies in the theories before him ‘a limitation to their explanatory power’ (Moore, 2013: 128). Inspired by Durkheim (1995), he develops ‘classification’ and inspired by symbolic interactionism, he develops ‘framing’. Together, the conceptual framework provides that essential ‘explanatory power’.

3.3.3.2 Classification

Unlike the common use of classification to distinguish a defining attribute *of* a category, Bernstein’s concept of classification refers to ‘a defining attribute of the relations *between* categories’ (Bernstein, 2003: 6).

Bernstein argues that when a discourse is differently specialised, there will be a space for it to develop its own unique identity with its own internal rules and special voice. This space, however, is not internal to that discourse but between that discourse and another; in fact, to ‘all’ the discourses or categories (of knowledge, agents, agencies, practices) (Bernstein, 2003: 6). It is the degree of insulation between categories that decides the degree of strength of classification. When classification is strong, categories (contents) are well insulated from each other, and each develops its own unique identity and internal principles. In contrast, when classification is weak, the insulation between contents is reduced. The blurred boundaries make discourses become less specialised. It is through this maintenance of boundary that power relations are constructed into different discourses (Cause, 2010).

3.3.3.3 Framing

While classification refers to the boundary strength *between* categories, framing refers to control *within* contexts. It is useful to notice here that Bernsteinian ‘framing’ should not be confused with ‘framing’, commonly understood as the heart of any theoretical paradigm in the discourse analysis of interaction (Tannen, 1993) or interactional sociolinguistics (Goffman, 1974). In education, ‘framing’ has to do particularly with the degree of control teachers or/ and students have over the selection (what is to be taught or communicated), sequencing (how knowledge is organised), pacing (how much time needed for acquisition), evaluation (what constitutes a legitimate realisation), of the knowledge transmitted and acquired (Bernstein, 2003). In this sense, framing regulates interactional practices, specifying who can say what to whom and when. Where framing is strong, teachers have more explicit control over the interaction; where the boundary between what may or may not be transmitted becomes blurred, students have more apparent control over the communication. It is important to note here that control is *always present* even teachers and students may try to elicit it through negotiation, spontaneity or unique authorship (Bernstein, 2000).

The above discussion of the boundary insulation between categories can be referred to as external classification, and of the control over communication in local pedagogic practices as internal framing. It is now useful to highlight the internal values of classification and external values of framing, for they constitute the delicacy of Bernstein’s theory. According to Bernstein (2003), internal values of classification are *always present*, but often invisible, in any communicative realisation of the context. How a classroom is displayed, how the teacher positions themselves, how seating is arranged and how tasks are distributed

all provide the sense of whether that classroom space is itself internally classified strongly or weakly. In the same manner, the external values of framing refer to the controls over communication which is outside the pedagogic context but which enters pedagogic communication within that context. The following external framing between a doctor and a patient illustrated by Bernstein (2000) provides valuable insights into the implication of his theory:

If you are not paying it is no good telling a long story about your particular problem, because the doctor is almost certainly not interested in that. Here the pacing is very strong, there are many to see, and it is unlikely that the doctor will count this as legitimate communication (Ibid: 14).

Through the illustration, Bernstein highlights that different external values of the framing can exclude or include one's identity and biography (race, social class, gender) outside that context. In the context of teaching, different external values of framing drawn upon contextual discourses of students can include them or make it difficult for them to recognise themselves. This illustration, indeed, implies the dimensions of power, control and identity that Bernstein's fundamental concepts can help reveal.

Empirically, Muller and Gamble (2010) identify that the pedagogic codes for change are characterised by strong framing over external selection and evaluation criteria and weak framing over pacing and teacher – student relations. These modalities also emerge in my data analyses (See Chapter Five, p. 130 and Chapter Six, p. 150).

It is useful now to draw in an example of how classification and framing can be brought together and utilised in the classroom. Figure 3.1 below illustrates how Lộc, a teacher in BEP2, classified and framed critical thinking in his classes.

Figure 3.1

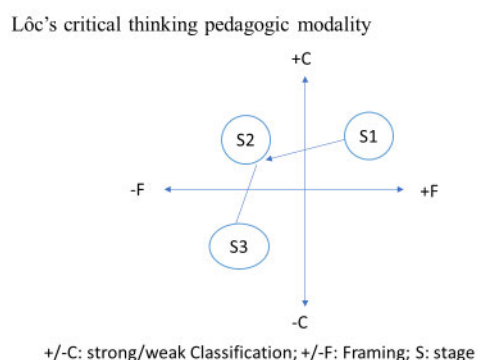


Figure 3.1 demonstrates how Lộc's pedagogic modalities of critical thinking can be coded. Lộc organised and developed critical thinking for his students through three stages.

In the first stage, he applied strong classification and strong framing values, e.g. locating critical thinking explicitly within each student's discipline or interest. Here he also regulated the selection of material for critical thinking strictly to ensure students internalised key theories and concepts necessarily for critical thinking. Moving to stage 2, Lộc weakened the framing by allowing students to choose their own material for critical thinking realisation but still confined to disciplinary interests. At stage three, students took control of the process of knowledge production. Here critical thinking could be open to critical thinking about any areas rather than constrained to specific discipline. Lộc's pedagogic codes are fully analysed in Chapter Five (pp. 132- 138).

To summarise, the principle of classification regulates '*What* discourse is to be transmitted and its relation to other discourses' in a curricular context. The principle of framing regulates '*How* the discourse is to be transmitted and acquired in the pedagogic context' (Bernstein, 2000: 100). When the theory is understood, classification (strong, weak) and framing (strong, weak) can be expanded or unpacked and translated into descriptions of an empirical kind (Moore, 2007). These two principles, classification and framing (strong/weak) will guide the analysis of the interview data later in Chapters Five and Six.

Before I move to the next subsection where the social and political implications of the theory will be highlighted, it is important to discuss two important features of code. First, classification and framing are conceptually independent with respect to the specification of pedagogic codes. As such, it can be possible that both weak classification and strong frame and strong classification and weak frames operate simultaneously within the same educational context. Given that code relates inevitably to notions of unequal power relations and social control, in these cases, the crucial questions can be raised as to who receives which code, at what age, and at what educational level. In the Vietnamese HE context, due to the contemporary pursuit of social constructivist approach in teaching and learning, critical thinking curricula may receive an open framing in social bases, as a result of the switch to student-centredness. However, content-loaded curriculum structures, capacity of students and traditional social hierarchy relationships between teachers/students and employers/employees may constrain framing in other aspects such as selection, pacing and sequencing. If this is empirically proven to be true, critical thinking can only be delivered and received in environments where teachers and students/ supervisors and interns are free from these constraints.

3.3.3.4 Power and Control

Central to the pedagogic device is power and control - the social, political and ideological dimensions of the theory (Moore, 2013). Located within the space where agents and power of different forces (the education system, the state, the economy and the civil society) function, the pedagogic device is social in its nature and thus has political and ideological implications. Here Bernstein shares Bourdieu's (1984) ideas of 'different social fields of power in and through which control is produced, regulated, maintained and changed' (Apple, 2002: 609).

As Bernstein points out, 'A theory of cultural reproduction has to be able, in the same theory, to translate micro into macro, and macro into micro, with the same concepts' (Bernstein, 2003: 170). Thus, the two concepts classification and framing above carry with them power and control, in the respective order, considering dominant social relations. On this perspective, principles of classification are maintained by power relations that 'create boundaries, legitimate boundaries, and reproduce boundaries between different categories of groups . . . of discourse . . . of agents' (Bernstein, 2000: 5). Since power always operates to produce dislocations in social space, any challenge to the insulation between categories necessarily provoke measures by dominant agents to restore the principle of classification (Bernstein, 2003).

Bernstein emphasises that the arbitrary nature of these power relations is always disguised by the principle of classification. In Bernstein's theory, 'Insulation is the means whereby the cultural is transformed into the natural, the contingent into the necessary' (Bernstein, 2003: 25). In this sense, insulation is similar to 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu, 1984, 1989), which is accomplished 'not by communication but by de-locations that regulate differences between voices' (Bernstein, 2003: 25). The idea of 'ideology as modes of relation' becomes significant here. In the case of Việt Nam, ideologies of the CPVN, the dominant ruling class (Chapter One, pp. 14- 33), often determine principles of classification. These principles, when transformed into curriculum organisations and pedagogic practices, in turn, introduce modes of relation that position social categories in a way that insulate them from each other to suppress the contradictions that inhere in their very arbitrariness.

While power constructs relations *between* categories, the notion of control, which refers to framing, constructs relations *within* a context or category. It 'establishes legitimate forms of communication appropriate to different categories and carries the boundary relations of power and socialise individuals into these relationships' (Bernstein, 2003: 5). In this sense, control refers to the nature of pedagogic communication between teachers and

students. Control, realised by framing, provides realisation rules (of what is made available, how and when it is made available, and social relationships), while power relations, determined by classification principles, provide recognition rules for separating out distinct categories and their specialised ‘voices’ (Bernstein, 1977).

As control is always inherent in whatever pedagogic context, what varies is ‘the form’ – the framing- control takes (Bernstein, 1977). It is in these various forms of pedagogic modalities that the politics of curriculum reveals, given that principles of control regulate framing vis-a-vis its social relations. As the data analysis later will show, teachers and students in the two programmes under study, in exploring and acquiring critical thinking, at times challenged and resisted this ‘official’ curriculum. This demonstrates that, ‘Control is double faced’, carrying ‘both the power of reproduction and the potential for its change’ (Bernstein, 2000: 5). While power/ classification regulates control/ framing, it is the latter that provides the crucial means of disrupting the former. Bernstein (2003: 39) writes, ‘Any framing carries with it the procedures of its disturbances and challenge’. The notion of ‘structuration’ made by Giddens (1990) is relevant here. ‘To study the structuration of a social system is to study the modes whereby that system, through the application of generative rules and resources, is produced and reproduced in social interaction’ (Ibid: 66).

The implications of the above concepts for the teaching of critical thinking can be that the strong/ weak classification between fundamental and theoretical abstract knowledge and between the inner consciousness of learners and the outer abstract structure of the world decide whether critical thinking can be accessed or not. Strong classification may prevent teachers from overstepping the boundary between contents and therefore reduce their power over what to be transmitted. Similarly, strong framing suggests the weak power of students over what, when and how they receive knowledge but increased power of teachers.

3.3.4 Identities: Esoteric and Mundane

As the section above has shown, power and control give the concept of code a significant meaning at the social level. At the individual level, pedagogic identities are determined by both the classification of curricular knowledge and the strength of framing. In Bernstein’s (2000: 205) terms, they are the outcome of ‘relation between’ and ‘relations within’.

Principally, identity refers to ‘the inwardness’ of the self, shaped by discursive orderings embedded in the socially structured relationships (Beck, 2002). This understanding actively foregrounds the social and political base of identity. For Bernstein

(2000), social base and career are two fundamental dimensions of a pedagogic identity. This means in a student's identity, there is an embedding of social orders and desire institutionalised by the state in the educational system and the moral, knowledge and locational aspects of the student's job. In this way, identity can be understood as the 'subjective consequences of pedagogic discursive specialisation' (Bernstein, 2000: 203). The following explains how two such distinctive 'subjective consequences': mundane and esoteric identities can be created through classification and framing of educational knowledge.

Bernstein's analysis of mundane and esoteric identities is shaped by Durkheim's (1995) concepts of 'the sacred and the profane'. While the former refers to '[its] relation to specific forms of knowledge (its otherness) and to the social and discursive obligations this relation requires', the latter refers to 'the contextual demands and constraints of economic context' that impinge on the former (Bernstein, 2000: 203). Bernstein sees the internalised esoteric as an outcome of the exceptionally strong classification of knowledge. He explains, 'If categories of either agents or discourse are specialised, then each category necessarily has its own specific identity and its own specific boundaries' (Bernstein, 2003: 23). Of central importance in this distinction is not the properties intrinsic to the content of any one category. Rather, it is the socially structured relations between categories of knowledge. Bernstein (1977) argues:

A sense of . . . the 'otherness' of educational knowledge, I submit does not arise so much out of an ethic of knowledge for its own sake but is more a function of socialisation into subject loyalty (Ibid: 96).

The strong classification of knowledge gives subject categories and students a sense of purity and powerfulness; this 'sets them apart, legitimises their otherness and creates dedicated identities with no reference other than to their own calling' (Bernstein, 2000: 54). An example can be the kind of knowledge and identity a math curriculum constructs. Knowledge here takes on an inward character, becomes radically separated from its ends, and is 'autonomous and self-sealing' (Ibid: 55). Empirical research using Bernsteinian analysis, often suggests that accessing esoteric knowledge can be possible with 'a mixed pedagogy' (see for example, Morais and Neves, 2010; Pausigere, 2016), e.g. strongly classified and framed evaluation criteria and a weakened classification and framing in the social base or 'hierarchical rules' (Bernstein, 2003: 65).

Unlike esoteric identities, mundane identities or ‘decentred market identities’ (D.C.M) (Bernstein, 2000: 73) are formed by the weak classification of knowledge, e.g. a weakening of subject boundaries, often in response to market-driven demands. Mundane identities, therefore, face ‘outward toward fields of practice’ (Ibid: 55). This can be seen in curricula of sociology or humanities. Knowledge in such curricula is often divorced from the inwardness of students to take on an instrumental aspect. It becomes ‘separated from commitments, from personal dedication, and from the deep structure of the self’ (Ibid: 86). The identities here are oriented towards producing an exchange value in the market. Consequently, pedagogic focus turns to knowledge or competencies that will optimise this exchange value on the extrinsic rather than the intrinsic. In other words, pedagogic transmission views knowledge as money that flows where demands call and in this free circulation of knowledge personal commitment has little stance. This position is ‘outwardly responsive. . . rather than one driven by inner dedication’ (Bernstein, 2000: 69). Ivinson and Duveen (2006: 117) conceptualise this identity as ‘other-realising’ identity to distinguish it from ‘self-actualising’ identity or esoteric identity described below.

If mundane identities are guided by the projection of knowledge, a reflection of external contingencies, then esoteric identities or the decentred therapeutic (D.C.T) identities are formed by the internalisation of knowledge. Here, ‘The concept of the self becomes crucial’ (Bernstein, 2000: 73). Pedagogic communication focuses on the development of characters, dispositions and inner dedication, necessary for the accumulation of knowledge, ‘a truly symbolic construction’ (Ibid: 73). In Bernstein’s terms, esoteric knowledge and the D. C. T. identities it generates aim at ‘inwardness, commitment, personal dedication, and deep structure of the self’ (Ibid: 86). It should not be too difficult to infer which knowledge the ‘mass system’ of HE in Việt Nam (Haydan and Lam, 2010) choose to develop for its students.

The discussion of mundane and esoteric identities would be incomplete without drawing in some understanding about their relevant curriculum knowledge structures. According to Bernstein (2000), mundane knowledge is often the product of ‘horizontal knowledge structures’ (Ibid: 161). These structures are collective in their nature since they generate knowledge forms with an aim to integrate a diverse range of theories, each with its own language and criteria for construction and transmission of texts. Curricula characterised by these structures orientate students towards ‘accumulation of languages’ (Ibid: 162) and thus ‘segmented thought’ (Ibid: 171), an orientation for simple social division of labour (Bernstein, 2003). Esoteric knowledge, on the contrary, is constructed within ‘hierarchical

knowledge structures', which produce knowledge forms whose principles integrate knowledge at lower levels and move realisation towards more and more general propositions at abstract levels. Curricula characterised by these knowledge structures aim towards construction of a language of great power, rigour and potential generality for more complex social division (Bernstein, 2003). Teaching critical thinking can be understood as orienting towards knowledge types which carry a high degree of verticality in the hierarchical knowledge structures. It aims at generalising knowledge from context and also recognising context through abstract theoretical knowledge (Wolmarans et al., 2016).

It can be inferred from the discussion above that the construction of the two dissimilar types of identities depends largely on the ideologies that underpin the distributive rules of the pedagogic device. The so-called 'official knowledge' and pedagogic identities it promotes reflect biases and foci of dominant groups in the fields of recontextualisation. Through their pronouncements of state policies and practices, these biases and foci construct in teachers and students, through particular performances and practices, not only particular moral dispositions but motivation and aspiration as well. In this way, Bernstein talks of an official pedagogic identity as being constructed by 'embedding [of an individual's] career (knowledge, moral, location) in a society's dominating purposes' (Bernstein, 2000: 205).

It is worth noticing that both Bernstein (2000) and Tyler (2004) warn about an increasing trend in HE practices being constructed in the educational marketplace. When market relevance becomes a criterion for the selection of subject knowledge, the possibility that curricula select and integrate subjects for mundane knowledge and extrinsic identities is high, as discussed above. Given that in Việt Nam, contemporary HE has been marketised and regulated for market purposes (Hayden and Lam, 2010), the possibility HE programmes champion mundane knowledge over esoteric knowledge cannot be overlooked. As the data analyses later will show, when teaching and learning is constrained by an instrumental approach and generic modes of training for economic needs, critical thinking or esoteric knowledge is hard to be realised. This is also confirmed by Thompson (2011).

Despite the above perceptive insights, Bernstein's description of general properties of the pedagogic identity arena has been dealt with only at surface levels. Tendencies and trends have been mentioned vaguely rather than identified explicitly (Tyler, 2006). Researchers like me who choose to use his theory are left with challenges while interpreting features of modalities, identities or positions of these tendencies and trends.

Another limitation of Bernstein's descriptions of knowledge and identities probably lies his own approach to knowledge. In classifying knowledge structures, Bernstein assumes

the natural sciences (physic, math) as the only model of objective knowledge while indeed there is potential for objectivity in other forms of knowledge (Young and Muller, 2007, Cassirer, 2000). This will be empirically proven in Chapter Five (pp. 129-134) and Six (pp. 150-154).

To be clear, all the above analysis of Bernstein's theory and concept does not mean that his theory is free from limitations. The next sub-section discusses more limitations of Bernstein's theory.

3.3.5 Challenging Bernstein's Theory

This last sub-section is to challenge Bernstein's code theory and the notions of pedagogic device and pedagogic identities. While I rely mainly on Bernstein's *pedagogic device* and the concept of *classification* and *framing* to guide the data analysis later in Chapter Five and Six, I do not endorse his theory as sufficient, especially when approaching knowledge and curriculum from the social realist position (see more in Chapter Four, p. 88).

Firstly, Tyler (2010) argues that Bernstein's analysis does not have explicit language to explain how technology-driven reforms may erode the boundary of the pedagogic discourse and its distinctive field of knowledge transmission. While technology is not the focus of this thesis, it is important to highlight this risk, since the possibility for teachers to apply technology in their classes is high, especially it is on the agenda of HE curriculum reform (Vietnamese Government, 2012a). When this is the case, the relationship between pedagogy and the socio-economic order is disrupted. Firstly, the distinction between the teacher and the taught is dissolved as the result of the disruption of pedagogic authority. Similarly, HEIs may lose their role as an agency of moral regulation and as the reproducer of ethical codes. Finally, the cognitive forms regulating the habits of works and sociality may be eroded. While expansion of Bernstein's work is required for the application in this arena, the original formulation of pedagogic device allows recasting the relationships between pedagogic communication and technology in terms of their convergences rather than rejections (Tyler, 2010).

Undoubtedly, the emergence of digital pedagogy has put Bernstein's 'pedagogic device' under new criticism. Questions may be raised concerning the loss of the core of the theory, which is the conventional face-to-face instruction and its embeddedness in the regulatory apparatus of educational bureaucracy. While this thesis does not take this at heart, there is a potential for future research to expand the pedagogic device to deal with challenges

in virtual classrooms, based on the principle of convergence between the pedagogic device and technology instead of rejecting it (Tyler, 2010).

Secondly, the D. C. M. and D. C. T. pedagogic identities (See explanation in Section 3.3.4, pp. 83- 84), despite their theoretical insights, have been argued to hold loosely opposing and contradictory positions. Specifically, they miss the deeper problematic of the communicative properties or generative logic of contradictory modalities. Indeed, Tyler (2006) highlights how, when it comes to explaining contemporary marketised reforms, Bernstein's pedagogic device may leave researchers, including me with tendencies and trends vaguely defined. In this case, a deeper underneath exploration for a more general principle of integration or structuring is necessary. In other words, while the pedagogic discourse offers different insights into repositioning the cultural politics of the curriculum, their links with the marketplace and the inner logic of the coding of knowledge have not yet been made clear.

Thirdly, it has been argued that Bernstein does not develop a sufficient language to allow the pedagogic device to operate to fulfil its democratic function; rather he offers a fundamental base for problematising the reality and considering possibilities (Frاندji and Vitale, 2016). Thus, for research seeking to achieve a democratic educational system, this can be a challenge. However, since this thesis focuses mainly on problematising the reality of the teaching of critical thinking and considering possibilities for change, Bernstein's theory can be argued to be a safe choice.

Summary

This chapter sets out key concepts that will inform and guide the collection and analysis of data in this research project. As theoretical tools, Bernsteinian concepts will function as 'a guidance for emancipation' (Johansson & Lindhult, 2008: 96), freeing researchers like me from restrictions and dominations of particular interests and powers. The construction of the theoretical and conceptual framework above does not necessarily endorse all Bernstein's reasoning. Yet the key concepts including *the pedagogic device*, *classification* and *framing* will inform the interpretation of the data to find out how teachers in two Vietnamese undergraduate programmes classify, frame and evaluate critical thinking and also what impacts the Vietnamese social political context have on the transmission and acquisition of critical thinking there. These research objectives and research question will be explored and evaluated in detail in Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight.

Chapter Four: Methodology

A Social Realist Approach to Critical Thinking Curricula

Introduction

This chapter explains and justifies the research methodology and methods employed in this study. It functions to connect the contextual chapter (Chapter One) with the theoretical insights (Chapters Two and Three) and with the research content (Chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight). The chapter includes three parts. The first part discusses the research methodology of the study. It spells out the research design that shapes my choice of case study as a specific research method. There is also a discussion of the boundaries (contexts) of the research cases, e.g. the two Business English (BE) programmes offered by a private and a public university in Việt Nam. The second part details my research process (methods), which I understand as being reflexive and iterative in its nature and thus involving change (Patton, 2015). It does so by elaborating on the procedures and specific techniques of data collection in both programmes. The last part discusses how the data is analysed and coded and how it will be presented in the chapters that follow.

4.1 Research Methodology

The research takes a social realist stance, which is characterised by ‘ontological realism and epistemological relativism’ (Maton, 2014: 33). By doing so, it brings together both the interpretivist and the empiricist approaches to curriculum knowledge. In supporting this paradigm, Young (2007), for example, argues that approaches to knowledge should take the social relationship to the world and the symbols that teachers and students develop to perceive and make sense of it (Cassirer, 2000) and at the same time acknowledge the intrinsic properties and power of knowledge.

The social realist approach has allowed me to endorse the merit of interpretivism while avoiding its limitations. On the one hand, with its relativist ontology and (social) constructivist epistemology (Ellery, 2016), interpretivism holds progressive possibilities and promises for emancipatory knowledge, especially for less advantaged students. On the other hand, interpretivism tends to view experiences and perceptions as foundation of knowledge and therefore, to accept all knowledge as equivalent, disregarding its status. By doing so, it ignores what Young (2007: 18) calls, ‘knowledge as a category in its own right’. By focusing

on ‘the commitment to truthfulness’ (Williams, 2002: 1) or objectivity of curriculum knowledge, social realism can help bridge the ‘knowledge -blindness’ social constructivism creates (Maton, 2014: 7). Finally, the social realist approach provides an alternative for critical stances within sociology of knowledge (Rata and Barnett, 2014) which treat knowledge as ‘no more than a relay of power relations external to itself’ (Bernstein, 2003: 166). In the words of Maton (2014: 32), social realism allows analyses of both ‘relation to’ and ‘relation within’ education and knowledge ‘to achieve explanatory power’.

The above approach allows me to acknowledge that fundamentally knowledge is socially constructed, but it is conceptually or theoretically organised at the same time. From this position, I insist that curricula and teaching/learning relationships in relation to critical thinking should be grounded on both the structural foundation of authoritative specialist knowledge and the social nature of knowledge production (Young and Muller, 2007; Young, 2007; Apple, 2016).

4.1.1 Research Method

As Creswell (2012) says, a research method should be chosen based on the research problem, research objective(s) and research question(s). Therefore, it is useful to repeat the purpose of this research, which looks into how critical thinking is perceived, taught, and evaluated in two undergraduate programmes, called English Studies (ES)- Business English Programme 1 (BEP1) and ES- Business English Programme 2 (BEP2) and how they are regulated by a broader set of socio-political ideologies. Although I will describe the two programmes in more detail later, it is necessary to note here that in ES- BEP1 and ES- BEP2, ES is the major discipline and BE is the minor/ concentration. In this section, I will at times refer to these programmes as BEP1 and BEP2 to be short. The reason for choosing ES as the research area is because it is the field that I have been working in. As an insider, I can enjoy the ‘social situatedness’ (Costley, 2010: 1), which puts me (the researcher) in an interplay with the situation and the context. The expertise and experience I have had in the field also give me an advanced level of knowledge of issues, which in turn helps me draw upon the shared understandings and trust of the participants (Costley, 2010). Based on these objectives, the research adopts case study as a research method. According to Creswell & Poth (2018: 153), case study articulates ‘a type of design in qualitative research . . . involving the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system’. In the same vein, case study can be understood as an in-depth investigation and thick description

of a contemporary educational phenomenon through a *real-life* instance (Swanborn, 2010, Yin, 2014, 2018) in its *real-world* context (Yin, 2014, 2018), aiming to find out why a phenomenon occurs and evaluate how an intervention works in a *specific* context (Yin, 2014, 2018; my italics for emphasis).

By choosing case study as a method, I see it not merely as ‘a technique for snapping reality into focus’ (Buchanan and Bryman, 2007: 483) but rather as the data window ‘through which phenomena are observed, influencing interpretive schemas and theoretical development’ (Ibid: 483). The use of case study research is thus particularly applicable to the exploration of how critical thinking is taught in the specific context of HE in Việt Nam. It is also appropriate for the purpose of investigation of how critical thinking is regulated by the Vietnamese state’s socio-political ideologies.

4.1.2 Case Selection

The thesis generates data from two cases, which were selected following the ‘purposeful maximal sampling’ (Creswell, 2012, Creswell and Poth, 2018: 159). This technique allows varying perspectives on the issue to be added rather than merely gathering a ‘sample’ of cases for the statistical generalisation. As I stated earlier, the research seeks to understand the teaching of critical thinking in ES-BEP1 and ES-BEP2 through the perspectives of leaders, teachers and work supervisors. The reason for my choice of Case 1, BEP1 is because it emphasises critical thinking as a programme objective. Important as well is the fact that I had quite abundant personal contacts with BEP1. This offered me a ready-made strength (Thomas, 2016: 98) and promised sufficient access to the data (Yin, 2014). Case 2, BEP2 was selected based on two criteria: the programme’s emphasis of critical thinking as an objective and its availability to participate in the research. The selection process started in the academic year 2017- 2018 when I screened all Vietnamese public universities located in the same city with BEP1 that offered ES. From there, I continued to check whether these ES programmes have BE as a minor discipline. If there was one, I accessed the university’s website and read the vision, mission, core value statements or the programme specification to look for indicators of critical thinking. Seven public universities were shortlisted and BEP2 was finally selected for its interest in the research and the accessibility for data generalisation within the academic year. While detailed accounts of the two programmes can be found in Chapters Five (pp. 104- 109) and Six (pp. 137- 141), the following short paragraphs will provide a brief characterisation of each programme.

BEP1 (Course 2016- 2020) is a minor, extended from the broader Bachelor of Arts ES programme. Since it was started in 2006, the Programme has attracted steadily growing enrolment, from 44 in Course 2006-2009 to 111 in Course 2009 – 2013 and to 500 in Course 2016 – 2020. The bounded setting of BEP1 is a well-known private university, thereafter, called Private Elite. By ‘elite’ I mean serving students from wealthy families.

At BEP1, the majority of students come from high socio-economic status. This is evident in the tuition fees students have to pay. In 2016, for example, the cost of one credit was averaged at VND 1,000,000 (equivalent GBP 35). Despite high tuition fees, Private Elite always allocates its self-regulated budget on abundant bursaries, presumably to attract more students from the less advantaged background. The Programme’s employment rates have also been significantly high, at 88.89 per cent in 2015 according to the internal report on students’ employment. Not receiving any financial support from the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), Private Elite enjoys an independent status that affords it greater autonomy in areas such as staff recruitment, salaries and student admissions. Most significant of all is probably the autonomy to develop curricula. Paradoxically, this has also resulted in contradictions.

On the one hand, autonomy has allowed BEP1 to take progressive steps towards improving the quality of the curriculum. One of them is the pursuit of a regional accreditation, called the Association of Southeast Asian Nations University Network-Quality Assurance (AUN-QA) in 2019. While theoretically quality assurance can help improve quality; this framework is indeed associated with customers- service delivery model, which is often criticised for promoting surface teaching and learning (Bridge, 2005; Furedi, 2010). Another tension is related to the quality-quantity tension. Financial self-reliance has forced the Programme to devise flexible admission plans to attract students. While most of these plans rely on the high school graduation and admission test scores, BEP1 also uses another layer of international standardised tests such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) (See details in Table 4.1 below). On average, BEP1’s admission scores are generally much lower than those of other mainstream programmes like BEP2. In 2016, for example, Admission score for BEP1 was 20 compared with 29.5 for BEP2. The variety of admission plans also suggest the Programme’s intention to aim at quantity. This raises questions about students’ levels of English proficiency and their readiness for the Programme. Concerns can also be raised about mixed ability classes

where students who have high command of English sit together with those who are less able. As I learned from the interviews with the teachers here, students' mixed English ability is a barrier to critical thinking development.

Being bounded in a well-known public university, pseudonymised Public Elite, BEP2 has also been a successful programme in terms of student enrolment. My description of BEP2 as 'elite' here means serving more academically successful or talented students. Like all other public universities in Việt Nam, Public Elite admit only students who are top scorers in the national entrance examination into its programmes (Bui, 2014b). Since it was launched in 2005, BEP2 has had a steadily increasing enrolment, despite its high admission scores. One of the leaders, in the interview, referred to this enrolment success of 2018 as 'the highest intake of all the programmes' (Hiệu: 240). Unlike BEP1, BEP2 uses only one admission plan (See Table 4.1 below). Tuition fees in BEP2 are decided by the MOET, and as a public programme, they are far more affordable. For example, in 2016, the fee was VND 219,000 (GBP 10) for one credit. The competitive admission scores together with the affordable tuition fee suggest students enrolling in BEP2 are more academically successful and have a traditional passion to change the low economic status they come from (Pham and Sai, 2020). However, as interviews with teachers later reveal, not all of them have that passion for social and economic mobility and that their choice of BEP2 was because they failed to make it to their firm choice, which was ES.

Table 4.1 2016 University Admission Plans of ES-BEP1 and ES-BEP2

| 2016 national high school examination test: Subjects taken | | |
|---|---|--|
| Mathematics, English, Vietnamese literature, Physics, Geography, Chemistry, History | | |
| | ES-BEP1 | ES-BEP2 |
| Admission plan 1 | Subject group1: Vietnamese Literature, Mathematics, English Subject group 2: Mathematics, History, English Subject group 3: Vietnamese Literature, History, English Subject group 4: Vietnamese Literature, Geography, English | Subject group: Vietnamese Literature, Mathematics, English |
| Admission plan 2 | GPA* of three years' studies 6.0 + IELTS** 6.5 | |
| Admission plan 3 | GPA of three years' studies | |
| Admission score | 20 (doubling weight for English subject) | 29.5 (doubling weight for English subject) |

*General point average ** International English Language Testing System

Significantly, not unlike BEP1, BEP2 teachers showed their concerns over the weakness of the students they taught. Although both programmes try to minimise this quality gap by doubling the weight of the English test scores, it does not seem to be effective. Presumably, the type of English produced and assessed in the instrumental 60-minute multiple choice test (Bui, 2016) is not enough for students to advance in ES programmes.

Unlike BEP1, BEP2 is under direct regulation of Public Elite's board of management and the MOET. Curriculum innovation at the classroom levels are in principle welcome but not at the programme level. Quality concerns, such as national quality accreditation or AUN, for example, have to be aligned with the MOET's plans. This can at times lead to slow innovation or the maintenance of its status quo, as one of the leaders confirmed in the interview, 'We, public universities, are not under pressure for competitiveness' (Hiệu, BEP2: 53). Given that public universities in Việt Nam (and probably elsewhere) often receive limited resources (Trần et al., 2014a; Harman and Nguyen, 2010), designing and implementing curriculum ideas in BEP2 can be argued to be constrained. Indeed, this shortage of resources, as the analysis in Chapter Six (p. 144) will show, affected the promotion of the critical thinking discourse there.

4.2 Data Collection

At both programmes, the data used included (1) interviews with university leaders, teachers, and supervisors in the workplace (2) curriculum documents related to the teaching of critical thinking such as programme specifications, course outlines/ syllabi, and others (See details in Table 4.2 below). All the data was generated between October 2018 – December 2018. Table 4.2 presents the data sources and data generation methods used in the study.

Table 4.2 Data Sources Used in the Thesis

| | Data sources | Data methods | |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|--|
| | | Document | Interview |
| BEP1 | Private Elite | ✓ | |
| | Participants (Total: 11) | | |
| | Institutional level: | | ✓ |
| | Vice Principle (n=1) | | |
| | Departmental level | | ✓ |
| | Head of the English Dept. (n=1) | | |
| | Classroom level: | ✓ | ✓ |
| | teachers (n=8) | | |
| BEP2 | Workplace level: | | ✓ |
| | supervisor (n=1) | | |
| | Public Elite | ✓ | |
| | Participants (Total: 9) | | |
| | Institutional level: | | ✓ through email at participant's request |
| | Vice Chancellor (n=1) | | |
| | Departmental level: | | ✓ |
| | Dean of the English Faculty (n=1) | | |
| | Classroom level: | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Teachers (n=6) | | |
| | Workplace level: | | ✓ |
| | supervisor (n=1) | | |

4.2.1 Recruiting Participants

While it is widely agreed that finding knowledgeable informants for a range of views, setting up interviews, and choosing interviewees can all be ‘principled’, the actual practice can deviate from this (Rapley, 2004).

In BEP1, the selection of participants was done directly by the researcher thanks to personal contacts. Given that critical thinking is possible only when it is a shared goal and taught across-disciplines (Ennis, 1997), the Programme Specification of BEP1 (PS1) and the syllabi of the subjects across the knowledge groups were used for indicators of critical thinking. A total of eight (groups of) subjects were identified. These included the politics subject group, Critical Thinking (CT), Listening and Speaking 3 (L&S3), research-oriented subject group, British and American Literature, Marketing, Advanced Business English 3, and Graduation Internship (See Appendix 4.1, pp. 228- 229 for more details).

Potential participants were then identified and invited for interviews. A total of eight teachers and one supervisor were recruited (See details in Table 4.2 above). In one subject (CT) one mainstream and one guest teacher were invited to add more perspectives to the issue. It is useful to note here that some teachers taught more than one subject and the possibilities that they brought in their relevant insights to share should be acknowledged. The vice-chancellor and Head of the English Department were also selected to add a variety of perspectives to the data. Teachers being invited were those who had potential for rich engagement in teaching critical thinking, disregarding their professional experience, their status of employment (full-time or visiting), their age, sex and background of professional training. The most important factors were these teachers were ‘repositories of knowledge, experiences, feelings . . . relevant to [my] research [aim]’ (Mason, 2002: 51) and their availability for participation during the data generation period. This same principle was applied to Case 2 (See more below).

While the selection of the participants in BEP1 was from personal rapport, access to the nine participants in BEP2 depended entirely on the gatekeepers. Through a personal contact with one ex-student, I was introduced to the Dean of the English Faculty in Public Elite. The interview with him ended with his sharing with me the contacts of the vice-chancellor and the programme manager. Similarly, at the end of the interview with the programme manager, he selected five other teachers and recommended one supervisor who I could contact to seek availability for interviews. I found out from the interviews later that

the Business English Unit consisted of just four mainstream teachers and they all participated in my research. Fortunately, they all had rich professional experience, especially the engagement in organising and teaching critical thinking.

One of the nine participants, the vice chancellor, requested to do the interview via email. Since there was no replacement available at the time of the interview, I accepted his request. Although it was him that decided the date to send the information back, I had to send two reminding emails before I could receive answers from him. In short, the recruitment of BEP2 participants happened on what Rapley (2004: 17) called ‘an ad-hoc and chance basis’.

4.2.2 Interviews

Rapley (2004) notes that qualitative researchers should go beyond reductionist perspectives to see interview talks as data resource and/or data topics. He defines interviews as ‘the joint-production of accounts and versions of experiences, emotions, identities’ to ‘try to understand the bio-graphical, contextual, historical and institutional elements that are brought to the interview and used by both parties’ (Ibid: 16). This remark helps me enter the field trip with a holistic view and a focus on maintaining a natural interaction rather than being obsessed with technical and moral instructions commonly highlighted in the literature (Rapley, 2004).

With the exception of one interview conducted over email, nineteen other semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted face- to- face. Consistently, interview guidelines with non-directive forms of questioning were used (See Table 4.3, Appendix 4.2, p. 230 for the complete guideline). The questions sought to understand how teachers, leaders and supervisors understood the notion of critical thinking and how this contributed to their teaching/ supervising and assessment of the subject. They also sought to reveal how critical thinking was organised with regard to other subjects in the programmes. Some examples of the questions were: How do you understand critical thinking? How do you teach for critical thinking? How can you tell your students have developed critical thinking? What do you think are advantages and difficulties? These questions were initially generated out of a negotiation with the relevant literature and my experience in the field as well as from the prior stage of document analysis, mostly of the two programme specifications and syllabi. This list of questions was also re-visited after every interview to make adaptation (Rapley, 2004).

The guidelines were used to keep track of the conversations and also to take notes of important, interesting emergent information. The order of the questions and the time frame lent themselves to influences of each specific interaction. With the enthusiasm and interest of the participants, I was able to conduct successfully the nineteen interviews, each lasted on average for 60 minutes. The interviews were conducted in Vietnamese to obtain the fullest understandings and insights of critical thinking. The only interview conducted in English was with David, the foreign teacher in BEP1. Table 4.4 (Appendix 4.8, pp. 256- 257) and Table 4.5 (Appendix 4.9, p. 258) summarise the key information about the participants, their involvement in BEP1 and BEP2 and the interviews.

4.2.3 Documents

As I mentioned above, besides interviews with the participants, the data was enriched through the use of related documents elaborated in Table 4.6 below. The programme specification and a sample syllabus of BEP1 are provided in Appendix 4.6 (pp. 235- 246) and of BEP2 in Appendix 4.7 (pp. 247 – 255).

Table 4.6 List of Type of Documents: Their Structural Codes and Their Uses

| Types | Specific documents | | | Structural codes | Uses | |
|----------------------|--|---|---|------------------|---|---|
| Curricular resources | Programme Specification of BEP1 | | | PS1 | Provided understanding of general expected learning outcomes of the content knowledge, skills and attitudes | |
| | Quality Learning & Teaching Strategy of BEP1 | | | QL&TS | | |
| | Specification of BEP2 | | | S2 | | |
| | Syllabi of BEP1 | General knowledge | Fundamental Principles of Marxist-Leninist (Compulsory) | M&L | | |
| | | | Critical Thinking (Elective) | CT | | |
| | | Professional-foundational knowledge | Listening and Speaking 3 | L&S3 | | |
| | | Professional- core knowledge | Project 2 Critical Reading and Writing | P2 CR&W | | Provided understanding of specific expected learning outcomes of the specific expected skills, content knowledge, and attitudes |
| | | | Marketing British-American Literature | MAR B&AL | | |
| | Specialised knowledge: | Advanced Business 3 Graduation Internship | ADB3 GI | | | |

| | | | | |
|--------------|--------------------|--|---|--|
| | Syllabi of BEP2 | Professional- foundational knowledge | Business Grammar Business Reading & Writing | BG BR&W |
| | | Professional- core knowledge | British Literature Marketing | BL MK |
| | | Specialised Knowledge | Human Resources Business Research 1,2 Business Ethics | HR BR1; BR2 BETH |
| Web pages | BEP1 | | | |
| | BEP2 | | | Provided understanding of general expected learning outcomes of the content knowledge, skills and attitudes |

4.3 Data Analysis, Data Coding and Reporting

As I mentioned in Chapter Three, Bernstein's code theory and its elemental constructs are relevant to empirical research (Cause, 2010). Applying his theory requires that I use a set of pre-existing or *a priori* codes to guide my coding process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This technique may be critiqued for limiting the analysis to *a priori*. However, it allows systemic integrity to the research's theoretical and methodological dimensions. These *a priori* codes were related to the two core concepts of internally/ externally strong/weak classification and frame. The use of 'pre-figured' codes does not mean that I was not open to additional codes emerging during the analysis (See Table 4.7, Appendix 4.10, p.259, for the code constructs). The coding process drew insights from the six phases of thematic analysis recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006) and also the intensive coding work of Luke et al. (2005). The process of coding data proceeded along two facets, which Yin (2014) calls a two-level approach to making sense of the data. Microsoft Excel was chosen to facilitate the technical side of the data analysis. This choice was based on my understanding that software, however sophisticated, cannot replace the researcher who is 'the expert' and should always remain in control of the analytic and interpretive process (Lewins and Silver, 2016). Since Microsoft Excel has been applied effectively in thematic analysis (Bree and Gallagher, 2016; Ose, 2016) it is practical and safe to rely on this routine word-processing tool to structure the interview data.

The first level is within- case analysis. In this process, each interview text was imported into Excel before being broken down into chunks and were colour-coded for the classification strength, e.g. for how critical thinking was conceptualised and organised within each programme. Here, I applied specific codes ranging from very strongly classified (++C), strongly classified (+C), weakly classified (ˉC) and very weakly classified (ˉˉC). These codes were accompanied by extensive analytic notes to justify why critical thinking in each programme acquired a particular code. Table 4.8 (Appendix 4.12, p. 267) delineates the analytic notes used for coding the framing and classification of critical thinking in BEP1 and BEP2. Next, the texts were coded for framing, using a similar colour-coded scheme and scale (++F, +F, ˉF, ˉˉF). It is important to emphasise here that as with all Bernsteinian analysis, the values of classification and framing operate independently of each other (Bernstein, 2000). This part of the coding required more skilfulness as it also sought to account for the specific sub-codes of the selection, sequence, pacing and evaluative criteria components of the pedagogic interaction. Table 4.9 (Appendix 4.13, p. 268) summarises the coding values of critical thinking in BEP1 and BEP2 that their participants generated. An individual coding sheet for critical thinking pedagogic modalities is also given as an example in Appendix 4.11, pp. 259- 265). Here, I also looked beyond a priori codes to identify the underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualisations to allow latent codes to emerge (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Some examples are ‘status of the university’, ‘students’ attitudes to career’ and ‘maintaining status quo’.

The analysis then continued with the organisation of the individual codes into larger coherent categories. Because a sociological theory of the curriculum ‘has to be able, in the same theory, to translate micro into macro, and macro into micro, with the same concepts’ (Bernstein, 2003: 170), the categories selected sought to explain the differences in competencies and consciousnesses developed, through the pedagogic transmission and acquisition, in both BEP1 & BEP2, as well as social bases of those differences. Only through this way of analysing and categorising the codes is the relation between the research’s theory and the methodology established. For Bernstein, differences of pedagogic codes indeed reflect larger social ideologies that work at creating, sustaining and legitimising those differences, and for particular purposes.

The second phase was cross-case analysis where I looked for points of similarities and/ or contrasts between the cases. When the classification and framing of critical thinking within each programme were identified, similarities and differences emerged. Comparing

the programmes, the analysis then sought to interpret these points of similarities/ contrasts by considering their unique contexts, e.g. the profile of each programme, its university, and students as well as the socio-political context in which they were all embedded. It was also at this point that the categories selected above were then merged into three central themes: mundane knowledge, esoteric knowledge, and symbolic control and identity. These three themes detailed the concept of pedagogic recontextualisation and provoked ideas of the four data analysis chapters: Chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight.

Being qualitative in its characteristic, this report divorced itself from the dominant ‘scientific’ style associated with passive voice and objective indirect locutions (Mason, 2002). Instead, it was direct and personal. This does not mean that the writing of this report was free from efforts to make it rigorous, coherent, clear and interesting to the reader. Being engaged in this style requires using different lexicons and registers (vocabulary), lyrical and evocative language and different narrative devices (Mason, 2002). This was not without challenges partly because I am a Vietnamese researcher, who still had to depend on English, a Western language, to write the thesis. This, however, turns out to be an advantage because it helped me avoid falling into the trap of ‘unnecessarily abstruse theoretical allusions’ (Vickers, 2018: 341) that elite Western authors often fall into. Rather, I aimed at reaching simplicity and clarity for informed readers.

4.4 The Role of The Researcher

As Patton (2015: 67) suggests, in qualitative inquiry, the researcher is ‘the instrument’. By ‘instrument’ Patton means that the background characteristics and experiences of the researcher can affect and shape the inquiry. Understood thus, it is helpful to clarify my roles in this research inquiry. Throughout the research process, I played two key roles. Firstly, I played the role of a participant. I have been a teacher of English since I graduated from university in 1999. I joined a well-known university in 2009 and since then have been living and working extensively with BE. In this role, I was an insider. My ways of living and telling stories of the two BE curricula shared the ones that my colleague participants have lived and told. We have been absorbed in the same concerns, the same disappointments and the same motives to help our students, and as a result we have undergone a sharing of experiences. This allowed me to conduct nineteen interviews (excluding the one conducted via email) successfully from the interpretivist perspective. I was able to get involved in long

explanations, rewording questions, and gave my participants my personal views on the topic of the questions where necessary.

The second role I played was the role of a researcher. In this role, I retold these stories which were not necessarily shared by all the participants. My voice and the importance of following the principles of emergence and submission enabled the data to take on its own life (Holliday, 2007: 113). Bernstein's notion of 'external language of description' (ELOD) is crucial here. For Bernstein, research methodology should recognise the language of description as a translation device to translate one language into another, to construct 'What is to count as an empirical referent, how such referents relate to each other to produce specific text and translate these referential relations into theoretical objects or potential theoretical objects' (Bernstein, 2000: 133). As a researcher himself, Bernstein engages simultaneously with both languages: an internal language of theory and an external language that specify possibilities about the world recognised by the theory. ELOD, as Moore (2007: 92) explains, attempts to 'close the discursive gap between concept and data'. The encounter with the empirical world via the ELOD always produces a surplus, one that bears within its excess a productive potential (Bernstein, 2000). This external language of description was used to describe code values of BEP1 and BEP2 and their participants, which in turn guided the analysis of the data set (See Table 4.8, Appendix 4.12, p. 267). The next section discusses specific standards of ethics which I observed and practiced throughout the research project.

4.5 Research Ethics

Thomas (2016) defines ethics as 'principles of conduct about what is right and wrong'. Making ethical decisions is complex due to the fact that individuals or cultures hold different views. Marshall and Batten (2004) share this view, warning that cross-cultural research ethics are hardly singly defined because the concept of ethics varies among groups. The culture of each requires individual understanding by the researcher. These views imply that research needs to be placed in its environment where certain ideological and contextual norms inform evidence (Patton, 2015). Conducting research in a culturally embedded environment as in this study requires 'intercultural sensitivity and equity [that minimise] symbolic violence, exploitation and assimilation' (Manathunga, 2009: 169).

Based on these insights, I conformed to the University of Gloucestershire and the British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines. Besides conforming closely to the

fundamental ethical practices suggested in the guidelines, I paid extra attention to the Vietnamese practices of ‘what is right and wrong’, which I believe I understand well. In both cases - the one that I had close contacts with and the one that I was unfamiliar with, I presented myself as the person who was seeking ideas from experts. It is extremely important because in the Vietnamese culture, the use of the vocabulary ‘interviewing’ or ‘questioning’ may trigger a relationship of hierarchy, which in turn affects the quality of the data generated. In all interviews, I

- was honest to the participants about my personal and theoretical perspectives
- recorded and analysed evidence instead of passing judgments
- took responsibility for my own work, transcribing and translating all the recorded interviews

It is important to highlight here that to reduce the loss of meaning during the translation and process (Nes et al., 2010), I retained as much as I could the original speech of my participants.

Being ethical or unethical in research may involve more than complying to an abstract ethics checklist. It should also involve establishing, maintaining and enhancing trust between the researcher and the participants throughout the research process (Lincoln, 2007). To this end, I adopted a relational view of equal status between me, the researcher, and the participants, which is linked to ethical principles of mutual respect, non-coercion and non-manipulation, and support for academic freedom and democratic values (Miles et al., 2014; Bridges, 2017). The above three principals were applied from the initial contact with the potential participants throughout to the finalisation of the study. Specifically, through formal emails and formal documents, the participants were clearly informed of their involvement and the nature and scope of the research. They were also told explicitly that their choice to participate was voluntary and that the time, place and location for the interviews were up to their own decision. Contact details of me and my supervisors were also provided for any queries about the research concerns. The Consent Form, the Invitation Letter for Participant, and the Information Sheet are presented in Appendix 4.3 (p. 232) Appendix 4.4 (p. 233) and Appendix 4.5 (p. 234) respectively.

In terms of confidentiality, participants’ demographic data, such as names, gender and nationality were collected but not used in any way that might identify them to a third party ‘so that they will not be put in any undesirable position’ after they participated in this study (Yin, 2018: 126). The information collected from the participants was analysed and

used only for producing this PhD thesis or publications coming out of the thesis. Pseudonyms were used to name the universities and all participants in the dissemination of results. Only my supervisors and I had access to the data. Where secondary data was needed, ethics approval was sought for access to the data.

The data, including the audio, transcription and translation was coded and stored as electronic files in my personal laptop, which was set with the log-in security password. Paper copies and drafts were also kept in the drawer in my locked PhD room at the University of Gloucestershire, Francis Close Hall Campus. All of the information will be stored safely for five years before it is destroyed.

Summary

The chapter outlines the methodology and method used in this empirical qualitative research. It justifies the employment of case study as a method, how the cases were selected, and also how participants in each case were recruited. Descriptions of each programme and its participants are also provided. There has been a sub-section that clarifies the role of the researcher, followed by a discussion of the research ethics. The chapter also includes a discussion of how the data were analysed and reported. The methodological considerations in this chapter will inform the systematic analysis of pedagogic discourse of critical thinking in BEP1 & BEP2 in Chapters Five, Chapter Six, and Chapter Seven.

Chapter Five: From Mundane to Esoteric Knowledge

Recontextualising Critical Thinking within Private Elite

Introduction

The discussion of this chapter addresses Research Objective One: How critical thinking is perceived, taught and evaluated in English Studies (ES)- Business English Programme 1 (BEP1), offered by Private Elite (pseudonym). The chapter comprises three themes. They are indicative of how knowledge of ES- BEP1 (BEP1 to be short) is recontextualised in both the official recontextualising field (ORF) and the pedagogic recontextualising field (PRF). They also provide findings at the micro level of how teachers influence students' learning of critical thinking through controls over pedagogy, assessment and curriculum interventions of what is/is not transmitted.

The organisation of this chapter is guided by Bernstein's (1977, 2000, 2003) insights of power, control and knowledge in curricula, which was discussed in detail in Chapter Three (pp. 64-87). It also derives from the analysis of BEP1 curricular documents, publicly available information (the university website) and ten interviews with teachers, institutional leaders and one supervisor in the workplace. They take the following shape. In the first section, I present the findings arisen from the analysis of the curriculum and the knowledge structure of BEP1. The second section details how critical thinking is conceptualised and positioned in that curriculum discourse and knowledge structure. The chapter ends with the third section providing evidence of how critical thinking is actually taught in the classroom. The emphasis of this section is on teachers' control over selection, sequence, pacing and evaluative criteria of critical thinking- the framing elements of pedagogic transmission (Bernstein, 2003).

It is useful to highlight here that the chapter uses a number of quotes from the participants to support my analyses. Except the quotes from David, the only participant who used English in the interview, the other quotes are my translation. The italics used in the quotes (if there are any) indicate the original English the participants switched to during the interviews.

5.1 Curriculum and Knowledge Structure

This section discusses the first theme of the chapter: Curriculum and Knowledge Structure. It presents findings in relation to the knowledge structure of BEP1, the aim(s) of the Programme, and its identities. The findings prove that at the curriculum level, BEP1 does not support the teaching of critical thinking.

5.1.1 ES- BEP1 in the ORF

Like any other ES- BEPs in Việt Nam, ES-BEP1 (and also ES-BEP2) has a curriculum structure of a major discipline (ES) and a minor discipline (BE). It is a Bachelor of Arts programme extended from the national curriculum framework of ES, developed by MOET as a way ‘to regulate the training quality of higher education (HE)’ (MOET, 2004, Article 4).

What needs to be highlighted in this national curriculum framework is the amount of control the MOET, the main agent in the ORF, has over what it believes knowledge means. Fundamentally, the MOET defines and categorises knowledge into different groups. It also selects certain specific areas of knowledge to be taught in each group and allocates credit weights to each of them. Its most controversial element is the imposition of the scientific subjects of Marxism–Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh’s thought which take up 9 out of 46 credits in the general knowledge group (See Table 5.1 below for more details). This reflects an aim to reinforce socialism in the country through efforts to internalise the socialist identity among young Vietnamese citizens. The Politics curriculum, which dominates the national moral/ethics curriculum, unfortunately, does not seem to align with the promotion of critical thinking as a neo-liberal education value. One participant revealed in the interview that the Politics curriculum in fact, discourages critical thinking by ‘promoting only the socialist perspectives rather than encouraging multiple approaches to politics’ (Lộc, BEP1: 29-30). For Lộc, the curriculum constrains itself within ‘the mindset that capitalism or Western *liberal* traditions in the world are all against us [the socialist communist leaders of Việt Nam]’ (Ibid: 30- 32). Another break from the neoliberalist paradigm that the MOET has itself embraced is the weak inclusion of scientific research knowledge (3 credits) compared with that of the socialist knowledge (9 credits) (See Table 5.1 below).

Table 5.1 ES-BEP Knowledge Structure in the ORF

| Required areas of knowledge | Required areas of subjects (among others) | Required Credits (140 at least) |
|-----------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| General | | 46 (min) |
| | -Politics Studies | 9 |
| | -Research Methodology | 3 |
| Professional | | 94 (min) |
| Foundation | | 51 (min) |
| | -English skills | 40 |
| Specification (BEP) | | 28 (max) |
| | -British & American Literature, Culture | 6 |
| | -Linguistics | 6 |
| Elective (BEP) | | |
| Graduation | | 6 |

Source: MOET (2004)

5.1.2 BEP1 in the PRF: Its Identities and Knowledge Structure

As I have explained above, the MOET exerts a strong control over how knowledge should be defined, organised and transmitted in the ES curriculum. Although, in this same framework, curriculum developers are given legitimate autonomy to further define, select and construct areas of contents according to the aims and objectives unique to each specific programme, the MOET indeed continues to manipulate this process of recontextualisation of knowledge. For example, it suggests universities can restructure ES by ‘selecting contents from different disciplines . . . to help expand students’ professional capacity and space after graduation’ (MOET, 2004, Article 4.3).

Following this guidance, the Programme Specification of BEP1 (PS1) defines its graduates as those who have ‘ability to negotiate, present, report and carry out business transactions, through the use of English, in both local and international business settings’. PS1 (Appendix 4.6, pp. 235- 241) also states explicitly that graduates will have ‘life-long learning abilities’. This latter commitment has been strengthened in the Learning and Teaching Strategy (L&TS) (Appendix 5.1, pp. 268- 271), in which BEP1 has committed to ‘foster the development of all students as critical thinkers with a capacity for life-long independent learning’ (L&TS1: 3). According to one leader, the critical thinking

commitment is evident in the fact that ‘The programme foregrounds a set of research-oriented subjects’ (Thu: 55).

Taken altogether, it can be said that the recontextualisation of BEP1 in both ORF and PRF has resulted in a programme that serves two contradictory aims: contextual knowledge and skills for immediate employment and professional knowledge or critical thinking for social mobility. Arguably, only by guaranteeing the latter will the former be allowed to function but not vice versa.

Table 5.2 below presents the selection and organisation of knowledge of 2016-2020 BEP1 in both the ORF and PRF. The areas of knowledge in bold are required by the MOET. With 45 collective codes (subjects/ courses) organised into different groups and sub-groups, BEP1 can be said to be horizontal and segmental in its structure (Bernstein, 2000). Knowledge is organised into two groups, called general knowledge (concrete local knowledge) and professional knowledge (more abstract general principles). In the general knowledge group, knowledge is further subdivided according to its ‘importance’. Not surprisingly, politics subjects, which aim to cultivate the ideology and principles of the Communist Party of Việt Nam (CPVN), is defined as compulsory and given more credit weights, while other subjects, including Critical Thinking (CT) have been defined as elective and thus given fewer weights. In the professional knowledge group, knowledge has also been sub-divided into foundational knowledge (mastery of fundamental knowledge), core knowledge (the mastery of simple operation) specialised knowledge (a more abstract general principles), and graduation (internship). Within this structure, progression moves from specific and context- dependent to more theoretical knowledge, which is only available later in the transmission when students reach their third or fourth years.

It is useful to repeat here that the 2006-2020 BEP1 shares the curriculum structure with the other three minor disciplines, namely English Language Teaching, Translation and Interpreting and Corporate Communication. This means BEP1 students take the same subjects in the general, professional- foundational, and professional– core knowledge groups with the other students from the other three disciplines. As the analysis later will show this causes difficulties for teachers when selecting material relevant to all of the students in these subject classes.

Furthermore, while the advancement of the English and research skills may suggest an integration of meanings, many others suggest offerings of segmental contents. Given that knowledge can only be transferred among subjects with similar features of the context and social relations (Bernstein, 2000), the possibility that overall transmission of knowledge that

allows critical thinking- the accumulation and integration of new knowledge- within this structure is low.

Table 5.2 Recontextualising BEP1 in the ORF and PRF

| | | | | |
|--|---------------------|---------------------------|------------|---|
| BEP1 144C*s, 45 M** | General | Political Studies: | | |
| | Knowledge: | 10Cs, 3Ms | | |
| | 41Cs,12Ms | | Core: | 2nd language :16Cs, 4Ms |
| | Vietnamese | | 19Cs, 5Ms | Work internship:3Cs, 1M |
| | | Social Sciences | | |
| | | 31Cs, 9Ms | | Group A: Methods and Skills 3Cs, 1M |
| | | | | Group B: Social values 3Cs, 1M |
| | | | Elective | Group C: Culture and Ideology: 3Cs, 1M |
| | | | 12Cs, 4Ms | Natural sciences: 3Cs, 1M |
| | | | | English skills: 24Cs, 8 Ms |
| | | Foundational | | Fundamentals of Vietnamese Culture: 3Cs |
| | | knowledge | | Intro to Linguistics & Comparative Linguistics: 6Cs, 2Ms |
| | | 39 Cs, 13Ms | | Principles of Marketing, Principles of Management: 6Cs |
| | | | | |
| | Professional | | | British & American Culture:3Cs, 1M |
| | Knowledge | Core knowledge | | Linguistics: 9Cs, 3Ms |
| | 103Cs | 31 Cs, 11 Ms | | British & American Literature: 3Cs, 1M |
| | English | | | Research: 4Cs, 2Ms |
| | | | | Academic and Business Correspondence; 6Cs, 2Ms |
| | | | | Elective: 6Cs, 2Ms |
| | | Specialised | | |
| | | knowledge | Compulsory | Advanced Business English 1,2,3: 9Cs |
| | | 24 Cs, 8 Ms | | Introduction to Translation and Interpretation: 3Cs |
| | | | Elective | 12Cs, 4Ms |
| | | Graduation 9Cs | | Internship |

Source: simplified by researcher from S-BEP1 *C: credit; **M: Module

For example, knowledge learned in Syntax or Morphology courses may not be re-introduced or applied in Marketing courses or Advanced Business English. Even knowledge in the English skills classes such as Reading may not promise transferability, as one teacher of CT, in my interview with him, lamented ‘They [Students] don’t know how to read for summaries’ (Lộc: 547).

Similarly, individual courses that include the word ‘introduction’ or ‘principles’, such as Introduction to Interpretation and Translation and Principles of Marketing may also suggest a tendency to equip students with contents that are superficial and therefore have no values for accumulating or integrating new meanings. With the aim to expand students’ career paths upon graduation, the offerings of such subjects can be understandable. However, within a restricted time frame (fifteen weeks), teaching students to think critically in those subject areas seems to be ambitious tasks. What is significant about this horizontal knowledge structure is that critical thinking may be perceived differently depending on specified languages, specified modes of interrogation and criteria for the construction and circulation of the content in each subject. Presumably, this may risk the realisation of critical thinking as an overall goal of BEP1. Given that subjects and their boundaries play an important role in shaping students’ identities as learners (Bernstein, 2000), one can easily assume what identities BEP1 with its fragmented knowledge structure will shape students upon their graduation.

However, all the above does not necessarily mean nothing has been done to structure the knowledge supportive of critical thinking. Indeed, the analysis of PS1 identified efforts to group some subjects together to establish a strong boundary around them. For example, research- related subjects, including Basic Writing, Academic Writing, Critical Reading & Writing (CR&W), Project 1 (P1) and Project 2 (P2) have been hierarchically connected by the prerequisite policies. As I mentioned above, BEP1 is proud to have this research subject group as the heart of critical thinking. Despite these efforts, further analysis of PS1 also revealed that the Programme still retains a strong boundary between its two main focuses e.g. the English discipline and the Business discipline. For example, the textbooks used for the English skills, which are the primary focus of Year 1 and Year 2, did not accommodate Business contents, which come only later in Year 3 and Year 4 of the curriculum path. Arguably, this division may impact teachers’ perceptions of what about critical thinking is considered as ‘official’ to be taught and assessed, or not, at different stages of knowledge transmission and acquisition.

5.2 Classification of Critical Thinking

Against the backdrop of the above knowledge structure, critical thinking has been infused into the Programme to be weakly classified. Indeed, there is a paradox. The critical thinking discourse is perceived as essential at least for two purposes. Firstly, it indicates high quality teaching and learning. At the time I conducted the interviews, the Programme was preparing

for the ASEAN University Network-Quality Assurance (AUN), and AUN requires ‘critical thinking and quality teaching and learning’ (Thu: 262). Secondly, the infusion of critical thinking also aims at students’ future employment, for ‘The ability to predict, adapt to situations will help them survive’ (Thu: 135-137). Despite those goals, there have been no further guidance or documents on how critical thinking should be deployed. This lack of clarity was justified by one of the leaders as due to the workload and time constraint, as he was ‘too busy . . . to remember the critical thinking project’ (Thu: 27).

As I have mentioned earlier in the chapter, BEP1 teaches CT as a separate elective course, managed by the Department of Liberal Education (DLE), located within Private Elite. Unfortunately, teachers in the English Department, including me before leaving the university for my PhD pursuit, have been unfamiliar with the relevance of this subject to the overall programme. Despite its lack of canonicity, critical thinking is perceived as important, and all the teachers participating in the research, as the analysis later will show, have infused different forms of critical thinking in their teaching. This also means all the students in the Programme have been exposed, in one form or another, to this powerful knowledge.

The weak classification of critical thinking is not only inherent in the way the programme leaders have defined and legitimated it but in how the closed social base of the institution impacts the critical thinking discourse negatively as well. In general, BEP1 is situated in an institution where relationships between teachers themselves, between teachers and leaders, and between departments are distant, albeit covert. Firstly, teachers tend to work independently within their own profession. In the interviews, they distinguished themselves from others using dichotomies ‘skills’ vs. ‘content’ (David: 243), ‘low’ vs. ‘high’ and ‘here’ vs ‘home’ (Đinh: 261). Arguably, this self-classification has impacted their pedagogic practices. As the data analysis later shows, teachers teaching foundational subjects generally associated critical thinking with English skills, while teachers teaching professional and specialised courses linked critical thinking with the subject contents at the expense of the depth of the English language. For critical thinking to be realised in programmes with a dual focus, like BEP1 (and BEP2 also), commonly known in the literature as content and language integrated learning (CLIL), language and content need to be coherently and cumulatively tied to and clearly articulated with each other (Coyle et al., 2010).

Academic discussions within the departments have also been practiced in the instrumental manner and concerns about critical thinking have not been shared and listened across disciplines. One teacher, in my interview with her, commented on the way the

professional development activities were organised in the institution, ‘. . . colloquiums . . . they take a lot of time but do not bring about any practical benefits’ (Phượng: 78-87). What Phượng needed was ‘a publication’ (Ibid: 79), the critical thinking knowledge for herself, so that she could pass it on to her students in the research-oriented classes, but her need was not shared. That lack of critical thinking knowledge equated a lack of self-efficacy and thus led to a sense of resistance to the critical thinking curriculum, e.g. Phượng’s request ‘to quit teaching the course [CR&W]’ (Ibid: 55- 56). What teachers want to do for students’ critical thinking development is not always supported by the university leaders. Ngoc expressed concerns about the commitment of ‘publications’ (Ngọc: 497) he had to make if they wanted more funding. Significantly, it is not because Private Elite lacks budgets for these activities to promote critical thinking; it is because it has ‘not be seen as important’ (Minh: 138-142).

To a certain extent, the social relations in BEP1 affect teachers’ efforts to develop critical thinking for students. Bernstein (2000) insists that, for the subject to produce legitimate text in a given context, there should also be aspirations, motivations, values and attitudes conducive to the production of that text (Moore et al., 2006). The questions worth raising here are who has power to decide what critical thinking is and how critical thinking should be realised.

Taken altogether, the above discussion highlights key features of the pedagogic discourse of BEP1, summarised in Table 5.3 below. It shows how the recontextualisation of critical thinking into BEP1 official curriculum has been affected by dominant controls from the OFR and the PRF. Presumably, there has been a weak boundary between critical thinking and other subjects into which critical thinking has been integrated and between what counts as critical thinking in one subject as compared to another. Arguably, even when all the subjects develop critical thinking in the same way, they may not have explicit internal criteria for critical thought. Furthermore, they may not see critical thinking as a curricular discourse separate from the content to which it is to be applied. These conclusions that have arisen mainly from the initial analysis of the curricular documents will be strengthened with more empirical evidence in the next section.

Table 5.3 Pedagogic Discourse of BEP1

| Features | Descriptions | Codes |
|-------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| 1. Curriculum structure | | Hierarchical and integrated |
| 2. Knowledge structure | | Horizontal |
| 3. Internal relation | Insulation of critical thinking within the programme, e.g. between English language and Business | +C |
| 4. External relations | Insulation between critical thinking and other subjects | -C |
| 5. Identity | Pragmatic, ‘knowing’ focus; moving towards critical thinking identity | Mundane, moving towards esoteric |
| 6. Social base | Hierarchical rules applied in the English Department and across other departments | +C |

+C: strong classification; -C: weak classification

5.3 Framing of Critical Thinking

While the previous section has focused mainly on the classification of critical thinking at the curriculum level, this section details how critical thinking is framed at the classroom level, e.g. how it is perceived, taught and assessed, through teachers’ controls over the selection, sequencing, pacing and criteria of what knowledge to be legitimated as critical thinking (Bernstein, 2000). The analysis of the pedagogic interaction is based on semi-structured interviews with teachers teaching different subjects in both general and professional knowledge groups. There is one teacher standing out for his method of teaching critical thinking. The analysis of his pedagogic modality is presented under the sub-heading Outlier Case.

5.3.1 General Knowledge

Phú teaches Fundamental Principles of Marxist Leninist, Hồ Chí Minh’s Thought, and Revolutionary Lines of the CPVN, the three required courses which aim ‘to educate political ideology and political stance’ (Course Outlines). Phú saw the three subjects as being interrelated, and together they formed a politics discourse. Given that Vietnamese young

citizens are not traditionally interested in the politics discourse and often view politics subjects as an imposition on them (Đoàn, 2005; Pike, 2012), one may expect a politics teacher to be instrumental in their teaching. However, Phú appeared to be progressive. For him, critical thinking in politics was ‘an attitude to believe in innovative and right things and stand up for them’ (Phú: 32-33). In teaching critical thinking, Phú emphasised skills and attitudes, which he believed ‘can be developed through applying and analysing problems and self-cultivating’ (Ibid: 93- 94). Phú’s progressive pedagogic practices were evident in the way he went beyond the instrumental rationality that critical thinking often champions to focus exclusively on the development of students’ consciousness and attitudes, e.g. ‘developing a right ideological consciousness’ and thus ‘staying optimistic about politics, to look at the positive side of politics and to see how socialism ensures equality’ (Ibid: 269).

Throughout the interview, Phú revealed some constraints in his efforts to move between regulative discourse (the hierarchical social order between him and his students) and instructional discourse (selecting, sequencing, pacing and evaluating critical thinking), the two inseparable discourses in Bernstein’s (2000) pedagogic device. Defining critical thinking as ‘to problematise, compare, evaluate and self-cultivate’, Phú applied a dialectic approach to help students acquire this subject:

[I] interact a lot, asking a lot of questions, problematising situations and turning them over. I encourage critical thinking firstly with the textbooks. Although they are standardised, being written by the MOET for national use, it does not mean that [...]. You know, reality changes. The textbooks say this and that, but are they relevant to reality (Phú: 143- 149)?

It is clear from the quote that Phú’s critical thinking modality started with him acting as a role model. By problematising contents prescribed by the MOET, Phú oriented his students toward challenging the ‘official’, ‘standardised’ or given knowledge, which Vietnamese students often receive unquestionably. This seems to be effective, since later, his students began to ask questions which challenge the communist and socialist discourse, such as ‘Why not pluralism? Why not multi-parties? Why voting for this person but not another?’ (Phú: 152-153). Besides encouraging, allowing and accepting students’ questions that challenge politics knowledge, Phú also modelled critical thinking through his tolerance of students’ attitudes towards the subjects. For example, he opened to students’ ‘sceptical smiles’ of the relevance of the subjects (Ibid: 231), accepting their subjective judgment, and then used evidence to show how politics is actually linked to their real lives, e.g. ‘how socialist ideologies work to ensure equality’ (Ibid: 269). In doing so, Phú hoped ‘Gradually students will believe [in the right things socialism has done]’ (Ibid: 248). Relaxing the traditional

hierarchical relation between the teacher and the student is important, especially in a Confucian heritage country like Việt Nam, since if teachers ‘suffocate them, students will become discouraged and dare not ask or speak out their minds’ (Phú: 362- 363). Although Phú did not impose directly his political stance on students, what he did artfully cultivated in students ‘trust’ and ‘optimism’ rather than ‘complaints’ (Ibid: 179) about the socio-political ideologies the State has embraced.

Phú’s openness to students is important in understanding why hegemony often involves authorities’ abilities to ‘justify and maintain [their] domination to win the active consent of those over whom [they] rule’ (Gramsci, 1971: 244) and what the dominant group often sees as official knowledge to be transmitted. In this light of understanding, his ‘emancipatory’ critical thinking pedagogy turned out to be instrumental, e.g. motivating students to complete the courses. One of his ex-students revealed this covert pedagogy, ‘I learned because you were open and lovable’ (Phú: 249).

When it came to ‘linking politics to reality’, Phú decided unilaterally the conditions for it to happen. In other words, the reality Phú mentioned was the reality he selected for students despite their concerns or the relevance to their own lives or disciplines. For example, in organising fieldtrips to illustrate and cultivate in students a strong belief in socialist ideologies and the CPVN’s good and right things, he based choices on the principle of availability:

The subject also includes field trips but just limited within museum visits . . . For Fundamentals of Marxist and Leninist, I have always had a dream to collaborate with another department . . . something close to the subject to organise field trips to show them a production line or a theme park so that students can see life is always open and lively rather than dull or pessimistic (Phú: 172-179).

To be sure, the selection of the museums and even plans for future visits to certain places were not based on Phú’s particular knowledge of his students’ interests or aptitudes. They were selected out of the relevance to the CPVN’s ideologies and the reality of the institution and also Phú’s network. The ultimate purpose of this theory-reality approach was to cultivate in students a belief in the CPVN’s ‘imperatives’ and ‘good aims’ to ‘include poor people’ and ‘ensure equality’ (Ibid: 267-268). This important point helps understand how the subtle mechanisms compromise critical thinking and control pedagogic transmission (Bernstein, 2000). Unmistakeably, Phú’s mixed pedagogic modalities of open social base and strong controls over material for critical thought suggest efforts to maintain, to a certain extent, the status quo of the elite ruling groups and their socialist ideologies.

Throughout the interview, Phú consistently identified critical thinking with skills, attitude and self-cultivation. By highlighting these, he also distinguished himself from other teachers of the same subjects whom he perceived as instrumental in their pedagogic modalities, ‘just concerned about doing their duty’ and ‘hav[ing] no time for students’ behaviours’ (Phú: 125-126). However, there was no evidence that Phú created conditions for the application of skills to generate new knowledge; nor did he develop any explicit evaluative criteria to help students internalise critical thinking skills and dispositions. Students did not have opportunities to explore external resources to see how the contents they learned in the class were related to their major(s) and their lives, thus, could think politically in English, discuss politically about business or deliberate politically with peers and Phú about social issues.

Instead, the cultivation of critical thinking dispositions in Phú’s classes was ‘orienting them [students], reminding them’, and ‘letting them take care of the rest’ (Phú: 104- 104). Politics discussions in class never went beyond ‘the curriculum boundary’ (Ibid: 191). Furthermore, he mainly depended on the traditional tests for fact memorisation although he managed to ‘balance the weight of these tests against classroom discussions’ (Ibid: 272).

Phú’s critical thinking practices, to some extent, moved away from instrumental rationality, but due to their lack of specific standards, they did not contribute to shaping the ‘critical thinking’ identity BEP1 programme has committed to construct. Phú also did not show how the type of critical thinking he developed was linked to the other subjects in BEP1. Indeed, he saw it as irrelevance. For him, the CT subject, for example, promoted a kind of ‘scientific thinking’ and metaphorically referred to what he was doing as ‘A swallow [that] cannot make a summer’ (Ibid: 360).

5.3.2 Professional- Foundational Knowledge

Participants in this knowledge group include Phụng and Đình. Phụng belongs to the English Department, while Đình comes from the Economics. Phụng teaches various subjects, but in the interview, she talked mainly about her critical thinking pedagogy in Listening Speaking 3 (L&S 3) and P2. Like Phú, Phụng faced some tensions when teaching critical thinking for students.

For Phụng, critical thinking in skills classes like L&S 3 was ‘explaining why, a higher-order thinking (HOT) level in Bloom’s (1956) taxonomy’ (Phụng: 163). These critical thinking questions, for Phụng had to come after questions of who and what. Perceiving knowledge hierarchically this way, Phụng controlled the pedagogic instructions tightly. Firstly, Phụng selected material for activities that could ‘motivate students to talk first off’ (Ibid: 320) because:

When it comes to questions requiring evaluation and justification, only a few students who have enough language and cognitive capacity raise their hands, while ninety to ninety- five per cent of the class stay completely quiet (Ibid: 169-170).

Being preoccupied with the quantity of talks, material Phụng selected ‘always includes questions of lower-order thinking in Bloom’s taxonomy’ (Ibid: 168- 169). While this strong sequence helped increase the quantity of talks, Phụng was ‘uncertain whether they talk right or wrong’ (Ibid: 314- 315). The quality of the talk in this case was downplayed. Also, the reliance on instrumental aspects of critical thinking put the 5 to 10 per cent of the elite students in Phụng’s classes at a disadvantage. It limited their opportunities to move on and access high qualified knowledge through activities that involve ‘justification and evaluation’, which can be hard for the majority.

Being obsessed with the learning outcomes (LOs) also led Phụng to applying strong regulative rules such as, ‘English only. Discussions. Not questions and answers. Everyone has to talk if you want to sit with your friends’ (Phụng: 318-319). Phụng may have believed that strict control over the sequence of knowledge and the social relation ultimately lead to some forms acquisition of critical thinking in her skills classes. However, presumably, students talked because they wanted to sit with their friends or because the topics Phụng gave them were ‘thinkable’. Here, Phụng’s pedagogic communication ultimately served as a remediation device addressing the lack of specific skills rather than a symbol of high-status knowledge. By all means, it is not Phụng’s pedagogy to be blamed. As I highlighted in section 5.2 above, critical thinking is weakly classified in BEP1’s curriculum structure. Phụng spoke more of that:

The ultimate goal is *language proficiency*. The content we give them [students] only serves as a ground for them to speak. In the assessment section [in the syllabus], critical thinking is not mentioned. Even in oral *presentations*, the focus is mainly on facts that they find somewhere: How many people do this or how many people do that or describe an event. That’s it (Phụng: 224-228).

The reason for Phụng to treat critical thinking as instrumentality is understandable. While in second language learning, fluency is important, decidedly there is a difference between conversational fluency and the ability to understand and express concepts and ideas relevant to subject interests (Cummins, 2008). The strong boundary BEP1 curriculum has established between English skills and subject contents deprived students of accessing theoretical and conceptual knowledge of the discipline as early as they could.

The curriculum constraints also forced Phụng to stick to the prescribed knowledge when teaching critical thinking although sometimes she saw the irrelevance. Paradoxically, she could not bring in external material to replace irrelevant contents, since she was ‘unsure if other teachers do the same’ or ‘if the exam asks this lesson’ (Phụng: 345). This strong skills-content boundary, together with Phụng’s earlier strong control over sequence of knowledge, are important to understand how the distributive rules regulate the transmission and acquisition of critical thinking in BEP1. In depending mainly on the syllabus for critical thinking decisions, what Phụng distributed to students was indeed contextual knowledge rather than critical thinking, the ability to speak, read, create disciplinary knowledge through the language of English. In Bernstein’s language, students in Phụng’s classes could not think ‘the unthinkable’.

Đình teaches Principles of Marketing. In the interview, he identified himself as ‘having knowledge of English but not deep’ (Đình: 370). In business, Đình believed critical thinking was the ability ‘to defend our own opinions and justify why other people’s opinions are right or wrong’ (Ibid: 169). To help students realise critical thinking Đình endorsed discussions and field trips. For discussions:

I ask students to discuss issues presented in every chapter. For example, at the end of Chapter Six, I raise questions for the discussion: In this product brand, which products are for students? Which ones target office workers? Is this price suitable for students? . . . Students then discuss (Đình: 29-31).

For field trips:

I organise field trips. On returning, I make questions for them to write reports. I will ask whether the way something has been done is right or wrong (Ibid:148 – 149).

The quotes above spoke of a pedagogy of strong control. Topics for discussions were based merely on the textbook, and the sequence necessary for the realisation of critical thinking was also presented in a hierarchical and linear manner. In both activities, Đình was always the one who decided what to be realised as critical thought and how it could be gained.

For Đình, questions such as the above helped develop ability to ‘evaluate and justify’. However, by raising questions readily for students to think critically about, Đình actually did the thinking for students. Students, therefore, did not receive opportunities to raise issues of their own concerns about the lessons or the field trips. Unfortunately, the ability to take initiatives in asking questions is often what employers see as an indicator of critical thinking (See more in Section 5.3.5 below).

It is worth noting that to participate in critical discussions in Đình’s classes, students were expected to develop some level of critical thinking elsewhere, e.g. in other classes, in their life and work. Those who possessed that privilege were given priority to ‘talk first’ (Đình: 234). Then came the ones Đình labelled ‘quiet’. In encouraging these students to think critically, Đình went further to apply strong hierarchical order and pacing:

They have to talk. Being pointed at, they have to talk. When talking, if they talk less, I will ask: Is there anything else? They have a minute or so to think. Other students in the group can support so that they can have more to say (Đình: 235 – 237).

What Đình applied in the quote above was what I would call ‘a pedagogy of force’. Given that critical thinking needs a certain level of confidence, pointing at students and making them talk may make what Lộc later said, ‘their hearts shake’ and thus they may not be able to talk critically about what Đình was expecting. With a strong reliance on students’ prior critical thinking value and the strict pacing of ‘a minute or two’, presumably due to the time constraints, Đình’s pedagogy may not accommodate the criticality in the talks of the ‘quiet’ students.

Like other teachers, Đình infused critical thinking in his pedagogic communication but did not develop systematic standards to allow it to internalise in students. There was no evidence Đình led students through processes of engagement, exploration and production of new knowledge. Rather, critical thinking was treated as being contextual and instrumental, ‘understanding theoretical contents and applying them to evaluate a case study’ (Đình: 206-207). Đình’s pedagogic modality was not irrelevant to the pacing of the subject in the curriculum. Marketing is paced as a foundational area of knowledge. Consequently, students take the subject without a clear sense of how it will be relevant to their major. Being with uncertain students, many of whom held an attitude of ‘learning just to know’ Đình may not have had a better choice. Indeed, what he was doing was already great efforts to try to make students ‘remember the subject and later in case they change their mind and take Marketing as a career won’t be confused’ (Đình: 89-90).

5.3.3 Professional- Core Knowledge

Of all the teachers who participate in the research, Ngọc and David are probably the most passionate and experienced teacher researchers. Ngọc teaches mainly CR&W and supervises P1, P2 and graduation theses if there are interests from students. David teaches British and American Literature and supervises P1 & P2. For Ngọc, in CR&W, critical thinking meant ‘knowing how to review, critique and analyse a journal article or a work of research’ (Ngọc: 6-7). As an experienced researcher, Ngọc believes that analysing research journal articles is the most effective way to scaffold students’ critical thinking.

In each lesson, Ngọc’s pedagogy communication involves strong control over selection, sequence, pacing and evaluation. For example, in teaching students how to write an abstract for a publication, he expected students to first acquire fundamental contents before practice the relevant skills. Thus, students were taught ‘the criteria needed for a standardised published abstract’ and ‘the components an abstract may exclude due to the word limitation’ (Ngọc: 23-24) before they were asked to analyse certain given abstracts in group and then synthesise and write a summary. The same traditional sequence of presenting, practicing and producing was applied for critical thinking development in other lessons about literature reviews and methodology. Like Phú, Ngọc always tried to relax the social relation between him and students, e.g. embedding open regulative discourse into instructional discourse. However, in doing so, he also exerted control on the latter:

When I request students to work on a summary . . . I think about topics relevant to students. For example, I will find articles related to *language learning* such as ‘What are the effective ways to improve vocabulary?’ They may be concerned about such an issue because they are all in *Language* (Ibid: 182 – 187).

In the quote, Ngọc did show concerns over how working towards certain ends internalise critical thinking in students. Since ES is students’ major discipline, undoubtedly, his assignment on ‘effective ways to improve vocabulary’ carried some sense of inclusion of all students. However, it can also be argued that not all students in his class had immediate concerns about or real interest in improving ‘vocabulary’. When students are asked to work

on what they are not interested in, they may do it just to pass. Of course, that is not Ngoc's pedagogic limitation. Rather, it is more about the knowledge reconstructualisation in BEP1.

That certain subjects are paced in early years to be taught disconnected from specialised contents makes it hard for both teachers and students to identify what epistemic values suit students' interests and their future career. This way of recontextualising knowledge deprives students of opportunities to engage in activities which allow them to think critically in their fields even when they learn subjects perceived as 'the heart of critical thinking' such as CR&W and P2 (empirical research). Critical thinking in Ngoc's classes was a contextual achievement (if there was any) rather than an internalised identity.

In the same vein, in selecting resources for skills practice such as summarising, Ngoc depended on what available in 'a rich database that *I* have searched ... and saved over years' (Ngoc: 192-193, my italics for emphasis). He also set certain standards for selecting material, including 'newly published, widely referenced, standardised in the format, and understandable language' (Ibid: 197-198). Although Ngoc accommodated students in these criteria, resources that met all of the above criteria were, as Ngoc revealed, 'very difficult to find' (Ibid: 200). Consequently, he had to use whatever available, albeit feeling 'constrained'. Ngoc's contradictions reflect the subtle mechanism regulating the principle of control in the transmission and acquisition of critical thinking (knowledge).

About criteria of critical thinking, Ngoc controlled them closely by applying 'detailed and clear' guidance in assignments to ensure all students could achieve 'the objectives of the course' (Ngoc: 99-100). This scaffolding was based on his perception that students were in 'second-year' and 'rather confused' (Ibid:99) and that the subject was 'distant to them' (Ibid: 100). In one such assignment, Ngoc guided students' criticality through several prescribed questions, such as 'Identify what the author(s) of the journal article has done well and what they have not done well and can be done better. The paradox was, in such an assignment, Ngoc tended to reduce the rigorousness of critical thinking, e.g. relaxing the use of references. For him, reliable literature such as published articles or books was 'a little high of a requirement for them' (Ibid: 109). Therefore, Ngoc happily accepted the knowledge that students 'pick here and there and from the lecture slides' (Ibid: 110). Indeed, critical thinking, in Ngoc's CR&W classes, was something he 'just encourage' (Ngoc: 110- 111).

Obviously, critical thinking is about engaging students in the process of getting to know knowledge, acquiring it and producing new knowledge themselves. What students acquired at the end of Ngoc's course was the 'factual' knowledge or knowledge of the other (lectures, books, journal articles) not of themselves. What Ngoc defined, taught and assessed as

‘critical thinking’ was indeed instrumental. It did not accommodate possible contradictions in interpretation, and therefore had no rigor.

Not unlike other teachers Ngọc separated language from (critical) thought:

In this subject we do not set language as an *outcome* . . . We also do not require varied sentence structures. Research style is simple coherent and clear rather than sentences with varied structures and varied *phrases* vocabulary. We have a different requirement . . . a simple but effective language outcome, so language is not a problem (Ngọc: 147 – 149).

It is not uncommon to see or hear teachers like Ngọc in CLIL programmes mistakenly distinguish between the content discourse and the language discourse (Coyle et al., 2010). Teachers of English skills tend to frame critical thinking in ways to enable communicative language competences (The case of Phượng on page 117 is an example). Teachers of content like Ngọc and David (see below), on the other hand, frame critical thinking exclusively within the content discourse, expecting language competences informally and tacitly acquired. Given Việt Nam’s position in the Expanding Circle of world Englishes where English is often regarded as the status of ‘language of (false) hopes and promises’ (Pennycook, 1994: 307), enrolling in a CLIL programme, students must expect opportunities to advance the English language. Therefore, the need to continuously develop English across the curriculum pathway can be argued to be essential. A focus of one at the expense of the other at a certain time prevents students from acquiring English as ‘the language of power and prestige’ (Ibid:13) that BEP1 spoke of through its name or as students enrolling in the Programme may expect.

Of course, the ‘simple, coherent but effective’ language style that Ngọc required was really of a particular type. It also indicated a strong external value of framing in pedagogic modalities. Discourses ‘outside’ of the curriculum subject (academic writing experience) that did not directly benefit students’ learning outcomes were discounted as educational experience and thus are excluded from the knowledge transmission. Ngọc insisted, ‘When I read students’ work, I know whether they have read about the field or not, for prior knowledge can’t be relevant to this [research discourse]’ (Ngọc: 148). While Ngọc expected a kind of knowledge that had its own voice and power (critical thinking), his intensive intervention in the knowledge production worked against this expectation. Since he had ‘confused’ students, Ngọc chose the pedagogic modalities that helped them achieve immediate outcomes by walking with them all the way through each stage. Indeed, he paved the way for them, albeit against his good will:

I show them all the details, and then I check the final written product to see if it is fine. The students are walking on the path I have cleared for them (Ngọc: 535-538).

Even when students reached the final stage of their learning, e.g. writing the graduation thesis, the strength of framing remained the same:

We have to tell them to use this method or that method; to write like this and like that. We hold their hand and point at work. We display food on the dish, and students just sit and eat . . . The good thing is the student know-how. The learning outcome is ensured, but students lack efforts, lack self-regulation (Ngọc: 522-527).

The strong framing of pedagogic interaction in Ngọc's classes is neither uncommon nor unorthodox and it is not irrelevant to the focus on achievements and outcomes-based education (OBE) in the HE system in Việt Nam, which at the classroom level has translated readily into the distinction between strong framing (teacher-centredness) and weak framing (student-centredness). The strong framing indicates that it is the teacher who is authoritative and that their practices are traditional and conservative rather than liberal democratic or progressive.

This impact is verified by David, the teacher in the same knowledge group. David's pedagogic interaction with his students in P2 courses can also be characterised as being strongly framed. For David, in research-oriented courses like P2, critical thinking was 'comparison and critique' (David: 287). As I mentioned at the beginning of the section, David is an experienced researcher. Undoubtedly, his insights in the field benefits students to some extent. However, in supervising BEP1 students, David tended to endorse topics that he knows well rather than of students' interests. He said, 'Project 2 is directly linked to my own research. They do what I do (David: 333)'. Although at times he generated topics that were 'very practical to them [the students]' (David: 341), his recommendations of such topics as 'Americanisation, Advertising, and Marketing' may benefit some students who later would major in Business while marginalise others who would choose English Language Teaching or Translation and Interpreting. This is not David's fault. Like Ngọc above, the pacing of P2 in the overall curriculum path made it hard if not impossible for David to know which epistemic knowledge was relevant to which student.

In pacing critical thought, David also stayed consistently within the time frame specified in the syllabus. This also meant students had to submit 'one draft every week'. Perceiving that P2 is fitted into the main semester of the second year when 'Students are very busy and do not have time for anything' (David: 357-358), David turned his pedagogic communication

into a ‘pedagogy of push’. He admitted he had to ‘push and push and push them’ (David: 306). It is not difficult to visualise the type of knowledge in the drafts written in ‘poor English’ (Ibid: 301) that students submitted to David. In this context of teaching and learning, David found himself relax the evaluative criteria for critical thought:

I gave them the reading and *I did the job for them* a bit. I highlighted the chapters that they needed and maybe a few pages . . . I said: Ok, read these 4 pages and try to extract what is important for your literature review (David: 379 – 383, my italics for emphasis).

It is often commonly agreed that critical thought is enhanced through engaging in as much challenging reading in the field as possible. In David’s case, research reading was controlled to ensure it was ‘readable’ for students in reference to both the content and the amount. Decidedly, what David aimed at in the end was the completion of the course rather than the specialised knowledge students could acquire from engaging in the research project. Paradoxically, by ‘doing the job for the students’, David discouraged them from engaging in the process of internalising knowledge, which, in turn, develops self-regulation, the disposition necessary for critical thinking.

Given that CR&W, P2 and graduation thesis, are core subjects for critical thinking development in BEP1, both Ngoc and David’s analyses are important for a broader understanding of how critical thinking is transmitted and acquired here. It should be clear now that the two teachers’ pedagogic modalities contradicted the subjects’ promises, ‘to develop analytical and critical thinking and to engage in independent learning’ (Course Outlines). While they both acknowledged these objectives, the preoccupation with learning outcomes led Ngoc and David to retaining strong framing over the transmission of knowledge. In these classes, the internalisation of the ‘esoteric’ knowledge which enables students to engage in critical debates of issues in the research field seemed a far-off goal. This holds true with specialised subjects as well, as the analysis below shows.

5.3.4 Professional- Specialised Knowledge

Trí teaches Advanced Business English 3 and English for Media where he perceives business content should be used as a secondary device to deliver English language skills. He conceptualised critical thinking as ‘the ability to look at a problem from different angles’ (Trí: 76). Understanding critical thinking that way, Trí decided that the most effective way

to help students develop different perspectives was to apply a weak hierarchical relation, e.g. ‘stay[ing] open to students, encourage[ing] them to debate and to give their opinions, and acknowledge[ing] their contradictory viewpoints’ (Ibid: 272-274). For Trí, open social base was important since it made students become ‘more confident and ready to speak out their contradictory viewpoints’ (Ibid: 208). Important as well was the organisation of activities so that students could debate, discuss and generate different perspectives. This is where tensions and contradictions between strong/ weak framing over selecting, sequencing and evaluating critical thinking emerged.

Firstly, in selecting material for these critical thinking activities, Trí showed efforts to go beyond the given knowledge in the textbooks, which he believed limited teachers and students’ viewpoints:

The choice of a certain textbook itself means that we constrain our thinking within that textbook. It is because the perspective of a specific author in that specific textbook is their own perspective, and it is not open. . . If we want to develop critical thinking, we have to look for other articles of the same topic but written from different perspectives (Trí: 215 – 218).

Apple’s (2000, 2013b) analysis of the politics of textbooks and its impact on classroom teaching helps understand the intellectual domination imposed on Trí (and other teachers). It is clear from the quote that even when Trí expanded material to external resources, it also had to link, to a certain extent, to the textbook knowledge. Students’ interests, therefore, was hardly a matter. Commonly, for engagement to happen, purposes of debates should arise from the need or the desire of students rather than those of the textbook or the teacher. Even when teachers like Trí can find extra articles they think are good for critical thinking realisation and bring them to class for discussions, students may resist the readings since they are about topics/ concerns alien to the former. It came as no surprise when Trí gave such extra material to students to read, they resisted, seeing it as ‘adding more work to them’ (Ibid: 226 – 227). Resistance became more obvious in debate activities:

When I put forward a controversial issue, they don’t have any ideas to debate. They sit still. They don’t have any thinking to so-called debate. In their mind, critical thinking is totally absent (Trí: 231-232).

Trí’ comment above revealed a strong control over sequence of critical thinking development. Unmistakeably, Trí expected students to develop critical thinking somewhere before they started his class. The dependence on prior critical thinking knowledge led Trí to blaming his students for their lack of critical thinking rather than thinking about how he

could allow students more control over the transmission and acquisition process. Such a reaction on the part of Trí's students was not without a good sense. It was indicated by Bernstein (1977) long ago that students often adopt a stance of deferred commitment, even resistance, to a pedagogic code in which they are unable to recognise themselves.

Secondly, given language is the medium to express and interpret thoughts and emotions (Halpern, 2014), a certain level of English proficiency is deemed necessary for debates. This is even more crucial for Vietnamese university students whose English capacity has been consistently reported low (Pham, 2018; Tri and Moskovsky, 2019, Phan, 2017). Although Trí appeared to be positive that he was always there 'to help' and 'write the words the students need on the board' (Trí: 249), his reliance on such help with vocabulary for critical debates may have been oversimplified. As a matter of course, language for debates often has to reflect students' understandings of the socio-cultural context, the interpretation of text in relation to the whole meaning of the materials/ topics, and the communication of those understandings through language (English). Working with topics and material they have little control over, students may find it hard to progress. Trí's assertion may be justified, but difficulties in critical thinking caused by language barriers are always there and should not be glossed over.

There was evidence of strong framing over the criteria for realisation of critical thought in Trí's pedagogic communication:

In English for Media, for example, when I want them to write an essay to promote Brand a, b, c, I guide them to think: who I write to; what the purpose is; how I approach it; what the content should be. Critical thinking is embedded in the content (ibid: 185-190).

In the quote, Trí made it clear what types of critical thinking he expected from students through the guided questions. Trí's explicit criteria seemed helpful in guiding students' answers and the type of critical thought they put into these answers. However, at a close look, the criteria Trí applied sought the achievement of a certain context-dependent areas of knowledge rather than the type of standards that were robust, internally coherent and allowed knowledge acquisition and the development of self-commitment, as what Lộc used in his classes (See Section 5.3.6 below). Indeed, Trí couldn't tell whether his students internalised critical thinking. He revealed, 'Although we all say we've integrated critical thinking but there is no assessment. . . we never can know whether we teach it successful or not' (Ibid: 303-305).

In summary, critical thinking was infused in all courses in BEP1 and students taking subjects in all knowledge groups were exposed to certain types of critical thinking. Generally, teachers understood critical thinking as an instrumental device to enable learning objectives. This was evident in the way controls were taken over selection of material, pacing, and criteria for critical thinking realisation. There was no evidence that critical thinking was understood as a discourse of its own right, a tool to access ‘powerful knowledge’ (Young, 2007:27), which in turn allows students to realise ‘the possibility of the impossible’ (Bernstein, 2003: 29). The analysis is now turning to the framing of critical thinking in the workplace.

5.3.5 Graduation Internship

The analysis of control over critical thinking transmission in this section is based on the interview with Diệu, the supervisor in the workplace, the CO of Graduation Internship (GI) (Appendix 5.2, pp. 272- 275), and the evaluation feedback form (EFF) (Appendix 5.3, p. 278).

In BEP1, GI is a fifteen-week course where students demonstrate and develop skills, knowledge and professional values which are assessed by both supervisors and teachers. The CO defines critical thinking as the ability to ‘identify an existing or potential problem(s) that the workplace has and propose possible solutions’. This expectation of critical thinking, as Diệu said in the analysis below, is hard if not impossible to be realised.

Diệu is Manager of the Public Relations (PR) and Events Department, VinaCapital Foundation, a foreign non-governmental organisation located in Việt Nam. She is based in Heartbeat Vietnam Unit, which aims at helping to heal children with congenital heart defects. Diệu regularly recruits and supervises interns from BEP1. At the time of the interview, BEP1 listed VinaCapital Foundation as one of its partners. However, according to Diệu, there was a strong boundary between the two parties. This affected the transmission of critical thinking on her side because she knew quite little about how the internship course worked and what the expectation it had from an employer like her. Thus, she based her supervision mainly on the expected LOs written in the CO that interns brought with them to the interviews.

For Diệu, in PR and events management, critical thinking involved ‘looking at a problem from different perspectives and being able to justify resources needed to solve that problem (Diệu: 50- 53). Diệu (65- 66) believed critical thinking emerges and manifests only in students who get involved more in ‘struggles with the society’, have ‘real-life knowledge’

and ‘hands-on work experience’. This view implied that the longer interns stay with their work, the more critical they will become. Apparently, Diêu identified critical thinking with the ability to generate new knowledge which can help solve problems in specific contexts. The belief also indicated a strong boundary that distinguished the critical thinking connected to ‘school’s theoretical knowledge’ and its experiences (Diêu: 71) from the critical thinking in the workplace. Diêu believed interns are often ‘fresh from schools’ and therefore ‘lack those types of practical knowledge’ (Diêu: 136-138).

The way Diêu perceived critical thinking definitely affected all the ‘pedagogic’ modalities she applied to improve critical thinking for interns. Overall, the modalities mixed both weak and strong framing over the social relation and the task selection, and they revealed tensions and contradictions.

Firstly, to encourage critical thinking, Diêu relaxed the traditional hierarchical social order between her, the other members in the team and the interns to accommodate the latter’s personal viewpoints:

Personally, I see interns just as our assistants. There is no such thing called inequity or injustice, e.g. treating them as *interns* or *volunteers* or whatsoever! We instead always encourage that they do their best and always make contributions to Team (Diêu: 160-163).

Not unlike classroom teachers, Diêu believed being open to interns would create comfortable environments for them to become reflective and interactive and in the end to ‘make their own contributions’ to the team. When it came to selecting tasks for interns:

I will assign them document translation; senior students will help us translate documents relating to fundraising, PR, and those documents we use in workshops. To the fourth-year students, we highly appreciate their English ability (Ibid: 100-103).

Diêu’s organisation of tasks through which interns’ critical thinking could be realised implied two things. Firstly, it reflected a strong control Diêu had over students’ knowledge and skills. The tasks were what Diêu and her team needed for their business purposes rather than her knowledge of whether interns felt confident enough to perform. Here, students’ prior business knowledge did not seem to matter. Secondly, Diêu’s practices indicated a very rigid hierarchy of knowledge (the English language) and attitude. To complete the tasks Diêu assigned above, besides a level of English proficiency, interns definitely needed an inward commitment to the exploration and generalisation of new knowledge/contents since the contextual- based knowledge BEP1 had prepared for them was not relevant to these health

medical contexts. In other words, Diệu expected students to have internalised critical thinking prior to coming to her workplace. This was indeed contradictory to her perception above that ‘interns are fresh from schools and do not have much critical thinking’. It was not surprising interns failed to meet Diệu’s expectation of a type of *practical* critical thinking:

The majority of their translations are naive . . . They are word-by word translation . . . When we, as a professional organisation, first receive information [of children with heart condition] from their families, the next step is to reword it a bit, so that it makes sense to us: Well, why is it that...? In what way is the heart related to the lung? Also, is this symptom that the family has reported correct or not terminologically? Students do not have that thinking, have not reached that level of thinking! They just rewrite exactly what they have heard (Ibid: 338 – 344)!

The above comments on interns’ uncritical work is a perfect place to bring in some discussion about the criteria of critical thought. As I mentioned above, in GI, students’ critical thinking (if there is any) is assessed in the workplace, e.g. by the supervisor like Diệu and in the university by the internship committee, e.g. certain teachers. From the quote above it can be said that Diệu applied a set of weakly framed criteria. For Diệu, critical thinking was evident through the depth of interns’ work, e.g. the use of English language to communicate critical thought. In the comment about interns’ Vietnamese- English translation above, for example, she emphasised ‘linguistics thinking’ (Diệu: 126), ‘the spirit’ (Ibid: 127-128) rather than merely ‘transmitting the original meaning’ or ‘translating word-by-word’ (Ibid: 131). It involved the ability to reflect on interns’ assumptions, to ‘reword’ or restructure the information received in the mother tongue and to keep rewriting one’s own drafts. Interns, due to their lack of critical thinking were not aware of these invisible standards.

The invisible criteria Diệu used stood in contrast with the *impractical* type of critical thinking set as the LO in the GI CO. There, as I mentioned above, critical thinking was about interns’ ability to identify and solve potential problems in the workplace. This critical thought (if there was any) was expected to be written down in the report. Diệu commented on interns’ critical thinking in this aspect:

Linh [name of a specific intern] had a recommendation: Develop a *data base* for Việt Nam’s Heartbeat for a more efficient management. It was a very good view. She did see the problem, did investigate it and did think about it. But the recommendation was, to be honest, not practical (Diệu: 242-249).

For Diệu, Linh did not show evidence of critical thinking at all. The intern was ‘too simple’ in her approach to problem justification and problem solving. She could not look far enough to see how that would be complicated for a more than ten-year old organisation. Although it

can be said the intern lacked experience, it can also be argued that BEP1 curriculum did not internalise in students like Linh a critical thinking identity, which, otherwise, could have helped her take a more holistic approach and avoid personal judgements.

Significantly, feedback to interns' limitations and how they could improve their critical thought was given through 'informal talks' (Diệu: 766). What Diệu wrote in interns' reports, despite their 'being descriptive' and 'lengthy' and lack of critical thinking, as she admitted, was 'to give students the best scores possible for their graduation' (Diệu: 765-766).

Diệu was not alone. As the analysis of another supervisor in chapter Six (pp. 160- 161) will also illustrate, feedbacks that could help interns see their weaknesses in thinking and thus work hard to improve it were often treated as 'small talks' rather than a method of systematic assessment. In the end, it can be said that like many other courses in BEP1, critical thinking in the GI was perceived as anything that contributed to the usual *good grades* 'for the purpose of their graduation' (Diệu: 766).

The analysis of the classification and framing of critical thinking in the GI course has helped reveal most clearly the gap between critical thinking in reality and critical thinking often spelled out in academic curricula. Interns' 'naïve' performances at work reflect the ineffectiveness of the critical thinking curriculum of BEP1 (and probably other BEPs). BEP1's horizontal knowledge structure characterised by the number of subjects aiming at knowledge the market often demands (Bernstein, 2000; Wheelahan, 2007) undoubtedly accounts for students' lack of critical thinking. While it is true that the 'market-oriented' curriculum structure can help prepare students for unexpected changes in the job market, the acquisition of mundane, specific context-based knowledge is not enough for students to engage in solving complex problems in new contexts. Interns need personal dedication, inwardness and commitment to generate new knowledge to achieve what Diệu calls 'the spirit' of the translation work, for example. Of course, this is where teachers play their roles. When critical thinking is strongly classified, and pedagogic interaction is appropriately framed this powerful knowledge can be internalised in students. This is exactly what one participant in BEP1 could do and the analysis of his pedagogic interaction is presented below.

5.3.6 Outlier Case

This last discussion of the framing of critical thinking in BEP1 is based on the analysis of the CT CO and the interviews with the two teachers teaching it. At Private Elite, the CT Course is identified as an elective area of knowledge the university especially organises to realise its commitment to the pursuit of ‘liberal education’ (University website). This special aim of the Course makes it worth analysing in detail the CO as well as the modalities teachers apply to realise the ‘liberal education’ ideology.

In the CO, critical thinking is specified explicitly through a set of objectives students have to meet to be considered critical thinkers. These include abilities to ‘apply criteria of thinking, . . . build coherent rational arguments . . . and internalise their [students’] own critical thinking spirit’ (CO: 1). To enable students to achieve those objectives, the Course requires that students’ performances meet standards, including ‘the use of accurate speech (both oral and written), soundness of arguments and justifications and cohesion’ (CO: 2). Significantly, there is the accommodation of students in the evaluative criteria of critical thought. Throughout the fifteen weeks, critical thinking is assessed mainly through students’ work on their own topics with facilitation of the teacher in charge. On-going assessment, essays and presentations replaces examinations (CO: 3). There is no prerequisite required for taking the Course (CO: 1). Instead, the sequencing of knowledge here takes on a recursive character. This means it depends on how teachers continuously reinforce the epistemic focus (depth and breadth) throughout the Course.

The rest of the section elaborates how critical thinking is framed here through the analysis of the interviews with Minh and Lộc. While both strongly classify critical thinking, and their pedagogic modalities are emancipatory, Minh is far more instrumental in his pedagogic modalities compared with Lộc. Although the discussion highlights Lộc’s framing (control) as a modality of success, it does not marginalise Minh’s framing values. Equally, it sees the latter as the other ‘face’ of control; the former’s framing carries the potential for its change while the latter’s carries the power of reproduction (Bernstein, 2000:5).

5.3.6.1 ‘You need to internalise values that can tell how you come out of the programme to be different.’

For Lộc, critical thinking was ‘making judgements on how a social institution reacts to a phenomenon, e.g. analysing a phenomenon from socio- political, economic and educational angles’ (Lộc: 94-95). It also involved ‘interrogating our own self’ (Ibid: 141-142).

Unlike Minh, who followed closely the CO for what he taught to help students achieve critical thinking, Lộc started by engaging himself in re-structuring the curriculum to allow critical thinking to develop systematically and specifically to the need and interest of every student. He did it by mapping out the three stages of development students had to go through, which he called ‘xé nháp’ [redoing the work] (Lộc: 330) ‘nâng cao năng lực’ [upgrading competences] (Ibid: 349), and ‘*high skills*’ (Ibid: 381). Lộc believed going through these stages systematically, students would ultimately be able to internalise critical thinking. He emphasised this on the first day of the Course:

Believe me: In the first stage, I talk, you nod; in the second stage, I say one sentence, you answer back one sentence; in the last stage, I say one sentence, you answer back four sentences’ (Lộc: 511- 513).

Throughout the stages, Lộc foregrounded a set of internal rules of critical thought, including logic, depth, breadth so that in the end students could reach ‘win-win solutions’ (Lộc: 404). This pedagogic modality suggested strong classification of the conceptualisation of critical thinking.

The core of critical thinking in the first stage (Weeks 1- 7) involved ‘How students prepare for and engage in class discussions; how to point out strengths and limitations of one’s report; how to overcome fear and attract audiences’ (Lộc: 329-340). At this stage, students received as much support as possible from Lộc and their friends. They were allowed to ‘redo the work, using feedbacks they received’ (Ibid: 330). The purpose was to achieve a standard of clarity and depth. During the second stage (Weeks 7 – 10) critical thinking was reinforced at a more rigorous level. Students selected their own academic or informal topics, did a critical review of literature, analysed all the contradictory views, and in the end produced a journal article. The criteria of critical thought were strongly reinforced here, as Lộc insisted on ‘an argument map, supporting evidences and premises- conclusion’ (Lộc: 370-375). Toward the end of the course, in stage three, students’ critical thinking was raised to ‘*high*

skills'. Of course, quality of critical thought continued to be emphasised, as Lộc requested students to solve problems, 'considering all sides involved, aiming at win-win solutions so that the society can develop collectively' (Lộc: 461- 462). It is important to emphasise here that in this stage, standards were translated into one single rule: thinking critically or failing the course, e.g. 'any inconsistency in arguments loses them [students] scores' (Lộc: 382-383).

This rigorous rule was not free from students' resistance, as they moaned that he was 'loveable and supportive at the beginning' but then towards the end became 'strict and easy to get crossed' (Lộc: 382- 383). However, Lộc believed for critical thinking to develop, teachers need to be strict when it is the right time to do so, and he insisted on how important students need to 'change the consciousness, change *perception* and accept [teachers' strictness]' (Ibid: 387). While he accepted them as 'babies' when they first came to him, he refused to accept them to 'still be babies approaching the end of the journey' (Lộc: 384- 389). It did not mean Lộc let students walk on their own through the journey. He, indeed, offered help irrespective of time and space. They used technology to communicate and he did not mind giving feedback whenever students got stuck and needed his help. Beside content knowledge, Lộc also accommodated students' control over the language they would feel comfortable expressing their critical thought in:

Some students who have *high level skills* of language discuss their topics in English. I told them: Ok, guys. I will do the translation for the rest of the class (Lộc: 802-803).

Significantly, it was the flexibility Lộc gave his students and the robust standards of critical thought that in the end helped internalise critical thinking in students. In the interview, he could not hold his emotion when he reflected on change in students' thinking towards the end of the Course. What he talked to students at the beginning of the Course became true, 'In the final test, when I just pretended to say something irrational, they immediately picked me on that! I could see how they had grown' (Lộc: 515-516). It was not surprising to hear Lộc's confidence when he talked about how his pedagogic transmission helped students internalise critical thinking:

Nobody has ever had to visit my class. They just need to call in any student of mine, put in front of him a case study and ask him to solve, I am quite sure the student never bases their judgements on personal view or any specific *detail*. Instead, they always approach the case from perspectives of *shareholders* and analyse it from the institutional approach (Ibid: 654-661).

It is important here to refer back to Minh to see how their pedagogic transmission brought about different results. While Minh emphasised the same set of criteria of critical thought, he did not apply it as recursively and systematically as Lộc did. Instead, he aligned them with learning objectives of each lesson. For example:

There are important lessons . . . They focus on standards of arguments and how to build sound arguments . . . I always have formative assessment to test whether students know how many parts an argument includes (Minh: 39 – 45).

The fact that Minh focused on students' memory of argument structures suggested an instrumental approach to critical thinking, which emphasised more on 'ends' rather than 'processes' of acquiring rules of logic, breadth, and depth of thought as in Lộc's case. Not surprisingly, evidence of critical thinking in Minh's students echoed just this instrumentality:

And then there are lessons about fallacies. The students love these lessons because I teach them all types of fallacies ... I am very happy when students, after those lessons, begin to dig into all aspects of life to spot fallacies and discuss with me about them (Minh: 100- 105).

Decidedly, the example Minh provided above proved that he succeeded in teaching critical thinking which could transfer to new contexts. However, his critical thinking modalities did not move beyond knowing, remembering or applying certain LOs. Instead of expecting students to achieve such fragmental LOs, Lộc engaged students in the process of inquiry, clarification, understanding, as well as justification throughout the course. In the end, these criteria were internalised. At the end of the course students had the ability to engage in critical debates with him, and as he was quite certain, they had the ability to approach any new problems holistically.

5.3.6.2 Framing Relations in Pedagogic Transmission

While the section above discusses how Lộc strongly classified critical thinking through the development of the internal rules for the subject's transmission, this section focuses on how he framed the selection, pacing and sequencing of critical thinking to make it internalised in students. Lộc's pedagogic instructions can be summarised in a few of his own words, 'I don't teach lessons' (Lộc: 472). This made his pedagogic practices different from those of Minh, as the analysis gradually unfolds.

Firstly, in terms of selection of material, unlike Minh, who unilaterally ‘search(es) east and west’ (Minh: 71) for material to illustrate the contents in his lectures, Lộc based teaching material on students’ relevance. As the above section showed, Lộc foregrounded a set of criteria for critical thought. Significantly, these standards were not developed without relevance to students’ needs and interests. Right in the first week, students were asked to ‘clarify’ their identities in relation to their programmes and personal interests (Lộc: 171). From then on, material used for critical thinking activities throughout the three stages were left to students’ choice, since he learned from his experience that ‘It is never effective if we ask students do things not relevant to them (Lộc: 540- 541). He just guided them to ‘better select issues closely related to your majors’ (Lộc: 151) and reminded them of the criteria of critical thought. Since students took control of their own discussions, it generated active engagement. Talks never seemed to stop in his classes because ‘It is *not me* who raise problems’ (Lộc: 147 – 148, my italics for emphasis).

Accommodating students’ control did not mean that Lộc left students on their own or accepted anything they took as critical thinking. His pedagogy also accommodated students’ pacing of knowledge. Students’ requests for more time were taken seriously. For example, he would let students submit their work late when they had ‘busy mid-term week’ (Lộc: 379-380). To reach the quality of thought, students received support whenever they needed it, irrespective of time and place. For Lộc, this was important because it gave students more confidence when working on their own:

When the deadline gets close, I receive on average a hundred or more messages a day from students asking for feedback about their work. Some even arrive at 12 midnight. I joke to them: *tụi bây* [You guys] need to behave; if, not *vợ* [wife] *tao* [my] will have to ask for a divorce (Lộc: 734)!

‘Tao’ and *Tụi bây*’ are informal Vietnamese vocabulary that can be used to refer to ‘I’/‘me’/‘my’ and ‘you’ respectively. Traditionally, the terms are used by people higher in hierarchy to address those who are lower in hierarchy. They are also commonly used by Vietnamese young people to communicate with each other within their intimate circle. Lộc clarified his use of this ‘mundane’ language as a way to reach an intimacy. It can be understood as an attempt to a share identification with students (Bernstein, 2000) so that when ‘You [students] come to me, your heart doesn’t shake’ (Lộc: 511). By weakening the social base between him and his students this way, Lộc helped them overcome fear caused by social hierarchies and thus become more confident in critical deliberations with him. In other words, Lộc used the ‘mundane’ language as a means to enhance class participation and

from there orientating students to the internalisation the ‘esoteric’ language of critical thinking.

Given that the relation between language and social structure is always there (Bernstein, 1971), knowing when to use what language to whom is key to critical thinking. Lộc indeed insisted on this language awareness as an inevitable aspect of critical thinking, especially for future leaders. For Lộc, when a message is delivered in the language that only the people in the speaker’s field can understand, that talk is ‘rubbish!’ (Lộc: 396). It has got to be something ‘A farmer on being invited to listen also has to understand’ (Ibid: 392-393). As the analysis of Diệu’s case earlier proved (pp. 128-129), BEP1 students who lack this language of awareness cannot work effectively at least as translators.

Indeed, the same informal language and weak regulative discourse can be identified in Minh’s pedagogic modalities, through his use of ‘thằng’ (he) (Minh: 733), ‘con’ (she) (Ibid: 730) and ‘tụi nó’ (they) (Ibid: 730) to refer to students and the affection he gave his students, ‘I shared my lunch food to him’ (Ibid: 735). However, they were used as a means to realise a type of critical thinking more instrumental in its sense (Barnett, 1997), e.g. ‘identifying fallacies’ (Minh: 61) and/ or ‘distinguishing between deductive and inductive arguments’ (Minh: 122-123).

Compared with Lộc’s flexible sequence and pacing, Minh’s controls were tighter. Embracing logic, clarity and coherence and expecting students to demonstrate these standards of critical thought in the examination, Minh organised a long tutorial meeting for each group to guide them step by step so that they could perform smoothly in the presentations. In doing so, he expected students to follow closely his guidance, most preferably was ‘tak[ing] notes or record[ing]’ his instructions. The feedback for any student/group that ‘did things their own way . . . completely irrationally’ was ‘This is not what I guided you’ (Minh: 545). The failure to create new knowledge of such groups was not irrelevant to Minh’s pedagogic modalities. In promoting critical thinking, Minh set himself as ‘a model’ of a critical thinker who is always clear, logical and serious about lectures and contrasted himself with many other teachers who ‘use the same lecture slides for 20 years’ (Ibid: 173). From there he expected students to ‘see’ and ‘make commitment’ (Ibid: 839-840). Minh must have romanticised the process of the internalisation of critical thinking. The inner commitment to knowledge may require more effective methods and relevant criteria rather than merely a behavioural approach of seeing and copying. Lack of such methods and criteria, the knowledge students gained was not the knowledge that was integrated and had

power to explain (Young, 2007; Barnett, 2009). In Minh's classes students' forms of critical thinking knowledge was indeed knowledge of the textbooks and of Minh.

Summary

This chapter characterises the critical thinking curriculum in BEP1. It analyses how critical thinking is classified and framed by teachers there. In general, in this Programme, critical thinking receives a weak classification. Each teacher perceives critical thinking in a different way and identifies it with anything that helps students achieve certain LOs. This perception affects teachers' pedagogic instructions. While most teachers appear to be open to students to encourage the development of critical thought, their strong framing over selection of material and weak framing over criteria impede this endeavour. Most teachers regulate their own pedagogic interaction, deciding and controlling what forms of critical thinking should be acquired, how, in what the order and with what assessment method it could be officially realised. They also decide which forms of communication constitutes legitimate realisation of critical thought. Given that LOs need to be ensured, teachers' pedagogic practices hardly show attempts at modifying the framing values to accommodate either 'elite' or 'weak' students. This makes access to critical thinking for *all* students a false hope, and therefore reproduces inequality in the classroom. The significance of the chapter lies in the findings of the outlier case. With an active engagement in re-organising the curriculum and applying appropriate framing over selection, pacing, sequencing and evaluative criteria, Lộc's pedagogic modalities have brought about change in students' critical thinking. Unfortunately, this is a single success. Overall, students come into the workplace with the mundane knowledge BEP1 internalises in them rather than critical thinking.

Chapter Six: From Mundane to Esoteric Knowledge: Recontextualising Critical Thinking in Public Elite

Introduction

This chapter continues the previous chapter to address Research Objective Two: How critical thinking is perceived, taught and assessed in English Studies (ES)- Business English Program 2 (BEP2), offered by Public Elite. The chapter juxtaposes the critical thinking discourse of ES-Business English Programme 1 (BEP1), Private Elite, discussed in detail in Chapter Five side by side with the critical thinking discourse of BEP2. The reason for juxtaposing the efforts taken by two different universities is to uncover the politics and processes embedded within the recontextualisation of critical thinking. As Bernstein (2000) emphasises, the unit of analysis is always ‘positional involving relationships across contexts and their specialised meanings and forms of realisations’ (Lim, 2016: 140). The discussion is based on document analysis, empirical interview data and the guidance of Bernstein’s theoretical and conceptual framework developed in Chapter Three. The chapter comprises of three sections. Section One provides characteristics of BEP2 – its curriculum and knowledge structure, the programme aims, the identities and how it recontextualises knowledge to realise these aims and identities. This provides the background for the discussion of Section Two, where I analyse how critical thinking is perceived and embedded in BEP2. Finally, the third section looks at the classroom level to delineate how critical thinking is realised there through pedagogic interaction.

Overall, the analysis shows at the curriculum level, the knowledge structure of BEP2 does not support critical thinking. At the classroom level, teachers perceive critical thinking differently and do not develop rigorous internal criteria to assess it, so there is little evidence of critical thinking internalised in students. There is one case where the curriculum is reorganised by the subject teacher to create safe spaces for critical thinking. This allows some acquisition of critical thinking.

6.1 BEP2’s Curriculum and Knowledge Structure

The analysis in this section discusses how the recontextualisation of knowledge in BEP2 at the official recontextualising field (ORF) and the pedagogic recontextualising field (PRF)

may enhance or inhibit the teaching of critical thinking. In recontextualising knowledge to realise the educational aims and identities, specifically critical thinking, BEP2 has faced tensions and contradictions. On the one hand, the accommodation of a certain areas of mundane knowledge in response to market needs has weakened the knowledge structure and made it less supportive for critical thinking development. On the other hand, there have been efforts to strengthen the knowledge structure for critical thinking to happen, through blurring the boundary between the two focuses: English language and Business content. Unfortunately, due to the absence of clarity, these efforts to make the knowledge structure more ‘vertical’ (Bernstein, 2003: 169) brought little hope to fulfil the promise to develop BEP2’s students into critical thinkers. In the analysis, references to BEP1 are at times made for the purpose of comparison and contrast.

6.1.1 BEP2 in the ORF and the PRF: Its Identities and Its Knowledge Structure

BEP2 shares the same characteristics as BEP1 in the ORF, e.g. where knowledge is selected and organised by the State and the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). Like BEP1, BEP2 is extended from the national curriculum framework of the ES to secure more job opportunities for students after graduation (MOET, 2002). Within this structure, BEP2 has been defined as a dual-focus programme with ES as the major discipline and Business as a minor discipline (See more in Chapter Five, p. 108).

Knowledge defined by the MOET then continues to be modified, redefined and reorganised in the PRF e.g. by a specific group of BEP2 curriculum developers to serve certain aims and identities. Here, not unlike BEP1, curriculum knowledge has been organised into groups, including general knowledge, foundational knowledge, professional-core knowledge, professional- specialised knowledge, and graduation. These groups accommodate a total of 41 subjects (also modules or courses) worth 135 credits, to be paced over four academic years (See Appendix 4.7, pp. 247- 252 for how knowledge was paced). Table 6.1 below illustrates the knowledge structure of 2016-2020 BEP2 in both ORF and PRF.

As the table suggests, BEP2 has adopted a market-orientated approach to knowledge. This is evident in the way the Programme has inserted a certain area of pragmatic and context-based knowledge, namely Applied IT in English Teaching and Translation and Office Work Skills. Similarly, the endorsement of ‘principles of’ subjects such as Principles

of Marketing or Principles of Management may suggest a further instrumental approach to curriculum knowledge.

Table 6.1 2016-2020 BEP2 in ORF and PRF

| Name of Programme | Group of knowledge | Sub-group | Training mode | Name of subject, credit weight and number of modules |
|---------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| BEP2 135C*s, 41M**s | General: 27Cs, 9Ms Vietnamese | | Compulsory | Politics 10Cs, 3Ms 2nd language :10Cs, 3Ms Laws - Fundamentals: 2Cs, 1M Psychology- Fundamentals: 2Cs, 1M Information Technology (IT): 3Cs, 1M |
| | | Foundational 43 Cs, 13Ms | | English skills: 43Cs, 13 Ms |
| | Professional 102Cs, 32Ms English | Core 26 Cs, 9Ms | Compulsory 12Cs, 4Ms | Linguistics 1,2: 6Cs, 2Ms British & American Literature: 6Cs, 2Ms |
| | | | Elective 14Cs, 5Ms | Linguistic, language, culture |
| | | Specified (Minor) 33 Cs, 10Ms | Compulsory 27Cs, 8Ms | Principles of Management: 3Cs, 1M Principles of Marketing: 3Cs, 1M IT in English Teaching and Translation: 3Cs, 1M Office Work Skills: 4Cs, 1M Research 1,2: 6Cs, 2Ms Internship 1,2: 8Cs, 2Ms |
| | Graduation 6Cs, 1M | | Electives 6Cs, 2Ms | Thesis |

*C: Credits **M: module

As all the names suggest, these courses may not go any further than equipping students with certain skills or raising their awareness about certain theories. Indeed, one teacher revealed in my interview with her, the ‘truth’ of pedagogic communication in Principles of Marketing that ‘Each one [principle] is flipped through like sitting on a horseback looking at flowers’ (Đoàn: 119-120). The selection of such segmental knowledge areas can be argued to be beneficial for the expansion of students’ career path after graduation as suggested by the MOET (MOET, 2004). It also fits in well with the Programme’s general aims and identities spelled out in BEP2’s Programme Specification (SP2: 3), ‘to use fluently the four English skills- Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing- in different social work settings, translating, interpreting and solving office work problems’. However, the projection of career knowledge by spelling out explicitly basic skills that the job market mostly requires stands in contrast with another desire to construct an identity of autonomous and critical learners who have a command of ‘important skills of the twenty-first century, such as critical

thinking, collaboration and creative thinking' (SP2: 3). Seeking to develop both an external, instrumental and mundane identity and an internal, autonomous and critical thinking identity within one programme is not without tension.

The insertion of market-oriented subjects may risk the divorce of knowledge from the 'inwardness, commitments, personal dedication and deep structure of the self' (Bernstein, 2003: 86). As I explained in Chapter Three (pp. 83-84), it is these subjective attributes that in turn lead students to the exploration of 'esoteric' knowledge that characterises critical thinking. Also, according to Barnett (2009: 438), curricula with generic skills and attitudes are often not 'demanding' enough for engagement in and access to powerful specialised knowledge. The inclusion of courses, such as Applied IT in English Teaching and Translation while the discipline is the English language in business contexts (or doing business through the English language) may also raise questions about students' attitudes to knowledge, career and critical thinking. As teachers later reveal in the interviews, a number of students choose to work as English tutors during and after the training rather than seeking career in their trained discipline (Business). Worse even, many of them remain uncertain about what they can do in their professional lives.

Given all the tension and contradictions inherent in BEP2's knowledge structure, its promise to 'train' students to be critical thinkers is well worth questioning.

6.1.2 Strong vs. Weak Internal Classification

The above explains how BEP2's knowledge structure, like that of BEP1, is unfavourable for critical thinking. This section foregrounds one significant effort that BEP2 has made in structuring its curriculum knowledge towards critical thinking.

Unlike BEP1, which is designed with quite a number of foundational and professional subjects to be shared with other different minor disciplines, BEP2 is a programme in its own right. This autonomy allows BEP2 to introduce business content as the device to harness the English language knowledge (the major discipline) right in the first year. This effort to blur the boundary between the English language and content was best explained by the programme manager:

Profession or vocation? It's a dilemma. We have decided that we do not compete in the vocational training sector . . . it is the English language that we equip them that will help them work when they graduate. . . So, right from the beginning we decided that business contents just serve as a vehicle to develop the English language' (Thanh: 239- 246).

It is clear from Thanh that BEP2 aims to retain the rigor of the English language by not taking practical knowledge as a way forward. However, a stronger internal classification of the English language at the curriculum level does not necessarily guarantee the same strong classification at the classroom level. There are two possible reasons for this.

Firstly, there may be little consensus among teachers about which focus they should prioritise. The inclusion of business contents, though being implied as a mechanism to develop the English language, may affect teachers' understanding of the relation between the two disciplines due to the long-standing contentious language- content debate in the content and language integrated learning (CLIL) discourse (Coyle et al., 2010). In this context, the (mis-) conception is who teaches what (content or language) at what stage while in fact the two focuses should always be treated as one (Coyle et al., 2010). Similarly, given that there is a wide range of knowledge inscribed into the Programme, teachers may get frustrated over which knowledge is more important for students to think critically about. Consequently, critical thinking may be identified with the acquisition of competencies rather than the theoretical knowledge that systematically constitutes logic, language, reason, and 'consciousness' (Bernstein, 2000: 37).

The above confusions were not unheard in the interviews. One 'skills' teacher talked about what she thought was the means to achieve the other, 'Our aim is language. If we focus on business content, then we can't develop the depth of the language' (Nữ: 512-513). However, she further added, 'Generally, it is still vague. I feel that English is just a means (Ibid: 531-532). 'Content' teachers also expressed confusion over which knowledge should be assessed as critical thinking. Vân (186) said, 'Things are still vague. I feel like we focus on content rather than English competencies'. Đoàn saw the whole experience of making decisions on how much of what should be justified as 'critical thinking' was 'a real mess' (Đoàn: 326). She indeed understood the opposite, 'English is just a tool. ... they [students] have to be able to do business' (Ibid: 287). Lack of clarity definitely led these teachers to understanding language and content as two discourses while they should be only one, as BEP2 curriculum defines it and as the literature of CLIL suggests (Coyle et al., 2010).

Another reason for the weak internal classification of the knowledge structure is the strong boundary between teachers who teach different groups of knowledge. In the interviews, teachers of the professional- specialised subjects referred to teachers of the foundational subjects as 'language teachers', 'the teachers below', 'They do not have background in business', and 'They do not understand business concepts fully' (Đoàn, BEP2: 382-383). These comments suggest teachers in each discipline tend to focus on the

specialised areas they are assigned to teach. This separation may result in instrumental understandings of critical thinking. Indeed, one ‘language’ teacher, in the interview expressed her association of critical thinking with English skills, e.g. ‘the ability to present knowledge, ask and answer questions in English’ (Nữ: 45). On the contrary, another teacher teaching specialised subjects did not see the relevance of language as a part of critical thinking. Indeed, ‘There is no need to focus too much on language’ (Vân, BEP2: 61). Since language and thought are inextricably related (Halpern, 2014), this division can be said to impact the teaching of critical thinking negatively.

Beside the boundary teachers construct between themselves, the programme also sets a strong boundary between visiting and mainstream teachers in relation to who can get involved in the PRF. Specifically, curriculum reviews are seen as the responsibility of ‘mainstream teachers in the Unit only’ (Vân: 17-18). Even within this mainstream group, some teachers have been marginalised. Bích (16) revealed, ‘I haven’t been invited to review curriculum’. For visiting teachers, the boundary is stronger. They are treated as ‘*outside teachers*’ (Vân: 19, my emphasis) and thus are not invited to formal meetings where they can discuss curriculum concerns. Syllabi are sent to them ‘to read at home’ instead (Vân: 20). The strong boundary decidedly affects the transmission of critical thinking, as one teacher expressed her wish for physical discussions so that she could find ways to realise critical thinking in her class:

. . . I want the Faculty or the Department to organise meetings so that we can share concerns . . . not only among full-time but part-time as well. . . if all the teachers who teach the same subject sit together to share . . . each contributes an idea, we can reach consensus . . . Then we can find a way to help our students . . . I know what I will do next (Nữ: 548-555).

It is obvious from the extract that the social distance of BEP2 ledt Nữ puzzled with the task of teaching critical thinking. Given that in BEP2, ‘Visiting teachers are three times more than the mainstream group of just five members’ (Hiệu: 274), marginalising the former’s voices from the discourse of critical thinking curriculum may account a part for the failure of the critical thinking endeavour.

In summary, the analysis of the curriculum documents identifies initial barriers to the development of critical thinking in BEP2. These barriers include the horizontal knowledge structure and the internally weak classification of the programme. The next section will continue the analysis with a special focus on the classification of critical thinking.

6.2 Classification of Critical Thinking

Section 6.1 sheds initial insights into how the curriculum and knowledge structure of BEP2 may affect the classification and framing of critical thinking. This sub-section focuses more intensively on the classification of critical thinking itself. Generally, BEP2 has a weak (both external and internal) classification of critical thinking. This is inherent in the lack of clarity of what critical thinking is and how to evaluate it.

Firstly, like BEP1, BEP2 embraces critical thinking for accountability and for students' employment. The difference is while BEP1 enjoys generous autonomy in reference to initiating, planning, and regulating the critical thinking curriculum (but does not set it as priority yet), the process in BEP2 is completely top-down. According to one programme leader, critical thinking was initiated because it was required by the MOET 'for the regular national accreditation and later for *AUN* [ASEAN University Network-Quality Assurance]' (Thanh: 39-41).

The discourse of critical thinking in BEP2, however, is little more than rhetoric. This is because 'Any further deployment needs to wait for guidance from the Board of Management (BoM)' (Thanh: 70). This control of the BoM and also the MOET above over the curriculum development has resulted in the curriculum developers themselves 'accepting an emotional understanding of what critical thinking is' (Thanh: 102). Thanh further admitted this as 'a limitation of the Programme' (Ibid: 103). As the analysis later shows, teachers believe critical thinking is almost anything a certain subject expects as the learning outcomes (LOs) although they share a general belief of what critical thinking is. A lack of clarity about what critical thinking is has resulted in a further internally weak classification of critical thinking.

Although critical thinking has been infused and taught in all subjects, there was little evidence of inner evaluative criteria for its realisation. One teacher said,

The syllabus does not specify what critical thinking is . . . There is a section called Application. However, there is no specific guidance on what application is legitimated as critical thinking realisation. Teachers often organise discussions and presentations. They may somehow reflect [critical thinking] (Đoàn, BEP2: 13-16).

That critical thinking was vaguely represented in the syllabus is understandable since a shared understanding of its concept has not been reached yet. While this may grant subject teachers plenty of pedagogic autonomy, it may also invite different interpretations, as Đoàn said above. Although the critical thinking curriculum has officially been initiated, there has

been no further effort to deploy and monitor its implementation. Indeed, how teachers understand and develop critical thinking has remained ‘beyond our control’, as the programme leader, Thanh (314-316), revealed.

Finally, the weak classification of critical thinking is partly related to a strong boundary between leaders and teachers within the institutional context of BEP2. Unlike BEP1, policies to enhance teacher research and professional development so that they can be confident about teaching critical thinking is rare in BEP2, as one leader admitted:

At the present, resources of a public university do not allow us to do more than that [giving teachers time to attend workshops and conferences] . . . There is no pressure to engage in research activities (Hiệu: 298- 300).

Hiệu’s comment implied two things: the role of the ORF (the MOET) and the curriculum developers’ view of knowledge and teaching. While I will discuss more in detail the role of the MOET in Chapter Seven (p. 170), I am emphasising here that by separating theoretical abstract knowledge from classroom teaching, BEP2 leaders treat knowledge and the knowledge production as being instrumental. The knowledge teachers transmit to students will certainly be conceptually empty and also socially empty (Muller, 2016). In the interviews, teachers lamented about lack of access to resources necessary for more understanding of critical thinking. They believed the reason was ‘because they [the MOET, the BoM, the curriculum developers] have not seen critical thinking as a focus yet’ (Đoàn: 225). What Đoàn raised was specifically worth noticing:

Critical thinking is another example. Nobody notices the philosophy underpinning it. I think it must be something more than that [synthesising evaluating and analysing]. I’ve attended workshops but the speakers did not say anything more than that . . . But I am too lazy to find out. . . Literally, the current workload exhausts me enough. Doing more with critical thinking will bury me in a hopeless mess’ (Đoàn, 437-441).

Clearly, Đoàn was motivated to obtain more understanding of critical thinking, but without support she was pulled back to the typical life of a busy teacher and carried on with a subjective understanding of what critical thinking is.

To summarise, the critical thinking discourse in BEP2 has weakly been classified both externally and internally with vague standards of realisation and teachers’ holding emotional/ instrumental understandings of the concept. Despite efforts to incorporate critical thinking for an esoteric identity, these efforts are disrupted by power relations from both the

ORF and the PRF. Presumably, pedagogic transmission within this knowledge structure provides students with either an absence of critical thinking internalisation or an acquisition of critical thinking which is both conceptually and socially empty (Beck, 2002, 2010; Muller, 2016). To verify this assumption, the chapter is now turning its focus on the analysis of teachers' transmission of critical thinking at BEP2.

6.3 Framing of Critical Thinking

The analysis above has given details about the aims, the identity, the knowledge structure of BEP2 and how critical thinking is incorporated within that overall structure. This section is now looking into how teachers in different knowledge groups actually perceived, taught, and evaluated critical thinking. Although teachers are unclear about what the curriculum means by critical thinking, it is what they all are for. Given that all undergraduate programmes in Việt Nam share the same national Politics curriculum, there is no empirical data of how critical thinking is taught in this curriculum in BEP2. Instead, implications will be made using relevant information from Phú, the teacher of Politics subjects in BEP1.

6.3.1 Professional- Foundational Knowledge

The discussion of critical thinking in this group is based on the analysis of pedagogic practices of two teachers- one mainstream and one part-time. In both cases, teachers take strong controls over their pedagogic interaction when transmitting critical thinking.

Bích, the mainstream teacher, teaches Listening and Speaking¹, Reading and Writing¹ and Business Grammar (BG). Not unlike other teachers in BEP1, Bích perceived critical thinking as 'the ability to raise questions and look at an issue from different angles' (Ibid:51-52). To help students realise critical thinking, Bích depended on the traditional approach.

To begin with, she followed a strongly framed sequence where she would explain the theory to students, raised questions to test understanding and gave feedback on students' answers. In this pedagogic modality, Bích paced the knowledge transmission tightly, since for her it was 'the main focus of skills subjects' (Bích: 24). This, she admitted, 'takes up all the curricular time' (Ibid:154- 155). This strong pacing was not without relation to her perspective of students' background and the social order. In the interview, she labelled students as 'rather timid' and 'not having business knowledge' (Bích: 188). Perceiving

students as ‘weak’, she applied a ‘step-by-step’ approach (Ibid: 73) to ensure all students understand the grammar rules prescribed in textbooks. Bích also controlled unilaterally the question time. To bridge the quietness in class, the one who often asked questions in her classes was herself. She revealed, ‘I must ask them questions’ (Bích, 188-189). This pedagogic communication decidedly displaced students’ voices in decisions over what should be called critical thinking to be realised in the pedagogic transmission.

Not surprisingly, the selection of material for critical thought was also strongly framed by Bích. External material and activities that required students to explore contexts of different usages of English grammar or to question its applications in real life were limited or even excluded. Indeed, they were ‘rarely’ organised (Bích: 151).

Evaluative criteria for realising critical thinking was not an exception. The following extract explained how she helped students realise ‘critical thinking’ in a typical BG lesson:

After I teach them defining and non-defining relative clause where I explain to them the use of *who*, *which*, *that* for collective nouns, I give them a sentence and raise a question: What is wrong with this sentence? The students then answer: Only *who* and *which* can be applied; *That* is not allowed in non-defining relative clause (Bích, 94 – 97).

It is obvious from the extract that Bích treated critical thinking as an instrumental skill to enable a mastery of the *factual* grammar. If Bloom’s (1956) and Krathwohl’s (2002) taxonomies are used as a point of reference, then critical thinking in Bích’s class above can be labelled as ‘understanding’ and/or ‘identifying’. To be clear, Bích equalises knowledge to ‘one correct answer’, and there is no other way around. Presumably, this conception of critical thought will be translated into multiple choice questions in tests, which makes up 90 per cent of the knowledge realisation (BG syllabus). Indeed, critical thinking was seen as irrelevant in this ‘skills’ subject, as Bích (201) admitted she did ‘not test much’ of it. In Bernstein’s (2003) terms, what students acquired in Bích’s class was the mundane knowledge of ‘the thinkable’. The grammar meaning Bích wanted her students to construct was context-bound and therefore had little reference outside that context. This instrumental approach to grammar explained partly why students failed to think ‘the unthinkable’ when they later engaged in new contexts where more than memorising grammar rules was required (See Section 6.3.4 below for more details).

The reliance on teachers and textbooks for knowledge continues to inform the teaching of critical thinking in other ‘skills’ classes taught by Nũ, the experienced visiting teacher who teaches Business Reading and Writing 1,2,3,4. For Nũ, critical thinking entailed ‘a solid background knowledge in business, ability to communicate that knowledge through

English, and the ability to defend and refute that knowledge' (Nữ: 85-87). To help students realise critical thinking, Nữ moved beyond the traditional teaching methods such as scanning, skimming, and asking and answering questions, which she thought was 'dry and boring' (Nữ: 108). However, the method she chose to replace - group presentations- showed its own limitations related to selection, sequence and evaluation of critical thinking.

Firstly, the material used for critical thought was completely constrained in what was prescribed as legitimate knowledge in the CO. Students were split into groups and each group was given a lesson in the textbook to prepare and present to the peers. Nữ saw the inclusion of external material as 'a waste of time' (Nữ:188). It is clear that critical thinking in this case, if there was any, was about effective techniques of representing given knowledge rather than creating new knowledge. Also, compared with Lộc's case in BEP1 (pp.133- 138), Nữ's tight control over what could be considered for critical thought excluded discourses of students' interests and concerns, such as gender, politics or personal issues.

Secondly, for evaluative criteria, Nữ insisted on the mastery of theoretical knowledge as a condition for critical thinking. She emphasised:

They need to internalise theory first. When they develop the root, they will be able to move on to deliberations. Without knowledge, it's impossible to deliberate (Nữ: 73-75).

Nữ's method of assessment implied one important thing: her approach to knowledge and also to critical thinking. In emphasising theoretical knowledge as the fundamental basis for critical thinking, Nữ shared the progressive critical approach to curricular knowledge as an object with Young (2007), Apple (2013a, 2013b), Maton (2014). However, the theoretical knowledge she expected was the contextually dependent knowledge rather than the contextually independent one. This is evident in the objective she set for group presentations. According to Nữ, presentations were selected as a way to engage students effectively in the memorisation process, as 'When they prepare the lessons, they will *remember* them *forever*' (Nữ, 115). What she required- the 'accuracy of content' (Ibid: 190)- reflected a belief of knowledge as tacit and stable rather than emergent. In this method, she also focused on skills, such as, 'a coherent agenda, speaking not reading slides, intonations, inviting and dealing with questions' (Nữ: 206-208). Insisting on these group presentation criteria, Nữ's critical thinking modalities aimed at enabling certain segmental business knowledge and presentation skills students lacked rather than internalising an abstract theoretical English knowledge that students needed and later could use to realise forms of meanings in their discipline. This partly helps explain why later in the workplace students performed well

where memorising and representing information were required but failed to generate new knowledge and communicate thought or solve problems through the English language (See Section 6.3.4 below).

In summary, teachers teaching foundational knowledge subjects tend to unilaterally regulate their pedagogic communication, designing and controlling meanings of critical thought, e.g. what constitutes them, how and in what the order, and which forms of assessment conducive to the ‘official’ realisation of critical thought. Pedagogic interaction here does not show much effort to enhance access to critical thinking or esoteric knowledge, which requires a connection with ‘inwardness, commitment, personal dedication, deep structure of the self’ (Bernstein, 2003: 86).

6.3.2 Professional – Core Knowledge

The analysis of the teaching of critical thinking in this knowledge group is based on the pedagogic interaction of one mainstream teacher. Mai teaches British Literature. She broadly understood critical thinking as ‘the ability to express an independent point of view’ (Mai: 28). Mai therefore decided that the most appropriate way to develop this ability was through class discussions, reflection writing and group presentations.

Mai typically followed a procedure where she would begin a lesson with her introducing the plot of the story, ‘problematising the theme and then inviting counter-arguments from students’ (Mai: 29-31). For example, in one class she asked students to ‘evaluate the behaviour of the mother who was stalking her daughter’s flirting the male lodgers from the Vietnamese socio-cultural norms’ (Mai: 32- 33). Since literature is about human values and culture, what Mai usually saw when it came to such sensitive topics as ‘flirt[ing]’ (Mai: 33) was a range of contradictory ideas hidden in students. However, due to ‘oriental cultural barriers’ (Mai: 38) they constrained their views and hesitated to speak them out. Here, Said’s (1978) concept of ‘the Orient’, a product of Western cultural hegemony is important to understand constraints Vietnamese teachers and students face when practicing ‘Western’ critical thinking. It also helps highlight the importance to adopt a flexible approach to the hierarchical social order between teachers and students for critical thinking:

Under the impact of the oriental culture, the majority of students disagreed with such a thing [flirting]. However, because I encouraged them to just speak out their views, their different perspectives if there were any, they ultimately ended up agreeing (Minh: 38- 41).

It is not hard to see in Mai's quote above a sense of moral shame which prevented Vietnamese students from speaking out what they believed was culturally right or wrong. Significantly, Mai's openness to students resulted in some initial development of critical thought.

As a part of her pedagogic modalities, Mai relied heavily on lectures rather than students' own exploration of knowledge as a way towards the realisation of critical thought. She believed that students 'lacked ability' to explore topics to reach a full understanding of the cultural values embedded in stories 'if left by themselves' (Mai: 64). For Mai, critical thinking was evident where students were able to express 'personal opinions' either in written texts or oral presentations. However, there were no specific standards on which Mai based her evaluation of students' critical thought. Mai also downgraded the use of language in critical thinking:

I focus on whether they can give their own points of view or opinions after they read a story. About language, I let them seek other ways to develop it (Mai: 46 -47).

Holding a perception that critical thinking centred around the notion of 'independent thinking', Mai embraced 'humanity', the value that she thought 'shape students' characters' (Ibid: 246). This is not without a good sense, for she read in her students' reflections that understanding humanity renewed their interest in literature. Unfortunately, being obsessed with human values, Mai left out the language development. Given that language and thought are inseparable (Vygotsky, 1978; Halpern, 2014; Brown, 2007), it is worth questioning how Mai's students could express their critical thought about humanity's cultures, beliefs and traditions.

The contradiction in Mai's evaluative rules, indeed, needs to be understood in a wider pedagogic discourse which 'specialises meanings to time and space' (Bernstein, 2000: 35), as Mai said 'time, class size and other pressures do not allow me to take care of both [language and critical thinking]' (Mai: 244 - 245). Mai was not alone. Class size was actually perceived as a big barrier to critical thinking development by other teachers, including David (BEP1), Lộc (BEP1) and Hiệu (BEP2). Unmistakeably, this is linked to the marketisation of the Vietnamese HE at the policy level (Vietnamese Government, 2012a).

Back to the language – thought relation in the evaluative criteria discussed above, although Mai was aware that students' English language was 'deteriorating through years' (Mai: 229-230), she could not accommodate support due to the class size. Decidedly, Mai's critical thinking pedagogic modalities were limited due to the quality-quantity constraint, which in turn, detached students from access to the type of English language that allows powerful

meaning generation. Not unlike in the other classes, critical thinking here was, in fact, pedagogically translated into and became ‘mundane’.

6.3.3 Professional – Specialised Knowledge

Vân and Đoàn teach content subjects in the specialised knowledge group. Although both show efforts toward appropriate frames for critical thinking realisation, they generate two different sets of pedagogic modalities. Compared with Vân and all the other teachers in BEP2, Đoàn probably creates the safest space for critical thinking to happen.

6.3.3.1 Pedagogy of the Regular

Vân teaches both skills and content subjects. In the interview, she talked mainly about her pedagogic modalities in Business Ethics. Beside teaching, Vân manages a language centre and at times receives BEP2 interns. In the interview, where relevant, she shared her insights about interns’ performances and attitudes. These insights are discussed in Section 6.3.4 (pp.160- 163).

Vân understood critical thinking as ‘ability to analyse and evaluate strengths and weaknesses as well as the logical or illogical aspects of an issue’ (Vân, BEP2: 29). To help students realise this critical thinking, besides embedding questions into her lectures, Vân depended largely on case study methods, as for her they best enhanced ‘students’ self-regulation’ (Ibid: 38). In talking about her pedagogic practices, Vân showed some contradictions related to how she taught and evaluated critical thinking.

Firstly, Vân followed a strongly controlled sequence, beginning with theoretical lectures, followed by groupwork, presentations and peer feedback. She expected students to have developed elsewhere certain conditions for critical thinking, such as prior business knowledge, work experience, content knowledge, as well as cultural knowledge. Expecting these, Vân found it hard to teach critical thinking, specifically in her Business Ethics classes. Indeed, she saw the difficulty arising from students’ side:

Although our students are good, critical thinking in a new specialised subject like this one is difficult because they don’t have work experience; they also have no content or cultural knowledge’ (Vân: 78-79).

Secondly, as I introduced above, Vân depended largely on case studies to develop critical thinking for students. In this method, she preferred foreign ‘standardised’ (Vân: 71) cases prescribed in the textbook to local ones, which she sometimes used but merely as ‘examples’ to ‘trigger’ students’ thought (Ibid: 70). As a teacher being trained abroad and teaching English, a Western language, it may be hard for Vân and probably other teachers including myself, to escape the attraction of Western ‘standardised’ intellectual products. Given that Western-produced textbooks and the English language have been widely characterised as forms of cultural hegemony (Pennycook, 1994; Apple, 2019), in endorsing these values, we the ‘captive mind’ (Alatas, 1972, 1974) actually contribute our part to the manifestation of cultural imperialism (Alatas, 2000) and distance ourselves and our students from our own social, cultural and political contexts. In other words, we put ourselves and our students under intellectual domination. Critical thinking in these cases hardly involves critical thinking about our own local, social, political and cultural issues.

Finally, while Vân insisted that critical thinking would develop through solving case study problems, she did not seem to have specific methods to scaffold students and help them understand social, political and cultural aspects required to solve these problems. Rather, she let her students work on that by themselves, ‘You go find it out by yourself why they have thought and behaved like this [authoritarian people taking over land property of indigenous people in the US]’ (Vân 55- 56). This pedagogy is not without a reason. Vân saw in her class a number of students who were ‘ngoan, hiền’ [obedient, well-disciplined] and ‘học giỏi’ [academically good] (Ibid: 118), so she grew ‘trust’ (Ibid: 84) in their efforts. However, with such open assessment, unless students were motivated and/ or saw the real need to solve complex problems happening somewhere far from the reality of their lives, the possibility they explored the contexts deep enough to come up with critical solutions can be argued to be low.

Although Vân did require students’ work to meet ‘legitimate standards, economic standards, ethical standards’ (Vân: 65), these prescribed ‘standards’ did not seem to be specific and consistent enough to constitute the realisation of critical thinking. Indeed, it was something, as Vân (192) revealed, ‘our assessment methods have not reached’. The reason for this was Vân did not see the teaching of critical thinking as necessary yet:

When it [critical thinking] is standardised, I will follow, but not now. I just can’t focus on critical thinking and evaluate it. This is related to many other things, such as curriculum and other skills (Vân: 196- 198).

By saying the above, Vân claimed her role as an observer and receiver of curriculum knowledge and denied her role in the PRF, which stood in contrast with Công in BEP1 and with Đoàn, whose modalities are presented in the next section.

6.3.3.2 Pedagogy of the Difference

Of all the teachers in BEP2, Đoàn stood out with an effective method of teaching critical thinking which I would call ‘a pedagogy of the difference’. Đoàn teaches subjects in all knowledge groups from Year 1 to Year 4. She covers quite a range of subjects, including Listening Speaking (L/S), Principles of Marketing, Human Resources (HR) and Business Research (BR) 1&2. Like Lộc (BEP1), Đoàn was fully aware of her role in reorganising knowledge in the syllabi for the benefit of her students. She saw teaching across the curriculum, from English skills classes to subject content classes, as a chance for her to see how knowledge progresses. From there, she could plan her pedagogic practices more systematically for critical thinking to internalise in students. As the analysis develops, it will be clear how Đoàn realised this goal and also what tensions she faced.

Đoàn perceived critical thinking as ‘questioning the given knowledge’. To help students internalise this value, she did two things. Firstly, Đoàn ‘pieced all the subjects she taught from Year 2 to Year 4 together’ (Đoàn: 87) to see their relations. She then sequenced knowledge in a way to ensure that when students reached the highest levels, critical thinking would internalise in them. In Bernstein’s language, she recontextualised the curriculum to make it ‘vertical’ (Bernstein, 2003: 169). In other words, she created her own critical thinking curriculum and strongly classified it. This allowed Đoàn to navigate, reintroduce and/or reinforce important concepts and/or theories required in subjects that students would take later in their academic path. For Đoàn, these important concepts/theories were often ignored by ‘skills’ teachers who ‘may not have business knowledge or may not understand them deeply enough to discuss with students’ (Đoàn, 382-383). She also took advantage of the ‘discursive space’ in the curriculum to re-organise the knowledge structures of the subjects she taught, where possible, to make them strong. For example, she invited the visiting teacher who taught the same Principles of Marketing course for a discussion and together they made change to the prescribed knowledge in the CO ‘reduc[ing] it [from 12 chapters] to 6 chapters’ (Đoàn: 351-352).

Secondly, she was flexible in her control over selecting, sequencing, pacing and evaluating knowledge for critical thinking to happen. In lower level classes, such as L/S, she ‘focused fully on discussions’ (Đoàn: 88) where she played the role of the facilitator. Here,

Đoàn applied different sequences to different problematic situations. With simple ones, students were given control ‘to solve the problems first’ (Đoàn: 28) and then presented their ideas. She would give them feedback on both the language use and the quality of the solutions. The sequence was different with more complex problems. Here, she scaffolded the groups by ‘sitting together with them for a discussion before letting them role-play’ (Đoàn: 29).

The criteria at this level were weakly framed as well. Đoàn did not expect deep understanding of the theoretical aspect of knowledge. Rather, students could ‘speak based on what they think, and *question* based on what they think’ (Ibid: 89-90). An inevitable part of her modalities included an open boundary between her and her students. It was evident in how she tried not to ‘*judge*’ students (Ibid: 46) and how she wanted them to change their mindset that teachers’ words were ‘not 100 per cent true’ (Ibid: 47). For Vietnamese students, such an emphasis is significant, since it helps students learn to think independently. She stayed consistent with this pedagogic communication across classes. As a result, ‘Students feel comfortable sharing ideas’ (Ibid: 47). Significantly, there was evidence this embedding of ‘regulative discourse’ into ‘instructional discourse’ generated some forms of critical thinking at least in the ways students solved problems. Significantly, she saw the ways she had solved some problems were not ‘as thoroughly as they [students] had’ (Ibid: 40-41).

At upper levels, after students were familiar with discussions and initially internalised some rules required for group discussions, the focus became more specialised. At these levels, as the analysis will gradually unfold, Đoàn continued to use her autonomy to flexibly frame the transmission process for the internalisation of critical thinking. In BR1, critical thinking targeted at ‘references’ and ‘coherence’. Đoàn gave priority to ‘references’ and applied flexible pacing on this. The reason she spent ‘a lot of time’ on references was she believed this area of research knowledge was especially important and also difficult for Vietnamese students who at the tertiary level still ‘don’t understand why they have to use references’ (Đoàn: 104).

The awareness of students’ difficulty guided Đoàn to apply weak framing over selection of material. Although the subject was BR, she selected topics accommodating students’ time and space. The curriculum autonomy was also used to strongly frame the assessment on critical thinking:

For the mid-term test, I request only an 800-1000-word essay about their future career or jobs . . . I specify clearly how many academic references they have to use.

. . They all feel difficult at the beginning because I always request at least 5 references for 800 words (Đoàn: 87 – 104).

Compared with Ngọc, who taught a similar course in BEP1 but did not require any references in students' assignments (See more on p. 123), Đoàn's standards were much more rigorous. Not only did she require references, she applied the word count as well. This helped foreground depth, as she insisted:

The most obvious way for students to realise critical thinking is to make them write in very limited words. The more they write the more they become digressed and, in the end, lose sense of what they are writing' (Đoàn, 207-209).

This criterion can be argued to be another challenge but helpful for Vietnamese students who traditionally grow up and are educated in a culture of 'syntheses' rather than analytic thinking (Phan, 1998; Trần, 2001).

As in other previous classes, Đoàn scaffolded students to help them achieve a certain level of critical thinking in their research proposals. She did it by spending time every week consolidating, supporting and encouraging them to make sure even weak students or unmotivated groups could follow. Most significantly, she wanted students to internalise the commitment and the disposition required to be a qualified researcher. For her, 'If it does not become a habit that is well cultivated, it is no use' (Đoàn: 163). By the end of the course, as she shared, her students developed an ability to look for differences across resources and avoid approaching issues unilaterally.

This same epistemic focus continued to be reinforced in the Marketing course. Here critical thinking was realised through writing reflections and planning marketing proposals. Material that accommodated students' interests continued to be used:

I let them choose freely one theory . . . take it home and dig more deeply into it. So, this reflection is where they break the theory down themselves. For example, *customer insight* is explained in just two or three lines in the textbook, so students must do more research to find out what it really is. They then have to bring in examples from reality that show the application of *customer insight*; they can give examples where people do not understand *customer insight*. Or they can also reflect based on their own experiences (Đoàn: 119- 127).

It is not difficult to see how Đoàn involved students in the process of integrating meanings in the discipline. Students had more control over the selection of knowledge and the time they needed to be adept at critical thinking. The flexibility in relation to evaluative criteria also gave students more control over how they could communicate their understanding and

application of knowledge. Consistently, reflections ‘of courses have to include references’ (Đoàn: 130).

In HR (Year 4) Đoàn decided to apply ‘the same criterion as in previous courses’ (Đoàn: 132) and increased their weights even more. Unlike in Marketing, where she set only five per cent on the mid-term reflection essay, here with HR she allocated 30 per cent. Students therefore had to be more cautious about critical thinking. The consistency Đoàn applied throughout her course of teaching was based on the desire to shape students to become ‘leaders who think like *scientists* whether in the fields of Marketing or HR’ (Đoàn, 147-148). She further emphasised the importance of taking control of professional lives and avoiding subjective thinking now that more and more marketers ‘don’t follow any *standards* and analyse [things] their own ways’ (Ibid: 149-152). Critical thinking or the ‘scientific inquiry’ Đoàn cultivated for her students decidedly encompassed dispositions, ethics, creativity and intellectual knowledge.

Đoàn was quite pleased that many students demonstrated in their assignments the ability ‘to see where theories work or do not work in reality and use their own language to explain why and of course with references’ (Đoàn: 119-120).

All these successes did not mean there were no tensions or contradictions. The first tension was related to the lack of clarity, at the curriculum level, in terms of evaluative criteria for critical thinking, which I highlighted earlier in Section 6.1.2. When it came to the dual focus of the Programme, not unlike other content teachers in both BEP1 and BEP2, Đoàn could not decide what critical thinking should be about, e.g. meanings or the English language, or both. Here, she decided ‘English is just a tool’ (Đoàn, 287) and focused merely on ‘correct pronunciation’ to help students later ‘achieve [their] business goals’ (Ibid: 288-290). Here, Đoàn fell into the skills-content trap and set standards for critical thinking based on her personal judgments about the relation between language and meaning. However, reality may prove the other way around. Đình’s (BEP1) comment on Vietnamese managers who ‘speak bad English’ but with ‘strong knowledge’ and ‘experience’ ‘can still do business with foreign partners’ (Đình: 372-375) was worth considering. Significantly, Đoàn’s belief and Đình’s understanding of what type of English is standardised or acceptable (or not) reflects a broader contentious issue of the spread of English as a cultural hegemony and the neutral status of its standard (Pennycook, 1994).

At other times, she could not decide explicitly whether critical thinking should be about the theoretical or practical aspects of knowledge, or both. She decided to go for ‘content and skills in earlier years’ (Đoàn:324) and ‘theory and practice in later years’ (Ibid:

324). Indeed, balancing the weights of critical thinking (theory aspect and meaning) against skills in tests always ‘exhaust’ her and she often felt ‘drained’ (Đoàn: 325).

Finally, there was inclusion-exclusion tension. While Đoàn’s modalities advanced some students towards internalising critical thinking, they left some others marginalised, as she revealed, ‘For those who do not care, I let them be’ (Đoàn: 175). She believed students should develop a sense of commitment to knowledge especially at the tertiary level. Without that, as a teacher, ‘I don’t want to exhaust myself because of them’ (Đoàn: 175).

Significantly, what makes it hardest for critical thinking is probably the orientation students have for themselves. Đoàn was deeply concerned about how work has distracted Vietnamese students’ lives today and made them so busy that ‘Even scores are now not enough to pull them back’ (Ibid:166-168). Given the impact of neoliberalism on education in Việt Nam, this money-driven motivation may soon shake the tradition of passion for learning (London, 2011) among Vietnamese students and therefore should not be glossed over. I will return to this implication later in Chapter Seven (p. 168).

Đoàn’s success is not irrelevant to her extensive academic background (being trained in Business Administration Studies) and her real-life experience working in the marketing field. This proves to be a decisive element especially when she contrasts her great confidence in the Marketing classes with the struggle to make sense of the material in the HR classes. Here she admitted she had to ‘flip through’ areas of knowledge she herself did not understand deeply enough to avoid students’ questions (Đoàn, 269- 270). It also has much to do with her active role in reorganising the curriculum. As I discussed in Lộc’s case in Chapter Five and mentioned again in the introduction of this chapter, a successful critical thinking curriculum requires teachers to play their role in the knowledge transmission. Unless teachers reorganise the curriculum, give students opportunities to read things, work with and against those things and practice them in ‘verbal sword fights with their masters [teachers]’ (Peckham, 2010: 51), critical thinking will never happen.

Before I take the analysis out into the workplace, it is useful to summarise how BEP2 has (not) realised critical thinking within its academic walls. In all the knowledge groups, subject teachers incorporate, to different extent, some critical thinking emphasis into their teaching. However, there is very little specialisation of the internal rules of critical thought (except in Đoàn’s case) and teachers tend to strongly perceive, frame and evaluate critical thinking in the light of the subject contents they were teaching or the learning objectives of specific knowledge areas of the day. Consequently, students advancing through the

curriculum path are very much likely shaped into the mundane identity rather than a critical thinking identity.

6.3.4 Graduation Internship

The above sections highlight that teachers' pedagogic interaction in BEP2 generally excludes critical thinking with an exception of Đoàn's case. This last section turns the analysis to the workplace with the interview with Dũng. Where it is relevant, perspectives from Vân, the teacher and also manager of an English language school, is also brought in to increase the rigour of the analysis.

Dũng is the founder and manager of English Horizon, an English language centre located in the same city as Public Elite. Dũng regularly receives and supervises interns from BEP2. During the interview, Dũng emphasised continuously that critical thinking was 'a spirit and an attitude' towards work (Dũng: 76). It was this understanding of critical thinking that informed Dũng's decisions on who could be selected as interns in his company. Here he relied on a strict sequence. Only students who 'enrich their CV [curriculum vitae] with a lot of experiences in social work' (Ibid: 80) and have *IELTS* [the international standardised test of English language proficiency] 7.0 or higher' (Ibid: 143) will have 'more chance to be selected for interviews' (Ibid: 81).

To help interns realise critical thinking, Dũng was flexible in the way he treated interns, acknowledging their 'rights to ask' and was ready to '*guide* them' (Dũng: 251-252). In doing this, Dũng opened the boundary between him as 'the boss' and interns as 'the subordinates' and thus gave interns more confidence to raise their voices.

Dũng also classified critical thinking strongly. For him, it had to be bounded within the ideology of his language centre. Understanding it this way, Dũng's 'pedagogy' always began with 'an orientation' (Dũng: 264) so that interns understood clearly the goal and the rules of the organisation before they started work. By establishing the boundary for critical thinking, Dũng limited the scope of interns' thought and also marked a safe space for critical thinking. Interns, therefore, were aware about what knowledge to be thought critically about.

After marking the boundary for critical thought, Dũng began to select tasks to assign to interns. This was where the 'truth' about the identity BEP2 had internalised in its students revealed:

It is ridiculous in one way. Some of them [the interns], when being assigned the enrolment consultancy task, did quite well because there was a lesson, a procedure

for them to memorise and follow. However, when it came to *complaints*, they were unable to solve. Their English was good, but they did not know what to say. . . . When our senior whose English was not good but who was competent in problem solving stepped out to help, they *translated* and caused *miscommunication*. The learners [customers] *hurt* even more and *complained* even more. Their communicative English was problematic (Dũng: 146-149).

Dũng's comments on interns' performances suggest an undeniable reality that BEP2 interns coming into the workplace carried with them mundane knowledge. It is not difficult to see from the quote above students lacked language and problem-solving competences necessary to engage in emergent tasks and solve new problems. The type of critical thinking they learned in the classroom, thinking from multiple perspectives- did not transfer. They were unable to think critically from the customers' perspective - who they were and what they expected- as well as from the organisation's perspective- how to achieve the business goal and at the same time please the customers. In other words, they did not have critical thinking to think things through.

It can also be said that the 'problematic' or uncritical English language interns used in the translation, which caused misunderstandings, indicated an identity of an incorrect social group. By this I mean the group who is not well equipped yet with the powerful language, a kind of 'symbolic capital' (Bourdieu, 1989) for their social mobility. Indeed, given the instrumental, academic type of critical thinking students were exposed to in the classroom, expecting interns to demonstrate applied critical thinking in the situation above as well as in Diêu's workplace (pp. 128- 129) equalised requiring them to make the leap. Unless BEP1 and BEP2 curricula accommodate these realities, they never can educate their students to be critical thinkers. BEP2 (and BEP1 as well) is not unaware of that. The whole point is this is related to the complex relations between knowledge, power and control in the pedagogic discourse. I address some of these issues related to the recontextualisation of critical thinking into classroom in Chapter Seven.

It was not just interns' knowledge about the world that was mundane; it was their knowledge about themselves that was mundane as well. Vân's comments on interns who applied for the teaching jobs in her centre was relevant here:

They couldn't tell what they can teach well or who they can work better with They couldn't tell whether they're calm or energetic. I pointed these out for them but not they themselves. They didn't know who they are and what they want' (Vân: 260).

From what Vân said, BEP2 students, on the completion the Programme, still couldn't realise their identity and style. It is not surprising since as Vân mentioned above, most BEP2 in her class were 'not from wealthy families but obedient and well-discipline' and thus 'lack innovations and creativity' [Ibid: 121]. Here, there was a lack of inwardness, of the deep structure of the self, and of personal reflection in BEP2 interns' identities. Unfortunately, these are inseparable dispositions students need in the process of internalising critical thinking or esoteric knowledge (Bernstein, 2003).

Back to Dũng's modalities, when assigning tasks, Dũng appeared to put interns' interest at heart. He did it by always checking with them, 'Can you do it? (Dũng: 248). However, there was control hidden under this overt 'consent' strategy. Indeed, in seeking interns' opinions, Dũng also imposed choices: 'Yes or No. Ok, if No, I'll give it to another' (Ibid: 249). Time was also negotiated, 'three days, yes or no' although he insisted on 'not forcing a deadline on them' (Dũng: 249). Given that BEP2 interns need work and assessment for the course completion, the possibility to say 'No' to such a question may be low. However, a 'Yes' answer may also put them in real challenge unless interns have internalised some level of critical thinking to evaluate the task against their own ability.

Significantly, in exercising control, Dũng simultaneously created a discursive space for possibilities. In the process of thinking critically about how to get challenging tasks done, interns may ultimately learn to be open to change. For example, one intern had a chance to learn from his friend and brought change to his own lives:

He asked a friend for help and then learned designing skills from that friend. Since then, he has been able to do designing himself. From the designing skills, he continued to gain other skills as he has moved along (Dũng: 262-263).

In terms of the evaluative criteria, Dũng separated 'competence'/'skills' from 'value' (Bernstein, 2003: 32), strongly controlling the latter. Since Dũng perceived critical thinking as 'an attitude', the spirit of 'readiness', he looked for critical thinking in 'how they [interns] approached their work, their professionalism, and their commitment to the work' (Dũng: 133-135). In this aspect, critical thinking became apparent in interns who 'do not sit waiting for tasks to be signed but take initiatives to ask whether they can do this or that' (Dũng, BEP2: 29-30). Unfortunately, not many interns displaced these dispositions. Generally, Dũng agreed with Diệu, the supervisor in BEP1, the majority of interns were 'still young; they did not see this [internship] as a job' (Dũng: 137-139). Apparently, the passive attitude of interns at work is not irrelevant to way teachers like Huyền (BEP1) asked questions for students to bridge the quietness in class.

It is worth emphasising here that in evaluating critical thinking attitude, Dũng excluded what ‘school’ expected as content knowledge, e.g. what BEP2 requested interns to represent in reports. Dũng saw it as being irrelevant to the workplace discourse:

However good or bad a report is, . . . I just look at the technical side . . . Honestly, about the content, I can’t read it all. Every report is a series of ten pages long. Firstly, I do not have expertise in the field of English teaching or English language. Secondly, I do not have the need to read them. I just give them a score. Give them a signature . . . tell interns to take it back to their teachers to grade it for them (Dũng: 112-119).

It is clear from the extract that Dũng established a strong boundary between the academic world and the world of work. This academic-work critical thinking binary was not irrelevant to a ‘painful’ lesson he himself learned as a student who strived for the top grade in the graduation thesis but was oppressed by a teacher. Ethically, Dũng may not have wanted interns to experience the same feeling of being ‘extremely restrained’ (Dũng, BEP2: 129). However, Dũng’s method of assessment may affect students’ attitude towards the commitment to knowledge and also their career and thus exacerbate the increasing trend to associate disciplinary knowledge to what employers want (Young, 2007; Allais, 2010). In this case, as long as interns had an ‘attitude’, they were evaluated as critical thinkers. Skills and knowledge BEP2 equipped students became irrelevant. Indeed, Dũng believed they were what ‘a good leader, a good boss or a good working environment can equip their employers with’ (Dũng, BEP2: 76-77).

That Dũng’s signing students’ reports off without reading them implies either a lack of responsibility for training students to be critical thinkers or a divide between schools and the workplace. Indeed, there was expectation from teachers and leaders that businesses should create conditions to ‘evoke critical thinking from interns’ (Hoàng: 67). By separating ‘knowing’ from ‘being’ (Barnett, 2009), ‘knower’ from ‘knowledge’ (Bernstein, 2003), Dũng separated the regulative from the instructional discourse while they should be only one. Critical thinking in the Graduation Internship course can be summarised, in Dũng’s words as ‘whatever to ensure they [students] can get high scores’ (Dũng, BEP2: 132).

Summary

Taken all together, the analyses confirm that BEP2’s decision to expand ES in response to the massification of HE and the fields of practices has resulted in a knowledge structure that is fragmented. They also suggest that the critical thinking discourse recontextualised into

this knowledge structure, due to its weak classification and strong framing, cannot be internalised in students. Significantly, despite epistemological and ideological tensions, there has also been evidence of hope. While the elite (public) status of BEP2 earns it entitlement to enrol bright students, what makes critical thinking or transformation happen is when teachers become more aware of their autonomous role and engage in the field of recontextualisation of knowledge (Đoàn's case). This finding is consistent with the finding in Private Elite (Lộc's case, BEP1). In light of these findings, it can be said that the critical thinking discourse in Vietnamese HE is not merely about the elite status of a programme (or a university). Rather, it is the hidden processes through which this form of 'powerful' knowledge is specified, transmitted and acquired. Important as well are the implied social relations and identities. These points are worth turning attention to and will be discussed further in the next chapter, Chapter Seven.

Chapter Seven: Cross- case Analysis and Synthesis

Introduction

This chapter addresses the overall Research Question: How critical thinking is regulated by the Vietnamese state's socio-political ideologies by putting together and discussing the findings of Chapter Five and Six in the light of the literature. Because the research adopts a comparative/ multiple case-study design, the fuller significance can only be appreciated when the two cases are juxtaposed for comparison (Yin, 2014).

Guided by Bernstein's (1977, 2000, 2003) pedagogic device theory (Chapter Three, pp.67- 90), the discussion centres on how the teaching of critical thinking in higher education (HE) in Việt Nam has prepared students to think, or not, 'the unthinkable'. It also delineates how the socio-political climate in Việt Nam has regulated the curriculum and the pedagogic interaction and included or excluded who can learn critical thinking.

The chapter divides the discussion into two main sections. In the first section, my comments are on the pedagogic discourse of critical thinking adopted by the majority of the teachers in Business English Programme 1 (BEP1) and Business English Programme 2 (BEP2), the two content and language integrated learning (CLIL) programmes offered by Private Elite University and Public Elite University. The second section sheds lights on how one single teacher's pedagogic interaction (that of Lộc) stands out as a model for curriculum and pedagogic efforts towards critical thinking realisation.

7.1 Critical Thinking: 'Thinking the Unthinkable'

The discussion of this section contextualises the emancipatory nature of critical thinking within the complex socio-cultural and political ideologies of Việt Nam. The purpose is to uncover the ways in which these ideologies have contributed to transforming the 'unthinkable' discourse (critical thinking knowledge) into 'thinkable' (curriculum knowledge) forms. It concentrates on how the complex socio-cultural and political ideologies have impacted the critical thinking curricula in BEP1 and BEP2.

7.1.1 Strong Frames and Access to Critical Thinking in Private Elite and Public Elite

Although teachers' pedagogic interaction in both BEP1 and BEP2 discussed in Chapter Five (pp. 107- 139) and Six (pp. 140- 164) are varied in frame strength, with research -oriented subjects being the strongest and Graduation Internship the weakest, on the whole, they all represent strong framing values (with the exception of Lộc and Đoàn's pedagogies). Briefly put, in all the courses, teachers maintain dominant control over the selection of what students can think critically about. In doing so, they often turn their considerations upon what the learning outcomes (LOs) or syllabus prescriptions require or what textbooks have to offer. With most teachers, the sequence of knowledge is also highly ordered. They tend to distinguish between and expose students to 'lower order thinking' skills (What? Who? When? Where?) before moving on to 'higher order' critical thinking. When it comes to pacing, the time frames for critical thinking follow tightly the requirements founded in the course outlines (COs). Finally, in these courses the evaluative criteria for students' critical thought often require addressing specific questions in specific contexts.

The empirical analyses of BEP1 and BEP2 curriculum structures and pedagogic modalities in Chapter Five and Six allow me to conclude that the stronger the framing, the smaller the space accorded for potential variation of critical thinking. Because curricula with such strong frames rarely accommodate students' perspectives, the realisation of critical thinking rarely incorporates material or ideas that are relevant to students' personal interests, concerns and/or social problems. Teaching and learning, therefore, is more about transmission of knowledge rather than negotiating knowledge. Paradoxically, while these two programmes commit to develop critical thinking for their students, this competence is delivered through the pedagogic modes that eventually discourage it. My evaluation here is less about the effectiveness of the curricula themselves than about the identities they cultivate in their students. The overall strong frame values in BEP1 and BEP2 indeed suggest the generation of 'other-realising' identities rather than 'self-actualising' identities (Ivinson and Duveen, 2006).

This can be further explained by moving beyond the internal to look at the external values of framing. By external framing I mean teachers' controls on which discourses and power relations outside of the pedagogic transmission are seen as legitimate and relevant to be brought in. With the exception of Lộc and Đoàn's teachings, which I will discuss later in Sub-section 7.2.1, in all other teachers' modalities, both strong internal and external frames exclude spaces where critical thinking is connected with social, familial and personal concerns.

Given that framing relations prescribe ‘*How* meanings are to be put together, the forms by which they are to be made public, and the nature of the social relationships that go with it’ (Bernstein, 2000: 12), how teachers, in their own ways, represent BEP1 and BEP2 curricula is decidedly not irrelevant to the issue of who has access to critical thinking. The very limited communicative competences that Diệu (BEP1) and Dũng (BEP2) observe in interns at work suggest that strong internal and external framing values don’t often acknowledge identities and biographies outside the context of pedagogic transmission. Consequently, students of weaker positions in terms of their academic performance may find it especially difficult to recognise themselves in the school and later in the workplace. In other words, these pedagogic codes distance students from the discourse of critical thinking and the identities of critical thinkers.

This helps explain why in some classes, such as those of Phụng (BEP1), David (BEP1), Nử (BEP2) and Minh (BEP2), weak students (in terms of their English capacity) exhibit passive resistance towards any encouragement of critical thinking. In these classes, teachers’ comments on their students include, ‘They don’t have anything in their mind to debate. They totally lack critical thinking in mind’ (Trí, BEP1: 237-238). Other teachers’ laments are: ‘They don’t read. They are not helping us’ (David, BEP1: 453) or ‘They study just to pass’ (Mai, BEP2: 236). Such reactions on the part of students are not without a sound reason, as Bernstein (1977) explained decades ago that students tend to defer or even resist their commitments to pedagogic codes in which they are unable to recognise themselves.

Another concern is related to the distribution of knowledge. A teacher realised in her class:

Some are very good. But for some others, I don’t understand why they can make it to the English Studies discipline. They’ve made very basic mistakes. I am not including ideas and presentation skills. Spellings and grammar errors are everywhere. They often fall into those who come from ‘vùng sâu vùng xa’ [remote areas] and ethnic groups (Nử: 275-279).

Nử’s observation resonates with Young (2007), who notes that one of the biggest concerns of sociology of education is the ‘distributional’ issue. Access to critical thinking does not depend solely on talents nor the willingness of students but on students’ social origins as well. In other words, the exclusion of critical thinking from the pedagogic transmission depends very much on students’ social classes and habitus (Bourdieu, 1989).

It is now time to connect this discussion of strong internal and external framing to my earlier analysis of Việt Nam's contemporary complex state (See Chapter One, pp. 15-23). In that section, I implied that, on the one hand, the long history of colonialism left the Vietnamese education system rudimental, strongly hierarchical and teacher-centred. On the other hand, while Vietnamese neo-socialism embraces modernisation and democracy, in education, the neoliberal education policy means contemporary education reforms need to adopt an economic growth discourse, perceiving education as largely fundamental to the socio-economic infrastructure. Thus, in many ways, education is viewed 'not so much as a right, a joy or a tool for liberation and empowerment, but rather as an investment' (Brock-Utne, 2000: 12). In one official document in Việt Nam, for example, the Government emphasises, 'Developing education is the fundamental foundation; high skilled labour force is one of the key forces to support the task of industrialisation, modernisation . . . in alignment with the state-managed socialist-oriented market economy' (Vietnamese Government, 2001, Article 1). The critical thinking curricula of BEP1 and BPE2 reflect consistently this complex transaction. Clearly, the effectiveness and quality of critical thinking in these two programmes need to be questioned. The dominance of strong frames apparently denies students' access to the curricula's specialised competencies and identities by categorically obscuring the pedagogic code's recognition rules from the majority of 'passive, quiet and weak' students. By saying this, I do not mean there have been no efforts taken for alternative orientations to pedagogic codes (See more in Chapter Eight, pp. 194-196). What stands out is the predominant weak classification and an orientation toward mundane knowledge and identities. The following section delineates this in more detail.

7.1.2 Weak Classification: Its Mundane Knowledge and Identities

The analyses in Chapter Five and Six identified that the critical thinking curricula in BEP1, Private Elite and BEP2, Public Elite embody weak classification values, both internally and externally (except Lộc and Đoàn's cases). The weak external classification is evident in the way all subject teachers integrate some emphasis of critical thinking into their teaching but hardly develop specific internal rule of critical thought. Teachers there make no effort to differentiate critical thinking from the contents of various subjects into which critical thinking is integrated. Weak or strong classification, as Bernstein (2000: 104) points out, 'marks the distinguishing feature of a context . . . orientates the speaker to what is expected and what is legitimate in that context'. In the context of teaching critical thinking in HE in Việt Nam, when teachers are not informed explicitly of what is expected of their teaching to

be considered as critical thinking (vague criteria), they fail to recognise the distinguishing features which make critical thinking a part of the official curriculum identity. Although they are able to identify the meaning of critical thinking, they fail to produce pedagogic practices that can help internalise critical thinking in students. In other words, they themselves are unable to realise what critical thinking is in their particular context.

Beyond the weak external classification, it should be noted that critical thinking at BEP1 and BEP2 is also weakly classified internally. As all the interviews with the teachers (except Lộc and Đoàn) in different knowledge groups have revealed, within each subject, critical thinking is perceived as being connected to either the English language or the subject contents rather than both. It is also perceived as synonymous with anything that brings about higher-order thinking, the solving of dilemma or problems, the decision making, presentation strategies and research skills, to name just a few. Beside the strong frames mentioned in Section 7.1.1 above, where teachers direct students to think ‘critically’ in specific ways and about specific materials, what has been revealed across the two curricula is an understanding of critical thinking as an instrumental rationality. In these two programmes, critical thinking is promoted as a tool, or a set of skills for students to turn to in order to solve pre-designated problems.

Some implications in relation to the shaping of students’ identities and the nature of knowledge can be drawn here. Firstly, both critical thinking and the knowledge generated from it are perceived merely as practice in task-based contexts. They take on a consumable aspect and are maintained as long as they produce an extrinsic exchange value, e.g. achieving a certain LO. Based on Bernstein’s (2000: 203) notion of identity, the ‘subjective consequences of pedagogic discursive specialisation’- it is not surprising that such an instrumental means-end understanding of critical thinking has led to the creation of mundane identities, or ‘other-realising’ identities (Ivinson and Duveen, 2006: 117). These identities, as I pointed out in Chapter Three (p. 86), are products of pedagogic codes that constantly ‘face outwards towards external fields of practice’ (Bernstein, 2000: 55) or ‘conform to a hierarchical social order in which the teacher was the authority’ (Ivinson and Duveen, 2006: 117). When being classified and framed as such, critical thinking has no intrinsic meaning or an empty value at heart. Indeed, Beck (2002: 624) argues a market-oriented curriculum which emphasises trainability rather than critical thinking is ‘necessarily empty’. Its whole point is advancing the receptiveness to whatever objectives or contents imposed on students as critical thinking rather than the cultivation of intellectual autonomy.

Secondly, the forming of students' identities is also related to neoliberal ideologies and its market desire, which has emerged in the pedagogic recontextualisation. It can be said from the findings that the type of critical thinking acquired in the classroom depends on what the subject/discipline is and what the teacher demands of it. Consequently, the construction of identities and the knowledge/competencies aspired in that subject/discipline decidedly depend on students' future careers and what those potential careers require. It is important to refer back to Bernstein (2000: 69) here that mundane identities are produced as such because they are outward-looking and 'view knowledge as money'. They are treated as educational products that can optimise the institution's position and its exchange values in the market rather than elite status. These identities are distant from critical thinking or esoteric identities, which view knowledge as a source of 'personal commitments and inner dedications' and which put the development of autonomy and 'exploration of knowledge' at heart (Bernstein, 2000: 86).

Given the significance of the above market-driven imperatives, teachers' descriptions of projected careers that BEP1 and BEP2 students may take in the future help reveal how neoliberal ideologies have shaped the perception and teaching of critical thinking:

I rank critical thinking as one of the four fundamental skills of the Twenty-first Century worker. We know that in today's dynamic labour market, the people we train only need to have good thinking, English, and information technology, then they will quickly adapt (Hiệu, BEP2: 53-56).

Hiệu's remark accords with my previous recognition of the macro shifts in Vietnamese economy away from 'factor-driven' into the 'efficiency' and in the future into 'innovation' fields and of how the MOET, through the reform policies, has emphasised the importance of a new set of competencies for such fast-growing economy (See Chapter One, pp. 14- 36). These material (but also discursive and ideological) shifts have found their way into the very process of pedagogic recontextualisation. They have influenced HE towards the production of 'knowledge workers', facilitating capacities such as knowledge creation and decision-making skills (Harvey, 2005). They have also influenced the way critical thinking (often ambiguously associated to decision-making skills) is decided and presented in the classroom.

Instrumental rationality is not without problems. Neoliberalism has been reported to affect students' perspectives and their attitude towards social values:

Compared with the past, their attitude now is more materialistic . . . in the past learning is committing the whole self. Learning is for the purpose of knowledge. And

also [students] respect the teacher. Now, they are more materialistic. Many of them already work while they are in school. Very often they can't arrange their time. This leads to a mentality, 'I will just invest my time in subjects that are more important.' It makes teachers reconsider their role: With that attitude of the student, what should we do? (Thanh, BEP2: 356 – 362).

It is not hard to see, in response to students' immediate capital-driven needs, BEP1 and BEP2 may have to prioritise their orientation towards decentralised market identities rather than critical thinking and the emancipation thesis to which it aspires. The critical thinking curriculum which often involves students' commitment and rigorous epistemic standards may not be a good choice either when education is treated as an investment and students as customers (Furedi, 2011). Indeed, these assumptions are further strengthened with more interview data with the two work supervisors of BEP1 (pp. 127- 130) and BEP2 (pp. 158- 161). Most significantly, are the words of one leader of BEP1, 'We dare not fail them. If they fail, the class size will be reduced to a half; we won't have money' (Thu, BEP1: 513- 514).

In all this, despite their commitment to develop critical thinking for students, BEP1 and BEP2 are not able to equip *all* students with this powerful knowledge necessary for social mobility (Young, 2007). Students majoring in BEP1 and BEP2 (indeed more in BEP2 than in BEP1), therefore, seem to set their minds for any jobs available out in the market to satisfy those immediate needs rather than a far-future aspiration to move up the ladder of social classes, although it is usually the latter that is their immediate purpose for seeking HE degrees. What Nũ (502-503) sees happening to BEP2 students is, 'They major in Business, but many end up working as tutors of English, rather than finding their way into companies as office workers'. Ironically, what these BEP2 students need, according to another teacher, is a certain amount of money for basic needs, e.g. 'to buy milk tea' (Đoàn, BEP2: 531- 535). The same can be heard in BEP1 where students have neoliberalised activities organised to enhance their dispositions and skills. One example is students' refusal to register for the Teaching Assistant Project because the payment is 'too little' (Thu, BEP1: 450). Students' resistance to critical thinking curricula can be easily understood. What matters more is the underlying feelings of hopeful anticipation in the curricula of BEP1 and BEP2. There are confusions and ambiguities about an identity- the sort of self- that working-class students seek. These are the issues that middle-class students do not often have to deal with (Bernstein, 1971; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). I will return to this point later in the chapter.

Not only do students' neo-liberal perspectives affect the pedagogic modes of performance, these modes have derived from teachers' neo-liberal positions as well. It is not

too difficult to detect neo-liberal thinking in teachers' talking about their critical thinking practices. Some examples are Ngọc's (BEP1) association of the ineffectiveness of the student research projects with lack of financial support and funding from university and Đoàn's (BEP2) blaming the lack of budget allocated to her Business English Department (BED) as the biggest barrier to the critical thinking curriculum. The desire for money is strong in her words, 'With money many things can be changed . . . with money we can also attract talented people' (Đoàn, BEP2: 573 - 576). Remarkably, she goes further to translate Maslow's well-known hierarchy of needs into money, 'The talented, whoever they are, Maslow's hierarchy is there to speak. Money is right at the bottom!' (Ibid: 578-579). Neo-liberal thinking has undoubtedly been internalised in the thinking and mindset of teachers like Đoàn. This mindset reflects the State's contradictory socio-political ideologies, and of course, its impact on the critical thinking curriculum is inevitable, since teachers and students may feel powerless to resist the patterns of immediate advantage that neoliberalism has brought about.

While the pedagogic modes of teachers in both BEP1 and BEP2 tend to respond to local market contingencies, for BEP2, the construction of 'mundane identities' is more paramount. The reason for this is, as a public programme, BEP2 has experienced additional lack of resources (economic and symbolic), which, in turn, has constrained the formation of teachers and students' identities within the mechanism of projection rather than internalisation. This sometimes put them in powerless situations. Aspiration for money is strong in one leader's words, 'We are looking forwards to policies on tuition increase . . . to improve facilities, class size, etc. very many things' Hiệu (283- 284). Undoubtedly, the development of critical thinking identities in HE in Việt Nam (and elsewhere) is not just about pedagogic transmission; it is about how the broader system has facilitated or constrained it, through appropriate policies (Young and Muller, 2016). The tight control the MOET has, not just over funding/resources as raised in the quote, but over other important aspects, including training programmes, curriculum frameworks, enrolment quotas, tuition fees (Dao & Hayde, 2010), to a certain extent, impedes HEIs from internalising critical thinking in students. As a site of contradiction between the demands of socialism and the move forward a market economy (Welch, 2010), the Vietnamese HE system may continue to struggle with problems such as lack of resources, over-enrolment, entry standards and especially the quality of education. Unless these are resolved, critical thinking will be hard to be realised.

De-centred market (D.C.M) curricula that respond to the State's neoliberal ideology, aiming to 'prepare students for world integration' (Vietnamese Government, 2012a) still has

a long way to go to reach their goal. When a BEP weakens the English discipline to accommodate business knowledge for work orientation, it creates ‘a horizontal discourse’ (Bernstein, 2000: 159). Within this discourse, different segments of knowledge are not often treated equally. Indeed, the acquisition of both the business and the English knowledge in BEP1 and BEP2 have been proven to be problematic. When it comes to English as the main discipline, the analyses of the pedagogic discourse in both Graduation Internship courses in Chapter Five (pp. 127- 130) and Chapter Six (pp. 158- 161) have proven interns do not communicate themselves as critical thinkers in the workplace. Indeed, the ‘modern’ and ‘professional’ identities BEP1 and BEP2 have promised are worth questioning since one teacher pointed out:

Those programmes that do not specialise in economics and commerce turn their specialisations onto the English language. If so, what can they [students] do later when they graduate? Only be secretaries. Nothing else. Besides secretarial work like typing and writing reports, they can’t do anything different! (Nữ, BEP2: 526-528).

More paradoxically, some students approaching their graduation, still ‘don’t know who they are and what they want at job interviews’ (Vân, BEP2; Diệu, BEP1). These uncertainties about students’ own identities and future jobs as well as their unreadiness to join the labour market all speak of unintended consequences of the ‘ambitious’ HE reforms that the CPVN and the MOET have devised. That Vietnamese graduates have not been prepared enough for high skilled jobs (Tran, 2012; 2014; Le and Hayden, 2017) holds true. This confirms Oxfam’s (2018) report on the persistent slow social mobility in Việt Nam. Once again, teachers as agents of universities and universities as agents of policies, are all working in response to market agendas. In this context, there seems to be little room for critical thinking.

7.1.3 Teachers’ Perspectives and Their Progressive Ideas

The section above deals with the significance of economic rationalities in the transformation of critical thinking. It is important now to acknowledge some progressive elements apparent in BEP1 and BEP2 teachers’ understanding of critical thinking. Although across the two cases, all teachers identify critical thinking with skills increasingly required in the marketplace, they do not simply teach critical thinking in the way to ‘divide’ students according to the prescribed positions in the economy. As I argued in Chapter Two (pp. 58-59), teachers in HEIs, as social organisations, are surrounded with different ideological obligations, some of which are progressive, e.g. cultivating intellectual autonomy and aiming

at the social good (Tilak, 2008). These progressive ideals persist in BEP1 and BEP2 teachers' pedagogic communication, especially when they move beyond textbooks and the workplace to highlight the benefit of critical thinking for students' lives. Đoàn, for example, emphasises the importance of critical thinking for detecting ideologically loaded information in the media. She raises students' awareness of misleading claims in everyday news, such as college dropouts 'still make a fortune'. Blind belief in such (misleading) orientation towards the importance of making money will affect students' 'career orientation' (Đoàn, BEP2: 546). She also emphasises the need for students to think critically and 'question themselves whether the purpose of education is for money' (Ibid: 551). Given that mass media is often 'not to educate the masses, but to make a profit' (Paul and Elder, 2005: 10), the role of critical thought in helping students detect the impact of neoliberal ideology and its foreground of capital on their lives is undoubtable.

Besides its instrumental rationality, e.g. achieving the LOs of specific lessons, BEP1 and BEP2 teachers have also promoted critical thinking as an emancipatory value. It is worth noticing that to Vietnamese teachers, acknowledging the emancipatory thesis of critical thinking here means teaching students how to tolerate inequality and diversity which they may experience in their lives. For example, what Minh has advised his students to do they have spotted their teachers' mistakes is to 'find ways to move on' and try to 'avoid hurting the teachers' (Minh, BEP1: 319). It is clear that critical thinking here accommodates a sense of tolerance and thinking for teachers. This is significantly important for Vietnamese students since the country still holds on to its traditional value of respect and hierarchy (Phan, 1998; Trần, 2001). 'Accept differences in thinking and rationality and see them as nuances to life' or 'Learn to accept that life is not simple' (Minh, BEP1: 301) do not come out of tune with the world view of the emancipatory thesis of critical thinking as a sense of tolerance and 'thinking for others' (Kennedy, 2000: 40).

Another point is teachers tend to see inequality caused by social order as fundamental. In other words, power and conflicts, from Vietnamese teachers' perspectives, are a matter of course, rather than as an exception. Referring back to Minh's critical thinking pedagogic modalities, Minh does not encourage disruptions of social order or actions to change people's different perspectives as critical thinking from critical theory perspectives usually does (Giroux, 1994; Parker, 2003). Rather, the emancipatory connotation in Minh's pedagogic interaction lies in the way he tells his students to learn from painful experiences so that 'Later you won't cause trouble to others or make them suffer the same way' (Minh, BEP1: 310). Most significant is the way he teaches his students to accept differences as a part of reality:

Any unnecessarily standardised university will actually put students at risks later on when they go into the workplace because it poses students to ideal equality and rationality . . . in the workplace . . . these never exist. That will put them into trouble (Minh, BEP1: 313- 315).

Despite these strong individual beliefs, however, as I have mentioned above, progressivism is not much of a promise of the pedagogic codes teachers have employed. What they have really aimed at is an instrumental rationality. To some extent, these divergences suggest that there are rarely consistent understandings of what critical thinking means in the pedagogic recontextualising field. More essentially, they perhaps reflect the struggle teachers have with contradictory ideals of critical thinking imposed on them from the official recontextualising field. As I explained in Chapter One (pp. 20-27), in the time when the CPVN and its government are working to reinforce hegemony and support, these contradictory discourses have evoked and accommodated, among others, the diverse ideals of socialist authoritarianism, collectivism and neoliberalism (Vietnamese Government 2005a, 2011, 2012a, 2013b).

To understand the dynamics of pedagogic contextualisation, it is useful here to unpack Williams' three constitutive interwoven discourses of cultural practices: residual, emergent, and dominant discourses. Following this, in teaching, the emergent discourse of critical thinking in the context of Việt Nam is composed of not solely novel developments but residual discourses as well. These residual discourses 'may have an alternative or even oppositional relation to the dominant culture' but addresses areas which the latter 'neglects, undervalues, opposes, represses or even cannot recognise' (Williams, 1977: 122- 124). Being constrained by the dominant educational, cultural, socio-political and economic framework, teachers in both BEP1 and BEP2, in their everyday classroom with their students, function largely as receivers. However, it does not mean that they are not unaware of the lingering progressive discourses that accompany the national official curriculum. The point is what conditions are needed for these progressive alternative pedagogic codes to happen. Indeed, Lộc's case provides an effective answer to the questions related to the conditions for alternative ideas and the pedagogic forms which they take. Further discussion of Lộc's case will be presented in 7.2.

7.1.4 The Infusion Approach to Critical Thinking

In Chapter Five (p. 112) and Six (p. 144), I implied that BEP1 and BEP2 apply an infusion approach to critical thinking, which is commonly promoted by the critical thinking movement. Deep beneath this approach ultimately lies the epistemological assumptions of the nature and standards of critical thought (See more in Chapter Two, pp. 41-44). Following this manner, assuming that the critical thinking curriculum decisions in BEP1 and BEP2 solely reflect a set of esoteric epistemological analyses will obscure a broader range of contextual considerations. Instead, the infusion approach adopted in the two programmes has much to do with the predesignated curriculum structures the universities receive, although each has certain flexibility to revise their curricula to foster critical thinking more epistemologically.

Contextualised in a public university, BEP2 has limited curriculum authority and financial independence. Therefore, the Programme has very limited flexibility in revising the curriculum structure. At the time of the interviews, critical thinking was included following the requirement of the MOET and the management board to serve the national and international quality assurance (See more on p. 146). This top-down curriculum management causes certain contradictions. While there is evidence that critical thinking is infused across subjects (both in the PS and in teachers' interviews), there has been no curriculum matrix or other evidence how each subject and its assessment will contribute to the realisation of critical thinking. Instead, this 'limitation' (Thanh, BEP2: 103) has been accepted as the matter of course. Another tension involves the discourse of 'internationalisation' in the revised programme. As requested by the MOET, curriculum revision for critical thinking has to use insights from other progressive programmes, both national and international, as benchmarks of reference. The whole point here is the issue of access. Without '*personal connection*' or '*partnership*' with universities, this is 'impossible', according to Thanh (BEP2: 118).

The above policy by the MOET regarding the recontextualising critical thinking into BEP2 curriculum reflects a broader international discourse: neo-colonialism and its aspects, such as intellectual imperialism (Alatas, 2000), policy borrowing (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; Phillips and Ochs, 2004; Phillips, 2015) and academic dependency (Alatas, 2003) and Việt Nam's inferior position within these discourses. As an ex-colonial developing country, Việt Nam has a strong desire to join the 'equal playing field' with the powerful West, specifically in the sphere of education (Phan, 2017). While globalisation and neo-liberalism are conducive to hope and change, they inevitably bring about dependence. What the HE

curriculum teaches and how it organises its knowledge structure towards certain ends tend to conform to the framework of the Western dominant power. It is possible to say the West continues to write the history of Việt Nam with another chapter of colonialism. The difference is this time it is a part of the wider globalising process.

The infusion approach in BEP1 is a little different. Because the Programme enjoys more curriculum authority, change in relation to critical thinking is from bottom up. The deployment of the critical thinking discourse is more advanced here although it does not necessarily equalise transformation in practice. The financial status and the resources of the Programme allows the establishment of a specialised team to work on the critical thinking taskforce (the AUN taskforce to be exact), mapping the relation between critical thinking and the curriculum subjects. More significantly, BEP1 enjoys a Critical Thinking (CT) Course, taught and managed by a separate academic department (See Chapter Five, p. 133). However, all of these do not mean that critical thinking is rigorously infused and taught. As the analysis in Chapter Five (pp. 115- 138) showed teachers do not have clear ideas what critical thinking means, especially in relation to assessment. Similarly, while the CT Course evokes certain influence, the impact of this separate course on the overall critical thinking of BEP1 has remained unknown, according to Lộc and Minh, the two teachers of CT.

Additionally, it is also important to consider here the background of the teachers in BEP1 and BEP2. Except Lộc (BEP1) and Minh (BEP1), the rest of the teachers are primarily trained as pedagogic specialists in one or two teaching areas. The majority of them have background in Linguistics and/or Teaching English as the Second Language (TESOL) rather than in disciplines traditionally associated with thinking skills, such as philosophy, sociology, or law (See Appendix 4.8, pp. 259- 260 and 4.9, p. 261 for more information about the participants). The limitation of teachers' knowledge and expertise, indeed, functions to restrict options on which decisions can be made about how critical thinking is incorporated into the curricula.

Following the debates of the specifist tradition in the critical thinking movement, it is often argued that critical thinking can only be acquired when it is strongly classified. This means when it is immersed into particular subjects and taught through a separate programme/course under the support and management of a dedicated academic department (Siegel, 2010b). However, as the analyses of the two outlier cases in BEP1 and BEP2 have illustrated, it is not always the case. In BEP1, when juxtaposing Lộc and Minh's pedagogic interactions, it becomes obvious that the success of a separate CT curriculum depends largely on how teachers make use of their autonomy to recontextualise the official curriculum according to

principles that they think are important (Bernstein, 2000; Morais and Neves, 2010). In the same vein, while there are no separate CT courses offered in BEP2, Đoàn's case proves that when teachers take active roles in recontextualising the curriculum to allow more in-depth immersion of critical thinking into particular subjects they teach, critical thinking can also be realised. In her own teaching practices, Đoàn seeks to further modify curriculum contents for critical thinking; she does not change the rules about the programme structure, the subject selection and the sequencing which the formal curriculum documents provide as the recontextualising framework.

For the sake of argument, it would nevertheless still be practically unfeasible for all teachers to do the same as Lộc and Đoàn due to different personal perceptions, academic backgrounds and competences. Yet the two outlier cases are options to which BEP1 and BEP2 enjoy access.

7.2 Controlling 'the Unthinkable'

Section 7.1 above comments mainly on critical thinking as perceived and taught by most teachers across the two case studies. The discussion in this section focuses especially on Lộc's critical thinking pedagogic modality as it stands out to be the most successful in teaching critical thinking. The discussion of Lộc's modality is also contrasted with that of Đoàn to reveal how curricula and the knowledge forms they construct can be differentially recontextualised and separately specified. Alongside this, the section also develops an understanding of the social relations and identities which are necessarily implied.

7.2.1 Weak Frames and Dispositions of Critical Thinking

As the analyses in Chapter Five and Six have proved, most teachers in BEP1 and BEP2 apply strong frames over critical thinking. This insulates pedagogic communication from external discourses of students' interests and concerns, thus, effectively excludes their involvement in the pedagogic interaction towards critical thinking. At the same time, teachers also adopt instrumental approaches to critical thinking, which limit which students are able to acquire these skills. This pedagogic interaction stands in contrast with the significant weak framing evident in Lộc's CT course, where critical thinking is infused into his students' specific disciplines and in Đoàn's pedagogic modality, where critical thinking is infused across the subject groups. Lộc and Đoàn both acknowledge personal and social

discourses. More significantly, they mediate the official curriculum structures, recontextualise the discourse of critical thinking and develop their own strong assessment methods for critical thought. These pedagogic codes help move the teaching of critical thinking there beyond the instrumental fulfilment of specific demands.

The weak internal framing in Lộc and Đoàn's classes encourages more autonomy and self-direction by allowing students to take more control over their learning of critical thinking. Similarly, the openness to external resources and discourses enables pedagogic communication in the classroom to stay connected more with students' social backgrounds, interests and concerns. Based on Bernstein's (2000) therapeutic identity, which focuses on the self and driven by inner dedication, such all-embracing approaches adopted by Lộc and Đoàn incorporate the wholeness of their students within the limits of the legitimate pedagogic discourse. It is important to emphasise the difference between the two modalities for implications to be made. While the CT curriculum structure gives Lộc full flexibility and he actively makes use of it for critical thinking, the syllabi of the subjects Đoàn teach limit her flexibility by imposing on her and the students the traditional (final) examinations and their assessment rules.

Two implications can be made here about the relation between power, knowledge and control. Firstly, while formal curriculum documents do not fully determine teaching and learning of critical thinking, as teachers can modify them along the way, teachers cannot ignore them by unilaterally altering the arrangement or division of knowledge (Bernstein, 2000; Morais and Neves, 2010). Secondly, it is not too difficult to see an embedment of class assumptions in the offer of the well-managed CT Course at Private Elite, which charges significantly higher tuition fees. As Bernstein (2000: 65) points out, therapeutic pedagogy is 'oriented to autonomous, non-specialised, flexible thinking . . . costly to produce and the output is not easily measured'.

In the discussion of Lộc's pedagogic modalities (Chapter Five, pp. 133-137), I implied how his use (and that of Minh as well) of strong criteria generates new relations of power and control that embrace an implicit character. This discussion, together with the features mentioned above, proves that what the CT Course in BEP1 really seeks is the development of a set of dispositions rather than discrete skills revolving around critical thinking and inquiry. These dispositions include being cautious about the language use in critical thinking, 'understanding *what* you are saying and *what* you are being asked' before taking the conversation further (Minh, BEP1: 747- 748, my emphasis) and especially an attitude to theoretical abstract knowledge:

I tell them: When you approach a problem, you have to be able to highlight the literature review, not just locally but internationally. Critical thinking will help you later in your life as well as your political and state governance life. Imagine you want to deliver a message. If that message is just for the people within your group to understand, your message is then no more than rubbish! In the plain language, ‘dump it away!’ (Lộc, BEP1: 306 – 308).

Obviously, Lộc’s pedagogic modality implies epistemological standards of critical thinking, such as clarity, relevance breadth, significance and depth, suggested by Paul and Elder (2008). This deep pedagogic focus on dispositions in the CT Course seeks to construct students as active beings rather than just the mundane practical dimension of critical thinking. Yet its emancipation, only available in the absence of external influences is not without its cost. The class divisions and social relations implied in this differentiated pedagogic organisation are further examined below.

7.2.2 Strong Classification and Critical Thinking Identities

For Bernstein, the internalised esoteric identity is the outcome of exceptionally strong classification: ‘A sense of the sacred, the ‘otherness’ of educational knowledge, I submit, does not arise so much out of an ethic of knowledge for its own sake, but is more a function of socialisation into subject loyalty’ (Bernstein, 1977:96). This discursive socialisation, in turn, requires that ‘Categories of either agents or discourse are specialised’ and that ‘Each category necessarily has its own specific identity and its own specific boundaries’ (Bernstein, 2003: 23). The implication Bernstein’s insights have for the critical thinking curriculum is probably its commitment to the differentiation and specialisation of students into (elite/ non-elite) social classes and (esoteric/ mundane) identities.

It may be true to argue that it is the status of critical thinking itself that validates its invariable nature of inquiry. However, Lộc’s success story is more about how he uses his autonomy to mediate the curriculum to make critical thinking happen rather than the realisation comes as a natural result of taking the CT course *pe se*. As the analysis in Chapter Five showed, Lộc, unlike Minh, re-organises the fifteen-week course in a way to define the strongly bounded identities and consciousness to which a sense of powerful knowledge, ‘the otherness of knowledge’ (Bernstein, 1977: 96) can be attached. Not surprisingly, the identities offered in Lộc’s CT Course aim at being ‘therapeutic’, e.g. ‘autonomous, non-specialised, and flexible thinking’ (Bernstein, 2000: 68). Significant as well is probably the status of CT in BEP1. As an elective course, CT may be guaranteed the function of being a

‘guardian of intrinsic educational value’ from the ‘pollution’ of market demands (Beck, 2002: 620).

It is now possible to conclude this section with some implication about power relations. The exercise of power always invokes the denial of its own arbitrariness; in the curriculum, this is most often carried through strong classifications between, on the one hand, the intrinsic/esoteric knowledge, and on the other, the extrinsic/ mundane/ instrumental aspects of knowledge (Bernstein, 2000).

7.2.3 Standards of Critical Thought and Implications for Identities

Not only are different classification and framing strengths decisive to the differential constructions of competencies and consciousness; what it means to be a critical thinker also depends on how curricula and teachers perceive and select epistemic criteria by which the quality of critical thought is determined. In Lộc’s critical thinking modalities, the development of critical thinking is rooted not only in rules of reasoning, such as purposes, questions, information and implications (Elder and Paul, 2008) but also in his requirement of epistemic standards drawn from the critical thinking movement of what students should consider when thinking critically about an issue. On the one hand, Lộc requires standards such as clarity, precision, relevance, validity, reliability, and logic, suggested by Paul and Elder (2008), for example. On the other hand, his adoption of the stakeholder analysis (students putting on thinking hats of different stakeholders to negotiate and solve problems) early in the course provides more criteria to justify how well students think not just what they think. Lộc’s explanation of the rationale underpinning his choice of the epistemic formulations:

Logic by itself cannot solve any problems. It’s true that logic is fundamental for arguments, and the CT subject itself depends on the logic approach. But for critical thinking to be applicable in reality, the analysis of real-life case studies is necessary (Lộc, BEP1: 626 – 629).

The insist on critical thinking to be connected to not only the rules of logical reasoning but also external discourses shifts the development of the subject from the content to the quality of thought. Lộc’s acknowledgement of critical thinking to be based on standards of logic, taken on its own, carries an instrumental rationality emphasis and leads to the creation of identities as mundane. However, as Section 7.2.1 showed, it is Lộc’s formulation of his own standards of clarity, depth and relevance that leads to the cultivation of the dispositions of

the thinker; discipline content and academic tasks then function as vehicles for advancing the quality of students' thinking. As Lộc points out, of importance in critical thinking is 'not just about what you say or how you react to an issue, but when you are evaluating it, it is about how you understand the root of the issue and how you solve that issue (Lộc, BEP1: 636-637). The emphasis here turns upon the construction of the inner. Critical thinkers here are characterised as being inward- oriented and reflexive. Thus, the identity it aims at becomes 'the esoteric', in Bernstein's terms.

Although the above-mentioned epistemic focus carries profound implications on the forming of consciousnesses, and as a result the social and class divisions, the literature and research of the critical thinking movement have rarely agreed on this (See for example, Nussbaum, 2004; Paul and Elder, 2005, Bailin and Siegel, 2003). In this field of production, theorists' philosophical and conceptual analyses tend to prioritise epistemological formulations and disagreements. In all this, the assumption is that the most logical and elegant formulation would generalise naturally into HE curricula.

It is worth repeating here that at Private Elite, the Department of Liberal Education, which manages the CT curriculum, enjoys significantly great autonomy. Free from the delivery of traditional academic content, the Department is able to focus completely on the development of 'symbolic capital' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) and elite dispositions. This status supports and makes it possible for Lộc to (strongly) classify the teaching of critical thinking and apply rigorous critical standards.

All of the above once again suggests that the whole political economy of HEIs, teachers and students does not always support the straightforward translation of critical thinking the literature has assumed.

7.2.4 The Strong Classification of Critical Thinking

This final sub-section demonstrates how, different from Minh's instrumental pedagogy, Lộc's active engagement in the curriculum mediation creates strong internal classification of knowledge within his CT Course. It also discusses how his pedagogic interaction establishes and regulates the discursive boundaries around what the State authorises as legitimate forms of knowledge inquiry and critical thought.

First of all, while Minh transmits mainly the knowledge paced and defined by the curriculum, Lộc distinguishes between the methodological and the contextual

characterisation within his CT course. This means, on the one hand, L  c retains the basic idea of the analytic tradition as a criterion of critical thinking. Toward this end, students are taught structures of arguments and how to solve problems by analysing key terms/ concepts and reviewing related information for options. In pursuing this, certain forms of logical, linguistic capacity and conceptual analysis are developed and promoted as standards of clarity and analytical rigor. On the other hand, L  c also believes these notions of rigor need to be framed in the descriptions of students' disciplinary and their immediate, social experiences rather than be applied away from or without the normal context or environment. That explains why right in the first week he requests students to clarify their identities, locating themselves within the discipline they belong to. Students' disciplines, in later weeks, serve as vehicles for critical thinking development. Additionally, L  c also organises the Course, allowing space and time for critical thinking to be acquired at different levels with rigor accelerating to the highest level that he calls 'the *level of high skills*' (L  c, BEP1: 381) towards the end of the course, e.g. in the final assignment. This has to be accompanied by the strictness of the teacher to 'beat up' (Ibid: 382) any irrational arguments from students (Ibid: 382). According to L  c, without the application of this rigorous distinction, which sometimes receives moaning from students, he as a teacher does not bring any values to students' lives. His words to the students are worth considering:

We need some values so that when we step out from the course, we become different. It doesn't make sense the first day you come to me, you are babies and to the end of the course you are still the same babies. We have to change our perception and we have to accept and tolerate my rigor at this level (L  c, BEP1: 383- 386).

It is not difficult to see that it is the 'change in perception' that speaks of the internalisation of critical thinking in L  c's pedagogic modality. Compared with Minh's pre-occupation with acquiring segmental knowledge, L  c's practices decidedly promotes a sense of commitments to the intrinsic value of knowledge, scholarship and free enquiry (Beck, 2002, 2010). As I said earlier, the type of critical thinking conceptualised and developed within L  c's CT Course also represents a strong external classification of the subject. It sets itself from other subjects and has space for its own identity. Thus, in its transmission, critical thinking acquires a set of highly developed and specialised internal rules. Equally significant is the covert internal classification in L  c's CT Course. It is clear that the boundaries established in the Course between analytic standards and contextual characterisation serve to create a sense of safety for critical thinking by restricting both its modes of inquiry and the scope of topics students bring into the classroom discussions. This strong internal classification contributes to the realisation of critical thinking in students through the

persistent application of the epistemic standards and the emphasis on dispositions, as discussed above. In Durkheimian and Bernsteinian sociological language, the strong internal classification acts to exert discursive controls on what is say-able and thinkable in the very act of ‘the unthinkable’ (Bernstein, 2000: 29). As such, it is crucial to the internalisation of critical thinking in students.

Another important aspect in Lộc’s pedagogy is his own awareness of the boundaries beyond what is acceptable. Allowing ‘discussions of all possible topics of concern, from international to local politics, from environmental campaigns to media, fashions, and religions’ (Lộc, BEP21: 178) means accepting the risk for class discussions to turn to anti-status quo dimensions. While students are encouraged to talk about any contentious issues, it is the development of different perspectives - rigorous standards- that results in their being more selective of what is appropriate to say. For Lộc (BEP1), that ‘Students have to approach issues from scientific lens’ (Ibid:135) indeed makes critical thinking become safe. The usual normative and controversial dimensions no longer discourage critical thinking be it critical thinking of politics or sensitive social issues. The strong internal, analytic or contextual classification functions covertly to include or exclude certain discourses thus ensures ‘a fair view to any contentious issue’ (Lộc, BEP1: 253-254).

Even with such *fairness* or objectivity, it should not be implied that the pedagogic transmission is unilaterally determined. Lộc recounts his first days teaching when he asked students to go home and read what *he* thought was important and saw students’ resistance. This proves that teachers’ strong control (over the selection, sequence, pacing, and criteria of knowledge) goes against the discursive boundaries established by the strong internal classification of critical thinking within a specific discipline.

Summary

In this chapter I detail how critical thinking is specialised into distinct sets of competencies and consciousness and regulated by a set of dominant political ideologies. The tensions and contradictions serve to justify my conclusion that practices in the discourse of pedagogic re-contextualisation are rarely straightforward and hardly ever constituted unilaterally. The fact that critical thinking can be accessed at either ‘rich’ private or ‘poor’ public universities - as in the case of Lộc and Đoàn- and that teachers may regulate their pedagogic practices for critical thinking depending on whether they think students are capable or not - as in the cases of Trí (BEP1), David (BEP1), Minh (BEP2) or Nữ (BEP2)- suggest academic success

depends less on the economic capital of a family but more on students' social and cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Bernstein, 1971). In both BEP1 and BEP2, critical thinking still serves little more than conforming to QA checklists (Madden, 2014).

Chapter Eight: Implications: Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity

Introduction

This chapter outlines significant implications made by the classification and framing of critical thinking in two Vietnamese undergraduate programmes - Business English Programme 1 (BEP1) and Business English Programme 2 (BEP2) for policy makers, researchers in curriculum studies and teachers in higher education (HE) who wish to develop critical thinking for their students. Guided by Bernstein's (1977, 2000, 2003) notion of *the pedagogic device*, I divide the discussion into two main sections. In the first section, I review a number of theoretical points made in Chapters Two and Three, namely *code*, *the pedagogic device* and *pedagogic identities*. I restate them in light of the empirical findings of Chapters Five, Six and Seven. The second section links the analysis of knowledge, identities and pedagogic codes at the classroom level with the orientation of pedagogic identities at the national level. Here, I connect the pedagogic codes of critical thinking analysed in Chapters Five, Six and Seven with the official pedagogic identities projected by the Vietnamese state in their control of the pedagogic device. In case the State's way of interpretation of critical thinking gives the impression that it monopolises the pedagogic device, the section turns to detailing several tensions caused by its recontextualisation of critical thinking into both programmes.

8.1 Restating Bernstein's Thesis: Code, the Pedagogic Device and Identities

In Chapter Three (pp. 80- 81), the concept of code is referred to as 'a regulative principle, tacitly acquired, which selects and integrates relevant meanings, forms of their realisation, and evoking contexts' (Bernstein, 2003: 14). The notion of the regulative principle (social order, relation, identity), which is always embedded in the pedagogic instruction, becomes crucial in the analyses of the data in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. In that same chapter, I also explained the pedagogic device as the relay of the procedures of distribution, recontextualisation and evaluation of 'official' knowledge which through these procedures is converted into curricula and pedagogic communication. Code and the pedagogic device enable me to uncover processes through which HE programmes in Việt Nam, in endorsing

elite values of neo-liberalism, have made efforts to teach students critical thinking. In these attempts, teachers differently position students by selecting to develop in them distinct sets of critical thinking, competences and consciousnesses.

Table 8.1 below translates the specific pedagogic codes in BEP1 and BEP2 into their modalities to summarise the forms they have taken, the meanings they have orientated to and their contextual realisations, which have been created by specialised interactional practices. Juxtaposing the pedagogic codes this way allows code, as a regulative principle, to emerge as a realisation of symbolic control on pedagogic identities.

The notion of symbolic control, ‘The means whereby consciousness is given a specialised form and distributed through forms of communication which relay a given distribution of power and dominant cultural categories’ (Bernstein, 2003: 134) becomes quite helpful here in uncovering the workings of the dominant social principles (ideologies) in the shaping of consciousness. The fact that the two different elite programmes deploy both ‘mundane’ and ‘esoteric’ pedagogic codes in their teaching of critical thinking reflects complex social bases of their students and also complex social obligations of each university. It also reflects tensions in the State’s desire to bring a kind of powerful knowledge that can benefit students into the national curriculum. Less overtly, it also indicates the role of the constitutive power relations and ideologies of the pedagogic device in deciding, although never without tension, who can learn critical thinking and why.

In Chapter Three, I also mapped out Bernstein’s ideas about official pedagogic identities. It is important to repeat here that Bernstein (2000) distinguishes between de-centred market (D.C.M) identities and de-centred therapeutic (D.T.T) identities. While the first refers to instrumental and outwardly responsive identities, the latter is characterised by internal coherence and inner commitment. The fact that the majority of the specific pedagogic modalities in BEP1 and BEP2 orient students towards mundane identities reflect an existence of a market-driven official pedagogic discourse in Vietnamese HE system.

I have so far reviewed several key theoretical points in light of the empirical findings. I am now turning to acknowledge Bernstein’s (2000) emphasis on curriculum studies to bring together the analysis of knowledge, consciousness and pedagogic codes at the micro level and the orientation of official pedagogic identities at the macro level. The purpose is to foreground the role of the State in projecting official pedagogic identities.

In turning to do so, what emerges is the tendency that the recontextualisation of critical thinking in Vietnamese HEIs seems to be sided with the D.C.M identity, although

there is also evidence it is moving towards D.C.T model and also maintaining the collective social

Table 8.1 Summary of the Pedagogic Codes in BEP1 and BEP2

| | | Private Elite | | Public Elite | |
|---------------------|-------------|---|--|---|--|
| | | Universal | Outlier case | Universal | Outlier case |
| Classifi- cation | | -C | ++C | -C | +C |
| (C) | External | Critical thinking infused across all subjects | Critical thinking wholly conceptualised under Critical Thinking programme | Critical thinking infused across all subjects | Critical thinking wholly conceptualised under subjects taught |
| | Internal | Critical thinking synonymous with higher-order' thinking, solving of difficult problems | Strong insulation between analytic and contextual characterisation; creates safe space for inquiries | Critical thinking synonymous with higher-order' thinking, solving of difficult problems | Strong insulation between analytic and contextual characterisation; creates safe space for inquiries |
| Framing | Internal | +F | --F | +F | -F |
| | | In terms of selection, sequence, pacing | In terms of selection, sequence, pacing | In terms of selection, sequence, pacing | In terms of selection, sequence, pacing |
| | External | -F Evaluative criteria | ++F Evaluative criteria | -F Evaluative criteria | +F Evaluative criteria |
| | | +F Discourses outside the programme omitted | --F Topic for inquiries based on students' interests outside of the programme | +F Discourses outside the programme omitted | -F Topic for inquiries based on textbooks but accommodated students' interests outside of the programme |
| Pedago- gic code | Context | Private Elite institution 'knowledge workers' and leaders | Elective independent Programme | Public Elite institution 'knowledge workers' and leaders | Strongly bounded subject groups |
| | Meanings | Externally oriented Mundane knowledge | Inwardly oriented Esoteric knowledge | Externally oriented Mundane knowledge | Inwardly oriented Esoteric knowledge |
| | Realisation | Market dependent, instrumental | Elite dispositions | Market dependent, instrumental | Elite dispositions |

++C: very strong classification; + C: strong classification; -C: weak classification; ++ F: very strong framing; + F: strong framing; -F: weak framing

base. As the analyses in Chapters Five and Six prove, in both Private Elite and Public Elite, critical thinking is mainly taught as instrumental skills perceived as needed by the knowledge

economy. It takes on mundane meanings and aimed at fulfilling external contingencies. In contrast, in Lộc and Đoàn's cases, the same the critical thinking ideal is instead realised in the way that

- strongly evokes a context of what they believe is for 'the future leaders' (Đoàn, BEP2: 147) or 'democratic and transformation leadership' (Lộc, BEP1: 672-673);
- is driven by an inward orientation to esoteric knowledge; and
- does not focus so much on the production of short-term responses but the cultivation of a strongly classified set of features necessary for 'scientific' inquiry, such as elite dispositions, ethics, creativity and disciplinary knowledge (See more on p. 137 and p. 158).

During the transmission teachers also at times remind students of their social base defined by the Vietnamese traditional and cultural norms so that the latter can accommodate critical thinking safely within the cultural, social political contexts in which they are a part. Indeed, teachers like Minh, in advising his students to seek solutions without 'touching' teachers, implies a compliance to the hierarchical social base.

My interpretation and contrast of the two main kinds of decentred identities constructed by the majority of the teachers BEP1 and BEP2, on one hand, and Lộc and Đoàn, on the other, can be strengthened by Bernstein's (2000: 73) own analysis of the opposing resources the construction of these identities are based on, 'In one case the resources are market, and in the other they are sense-making resources to create internal coherence'. For Bernstein, these two decentred positions, indeed, share the same generative principles, especially when being contrasted with 'retrospective and prospective identities. While retrospective positions claim to be fundamentalist, elitist and grounded in collective past and prospective positions construct identities along lines of race, region, gender, 'decentred market identities announce distance from this social and collective base' (Bernstein, 2000:76). One aims at the construction of the identity driven by 'inner dedications'; the other at an 'outwardly responsive identity' (Bernstein, 2003: 69).

My analysis of how critical thinking has been taught at Private Elite and Public Elite in a cosmopolitan city in Việt Nam may be suggestive of similar efforts undertaken by other Vietnamese universities (See, for example, Nguyen, 2016b). If this is the case, then, what has emerged in the field - of what it means to be a critical thinker- is an identity that has in fact facilitated 'the shrinking of the social and moral imagination' (Bernstein, 2000: 79). In light of Bernstein's (2000) analysis of symbolic control and the regulation of social relationships, consciousness, identity and desire, it can be concluded that under these

circumstances, the State, through process of recontextualisation, has prescribed an official pedagogic identity that functions to restrict the emancipatory thesis of critical thinking.

Given that the critical thinking discourse speaks of individual autonomy (Chapter Two, p. 55) rather than individualised (decentred) identities, an emancipatory thesis functions as a strong barrier against forms of domination and orients towards freedom and social good. In institutionalising decentred identities as the only legitimate pedagogic positions to be developed and acquired, the State has implicitly denied, in its official discourse, the collective sympathies and empathies fundamental to critical thinking. In other words, it suggests an emptiness of discursive spaces, essential for critical thinking to realise its counter-hegemonic potential.

One last significance that needs to be highlighted is related to the notion of pedagogic recontextualisation as a discourse of the pedagogic device. For Bernstein (2003), this process is never unilateral nor ever pre-determined. Indeed, it is the potential site for contestation and opposition (Wong and Apple, 2003) since multiple agents involved in both the official recontextualising field (ORF) and the pedagogic recontextualising (PRF) struggle to distribute power and their contradictory ideologies. The next section explains some of these tensions and contradictions. It looks into their enactment in the classroom contexts of the two programmes. By doing so, the section also acknowledges how pedagogic interactions subsequently create the condition for the emancipatory thesis of critical thinking to be re-introduced.

8.2 Tensions and Contradictions in the Pedagogic Device

By now it can be said that the pedagogic device allows some delineation of what form of critical thinking to be taught in Vietnamese HE curricula. However, the empirical experience with BEP1 and BEP2 confirms that orientations to different versions of critical thinking are themselves made available by the device. This ‘transformative’ nature of pedagogic device is explained as:

The very discourse which is subject to control contains within itself the possibilities of the transformation of its own principles (Bernstein, 2003: 189).

Despite this, Bernstein also raises awareness of certain limits inherent in the workings of the pedagogic device:

Although the device is there to control the unthinkable, in the process of controlling the unthinkable it makes the possibility of the unthinkable available. Therefore, internal to the device is its own paradox: it cannot control what it has been set up to control (Bernstein, 2000: 38).

The above remarks decidedly carry a certain level of abstraction. However, deep under their abstraction implies a message that pedagogic recontextualisation has with it uncertain outcomes and that any attempts at curriculum controls can bring about change or transformation. Consequently, struggles over what knowledge to teach, what identities or consciousnesses to construct and/ or what regulative order to impose always take place in discursive boundaries of pedagogic practice and discourse. These contradictions and tensions never seem to be entirely controlled even when power relationships are translated into legitimate forms of pedagogic communication.

In Chapter One (pp. 15- 23), I highlighted how the State in seeking ways to maintain its legitimacy has worked hard for (1) the promotion of equality; (2) the introduction of 'progressive' values into the national traditional curriculum; and (3) the pursuit of neoliberalist rationality. I also outlined how these ideologies have created tensions and contradictions. Of course, these contradictions impact the pedagogic device as it attempts to transform the critical thinking knowledge into pedagogic communication by specifying codes, competencies and consciousnesses.

However, all the above does not mean that these boundaries are impossible to change. Indeed, they are always subject to challenges and resistances. In Bernstein's theory, such challenges and resistances often operate at the level of framing relations, as 'any framing carries with it the procedures of its disturbance and challenge' (Bernstein, 2003: 39). To be clear, when teachers and students struggle to realise a specific code, they may disturb, challenge and resist the code. Some of the pedagogic interactions and practices in BEP1 and BEP2 become exceptionally important in clarifying this point. Toward this end, in the next sub-sections, I will demonstrate how teachers and students in BEP1 and BEP2 have sought to make sense of what it means to be a critical thinker. In demonstrating this I also show how in challenging the discursive boundaries and official pedagogic identities alternatives to conceptualisations of critical thinking can be introduced.

8.2.1 Tensions and Contradictions in Weak Framing

In Chapter Five (pp. 132- 138), I discussed in detail how Lộc, the teacher of Critical Thinking (CT) at Private Elite applies both strong classification and weak frames in his teaching of critical thinking. The strong classification is evident in how Lộc conceptualises and teaches the subject as a specialised identity inevitable to the education of Vietnamese future leaders. Lộc's weak framing on pedagogic interaction is how he cultivates in students a set of 'scientific' thinking dispositions, such as autonomy, self-reflection, and intellectual commitment.

However, such a pedagogic code contains its own tensions. The flexible pedagogic communication and the open-ended nature of inquiry can at the same time invite students' challenges of authority structures outside of the academic contexts and so go beyond the discursive boundaries established by the strong classification of critical thinking in the CT Course. When students in Lộc's class take advantage of weak controls of communication to voice their critical opinions against the Government, Lộc creatively adopts a variety of ways aiming at policing these discursive boundaries and lessen their exceeding of the limits. Using Lộc's modalities, I generalise here the two key approaches teachers, specifically in Việt Nam, can rely on to strengthen the framing of the pedagogic interaction.

One such approach is strengthening teachers' controls over the *selection* of what aspect of knowledge to be transmitted. This requires teachers to take an explicit stance, ideally a middle-ground one, and make it clear to students what they need to consider when class discussions turn into socio-politically sensitive issues. This approach is often accompanied by a strengthening of the internal dimension of framing, e.g. strong *criteria*. One example of the working of this approach is how Lộc exerts particular considerations into such discussions:

I let students talk about anything of their concerns; nothing left untouched. They can even talk about politics, *but from the scientific lens rather than subjective judgments*. I told students, 'if you want to talk about the 99-year land law in Việt Nam. Ok, that's fine. It's about special administrative -economic zones (SAEZs). But first off, show me how you understand SAEZs and what the world has had to say about it (Lộc, BEP1: 181- 187, my emphasis).

Clearly, teachers can prevent discussions from entering into anti-social tendencies by taking initiatives in selecting considerations that students are to work with. In case selection is open to all possible considerations, like in Lộc's case above, the selection of rigorous criteria (analytic clarity, having meanings and definitions thoroughly delineated) and the

incorporation of a political middle-ground perspective are crucial to ensure safety. In Bernstein's terms, the reinforcement of the internal dimension of framing is helpful in legitimating forms of inquiry and out-of-bound markers.

This same strategy is also applied by other teachers, for example, Phú, the teacher of Politics in BEP1. When students' concerns turn to questioning the Politics subjects *per se* or the Communist Party of Việt Nam, he requires an application of comparison, assessment, and justification for greater breadth of thought and for a right attitude:

We are not ignorant of politics; not blind to it; not close our eyes to the wrongdoings. Deliberating goes hand in hand with a right attitude; an attitude to believe in new and right things and support them (Phú, BEP1: 28- 32).

Although the two pedagogic codes are different in frame strengths, it is the emphasis of the epistemological and regulative restrictions (the scientific lens in Lộc's case vs. an attitude in Phú's) that makes what is validated as official knowledge become more challenging for students.

The above is the method involving selection and criteria, the two internal dimensions of framing, that teachers can rely on to create a safe space for critical thinking. The other approach refers to the strengthening of the external dimension of framing. In Bernstein's (2000) terms, it is the embedding of a specific 'regulative discourse' into 'the instructional discourse'. In this approach, teachers need to consider the inherent impact of power relations outside the context of specific pedagogic communication. This is illustrated in Bernstein's (2003) hypothesised description of how much communication is made available between a non-paying patient with his doctor (See Chapter Three, p. 82). An even more nuanced example is with Lộc's own accounts of how external power relations forcefully determine critical thinking:

I gave them examples of cultural barriers . . . related to my own experience . . . I talked on television about prostitution districts . . . My parents saw me analyse why it should. They turned off the telly. Immediately, I was excluded from my family. My name was crossed off the family ancestry. They did not watch to the end to hear me analyse why it shouldn't (Lộc, BEP1: 239 – 242).

While critical thinking can cost students a family relationship like in Lộc's case above, it can also cost students their jobs as the story of Văn's own niece who 'got fired every time she raised her voices against the wrong things her bosses have made' (Văn: 270). In some social context, especially in working with the Vietnamese authorities, the regulative

discourse can be so powerful that those who want to keep their ‘chairs’ (Ibid: 279) learn well the lesson, ‘Silence is gold’ (Văn, BEP1: 329). These examples are significant in understanding how moral orders are important in the application of critical thinking, especially within the context of Việt Nam, where family relations, jobs and harmony are traditionally seen as important. As such, teachers may want to take Văn’s (Ibid: 286) warning of the teaching of ‘harsh Western critical thinking’.

This becomes more urgent when the negative aspect of critical thinking, its confrontational nature (hook, 2010), is always there to play its role:

Quite a number of graduates are conceited. They go to work, and in a meeting, for example, speak out their ideas. It is helpful that they have good ideas and want to share, but the way they speak make others feel, ‘Why do I have to listen to you? You are anyway just a fresh graduate with no experience’ (Thanh, BEP2: 427 – 429)!

In this case, students’ attitude of narcissistic arrogance (if there is any) needs to be ‘adjusted’ (Thanh: 430) to ensure safety for the application of critical thinking. Otherwise, teaching critical thinking may ultimately lead to unexpected consequences, such as ‘unable to function at work’ and even worse ‘do harm to the rest of their [students’] lives’ since nobody will accept them (Văn, BEP1: 287-288).

Similarly, the critical thinking curriculum in Việt Nam may need to contain forms of communication of the collective self. The way Minh advises his students to hold back their thought against their teachers and to ‘find a way out without hurting them’ (Minh, BEP1: 320) and the way he himself often avoids confrontations with people of higher power, simply because he knows he ‘can’t change them’ (Ibid: 291) are selections that are worth considering.

The strong external framing will ensure that the realisation of students’ autonomy, which is now required in Vietnamese HE (Vietnamese Government, 2008), needs to be fundamentally situated in an external moral order. In this case, social hierarchies, which often decide who may say what will be quite explicit.

The ethic of social relations that the strong external framing reinforces matches well with the authoritarian and collective ideological orders the Vietnamese government has for long been embraced. Indeed, the teachers’ remarks above resemble the law on the responsibilities of founders and managers of science and technology organisations based in Việt Nam, signed by the Prime Minister, Nguyễn Tấn Dũng:

To address dissents, if any, with the orientation, guidelines or policies made by the Party or State, it is obligatory that these disagreements must be sent directly to the relevant State or Party agencies; No publications of any forms under the name of, or in association with the name of, a science and technology organisation are allowed (Vietnamese Government, 2009).

8.2.2 Weakening External Frames and the Social Order

In Chapter Five and Chapter Six, I suggested that the teaching of critical thinking in both BEP1 and BEP2 is characterised by a general weak classification and strong framing. This comes out as the result of an instrumental conception of the subject as one of the Twenty-first Century skills for employment, commonly referred to in the literature as ‘knowledge skill’ for ‘knowledge workers’ (Young, 2007). In this context, the strong framing, by limiting the potential for variations in the realisation of the pedagogic text, becomes effective in ensuring (and controlling) the legitimacy of the production of critical thought. In other words, the strong framing of the pedagogic codes there serve to secure students acquire only what is allowed to be transmitted. The case of Phụng, BEP1 (pp. 118- 121) and Nữ, BEP2 (pp. 149- 151) casting aside external material for critical thought to stick with the curriculum knowledge are obvious examples.

In those two chapters, however, I also argued that despite the weak classification of critical thinking, the majority of the teachers try in different ways to weaken their framing- at least its external dimension - for critical thought. Among teachers in BEP2, Đoàn stands out for her weak framing although it is still not as weak as that of Lộc in BEP1. I am now returning to elaborate on these efforts. Like the specifically weak framing in Lộc’s class, which allows pedagogic communication to touch non-official discourses, the weak framing in Đoàn (and other teachers’ classes) also provides equal possibilities for alternative orientations to pedagogic codes.

It can be argued that the nature of an academic subject by itself may suggest stronger or weaker framing. However, it is not necessarily so, since the process of recontextualising subjects into curricula is often arbitrary and therefore subjects are often embedded with particular social, political and moral orders (Luckett, 2009; Lilliedahl, 2015). Through the interviews with teachers in both programmes, it becomes clear that it is teachers’ attempts that connect, or not, their students to critical thinking as ‘the privileging text’ or the official curriculum. This is significant, especially when teachers tend to perceive students as ‘weak’ or ‘passive’ ‘quiet’ and ‘lack of critical thinking’ and therefore assume the subject as irrelevant to the latter’s experiences.

For example, in seeking ways to weaken the external framing of critical thinking, Đoàn and other teachers draw on wide legitimate discourses in their pedagogic transmission. Nevertheless, these ways all aim at bridging the social divide between the regulative orders of the formal academic discourse and students' personal, informal and social discourses. Specifically, my discussion in Chapter Five (pp. 136- 138) and Six (p. 155- 159) showed that Minh and Đoàn try to connect their teaching of critical thinking to students' personal lives. Đoàn, for example, asks them not to take at face value and always cross-reference the information they hear and come across on the Internet, social networking websites, mainstream newspaper reports. Given that in Việt Nam, socialism is enforced through institutionalised channels as the only philosophy and that social media is strictly censored to avoid any attempts at 'fighting against the government or causing internal disconnections' (Vietnamese Government, 2018), Đoàn's modality (and that of Minh) help orient students towards the emancipatory thesis of critical thinking, which in turn, will benefit their lives to a certain extent.

Đoàn (BEP2), Phú (BEP1) and Minh (BEP1) all emphasise the significance of critical thinking by suggesting how in their classes it has helped students manage their personal lives and resolve conflicts that can at times get out of hand. Elsewhere Nữ also promotes critical thinking as an advantage for students in the future, for it will help them learn to 'understand themselves as well as potential employers' (Nữ, BEP2: 95). These understandings help 'sharpen their [students'] focus' and 'earn them a good network' (Nữ, BEP2: 100- 105).

How teachers perceive and teach critical thinking depends on their beliefs about who has the right to practice critical thinking, when and where critical thinking is appropriately used. Beliefs such as critical thinking will flourish and become useful in 'democratic climates', e.g. 'multinational companies' (Đình BEP1: 312) or in cases when students may want to 'establish *start-ups*' (Ibid: 310) motivate teachers like Đình to turn to alternatives. Beliefs such as 'too rigorous critical thinking may harm students' lives and career' (Văn, BEP1: 287) or 'obedience as a criterion' (Hoàng, BEP2: 55) drive leaders like Văn and Hoàng to be cautious about policies to support a critical thinking curriculum. Finally, a belief that critical thinking does not help solve inequality caused by social labour division, something like, 'I never can change them [people of higher social hierarchies]' or 'If I jump in, I can just spoil things more (Minh, BEP1: 291-292)' definitely guides Minh (and other teachers) to take a peaceful approach to critical thinking. Such 'peaceful' modalities indeed resonate Toulmin's (2001) discussion of a mutual toleration of ambiguities, cultural diversities and disagreements, typified by binary 'us-them' thinking (Lim, 2016). Back to

the core question referring to the power relation: Who has the right to practice critical thinking? It seems that it is the privilege of the ruling elite or those who are high in the hierarchy (at least in Việt Nam). The issue I raised in the Introduction about Thu's ex-student and his boss (p. 2) and the way the Vietnamese authoritarian government has controlled the Covid 19 pandemic (p. 20) well illustrate the point.

The fact that students begin to stand up for their rights as democratic citizens and family members are confirmed by teachers, including Phú (BEP1) and Nữ (BEP2). For example, Phú observes that students begin to have more critical thinking, since the university has, to some extent, handed this 'weapon' to them:

Although their parents overprotect them . . . students today just want to be themselves; they are beginning to express their dissents toward family protection . . . For example, when their parents don't allow them to join the Green Summer Project, they will find all possible ways to make it happen, seeking help from teachers and other family members who they think are influential to their parents. (Phú, BEP1: 339 – 345).

Critical thinking is also reported to happen in students' own lives, albeit still being instrumental, as seen in Minh's students who now begin to 'dig around to see where this or that person is uncritical or irrational (Minh, BEP1: 105). This, however, may pose threat to the traditionally deep-rooted teacher-student hierarchical divide since questioning teachers' knowledge actually 'make them [visiting teachers] uncomfortable' (Phú: BEP1: 290-291). Đình's personal story of himself 'being oppressed' (Đình, BEP1: 35) when he points out his high school teachers' mistakes in her English lessons allows a conclusion that the teaching of critical thinking may end up reinforcing 'the pedagogy of the oppressed' (Freire, 2012).

Compared to the official discourse of critical thinking as 'knowledge skills' for 'the knowledge economy', these ways of weakening the external framing of critical thinking, although restricted to individuals, focus more on students and their lives. In doing all these, teachers indeed involve in 'the transformation of the transformed text in the pedagogic process' (Bernstein, 2003: 193). In this process, as Singh (2002: 577) explains, 'Teachers may recontextualise discourses from the family, community . . . for purposes of social control, in order to make the regulative and moral discourses of the classroom more effective.' In light of this understanding, the implication is that externally weak framing allows a translation of critical thinking into something that students feel connected with and may eventually acquire it in one form or another.

The weaker framing of pedagogic interaction opens up variety of discourses where the conceptualisation of critical thinking at times go beyond the instrumental rationality. One example of this is how Phú introduces the non-official dimension of the curriculum into the pedagogic transmission by getting his students problematise the very content of the Politics textbooks written by the MOET and thus presumably being ‘standardised’ (Phú: 147). Similarly, by encouraging critical thinking so that when it comes to voting students will know ‘Why voting for this person but not another’ (Phú, BEP1: 153), Phú promotes the notion of critical thinking that is, as I reviewed in Chapter Two (pp. 47- 48), in the democratic West, predominately tied to the social good.

8.2.3 Contradictions in the Pedagogic Recontextualisation

The application of externally weak framing by teachers in BEP1 and BEP2 reflects contradictions in the pedagogic recontextualisation. This can be delineated in two ways.

Firstly, from a Bernsteinian lens, the recontextualisation of critical thinking in BEP1 and BEP2, the two work-oriented programmes, involves the subject being dis-located from its emancipatory thesis and then being relocated as ‘knowledge skills’ for ‘the knowledge economy’. Delivering critical thinking with that instrumental meaning necessitates strict controls over the pedagogic transmission. However, it is also these strong pedagogic controls that leads to (some) students’ resistance of the official curriculum of critical thinking (in Trí, Phượng, and Đoàn’s classes). This requires a further relocation of the instructional discourse of critical thinking in a different regulative discourse. What I showed in Section 8.2.2 above is teachers’ attempts to do just that. With attempts to weaken frames to accommodate different discourses more relevant to students’ personal, social experiences, this further recontextualisation detaches itself from the contingencies of economic instrumentality and to be connected more to the emancipatory potential of critical thinking.

The tensions inherent in both pedagogic codes- weak framing and strong framing- discussed above strongly imply that contradictions in pedagogic work always exist, although being varied in different conditions. When becoming evident, often at the level of classroom interaction, they will be either restrained and suppressed or challenged and negotiated, through different framing modalities. The framing (control) relations in both programmes confirm Bernstein’s (2000:5) emphasis that ‘Control is double faced . . . it carries both the power of reproduction and the potential for its change’.

Secondly, the contradictions highlighted above also foreground another aspect related to the link between the recontextualising fields and the pedagogic agents and provide more reasons to apply a flexible interpretation of any official attempt at pedagogic recontextualisation.

This is because even in an educational system where the state manipulates, to a great extent, the development of common curricula and the provision and regulation of formal educational knowledge, a necessary separation between the dominance of the state in the ORF from teachers' pedagogic work in the PRF is required. This seems especially the case when agents in the ORF tend to take control over reinforcing dominant ideologies through the transmission of codes within the classroom (Bernstein, 2000).

As the data analyses reveal, most teachers in both programmes are specialists in their narrow fields of study and teaching and therefore often not equipped with a substantive understanding of what critical thinking is (with the exception of Minh and Lộc). As a result, in trying to make sense what critical thinking means to the subjects they teach and for the particular students in their classes, teachers often have to rely on a variety of sources. While these sources are typically course outlines (syllabi) and other official guidelines (learning outcomes), teachers occasionally extend to online, relevant programmes elsewhere or their own personal experiences, values and beliefs.

Under these extensive influences, the ideological construction in the PRF is necessarily to be fragmented so that it becomes impossible to specify in advance boundaries that efforts to recontextualise what is presented and how it is presented in this field may proceed. This, in turn, weakens the control that the ORF is able to impose on the institutional and classroom pedagogic work in terms of the specification of official pedagogic discourses and identities.

8.2.4 Tensions in Pedagogic Codes

Turning to recruitment, it is important to highlight some tensions. Firstly, there is tension caused by the status of the programme/university. Both BEP1, Private Elite and BEP2, Public Elite have their relative autonomy which allows them to recruit their own teachers based on the uniqueness of their curricula. Located within a public institution, the dependence on the MOET for budgets limits BEP2's selection of potential candidates. For BEP1, the financially independent status allows it to recruit any qualified teachers- the ones who 'are active and are trained from abroad' (Vãn: BEP1: 359)- it believes are suitable for

critical thinking. Unfortunately, in language and content integrated programmes like BEP1 and BEP2, teachers who are qualified in both the English language and the business discipline are ‘nowhere to be found’ in Việt Nam (Thanh: BEP2). This lack of qualified teachers is not without relation to the State’s ineffective policies in relation to teachers’ professional development for HE reforms towards modernisation and international integration (Tran et al, 2014b; Vietnamese Government, 2004).

Besides staff, both programmes have their own tensions over the organisation of professional development for teachers and extra-curriculum activities for their students. In these aspects, too, the ‘elite’ status of private universities may not guarantee success, since strong boundaries have been established between departmental leaders, curriculum developers and teachers (See more in Chapter Five, pp. 114). At the individual level, all of these tensions affect the development of critical thinking, since they impede the continuous and collective progress of knowledge production, which is crucial for the development of critical understanding, a condition for ‘experiencing boundaries’ and a means to ‘new possibilities’ (Bernstein, 2000: xx).

Secondly, tension also arises out of the dependence of Việt Nam and its education system on elite knowledge that neoliberalism and its hidden discourse of intellectual imperialism have appropriated and imposed, often through international funding agencies, identified by Bernstein (2003:216) as the ‘international field’. With an orientation towards ‘standardisation, modernisation and international integration’ (MOET, 2004), such neoliberal market-oriented programmes as BEPs limit the field of potential candidates. This emergent discipline also makes it harder not only for the ORF (making and managing professional development policies for HE teachers) but also for universities themselves to align teachers’ ideological beliefs with the central purposes of the curricula, and with the broader social, moral order. What one leader of BEP1 comments on this tension is worth mentioning here: ‘To recruit good and active teachers, we only have to give a priority to those who are trained abroad. Those who are local-bounded limit their view’ (Vãn, BEP1: 358 – 359). Similarly, for BEP2, future candidates have to be those who ‘have work experience, are trained abroad in business fields and have a substantive command of English’ (Thanh, BEP2: 264-265).

Significantly, since high-ranking teachers can function as ‘a means of maintaining powers of attraction’ (Bernstein, 2000: 70), it turns out for BEP2 (and other public programmes elsewhere) whose financial resources cannot afford elite recruitment,

commitment to students' employment functions as the means to maintain or improve the competitive position. Indeed, one leader of BEP2 reveals:

We mainly aim at students' employment . . . We know in the continuously changing labour market, we only need to equip students with good thinking skills, English skills and information technology. They will adapt quickly (Hiệu, 51-56).

The contradiction here how 'good thinking skills' can be transmitted in the absence of a high-qualified staff.

I mentioned in Chapter Five that Lộc is a visiting teacher and is quite new to Private Elite. At the time of the interview, he taught the CT Course for just one year. Therefore, he may not have wholly initiated into the regulative orders of BEP1/ Private Elite yet. Lộc's understanding of the reason for critical thinking to be taught may arise less from the subject's official discourse of instrumental rationality. Instead, the exigencies guiding his pedagogic interaction reflect more of a sense of egalitarianism and a vision for democratic engagement:

Our [Vietnamese] approaches to social concerns are often one-sided. The system of theories available in our country mainly serves the socialist ideology rather than open to diversity. In our mindset, capitalism and liberal trends in the world all go against us. We need to acknowledge these limitations and learn to approach concerns from different perspectives to arrive at a better course of actions (Lộc, BEP1: 27 – 32).

Thus, at the institutional and classroom level, pedagogic interaction, practices and rationalities reflect a wider and more diverse set of ideals and considerations. This reality speaks of a non-deterministic understanding of both the process and outcomes of pedagogic recontextualisation. The PRF, with its different element of composition, presents diversity in terms of interests, interpretations and appropriations of critical thinking both within the field itself and between it and the ORF (Wong & Apple, 2003).

Summary

In summary, through multiple empirical evidence presented in in this chapter I show that while official efforts by the Vietnamese state to recontextualise critical thinking have limited a certain range of discourses, they have also allowed space for possibilities.

Chapter Nine: Concluding Remarks

Introduction

In this last chapter, I will outline a number of final remarks at the curriculum reform level and at the level of classroom practice where teachers' interpretation and consciousness often dominate their pedagogic modalities. Specifically, I will restate the thesis and its critical arguments. Then I will look at how the thesis has addressed the research objectives and the overarching research question. There will also be a consideration of its limitations. The chapter finishes with a section highlighting the three contributions the thesis has made to knowledge in the fields of critical thinking, curriculum studies and Bernstein's theory.

The chapter implies that efforts in the field of pedagogic recontextualisation strengthen the Vietnamese state's attempt at promoting decentred market (D.C.M) and decentred therapeutic (D.C.T) as official pedagogic identities. However, the promotion of these identity constructions has led to the shrinking of the moral imagination. This, in turn, results in an emptiness of the emancipatory thesis of critical thinking. The chapter also emphasises that attempts at the selection, organisation and transmission of critical thinking are never unilaterally determined. Finally, the chapter also re-examines, in light of the empirical findings, Bernstein's comments on the limits of the pedagogic device and its workings. This re-examination suggests a paradox that since codes function as regulative devices in the service of a dominant order, containing within its contextual framing relations are the possibilities of the change of that order.

9.1 Summary of Arguments

It is useful now to summarise the development of this ten- chapter thesis for two purposes: acknowledging its limitations and highlighting its significance. In the Introduction (pp. 1- 11), I raised the research idea and explained why I chose critical thinking as the research topic. Chapter One (pp. 12- 40) is where I mapped the research context. There, I highlighted the history of colonialism, e.g. how it, together with the contemporary social and political ideologies – socialism, socialist democracy and neoliberalism, characterised Vietnamese national consciousness. I detailed the interactions as well as the tensions and contradictions that these ideologies generate in the political agenda and in the higher education (HE)

discourse they translate into. There is a discussion of the extent to which these ideologies have influenced the desirability of critical thinking in the state-mandated curriculum. The key argument is that even though critical thinking is projected by the MOET as a way to gear Vietnamese young people for the demands brought about by the neoliberal economic order, it also raises regulative concerns, such as threat to the authoritarian state, commitment to rationality and the worsening of egalitarian-elite tension. Consequently, analysis at the institutional and classroom is required to elaborate paradoxes and conflicts caused by such efforts at the national curriculum reform.

The theoretical and conceptual parts of the thesis are developed in Chapter Two (pp. 41- 66) and Chapter Three (pp. 67- 90). In Chapter Two, I conducted a critical review of critical thinking scholarship, arguing that its conceptualisation is ahistorical, asocial and apolitical. The chapter also points out that the literature developing around the curricular themes of thinking and rationality are fundamentally indicative of dominant political ideologies and established social orders. There, I introduced Bernstein's work on Durkheimian sociological distinction between esoteric and mundane 'knowledges'. From these two concepts I developed an argument: As long as critical thinking allows individuals to problematise taken-for-granted things and thus enables critique of 'the yet to be thought' (Bernstein, 2000: 30), it- as well as knowledge generated from it- constitutes a form of esoteric knowledge. Significantly, such knowledge forms need regulation, for it can be regarded by the dominant social powers as a form of disruptive knowledge.

Chapter Three constructs a set of conceptual tools for understanding the covert process of the recontextualisation of critical thinking. Central to the conceptual framework is Bernstein's analysis of *the pedagogic device*. The constitutive rules of the device seek to regulate the pedagogic communication through embedding curricular constructions into competencies and consciousnesses. Here, I looked into the dynamic relations between knowledge, power and control and unpacked the consequences these may cause on subjective identity. The conceptual framework also includes an analysis of Bernstein's notions of classification and framing.

Chapter Four (pp. 91- 106) is the discussion of the research methodology and the research methods as an instrumental guidance for the empirical dimension of the study. In that chapter, I highlighted how classification and frames guide the coding and analysis of the data.

Chapters Five, Six, and Seven are the data analysis and discussion chapters. They address the research objectives delineated in the Introduction (p. 8) by giving a concrete

focus on the pedagogic interactions of teachers and students. Throughout these chapters, the earlier conceptual tools function. Specifically, chapters Five and Six, through the examination of classification and framing, address the two research objectives: How critical thinking is perceived, taught and evaluated in two undergraduate programmes, called Business English Programme 1 (BEP1) and Business English Programme 2 (BEP2). Chapter Seven synthesises the findings of the recontextualisation processes as well as the pedagogic codes of critical thinking in the two programmes. It addresses the Research Question: how the teaching of critical thinking in the two programmes are regulated by a set of socio-political ideologies.

On the whole, teachers in both BEP1 and BEP2 hold instrumental views to critical thinking, seeing it as knowledge skills necessary for the ‘knowledge economy’. These perspectives affect their choice of pedagogic modalities. As it is expected, the significance of the findings lies in how the social bases of the universities and their students inform the transmission and acquisition of knowledge, competencies and the shaping of the consciousnesses here. Another significance is the role of teachers in the field of professional recontextualisation. In each programme, there is what I would call, ‘the pedagogic code of the difference’ shaped by this role. While the elite status of BEP1 allows it to organise elective courses whose knowledge is not affected by market-driven orientations, it is teachers’ active engagement that makes the differentiation of knowledge, competencies and consciousness happen. Similarly, in BEP2 where resources are short, each teacher may have to teach the same group of students as they move along their curriculum path. When teachers see this as a chance to reorganise the curricula (syllabi) to allow knowledge to be built systematically towards abstract general meanings, critical thinking also happens. These findings also prove that the pedagogic device (and its discursive gaps) carries within itself the potential transformation (Bernstein, 2003).

In the light of Bernstein’s theory of code and the concept of the pedagogic device, I outlined, in Chapter Eight a number of significant implications for teaching critical thinking with an awareness of the Vietnamese state’s social, cultural and political ideologies.

9.2 Limitations

My effort to carry out this thesis, despite being supported by a rigorous theoretical and conceptual framework and sound methodology, does not guarantee that it is free from limitations. This specific section outlines four main possible limitations.

Firstly, the thesis may be challenged for its selection of cases, which is restricted to just two programmes (universities). Consequently, the possibility that the findings/conclusions may speak across various universities and contexts may also be limited. While this argument has its own merits, it is the deep analysis of the unique historical, cultural and socio-political context of a specific country that has generated valuable insights. The research insights also come from the ‘thick description’ of the interaction of the ideological forces, which in turn, shapes curricular discourses. This research direction, I believe, is worth taking. Admittedly, the research’s conclusions could have been and will be able to be strengthened in the future by a larger scale research project that accumulates data coding of a greater number of programmes/ universities (See, for example, Luke et al., 2005). Decidedly, such an approach using larger data may not capture rich textual descriptions, as seen here in this thesis, of pedagogic interactions and the ideologies underpinning them. However, the results it yields may help identify more ideological variation and may provide a more systematic understanding of how critical thinking is taught across the HE system.

Secondly, the validity of the thesis may also be questioned. Critics may raise concerns over whether or how the critical thinking skills deployed in the Politics subjects and the Critical Thinking (CT) Course in BEP1 are developed in BEP2. Their justification may be that only by doing so will the two cases share the same replication logic and the overall validity of the research design (Yin, 2018). This is undoubtedly a stronger move in methodology. However, it does not match the intent of this study, which seeks to examine how *critical thinking* – not a specific subject or discipline such as Politics or Marketing - is understood and taught across the two universities. Provided that the unit of analysis (critical thinking) is either similarly or differently organised between cases, then these crucial features of the cases should deserve analysis (Yin, 2018). Due to the constraint on accessibility at BEP2, Public Elite, I did not recruit participants outside the English Department. Despite this, through the interview with Phú, the teacher of Politics in BEP1 and Lộc, the teacher of CT in BEP1, I have made efforts to seek understanding (in fact, they constantly told me through their professional experience and understanding in the fields)

how other teachers of the same subjects may draw upon the critical thinking skills these two teachers establish. The possibilities of their instrumental approaches to critical thinking are reported in Chapter Five (p. 116; p. 138).

Nevertheless, without a detailed examination, it is impossible to rule out a possibility that critical thinking in Politics subjects and in Creativity Thinking in BEP2 might be esoteric, e.g. rigorous and powerful. If this happened, it would strengthen the pattern that in both BEP1 and BEP2 there would exist two pedagogic codes available to students: one would be esoteric; the other: mundane.

The third possible limitation may involve the exclusion of students from the process through which critical thinking is conceptualised, organised, transmitted and acquired in the classroom. In other words, it ignores the treatment of the curriculum reception, e.g. how students navigate, internalise or resist intended curriculum, as a movement of the ‘circuit of cultural production’ (Apple, 2000: 97). The criticism of this shortcoming is legitimate in its own right. It is true that the study, by not interviewing students, does not make any attempt to understand how they actually acquire (or not) critical thinking in the two programmes/universities. However, through the structural analysis of the interactions between the State’s ideologies, agencies and agents, the research does demonstrate that students are actually included in the pedagogic and ideological contexts shaped by these interactions. In shaping these contexts, pedagogic interaction limits a set of ideological pedagogic dispositions, identities and possibilities from which students are positioned into. Critical analysis of these possibilities and positions which emerge in Chapter Five and Six and climax in Chapter Seven involve questions about students’ reception of such a curriculum as critical thinking.

The last limitation may lie in the choice to use Microsoft Excel rather than another more specialised software such as NVivo for organising and coding the data. While I acknowledge the benefits of using prepacked software programmes in managing the data corpus, retrieving and organising codes, the usage of a software package requires a certain level of familiarity. Due to the time constraint and my having little experience using software for qualitative data analysis, I believe it is more practical to stay with what I have been feeling comfortable with. Most important of all, the key of data analysis is the analytic and interpretive process, and it is the researcher rather than any software that should be in control and be responsible for it (Yin, 2018; Lewins and Silver, 2007). In so far as Microsoft Excel facilitated my approach to the analysis, the choice of this routine word-processing ultimately led to robust results.

9.3 Contributions to Knowledge

Apart from the limitations above, the study has its own significance. The following summarises three contributions it has made to the critical thinking scholarship, curriculum studies and Bernstein's theory.

9.3.1 To Critical Thinking Scholarship

The findings of the study contradict the claim in the literature that critical thinking can be taught as a set of universal skills and dispositions across contexts (See for example, Facione, 1990; Fisher, 2001; Bailin et al. 1999; Ennis, 1996, 2016). They also challenge the promotion of the emancipatory essence of critical thinking as a generic value higher education curricula worldwide should adopt (Scheffler, 1989; Siegel, 1997; Lipman, 2003; Winch, 2005). In the light of the findings of the thesis, it can be said that these promotions communicate a type of academic hypocrisy. What constitutes critical thinking depends on how teachers in each specific context organise pedagogic practice and assessment that engage students in the commitment to qualified knowledge. This can be illustrated through the examples of how Phú and Đoàn apply consistent and rigorous criteria of critical thought to aim at inner properties of knowledge in their particular fields. In the same vein, that what type of critical thinking is selected to teach, to whom and how depends on the social location of students and the ideological formation of the society. The case of Phú teaching a Vietnamese version of critical thinking that supports and maintains the socialist status quo and the case of Minh, who teaches students another version of Vietnamese critical thinking that supports the Vietnamese traditional value of 'respect' to teachers are two significant examples. Thus, assuming that any list of generic skills and dispositions theorised in the literature like those of Facione (1990) or Bailin et al. (1999) will result in a straightforward transformation to curriculum practice in all socio-political context is indeed a false hope. Future research in critical thinking needs to (re)conceptualise the notion to acknowledge the internal strength of knowledge critical thinking aims at as well as the social order regulating the reality of the teaching and learning of critical thinking.

9.3.2 To Curriculum Studies

Secondly, the thesis has contributed an Asian voice to research in curriculum studies, the majority of which is carried out in the empirical context of the ideological West (Young,

1971, 2007; Young and Muller, 2016; Apple, 1995, 2013a, Lim and Apple, 2016). As Chapter Three has reviewed, there is an increasing body of research carried out to interrogate curriculum reforms and change which have recently surfaced in (South-eastern) Asian education systems, traditionally dominated by a strong state presence. These works tend to seek and report how governments in Asian countries have organised national curricula to respond to challenges and demands brought about by globalisation and modern socio-economic and socio-political environments (Mok, 2006; Harman et al., 2010, Marginson et al., 2014, Grossman, 2008; Tan, 2006). Being critical in a variety of different ways, these examinations highlight achievements as well as challenges and limitations these states encounter in reforming their curricula in the light of new exigencies. However, none of the works mentioned above foreground the relations between the organisation of curriculum knowledge and the production of social identities (Lim, 2016). Turning attention to the specific field of critical thinking, as I reviewed in Chapter Two, while quite a few attempts have been made recently across countries to approach critical thinking in the context of curriculum reforms and change. However, hardly any of them (except that of Lim, 2016) has looked at the relations of critical thinking (knowledge), power, and consciousness, in the way this thesis has done.

The above contribution also has further implications for curriculum change in Việt Nam and hopefully other strong states in South East Asian countries (Lim and Apple, 2016). As the review of the literature on Vietnamese higher education under the ruling of the communist socialist regime in Chapter One (pp. 33- 39) has shown, the Communist Party of Việt Nam has consistently exerted a considerable ideological intervention in higher education curriculum reforms and pedagogic practice (Harnam and Nguyen, 2010; Dao and Hayden, 2010; Đỗ and Đỗ, 2014). This monopoly of curricula and curricular agents may result in little gain since such interventions are based on the State's ideologies rather than the commitment to knowledge. Consequently, what may emerge in the pedagogic discourse is fragmented beliefs, sentiments and conducts among agents. In light of the findings of this study, future research in curriculum studies in Việt Nam should foreground the dynamics of pedagogic discourse and symbolic control on knowledge and identity. It should address how curriculum change in this unique socialist context should also involve destabilising the existent regulative order, disrupting the hegemony of contemporary communist socialist power and legitimacy, and introducing alternative identity orientations (Lim and Apple, 2016).

9.3.4 To Bernstein's Theory

Finally, the thesis has contributed a part to the growing body of research using Bernstein's theory to tackle the relation between curriculum issues and the wider socio-political power (see, for example, Ensor, 2004; Vorster, 2011; Wheelahan, 2007; Luckett, 2009; Lilliedah, 2015; McLean et al., 2013). Since the findings of the thesis show a connection between the mandated market- oriented curricula and the teaching of generic critical thinking or knowledge, future researchers can apply Bernsteinian analysis to continue to look into the effects of 'economising' higher educational systems on curriculum and pedagogy as suggested by Bernstein (2000) and Muller (2004). Significant as well is that the findings also confirm Bernstein's claim of the 'double faced' nature of control and the 'potential discursive gap' it creates for 'alternative possibilities' (Bernstein, 2000: 5). This speaks of the potential use of Bernstein's theory and concepts for studies in curriculum change at the classroom level. Indeed, the thesis has supported the trend for a more rigorous application of Bernstein's theory (Lim, 2016). Specifically, future researchers can expand the theoretical conceptual framework used in the study to problematise the implementation of not only critical thinking in a new context but also any emergent curricular or educational idea or policy in a specific pedagogic context across a variety of ideological contexts and spaces. As Bernstein (2000) insists, conflicts always exist within and across recontextualising fields, and deep contradictions are always inherent at both the levels of society and the individual. Any attempt at (re)establishing hegemonic relations through curricular and pedagogic change needs to address these complex relations. Applying a Bernsteinian approach to analyses of the processes and mechanisms through which imposed educational models, pedagogic ideas and/or curriculum policies are transformed into pedagogic practice allows these deep contradictory power relations to be revealed. This is often limited with other models, including diffusion models (Read more on Section 0.3, p. 9).

I would like to end the thesis with a closing comment on the importance of a relevant critical thinking curriculum in a country like Việt Nam. In light of the thesis, such a critical thinking curriculum needs to acknowledge two interrelated things. Firstly, it needs to be structured to aim at meaningful knowledge. This means a balance against being wedded into market-driven rationality, which tends to socialise students into potential employees rather than critical thinkers. Secondly and more significantly, in Việt Nam, such a critical thinking curriculum also needs to be structured in such a way that it takes serious consideration of the implications of any classroom deliberations against the socialist authoritarian ideologies and

the traditional social hierarchy. This requires rigorous evaluative criteria aiming at meaningful knowledge discussed earlier.

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Appendices

Appendix 4.1 Indicators of Critical Thinking in Selected Subjects

Table 4.3 Indicators of critical thinking in the selected Subjects of BEP1 and BEP2

| | Name of subjects | Indicators of critical thinking |
|----------|--|--|
| ES- BEP1 | Politics subjects: - Fundamental Principles of Marxism & Leninism - Hồ Chí Minh Ideology - Revolutionary Lines of the Communist Party of Viet Nam | -Understand fully and apply creatively the principles of Marxism and Leninism in students' lives -Trust the regime and the right leadership of the Party -Solve contentious social political and economic issues |
| | Critical Thinking | -Consider different aspects of an issue; - Obtain a holistic view - Build strong arguments - Internalise a self-defence spirit |
| | Listening & Speaking 3 | - Understand themed lectures that align with core academic content areas - Become an active and confident member of a classroom discussion |
| | Research subjects -Critical Reading & Writing -Project2 | -Organise ideas -Read, analyse and synthesise literature - Generate language and concepts needed for students' own essays |
| | British & American Literature | -Discuss critically elements of a short story in a presentation - Evaluate elements of a short story - Create a film review based on the principles learned |
| | Principles of Marketing | -Design a marketing-mix plan |
| | Advanced Business English 3 | -Discuss strategies for increasing global market share in computers - Communicate effectively in business contexts - Deal with conflicts and convince others - Interpret in students' own words how an organization deals with a huge recruitment challenge |
| ES-BEP2 | Graduation Internship | - Recommend solutions to problems - Evaluate the internship process - Analyse how the internship benefit the intern |
| | Business Grammar | -Problematised issues related to grammar lessons learned |
| | British Literature | -Use terminologies for critiques of Literary works - Enhance the appreciation of literary works - Relate literature with real life |
| | Business Writing & Reading 6 | -Analyse and understand reading texts about business - Perform well exercises involving reading and writing at advanced levels |

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Principles of Marketing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Evaluate customers' needs -Design a marketing-mix plan |
| Human Resource Management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Conduct research in the field of human resources |
| Business Ethics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Investigate some activities related to business ethics -Explain problems related to business ethics in their relation to other dimensions |
| Graduation Internship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Evaluate the internship process |
| Business Research Methods | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify and define the issue needs to be investigated -Build a research plan - Analyse problems inherent in business fields and conduct research to solve problems - Analyse and synthesise collected data |

Appendix 4.2 Individual Teacher Interview Guide

CRITICAL THINKING CURRICULUM IN ENGLISH STUDIES PROGRAMMES (BUSINESS ENGLISH CONCENTRATION)

INDIVIDUAL TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. In your opinion, in what way is the course(s) you are teaching critical thinking oriented?
Probe: learning outcomes; learning requirements, assessments
2. Critical thinking is stated as an objective of the English Studies Programme. How have these goals/ objectives been communicated to you? Where do you think the impetus of critical thinking comes from? What do you think is/are the purpose/s?
3. In your opinion, what is critical thinking? How do you teach for it to be transferred into the workplace?
4. Describe ways you have integrated critical thinking into your teaching? Activities, materials, scaffolding, self-regulation
5. How have you assessed the 'success' or 'outcomes' of these assignments/ activities?
6. What are the factors that have enhanced or inhibited critical thinking?
7. Despite efforts towards integrating critical thinking in higher education, Vietnamese students and graduates are said to still lack critical thinking. Do you see evidence of this in your classroom? What do you think are the reasons?
8. How would you like the context to be different so that you can teach critical thinking more effectively? Probe: resources, students, curriculum, society's attitude

Appendix 4.3 Informed Consent Form

School of Education
Francis Close Hall Campus
Swindon Road
Cheltenham
Glos GL50 4AZ.

INFORMED CONSENT

Title of Project Pedagogy of Critical Thinking: Internationalisation and Academic Dependency in Higher Education in Việt Nam

Researcher Lê Đào Thanh Bình An
Lecturer, Hoa Sen University, 08 Nguyễn Văn Tráng St., Dist. 1, Hồ Chí Minh City, Việt Nam
PhD student, University of Gloucestershire, Francis Close Hall, Cheltenham, GL50 4AZ

I, _____, consent that (please tick the box as appropriate):

| | | |
|---|--|--------------------------|
| 1 | I have read and understood the information about the project, as clearly provided in the participant information sheet. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 | The procedure of the project, the time involved, and the role of the participant in the semi-structured interview has been clearly explained to me. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 | I have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 | I voluntarily agree to participate in the semi-structured individual interview with the researcher. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 | The confidentiality of the data, including the use of name, data analysis, publications, and sharing of data has been explained to me. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 | I understand that other researchers will have access to these data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms that I have specified in this form. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7 | I understand that I can withdraw at any time without having to bear any consequences. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Printed Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

This study has been approved by the School of Education Research Development Panel, the University of Gloucestershire on December 15, 2017.

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this research, please contact Post Graduate Research Lead, Dr Paul Vare at [REDACTED] Dr Paul Vare has no direct involvement in the study.

Appendix 4.4 Invitation Email for Participant

Dear _____

I hope this letter finds you well.

My full name is Lê Đào Thanh Bình An, a lecturer at Hoa Sen University. I am currently taking a PhD degree at the University of Gloucestershire, UK. My study is fully sponsored by Vietnam International Educational Department, Ministry of Education and Training. I am under the supervision of Prof. Hazel Bryan (PhD), Head of School, and Dr. Jenny Fryman, Senior Lecturer.

I would greatly value your participation in this study, and therefore invite you to take part. Before you make your decision, please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with me and others if you wish.

My research project is entitled “Pedagogy of Critical Thinking: Internationalization and Academic Dependency in Higher Education in Việt Nam.”

In this research project, I am working with the presupposition that critical thinking is worth teaching and learning. However, because it is an adopted educational value from the West, it may be impeded by cultural challenges. I am seeking to ascertain situational, structural, cultural, and international factors within two universities that may enhance and/ or inhibit critical thinking production.

The main question to be answered is: How might considering an imported educational idea systematically in its context, content, and process provide a better understanding of it and therefore practice it more effectively. In order to address this research question, I am conducting interviews with Vietnamese and foreign lecturers, program managers, school leaders, as well as supervisors of the graduation internship courses from two universities in Hồ Chí Minh City.

Your engagement in this project is invaluable to me. I also hope that your participation will give you a chance to reflect on your teaching for, and support of, critical thinking among students. You may even decide to pursue future research on teaching and learning or promoting critical thinking in your specific subject area or context of work.

Participation is totally voluntary, and your anonymity will be ensured. You may withdraw from the project at any time you feel uncomfortable without having to give a reason. If you choose to withdraw, your data will also be withdrawn at that stage.

The transcript/s of the recorded interviews will be returned to you to check before being used in this research. If you wish to receive a copy of the final research outcome of this project, I will be happy to provide upon requested.

If there is anything unclear to you about the project, please feel free to contact me by phone at [REDACTED] (Việt Nam) or [REDACTED] (UK) or via email at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

Your response will be highly appreciated as I am looking forward to working with you on this important project.

Kind regards

Lê Đào Thanh Bình An

Appendix 4.5 Participant Information Sheet

School of Education
Francis Close Hall Campus
Swindon Road
Cheltenham
Glos GL50 4AZ.

Participant Information Sheet

Project title: Pedagogy of Critical Thinking: Internationalisation and Dependency in Higher Education in Việt Nam

Project Summary:

The main objective of the study is to ascertain situational, structural, cultural and international factors within two universities that may enhance and/or inhibit critical thinking production. The research plan holds the presupposition that while critical thinking is worth teaching and learning, this adopted Western concept may contain inherent cultural challenges.

The major research question to be answered in this study is: How might considering an imported educational idea systematically in its context, content, and process provide a better understanding of it and therefore practice it more effectively.

A mixed methods multi-case study has been selected with the adoption of two main research instruments: document analyses (text analysis of the literature, university websites and curriculum analysis) and semi-structured interviews.

First, the Programme Specifications of the Business English Studies will be analysed to identify the critical thinking objectives. Then the programme courses with critical thinking as intended learning outcomes will be selected.

Second, participants, including lecturers, programme managers and/or department heads, university leaders and graduation internship supervisors will be invited to participate. It is estimated that twelve lecturers, six supervisors, two programme managers and/or two department heads, and two university leaders will be invited for semi-structured interviews.

In terms of time and place, each semi-structured interview will last about one hour and will be conducted at the time and the place of the participant's convenience.

The open-ended interview questions will explore your perception of how the culture of your institution affects the teaching for, and the support of, critical thinking. The questions will also include an opportunity to discuss how you conceptualize critical thinking, teach and support it.

You can choose whether to take part in the interview or not. You can withdraw from the research at any time without having to explain. Data that you supply will be treated with complete confidentiality published anonymously and only used for the purpose of the research.

After the publication of my research, its findings will be available online for you to access.

Should you have any queries about the research, please do not hesitate to contact us. My email addresses are [redacted] and [redacted], and my phone numbers are [redacted] (Việt Nam) and [redacted] (UK).

My supervisors are Prof. Hazel Bryan and Dr. Jenny Fryman, and their emails are [redacted] and [redacted].

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Lê Đào Thanh Bình An

Appendix 4.6 Programme Specification of BEP1 (PS1)

Ministry of Education and Training

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIỆT NAM

Private Elite University

Independence – Freedom – Happiness

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Name of Programme | : Bachelor of Arts in English Language Studies |
| Level of Training | : Tertiary |
| Discipline | : English Studies |
| Form of Training | : Formal |
| Cohort | : 2016 - 2020 |

(Issued under Decision No./QĐ-BGH day... month ... 201..

by Principle of Private Elite)

To be applied since Semester 16.1A, academic year 2016 – 2017

1. Training Goals, Expected Outcomes

1.1. Training Goals

The B.A. Programme in English Language Studies provides students with a politic ideology, morality, a consciousness to serve general people, knowledge and career competences, physical well-being, to meet the demand of building and protecting the nation. Specifically, the B.A. in English Language Studies has the following training goals:

- Students, upon graduation, will be able to apply knowledge and skills of language, culture and society in the fields of business, teaching and learning, translation and interpreting to work in multicultural companies.
- Graduates will have effective, professional communication skills, groupwork skills, flexibility and ability to adapt to immediate as well as long-term social demands as well as ability to integrate into real work environments of the modern economy
- Graduates will achieve an English capacity ranking from the medium to advanced level.
- Graduates have an attitude and professionalism, active, ability to apply creatively knowledge learned into the real life working environments; sense of responsibility, independence, confidence to do the tasks assigned under any conditions.
- Graduates acknowledge the need for further personal knowledge and career development
- Students develop effective learning skills to continue to upgrade capacities, knowledge to do research

1.2. Expected Outcomes

On graduation, students will be able to achieve the following learning outcomes:

Attitude and professional ethics

- Comply to all the rules in the workplace;
- Comply to all the rules related to career ethics, such as honesty and responsibility for the work undertaken

Disciplinary capacities

- Use four English skills, Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing fluently
 - Students majoring in Business English and Corporate Communication have to have TOEIC at least 800, TOEFLiBT 90, or IELTS 6.5.
 - Students majoring in English Language Teaching and Learning and Translation and Interpreting have to obtain TOEFLiBT 90 or IELTS 6.5.

- Based on knowledge in linguistics and cultural studies, students develop ability to perform text analysis and ability to identify elements that cause ambiguous meanings
- Ability to use translation and interpretation techniques appropriately to translate or interpret material related to popular topics and business topics.
- Depending on the minor discipline selected, upon graduation, students will be able to:
 - Business English: Negotiate, present, report and conduct transactions in the fields of business through the use of the English language
 - English Language Teaching and Learning: Teach the English language at foreign language centres and high schools
 - Translation and Interpreting: perform translation and interpretation in business and civil transactions through the use of the English language
 - Corporate Communication: organise integrated communication activities in companies, corporations or companies specialising in advertising and communication services

Integration and Lifelong learning abilities

- Have ability to adapt successfully to change required by emergent situations
- Develop teamwork spirit and cooperative spirit through groupwork/ teamwork activities and projects
- Arrange work and choose appropriate methods to carry out the work effectively
- Evaluate opposing information resources before applying them for research or learning purposes
- Always continue to learn, to do research and to upgrade information related to disciplinary knowledge and skills
- Respect differences and tolerate cultural diversity

2. Length of training: 4 years

3. Knowledge weights: 144 credits, Physical Education: 135 periods; Defense Education: 165 periods

General information technology (IT) is knowledge required for enrolment and is prerequisite to some subjects, so in the first semester students are requested to study an IT preparation course (no credit). Students can apply for the test to test IT skills. Those who achieve 5,0 or more are exempted from the preparation course.

4. Targets of Enrolment: Align with university enrolment policies issued by the MOET

5. Training Procedure, Graduation conditions

Training according to the credit mode required by Decision 1683/QĐ-BGH dated 5 November 11 2013 of the President of Private University

Students will be awarded the degree if the following conditions are met:

- Not be held accountable for criminal responsibility up to the time of graduation
- Accumulate enough required credits
- GPA of the whole programme: minimum 2,00; No failed/ incomplete subjects (Grade D+, D, D-, F)
- Subjects from 7.1.1 to 7.1.3 ≥ 4.0 (out of 10 points)
- Subjects from 7.1.4 to 7.2.4 ≥ 5.0 (out of 10 points)
- Obtain certificate in defense education and physical education
- Students majoring in Business English and Corporate Communication have to have TOEIC at least 800 and/ or TOEFLiBT 90, or IELTS 6.5.
- Students majoring in English Language Teaching and Translation – Interpreting have to have TOEFLiBT 90 or IELTS 6.5.
- French certificate DELF A2 or Korean, Japanese, Chinese certificates equivalent A2-CEF, specified in the second language policy issued by Private Elite

Students completing the programme are awarded Bachelor of Arts in English language Studies degree.

6. Assessment

| No | Type | Scale of 10 | Scale of letter | Scale of 4 |
|----|------|-------------|-----------------|------------|
|----|------|-------------|-----------------|------------|

| | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|-----------|----|-----|
| 1 | Pass (credits are accumulated) | 9,0 – 10 | A | 4,0 |
| 2 | | 8,5 – 8,9 | A- | 3,7 |
| 3 | | 7,5 – 8,4 | B+ | 3,3 |
| 4 | | 7,0 – 7,4 | B | 3,0 |
| 5 | | 6,0 – 6,9 | B- | 2,7 |
| 6 | | 5,5 – 5,9 | C+ | 2,3 |
| 7 | | 5,0 – 5,4 | C | 2,0 |
| 8 | (Pass with condition) | 4,0 – 4,9 | C- | 1,7 |
| 9 | Failure | 3,0 – 3,9 | D+ | 1,3 |
| 10 | | 2,0 – 2,9 | D | 1,0 |
| 11 | | 1,0 – 1,9 | D- | 0,7 |
| 12 | | 00 – 0,9 | F | 00 |

7. Contents of the Programme

7.1. Foundational Knowledge

7.1.1. Marxist and Leninist political philosophy and Hồ Chí Minh's Thought

| N0 | Subject Code | Name of subjects in English | Periods | Credit weights | Notes |
|----|--------------|---|------------|----------------|-------|
| 1 | DC107DV02 | Fundamental Principles of Marxism-Leninism | 75 | 5 | |
| 2 | DC105DV03 | Ho Chi Minh's Ideology | 30 | 2 | |
| 3 | DC108DV02 | Revolutionary Lines of Vietnamese Communist Party | 45 | 3 | |
| | | | 150 | 10 | |

7.1.2. Social Sciences

– Elective (9 credits): Choose one subject in each group

| No | Subject Code | Name of Subject | Periods | Credit weights | Note |
|----|----------------|-----------------------------|---------|----------------|------|
| 1 | Group A | Methods and Skills | | 3 | |
| 2 | Group B | Social values | | 3 | |
| 3 | Group C | Culture and Ideology | | 3 | |
| | | | | 9 | |

7.1.3. Mathematics, Information Technology – Natural Sciences- Engineering - Environment

– Elective (3 credits): Choose one of the following

| No | Subject Code | Name of Subject | Periods | Credit Weights | Note |
|----|--------------|-----------------------------------|---------|----------------|----------|
| 1 | TINV242DV01 | Applying MS-Project in Management | 45 | 3 | |
| 2 | TINV203DV01 | Spreadsheet | 45 | 3 | |
| 3 | TINV204DV01 | Database Management | 45 | 3 | |
| 4 | TINV205DV01 | Web Design and Tools | 45 | 3 | |
| | | | | 45 | 3 |

7.1.4. Second language

- Second language (16TC): Besides the first language, students are required to take any other second language
- In case students choose to take second language courses offered by Elite University, choose one of the following options:

a. French

| No | Code | Name of subject | Period | Credit weights | Note |
|----|-------------|-----------------|--------|----------------|------|
| 1 | PHAP101DV02 | French 1 | 90 | 4 | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|----------|--|------------|-----------|--|
| 2 | PHAP102DV02 | French 2 | | 90 | 4 | |
| 3 | PHAP103DV02 | French 3 | | 90 | 4 | |
| 4 | PHAP201DV02 | French 4 | | 90 | 4 | |
| | | | | 360 | 16 | |

b. Chinese

| STT | CODE | Name of Subject | Period | Credit weights | Note |
|-----|-----------|-----------------|------------|----------------|------|
| 1 | TQ101DV02 | Chinese 1 | 90 | 4 | |
| 2 | TQ102DV02 | Chinese 2 | 90 | 4 | |
| 3 | TQ103DV02 | Chinese 3 | 90 | 4 | |
| 4 | TQ104DV02 | Chinese 4 | 90 | 4 | |
| | | | 360 | 16 | |

c. Japanese

| STT | CODE | Name of Subject | Periods | Credit weights | Note |
|-----|-------------|-----------------|------------|----------------|------|
| 1 | NHAT101DV02 | Japanese 1 | 90 | 4 | |
| 2 | NHAT102DV02 | Japanese 2 | 90 | 4 | |
| 3 | NHAT103DV02 | Japanese 3 | 90 | 4 | |
| 4 | NHAT104DV02 | Japanese 4 | 90 | 4 | |
| | | | 360 | 16 | |

7.1.5. Physical education: 135 periods, being awarded Physical education certificate

7.1.6. Defence Education: 165 periods, being awarded Defence education certificate

7.1.7. Awareness internship in the workplace: 8 weeks, 3 credits

7.2. Professional knowledge

7.2.1 Foundational knowledge

| STT | MSMH | Name of subject | Periods | Credit weights | Note |
|-----|------------|------------------------------------|------------|----------------|------|
| 1 | TT103DV01 | Fundamentals of Vietnamese Culture | 45 | 3 | |
| 2 | ANH220DE02 | Introduction to Linguistics | 45 | 3 | |
| 3 | TT202DV01 | Comparative Linguistics | 45 | 3 | |
| 4 | ANH101DE02 | Listening and Speaking 1 | 45 | 3 | |
| 5 | ANH103DE02 | Reading 1 | 45 | 3 | |
| 6 | ANH102DE02 | Listening and Speaking 2 | 45 | 3 | |
| 7 | ANH104DE03 | Reading 2 | 45 | 3 | |
| 8 | ANH218DE02 | Critical Reading & Writing | 60 | 3 | |
| 9 | ANH203DE02 | Listening and Speaking 3 | 45 | 3 | |
| 10 | ANH115DE01 | Basic Writing | 60 | 3 | |
| 11 | ANH210DE03 | Public Speaking | 45 | 3 | |
| 12 | MK203DE01 | Principles of Marketing | 45 | 3 | |
| 13 | QT106DE02 | Principles of Management | 45 | 3 | |
| | | | 615 | 39 | |

7.2.2 Professional Knowledge

7.2.1.1. Professional – Foundational Knowledge

| No | CODE | Name of Subject | Periods | Credit weights | Note |
|----|------------|--|---------|----------------|------|
| 1 | ANH212DE02 | British and American Culture and Society | 45 | 3 | |
| 2 | ANH205DE03 | Business Correspondence | 45 | 3 | |
| 3 | ANH307DE04 | English Phonetics and Phonology | 60 | 3 | |
| 4 | ANH303DE03 | Syntax and Morphology | 60 | 3 | |

| | | | | | |
|---|------------|------------------|------------|-----------|--|
| 5 | ANH219DE02 | Academic Writing | 60 | 3 | |
| | | | 270 | 15 | |

7.2.1.2. Professional – Specialised knowledge

- Compulsory subjects required by all minors:

| STT | MSMH | Tên môn học tiếng Anh | Tổng số tiết | Tín chỉ | Ghi chú |
|-----|------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|------------|------------|
| 1 | ANH408DE04 | British and American Literature | 60 | 3 | |
| 2 | ANH404DE02 | English Semantics | 45 | 3 | |
| | | | 105 | 6 | |

The B.A in English Language Studies has:

4 minor disciplines/ concentrations

- English Language Teaching
- Translation – Interpreting
- Business English

(There are three majors: Human Resources Management, Business Administration and Marketing)

- Corporate Communication

- Specialised subjects of each minor discipline/ concentration (24 credits):

➤ **Business English Minor/ Concentration**

- Compulsory (12 credits):

| No | Subject Code | Name of Subject | Periods | Credit weights | Note |
|----|--------------|--|------------|----------------|------|
| 1 | ANH201DE04 | Advanced Business English 1 | 60 | 3 | |
| 2 | ANH301DE04 | Advanced Business English 2 | 60 | 3 | |
| 3 | ANH315DE04 | Advanced Business English 3 | 60 | 3 | |
| 4 | ANH308DE04 | Introduction to Translation and Interpretation | 60 | 3 | |
| | | | 240 | 12 | |

- Optional (12 credits): Choose 4 out of 12 subjects

| STT | MSMH | Name of Subject | Period | Credit weight | Note |
|-----|-----------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------|------|
| 1 | MK202DE01 | Consumer Behavior | 45 | 3 | |
| 2 | NT209DE01 | Electronic Commerce | 45 | 3 | |
| 3 | MK304DE02 | Public Relations | 45 | 3 | |
| 4 | MK310DE01 | Sales Management | 45 | 3 | |
| 5 | TC201DE02 | Monetary and Finance | 45 | 3 | |
| 6 | QT212DE01 | Change Management | 45 | 3 | |
| 7 | QT203DE01 | Negotiation Skills | 45 | 3 | |
| 8 | QT302DE02 | Strategic Management | 45 | 3 | |
| 9 | NS207DE02 | Human Resource Management | 45 | 3 | |
| 10 | NS301DE01 | Leadership | 45 | 3 | |
| 11 | NS303DE02 | Recruitment and Development | 45 | 3 | |
| 12 | NS306DE02 | Labour Relations | 45 | 3 | |
| | | | 180 | 12 | |

- Research Projects

| STT | MSMH | Name of Subject | Period | Credit | Note |
|-----|------------|--|--------|--------|------|
| 1 | ANH222DE02 | Project 1: Collecting data from secondary source | 0 | 2 | |

| | | | | | |
|---|------------|--|----------|----------|--|
| 2 | ANH320DE02 | Project 2: Specialized Field Data Collection | 0 | 2 | |
| | | | 0 | 4 | |

7.2.3 Cross-disciplinary Elective Knowledge (6 credits)

Students are allowed to choose 6 credits from all subjects available in the university except the compulsory subjects or compulsory optional subjects required in the Business English discipline.

7.2.4 Graduation (9 credits)

Choose one of the two options

- Graduation thesis (9 credits)
- Graduation Internship (9 credits)

Two graduation courses/ modules can be considered in case students, for specific reasons, cannot choose the above two options.

8. Programme Schedule: 4 years

9. Implementation guideline

- 9.1. For compulsory optional subjects, the offering of the courses depends on specific condition in that specific time: number of students, teaching staff, and available facilities
- 9.2. At the end of the third semester students will choose the second minor discipline/ concentration, which includes Business English, Translation and Interpreting, English Teaching and Learning and Corporate Communication
 - For students who choose Business English, the completion of 4 the four compulsory optional subjects in 7.2.2.2.
- 9.3. Subjects have to be transmitted according to the signed syllabi. The syllabi have to be given to students before the courses take place

Day month year

Dean

Day month..... year

Programme manager

Day month..... year

On behalf of President

Vice Chancellor

Sample Course Outline of BEP1

| Course ID | Course title | Credits |
|------------|------------------------------|---------|
| ANH218DE01 | Critical Reading and Writing | 03 |

To be applied to Semester 1 School year: 2014 under Decision No 2012/QĐ-BGH 18/12/2013

A. Course Specifications:

| Periods | | | | | | Periods in classroom | | |
|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------|-----------|--------------------|----------------------|----------|-----------|
| Total periods | Lecture/Seminar | Laboratory/Studio | Activity | Fieldwork | Self-study periods | Lecture room | Lab room | Fieldwork |
| (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) |
| 60 | 60 | XX | XX | XX | 120 | 60 | XX | XX |

B. Other related Subjects:

| Other related Subjects | Course ID | Course title |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------------|
| Prerequisites: | | |
| 1. | ANH313DE02 | Academic Writing |
| Co-requisites: none | | |
| 1. | | |
| Other requirements: none | | |
| | | |

C. Course Description:

This course provides students with a practically and efficiently integrated approach, with a particular focus on the critical reading and writing skills. For students involved in the academic world, reading will be strongly connected to writing. Most of what they write will be linked to what they read. With regard to the reading skills, the course attaches importance to developing students' critical thinking skills via a variety of academic reading texts. As far as the writing skills are concerned, the course equips students with academic writing and research skills necessary for conducting secondary research in their own subject-specific area.

D. Course Objectives:

| No. | Course Objectives |
|-----|--|
| 1. | Develop students' critical reading and thinking skills in their approach to sources through questioning and evaluating everything they read. |
| 2. | Equip students with the skills necessary for conducting research and for producing a piece of extended writing (referred to here as a project) in their own subject area. |
| 3. | Get students to critically assess what they have written and develop this criticality through discussion with their classmates and teachers. |
| 4. | Enhance students' study skills such as team-working skills through group-work activities and learner autonomy via individual reading and writing assignments given by the teacher-in-charge. |

E. Learning Outcomes:

| No. | Learning Outcomes <i>Upon the successful completion of the course, students will be able to:</i> |
|-----|---|
| 1. | Evaluate and select the most relevant and reliable sources from books, journals, and the internet as input for their learning; |
| 2. | use what they read to support their writing; |
| 3. | employ the skills to incorporate ideas and information into their text through paraphrasing, summarizing, and synthesizing to avoid plagiarism; |
| 4. | demonstrate the knowledge of writing different sections of a secondary research paper; |
| 5. | learn about academic conventions for referencing and compiling a bibliography; |
| 6. | discuss their work with their teacher and peers; and |
| 7. | give a presentation about their work. |

F. Instructional Modes:

1. This course involves explanation and demonstration by the instructor with students participating in basic concepts and skills, along with in-class practice including feedback, coaching and evaluation by the instructor;
2. Class and group discussions of major topics as well as skill-building exercises are required;
3. Students are required to actively join in-class activities and attend classes regularly;
4. At least two periods of independent work (including preparation for the coming lesson and completion of exercises) done out of class are required for each period of in-class study;
5. Students will also be required to read selected articles to generate vocabulary and grammatical structures relevant to the topics assigned.
6. The instructor is required to give students guidance and help, especially in learning independently and finding appropriate materials or learning tools.

G. Textbooks and teaching aids:

1. Course books:

- McCormack, J., & Slaght, J. (2009). *Extended Writing & Research Skills* (1st ed.). Garnet Publishing Ltd.

2. Reference books:

- Wallwork, A. (2011). *English for Writing Research Papers*. Springer.
- Ramage, J. D., Bean J. C., & Johnson, J. (2009). *The Allyn & Bacon Guide to Writing* (5th ed.). Pearson Education, Inc.
- Murray, N., & Hughes, G. (2008) *Writing Up Your University Assignments and Research Projects* (1st ed.) The McGraw-Hill Companies
- Weissberg, R., & Buker, S. (1990) *Writing Up Research*. Prentice Hall Inc.
- Barnet, S., & Bedau, H. (2011) *Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing* (7th ed.). Bedford/St. Martin's

3. Helpful websites:

- <http://englishforacademicstudy.com/us/student/ewrs/links>
(Including essential grammatical points in writing)
- <http://www.uefap.com/writing/writfram.htm>
(A very good website, including many exercises in various writing aspects)

H. Assessment Methods (Requirements for Completion of the Course):

1. Description of learning outcomes assessment

MINI-TEST 1 (10%): Questions about the reading skills presented in Units 1-5

MID-TERM (30%): Students are required to write paragraphs or an essay to answer questions. Some articles about the same topic(s) selected by teachers are given and students will be required to make use of the skills they study in Weeks 1-7 to answer questions.

MINI-TEST 2 (20%): Home assignment: Write an outline of the course project

FINAL EXAM (40%): The project will be submitted in week 15. Its overall grade is considered the score of final test.

2. Summary of learning outcomes assessment

*** For main semester:**

| <i>Components</i> | <i>Duration</i> | <i>Assessment Forms</i> | <i>Percentage</i> | <i>Schedule</i> |
|--------------------------|-----------------|---|-------------------|------------------------|
| Mini Test 1 | 45' | Written Test | 10% | WEEK 5 |
| Mid-term | 60' | Writing Test: (combination of reading and writing skills) | 30% | WEEK 8 |
| On-going assessment Test | Home assignment | Writing an outline for the course project | 20% | WEEK 12 |
| Final Test | Full project | Writing a project report? Based on Written Paper Evaluation (attached) | 40% | From WEEK 9 to WEEK 14 |
| Total | | | 100% | |

*** For extra semester:**

| <i>Components</i> | <i>Duration</i> | <i>Assessment Forms</i> | <i>Percentage</i> | <i>Schedule</i> |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Mini Test 1 | 45' | Writing Test | 10% | W/M 3/2 |
| Mid-term | 60' | Writing Test: (combination of reading and writing skills) | 30% | W/M 4/2 |
| On-going assessment Test | Home assignment | Writing an outline for the course project | 20% | W/M 6/2 |
| Final Test | Full project | Based on Written Paper Evaluation (attached) | 40% | From WEEK 5 to WEEK 7 |
| Total | | | 100% | |

Below is a table of abbreviated letters students can use while doing peer-editing. Refer to the Appendix for more symbols.

| Symbol | Meaning |
|---------------|---------------------|
| Sp | Spelling |
| VT | Verb tense |
| SV | Sub-verb agreement |
| Pl | Plural |
| Prep | Preposition |
| WF | Word form |
| WW | Wrong word |
| WO | Word order |
| Punc | Punctuation |
| Pa | Parallelism |
| Frag | Fragment |
| Art | Article |
| C/U | Count /Uncount Noun |
| SS | Sentence structure |

3. Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a fundamental value that affects the quality of teaching, learning, and research at a university. To ensure the maintenance of academic integrity at Hoa Sen University, students are required to:

- Work independently on individual assignments
Collaborating on individual assignments is considered cheating.
- Avoid plagiarism
Plagiarism is an act of fraud that involves the use of ideas or words of another person without proper attribution. Students will be accused of plagiarism if they:
 - Copy in their work one or more sentences from another person without proper citation.*
 - Rephrase, paraphrase, or translate another person's ideas or words without proper attribution.*
 - Reuse their own assignments, in whole or in part, and submit them for another class.*
- Work responsibly within a working group
In cooperative group assignments, all students are required to stay on task and contribute equally to the projects. Group reports should clearly state the contribution of each group member.

Any acts of academic dishonesty will result in a grade of zero for the task at hand and/or immediate failure of the course, depending on the seriousness of the fraud. Please consult Hoa Sen University's Policy on Plagiarism at <http://thuvien.hoasen.edu.vn/chinh-sach-phong-tranh-dao-van>. To ensure the maintenance of academic integrity, the university asks that students report cases of academic dishonesty to the teacher and/or the Dean. The names of those students will be kept anonymous.

I. Teaching Staff:

Anonymous

J. Outline of Topics to be covered (Learning Schedule):

* For main-semester:

| Week/ Meeting | Topics | References | Homework /Assignment |
|------------------|--|--------------|--|
| 1 | - Reporting: Paraphrase, Summarize, Synthesize – Examples <i>Exercises (app.7)</i> | Appendix 1,7 | Reading Article 1 Writing a summary |
| 2 | - Reporting: Paraphrase, Summarize, Synthesize (cont.) | Appendix 6,7 | Reading Article 2 Writing a synthesis |
| 3 | Rhetorical Functions in Academic Writing: - <i>Including charts and diagrams</i> - Examples-exercises | Appendix 6,7 | Reading Article 3 Describing a chart/diagram |
| 4 | Rhetorical Functions in Academic Writing(cont.) - <i>Evaluating points of view</i> - <i>Working with different voices</i> Exercises : - <i>Identify the different points of view and how the writers have evaluated them.</i> - <i>Identify the voices in a text.</i> | Appendix 6,7 | Reading Article 4 Evaluating points of view |
| 5 | Citing sources Example 1: Protecting Rainforests Exercises (to review paraphrase and summarise) Mini Test 1 | Appendix 6,7 | Reading different texts on the same topic Writing a synthesis with citation |

| Week/ Meeting | Topics | References | Homework /Assignment |
|------------------|---|---|---|
| 6 | Introduction to the Skills of Extended Writing and Research - Focus on task 6: (pages 15-16): <i>The stages of writing a paper</i> -Brief refer to self-evaluation checklist in Appendix 2 | Appendix 2 CB pp.9-20 CB pp.119-120 | - Read through Unit 1 for consolidation - Students search for sources in their subject area - Search for sources in their subject area. |
| 7 | Using evidence to support your ideas -Main focus: task 2 and 3 (pages 23-26): <i>Incorporating evidence into academic work; referencing</i> | CB pp.21-32 | - Complete unfinished work from unit 2, Task 2 and 3 |
| 8 | MID-TERM - Feedback on students' mid-term papers | | Review what have been discussed from week 1 → week 7 |
| 9 | Structuring your project and finding information Focus on: -The structure of papers -Descriptive and evaluative writing -Writing a bibliography -Planning the course project | CB pp. 33 – 49 | Ask students to start preparing the course project -Choose a topic for your project -Planning the course project |
| 10 | Developing your project Quotations, paraphrases, and plagiarism Avoiding plagiarism Focus on: -Working with abstracts -(Feedback to students' topic selection | pp.50-60 | -Discuss plagiarism. -Give some more abstracts for students to examine and evaluate. |
| 11 | Developing a focus - Choosing a topic for your project - Establish a focus -Establish a working title -Planning project Mini Test 2 (to be submitted in Week 12) | pp.62-69 | - Class assignments - Write an outline |
| 12 | Introductions, conclusions and definitions -Introduction: <i>Features of introductions</i> -Conclusion: <i>Features of conclusions; analyzing your conclusions, the language of conclusions</i> | pp.70-83 | ->Write first draft (to be submitted in week 13) |
| 13 | Individual Help Incorporation data and illustrations -The purpose of data -The language used in incorporating data -Data commentary -The language of data commentary -Practice data commentary | pp.84-93 | - Students respond to comment - Class assignments - Continue the project - Write the second draft |
| 14 | -Discuss second drafts: students bring feedback sheets Preparing for Conference, Presentations and Editing your work -Introduction -Features of abstracts -Conference abstracts -Editing your written work | pp. 94-104 | -Respond to comments on feedback sheets -Submit abstract -Write the second draft |
| 15 | Final Test : Submit the full project Reviewing the whole course -Feedback to individual, as appropriate | | |

Appendix 4.7 Programme Specification of BEP2

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIỆT NAM

Public Elite

Independence- Freedom- Happiness

UNIVERSITY TRAINING PROGRAMME

| | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Name of Programme | : Business English |
| Level of training | : <i>Tertiary</i> |
| Discipline | : Applied English Studies |
| CODE of Programme | : <i>52 22 02 01</i> |
| Mode of Training | : <i>Mainstream, full time</i> |
| Year of Application | : <i>2016</i> |

1. Introduction

Programme goals:

Train graduates in English Studies who have enough knowledge, skills, professional skills, political values, physical health to work effectively in companies and corporations. Students majoring in Business English, after graduation, will have research ability and be able to use fluently the English language in business settings and international trade.

1.1 Programme Learning Outcomes:

1.1.1 Dispositions

1.1.1.1 Political Values and Civil Responsibilities

- Understand and observe closely the guidance and orientations of the Communist Party, policies and laws of the State.
- Develop a sense of responsibility for the nation, join enthusiastically activities for the good of the community

1.1.1.1 Moral Values and Professionalism

- Understand clearly the responsibilities the translation and interpreting career requires and develop a sense of responsibility for the career
- Develop professionalism

1.1.2 Generic Competences

1.1.1.2 Learning autonomy

- Develop ability to self-evaluate and self-orientate personal development
- Develop ability to organise and evaluate the outcomes of learning autonomy process

Communicative Competences

- Develop ability to use the Vietnamese language up to standards and effectively in

- everyday communication and in professional activities
 - Develop ability to use effectively multi-purposes communicative devices
- 1.1.2.3 Critical Thinking competences, creativity and problem solving
- Develop ability to analyse evaluate information and opinions
 - Develop ability to identify and solve problems effectively and creatively
- 1.1.2.4 Cooperative competences
- Respect differences and seek agreements through discussions and debates
 - Ability to work in groups, create and manage groups
- 1.1.2.5 Language and information technology competences
- Develop knowledge and skills of the second language at level 3 of the 6 levels in the CEFR applied in *Việt Nam*.
 - Achieve level A of information technology knowledge and skills
- 1.1.3 Professional Competences
- 1.1.3.1 Language competences, learn the English language and understand the contents of the language framework
- Show the personal competences when using the language to teach at an appropriate level according to the CEFR and seek chances to improve personal language competences at level C1.
 - Develop cultural knowledge of countries using the target language; know how to apply and compare/ contrast with Vietnamese culture
- 1.1.3.2 Start-up competences and life-long learning
- Have ability to identify problems, apply disciplinary knowledge to solve those problems. Be able to write a research proposal and a research thesis about the English language.
 - Develop and enact self-regulation, be able to search information to upgrade knowledge in the language teaching work and research in language fields, develop new skills and competences.
 - Develop an awareness about start-up and have ability to develop start-up plans.
 - Have all the values/ dispositions of a global citizen, such as respect different cultures, ability to cooperate and awareness to protect the environment
- 1.1.4 Career Competences
- Use fluently four English language skills: listening speaking reading and writing to communicate in social situations and professional work environments.
 - Have abilities to translate, interpret and manage office work in the workplace.
 - Develop important skills of the twenty-first century worker such presenting problems, critical thinking skills, corporation skills and creative thinking
- 1.2 Length of the Programme: 4 years
- 1.3 Total credits of the programme: 135 credits, including compulsory and elective modules (physical education and defense education are not included)
- 1.4 Enrolment targets:
- *Aligned with The Enrolment Policy decided by the MOET and the unique enrolment plan developed by Public Elite.*

1.5 Training procedure and graduation conditions

- *Aligned with Regulation of undergraduate fulltime training based upon credit system, issued to accompany Decision 2045/QĐ-ĐHSP, dated 05/9/2016 by President of Public Elite*

1.6 Assessment:

- *Specific scores and final examination scores are evaluated according to scale 10 (form 0 to 10).*

2. Curriculum Structure

| No | CODE | Subject | Credit weights | Prerequisite |
|------------|-------------------------------|--|----------------|--------------------|
| 1. | Foundation | | 27 | |
| 1 | POLI1001 | Fundamental Principles of Marxism-Leninism | 5 | No |
| 2 | POLI1003 | Ho Chi Minh's Ideology | 2 | POLI1001 |
| 3 | POLI1002 | Revolutionary Lines of Vietnamese Communist Party | 3 | POLI1003 |
| 4 | POLI1903 | Introduction to Laws | 2 | POLI1001 |
| 5 | PSYC1001 | Introduction to Psychology | 2 | POLI1001 |
| 6 | | Second language 1 | 4* | required level 2/6 |
| 7 | | Second Language 2 | 3* | Second Language 1 |
| 8 | | Second Language 3 | 3* | Second Language 2 |
| 9 | TTTH1001 | Basic Information Technology | 3* | No |
| 10 | | Physical Education1 | 1** | No |
| 11 | | Physical Education2 | 1** | PE1 |
| 12 | | Physical Education3 | 1** | PE2 |
| 13 | MILI1101 | Direction on the National Defence of the Communist Party of Viet Nam | 3** | POLI1002 |
| 14 | MILI1102 | National Defence | 2** | No |
| 15 | MILI1103 | Strategies and Techniques for using AK guns | 3** | No |
| 2 | PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE | | | |
| 2.1 | Foundation | | 43 | |
| 16 | ENGL1401 | Listening-Speaking1 | 3 | No |
| 17 | ENGL1406 | Reading-Writing 1 | 3 | No |
| 18 | ENGL1461 | Business Listening-Speaking 1 | 4 | No |
| 19 | ENGL1462 | Business Listening-Speaking 2 | 4 | ENGL1461 |
| 20 | ENGL1463 | Business Listening-Speaking 3 | 3 | ENGL1462 |
| 21 | ENGL1464 | Business Listening-Speaking 4 | 3 | ENGL1463 |
| 22 | ENGL1465 | Business Listening-Speaking 5 | 3 | ENGL1464 |
| 23 | ENGL1466 | Business Reading-Writing 1 | 4 | không |
| 24 | ENGL1467 | Business Reading-Writing 2 | 4 | ENGL1466 |
| 25 | ENGL1468 | Business Reading-Writing 3 | 3 | ENGL1467 |

| | | | | |
|--------------|---|---|-----------|--------------------------------------|
| 26 | ENGL1469 | Business Reading-Writing 4 | 3 | ENGL1468 |
| 27 | ENGL1470 | Business Reading-Writing 5 | 3 | ENGL1469 |
| 28 | ENGL1471 | Business Reading-Writing 6 | 3 | ENGL1470 |
| 2.2 | Professional knowledge | | | |
| 2.2.1 | Compulsory modules | | 12 | |
| 29 | ENGL1411 | Linguistics 1 | 3 | ENGL1406 |
| 30 | ENGL1412 | Linguistics 2 | 3 | ENGL1411 |
| 31 | ENGL1413 | British Literature | 3 | ENGL1407 |
| 32 | ENGL1414 | American Literature | 3 | ENGL1402 |
| 2.2.2 | Optional Modules (Choose 14 out of 39 credits) | | 14 | |
| 33 | ENGL1415 | Contrastive Linguistics English-Vietnamese | 2 | ENGL1407 |
| 34 | ENGL1472 | Business Grammar | 3 | không |
| 35 | ENGL1473 | Presentation | 3 | không |
| 36 | ENGL1474 | Business Translation Theory | 3 | không |
| 37 | ENGL1419 | Introduction to Discourse Analysis | 3 | ENGL1407 |
| 38 | ENGL1420 | Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics | 3 | ENGL1402 |
| 39 | ENGL1421 | Introduction to Social Linguistics | 3 | ENGL1407 |
| 40 | ENGL1422 | Introduction to Cultural Linguistics | 3 | ENGL1402 |
| 41 | ENGL1423 | Language Acquisition | 3 | ENGL1407 |
| 42 | ENGL1424 | Stylistics | 3 | ENGL1402 |
| 43 | ENGL1425 | Cross- cultural Communication | 4 | ENGL1407 |
| 44 | ENGL1426 | Humour in British Literature | 4 | ENGL1402 |
| 45 | ENGL1427 | American and British Civilisation | 4 | ENGL1407 |
| 3 | Specialised Knowledge | | | |
| 3.1 | Compulsory | | | |
| 3.1.1 | Foundation | | 9 | |
| 46 | ENGL1475 | Business Overview | 3 | ENGL1467 |
| 47 | ENGL1476 | Management | 3 | ENGL1475 |
| 48 | ENGL1428 | Applied Information Technology in English language teaching and translation | 3 | không |
| 3.1.2 | Specialised | | 10 | |
| 49 | ENGL1477 | Office work skills | 4 | ENGL1469 |
| 50 | ENGL1478 | Business Research 1 | 2 | ENGL1469 |
| 51 | ENGL1479 | Business Research 2 | 4 | ENGL1478 |
| 3.1.3 | Professional Practice | | 8 | |
| 52 | ENGL1480 | Work Internship 1 | 2 | Aligned with University's regulation |
| 53 | ENGL1481 | Work Internship 2 | 6 | ENGL1480 |
| 3.2 | Electives | | 6 | |
| 54 | ENGL1482 | Marketing | 4 | ENGL1476 |
| 55 | ENGL1483 | TOEIC | 4 | Không |
| 56 | ENGL1484 | Business Ethics | 3 | Không |
| 57 | ENGL1485 | Business Translation | 3 | ENGL1474 |
| 58 | ENGL1486 | Start-ups | 3 | ENGL1475 |

| | | | | |
|---|----------|--|------------|--|
| 59 | ENGL1487 | Logistics and Supplies Chain Management | 3 | ENGL1475 |
| 60 | PSYC1490 | Time Management and Problem-Solving Skills | 2 | No |
| 61 | PSYC1491 | Emotional Control and effective conflicts resolution skills | 2 | No |
| 62 | PSYC1492 | Creative thinking skills in professional activities | 2 | No |
| 4. GRDUATION THESIS, OR GRADUATION MODULES | | | | |
| Choose one of the three options | | | | |
| 63 | ENGL1495 | <u>Option 1:</u> Graduation Thesis | 6 | |
| 64 | ENGL1496 | <u>Option 2:</u> Research Project (3 tín chỉ) a module (3 credits) | 3+3 | Aligned with yearly Faculty's regulation |
| - <u>Option 3:</u> Accumulate two modules of total 6 credits from the following optional modules: | | | | |
| 65 | ENGL1488 | International Trade | 3 | ENGL1482 |
| 66 | ENGL1489 | Human Resources Management | 3 | ENGL1476 |
| 67 | ENGL1490 | Finance Management | 3 | ENGL1476 |
| 68 | ENGL1491 | Project Management | 3 | ENGL1476 |
| Total | | | 135 | |

***Not counted to the total credits of the programme*

** and ** Not counted to GPA of the semester and the programme*

**** Every term students select elective modules to take to meet the credit requirement as specified in Section 2. On average, students accumulate at least 14 credits each semester.*

3. Guidance on implementation

3.1 This is the credit training programme. Therefore:

- Teachers (Lecturers) have to know the programme well to give students consultancy
- Students have to: seek advice from academic consultants for module registration, take initiatives to look for information and map out the personal academic plan and develop learning autonomy

3.2 This programme was developed aiming at the development of learners' competences. Therefore, the implementation of this programme needs to strictly observe the following orientations:

- *Teaching methods:*

+ Theory reduction, link theory with practice, enhance practice, discussion, and group work

+ In helping students understand theoretical knowledge, it is necessary that teachers apply that knowledge into solving specific problems closely related to real life.

+ Enhance the application of technology in teaching

- *Assessing outcomes:*

+ on-going assessment is the main method

+ students are able to build effective self-evaluation plans

Day ..., month, year 2016

President

(signed)

(Anonymous)

A Sample Syllabus of BEP2

Public Elite

English Department

BUSINESS RESEARCH 2

1. Overview of the module

- 1.1 Name of the module: Business Research 2
- 1.2 Code: ENGL1479
- 1.2 Requirements:
 - Prerequisite: No
 - Previous Module: Business Research 1
- 1.5 Training Programme: University training
- 1.6 Discipline: English Language Studies
- 1.7 Number of credits: 4; Periods: 60 (60/0/0/0)
- 1.8 Facilities: board, LCD Projector, computer

2. Overview of the content of the module

This module familiarises students with how to analyse issues in the business field and do research to solve problems. The contents include:

- Research methods in business
- How to select samples, collect and analyse data for the research project
- How to write a research project that meets the required standards in the business field

3. Module objectives

After completing the module, students will be able to:

3.1. Regarding dispositions

- Develop a cautious attitude and an objective view when selecting a research method and carrying out the research process
- Cultivate a sense of carefulness and know how to protect collected data
- Acknowledge the copyright and other people's knowledge

3.2. Regarding competences

- Identify the problem that needs being investigated
- Develop a research proposal,
- Collect data for the research project
- Analyse and synthesise the collected data
- Write a research paper in the business field that meets the required standards

4. Specific contents

- 4.1 Qualitative research:
 - 4.1.1 Definition and concepts
 - 4.1.2 Methods in qualitative research
- 4.2 Observation
- 4.3 Surveys
- 4.4 Quantitative Research
 - 4.4.1 Definition and concepts
 - 4.4.2 Methods in quantitative research
- 4.5 Measurement
 - 4.5.1 Scales
 - 4.5.2 Measurement instruments
- 4.6 Selecting samples in research
- 4.7 Data collection and data analysis
 - 4.7.1 data collection
 - 4.7.2 data analysis
- 4.8 Testing the hypothesis
- 4.9 Writing up the research
- 4.10 Displaying the research

5. Teaching Plan

| Week | Content | Periods | Material | Notes |
|------|--|---------|--|--|
| 1 | 4.1 Qualitative research 4.1.1 Definition 4.1.2 Methods | 4LT | [2]: Unit 8 [1]: Unit 7 | Students work in groups, present and do assignments. |
| 2 | 4.1 Qualitative research 4.1.2 Methods (Cont.) | 4LT | [2]: Unit 8 [1]: Units 7, 8 | |
| 3 | 4.2 Observation | 4LT | [2]: Unit 9 [1]: Units 7, 8 | |
| 4 | 4.3 Surveys | 4LT | [2]: Unit 10 [1]: Units 7, 8 | |
| 5 | 4.4 Quantitative research 4.4.1 Definition and concepts | 4LT | [2]: Unit 11 [1]: Unit 10 | |
| 6 | 4.4 Qualitative research 4.4.2 Methods | 4LT | [2]: Unit 11 [1]: Unit 10 | |
| 7 | Midterm | 4LT | Test written by teacher in charge | Students do the test on paper |
| 8 | 4.5 Measurement 4.5.1 Scales 4.5.2 Measurement instruments | 4LT | [2]: Units 12 – 14 [1]: Unit 11 | Students work in groups, present and do assignments |
| 9 | 4.6 Sampling | 4LT | [2]: Unit 15 [1]: Unit, 10 | |
| 10 | 4.7 collecting data and analysing data 4.7.1 Collecting data | 4LT | [2]: Units 16 – 17 [1]: Units 7, 10 | |
| 11 | 4.7 Collecting data and analysing data (Cont.) 4.7.2 Analysing data | 4LT | [2]: Units 16 – 17 [1]: Units 8, 11 | |
| 12 | 4.8 Testing hypothesis | 4LT | [2]: Unit 18 [1]: Unit 12 | |
| 13 | 4.9 Writing the research paper | 4LT | [2]: Unit 21 [1]: Units 13, 14 | |
| 14 | 4.9 Writing the research paper (Cont.) | 4LT | [2]: Unit 21 [1]: Units 13, 14 | |
| 15 | 4.10 Presenting the research topic | 4LT | | |

6. Material

6.1 Official Textbooks

- [1] Collis, J., & Hussey, R. (2014). *Business Research – a Practical Guide for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students* (4th ed.). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- [2] Cooper, D.A., & Schindler, P.S. (2006). *Business Research Methods* (9th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

6.2 Recommended Material for further reading

- [3] Burns, R. B., & Burns, R. A. (2008). **Business Research Methods and Statistics Using SPSS**. London: SAGE Publications.
- [4] Bryman, A. , & Bell, E. (2006). *Business Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [5] Dul, J., & Hak, T. (2007). *Case Study Methodology in Business Research*. Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann.
- [6] Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., & Jackson, P.R. (2008). **Management Research** (3rd ed.). London: SAGE Publications.
- [7] Fisher, C. (2007). *Researching and Writing A Dissertation – A Guidebook for Business Students* (2nd ed.). Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- [8] Gauri, P., & Gronhaug, K. (2005). *Research Methods in Business Studies – A Practical Guide* (3rd ed.). Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- [9] Lee, N., & Lings, I. *Doing Business Research: A Guide to Theory and Practice*. London: SAGE Publications.
- [10] Saunders M., Thornhill, A., & Lewis, P. (2009). *Research Methods for Business Students* (5th ed.). Harlow: Prentice Hall.

6.3 Recommended website

http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072979232/student_view0/index.html

7. Assessment

| On-going | | Final test |
|-------------|---------------|------------|
| Performance | Mid-term test | |
| 10% | 30% | 60% |

7.1 Assessing performance:

- Types: class attendance, lesson preparation, groupwork, presentation ...
- Scores: From 0 to 10, rounded up to one decimal

7.2 Midterm test:

- Form: written test and multiple-choice test
- Grade: from 0 to 10, rounded up to one decimal

7.3 Final test:

- requirement: on-going assessment grade: at least 3.0
- From: written test
- Scores: 0 to 10, rounded up to one decimal

Hồ Chí Minh City, day month year 2016

Dean

Department Head

Lecturer 1

Lecturer 2

Appendix 4.8 Table 4.4 Summary of BEP1 Participants and Interview Information

Table 4.4 Summary of BEP1 Participants and the Interview Information

| No | Name & Role in the BEP1 | Experience in site (year) | Professional background | Subject taught in BEP1 | Linguistic capacity | Date, time place of interview | Length of interview |
|----|--|---------------------------|--|--|--|--|---------------------|
| 1 | Văn Vice chancellor/ teacher | 1,5 | PhD in Economics, Australia | No | Vietnamese Fluent English | -Nov. 2 nd , 2018 -10:23 am -BoM Office, Campus2 | 52:24 |
| 2 | Thu, Head of Department/ Teacher | 10 | PhD in Applied Linguistics, Boston Uni, America | British/ American Literature; Advanced Interpretation | Vietnamese Fluent English Communicative French | -Oct. 17, 2018 -09:11 am -Office, Campus2 | 1:00:50 |
| 3 | Thư, mainstream teacher | 10 | Master's in philosophy, Việt Nam | Fundamental Principles of Marx and Lenin | Vietnamese Limited English | -Oct. 30 th , 2018 -14:27 pm - Office, Campus2 | 36:01 |
| 4 | Lộc, visiting teacher | 1 | Master's in laws PhD in sociology, Hongkong | Critical Thinking | Vietnamese Fluent English | -Nov. 29 th , 2018 -09:50 am -Research Room, Main Library, Campus1 | 1:35:05 |
| 5 | Minh, mainstream teacher | 3 | PhD in psychology, Russia Fulbright scholar, America | Critical Thinking | Vietnamese English | -Nov. 8 th , 2018 - 13:33 pm - Research Room, Main Library, Campus1 | 1:27:31 |
| 6 | Phượng, mainstream teacher | 6 | Master's in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) UK | Critical Reading & Writing; Listening and Speaking 3; Teaching English for Children; Research Projects 1,2 | Vietnamese Fluent English | -Oct. 19, 2018 -13:38 pm -Office, Campus2 | 43:04 |
| 7 | Ngọc, mainstream teacher | 3 | PhD in Asian-Pacific Studies, Japan | Critical Reading & Writing Research Project1,2 | Vietnamese Fluent English Communicative Japanese | -Oct. 19 th , 2018 -11:27 am -Office, Campus 2 | 57:48 |
| 8 | David, mainstream teacher | 5 | PhD in Contemporary History, majoring in Commercial Institutions and Maritime Trade, Italy | British and American Literature | French English | -Oct. 23 rd , 2018 -13:08 pm -Research Room, Main Library, Campus 1 | 1:01:21 |
| 9 | Trí, visiting teacher | 10 | Master in TEFL, Việt Nam | Advanced Business 1,2,3; English for Media | Vietnamese Fluent English | -Oct. 23 rd , 2018 -17:57 pm -Classroom, Campus 1 | 38:19 |

| No | Name & Role in the BEP1 | Experience in site (year) | Professional background | Subject taught in BEP1 | Linguistic capacity | Date, time place of interview | Length of interview |
|----|--|---------------------------------|--|---|------------------------------|---|------------------------|
| 10 | Đinh, mainstream teacher | 6 | Master of Communication (Advertising Major), Australia | Principles of Marketing | Vietnamese Fluent English | -Oct. 23 rd , 2018 -11:14 am -Research Room, Main Library, Campus1 | 46:30 |
| 11 | Diệu, Supervisor in the workplace | 5 | Master's in public Relations and Marketing, UK | Supervising interns in the workplace | Vietnamese Fluent English | -Nov. 3 rd , 2018 -14:37 pm -Research Room, Main Library, Campus1 | 1:16:26 |

Appendix 4.9 Table 4.5 Summary of BEP2 Participant and the Interview Information

Table 4.5 Summary of BEP2 Participants and the Interview Information

| N o | Role in the BEP2 | Experi ence at the site (year) | Professional background | Subjects taught | Linguistic capacity | Date, time Place of interview | Length of interview |
|--------|--|--|---|--|---|---|--|
| 1 | Hoàng, Vice President/ Associate professor | 1,5 | PhD in Economic, Australia | Micro – Macro Economics | Vietnamese Fluent English | Questions sent: Nov.11, 2018 Received: Jan 18,2019 | 852 words, Questions not counted |
| 2 | Hiệu, Head of Department Assoc. Professor | 9 | PhD in Comparative Linguistic, Australia | Applied Information Technology in Translation and Interpretation; Applied Information Technology in Teaching; Cognitive linguistics, | Vietnamese Fluent English Communica- tive French | -Oct 15, 2018 -08:24 am -Office, Public Elite | 41:49 |
| 3 | Thanh, Programme Manager, teacher | 10 | PhD in TESOL, Australia | | | -Oct 19, 2018 -09:06 am -Café, Tân Thanh District | 1:07:52 |
| 4 | Đoàn, mainstream teacher | 10 | Master's in Business Administration | Human Resources, Principles of Marketing | Vietnamese Limited English | -Nov,1 2018 -14:21 pm -Research Room, Main Library, Campus1, Private Elite | 1:03:52 |
| 5 | Minh, mainstream teacher | 1 | BA in TESOL, | British Literature | Vietnamese Fluent English | -Nov 8, 2018 -08:36 am -Office, Public Elite | 36:57 |
| 6 | Bích, mainstream teacher | 6 | Master in TESOL, UK | Business Grammar | Vietnamese Fluent English | -Nov 14, 2018 -16:46 pm -Office, Public Elite | 23:43 |
| 7 | Vân, mainstream teacher | 3 | Master in TESOL, Australia | Business Ethics | Vietnamese Fluent English Communicati ve Japanese | -Nov,19 2018 -10:32 am -Participant's Language school | 38:24 |
| 8 | Nữ, visiting teacher | 10 | Master in TESOL, Việt Nam | Business Reading and Writing | Vietnamese Fluent English | -Dec 6, 2018 -12:09 pm -Café, District 1 | 1:13:00 |
| 9 | Dũng Supervisor In the workplace | 5 | BA in Media and Journalism, Việt Nam | | Vietnamese Fluent English | -Nov 10, 2018 -09:47 am -Café, District 3 | 1:05:55 |

Appendix 4.10 Table 4.7 Code Constructs

Table 4.7 Code Constructs

| CODE CONSTRUCTS | | | | | |
|-----------------|----|---------------------|--------------------|--|---------------------------|
| Type of code | No | Research objectives | Code | Description | Relation with other codes |
| <i>A Priori</i> | | | | | |
| | 1 | 1,2 | Classification | | 2, 11 |
| | a | | | How critical thinking was perceived by participants | |
| | b | | | How critical thinking was defined by the two programmes, BEP1 and BEP2 | |
| | 2 | 1,2 | Framing | | 13,8,1,6,14 |
| | a | | Selection | How knowledge, material, ect. was selected for critical thinking realisation | |
| | b | | Pacing | How much time was given for knowledge, material, ect. to be realised as critical thinking | |
| | c | | Sequencing | How teachers, curricula, syllabi sequenced knowledge, material, ect. to become critical thinking | |
| | d | | Evaluation | How critical thinking was evaluated or assessed by teachers or curriculum | |
| | 3 | 3 | Social base | How flexible teachers are or are not in their pedagogic relationships with students; the integration of instructional aspect and social hierarchical aspects | 6,1,2 |
| | 4 | 1,2 | Students' ability | How well students prepared for academic work, e.g. how good is their English and business knowledge | 1,2,3,8 |
| | 5 | 3 | Students' attitude | Students' reaction to tasks related to critical thinking or knowledge ingeneral and their attitude totheir future career | 1,2 |
| | 6 | 3 | Society's attitude | How teachers, parents, employers perceive and react to critical thinking; whose critical thinking? | 1,2,5 |
| | 7 | 3 | Curriculum issues | How curriculum structures enhanced or empeded critical thinking | 1,2 |
| | 8 | 3 | Policy issues | How university or departmental policies supported or impeded critical thinking development | 1, 2, 11 |
| | 9 | 3 | Teachers' capacity | How confident or professionally prepared teachers are to teach critical thinking | |
| | 10 | 1,2,3 | Scaffolding | Support teachers gave to students to help them internalise critical thinking | 2,1,11,8 |
| Emergent | | | | | |
| | 11 | 3 | Consequences | What may happen to students when they apply critical thinking in the real life | 12,14,8 |
| | 12 | 1,2 | Alternatives | Teachers' desire to develop critical thinking for emancipation or a better life for students rather than a set of skills | 3,2,1,8 |
| | 13 | 1,2 | Outcomes | Evidence of students' critical thinking at the end of a course/ the programme; what identities students turned out to be at the end of a course/ the programme | 1,2,7,8,10 |
| | 14 | 3 | Identity | How teacher' teaching/ curriculum shaped students' consciousness or what identity teachercurriculum oriented students at | 1,2 |

Appendix 4.11 Sample of Individual Coding Sheet

| 1 | Tri's Interview text CT: critical thinking CO: Course outline | Code |
|----|---|------|
| 2 | INTER: The subjects you are teaching are . . . | |
| 3 | PART: Currently, I am teaching . . . overall, recently in the past two years or so, the two | 9 |
| 4 | subjects I have mainly taught are Advanced Business English 3 and English for Media. | |
| 5 | INTER: You can share your experiences either with Advanced Business English 3 or with | |
| 6 | both of them. That should be fine. | |
| 7 | PART: I will be interactive. They're separate subjects, but they both belong to <i>ESP</i> [English | 9 |
| 8 | for specific purposes] and there are more about English for Media to share than Advanced. | |
| 9 | Because your topic is about CT, I will share all the things that I think are related to it, ok? | |
| 10 | INTER: Thank you very much. | |
| 11 | INTER: In the subjects that you have been teaching including Advanced Business | 1b |
| 12 | English and English for Media, what are some evidences that prove they aim to develop | |
| 13 | CT capacity for students? | |
| 14 | PART: Let's just start with the course outline. I am the last stage in the process: the person | 1b |
| 15 | who implements the CO. In my opinion, CT should be stated explicitly in the CO. But some | |
| 16 | COs include it; some don't state it at all, or state it vaguely. There is no clarity. For | |
| 17 | example, in ABE3, it is mentioned but not stated clearly. As usual, a CO often | |
| 18 | has <i>learning outcomes</i> (LOs), but I have not seen, in those LOs of the courses I have | |
| 19 | taught, any sentence that states: develop CT as a LO necessary for that subject. | |
| 20 | Instead, they mainly aim at content knowledge [pause] and skills [pause] only. So, if I | |
| 21 | am asked to identify, in the subjects I am teaching, evidence to prove that they are CT- | |
| 22 | oriented, then the truth is: right in the CO, I do not see it clearly. | |
| 23 | It can only be inherent in whether the teacher who teaches a certain subject is aware of | 9 |
| 24 | developing CT for students or not. This totally depends on their instructions, which, in | |
| 25 | turn, depends on the teacher's teaching methodology and there are many factors affecting | |
| 26 | that. For example, how that teacher understands CT; whether he/she wants to create | |
| 27 | conditions for students to practice, and also whether the methods he/she uses really help | |
| 28 | students develop CT. And finally, how that teacher knows that students have obtained that | |
| 29 | CT or not. Probably, for those elements, I will discuss one by one later. | |
| 30 | | |
| 31 | INTER: Thank you. The Business English Programme (BEP) you are invited to teach states | 1b |
| 32 | as its general LO an aim to enhance CT for students. Since you have a lot of teaching | |
| 33 | experience, as a full-timer before and a guest lecturer now, can you tell how that LO has | |
| 34 | communicated to lecturers so that each lecturer is aware of it and integrate it into the | |
| 35 | subject they teach? | |
| 36 | PART: As I have mentioned, I do not know about other subjects. For the subjects I am | 1b |
| 37 | teaching, I do not see any evidence of CT in the CO. By 'evidence' here I mean it has to | |
| 38 | be stated in the LOs, but I do not see that. | |
| 39 | INTER: And has it ever been discussed in meetings, etc.? | |
| 40 | PART: Firstly, it has not [pause]. The clearest way of communication is in the CO, but I do | 1b |
| 41 | not see that. About meetings, because I am a visiting teacher, I am not often invited to | |
| 42 | attend faculty or departmental meetings. Therefore, in my personal case, as a guest | |
| 43 | lecturer, I have had no information about the so-called CT. This mean I don't know | |
| 44 | whether this subject aims to develop CT or not and how to develop it. I completely do not | |
| 45 | have a thing called <i>channel</i> about that CT orientation. This is a specific case of mine | |

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 46 | as a guest lecturer. I do not know about other full-time lecturers. | |
| 47 | INTER: In your opinion, when a programme commits itself to CT enhancement, what is | 1b |
| 48 | the underpinning purpose? | |
| 49 | PART: Literally, my personal opinion is when they include terminologies or values such as | 1b |
| 50 | CT or lifelong learning, so on and so on, they follow trends. I mean right now CT is one | |
| 51 | of the skills that modern HE is highly evaluating, e.g. embracing. Thus, undergraduate | |
| 52 | programmes of all disciplines now include CT as a value. It is very much like a universal | |
| 53 | trend of contemporary HE. Meanwhile, how they understand those skills and how they | |
| 54 | apply them in each specific discipline is unknown. I do not see anyone . . . In my personal | 7 |
| 55 | view, it seems people [programme writers] do not understand it very clearly and also do | |
| 56 | not have an idea how lecturers will apply it in a specific subject or specific major. Instead, | |
| 57 | they just make a general claim of it. OK, let's teach CT and then lifelong learning skills. | |
| 58 | Period. So, I feel like there is something not very specific and evident! | |
| 59 | INTER: In your opinion, how do you define CT? | 1a |
| 60 | PART: As far as I understand. . . Saying <i>understand</i> I mean when I ask students | |
| 61 | to do activities that are designed for CT enhancement, I focus on the following criteria (1) | 1a |
| 62 | They are able to approach an issue from different perspectives. Approaching an issue from | |
| 63 | different perspectives means they have to imagine themselves in the roles of different | |
| 64 | people whose benefits are affected by that issue. Take the internship issue as an example, | |
| 65 | Students have to approach it from different perspectives: how the university | |
| 66 | sees it? How students see it? How employers see it? And how parents view it? This | |
| 67 | means, firstly, I want students to approach an issue from different angles, or different | |
| 68 | positions. Secondly, I want them to evaluate it in two ways: strengths and weaknesses; | |
| 69 | What is good and not good. That is how I understand CT and aim students towards | |
| 70 | that. Uhhh . . . another problem I see students often have is that they easily trust | 5 |
| 71 | what they read online or believe in what teachers or somebody else says. They completely | |
| 72 | lack CT. They are unable to evaluate whether that idea of that person, that opinion, that | |
| 73 | Material applies to all situations or not, or it is just appropriate in a specific context, or a | |
| 74 | a specific case only. Students do not have that ability. I, therefore, always guide students | |
| 75 | toward that direction. I raise questions, such as: are those statements true for all situations | 1a |
| 76 | or not? Or in what specific situation are they appropriate? etc. That is a part of CT that I | |
| 77 | think I am aiming students at. To me, CT is all that. | |
| 78 | INTER: In your opinion, is it possible to teach that CT across disciplines and teach it | 2 |
| 79 | to transfer into the workplace? | |
| 80 | PART: I am not quite clear about the concept 'across disciplines', but this is how I | 1a |
| 81 | understand your question: CT itself is not a skill of a specific subject. It is a life skill. CT itself | |
| 82 | is a <i>transferable skill</i> . This means, it does not constrain itself as an academic skill. Rather | |
| 83 | it is a life skill, a skill everyone needs. You ask me whether or not I understand CT as being | |
| 84 | continuous. The answer is I personally think it is not continuous because it is not there in | 7 |
| 85 | the programme specification and in the CO. If I do want to develop a skill called CT, it has | |
| 86 | to start with the very first subject students take when entering university and is retained | |
| 87 | consistently to the last subject. This means every subject has to have a CT element in it. | |
| 88 | And the curriculum has to be designed in a way to allow CT to increase gradually. This | |
| 89 | means its <i>level</i> has to go from low to high and across the curriculum. Honestly, I have not | |
| 90 | seen that. Not even in the COs. I have not seen it stated explicitly, let alone seeing it | |
| 91 | developed as a possible skill throughout the curriculum. I absolutely do not see that. | |
| 92 | INTER: Do you think we are able to do this, but we have not done it yet? | |
| 93 | PART: Not only do we . . . The point is not whether we can or cannot do it. We have to do | 7 |
| 94 | it and we absolutely can do it. The only concern is whether everyone see it as worth doing | |

| | | |
|-----|---|----|
| 95 | or not. This is another story. | |
| 96 | INTER: Can you share with me the activities you often use in class to enhance students' CT- | 2 |
| 97 | something such as evaluating, identifying implied meanings etc.? What activities do you | |
| 98 | often use? | |
| 99 | PART: Literally, because I teach language skills, so where possible, I try to integrate CT into | 2a |
| 100 | all the activities related to language skills. However, it is easier to some activities than | |
| 101 | to others. Let's start with Reading. When I assign reading activities, I recommend not only | |
| 102 | one source but many different sources. And if it is possible, I choose different | |
| 103 | newspaper articles or materials of the same topic but with opposing views. Students | |
| 104 | themselves when reading articles with contradictory opinions, they naturally become | |
| 105 | conscious that with just the same issue but this person may hold this view, and that person | |
| 106 | may hold a different that view. That is Reading. Next is Writing activities. I also want, for | |
| 107 | instance, when I want students to write a summary or a 'report', I also often ask them to | 2d |
| 108 | to write it from different angles. It means they have to explain that issue from different | |
| 109 | perspectives. The third thing is . . . the activities I most often do in class to develop CT is | |
| 110 | through Speaking. I would organise debates in class. Students can sit in groups and each | |
| 111 | group can represent what I temporarily call <i>stakeholder</i> , e.g. a group of people whose | |
| 112 | benefits are related to a certain issue. And students have to debate. So, it is through the | |
| 113 | <i>debate</i> activities. When organising activities for students to debate like that, I see many | |
| 114 | benefits. Students have to listen to other opinions from other stakeholders, from that | |
| 115 | listening, they propose things that are called arguments to agree or disagree. | |
| 116 | When students participate in such Speaking or debate activities, I not only want them to | |
| 117 | say, 'Alright, I agree, or I disagree.' but I also ask them to give the reasons why | |
| 118 | they agree, and why they do not agree. Or I agree in what ways or I disagree in what | |
| 119 | conditions. To sum up, those are the three activities I very often use in class to try to | |
| 120 | enhance students' CT. | |
| 121 | INTER: How do you evaluate these activities? | 2d |
| 122 | PART: That is the problem that I completely believe should be improved. Because first of | 2d |
| 123 | all, in the CO itself, there is no clear objective that LOs have to include CT. This | |
| 124 | leads to the problem: The CO also does not include any clear statements of what methods | |
| 125 | teachers can use to assess whether students have achieved [CT] or not. Because as usual, | |
| 126 | the expected LO has to be written first. Then, we would consider the <i>assessment</i> issue: | |
| 127 | What [assessment] is for what LO. On the contrary, if the CO lacks clear evidence of CT, | |
| 128 | then it also means there won't be <i>assessment methods</i> of that CT. And that is the | |
| 129 | reason why when we organise activities in class, our activities are actually spontaneous | 2d |
| 130 | and in general, they vary depending on lecturers, and we do not assess them. | |
| 131 | Because we do not see the need to assess, so we do not assess. We just observe, e.g. | |
| 132 | feel whether our students have CT or not, but we cannot quantify it, measure whether | |
| 133 | their CT is at level 1,2,3, or 4. We can't quantify it. | |
| 134 | INTER: In the course outline, are there any words similar to CT, such as those in Bloom's | |
| 135 | Taxonomy, the three tops levels of thinking? For example, on completion of this subject, | 2d |
| 136 | students will be able to evaluate this or analyse this theory, or create this or that? | |
| 137 | PART: There are those equivalences but . . . back to the same issue: I wonder whether | |
| 138 | when writing the CO, those who are in charge were aware of integrating <i>Bloom's</i> | |
| 139 | <i>Taxonomy</i> into the LOs or not. I sometimes see in the subjects that I have taught there is | |
| 140 | no clear evidence of that <i>Bloom's Taxonomy</i> either. So, that is also a problem. In the | |
| 141 | newly up-dated COs, I hope there is more clarity in relation to the use of specific terms | |
| 142 | for <i>Bloom's Taxonomy</i> instead of saying in general: 'to improve understanding' as what I | |
| 143 | see now in the COs. These general LOs are hard to be quantified. Another thing is, when it | |

| | | |
|-----|--|----|
| 144 | comes to assessment, the expected LOs have to be measurable. However, honestly, there | |
| 145 | is one reality. The LOs we set are impossible to be quantified, I mean, they are impossible | |
| 146 | to be measured. When we are unable quantify LOs, we fail to measure whether we | |
| 147 | achieve the objectives we set for our subject. So, I want to say one again because there is | |
| 148 | no clarity, there are many paradoxes concerning teaching critical thinking. | |
| 149 | INTER: When you read a student's written work, do you grade the content or the | |
| 150 | language? | |
| 151 | PART: Honestly, personally, I support CT, and I also want to encourage students to develop | 2d |
| 152 | CT, so in writing assignments at rather high levels, I always specify where I require | |
| 153 | CT. For example, in Advanced Business English 3, I may ask students to write about | |
| 154 | unemployment among students in Việt Nam. In this task, I specify all the requirements | |
| 155 | and assessment criteria, for example, students have to approach the situation and to | |
| 156 | present their arguments from different angles. For the assessment criteria, I often embed | |
| 157 | CT into the assessment criteria for content. Or in English for Media, when students want to | |
| 158 | write a text to promote a certain brand a, b, c, or d, I ask them to think about these things: | |
| 159 | When writing a text to promote a brand, who am I writing to? What is the purpose? How | |
| 160 | do I approach the audience? After that comes the questions about the content: What | |
| 161 | should I put in the content? This means the component of CT is embedded in some of the | |
| 162 | requirements about the content. Of course, besides that we also have to assess their | |
| 163 | language and also the accuracy of their language use. | |
| 164 | INTER: If you have to balance between language and content, what do you think | 2d |
| 165 | should be the ratio? | |
| 166 | PART: I think . . . In my personal opinion, it has to depend on the requirement of each | |
| 167 | subject. Usually, it is stated in the Cos, for example, for Writing, how much is for the | |
| 168 | content and how much is for the language. But in a broader setting, I think there should be | |
| 169 | a flexibility. For example, at lower levels of thinking, when students just enter university | |
| 170 | and are not familiar with CT, but they have to learn it in Listening, Speaking, Reading | |
| 171 | and Writing classes, then the ratio of language-content should be 50:50. That is when we | |
| 172 | want them to focus more on the quality of language. But at higher levels of thinking, | |
| 173 | we can do 40: 60, 60 % for content and 40 for language; or sometimes I require 70 % | |
| 174 | for content and 30 percent for language. I think this is completely flexible, depending | |
| 175 | on the requirement of the subject. I don't think should be a fixed ratio. | |
| 176 | INTER: When you teach and you organise critical thinking activities for example, | |
| 177 | looking for articles with different arguments and giving feedbacks on students' works, | |
| 178 | what are some advantages and barriers? | |
| 179 | P: Firstly, the primary difficulty is the materials themselves. What we have long been doing | 2a |
| 180 | is choosing a book, or a textbook and teaching the lessons in that textbook. When | |
| 181 | choosing a textbook to depend on, our own thinking will be constrained by the | |
| 182 | perspectives of the writers who write the articles in that textbook. Those perspectives are | |
| 183 | theirs and they are not widely open. Thus, the first difficulty is, if we want to develop CT | |
| 184 | for students, we have to look for other articles of the same topic but from different | |
| 185 | perspectives. Sometimes we cannot find them. Completely nowhere! Very much a waste | |
| 186 | of time! So sometimes it is that waste of time that makes lecturers discouraged and give | |
| 187 | up. Anyway, it is not required; doing it means adding more work to ourselves, so why not | |
| 188 | Forgetting rid of it to have peace. That is the first difficulty. | |
| 189 | The second difficulty is we lecturers think it is necessary. Yes, CT is necessary, but do | 5 |
| 190 | students think the same way? Students do not have the habit to think critically. Right | |
| 191 | from the beginning when they enter university, they do not have that habit, so they | |

| | | |
|-----|---|----|
| 192 | feel it is normal to think like: OK, whatever the book says I will follow; whatever the | |
| 193 | teacher says, I will follow; or whatever the news says, it's true. This means they accept | |
| 194 | them unquestionably and see that as a norm. They do not have such a thing called a habit | |
| 195 | to question, so even though we can find good materials and give them to students, they | 5 |
| 196 | will say: why, instead of reading 1 text, I now have to read 2, 3 texts just for the purpose of | |
| 197 | synthesises! When you give students more work, they do not like it. Thirdly, suppose we | |
| 198 | are successful in the way that we inspire students to put forward their personal ideas in | 6 |
| 199 | class. Out in the society, CT is not a skill to help them survive. Indeed, when students | |
| 200 | return from internship, for instance, they tell me they'd rather do what their bosses have | |
| 201 | said and do not argue back. So, it is the society itself. When in the outside world or the | |
| 202 | society in general, people do not champion CT, it does not create an impact and students | |
| 203 | don't see CT skill as necessary or useful. They just only perceive it as, 'Ok, this is something | 5 |
| 204 | teachers require, so just do it.' And obviously right from when they are kids and later at | |
| 205 | low levels of education, e.g. <i>secondary, nursery</i> , schools do not teach CT, so when we . . . | |
| 206 | ... I often encounter one problem: When I put forward an argument students don't have | 4 |
| 207 | any kind of thinking to allow them to argue against or in favour of. This means in their | |
| 208 | minds the concept of CT is totally absent. I think that is the most difficult and sometimes | |
| 209 | it makes us very discouraged. | |
| 210 | INTER: Is language a barrier when students have to make arguments in English? | |
| 211 | PART: I totally agree that language barrier sometimes does make it hard for students | 6 |
| 212 | to express their opinions or communicate all of their thinking across. But from what I see, | |
| 213 | the English language is not really an issue. Rather, it is their reaction. Because for some | |
| 214 | students their English may not be good, but their attitude is. They enjoy challenging things. | |
| 215 | And it is that attitude that I conclude that they have CT or not. About the language issue, of | |
| 216 | course when they have difficulties with the language, what are we teachers there for? We | 10 |
| 217 | are there to support them. We can support them by saying: OK, you want to communicate | |
| 218 | That idea, right? I will give you the word list on the board. Is this what you mean and want | |
| 219 | to say? Those are supports from lecturers. What is the lecturer there for? The lecturer | |
| 220 | is there to guide students. But noticeably, the first thing that needs to be seen is students' | |
| 221 | spirit. They have to get involved in that, 'Ok, I am ready to put on my thinking cap.' 'Ok, I | 2b |
| 222 | am ready to point out to the teacher that: Your saying is not correct! I have many times | |
| 223 | triggered critical thinking by purposefully putting forward a viewpoint that is very | |
| 224 | controversial to stimulate them to argue against me, but they still do not argue (sad smile). | |
| 225 | Therefore, I very often feel very, very, vey, in general, like, low mood, and sometimes feel: | |
| 226 | What do I have to do now? | |
| 227 | We apparently see it as a very necessary skill, but students do not see that. Thus, our | 5 |
| 228 | efforts are sometimes isolated and cannot generate an impact. Thus, back to the | |
| 229 | previous point, I want to share one thing. That is: to achieve a success in teaching skills, | 7 |
| 230 | not just CT but other soft skills that do not belong to hard skills, requires the continuity | |
| 231 | and the consistency from both the curriculum and the teaching staff. All of the subjects in | |
| 232 | the curriculum have to be that consistent; all have to boost those soft skills. Only by | |
| 233 | doing that will students then come to realise that, 'Ok, that skill is necessary.' On top of | |
| 234 | that is another very important thing: That soft skill, when being integrated across the | |
| 235 | curriculum, has to be constructed scientifically to demonstrate continuation and | |
| 236 | advancement. Only by doing that will it succeed. | |
| 237 | INTER: Sometimes we play our part in our subject, but then in other subjects, other | |
| 238 | teachers may not and CT may not be encouraged. | |
| 239 | PART: And another issue I have observed is CT is also affected by a very important factor. It | |
| 240 | is the interaction between the lecturer and the students. I noticeably see on the first day in | 3 |

| | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 241 | in my classes, all of the students are very watchful and defensive because they've heard I | |
| 242 | am difficult. But through the way I present topics, the way I encourage them to put | |
| 243 | forward their arguments, or presenting ideas, and especially the way I feedback a | |
| 244 | contradictory viewpoint. I don't discourage it! Rather, I analyse it for students to see | |
| 245 | where they get it right or where they don't get it right. Or this is the angle they are looking | |
| 246 | at the problem from how about other angles? Then I notice, often 2 or 3 weeks later, when | |
| 247 | students get used to my way of interaction, they will feel: OK, this teacher is an open | |
| 248 | teacher, ready to listen to and accept contradictory opinions. They will then become more | |
| 249 | confident. So, social communication is a dimension. I mean, apart from CT, the | |
| 250 | pedagogical interaction between teachers and students is also a factor that encourages or | |
| 251 | discourages the acquisition of CT among students. | |
| 252 | INTER: Do you think knowledge of lecturers, especially those who teach content | 9 |
| 253 | subjects have to be deep in order to help students see things from different angles? | |
| 254 | PART: That is also a problem although I don't think lecturers who teach English for | 9 |
| 255 | specific purposes need to have another degree in another subject area. However, when it | |
| 256 | comes to equipping our knowledge, there are many ways to equip knowledge. We can | |
| 257 | read more books; we can search information to find out more about the field. However, I | |
| 258 | also agree that professional knowledge is important. By professional knowledge I mean | |
| 259 | knowledge in media or in business, for instance. When we teach content subjects in a | |
| 260 | <i>Business English</i> programme, I don't think teachers' knowledge of <i>business</i> needs to | |
| 261 | be deep or at the same deep level as when they teach the same subjects in a traditional | |
| 262 | Business School. But it is also true that Business English students need a <i>foundation</i> - deep | |
| 263 | and broad enough for them to form a base. The teacher themselves and the students | |
| 264 | themselves have a base to develop things called arguments for an issue. Lack of | |
| 265 | that is also not a good idea. | |
| 266 | INTER: Universities and lecturers have made efforts to promote CT for students. However, | |
| 267 | employers often complain that Vietnamese graduates lack CT. What do you think are | |
| 268 | possible causes? | |
| 269 | I actually see this issue also from different angles. Firstly, although we claim we | 1 |
| 270 | have made efforts to integrate CT into content subjects and the curricula, but is that | |
| 271 | integration logical or not? Is that integration scientific or not? And are there or not | |
| 272 | scales or ways to assess that students, through doing this and that, are demonstrating CT? | |
| 273 | Up to now, I have not seen such an assessment rubric. Although we have said we have | |
| 274 | focused on CT, we haven't developed assessment. And when there is no assessment, of | |
| 275 | course, we cannot say whether we have done it successfully or not. That is from the angle | |
| 276 | of the university. From the lens of employers, although they complain about the | |
| 277 | lack of CT among students, they also have to look at themselves . . . Why is it that when | 6 |
| 278 | interns put forward their opinions, they say: don't give opinions! You know nothing to say! | |
| 279 | So, does that actually encourage CT? Therefore, the point is businesses themselves, | |
| 280 | maybe the big boss really wants to encourage discussions and contradictory ideas to | |
| 281 | generate the best possible ideas. However, does that guarantee that everyone in the | |
| 282 | organisation have that same <i>mind-set</i> ? Or what if the head of the department or the dept. | |
| 283 | manager himself does not favour CT? What if he does not like arguing? In this case, | |
| 284 | apparently, it can't be said students lack CT. We need to reconsider to see whether, | |
| 285 | as labour users, they have. . . whether their organisational cultures encourage CT or not. | |
| 286 | Even when they do encourage CT, the possibility is that they do it verbally, but they do not | |
| 287 | absorb completely the philosophy of CT. This, sooner or later, will ruin their staff. But then | |
| 288 | they go complain: Why are my staff so passive? Why don't they have CT? You see, | |
| 289 | sometimes, it is their fault not ours [the university's]. Honestly, I have heard a lot | |

| | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 290 | from the students - the ones who are active and like to challenge things. They've told me | |
| 291 | at the internship, when they say things, no matter what, their opinions are overlooked | |
| 292 | and despised. They are often told: No opinions of any! Do as being told! | |
| 293 | So, is it a correct practice or not when employers pass the buck? Or when they question | 6 |
| 294 | why universities train students deficient in CT? I have looked at this issue from the two | |
| 295 | angles: the university and the employer. From the university, we claim we do it, but to | |
| 296 | what extent we have been successful is still left unmeasured. To the employer, whether | |
| 297 | they actually encourage CT or not and how they react to new employees who hold | |
| 298 | different ideas are other aspects of the story. Employers want everyone to know, 'I am | |
| 299 | following trends.' Honestly, I am telling you from the bottom of my heart, my feeling is, | |
| 300 | people nowadays are mainly following universal trends. Believe me. Just go ask businesses | |
| 301 | themselves what CT is, will they be able to define it? And also, for example, when a certain | |
| 302 | employer claims that their staff has CT, are they able to measure their staff's CT to be | |
| 303 | at level 1, 2, 3, or 4? And where is the evidence? | |
| 304 | I think employers themselves have difficulties proving it. Thus, all the things boil | 6 |
| 305 | down to one thing, which is: everyone speaks of that concept; everyone sees it as | |
| 306 | important, but up to the present, quantifying it and identifying what it really is have | |
| 307 | remained blurred. Everyone from universities and lecturers to employers who use labour | |
| 308 | are still very confused. | |

Appendix 4.12 Table 4.8 Framing and Classification Analytic Notes for Coding

Table 4.8 Framing and Classification Analytic Notes for Coding

| | | Framing values of participants | | |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| Vaus | F ++ | F+ | F- | F-- |
| Selecritical thinking | <p>Teacher depended on the textbook(s) or syllabi for critical thinking transmission.</p> <p>Teacher arbitrarily chose who worked in what group and who carried out what tasks.</p> | <p>Teacher depended on the textbook(s) but also selecritical thinking extra external materials that he/she thought was good for critical thinking realisation.</p> <p>Teacher decided who to be included in groups</p> | <p>Teacher balanced materials in the textbooks against other external material that he/she thought was good for critical thinking realisation.</p> <p>Teacher let students choose who they wanted to work with.</p> | <p>Teacher prioritised external materials that he/she thought was good for critical thinking realisation</p> <p>Teacher let students decide who they wanted to work with.</p> |
| Sequence | <p>Teacher either relied on prior related knowledge or refused any knowledge gained outside the discipline for further development of critical thinking.</p> <p>Teacher expectcritical thinkinged critical thinking to be internalised in students prior to university entrance.</p> | <p>Teacher expectcritical thinkinged students to know certain knowledge and develop certain skills within the discipline for critical thinking realisation.</p> | <p>Teachers required little prior knowledge from other courses within the discipline for critical thinking realisation.</p> | <p>Teacher did not require any prior knowledge for critical thinking.</p> |
| Pacing | <p>Teacher followed the time frame for acritical thinkingivities and assignments realted to critical thinking.</p> <p>Teacher came to class to do what the syllabus said they were supposed to do and left when time was over.</p> | <p>Teacher set time limit on assignments according to how much time they thought was needed for critical thinking to be internalised and controlled the time.</p> | <p>Teacher sets time limit on assignments/ tasks but let students take control of their time.</p> | <p>Teachers let students decide the time limit they needed for tasks that required critical thinking.</p> |
| Criteria | <p>-Teacher just accepted answers that met rigorous criteria</p> <p>-Teachers gave specific feedback on students' work</p> <p>-Teacher specified rigourous parameters or standards students could refer to for critical thinking</p> | <p>Teacher told students criteria of critical thinking but had no methods to help them achieve it.</p> | <p>Teacher evaluated critical thinking but implicitly</p> | <p>Teachers accepted all kinds of answers</p> <p>Teachers didn't give specific feedback on students' work</p> <p>Teacher had no criteria for critical thinking</p> |
| Social base | <p>Teacher didn't invite/ allow questions from students. Or Teacher asked questions instead of students.</p> <p>Teacher was stricritical thinking and maintained the traditional hierarchical distance between him/her and the students.</p> | <p>Teacher asked questions but didn't wait for students' answers.</p> <p>Teacher was open to students but within a limit.</p> | <p>Teacher scaffolded tasks but within the legitimate limit, e.g. during the class time only.</p> | <p>Teacher scaffolded tasks at any time students needed to ensure students acquire critical thinking.</p> <p>Teacher stayed open and listen to students' concerns.</p> <p>Teacher used the language that make students feel confident to put forward their opinions.</p> |
| | | Classification values of the participations | | |
| Values | C++ | C+ | C- | C-- |
| Within the Business English discipline | <p>Teachers associated critical thinking with both the quality of the language used and the quality of the content knowledge.</p> <p>Teachers weakly insulated the relation between English and content knowledge, seeing them as one discourse.</p> | <p>Teacher focused on critical thinking as the acquisition of both the English language and the subjecritical thinking content but gave more emphasis on one than the other at different stages.</p> | <p>Teacher focused on critical thinking as the acquisition of the learning outcomes which was either the English language or the subjecritical thinking content at different stages.</p> | <p>Teacher perceived critical thinking as the acquisition of one single domain, either the English language or the subjecritical thinking content.</p> <p>critical thinking at the lower levels was about the English language skills, while at the disciplinary or higher levels it was about the subjecritical thinking content.</p> |
| Relation between critical thinking and other subjecritical thinkings/ discourses | <p>Teacher emphasised the relation between critical thinking and other subjects within students' discipline(s) and helped students realise this connection.</p> <p>Teacher helped students connect knowledge acquired before and new knowledge.</p> | <p>Teacher emphasised the connection between critical thinking and other subjects within the discipline but did not had a specific method to realise this connection.</p> | <p>Teacher was not able to link critical thinking with students' disciplines although at times they drew connectcritical thinkings between knowledge acquired before and new knowledge or vice versa.</p> | <p>Teachers separated critical thinking from other areas of knowledge.</p> <p>Teacher perceived critical thinking as anything related to the LOs of a specific subjecritical thinking taught.</p> |
| Within critical thinking | <p>The teacher believed critical thinking is the type of knowledge that needs intrinsic standards/criteria to be internalised.</p> <p>Teachers developed relevant criteria for critical thought and monitor them.</p> | <p>The teacher believed critical thinking is the type of knowledge that needs intrinsic standards/ criteria to internalise but did not develop any systematic criteria to ensure the qualaity of thought</p> | <p>Teacher applied a general rule for critical thinking.</p> <p>Teacher explained the requirements for critical thought but did not specify and monitor them.</p> | <p>Teachers did not develop and apply specific criteria for critical thought.</p> <p>Teacher tended to accept anything to be critical thinking.</p> |

Appendix 4.13 Table 4.9 Summary of Participants' Pedagogic Codes of Critical Thinking in BEP1 and BEP2

Table 4.9 Summary of Participants' Pedagogic Codes of Critical Thinking in BPE1 and BEP2

| Summary: Critical thinking Pedagogic Modalities of Participants in BEP2 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|-----|--------|------|-------|------|-----|------|------|------|-----|-----|
| | Framing | Phú | Phượng | Đinh | David | Ngọc | Trí | Minh | Lộc | Diệu | Văn | Thu |
| Framing | Selection | +F | ++F | +F | +F | +F | ++F | ++F | -- F | +F | +F | ++F |
| | Sequence | +F | ++F | +F | ++F | +F | +F | +F | -F | -F | -F | +F |
| | Pacing | +F | +F | +F | +F | +F | +F | +F | -F | +F | -F | -F |
| | Criteria | -F | -F | -F | +F | ++F | -F | +F | ++F | +F | +F | -F |
| | Social base | -F | -F | -F | -F | --F | -F | -F | -F | -F | -F | -F |
| Classification | CT within Subject taught | -C | -C | -C | -C | -C | -C | ++C | ++C | +C | -C | -C |

| Summary: Critical thinking Pedagogic Modalities of Participants in BEP2 | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|------|-------|------|-------|------|
| | Framing | Bích | Nữ | Mai | Vân | Đoàn | Thanh | Hiệu | Hoàng | Dũng |
| Framing | Selection | ++F | ++F | - F | +F | --F | +F | ++F | -- F | +F |
| | Sequence | ++F | ++F | +F | ++F | ++F | +F | ++F | -F | --F |
| | Pacing | ++F | +F | +F | +F | -F | +F | +F | - F | +F |
| | Criteria | - F | +F | +F | -F | ++F | -F | +F | +F | ++F |
| | Social base | -F | --F | -F | -F | --F | -F | -F | -F | -F |
| Classification | CT within Subject(s) Taught/ context | -C | -C | -C | -C | +C | -C | -C | -C | +C |

Appendix 5.1 Learning and Teaching Strategy, BEP1, Private Elite

Learning and Teaching Strategy, BEP1, Private Elite

Faculty of Languages and Cultural Studies

I. Background

1. Overview of Private Elite

Not presented for the ethics reason

2. Purpose of the L&T Strategy

- Spell out our commitment to high quality learning and teaching;
- Establish a strategic framework for the enhancement of learning and teaching quality;
- Chart future directions towards accomplishing our priorities in learning and teaching;
- Guide the development of learning and teaching reform projects.

II. Alignment with vision, mission and other institutional strategies

Our L&T Strategy is shaped by the Vision, Mission, and the 2010-2020 Strategic Plan of Private Elite

1. Vision

Hoa Sen aims to become an internationally recognized university in Vietnam that constantly strives for leading quality in teaching, research, and public service.

2. Mission

- To create non-disparity educational opportunities;
- To train labor forces capable of self-adaptation, lifelong learning, and long-term competition in a rapidly changing global environment;
- To contribute to the sustainable and humane development of the economy and society for Vietnam and the region.

3. Strategic Plan (2010-2020)

Private Elite has been implementing the 2010-2020 Strategic Plan with an overarching commitment to excellence in different areas of development, including Learning and Teaching, Research, International Relations, Human Resources, and Infrastructure. At the core of our activities has been the continuous enhancement of Learning and Teaching quality with the following aims:

- To develop high quality programs that respond to the increasingly diversified social needs and international standards;
- To create unique learning experiences whereby students are inspired and challenged to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes vital for success.

III. Aims/Objectives

1. **Learning and teaching quality:** Ensure high-quality learning, high-quality teaching, and high-quality curricula/programs;
2. **Learning and teaching environment:** Create a well-resourced and technology-rich environment that offers flexible and diverse learning opportunities;
3. **Staff development:** Foster the development of professional scholarship and practice of both academic and support staff;
4. **Digital literacy:** Ensure that staff and students are competent users of technologies that enhance the learning process;
5. **Quality culture:** Cultivate a quality culture in all aspects of learning and teaching;
6. **Key graduate attributes:** Strengthen graduate attributes that are vital for the pathway to global citizenship, employability, and social responsibility.

| Aims/Objectives | Key projects/Strategic action plans |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Learning and teaching quality: Ensure high-quality learning, high-quality teaching, and high-quality curricula/programs | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Empower students through a structured and multi-dimensional learning process, including <i>acquiring and integrating knowledge, extending and refining knowledge, using knowledge meaningfully, and establishing habits of mind</i>; ¹ - Engage students in an enriched learning experience built upon collaborative learning, action learning, enquiry-based learning, and strong faculty-student interaction; - Promote a student-centered approach to teaching whereby students' diverse interests, abilities, voices, and needs are duly addressed. - Ensure that teaching delivery can facilitate students' own construction/co-construction of knowledge through an emphasis on practice, experience, and reflection; - Foster the development of all students as critical thinkers with a capacity for life-long independent learning; - Develop professionally-based curricula/programs that are characterized by: (a) responsiveness to social needs, (b) research-informed and coherent content; (c) relevance and accessibility; (d) comprehensiveness; (e) academic rigor and inter-disciplinary orientation; and (f) clearly articulated graduate skills. <p>(a) Responsiveness to social needs: Ensure that programs are designed to meet the changing social needs and provide students with skills and qualities vital for their future careers;</p> <p>(b) Research-informed and coherent content: Ensure that (i) programs are developed with reference to current research and professional scholarship; and (ii) all elements, including teaching, learning, assessment and feedback, are coherent in offering a progressive and developmental learning experience for students;</p> <p>(c) Relevance and accessibility: Ensure that continuous efforts are made to widen the range of knowledge and skills that are relevant and accessible to learners of diverse interests, intellectual capabilities, and learning styles;</p> <p>(d) Comprehensiveness: Ensure that programs are developed to encompass the depth of specialized knowledge and the broad understanding of contemporary and enduring issues;</p> <p>(e) Academic rigor and inter-disciplinary orientation: Ensure that students are given opportunities to undertake challenging and cross-disciplinary modules/study through the development of logical modular schemes and effective cross-departmental initiatives;</p> <p>(f) Clearly articulated graduate skills: Ensure that all programs have clearly defined and measurable graduate outcomes;</p> | |
| 2. Learning and teaching environment: Create a well-resourced and technology-rich environment that offers flexible and diverse learning opportunities | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maximize learning outcomes through the provision of a well-resourced learning environment which features quality learning space, abundant learning resources, and well-equipped physical infrastructure; - Create a technology-rich environment by increasing investment in digital learning resources and promoting | |

¹ Marzano, R., & Debra, P. (1997). Dimensions of Learning: Teacher's Manual, 2nd Edition. Alexandria, VA: ASCD

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>the optimal use of technologies for educational purposes by staff and students;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extend the range of learning opportunities by embedding alternative learning opportunities (such as internship placements, exchange programs, service learning, industry-oriented projects, research projects, etc.); - Promote flexible delivery and diverse learning modes with the aid of high technology; | |
| 3. Staff development: Foster the development of professional scholarship and practice of both academic and support staff | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that academic staff are highly-qualified and share the qualities of being (a) effective and innovative; (b) research competent and active; (c) committed to constant professional development; (d) collaborative; and (e) connected to industry and community. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Effective and innovative: Encourage staff to explore and experiment with new teaching methods and innovations to maximize learning outcomes; (b) Research competent and active: Promote research-based teaching; Encourage staff to enhance their research capacity, and actively engage in applied research projects; (c) Committed to constant professional development: Provide staff with opportunities and support for continuing professional development and motivate staff through rewards and recognition; (d) Collaborative: Engage staff in a collegial atmosphere with opportunities for professional networking, co-teaching/team-teaching, and sharing of experience and expertise; (e) Connected to industry and community: Develop strategies to help academic staff stay connected to industry and the community through a variety of channels. - Ensure that all support staff members are dedicated to professional and high standard service. | |
| 4. Digital literacy: Ensure that staff and students are competent users of technologies that enhance the learning process | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that staff and students are skilled users of digital tools and information who are able to cope with the fast-moving technological advances; - Provide staff and students with appropriate training and guidance for better choice and adoption of technologies to suit their needs; - Ensure that academic staff and students are capable of using state-of-the-art technologies to enhance flexibility and effectiveness of learning and teaching, learner independence, access to learning, individualized instruction and support, faculty-student interaction, and collaboration and teamwork. - Ensure that support staff are capable of using technologies to improve internal work processes, feedback and service speed, and engagement with industry and community. | |
| 5 Quality culture: Cultivate a quality culture in all aspects of learning and teaching | |

| | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strive to obtain international accreditation for quality learning and teaching; - Develop strategies to institutionalize a quality culture within the Faculty with special respect to (a) review system, (b) individual and collective reflection, (c) sharing of good practices, and (d) transparent processes and communication. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Review system: Adopt effective methods and procedures for the continuous review and improvement of learning and teaching quality; (b) Individual and collective reflection: Facilitate the practice of individual and collective reflection on various aspects of learning and teaching activities to guide future course of actions; (c) sharing of good practices; and (d) transparent processes and communication; | |
| 6 Key graduate attributes: Strengthen graduate attributes that are vital for the pathway to global citizenship, employability, and social responsibility | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that graduates are fully prepared to be global citizens who display excellent language skills, critical thinking, intercultural sensitivity, adaptability, and knowledge of global issues; - Ensure that graduates have the capacity to compete in the labor market; - Create opportunities for students to connect with and act for the benefits of the community. | |

Appendix 5.2 Graduation Internship Course Outline

| Course ID | Course title | Credits |
|------------|-----------------------|---------|
| ANH450DE02 | Graduation Internship | 9 |
| | Thực tập Tốt Nghiệp | |

To be applied to Semester - 1, Academic year 2016-2020 under Decision No ____/QĐ-BGH

C. Course Specifications:

| Periods | | | | | | Periods in classroom | | |
|---------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------|-----------|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Total periods | Lecture/ Seminar | Laboratory/ Studio | Activity | Fieldwork | Self-study Periods | Lecture room | Lab room | Fieldwork |
| (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) |
| XX | XX | XX | XX | 600 hrs | XX | XX | XX | 600hrs |

D. Other related Subjects:

| Other related Subjects | Course ID | Course title |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------|
| Prerequisites: N/A | | |
| | | |
| Co-requisites: | | |
| 1. | ANH250DE_ | Work Experience Internship |
| | | or Work Experience Accumulation |
| Other requirements: N/A | | |
| | | |

E. Course Description:

This fifteen-week internship offers the intern the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills learned in the classroom to the professional work environment as well as to gain experience related to a specific career. The goal is to assist the intern in making the transition from school to work by providing hands-on, “real world” learning experiences and practical application of classroom theory.

F. Course Objectives:

| No. | Course Objectives |
|-----|-----------------------------|
| | <i>This course aims to:</i> |

| | |
|----|---|
| 1. | Expose the intern to the real world of work so that they can apply their acquired knowledge to tasks assigned at the working place; |
| 3. | Provide challenging and valuable work experience in an environment conducive to learning; |
| 4. | Prepare the intern for future careers possibilities in the field of Business, Translation, and Corporate Communication and ELT; |
| 5. | Help them realize their strengths and weaknesses; and |
| 6. | Sharpen their communication skills. |

G. Learning Outcomes:

| No. | Learning Outcomes | Linked to PLOs |
|-----|--|--|
| | <i>Upon successful completion of this course, the intern will be able to:</i> | |
| | Communication skills | |
| 1. | <i>Oral communication</i> - Verbally express ideas clearly and persuasively with clients, supervisors, and colleagues and in front of the Internship Committee; | PLO_3 (M) PLO_9 (M) PLO_11 (M) PLO_15A (M) |
| 2. | <i>Written communication</i> - Express ideas clearly and persuasively in writing as evidenced by internship daily diaries and internship written reports; | PLO_10 (M) PLO_9 (M) PLO_11 (M) |
| | Cognitive skills | |
| 3. | - Apply knowledge to assigned tasks; | PLO_14A (M) PLO_15B (M) PLO_14C (M) PLO_17A (M) |
| 4. | - Identify potential problems at work; - Plan and implement lessons in a real classroom under guidance (ELT); | PLO_5 (M) PLO_11 (M) PLO_16A (M) |
| 5. | - Recommend solutions to problems; - Use provided materials and incorporate supplementary teaching materials and activities to meet learners' needs and interests (ELT); - Adapt existing materials and develop original work to meet learner needs and interests; (ELT) | PLO_5 (M) PLO_12 (M) |
| | • Professional skills | |

| | | |
|----|---|--|
| 6. | - Construct sense of responsibility; | PLO_19A (M) |
| 7. | - Develop appropriate workplace attitudes; and | PLO_2 (M), PLO_4 (M) PLO_6 (M), PLO_7 (M) |
| 8. | - Evaluate the whole period of the internship by analyzing how it benefits the interns. | PLO_12 (M) PLO_18A (M) |

H. Internship requirement

1. Intern's acquired knowledge:

The interns in this program have successfully completed the four-year training program. They have been equipped with the following knowledge and skills:

1.1 *Generic skills*

Communication skills

- Public Speaking
- Business Correspondence
- Academic Writing

Office skills and IT

- E-commerce
- Data Management
- Drafting Correspondence
- Web Design and Tools

Work Experience Internship

1.2 *Specific knowledge and skills*

1.2.1 **Business English**

Marketing

- a. Public Relations
- b. Sales Management

Business Administration

- a. Change Management
- b. Strategic Management

Human Resources Management

- a. Leadership
- b. Labor Relations

1.2.2 **Translation**

- a. Approaches to Interpreting (Interpretation Methodology)
- b. Specialized Translation in Practice (Translation Practice)
- c. English Semantics
- d. Advanced Methods of Translation (Advanced Translation Methodology)

1.2.3 **Pedagogic knowledge and skills ELT**

- a. Teaching the English Language skills
- b. Classroom - based Language Assessment

- c. Lesson Planning and Materials Development
- d. English Language Teaching: Theories, Methods and Techniques
- e. Teaching English to Children

1.2.4 Corporate Communication

- a. English for Media
- b. Internal communication
- c. Strategic Corporate Communications
- d. Introduction to Events Management
- e. Brand Management
- f. Integrated Marketing Communications Management

2. Expectation:

2.1 Of the intern:

In compliance with the objectives of the internship, the interns are expected observe and conform to these expectations during the internship experience.

Task Performance

- Serve the workplace objectives as official office staff of departments where English is used in transactions.
- Demonstrate practical use of information technology.
- Train communication skills, solve hands-on work problems, be able to apply learned knowledge and acquired skills to carry out tasks appropriately, ensuring quality and efficiency.
- Comply to all of the rules and regulations at the working place.

Courtesy at work

- Be serious, careful, and responsible
- Understand and accept the necessity of dull and repetitive tasks
- Maintain professional confidentiality
- Be open to learning new things, sociable, and well-behaved towards other colleagues
- Demonstrate an active desire to learn from and contribute to the organization

2.2 Of the supervisor:

- Provide a variety of experiences in content and share their knowledge of the setting as a whole
- Establish a positive and effective working relationship with the interns offering time, guidance and support to assist and monitor the interns' transition to the role of professional office worker
- Write a detailed objective assessment report which gives diagnostic and helpful recommendations
- Be willing to suggest to the faculty any recommendations regarding changes to the practicum

I. Assessment Methods (Requirements for completion of the course):

1. Description of learning outcomes assessment

The intern will be assessed by their supervisors based on their performance at the workplace. They also have to make a complete written report, submit a soft copy into Turnitin and a hard copy to Secretary of the Department., and give presentation to the Internship Committee.

| Written report | |
|--|----------------------------|
| <p>Task description:</p> <p>- At the end of the internship, each intern, whether doing internship at the same or different organizations, must write a report of his/her own then submit a soft copy to Turnitin and a hard copy to Secretary of Department. The report consists of the following sections:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Introduction Information about the internship (place, time, position), aims/purposes of the internship, intern's goals2. Organization Name of company, department, location, type of business3. Position Describe main tasks and discuss the knowledge and experience gained during the internship4. Discussion of the chosen topic, including:<ol style="list-style-type: none">4.1 Issue identification and description:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Give the context and describe the matter/issue.- Give the reason why choosing the matter / issue and how important / necessary it is4.2 Issue analytical interpretation:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Clearly interpret/ explain the matter / issue in detail.- Adequately support the interpretation / explanation of the matter / issue with logical and convincing evidence4.3 Issue enhancement interpretation Give your evaluation of / suggested solutions to / recommendations for the improvement of the matter, issue or situation and the results (if any).5. Evaluation and recommendations<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Evaluate the whole period of the internship and how it benefits the interns.- Point out the intern's strengths and weaknesses6. Conclusion and recommendations<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Summarize the intern's goals, activities, and accomplishments, highlighting key knowledge or skills gained, how the interns benefit from this internship, and how it benefits the company.- Give the intern's conclusion and plan concerning your studies and/or your future career.- Suggest ways for the company to improve its products or services (optional)- Recommend what the University, the Department, the Program Manager, or the company can do to better prepare the interns for the final or graduation internship and to meet the requirements of businesses. <p>* Appendices (optional) Include documents, pictures etc. if necessary, to illustrate the reported contents.</p> <p>* The internship journal is required to be submitted with the report</p> | |
| Task length | - About 20 – 25 pages long |

| | |
|---|---|
| Assessment Criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Layout and structure (10%) - Language and style (15%) - Introduction (10%) - Company/ Organization (5%) - Position and tasks (15%) - Matter/Issue identification & description (5%) - Matter/Issue analytical interpretation (10%) - Self-evaluation (10%) - Conclusion & recommendations (10%) |
| Oral presentation | |
| Task description: - Each intern gives an oral presentation of the graduation internship in accordance with the requirements of the University and the Department timeframe | |
| Task length | - 15 minutes for the presentation and 5 minutes for Q&A |
| Assessment Criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attire (5%) - Preparedness (5%) - Content (15%) - Elocution (10%) - Body language (5%) - Language (10%) - Slides (10%) - Clarity/ Communication (15%) - The content of the answer /responses (15%) - Answering strategies/techniques (10%) |
| Supervisor's Assessment | |
| Task description: - The supervisor's assessment of the intern's fifteen weeks of work focuses on three areas, including the quality of the tasks accomplished; the intern's ability to apply his/her knowledge to the tasks given and their attitude at work; and finally their recommendations to the issue under investigation. | |
| Assessment Criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Task completion - Deadline meeting - Sufficient knowledge to perform tasks - Attitude to work assigned - Workplace regulation obedience - Attitude to staff - Practicality of the recommendations - Research methodology <p>Intern's work performance/10; Intern's issue analysis:/10;</p> |

- Rubrics for grading the written report, the oral presentation and the supervisor's assessment are attached in **Appendices 1,2,3**.

Appendix 5.3 Evaluation Feedback Form

Company :

Address :

INTERNSHIP EVALUATION FEEDBACK FORM

Please check (✓) your responses to the following questions

Name of the intern: Class:

Department:

Evaluation of the company about the quality of the intern's assigned work

A. Level of work accomplishment:

☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Average ☐ Bad

B. Deadlines of the assigned tasks were:

☐ always met ☐ sometimes met ☐ not met

Evaluation of the company about the intern

A. Professional skills used in the assigned work are at a __ level:

☐ good ☐ fair ☐ average ☐ bad

B. The attitude and behaviour of the intern toward the assigned work:

☐ Active ☐ Normal ☐ Passive

C. Level of complying with labour discipline (working hours, absenteeism...)

☐ Good ☐ Average ☐ Bad

D. Attitude to employees in the department /colleagues in the office:

☐ Social ☐ Nothing to mention

Comments on the intern's suggestions:

A. Practical suggestions:

☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Average

B. Possibility of the measures:

☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Average

C. Comments on the intern's research methods:

☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Average

Evaluation: **Internship score:**/10; **Topic score:**/10 (*Scores rounded to one decimal*)

Confirmation of the company Date:

(*Head of the company signs and seals*) Name, signature and position of the mentor
/reviewer

Please Note: This form is signed and sealed by the office's head, then put in a sealed envelope so that the student can bring it back to school (or send to school by post),

Reflective Notes

The thesis uses Bernstein's code theory and the concepts of pedagogic device as the theoretical and conceptual framework to investigate how critical thinking, a kind of 'esoteric knowledge' (Bernstein, 2000) and 'powerful knowledge' (Young and Muller, 2016:116) is perceived taught and evaluated at the tertiary level in Việt Nam. The thesis also discusses how power and control are transmitted from dominant classes in society via higher education institutions (HEIs) by the way the content is classified, and the way interactions are framed. Generally, findings of the thesis have demonstrated that Vietnamese students, on the verge of their graduation, have not acquired the powerful esoteric knowledge employers expect. In other words, they have displayed 'empty openness', both conceptually and socially (Muller, 2016: 76), to job requirements. The issues raised in this thesis – although illuminated by a limited number of cases, have had significant implications for HE in Việt Nam, in terms of knowledge and curriculum. It seems it is not enough for curricula to view knowledge as socially produced. Important as well is a need to acknowledge the context independence of knowledge if Vietnamese HE wants to 'bring knowledge back in' (Young, 2007, xv), especially now that it has been under pressure to produce an active competent workforce and the desire to integrate with the world. The research findings have also had some important implications in terms of the academic-vocational divide and pedagogical modalities for critical thinking. The following are a number of points that are worth recapitulating in this conclusion:

1. Firstly, there is a relation between critical thinking and curriculum designs. The findings coming out from the analyses of the two English Studies- Business English programmes (ES-BEPs) have suggested that pressure placed on Vietnamese HEIs, whether public or private, by government, society and employers and the HEIs themselves have resulted in universities implementing curriculum change and an increased interest in the incorporation of neoliberal ideas, such as critical thinking, to provide students with skills and knowledge necessary to survive in a knowledge-driven society (Vietnamese Government, 2001, 2012b; Harmen and Nguyen, 2010). Simultaneously, HE reforms in Việt Nam, being propelled by the current global vogue for qualification frameworks, requiring knowledge to be stipulated in learning 'outcomes' (Vietnamese Government, 2011; 2012a; 2012b; MOET, 2017), has resulted in curriculum design and pedagogic practices that aim at 'trainability' (Young and Muller, 2016) or 'generic skills' (Allais, 2010, 2012) rather than specialised knowledge or critical thinking.

2. Secondly, although it is argued that success of critical thinking curricula is linked to some extent to university statuses (Lim, 2016). This means it is the autonomy curricula give teachers that allows critical thinking to happen. While it is true that teachers' pedagogical modalities of critical thinking depend, to a large extent, on how much autonomy curriculum structures allow them to do so, what is more important is whether teachers are aware of the autonomy and take advantage of that to reorganise knowledge and adjust evaluative criteria for critical thinking to happen. Decidedly, it is the covert processes through which critical thinking- the 'elite' knowledge form- is differently and separately specified and alongside this, the social relations and identities that are necessarily implicated. However, it does not mean knowledge (critical thinking) is left for teachers to interpret at their own wish. Where curricula (syllabi) lack clarity on what critical thinking is and how to assess it, teachers get confused and exclude it from what is perceived as 'official' knowledge. In the case of Việt Nam, private universities seem to enjoy more of this privilege than public universities do.
3. Thirdly, a lack of support due to financial constraints experienced by public universities and their training programmes such as BEP2, does speak of something broader. As a programme operated directly under the ministry of education (MOET), a lack of national funding for research and professional development indicates a lack of roots in knowledge production. Socialist ideologies may see HE not so much as a relay for specialised knowledge and skills but as a means of institutionalising and relaying a new ideological collective consciousness. It is evident in the way that the government and the MOET have de-classified the whole Vietnamese educational system and weakened all the classification and framing. Unless this orientation is changed, efforts to bring knowledge (critical thinking) back into curriculum will continue to be carried out at the surface level.
4. Fourthly, it is about academic- vocational divide. In both private and public universities, decisions to expand a discipline (in this case, English Studies) to respond to the massification of HE and the fields of practices have resulted in curriculum structures being horizontal and segmented. These structures facilitate functional knowledge rather than critical thinking, a kind of esoteric, conceptual knowledge, which allows the generation and integration of abstract symbolic meanings (Bernstein, 2000; Muller, 2016).
5. Another point is critical thinking acquisition in programmes with a dual focus, like those of BEP1 and BEP2, commonly known in the literature as content language

integrated learning (CLIL), requires weakened classification and framing between intradisciplinary relations. This ensures that language and content are coherently and cumulatively tied to and clearly articulated with each other. At the same time, boundaries between one subject knowledge and other knowledge within the discipline and between academic and non-academic contexts also need to be weakened to achieve the same coherence. While recognition and valuation of students' identities and experiences in these non-academic contexts are crucial, these should be accompanied by strong control over criteria, since without these, students do not know what is required of them. In both BEP1 and BEP2 teachers attempt to regulate what it means to take up and enact a discipline specific pedagogic identity. However, there have been conflicts and struggles over whether they should develop students as critical English users or critical business practitioners, or both. Unfortunately, they all separate the two at different stages of training, while language and thought are seen as inseparable (Vygotsky, 1978).

6. In a broader setting, both Private Elite and Public Elite (and other Vietnamese universities) have to face the complex realities of the 21st century. In seeking to catch up with their counterparts in the regions and in the west, they are now entering the playing field which is described as difficult and expensive (Phan, 2016). Teaching critical thinking, the 'powerful knowledge', which in the case of Việt Nam also the 'knowledge of the powerful' is necessary for knowledge production if Việt Nam does not want to be doomed to a peripheral status (World Bank, 2013). Like other undergraduate programmes around the world, both BEP1 and BEP2 have initiated the critical thinking curriculum with a view to align their educational aims with a national agenda, viz. to raise academic standards for all and meet the nations' needs in human resources required by an emerging 'knowledge-based economy'. In this sense, the introduction of critical thinking serves the programmes' needs to be recognised as qualified nationally, regionally and internationally. However, the strategies used by the leaders and teachers to achieve this aim are considerably pragmatic and context dependent. The reason is because the existing socio-cultural political and institutional conditions constrain the ways in which it is possible to articulate critical thinking with the respective contexts.
7. Of course, the teaching of 'powerful knowledge' is impossible without the academic profession. Good pedagogy begins with teachers themselves practicing what they advocate. Overall, teachers in both programmes perceive the importance of critical thinking and have innovated their pedagogic practices to facilitate more access to this

knowledge. However, most progressive ideas lie in the openness of teachers to students. For the instructional discourse, teachers' critical thinking modalities are mostly identified with the learning outcomes (LOs) of the subjects taught. This weak classification, together with generally strong framing over selection, pacing and sequencing of knowledge, have hindered the efforts to internalising critical thinking in students.

8. The weak classification of critical thinking has also had profound impacts on student identities and the nature of knowledge. Critical thinking and the knowledge generated from it have always been projected as a practice in some task-based context. They have taken on a consumable 'property' aspect and been maintained as long as they produce an extrinsic exchange value, e.g. motivation, class engagement, achievement of certain LOs. According to Bernstein (2003: 203), the notion of identity refers to 'the subjective consequences of pedagogic discursive specification'. It is hardly surprising that such an instrumental means- end understanding of critical thinking is conducive to the creation of mundane identities. Significantly, despite epistemological and ideological tensions, there have been signs of hope.
9. The significance of the thesis lies in the findings of the two outlier cases, which demonstrate successful pedagogic modalities of critical thinking. In these cases, teachers combine visible elements of pedagogy, e.g. systematic, direct, explicit instruction and rigorous evaluation criteria together with openness to teacher-student relationship. The pedagogic practices here also accommodate openness to material selection, the use of classroom space, pacing of assignments and between intradisciplinary relations to ensure knowledge is coherently tied. In Bernstein's (2000, 2003) terms, the pedagogic modalities have strongly classified and framed evaluation criteria and a weakened classification and framing in the regulative discourse. On the one hand, this mixed pedagogy (Morais and Neves, 2010) encourages students' engagement and motivation to deliberate disciplinary concerns as well as socio-political issues. On the other hand, since strict systematic evaluation rules in the outlier cases require certain commitment to knowledge, they have led students to successful acquisition of critical thinking. In summary, the findings coming from the outlier cases have proved that the underlying logic of a successful critical thinking curriculum is a combination of an overall weak classification and framing in 'hierarchical rules' (Bernstein, 2003: 65), in selecting, pacing and sequencing lessons and a strong classification and framing in evaluation criteria.

10. The critical thinking curriculum is not without tensions and contradictions. Despite many on-going challenges including overcrowded classrooms, shortage of academic staff, facilities and curriculum materials, not to mention the legacy of the war years and economic crisis, the critical thinking curriculum is a step Vietnamese HE is taking to move toward deep ‘transformation’ of knowledge and advanced skills (Harman & Nguyen, 2010: 68). In this effort, learners are viewed as the most valuable resources for the sustainable development of the nation and with the active participation of Vietnamese universities in regional and international educational cooperation. While measures have been taken to ensure equal access to HE for all learners, privatisation, market-oriented curriculum structures and pedagogic practices that are outcome-based deny equal access to treatment, especially when critical thinking is emphasised.
11. When too much autonomy is given to students in a student-centred environment without explicit direct control of teachers in term of evaluation (Phuong’s case, for example), students do not understand what it is about critical thinking that they are required to aim for. The risk is also great with the lecture method (Bích’s case, for example). The dependence on this method often leaves students with content mastery rather than gaining the cognitive, moral, and epistemic development necessary to become autonomous critical thinkers.
12. The conditions that encourage the formation of critical thinking, or scared knowledge and the formation of identities associated with ‘inwardness’ and the ‘inner dedication to knowing’ are now under most challenge from economic pressures associated with marketisation as well as from government policies which attempt to diminish the autonomy of professionals and direct their activities towards politically defined goals. This present trend in Việt Nam resembles the process of what Sabour (2005: 13) calls universities selling their ‘soul’ to ‘the corporation’ - the process based on the logic of how to provide the population with higher learning at a lower cost, with greater efficiency, and with excellent output. On the face of it, this equation would appear to be logical, but it should be achievable without generating major human and social disadvantages. From a temporal and an idealistic perspective, Vietnamese universities and their training programs are still very remote from that spirit of critical thinking. Even though there have been signs of conception, in principle, what has still been absent is the understanding of what it means to think critically: student and teacher autonomy, their intellectual craft and the quest to accumulate and articulate knowledge.

Throughout its history of development, HE in Việt Nam has always reflected the restriction of accessibility of ‘elite’ knowledge to different groups – the small number of mandarins under the Chinese domination, the selected elites under the French colonialism, and the majority wealthy under the communist regime, although there have been efforts to promote equality.

In the broader context, as a developing country, Việt Nam, in the era of globalisation and neoliberalism cannot escape the influence, the epistemological domination coming from Western countries. Being forced to adopt a market-inspired route that, in the long run, will risk Việt Nam once again to be vulnerable to another era of colonialism as the history of the country experienced. The difference is that this time the colonialism is more global, indirect, invisible and hard to track.

Mass education in Việt Nam, like elsewhere in the world, has challenged the social justice and equality goals set for it by the socialist and democratic movements. It has not fulfilled adequately the growing demand from a globalising labour market for higher levels of knowledge and skills. Unless this is controlled, the long-standing tension between quality and quantity never can be resolved.

Consistently throughout the history of development of the country, HE in Việt Nam has been viewed as a pathway to a better life and an avenue to social mobility (Tran and Marginson, 2014; Hayden). However, HE also functions as an obstacle to such social mobility. It acts as a sorting mechanism that generates, reproduces, or transforms existing social inequalities. The whole picture of how Vietnamese universities in general and BEP1 and BEP2 in particular select and organise critical thinking reflects a broader desire for social political change. As London (2011) put it, in an age of rapid economic growth and consumerism, Việt Nam’s education system may be thought of as a vast social field in which aspirations and constraints collide.

It is undeniable that both Private Elite and Public Elite and their two BEPs are making some great efforts to advance themselves, moving towards the idea of critical thinking as autonomy and intellectual freedom. However, as a result of the orientation of present-day society, in reality, they are still getting stuck in the traditional mission of equipping students with mundane knowledge rather than cultivating in them a critical mind. Given that critical thinking takes emancipation or democracy to heart (Lipman, 2003; McPeck, 1990; Elder and Paul, 2008; Paul and Elder, 2008), what a successful critical thinking curriculum needs is to provide opportunities for involvement in practices through which the social order can be changed, as in the case of Lộc.