

Chapter 5


Vietnamese Teaching Practitioners as Doctoral Students Learning-to-Teach, Teaching, and Assessing Students of and for Social Justice

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents a reflective account of two practitioners, doctoral students from Vietnam learning to teach, teaching and assessing students in tertiary EFL context for interculturality. Informed by King and Kasun's social justice framework, the researchers employed a duo-ethnographic approach to exploring their transnational process of co-constructing knowledge of social justice and transforming into responsible educators for interculturality. Data revealed that the researched participants' educational backgrounds, overseas engagement, and research-to-pedagogy perspectives have facilitated their sense of intercultural communication, which in turn shaped their socially-just personal, academic, and professional decisions.

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INTRODUCTION

Relevant literature suggests that practitioners need to become more conscious of their responsibilities for educational initiatives toward a more diverse, inclusive and equitable educational environment in which they play their significant part (López-Gopar et al., 2022). In language education, a social justice initiative requires stakeholders to become interculturally responsive to the ever-increasing demands to promote equity, inclusion, and diversity in language classrooms (Barahona & Ibaceta-Quijanes, 2022; Deardorff, 2006; Do & Vu, in press). This, in turn, supports students in reaching their full potential in language proficiency, knowledge of the target language, and social responsibility (Barahona, 2020; Barahona & Ibaceta-Quijanes, 2022). By taking students' needs, interests, and personal capacities into consideration during material development, curriculum design, teaching and assessment practices, the teachers can assist students in achieving their language proficiency and significantly help cultivate students' sense of responsibility for being agents of social change. However, most English language teaching programmes in English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) contexts, such as in Vietnam, have failed to sufficiently address social justice components in their respective curricula (Leiva et al., 2021; Nguyen & Zeichner, 2021), despite a developing line of research findings (Vu et al., 2021). Instead, they tend to place unnecessary emphasis on learners' linguistic achievements rather than communicative competence (Cao, 2018). Therefore, raising the associated stakeholders' awareness of social justice in language education is a burgeoning task in such a context.

In Vietnam, few studies have explored how stakeholders, including teachers, take proactive responsibility as social change agents to enact their teaching and research practices toward a social justice perspective (Nguyen & Zeichner, 2021; Vu & Nguyen, 2022). As teacher trainers, practitioners, and researchers in this context, the researchers position themselves as social actors who are agents of social change at personal and professional language education levels. The researchers argue that such an approach helps contribute to a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable social environment for language education. Another study by Vu and Nguyen (2021), though not directly related to this importance, facilitated the pre-service teachers' civic engagement as an additional source of knowledge needed for their future pedagogical approaches. Remarkably, considering social problems as content knowledge enabled the teachers to develop their and their students' socially-just skills in future language classrooms. Moreover, from a personal level, their proactive personality may help steer their changes in teaching practices to fulfil their professional responsibility in their multiple roles in a multicultural and multilingual environment.

The researchers understand that developing a sense of responsibility for social justice among stakeholders in any context requires both macro and micro levels. From the micro-level, they wish to contribute their humble part by raising their voice in their reflections that have shaped their identities and transformed our personal and professional perspectives of and for social justice. To this end, they report on a duo-autoethnographic account of their experience in the roles of parent, doctoral students, educators, and researchers through their professional exposure to multicultural and multilingual educational contexts. The chapter begins with background information that signifies the research rationales, followed by the research methodology and the data collection and analysis process—the subsequent sections deal with major findings and discussions. The chapter concludes that teachers' and practitioners' socially-just personal, academic, and professional actions may help gradually shift the language education in which they play a part toward a more diverse, inclusive and equitable environment.

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