

**Understanding the transformative potential of
international education for Vietnamese overseas graduates
and their communities**

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Thesis

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List of Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AEI	Australian Education International
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
CA	Capability Approach
CPV	Communist Party of Viet Nam
DN	Da Nang
FAE	Foreign affiliated enterprise
FDI	Foreign direct investments
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HERA	Higher Education Reform Agenda
HCMC	Ho Chi Minh City
HN	Ha Noi
IIE	Institute of International Education
IPP	International Partnership Program
IT	Information and Technology
MNC	Multinational Corporation
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGO	Non-government organisation
NSE	Non-State owned enterprise
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SOE	State-owned enterprise
SBV	State Bank of Viet Nam
USOM	United States Operation Mission
VCA	Viet Nam Cooperative Alliance
VCCI	Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry
VFF	Viet Nam Father Front
VHLSS	Viet Nam Household Living Standards Survey
WEF	World Economic Forum
WVS	World Values Survey
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Summary of thesis

Discourses in international education have largely focused on economic and political imperatives, which emphasise institutional measures such as student mobility, international partnerships and alliances as evidence of efficiency and achievement. This thesis aims to shift that thinking to consider perspectives of human development and international graduates' contribution to development of their home countries. Along this vision, and in consideration of the large population of international students from Asian developing countries, this thesis explores the transformative potential of acquired international education for Vietnamese graduates in their local communities.

Through the lens of Amartya Sen's agency-focused Capability Approach, this thesis examines the aspirations, opportunities and practices of Vietnamese overseas graduates in their work and community work after returning to Viet Nam. This thesis employs Pierre Bourdieu's sociological concepts of *habitus*, capital and field to operationalise Sen's notions of effective agency as the transformative capacity of these returnees to enable personal and social change in their work and community participation. It offers concepts of *normative agency* and *intersubjective freedom* as a theoretical framework, and the use of reflexive sociology as an innovative way to engage with the returnees' "reasoning" of their values, choices and practices.

This research employed a mixed method approach of online surveys of Vietnamese overseas-educated returnees (N=280), followed by in-depth interviews with key returnees and members of their networks (N=48). The interviews provided a fuller account of the returnees' experiences identified in the surveys, thus were the primary focus of analysis and discussions in this thesis. This thesis provides understanding about the types of overseas-acquired skills, knowledge, attributes and attitudes that these returnees can utilise, in light of Viet Nam's historical, economic, cultural and political contexts, and institutional structures of their workplaces and community organisations. The returnees' practical experiences suggest competing values that underline the complexity of co-opting with societal norms and making autonomous choices and actions in the process of agency and social change. This thesis offers some implications for international education providers to contribute to ethical development of emerging knowledge societies, and for public policies in Viet Nam to support overseas-educated returnees in contributing to their communities. This thesis offers significant

theoretical contributions and insights into the experiences of international graduates upon returning home, thus sets the ground for further research work in this area.

Candidate's Statement of Authenticity

I certify that the thesis entitled “*Understanding the transformative potential of international education for Vietnamese overseas graduates and their communities*” is the result of my own research, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

I certify that I obtained approval from the Macquarie University Ethics Committee prior to conducting the research, and that I have met the reporting compliance of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). The Ethics Committee approval protocol number is 5201300115.

Name: Lien Thi Pham

Signed:

Date: May 2016

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I have always wanted to be a writer who tells stories about people's lives, the kind of stories that engage readers to imagine a world that they may never visit, and hear the voices of the people that they may never meet. So I embarked on writing a research thesis. Little did I know how challenging yet nourishing that process turned out to be. It is not so much because of the enduring process of writing or the rigour of research. Rather, it is the people that I have met along the way, the people whose experiences, knowledge, thoughtfulness and generosity have enriched my learning, and allowed me to really understand my place in this world. I wish to express my gratitude to all those people who have taken time to work with me and supported me in this research project and writing this thesis.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

There has been a tremendous growth in student mobility in higher education¹ in the last two decades as universities in the West engage in internationalisation strategies to respond to globalisation. According to the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD 2013), the total number of foreign students enrolled in tertiary education in 2011 was 4.3 million, with the United States receiving 16.6 per cent of the total number, followed by the United Kingdom (13 per cent), Australia (6.6 per cent), Germany (6.4 per cent), France (6.3 per cent), other OECD countries (35.6 per cent) and non-OECD countries (15.5 per cent). Asian students account for 53 per cent of all students studying abroad worldwide with the largest number of international students coming from China, India and Korea (OECD 2013). At the same time, the Asian region has begun to make its presence felt as countries like Singapore, Hong Kong (as part of China) and Malaysia offer international education to neighbouring countries including Thailand, Viet Nam and Taiwan (Ng 2012).

The increasing role of market forces in international education and positioning of universities on a global scale has seen a focus on marketisation, competition and management of student mobility (Altbach 2014; Nahas 2012; Teichler 2004). This has led to the delivery of international education as a market based commodity focusing on developing human capital to meet economic growth, particularly for developing countries in Asia (Altbach & Knight 2007). It has also resulted in practices by Asian universities - especially in East Asia - of duplicating Western ideas of a university (Marginson 2007). The broad benefits that have often been advanced from countries and institutions offering international education are improved public diplomacy and trade relations between host and source countries, universities entrepreneurialism and market positioning, and higher status qualifications and better job access for international education graduates (Murray et al. 2011; OECD 2013). According to Knight (2014), universities are motivated to deliver international education to gain political, economic and institutional competitiveness. Knight (2014) argued that these rationales emphasise international students' employment outcomes, rather than preparing them to understand the social needs and challenges of their countries' development,

¹ Using the World Bank definition, higher education is taken to include undergraduate and postgraduate education

participate ethically in their local societies, and be global citizens. Furthermore, they have resulted in a commodification of knowledge, and a dominance of Anglo-Western knowledge and pedagogies (Knight 2014).

Research about international education has been mainly conducted by host countries and universities that offer international education, focusing on the economic imperatives of demand and supply of student mobility, economic outcomes of internationalisation practices, and graduates' participation in the labour market as evidence of international education outcomes (Altbach 2014; de Wit & Jooste 2014; Knight 2014; Macgregor 2014), or critiques of dominance of Anglo-Western perspectives in knowledge production and export as new forms of internationalism (de Wit & Jooste 2014; Knight 2014). The various orientations of these studies have accumulated a large body of literature about student mobility, international student experiences, policies and practices in international education programs, pedagogy and curriculum delivery, student preparations, skills, jobs, and migration. However, these studies tend to present international students as belonging to homogenous groups of nations, rather than examining the impacts of international education from individual perspectives of international graduates and returnees from and returning to particular countries or regions. Furthermore, there is little research about their contribution to socio-economic development of their local communities as a result of their acquired international education.

In this thesis, I argue for rethinking the vision of international education towards a transformative agenda to engender international students' self-determination, self-reflection, agency and citizenship that would enable them to make valuable personal and social change for them and their communities when they return to their homeland. The purpose of international education could include both the instrumental objectives of skills development and jobs procurement, as well as the intrinsic value of creating substantive opportunities for people to live the lives they value. To achieve this vision, I argue that there is a need to move research from institutional perspectives of international education providers to those of international students, graduates and returnees, and focusing on their personal and civic commitment within their home communities.

With these objectives, this thesis presents and discusses the research findings of a case study of Vietnamese overseas-educated returnees, and their experiences in employed work and community work in Viet Nam. Drawing on surveys followed by interviews conducted with these returnees, I will discuss their experiences in their work and community work, their perceptions of the benefits and limitations of acquired international education in enhancing their capabilities to pursue their goals as they see valuable for them and their communities

(Sen 1985, 1999). I will show that while overseas-acquired learning may provide these returnees with some positional advantage in the employment market, the extent to which they can translate these resources to capabilities in order to enable change in the workplace or community development is largely dependent on the economic, social, political and institutional contexts of their work and community work. Furthermore, their future commitments to social change through professional and ethical work practices and civic actions, are determined by their values and perception of power, which are constructed within their local institutions and relations with others. Understanding the complex and challenging conditions that returnees encounter in their local communities can open the way for international education policy makers, and governments in home countries to consider opportunities to assist returning graduates – as difficult as it might be - to engage in transformative actions that are applicable for their local communities.

In the context of this thesis, the terms “international education”, and “overseas education” are used interchangeably and refer to studying at universities in the host countries that students do not have citizenship. The terms “West” and “Western” generally refer to countries that are historically and culturally European including the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The terms “Anglo-West” and “Euro-America” are also used interchangeably with the same meaning. The terms “Asia” and “Asian” generally refer to countries in East Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia.

I organize the remainder of this chapter as follows. In the next section, I sketch the current literature about international education where I critique the idea of “knowledge economy” as fostering a narrow economic view about the benefits of international education and entrenching a soft power of Western knowledge and values in international education. I then offer, in section 3, a contending viewpoint of international education as developing a “knowledge society” that locates international students and graduates in the diversity of their home countries. Here I draw on Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach (CA) as a conceptual lens to present a humanistic view of international education that allows for a plurality of agency-focused capabilities. I then propose a framework in which we can understand and analyse the impacts of international education by combining Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practice with Sen’s ideals of agency. I argue that a sociological framework of agency-focused capabilities allows us to understand the social conditions that returnees encounter, and how they may respond to - and shape - those conditions to utilise their overseas learning to contribute to socio-economic development of their communities. In the following section (section 4), I present an overview of my research, its aims and how I apply the Sen-Bourdieu

framework to design my research. In section 5, I summarise the key arguments of the thesis, and note the contributions of this thesis in terms of theory, method and empirical knowledge about the experiences of Vietnamese overseas-educated returnees (section 6). The last section (section 7) outlines the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Current discourses of international education

1.2.1 The notion of “knowledge economy” in Asia

The practices of higher education in Asia have to a great extent been about developing human capital to contribute to economic development. This phenomenon of the “knowledge economy” (Welch 2013) serves as a stimulus in competitive internationalisation practices of universities in Europe, North America and the Pacific, particularly universities in the United Kingdom, Australia, and to a lesser extent, those in the United States, Canada and New Zealand (Brandenburg & de Wit 2011; Marginson & Considine 2000; Rhoades & Torres 2006). Olsen & Peters (2005) argued that the reaction to, and support for the ‘competition’ agenda presents free markets as appropriate in delivering and evaluating higher education where universities are managed as entrepreneurial business entities with international students as customers. The consequence is that knowledge is seen as having a practical value of strategic occupation in the knowledge economy where universities measure performance based on ranking and graduates’ employment outcomes. As Welch (2013) argued, the “knowledge economy” narrowly presupposes a pursuit of higher education for vocational outcomes and economic rewards. According to Knight (2013), the role of international education is thus seen as equipping students to meet the impetus of educational status and income generation over the importance of socialising students to be active citizens in their country and of the world.

1.2.2 International education outcomes of skills, knowledge, jobs and employability

It is not surprising then that research about international education outcomes and benefits has largely focused on economic returns for international students. Yet, the picture seems to be mixed in terms of relevant skills and knowledge, jobs, employability and high salaries for overseas graduates when they return home (Cannon 2000; Demir et al. 2000; Harman 2005; Lewis 1992; Wiers-Jenssen 2008). While there is not enough research evidence to suggest

that international education can help in the long term with career progression, literature often points to the advantage that international graduates have in the initial recruitment process.

Research studies that portray positive outcomes of international education tend to focus on graduates' positional advantage in employment markets as a result of studying in Western countries. For example, studies that focus on East Asian countries like Hong Kong and Japan, often frame international education as status markers in the home countries (Ong 1999; Waters 2006). Other studies claim that returning Asian graduates procure valuable cultural capital (Chen & Zimiatat 2006; Matthews & Sidhu 2005), and gain positional opportunities for employment because international education has the potential to change professional identities (Pyvis & Chapman 2007). These potentialities emphasise overseas-acquired transferable skills and knowledge, work-related attributes (Cox & King 2006; Leckey & McGuigan 1997), and language skills particularly English proficiency (Pennycook 1994; Philipson 1992; Waters 2006). Crossman & Clarke (2010) claimed that there is a clear connection between international education and employability due to foreign networks, and the experiential learning of applying theory to practice in authentic, real life or practical ways that enable graduates to be work-ready.

On the other hand, there are studies about Asian returnees that suggest these positional advantages associated with overseas education are bound up with local issues and thus are not universal across and within nations (Keats 1969).² Other studies point to disadvantages for Indonesian returnees such as the lack of connection between overseas studies and local work settings to practise professional skills, little increase in scope or responsibility to use knowledge or skills learnt overseas, and delayed career progression due to local and national department policies and bureaucratic control (for example civil promotion systems) (Cannon 2003; Kiley 1999). There are similar findings about significant problems relating to lack of resources and technology, lack of capacity to continue research or implement alternative ways of teaching, lack of co-operation and appreciation from locally trained staff, and feeling of disrespect by local people (Daoresmna & Daroesman 1992; Gill 2010; Johnsrud 1993).

Furthermore, some of the skills and attributes promoted by Western universities are not relevant to returnees. Campbell (2010) argued that the extent to which these generic skills are relevant in professional careers of returnees depend on the social and political contexts,

² Keats (1969) is a tracer study of the Australian Colombo Plan and as far as I know, the only study that looked at a number of source countries in Asia. The countries that were examined were Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Indonesia and the Phillipines.

work culture and opportunities of their workplace, and returnees' status within their communities. Hao et al. (2016) found that one of the biggest barriers for today's Chinese sojourners is to re-adapt to traditional Chinese culture, government structure, economic growth, different customs in different regions and China's position in the world. Similarly, in his research about Chinese returnees, Zweig and Yang (2014) argued that conservative values form a strong firewall against inculcation of the Western norms to which members of the diasporic community have grown accustomed. However, there are "small environments" within larger organisations (Zweig & Yang 2014). In addition, research reports that found positive impacts of generic skills are often based on data from students in Western countries (Gauntlett 2006; Leung & Chan 2003; Thakur & Horgan 2007).

According to Campbell (2010), there remains little research about whether skills that are valued by Western societies are also valued in the contexts of local culture. Understanding the value of skills is important because most skills are applied in the contexts of the home country, where families, colleagues, teachers, political and community leaders have a major role in shaping and valuing specific generic skills and attributes. As Cannon (2000) pointed out, employability outcomes are complex because international graduates recognise their overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes differently to their local counterparts. Yet, they also want to integrate with the local professions and communities in order to be able to apply and maintain those skills and attributes.

1.2.3 The soft power of Western knowledge

In addition to a lack of clear direction and connection between international education and employability of graduates, the idea of "knowledge economy" as constituting demands for international education has a disempowering effect at the national level as universities in Asia strive to borrow policies from the Euro-American nations. Marginson (2007) referred to this as knowledge that relies on the "subordination of peripheral countries to Europe-American intellectual dominance of research concentration and knowledge flows" (Marginson 2007, pg. 306). Such thinking constructs a reductionist viewpoint of the West possessing the expertise, technology and management, and education that Asian countries lack (Choi 2010; Marginson 2007; Welch 2013). It is this lack of expertise and capacity that is portrayed as the problem of Asia and economic development can be achieved by acquiring Western education. The emphasis on knowledge in this context is in response to catching up with the demands of globalisation and technological advances that are in line with Western values (Choi 2010;

Mahbubani 2007) and through the use of English (Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson 1992). Under this framework, international students' identities are discursively manufactured as seekers of positional goods who will gain monetary rewards in the labour market abroad or at home without really considering their subject locations in either location. They are assumed to be global citizens with global and diverse tastes, senses and values that would allow them to fit into a global Western democratic society and capitalist economy, and that they can utilise these acquired tastes, senses and values to participate in society and achieve labour market advantage wherever they are (Waters 2006). Yet, as gleaned from the literature above, there remains little research evidence to support these assumptions.

1.3 Contending viewpoints of international education

1.3.1 The vision of a “knowledge society”

In this thesis, I echo other scholars who have argued for a new vision of international education (Altbach 2014; Brandeburg & de Wit 2012; de Wit 2014; Knight 2014, Teichler 2004). This vision conceptualises international education as developing human beings as agents who are in charge of their lives, where educational values are about what people can do with their knowledge. It views educational processes as creating the kind of knowledge that enable people to make choices that they value rather than accommodating to values that are imposed on them (Welch 2013).

I argue that international education has the potential to advance knowledge production and transfer when people can critique the knowledge that they have in order to generate knowledge, in a place where they can use such knowledge, and in ways that are valuable for them in their society. In other words, international education should be premised on the notion of “knowledge society”, rather than the illusion of the “knowledge economy”: the potential of international education lies in its impacts upon the lives of graduates in their local communities that include and extend beyond economic benefits. I draw on Barnett's (2011) concept of “knowledge society” as *knowledge-for-the-world* and *knowledge-in-the world*; the former refers to the instrumental value of knowledge insofar as it has utility in society; the latter refers to knowledge that is generated in the “real” world that counts. Barnett (2011) contrasts this with the notions of *knowledge-in-itself* where it is assumed to be valuable in itself and *knowledge-for-itself* where it is generated in a place that has value for that place, rather than the place where it may be applied. As Sen (1997) argued, it is important to see human beings in a broader perspective than that of human capital, that is seeing human beings

as more than productive resources in the economy. Similarly, Turner (2012) argued that viewing international education only for the economy surrenders people to the conception of ‘value’ that depends on economic exchanges primarily in the market place, rather than engagement with knowledge as enabling individual and social development within a set of broadly conceived development aims. Paradoxically, when knowledge is narrowly construed as having economic value and economic value is dominant, the person who acquires knowledge is disempowered and robbed of her opportunities to make “real” personal and social change (Turner 2012).

Furthermore, I argue that if we attend to international education as humanising processes in the “knowledge society”, international students can be encouraged to be critical of their roles in their society and prepared to engage in their local communities; so they can address local and global issues with confidence and voice, and be able to shape sustainable development and international collaboration in a highly interdependent world. As Barnett (2011) argued, knowledge is pursued when knowledge is critiqued. Through developing graduates’ capabilities to reason what they know and why they know, they might recognise how “knowledge” as a result of international education maybe imposed as universal, or they can take part in the knowledge construction and application.

My argument for shifting the vision of international education also takes account of the dearth of research about the potential of international education beyond jobs and economic benefits. As noted by Cuthbert et al (2008) and Yashiro (2010), there is much need for investigating into other activities that returnees may engage in, including leadership in NGOs, governments, community work and how these activities contribute to local development. As Williams (2005) argued, international education can foster diverse cultural values and openness that enable international students and graduates to have respect for their own cultures and traditions, rather than oriented around notions of flexibility and adaptability for working in industrialised environment of Western advanced economies. As Cuthbert et al (2008) and Harman (2005) noted, the pertinent question about the value, relevance, outcomes and benefits of acquired international education for graduates and their local communities over time remains unasked and unanswered. There seems to be a continued disconnect in the literature about the skills, knowledge and attributes that international education can impart to students, and the opportunities and processes in which graduates take on to contribute to socio-economic development of their home countries.

1.3.2 A sociological framework of Sen's agency-focused capabilities

Against this background of scarce and fragmented research about the impact of international education for local development from international graduates' perspectives, I argue for a research focus on international students and graduates' values, motivations, choices, resources and opportunities to contribute to development of their local communities. We need a framework to understand the processes of applying skills, knowledge, attributes and attitudes learnt from abroad that draw on - but also critically assess - localised traditions and values. We must recognize that in everyday practices, people act in response to local conditions and contexts (Patrick 2013).

Amartya Sen's Capability Approach (CA) is attractive as a conceptual lens for viewing and evaluating international education and its role in development as it allows us to think about humans as *ends* of the process of development rather than *means* in the process of development (Sen 1999). Sen (1999) argued for an ethical viewpoint about development as expansion of freedom or capability of individuals to *do* and to *be* as they value. With this focus on human development, economic outcomes are only valuable insofar as they can provide people opportunities to live a life they have *reason* to choose and value (Sen 1999). As Arnove (2010) argued, education is an essential component of development in that it can be shaped either to control people and limit their worldviews of possibilities, or it can equip individuals to question their existential realities and take actions to improve their life circumstances and societies as a whole, in accordance with their values and goals.

I argue that Sen's CA allows for thinking about "knowledge" in terms of the substance of a person, as *beings*, and the application of a person, as *doings*, through its emphasis on agency. Sen (1999) takes into account the interpersonal impact of education because people are able to use the benefits of their education to help others as well as themselves to contribute to democratic freedom and the overall good of society. The CA focuses on individuals as agents who make choices and take actions in the process of development (Crocker 2008; Robeyns 2005; Sen 1999). The notion of agency puts to the forefront the potential of international education in bringing about self-determination and resources that may (or may not) lead to empowering choices and actions. The subjectivities of graduates who return to their home countries and their influences on their communities hold much relevance for knowledge production and transfer as they are understood and applied critically *in* the world and *for* the world that they live in. Thus, I argue that the normative underpinning of Sen's CA allows for the "reasoning" of knowledge as a production of knowledge *in* the

world in which the person lives, not just interpreting and applying a certain form of knowledge acquired from elsewhere. In applying this view of self-determination, one must be careful to recognise what can be learnt from the outside, and that people may not want to be agents because local knowledge says they should be passive tools of authorities. Therefore, Sen's CA is useful as a conceptual lens to consider the benefits of international education for society, in ways that do not reduce educational values to mere economic values.

To understand the rationale and potential of international education to make a difference in people's lives, there must be a space to imagine transformation at a local level where they live and work. Thus as Sen (1985) argued, the social, economic and political conditions that impact a person's values set must be accounted for and considered relative to her freedom and agency. This normative focus of agency makes Sen's CA highly appealing for thinking about the impacts of international education for graduates in their local contexts because their motivations, choices and actions are shaped by these local political, cultural, social and economic influences.

However, there are some tensions in Sen's vision of agency. First, Sen envisions agency to be exercised when individuals can reason their values and justify their actions (Sen 1985). This focus on the value judgement process seems to imply an objective freedom that is inconsistent with his recognition of social conditions affecting freedom and agency of a person (Martins 2007). Second, Sen pays little attention to how values are formed and choices are taken in light of these social conditions (Deneulin 2009). (I will discuss these tensions in chapter 3). Thus, I argue that sociological tools are needed to bring Sen's highly abstract notions of agency and freedom to concrete levels, in order to understand how graduates may apply their overseas acquired skills, knowledge or values *for* and *in* their local environments. This need for an auxiliary sociological theory to understand values and choices is also recognised by other CA scholars (Agee & Crocker 2008; Deneulin 2009; Gasper 2007; Hart 2013) (see chapter 3).

In this thesis, I draw on Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) sociological concept of *habitus* to understand and analyse international graduates' values, choices and practices in the following ways: First, I use *habitus* - systems of dispositions - to understand: (1) how values of overseas education are constructed (chapter 5); and (2) how might overseas-acquired learning be valued and mobilised to achieve the goals that overseas-educated returnees desire (chapter 6 to 8). According to Bourdieu (1990), *habitus* works in relation to the social fields that individuals operate in, that is individuals make choices in response to their surrounding social conditions. Thus, *habitus* focuses on cultural, social, political and historical issues in the local

contexts that returnees live in, and how they might influence their values, motivations, goals, responsibilities, choices and actions. In other words, *habitus* allows us to understand the social conditions that Sen refers to in shaping individual goals and opportunities, and the process of agency. The dialectical workings of *habitus* recognises that agency also shape the *habitus* that in turn shape individual agency. Thus, *habitus* supports Sen's argument that humans can exercise agency and shape the very conditions that shape them (Sen 1999, p. 9, 11, 31).

Second, I use Bourdieu's *reflexive sociology* as praxis to engage returnees in the process of "reasoning" their values about the significance of international education in enabling or restricting their agency in their everyday practices (see chapter 3). This praxis of reflexivity explicates the normative underpinnings of the CA, as well as nurtures the processes of critical reflection and connection with others that are intrinsically ethical and not only instrumental (Nussbaum 2011; Sen 1999). Thus, in applying Sen and Bourdieu as a conceptual framework, my central argument in this thesis is that the relevance of international education lies in its ability to enhance the lives of international graduates and returnees in ways that enable them to recognise, respond to, and shape their surrounding social structures and relations. In this regards, I use the Sen-Bourdieu framework to conceptualise *normative agency*, that is a framework of agency that takes account of the practical choices and actions of returnees in their social environments. I discuss this conceptual framework, its potential limitations and how I address these limitations in chapter 2.

In summary, I argue for shifting international education research towards broader outcomes beyond economic returns, in particular, whether these outcomes reflect graduates' personal values of how they want to live their lives. As Barnett (2011) noted, the idea of knowledge is not value-neutral: with knowledge, a person sees herself in her society; she perceives knowledge as a valid relationship to her world in her application of her knowledge in everyday life. I consider the concept of *normative agency* to be highly appropriate for enacting this vision because it allows knowledge to be viewed in the plurality of social, cultural, political and economic contexts that condition the values, choices and practices of returnees. Without acknowledgement and deliberation of research to understand the relevance of international education in the local contexts of students or graduates, there is a risk that international education becomes *knowledge-for-itself*, that is it accounts for the interests of the universities and countries who produce and transfer this knowledge.

Furthermore, I argue that rather than thinking about the local as something distinct from the global, the emphasis of international education outcomes and benefits could be upon reflexive aspects of relationships between returnees and the global world in their day-to-day experiences because they produce day-to-day actions actively in local conditions. From this basis, theorising international education can build upon the unique characteristics of their country's historical, cultural, social and political contexts, rather than perpetuate ideas based on prerogatives and conditions of the Anglo-Western world. This entails considerable effort in research to understand the conditions that enable or challenge returnees in their local communities as a result of their acquired international education.

1.4 Overview of the research

In the last section, I argued for rethinking international education as a transformative potentiality to enable graduates and returnees to critically examine their roles in their society and enable change as they see valuable. I charted a framework of *normative agency* drawing on Sen and Bourdieu to theorise and conduct research along this vision. In this section, I present an overview of this research using a case study of Vietnamese overseas-educated returnees to enquire about the transformative potential of international education from their experiences in working and participating in community work in Viet Nam. First, I argue the significance of Viet Nam (see also chapter 3 and 4), followed by an overview of the research theoretical framework (see chapter 2) and methodological design (see chapter 3). Then, I will summarise the main arguments that form part of the overall research aims (see chapter 5 to 7).

1.4.1 The significance of Viet Nam

The use of a case study of Viet Nam is intended to account for the country's unique historical, political, cultural, social, and economic specificities, and their impacts on governance and policies in workplace, technological advancement, human resources, teaching and research capacity, and activism in community participation; in turn, how these factors create conditions or conditionings for Vietnamese overseas-educated returnees to apply their overseas learning as they see valuable. It should be noted that the intention of this thesis is not to homogenise Vietnamese returnees, or those of East or Southeast Asian countries. Rather, I consider that Viet Nam provides a useful case study for broader phenomenon about the transformative

potential of international education from the practical experiences of overseas-educated returnees.

Viet Nam has unique characteristics that make it a useful case study. First, Viet Nam has experienced dynamic economic growth with average annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of 7 per cent in the last three decades (World Bank 2013). From 1990 onwards, Viet Nam's *Doi Moi* (Renovation) economic reform has promoted a market-based economy that has encouraged studiousness and industry of its people. This has stimulated Vietnamese people especially the youth to study actively, particularly studying abroad, to seek opportunities to enhance their competitive skills and competencies (Pham & Fry 2004). Yet there is a sombre assessment of Viet Nam's human capital. The World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness report for 2008-2009 (WEF 2010) suggests Vietnamese global competitiveness has not improved due to weaknesses in the quality of infrastructure and institutions, low quality in higher education and training, low university enrolment rate and poor quality of education systems (WEF 2010). In this regards, Viet Nam provides a good case study to understand the impact of acquisition of international education in terms of enhancing jobs access and employability for Vietnamese international graduates.

Second, there has been a strong emphasis within the Vietnamese society on studying abroad since colonial days when there was a number of students studying in France in 1920s. Following the Geneva agreements in 1954, South Viet Nam became a client state of the US and North Viet Nam received assistance from the Soviet Union, China and the Eastern-bloc countries (Marr 1993). The Soviet Union provided "friendship" scholarships for students to study in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) (Marr 1981). At the same time the US Operations Missions (USOM), implemented changes in education systems in South Viet Nam, with goals to reform education systems to provide greater access and practical training to facilitate economic development (Tibbetts 2007, NARA 2015). This resulted in many South Vietnamese receiving scholarships to study in US institutions. The South Vietnamese government was also subsidising almost 6,000 students to study abroad (Marr 1981). The study-abroad trend has continued since reunification in 1975 with the Vietnamese government, in conjunction with other countries, providing overseas scholarships for Vietnamese students to take up postgraduate studies in Russia and Eastern Europe up to early 1990s (Marr 1991), and Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand, Japan, Singapore, Thailand, the US and Canada since *Doi Moi* until current day (IIE 2013; OECD 2013, Welch 2013). Thus, Viet Nam is a good case study to understand the impact of international

education in light of this historical trajectory of colonial influence, Communist alliance and contemporary pursuit of international - largely Western - education.

Third, with the rise in private wealth in the last 20 years, there has been a surge in private funding by parents for their children to study abroad. The significant increase in Viet Nam's student outflow to Western universities reflect students' and their families' pursuit of employment opportunities and skilled migration in Western countries, as well as their perception of the superiority of Western universities, particularly the US (Vietnam Net 2014). Since the early 20th century, the tremendous flow of international students from Viet Nam going abroad is aligned with student outbound mobility of other Asian countries to Euro-American countries. According to OECD (2013) 2010 enrolment data for foreign students, Vietnamese international students represent 1.6 per cent (approximately 68,800 students) of the total number of 4.3 million foreign students worldwide. The total proportion of foreign students from Asia was 53 per cent of total foreign students worldwide.

Viet Nam has been a top 20 place of origin for international students since 2006/07 and remains a top 10 place of origin in the US since 2010/11. In the 2011/12 academic year, 15,572 students from Viet Nam were studying in the US (up 5 per cent from the previous year) making the country the eighth leading place of origin for students coming to the US. The majority of students were studying at undergraduate level (72 per cent) and 17 per cent at graduate level. In Australia, there were 11,071 Vietnamese international students enrolled in tertiary institutions in December 2012, (11,173 in 2013). Viet Nam placed fourth as a source of Australian international tertiary education enrolment, behind China, India, and Malaysia (AEI 2015). This trend has remained steady in the last seven years. Vietnam is thus appropriate to examine the outcomes of international education given its significance in terms of international student enrolment; and as far as I know, there has not been research that enquires about Vietnamese international graduates or returnees.

Fourth, Viet Nam is an authoritarian Socialist State with a history of fighting independence from foreign colonisation. The State also has strong policies of pushing nationalism, particularly through the education systems (London 2006; Salomon & Ket 2007). The State has a pervasive presence across society through the Marxist-Leninist model of embedding mass organisations in almost all public institutions (Kervliet 2008; Hannah 2007). It also has strict policies against political activism, yet has also relaxed its authoritative grip on public debate, for example in the media (Porter 1993). The unique integrated State-society relations provide useful insights for understanding about conditions for democratic actions in Viet Nam generally. Moreover, these unique relations make Viet Nam a useful case study to

explore the opportunities and practices of overseas-educated returnees in economic, civic and political participations.

Fifth, I am Vietnamese-Australian, a *Viet Kieu* (overseas Vietnamese). Having grown up and studied in Australia, I can, to a certain extent, understand the viewpoints of the Vietnamese international graduates when they return to Viet Nam. In particular, my knowledge of the Vietnamese culture is beneficial for understanding the social contexts of the Vietnamese returnees' experiences. My proficiency in the Vietnamese language is useful in recruiting participants, engaging in dialogues with them, and gaining insights about their aspirations, responsibilities and choices in their everyday practices.

1.4.2 Statement of research problem

The central objective of this research is to explore the transformative potential of acquired international education for Vietnamese international graduates and their local communities when they return to Viet Nam. The transformative potential of international education is explored in three broad areas. First, returnees' achievements and opportunities in their work and community participation as a result of their acquired overseas education. Second, the processes in which returnees can apply their overseas-acquired skills, knowledge, attributes and attitudes to pursue their goals as they see valuable. Third, returnees' agency to enable personal and social change within their societies.

This research orients around the main research question: What is the transformative potential of acquired international education for Vietnamese overseas graduates in their local communities? To address this overarching question, this thesis has three main aims: (1) to understand the extent that Vietnamese overseas graduates can utilise their overseas-acquired skills, knowledge, attributes and attitudes to participate effectively in the employment market and community activities upon returning to Viet Nam; (2) to understand how economic, political and institutional structures in Viet Nam promote and constrain returnees' ability to pursue their goals in respect of their acquired overseas education in their work and community activities; and 3) to understand the extent that Vietnamese returnees can leverage their acquired international education to enable personal and social change in their chosen work and community activities in Viet Nam.

1.4.3 The conceptual framework and research design

In this research, I adopt Sen's agency-focused CA (Crocker 2008) as a conceptual lens for viewing the transformative capacity of individuals, focusing on individual choice and agency to address the main aims of the research. Under the CA, capability is defined as the real opportunity or freedom to *do* and *be* the things that one values in *doing* and *being* (Sen 1985). These *doings* and *beings* are called *functionings*. Functionings are components of how a person lives, for example the type of jobs a person has, or her political membership. A person's *capability* is the set of alternative functionings that a person can attain, her capability set. In other words, capability can be understood as the capability to achieve valuable functionings with emphasis in opportunity freedom to attain what one has reason to value (Sen 1985). For Sen (1999), it is important to look at both functionings and capability because while people may have the same functionings, their capabilities maybe quite different. The CA thus focuses on a distinction between opportunities and observed choices, with the emphasis on agency. To highlight this emphasis on agency, I use Crocker's (2008) agency-focused CA, focusing on the five agency dimensions of values, goals, responsibilities, power and well-being (Sen 1985). I discuss Crocker's (2008) reconstruction of Sen's ideal of agency in chapter 2.

I use Bourdieu's (1977, 1998) theory of *habitus* to examine Sen's agency dimensions and how they might be conceived and derived in the practical experiences of the Vietnamese returnees. I address the three related research aims in the following ways. First, I examine the returnees' values and goals of their overseas education and the conditioning factors in Viet Nam (or abroad) that shape these values and goals - their *habitus* (chapter 4 and 5). Second, I enquire about the types of overseas-acquired skills, knowledge, attributes and attitudes that returnees perceive. Following Bourdieu, I view these items as forms of capital, and I distinguish between *symbolic* and *cultural* capital (Bourdieu 2006), to enhance returnees' power positions and pursue their goals in the social fields (research aim 1). I will explain these terms in chapter 2. Third, I examine the choices that returnees make in light of the *opportunities* that they perceive these forms of cultural capital can bring about; and the returnees' *processes* of agency in light of the institutional structures and relations of their work and community groups (research aim 2). Fourth, to understand the impact of overseas education on enabling personal and social change (research aim 3), I examine returnees' achieved functionings and well-being in their work and community work; and how might

these achievements accord with or diverge from their values and goals, and shape their motivations and commitments for social change.

I use Bourdieu's reflexive sociology to engage with returnees' "reasoning" of choices and practices. Through the process of inclusive dialogues with returnees, and reflexive sociological analysis (see chapter 3), I attend to the returnees' processes of making choices and taking actions that explore their moral concerns rather than telling them what those concerns ought to be. I argue that reflexive research is essential for a theory of agency with normative underpinnings to truly link with ethical development. In this research, engaging in reflexive practices means engaging with the returnees as epistemic beings rather than empirical beings. This requires examining the concepts of values, choice and agency through the practical experiences of returnees. In other words, I understand and take account of returnees' conception of these concepts as embedded in their social world, rather than from a *a priori* outsider perspective. In so doing, I operationalise Sen's "process of reasoning" *within* the contexts of returnees' social surroundings rather than external to their surroundings. The aim is to understand the historical, cultural, social and political influences as conditions that may shape returnees' conception of freedom and agency, so as to understand the kind of freedom and agency that they value. This opens up the opportunity for the thesis to draw upon the voices of the returnees to theorise *normative agency* by understanding their empowerment from within their local contexts; thus achieving the broader aim of viewing the transformative potential of international education from the perspectives of international graduates.

I employed a mixed method approach of online surveys followed by face-to-face interviews. In the first phase, survey respondents were recruited using a non-random snowball approach (N=280). The survey and analysis of survey data aimed to gain an overview of: (1) returnees' experiences of employment and community participation; (2) the types of skills, knowledge, attributes and attitudes that returnees have acquired overseas, and applied in their work and community work. The survey also informed the selection of interviewees and identified areas where the interviews could further examine to gain more in-depth information. In the second phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected survey respondents (N=21), and key members of their networks (N=27). The interviews aimed to provide a more in-depth understanding of "how" and "why" these overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes might be useful for them in pursuing functionings that they value. The findings and discussions in this thesis are drawn primarily from the analysis of interviews with selected returnees. The practical experiences of returnees are analysed and discussed in three broad fields: (1) "professional" that includes all economic sectors except

higher education; (2) “intellectual” refers to the higher education sector, namely universities; and (3) “civic” that includes political, humanitarian and community services. I discuss the methodological design, methods of collecting and analysing data, my reflection on the use of reflexive sociology and my role as insider/outsider in chapter 3. I now summarise the key arguments of the research.

1.5 Key arguments of the research

1.5.1 Resource opportunity structure of overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes

In this thesis, I use the term *resource opportunity structures* to refer to the opportunities that returnees perceive as advantageous in regards to their overseas-acquired resources. In chapter 6 and 7, I show that the main benefits of acquired overseas education lie in transferable (soft) skills, English skills, and work-ready attributes because they allow Vietnamese returnees to access jobs in managerial roles in the “professional” field, particularly with foreign firms. These types of skills and attributes are forms of cultural capital for the returnees because they are *power resources* that provide them opportunities to achieve their goals of economic betterment. These types of skills and attributes are also useful for returning academics in the “intellectual” field as they desire to teach these skills. Thus, they also are power resources for these returnees - particularly in foreign universities and non-public universities - where they are expected to teach these skills. While it seems that skills and knowledge acquired overseas may expand the choices of returnees, their chosen career tracks are narrowly targeted to foreign firms because of their economic goals primarily, and to a lesser extent, the ability to apply these resources in ways that they see as enhancing their professional and teaching practices. I argue that the value of overseas-acquired resources depend on the returnees’ perception of economic power attached to these resources, which in turn shape the opportunities that they see as feasible. My next argument below, is that the returnees’ perceived opportunities also depend on their motivations and expectations of overseas education, family responsibilities, and how well they can mobilise and legitimise the economic value of these resources in their workplaces.

1.5.2 Cultural opportunity structures of the institutions and social relations

In this thesis, I use the term *cultural opportunity structures* to refer to culture as conditions of returnees' power to make choices and take actions in specific social situations. In chapter 6 to 8, I show that the returnees' processes of mobilising their overseas-acquired resources are influenced by the institutional structures and social relations of their work and community work. The evidence suggests that returnees' choices of foreign firms also reflect their attempts to mediate the Vietnamese culture of personal relations that inhibit their professional and ethical working practices in the "professional" field. Similarly, in the "intellectual" field, the lack of supporting environments for research and teaching using Western texts and pedagogy seems to hinder returning academics from applying their overseas learning. In both fields, the extent to which returnees can mobilise their resources depends on whether their colleagues and leaders share their value of these resources, or appreciate their utilisation of these resources in the workplace.

On the other hand, these overseas-acquired resources seem to be much less useful in community work, thus returnees do not view them as power resources. The returnees' valuations of these resources thus are shaped by their social relations' perception of their worth, which in turn, designate the power relations of the returnees in their institutions. In that way, the value, or power of these resources are intimately tied to the power structures within the institutions and embedded in the returnees' relationships with others. I argue that these power structures give rise to the power of returnees in terms of mobilising their power resources; the more they can recognise, enhance and modify their power structures within the field and institutions (subfields), the more they can see opportunities and exercise their agency.

There seems to be a tension - and even "contestation" - between the returnees' autonomy to implement professional and ethical practices, which is what they may desire, and the need to accord with the power of their relations to mobilise their resources to achieve their economic goals and meet family responsibilities. The choices returnees make are influenced by their power relations within the institutions. Thus, I argue that understanding the choices that individuals make require understanding of the inherent workings of individuals' power structures within the social field. Again, as with the argument I make with resource opportunity structures, while overseas education may seem to expand the choices of returnees given their increased skills sets, their chosen career tracks often do little more than reflect a choice among a narrow range of options, namely, foreign firms. This is because of the

returnees' perception of limited shared value of these overseas-acquired resources among their colleagues in Vietnamese firms. This perception in turn, limits the returnees' motivation and ability to mobilise their power resources in these organisations. They are though aware of this limited vision and limited opportunities, and there is some scope for them to exercise agency and shape the structures that in turn shape their choices and actions.

1.5.3 Empowerment for personal and social change

While there is some evidence of personal change as perceived by the returnees in both the “professional” and “intellectual” fields, these changes seem to lie in the acquisition of the skills, knowledge and attributes and attitudes, rather than their application in the workplace or community work. However, the patterns of high salaries and jobs access in foreign firms may also suggest achieved functionings and well-being because they meet the returnees' economic goals as well as family responsibilities and expectations. Similarly, their experiences in community work reflect at least some personal change in terms of a different conception of community beyond families, and a self-determination approach to social development. However, their practical experiences suggest returnees are often susceptible to “co-optation” by the conventional and reigning Vietnamese community work culture. The result is often that returnees acquiesce and make insignificant impact in improving the opportunities available.

Overall, these findings of achieved functionings and future commitment to change suggest that returnees' personal values stem from the Vietnamese values, which at times, conflict and compete with the values acquired from overseas. They have to mediate between the traditional virtue of filial piety, which denotes family responsibility, and the personal accountability or social responsibility demanded to implement changes. These traditional values constitute their *habitus* and predispose them to certain choices of economic pragmatism. Their actions are also based on their power positions within the immediate social situations of the economic sector or community groups that they work in. Thus, I argue that the returnees' values are shaped by their conception of freedom and responsibility - *intersubjective freedom* - which are constructed and constituted *within* their relations with others, not as external to others, and which have a historical trajectory. It also explicates the dialectic nature of *habitus* in constructing *knowledge-in-the-world* and *knowledge-for-the-world*: what these returnees think is possible in society shapes what they do, and what they do in society shapes what they think is possible. In this way, I echo Nash's (2010) argument that *habitus* can be generative and at the same time restrictive by its limitations on people's perception and thus their practices.

I further argue that the concept of *habitus* is potentially transformative in its attention to the potential role of individuals to take active role with their individual and collective agency (Jenkins 2002). Here, I will show that individual agency is interdependent with collective agency because the power of the individual lies *within* her power relations with others. Through the shared value and appreciation of returnees' overseas-acquired resources, colleagues and leaders of the returnees may permit their *power-within* as members of their institutions. At the same time, colleagues and leaders can also act as the *power-over* these returnees, which limit their *power-to* do as they value. I will show that in Vietnamese society, where there are traditions of personal relations and social hierarchies, returnees constantly engage in the process of recognising and negotiating their *power-over* and *power-within* to cultivate the *power-to* commit to choices and practices of enabling social change.

While these emergent findings are presented above as summative to present the key arguments of the thesis, the analysis and interpretation of interview data (in chapter 5 to 8) draw attention to the occasions where some returnees may recognise the constraint of their social conditions and read the future as adaptive, but others may recognise the capacity for improvisations and generate opportunities for social change, or a combination of both. There are opportunities for returnees in this research to use their overseas education to foster changes to meet the State's economic reform and higher education reforms. However, their practical experiences suggest resistance and struggle to adopt foreign ideas and practices in the workplace because of a lack of infrastructure, different working culture and institutional structures. In community work, the returnees' overseas-acquired ideas about civic actions have to be weighed against the Vietnamese conception of community, local communities' scepticism of applying a foreign model of social development in Viet Nam, and the State's pressure to limit civic actions.

Viet Nam is a case study of this research, and there are limitations of the findings due to the small sample size and sample bias (see chapter 3), but the application of the findings for understanding the transformative potential of international education is beyond that country. I argue that we must pay attention to understanding the local conditions in which international graduates work and live through their practical experiences. I consider that it is more important to understand the extent to which returnees recognise and respond to conditions of their surrounding social structures and relations, rather than assuming that the same set of social conditions will have similar impact on everyone's choice and practices, or evaluating transformative actions based on *a priori* criteria of freedom from an outsider perspective. The

intention of this thesis is to uncover alternatives within those structures and relations in order to arrive at possibilities of *normative agency*.

1.6 Significance of the research

This research yields significant insights into theory, method and experiences of Vietnamese overseas-educated returnees. Some of these contributions are outlined below. I expand on these contributions throughout the thesis and in the conclusion chapter (chapter 9).

1.6.1 Contribution to theory: Concept of *normative agency*

This thesis seeks to make explicit the interdependence between individuals' values, choice and agency and their surrounding social structures and relations (Sen 1985). I extend on Sen's (1985) ideas of *effective freedom* to *intersubjective freedom* by highlighting that freedom is constructed *within* one's social relations and structures. I offer a sociological framework to conceptualise Sen's abstract ideas of values, choice, and agency to relate it to concrete levels using Bourdieu's sociological concepts of: (1) forms of capital to explain resources; (2) social structures and relations to explain culture and power in the process of converting resources to valuable *beings* and *doings*; and (3) *habitus* to understand formation of values, and explain dispositions of individuals to recognise, reason and act to pursue their goals. I therefore have adopted and expanded upon the work done by other CA scholars who recognised that Sen's CA and the CA school lack attention to how values are formed (Deneulin 2009), how goals and responsibilities are shaped by values, and how pursuit of goals and responsibilities may produce the conditions that limit empowerment (Hart 2013). Moreover, I have attempted to do so through the notion of *normative agency*, that is from the practical experiences of the Vietnamese returnees in this research, rather than from *a priori* conceptual standpoint of values, freedom and agency often associated with Western democratic liberalist societies.³

1.6.2 Contribution to method: Reflexive sociology in the process of "reasoning"

I have drawn on the conceptual tensions identified by Gasper (2007), Martins (2007), and Smith and Seward (2009) that Sen's vision of agency demands people to "reason" their values in taking choices, which necessitates ontological dimensions of values and choice, yet he also

³ Sen makes many of his points about the importance of scrutinizing values in relation to the public deliberation that occurs within Asian and particularly Indian society. See Dreze & Sen (2013) *An Uncertain Glory: India and its Contradictions*.

assumes that people can have the freedom to examine their values and make choices as if they live outside those values. This conceptual tension is problematic for operationalising Sen's agency. In this thesis, I employ Bourdieu's reflexive sociology as praxis where research participants in the interviews can reflect upon their values by objectifying their practices to: (1) recognise the influence of their social structures in shaping their values, power and choices; and (2) recognise that their practices to enhance their power may, in turn, reproduce those social structures or construct new conditions for agency and empowerment.

Furthermore, employing reflexive sociology in the analysis of interview data allows myself, the researcher to understand the choices and agency of participants from within their practical experiences. I argue that engaging in reflexive sociology is a way to operationalise the concept of *normative agency* that explicates the ethical individualism that Sen's CA is noted for (Robeyns 2011). I will explain what Robeyns means by ethical individualism in chapter 2.

1.6.3 Contribution to empirical knowledge of experiences of overseas-educated Vietnamese returnees

This research provides empirical insights about the transformative potential of acquired international education for Vietnamese returnees in their work and community work. The examination of Vietnamese overseas-educated returnees' experiences in their work and community work allows us to understand the country's specific issues and conditions and how they affect returnees' achievements in terms of work and community participation, and whether they are able to make use of the skills, knowledge, attributes and attitudes that they have acquired overseas. In exploring the returnees' goals, choices and practices as agency opportunity and achievement, this thesis presents insights into their values of acquired international education, and how these values shape their motivations and goals, and perception of their achievements. Given the scarce research about international education outcomes and benefits for developing countries, this research is an initiative to build a body of knowledge about the role of international education in development context by offering some understanding about the extent that Vietnamese graduates can reap the benefits of international education when they return home, in ways that consider their overseas-acquired resources and the social, cultural and political contexts in which they can utilise them.

This research is pioneering for its empirical data about international education outcomes from the perspective of sending countries, their students and graduates, and embracing issues concerning human development with an ethical view of development beyond economic outputs. In this way, this thesis shares Sen and Nussbaum's ethical

concerns of development (Sen 1985b, 1993a, 1999; Nussbaum 2011), and other scholars in international education (Altbach 2014; Brandeburgh & de Wit 2012; de Wit 2014; Knight 2014) by calling for rethinking the vision of international education that is inadequately accounted for by human capital theory in a market-based internationalisation of higher education. Echoing Gustavsson's (2014) idea of 'bildung' as a development of humanity by relating to other human beings, I have given voice to the Vietnamese returnees in this thesis with the aim to enable scholars in Western countries to understand Vietnamese people's aspirations to search for modernity while keeping to their traditions.

1.7 Structure of the thesis

I organise the remainder of this thesis in two parts. The first part addresses the theoretical dimensions of the thesis. It focusses firstly, in chapter 2, on the definition of an original conceptual framework combining Sen's agency-focused Capability Approach with Bourdieu's reflexive sociology and theory of social practice (*habitus*, field, capital). This provides a model which is used as reference for the empirical assessment and analysis. Secondly, chapter 3 describes the methodology (a mixed-method design) to provide the information required to test this model. I propose the design of a particular investigative system combining survey and interviews in order to collect quantitative and qualitative data that will be used to reflect on the Vietnamese social processes and economic functionings.

The second part of the thesis deals with its empirical dimension. It is based on Vietnam as a case study and on a sample of 280 graduate returnees (and members of their networks) who have answered the survey and some interviews. This empirical part can be, in fact, divided in two subparts. In the first subpart, chapters 4 and 5 can be considered as mirror chapters, that is directly interconnected. Chapter 4 describes the *habitus* (culture, values system, social, educational and political history) of the Vietnamese people, while chapter 5 presents the values, motivations and expectations which characterise the returnees and shapes their capabilities and agency (self-driven attitude, social responsibility, and search for opportunities). Based on empirical observation, these chapters express the confrontation between these two visions, one expressing a mix of traditional values and attitudes while the other brings new ways of thinking acquired from overseas and which are considered more efficient for economic well-being and development. Combining the two generate appropriate mediation skills (in terms of effective capabilities and agency) which can - more or less -

contribute to overcoming potentially conflicting situations and promoting changes. This is, in a second subpart, the content of the chapters 6, 7, and 8. They describe, for various sociological fields of analysis, the current practices that are implemented by the returnees to appropriate overseas acquired resources and contribute to changes at personal and collective levels using their capabilities and agency. These fields are a "professional" field for the economic context, an "intellectual" field for higher education, and a "civic" field for NGOs and other community organisations, each of them providing the content of a different chapter.

Finally, in chapter 9, I conclude the thesis by summarising the key findings and their implications for the research aims and theoretical contributions, and reflect on the use of the Sen-Bourdieu framework in this research. I will also note the limitations of this research, and offer some suggestions for future research in related areas of international education.

A note about the use of Vietnamese language convention

In referencing the Vietnamese writers who live in Viet Nam, I have chosen to use their names as noted in their publications and in accordance with the Vietnamese convention. In Viet Nam, writers use either a pen name or their full name. I have also chosen to use Vietnamese terms and names without their diacritical marks to make it easier for the non-Vietnamese readers.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

2 The Sen-Bourdieu theoretical framework: Conceptualising normative agency

2.1 Introduction

This research explores the transformative potential of acquired international education for overseas-educated Vietnamese nationals in their work and community participation when they return home. The aim is to understand the types of skills, knowledge, attributes and attitudes that Vietnamese returnees have acquired from their overseas education, as well as the social, cultural, political, economic and institutional conditions that impact their ability to convert their overseas-acquired resources to participate effectively in their society. The transformative potential of international education is viewed in terms of the Vietnamese returnees' agency-focused capabilities to bring about personal and social change.

In chapter 1, I argued that the framework of an agency-focused CA is appropriate for this research because of its embrace of pluralism in informational bases of capabilities that can be used in different contexts (Sen 1985, pg. 170), and its participatory focus that allows returnees to directly express their different positions on social reality and relationships. In this chapter, I present and discuss in detail the theoretical framework that the research develops, which informs the methodological design and method of the research (see chapter 3). I draw on the agency-focused CA as a conceptual lens because an emphasis on agency allows for understanding the Vietnamese returnees' involvement, or at least scope for agentic involvement, in their everyday practices; and from that, understanding their empowerment as a process of personal and social change. The research aims to gain insight into the opportunities that Vietnamese returnees have as a result of their overseas education, and how they employ their overseas-acquired resources to enable them to take part in their work and community in ways that are aligned with what they see as valued goals.

This research focuses on understanding the conditions of agency *opportunity* and agency *process* – as well as obstacles that arise from the Vietnamese returnees' social structures and relations, and how they recognise and respond to these conditions in their work and community work, rather than evaluating achieved outcomes in these areas. As Drydyk

(2013, pg. 261) argued, taking a relational approach to understanding agency and empowerment is essential because capturing achieved outcomes in terms of agency or choice is not sufficient unless the fragility or durability of these achieved outcomes are also understood.

As noted in chapter 1, scholars including Agee & Crocker (2013), Deneulin (2012), Gasper (2007) and Hart (2013) argued that the CA needs an auxiliary sociological theory to help with examining the elements of social structures and how they shape individual values, goals, choices and agency in normative practices. In this research, I employ Bourdieu's notions of *habitus*, *capital* and *field*, and *reflexive sociology* as analytical tools to understand the Vietnamese returnees' values for international education, their choices and practices in their work and community engagement.

The effort of this thesis is to provide a case study using a combined framework of Sen and Bourdieu, to analyse the returnees' social positions, dispositions, and choices taken in their social fields as they pursue their goals in work and community work. The aim is to connect the "dots between agency and power, with empowerment as a marker of research" (Drydyk 2013, pg. 261), so as to conceive alternatives within the returnees' social structures and relations, and to theorise *normative agency* at the individuals' level and also at the level of community or collective action.

The rest of this chapter is organised as follows. In the next section, I discuss the key features of the agency-focused CA, and the agency dimensions to be examined in this research. I draw attention to the operational challenges of the agency-focused CA, particularly Sen's lack of guidance on examining values, choice and agency. I then explain how I use Bourdieu's theory of social practices (*habitus*, *capital*, *field*) and *reflexive sociology* to operationalise and analyse the agency dimensions to address the research aims. This is followed by a discussion of the potential challenges of combining these two theoretical approaches for this research. In concluding the chapter, I highlight the merits of applying the Sen-Bourdieu framework, and note that its usefulness will be assessed in the concluding chapter of the thesis (chapter 9).

2.2 Theoretical foundations and key features of the agency-focused Capability Approach (CA)

The CA is a broad normative framework for evaluating individual well-being and social arrangements, and for development of policies and social change (Robeyns 2005). The central

claim of the CA is that evaluation of development initiatives should rely on an analysis of changes in the capabilities of individuals or groups (Robeyns 2005, Sen 1999). Capability is defined as the real opportunity or freedom to *be* and *do* the things that a person wants to *be* and *do*. The CA distinguishes between the *value* of *beings* and *doings*, and what people *achieve beings* and *doings*. In other words, activities or states that people do not value or have no reason to value could not be called capabilities. For example, in the context of this research, the skills that graduates acquired overseas are to be distinguished from the opportunities to apply them as they see valuable in their local communities. A person's *achieved functionings* at any given time are the particular functionings that she has successfully pursued and realised from among other opportunities (or real possibilities).

According to Sen (1985), an evaluation that only looks at achieved functionings does not adequately capture the relational functionings, or those functionings that people deeply value. For example, if an evaluation of acquired international education outcomes only takes into account the achieved functionings of, say employment rates or level of income generated, it misses out on functionings that may have been expanded or contracted, or those that people have not achieved but see as valuable, say independent learning skills, or openness to other cultures. A person's *capability* is the set of alternative functionings that a person can attain, her capability set. In other words, capability can be understood as the capability to achieve valuable functionings with an emphasis on the opportunity freedom to attain what one has reason to value.

Under Sen's CA, an individual's capability set gives her the advantage, a freedom to achieve well-being, her *well-being freedom* (Robeyns 2011). According to Sen (1999), considering well-being freedom is important because it allows for identification of *real* opportunity for improving conditions for human flourishing; capability that takes account of individuals' values should consider, but not be limited by the circumstantial factors that people have to contend with otherwise it risks accommodating their adaptive preferences. I will come back to this issue later on. The assumption that Sen makes is that people have the capacity to reason and make informed decisions about their lives (Sen 2012). Thus, for Sen, the well-being of a person must be seen in both her *well-being achievement* and *opportunity* to achieve well-being or *well-being freedom*.

2.2.1 Agency emphasis of the CA

At the heart of the CA is the notion of *effective freedom* and *effective agency*, which Sen (Sen 1985, 1999; Crocker 2008) envisions as when an individual: (1) has her own goals that may also include others' goals; (2) can make her own choice; (3) is not a mere recipient of resources as inputs; and (4) can take actions through practical reasoning. Freedom and agency involve both a *process* aspect, that is how people go about doing and choosing what they do, and an *opportunity* aspect that is, the freedom or opportunities to do or choose certain practices. This idea of freedom and its centrality to agency is premised on a person's *reasoning* of values, the crux of Sen's vision of the CA. Agency is conceived in terms of achieving goals that people happen to value (Drydyk 2013). Such goals may include the goals of others, not just oneself, and thus may be unrelated to a person's well-being (Sen 2009, pg. 188-193). Agency thus refers to the scope for achieving a person's valued goals, which can be a source of advantage and disadvantage when evaluated against a person's well-being (Sen 1985). This notion of agency, as some scholars have pointed out, is necessarily normative (Martins 2007, Smith & Seward 2009). It is good to be an agent and run one's own life rather than be a tool of others or a victim of circumstance.

In this thesis, Crocker's (2008) term agency-focused Capability Approach is used to highlight this agency focus and its importance for discussing the transformative potential of acquired international education from the perspectives of the Vietnamese returnees. Crocker (2008) reconstructed Sen's ideal of agency (as outlined above) in the following ways. When exercised, degrees of agency can vary depending on four conditions: (1) insofar as a person either performs an activity or plays a role in performing it; (2) insofar as this activity has an impact on the world; (3) insofar as the activity was chosen by the person; and (4) for reasons of their own whether it is individual or group deliberation (Crocker 2008, pg. 157).

In the context of education, Sen (1997, 1999) argued that a role of education is to expand human agency and freedom, both as an *end* in itself and as a *means* to further expand freedom. Thus, learning to expand agency should encourage people to examine themselves and their place in the world, their subjective conditions and forms that they can use to imagine and develop their own futures. As noted in chapter 1, this is a powerful contribution that the CA can bring to understand the impact of international education. In this research, an agency-focused CA links outcomes of education with returnees' Vietnamese origins by making explicit their political and cultural values and social norms in shaping their participation in society, their achievements and the conditions that give rise to such achievements. It allows

for questioning how returnees might make claims on their overseas-acquired resources and opportunities to appropriate, modify, and reform their cultural heritage to realise what they aspire to do. It offers some conceptual dimensions of agency that the research can draw upon to enquire about the potential of overseas education to enhance returnees' quality of life and the circumstances around such potentialities.

In addition, agency is intrinsically important in and for collective action (Ballet et al. 2007; Stewart 2005) and democratic participation (Crocker 2008) because it allows for considering individuals' agency in cooperation with others. Empowering people as democratic citizens and as members of social groups contributes to collective agency to foster sustainable human development (Volkert 2013). As Crocker (2008) pointed out, without an emphasis on agency, research risks removing opportunities for participants to engage in the process of reflecting on their values and choice making which is important for their durable participation in development.⁴

Sen's ideas of agency have abstract dimensions and are conceptualised in relation to the other key features of the CA. There are broadly five dimensions of agency that relate to the *opportunity* and *process* aspect of agency. First, agency is connected to a person's values, so we have to consider her conception of "good" (Sen 1999). Second, agency may be exercised to pursue one's goals and goals of others thus we have to consider her aims, objectives and allegiances (Sen 1999). Third, in the pursuit of her goals, an agent has responsibility to others that reflects her obligations to others; it must be noted that Sen's idea of responsibility refers to personal accountability that arises after one's freedom and rights are exercised (Sen 2012). These three dimensions underpin Sen's concept of freedom as *real* opportunity to accomplish what one values, which is different to the idea of freedom as something that people hold theoretically or legally, but in reality, they cannot reach. In this research, these dimensions are considered in terms of the returnees' motivations and goals for their acquired international education upon returning home; how they are shaped by their expectations and responsibilities to their families and communities. My focus is on understanding whether studying and living overseas have changed returnees' values, and provided them the opportunities and ability to recognise their values and the social conditions that shape their goals in their work and community work. I also want to question whether study abroad has nurtured returnees' agency freedom and their commitment to be an agent

⁴ Sen's emphasis on agency is notably different to Nussbaum's idea of capability that does not capture the ideal of agency (Crocker & Robeyns 2010). For a closer reading of Nussbaum Capability, see Martha Nussbaum (2006) *Frontiers of Justice*, Harvard University Press.

and not merely a patient or pawn, and willingness to run their own individual and collective lives.

The fourth dimension of agency refers to the inclusion of power and control, but with emphasis on power not so much control. Sen defines power (1985, pg. 210) as agency exercised to achieve chosen results: whether the person is free to achieve one outcome or another; whether her choices will be respected and corresponding things will happen. This is what Sen terms *effective power*, or *power* (for short), and is not concerned with the mechanism and procedure of control (Sen 1985, pg. 208). The latter refers to the control that reflects a person's ability to make a choice and control the procedures whether or not she can realise her aims. According to Sen (1999), if one is to understand power as an element of effective agency, then one has to understand a person's power position in her society. For example, an overseas-educated Vietnamese academic can choose to take a job as a lecturer or departmental manager because both options are available to her. She has control over her choice of jobs, but her power to do the things that she values, for example organise international partnership programs is much lower as a lecturer compared to a manager. Thus, she may choose to become a manager because she can enhance her power position in the department. Understanding power allows us to understand the choice that a person makes in regards to her surrounding social structures and relations, which is her perceived *opportunity* for agency, as well as the *process* of agency. In this research, the focus is on understanding the social conditions of power and how returnees respond to those conditions.

The fifth and last dimension of agency refers to the distinction between agency and well-being. According to Robeyns (2005), this is a key contribution of Sen's CA to ethical development. The distinction draws attention to the idea that one's actions may give rise to achievements that enhance her well-being but reduce her agency and vice versa. The well-being of a person can be seen as the "wellness" of the person's own state of being, which may also be "other-regarding". In this approach, functionings are seen as central to the nature of well-being, and the evaluation of a person's well-being has to take the form of an assessment of functionings. If checking the 'wellness' of the person's being is assessing the person's success in the pursuit of all the objectives that she has reason to promote, then the exercise becomes one of evaluation of 'agency achievement', rather than of well-being achievement.⁵ Sen underscores the distinction between well-being (capabilities and functionings) and agency: if people exercise their own agency in deciding on and realising their well-being

⁵ For a more comprehensive discussion of the distinction between well-being and agency, see Sen (1985)

freedoms (capabilities), they are more likely to realise well-being achievements (functionings), than if they depend on luck or others (Crocker & Robeyns 2010). Moreover, when people make their own decisions and run their own lives, the exercise of agency if accompanied by a sense of satisfaction, is also a component of well-being achievement (Alkire 2009, Sen 1985). The normative aspect of agency whereby an increase in well-being may be traded off by reduction in agency may suggest that some actions might be based on adapted preferences to social conditions due to a lack of freedom to recognise one's power location in society (Drydyk 2013). At the same time, it brings out the potential of agency to enable empowerment for social change (Hart 2012; Sen 1985), by highlighting inequalities of individuals and others' well-being and unequal freedom to pursue causes and concerns.

This fifth dimension of agency can be problematic. Gasper (2007) argued that the potentiality of agency to contribute to well-being and well-being freedom assumes that actions to achieve well-being are based on the ability of a person to make reasoned choices. Drydyk (2013) pointed out that the distinction between agency and well-being is lost if agency is conceived consequentially in terms of well-being, rather than in terms of autonomy. To counter these issues, and along with Drydyk's (2013) argument that it is better to consider agency as a concept of a person's autonomous involvement in activities, I draw on Crocker's (2008) four-fold conception of agency (discussed above), to understand the returnees' conditions of agency, rather than the well-being consequences of returnees' activities as an evaluation of their agency. This has implications for the methodological design of the research, which I shall discuss fully in chapter 3. Furthermore, rather than assuming a person can "reason her choices", this thesis focuses on understanding how "reasoned choices" may come about by enquiring whether a returnee exercises agency in recognition of her power position in her social group.

To sum up the discussion of agency dimensions thus far, the first three agency dimensions of values, goals and responsibility constitute the *opportunity* aspect of agency, and the fourth dimension of agency relate to the *process* aspect of agency. These four dimensions are the focus of investigation in this research. For the reasons explained above, this thesis will briefly touch on the fifth dimension of well-being only insofar as the returnees' agency impacts on their well-being in ways that contributes to their empowerment as a process of personal and social change. I now discuss some of the challenges in operationalising the CA. Then I will explain how sociological tools can be employed to overcome these challenges to examine Sen's agency dimensions.

2.3 Operationalising the CA

2.3.1 Operational challenges of the CA

As argued above, at the abstract level of agency-focused capability, the CA is useful for this research because of its focus on expanding freedom and thus potential for human flourishing. However, Sen is unclear about how to examine values, choice, agency and well-being. Moreover, there are conceptual tensions in operationalising these concepts. The normative priority of the CA is on effective freedom, self-responsibility and ability to reason in choosing valued functionings (Gasper 2002, 2007; Sen 1999, 2010; Smith & Seward 2009). As Gasper (2007) noted, this assumes that agents can make conscious choices or error free choices as if these choices are based on objective conception of well-being that is somehow detached from the processes of choice making itself. This assumption stems from Sen's adoption of Adam Smith's "impartial spectator" of values along the Kantian philosophy of reasoning of values as forms of "rationality" (Pham 2013). However, as Gasper (2007) noted, the normative underpinning of "values" and "reasoning of values" seems at odd with the assumed rationality that the person has in her reasoning activity in order to come up with good reasons to make her choice. The conceptual tension is that in the one case Sen is assuming that values deterministically shape actions while in the latter case he affirms that humans can exercise their agency to shape and improve values and actions.

Following from this, Gasper (2007) argued that Sen's concept of well-being seems to rely on "reasoning" in a way that brings about objective well-being, which is also at odds with the idea of relational agency that Sen considers as dependent on the social and cultural contexts of the agent. Sen (2012) responded to this critique by arguing that good reasoning is important to allow recognition of objective measures of well-being rather than falling susceptible to subjective measures that are based on adapted preferences. This, though, seems to imply a perspective of outsider-facilitator or from a certain point of conception of well-being, which again is in tension with the normative idea of well-being. Furthermore, in practical situations, it is very difficult to discern between reasoned values and values themselves, which are conditioned by people's circumstances. Again, there is a conceptual tension between values that shape agents, and agents that shape values.

The CA is criticised for lacking definitions and measurements of functionings and how they are operationally distinguishable from capabilities (Hollywood et al. 2012). As Agee and Crocker (2013) and Gasper (2007) noted, this critique points to the tension within

the idea of capability as sets of alternative functionings in practical terms. If capability is about a range of possible functionings that a person can attain, then from an epistemological perspective, the researcher has to be able to know or ascertain the full range of alternatives lying within reach (Agee & Crocker 2013, Gasper 2002). However, the CA also acknowledges that there are conditionings due to political, cultural, social or economic circumstances of the individual which influence how an agent may be able to convert her resources to functionings, and thus her choices would inherently take account of those conditions as enablers or restraints in her perception of available opportunities (Sen 1977, 2007). Thus, it is contradictory and unusual that a person can know beforehand or at any point in time what the full range of alternatives is (Gasper 2002). Sen (1985) notes this problem of examining functionings due to its informational-pluralistic accounting for each person's historical, social and psychological characteristics and circumstances. Yet he is firm that the CA remains incomplete and any attempt to make it complete is not methodologically sensible or substantively plausible (Sen 1985, pg. 177). As Gasper (2007) argued, operationalising the ideas of alternative functionings seems to require some kind of value judgement by the researcher about variations of functionings that the agent can arrive at herself.

Therefore, as Agee and Crocker (2013) argued, the CA needs an auxiliary theory of what provokes choices and behaviours. Sen (1999) says that values influence choices and behaviours. However, as Deneulin (2009) noted, the CA is silent on the conceptualisation and formation of values. The CA focuses on the value judgement process as an essential element for agency, but it suffers from the tension in moving between ontological dimensions of values and evaluation of the values themselves (Deneulin 2009). According to Agee and Crocker (2013), another auxiliary theory is thus needed to take into consideration the social structures and relations as conditions of values formation and determining factors in choices and actions, whether or not the choices and actions follow from a person's values.

2.3.2 Operationalising the CA using sociological analytical tools

Given such operational tensions within the CA, this research does not aim to evaluate functionings or well-being achievements as indicators of transformative actions of Vietnamese overseas-educated returnees. Rather it aims to understand the various dimensions of agency as outlined in the previous section, how they might be derived, the choices that returnees make, and the conditions that shape their choices. I will explain how this is achieved in the methodology chapter (chapter 3). Drawing on Robeyns' (2011) claim that the CA

allows heterogeneity of people and connects individual biographies and social arrangements through its emphasis on individuals' ability to rationalise their choices and actions ethically, the analysis of agency has to also consider social arrangements. Deneulin (2009) claimed that this ethical dimension of the CA is underpinned by the idea that agency is connected with individual values that are shaped by their surrounding structures and relations. Further, according to Hart (2013), the process of achieving functionings depends on people's ability to convert their social, cultural and economic resources and their personal attributes into functionings. Similarly, this research takes the individuals as the unit of analysis when considering the outcomes of social arrangements, but does not assume that explanations for these outcomes are only in terms of individuals' goals. Social, cultural and economic factors contribute to different aspirations and participation in society, and the outcomes depend on intersecting differences of people's resources and social surroundings (Hart 2013, Sen 1977).

Through the lens of agency-focused CA, the social opportunities or social norms that the returnees encounter are examined in terms of their impact on expanding or diminishing the returnees' choices and agency; and on the other hand, how their agency *opportunity* and *process* may contribute to social opportunities and norms. This examination is underpinned by Crocker's (2008) core ideas of agency as individuals' ownership of their choices and practices. I draw attention to the conditions in which returnees' choices and practices may take place under coercion or social pressure versus those conditions that support their own values and views of their lives. The agency analysis of the Vietnamese returnees in this research focuses on the opportunities that they have to pursue their goals, and at the same time understanding their responsibilities in respect to their social relations, which give rise to tensions in their everyday experiences. For example, many returnees may feel a sense of family obligations that might limit their ability to pursue choices they otherwise might have both the desire and resources to pursue. To gain an understanding of this complex dialectic workings of contexts and agency, the research employs Bourdieu's sociological concepts of *habitus*, *capital*, *field*, and *reflexivity* to understand aspects of agency-focused capabilities conception and derivation within the context of the social structures and relations that surround the returnees. These concepts are now discussed.

2.4 Operationalising the agency-focused CA using Bourdieu's theory of practice and reflexive sociology

Habitus is the key concept of Bourdieu's theory of practice. *Habitus* works in relation to forms of *capital* in specific social *fields*. I will first explain how *habitus* is used to conceptualise and analyse Sen's notions of values, choice and dimensions of agency. Then I will discuss how *habitus* and its working elements of *capital* and *field*, and *reflexive sociology* are used to address the aims of this research.

The concept of *habitus*, similar to some concepts in the CA, affirms both that humans are free agents, and that their agency is constrained and enabled by historical and social conditions. The concept of *habitus* helps us understand how one can be a free agent and yet whose every day decisions are shaped by historical and contemporary structures, for instance, the character, attitudes and behaviours of others. According to Bourdieu (1994, pg. 65), *habitus* is intended to answer the question "How can behaviour be regulated without the product of obedience to rules?"; in other words, how can individual agency be reconciled to social structures? Bourdieu defines *habitus* as property of agent that comprises a *structured and structuring structure* (Bourdieu 1990). It is *structured* by one's past and present circumstances such as family upbringing and educational experiences. It is *structuring* in that one's *habitus* helps to shape one's present and future practices. It is a *structure* in that it is systematically ordered rather than random. This structure comprises a system of *dispositions* for the person which generates her perceptions, appreciations and practices (Bourdieu 1990, pg. 53). For Bourdieu (1977, pg. 81), the term *disposition* designates a way of being, a habitual state, a predisposition, or inclination to do and be, as a result of an organised action, hence a close meaning to "structure".

2.4.1 Habitus and values formation

According to Bourdieu (1977), *habitus* is structured by conditions of existence, as well as structuring in its generation of practices, beliefs and attitudes, both acting in accordance with its own structure. Values are formed through the *habitus* by the relating of two systems of structured structure and structuring structure. To illustrate, given the context of social hierarchy within Vietnamese society which has its historical roots in the tradition of village life (see chapter 4), the acceptance of hierarchies driven by family status within the village is embedded in the Vietnamese person by her earliest upbringing experience. This is often at least, a precondition for coordinating her practices in her village, since her behaviours and

adjustments of behaviours are structured or presuppose the common code of social hierarchy within the village. At the same time, her undertakings as a village member are structuring her own *habitus* and *habitus* of other members of the village. The dialectic meeting of the *habitus* of village members is their structure or value of the social hierarchy that they express. The application of *habitus* and its durability over time acts as *disposition* that supposes the homogeneity of the group, which gives members a consensus of their values, and inform them certain ways of *doing* and *being*. Underpinned by this principle, understanding the formation of values for international education necessitates an enquiry into the *habitus* of the Vietnamese returnees: for example what is it that is tacit knowledge or common sense to these returnees about their acquired overseas education? How does this tacit knowledge form a *fait accompli* for these returnees that make their world appear as an objective set of meanings, whether it is myths, customs, norms, or law? And how do they internalise and reproduce these values of overseas education? These questions will be explored in chapter 4 and 5.

According to Bourdieu (1977), since *habitus* draws on history as part of objective structures, individuals' dispositions are in effect, markers of their social positions that are grounded in present and past positions in social structures, which individuals carry around with them. For example, Tibbetts (2007) argued that educational aspirations of Vietnamese people to study in Western countries in order to acquire modernity of advanced economy can be understood as rooted in its colonial history; the French education system in Viet Nam in the early 20th century, gave rise to intellectual thoughts and ideas of wealth and power through the economy. That is why in chapter 4, I draw on the Vietnamese history and culture to describe some aspects of the Vietnamese *habitus* to understand the returnees' values and goals in regards to their acquired international education. The aim is to understand how returnees' practices enact their social positions that are part of their past and present, which may appear to them as a continuous and regular way of life. Investigation along these ideas will offer insight into the formation of returnees' values as well as the process of value judgement that they might engage in (see chapter 5). In doing so, the research operationalises some aspects of "reason" and "rationality" assumed by the CA in order to understand the returnees' choices and agency in their work and community work (see chapter 6 to 8).

2.4.2 Habitus and choice and agency

In this part, I discuss how I use *habitus* to understand Sen's agency dimensions in this research. To understand the dimension of values (dimension one), the research looks at

returnees' motivations and expectations of their acquired international education, and whether they are conscious of how their motivations are shaped by traditional Vietnamese values or overseas-acquired beliefs and attitudes, or both. Bourdieu (1977) refers to this as *conscious mastery* of one's values or *conscious intention*, which he contrasts with the *objective intention* that one might have based on tacit knowledge from social norms. I argue that this recognition of subjectivity of returnees' choices as a process of *consciousness* is compatible with Sen's notion of "reasoning" one's values in justifying one's choices in the following way. It must also be noted that for Bourdieu (1998), a conscious mastery of one's values necessitates a "sense of rationality" or ability of the individual to reason; reason to act however, is not rationality. This is because according to Bourdieu, in sociology, one has to accept what philosophers call "principle of sufficient reason" (Bourdieu 1998, pg. 75), that is, individuals act with reason. Those reasons are what direct, guide or orient their actions. They engage in reasonable forms of behaviour without being rational, and without having reason as its principle (Bourdieu 1998, pg. 76). This idea of conscious mastery of one's values as "reason" would be what Crocker (2008, pg. 157) referred to as "chosen" by the person and for "reasons of her own". It stands opposed to a person adapting to preferences that are imposed on her, and then pursues goals along those adapted preferences (Sen 1999).

Furthermore, understanding returnees' subjectivities in their choice making is insightful to understanding their "real" choice, which Sen (1985) defines as what a person can command, not one that is enforced or imposed or which a person cannot reach. As Kabeer (1999) claimed, the context in which choice is made is important because if people make choices and their conception of choice is influenced by social norms and values of families and communities which are disempowering, then their choices may also be disempowering as well.

The second dimension of agency is in regards to a person's goals. Through *habitus*, interactions between returnees depend on the social structures within the field that they operate in, which produce their dispositions to act and allot their relative power positions (Bourdieu 1998, pg. 6). Choice that is made in recognition of the dependence of agents' actions on structures, is what Bourdieu calls a form of *objective subjectivity* (Bourdieu 1977, pg. 79) that produces the relational agency that Sen refers to. In order to understand how relational agency works, we need to understand how these interactions are defined by those structures (objective) that produce them, and we can only do that by understanding each person's system of dispositions (subjectivity) (Bourdieu 1977). For the Vietnamese returnees

in this research, such system of dispositions may be what they perceive as advantageous for them in terms of overseas-acquired resources like language competence, industry specialised knowledge, independent working skills, or dispositions that are embodied in the course of Viet Nam's history, such as economic pragmatism or elitism of Western education.

The third dimension of agency refers to a person's responsibility. Here, the research considers the context of Vietnamese society, where the Confucian virtues of *Hieu* (filial piety) and *On* (moral debt) (Marr 2005; London 2010) (see chapter 4), may impose on returnees a set of moral obligations that compete with their overseas-acquired values that maybe more individualised (Marginson 2014). To address this dimension, I draw on Ballet et al (2007) and Dubois (2010) to distinguish between *prospective* responsibility and *retrospective* responsibility in the conception of freedom and morality. As Ballet et al (2007) explained, prospective responsibility refers to moral obligations and virtues that inform reasoning of values where satisfying obligations to others is a precondition of one's freedom (*ex-ante* to freedom); retrospective responsibility refers to the reasoning of values as informing moral decisions once individual freedom has been exercised. Sen's idea of responsibility follows the latter approach in that it is a form of self-responsibility or accountability to be held once freedom and rights are exercised (*ex-post* to freedom).

According to Dubois (2010), a person is embedded in her social structures and relations that determine her rights and obligations *for* others, which she sees as moral or virtuous - objective obligations which she has to satisfy. She also has rights and freedom within her social contexts, which inform her actions in her obligations *to* others. The extent to which she can exercise her agency depends on her conception of morality and freedom that mediates between obligations *to* others or retrospective responsibility, and obligations *for* others or prospective responsibility. Similarly, underpinning Bourdieu's *habitus* is the idea that freedom is conceived within social structures and relations because agents exist within these structures and relations. Responsibility includes both prospective and retrospective responsibility and these types of responsibility operate dialectically: prospective because a person's values are constructed within her social relations, and retrospective because she acts in accordance with what she imagines as her freedom. Thus, she might not see responsibility as a constraint to freedom since she voluntarily imposes on herself the responsibility before she exercises her freedom (Ballet et al. 2013).

This research considers the idea of responsibility in terms of moral obligations and its relationship to individual agency. In other words, how might responsibility be imposed upon

returnees and why? Which types of responsibility form part of their motivations or expectations of international education? How do they mediate between prospective responsibility to families, community, workplace or political leaders, the State, and retrospective responsibility to enhance their professional identities and work performance which they may see as valuable to satisfy their self-actualisation and self-determination? This is important as responsibility in its relationship to agency through returnees' conception of freedom can be enabling or limiting the deliberative process of participation for social change.

The fourth dimension of agency refers to inclusion of both power and control, but Sen emphasises on power because he considers control is not adequate for conceptualisation of freedom (Sen 1985). For Bourdieu, understanding power is about understanding the choice that a person makes in regards to her social structures and relations - her *position taking* based on her perceived opportunity within a specific social situation (Bourdieu 1998, pg. 6). As noted earlier through Drydyk's (2013) argument, understanding power also helps to understand the process of agency. Martins (2007) also argued that understanding agency and power necessitates understanding of a person's surrounding social structures and how they operate as power structures that enable or disable the person to exercise her agency.

Sen and many other CA scholars have also acknowledged that social factors can be causal powers that impact on effective agency of the person (Deneulin 2009; Gasper 2007; Ibrahim 2013; Robeyns 2005; Stewart 2005), because there are relational dimensions of empowerment. For example, choices that a person makes are dependent on choices that others have or make which can lead to a person's dominance or subjugation, or a combination of both (Drydyk 2007). *Habitus* helps to explain the relational factors that produce power as asymmetrical to agency as its operations are underpinned by the workings of social structures and relations as power structures. I now explain briefly the integrated workings of *habitus*, *capital* and *field*, then I discuss how I use these concepts to understand and analyse agency and power in this research.

2.4.2.1 The relations between *habitus*, capital and field

Bourdieu takes the idea of capital in the economic sense and employs it in a wider system of exchanges whereby assets of different kinds are transformed and exchanged within complex networks within social fields (Moore 2010). Bourdieu's idea of capital exists in different forms. *Cultural capital* exists as *objectified* through objects like possession of prestigious

artwork, or *embodied* within the corporality of a person for example family upbringing, or as *institutionalised* in the form of formal education (Bourdieu 2006, pg. 106).

According to Bourdieu (1977, pg. 187), *symbolic capital* refers to goods or material that present themselves as worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation; and individual “practices” orient towards maximising their material or symbolic benefits as they attempt to derive advantages in social situation. For Bourdieu, symbolic capital includes cultural capital and other forms of capital such as linguistic capital (for example English proficiency) or political capital (for example belonging to a political party). The practices by agents in deploying these forms of capital, which result in enhancing their power positions in the field, legitimate the symbolic capital itself (Pham & Tran 2015).

Social capital is defined by Bourdieu (2006, pg. 110) as an “aggregate of actual and potential resources which are linked to membership of a network of mutual recognition and acquaintance, which provides each member of the group a collectivised-owned capital”. Membership of the groups can be families, work place, schools, political organisations, community groups, and as broad as class or ethnicity. Similar to cultural capital, social capital is linked to economic capital and relies on mutual acknowledgement of members in the group in an unconscious way to constitute its organised practices, which then exerts a multiplier effect on the social capital that the person owns (Bourdieu 2006, pg. 110). Thus according to Bourdieu (2006), social networks are results of members’ investment strategies - individual and collective - that aim to establish and reproduce these relationships that they can then take advantage from. Over time, these relationships are transformed into something seen as necessary and elective which imply durable obligations between members. For example, personal connections are expected in Vietnamese society to form dyadic links between an individual and other people, which when established render the individual her distinction from those without those links (Marr 2000) (see also chapter 4).

People’s ownership of various forms of capital denotes their position within the social hierarchies of their groups. The value of these forms of capital and associated advantages are enactment of the rules, codes that are shared by members within the social group (Moore 2010, pg. 105). Bourdieu (1977) considers these different forms of capital to be derived from or converted to economic capital, which is needed to produce the type of power effective in the *field*. A *field* gives forms of capital their value, and boundaries of the field maintain the dominant value of distinguished members from non-members (Singh & Huang 2012).

In the context of this research, the focus is to understand the returnees' power positions in terms of the forms of capital derived from overseas studies, and their cognitive construction of the value of these owned forms of capital in their fields of work and community work. The research aims to understand how returnees make choices knowing their power positions which influence their perception of opportunities that their owned forms of capital can be mobilised; and whether those choices are in accordance with or resistance to the structures that designate the value of their owned capital. For Bourdieu (1998, pg. 12), it is the structure of capital and the weighting of these forms of capital in the returnees' ownership that create differentiated means for them as agents in their social fields. Through the returnees' ownership and deployment of cultural and social capital in interactions with others in the field, we can come to understand their ability to convert their overseas-acquired resources to achieve their goals. I now discuss these concepts of capital and field specifically in regards to the research aims.

To understand the types of overseas-acquired resources (skills, knowledge, attributes and attitudes) that returnees can use to participate effectively in their work and community work in Viet Nam (research aim 1), the research examines the returnees' perceived symbolic capital of these resources through norms of the fields in which they operate. These fields dispose them to certain opportunities, but returnees as free and responsible agents, may mobilise these overseas-acquired resources to convert to do and be what they desire and thus legitimate their symbolic capital. I refer to these opportunities as *resource opportunity structures* because they represent the structure of power resources that returnees perceive as advantageous in achieving their goals.

To understand how the economic, political and institutional structures in Viet Nam promote and constrain returnees' ability to pursue their goals (research aim 2), the thesis focuses on understanding the role of political, economic, cultural and social environment of the field of work and community work, the institutional structures within these fields (subfields), and their impact on returnees' perception of opportunities to mobilise their resources in ways that they see valuable. I refer to these opportunities as *cultural opportunity structures* because they refer to culture as returnees' conditions of power to take up choices and exercise their agency. I consider this important for understanding the choices that returnees make because such choices reflect their perception of advantage positions in the field, their values of acquired international education, their motivations and goals, their perception of feasible opportunities, and their *consciousness* of institutional structures and

social relations as conditions of their agency. These choices may also open up possibilities for them to envisage new possibilities or limit them to structured hierarchies of power positions.

It must also be noted that for Bourdieu (1977), the working of *habitus* in a person's empowerment process is an ongoing process and not entirely one's own making because the range of choices of actions that one faces or beliefs that one holds depends on the social position that she occupies in the field. Whether these choices are visible to her or not are results of her past experiences, her history because her choices or sense of what is available to her is shaped by those past experiences (Bourdieu 1998). These ideas of choice makings that recognise social factors are also implied by Sen (Robeyns 2005), rather than explicitly recognised. The choices that a person takes will then shape her future possibilities because they set her on a path that will further shape her cognitive construction of understanding of herself and of the world. It is this dialectic and ongoing process of structured and structuring as a relation between *habitus* and *field* that create the structures in which individual practices are produced, which are durable and transposable but not immutable (Bourdieu 1977). This is the transformative element of Bourdieu's *habitus* that I consider useful for this research to understand how agency may bring about personal and social change (research aim 3). It also makes explicit the social process of agency which Sen assumes that a person can do through "reasoning" (Sen 2001). I now discuss how reflexive sociology and *habitus* are used to analyse empowerment as a process of personal and social change.

2.4.3 Habitus and empowerment for personal and social change

2.4.3.1 Agency for personal change – reflexive sociology in the process of reasoning about values

Following from the previous discussion, the idea of the dialectic relationship of one's *habitus* is generative for thinking about transformative potential from the perspectives of the Vietnamese returnees. Following Bourdieu (1990), agents act in accordance with the complex internal pluralities of their *habitus* which may construct competing motivations. This is particular for the case of overseas-educated returnees who may have internalised a different set of beliefs and attitudes to their traditional Vietnamese values set. It is the recognition of these different values sets and their derivation from surrounding structures and relations - though *reflexive sociology* - that might enable them to respond in ways that are transformative of the structures that produce those values and goals. Thus, reflexive sociology is used in this research to (1) help the returnees understand the tension between the traditional values (and

conflicts within them) and the newly acquired values, and (2) enable the returnees (given that they have come to see themselves as free and responsible agents) to exercise their agency to combine the old and new values in their own way and change the traditional structures and options.

Reflexive sociology is a form of praxis because it takes account of the agents' perspectives and of their practical experience in specific social situations. This "reflexivity" would come close to Sen's idea of "reasoning" about or "scrutinising" one's values and rationalising them in making actions, and help to remove the tension of Sen's assumption of an agent being an "impartial spectator" of her own values (Sen 2012). Using the idea of reflexivity in relation to *habitus* means that such system of dispositions is also a principle for transformation (not just structure). But transformation only occurs when people recognise that the past and present are structuring their choices and practices, and that they have more or less power and opportunity to modify those structures (Bourdieu 1998). Such recognition gives rise to their "reasoned choices" in discerning practices that accord with or transform those structures.

Given the emphasis of reason in Sen's agency (Crocker 2008; Sen 1985, 1999), reflexive sociology is applied in this research in the following way. "Reasoning" refers to not only what a returnee can say about her values, goals, motivations but that she recognises that (1) her goals and motivations are shaped by her power position, which is denoted by her ownership of cultural and social capital within a particular social field, and (2) her power positions influence her choices and practices. It also means that she is aware of the opportunities that her practices can have in transforming her power positions and the structures that produce those power positions; that she actually grasps those opportunities, and in her practices has the power to change the structures. This is the transformative potentiality or *normative agency* at the individual level: the idea that returnees recognise their power positions, the nature and functioning of power, how such power comes about, and they choose to act to maintain or change those power positions to accord with their values and responsibilities.

The "reasoning" that undergirds an agency-focused CA can be explored by searching for "subjectivism" that returnees in this research are capable of making and accounting for. This requires a process of engaging participants in reflexive sociology because it allows for returnees to have ownership of their choices and practices (Crocker 2008). In so doing, it moves Sen's theoretical ideas of *effective agency* (Sen 1999) that involves "reasoning" in

abstract of the impositions of a person's world, to praxis where the person can take up her own reasoning within her own world that then allow her to recognise the impositions of that world. In this way, Bourdieu's reflexive sociology of the *habitus* modifies Sen's idea of freedom as in danger of being too external to the individual. In this light, the agent's freedom is thicker in the sense that it is conceptualised within the world of the person, which I term *intersubjective freedom*, and not in a transcendental space beyond one's historical and lived space.

Furthermore, understanding "rationality" rather than assuming it, requires questioning about the feasibility of demarcation between "objective" and "subjective" from a construct of research. As Bourdieu says, "A perspective is defined by the objective position from the social space in which it is adopted. The social space is indeed the first and last reality, since it still commands representations that the social agents can have of it." (Bourdieu 1998, pg. 13). Thus, this research shifts Sen's concept of *effective agency* to *normative agency* by understanding the *habitus* of returnees from their practical experiences in specific social fields and subfields (chapter 6 to 8). I argue that Bourdieu's *habitus* helps to operationalise Sen's abstract concepts of *opportunity* and *process of agency* by bringing together the existence of social structures and people's experiences of agency within those structures. In doing so, thinking with *habitus* encourages us to think in terms of relational agency (see also discussion above in section 4.2 on objective subjectivity).

In practice, as Sen (2007) implied, agency may never come about in a single action, or even a continuous set of actions. Some people may be unconscious of how social structures and relations determine their choice and actions, and they choose to act willingly without that recognition. On the other hand, there can be gradients of agency that border or overlap, even contradict as people engage in their trajectory within or outside their social groups. For example, a person may recognise her position and actions as influenced by the conditions of existence or the power positions of her structures, but choose to follow those conditions of existence as she sees fit. But she can also choose to dissent and rebel, even at the danger of being imprisoned or silenced in some other way. The reason is that she might have the autonomy to act as she wants and sees valuable, but she does not seek to resist the structures because her actions may change her power position to increase her advantage in the field while enhancing production of same conditions that produce their actions in the first place (Bourdieu 1998). Another situation may be when a person's action due to having control rather than power, changes the structures even if she may not have acted upon a

consciousness of the conditions within those structures. She might though still develop a sense of *consciousness* after she sees past experiences or opportunities as a result of her practices even though those practices are based purely on *unconsciousness* of her power position.

The point here is that while it is important to understand agency dimensions through examining *habitus*, its complex internal plurality makes it very difficult to quarantine actions as simply agency, resistance, struggle, compliance or any other category in practical situations.⁶ Thus I argue that it is more fruitful to think about *opportunity* and *process* of agency in terms of the opportunities and lag due to structural conditions, and how returnees respond to these structural conditions (Bourdieu 1977, pg. 83); thereby opening up possibilities to understand how lags are missed opportunities and how might structural conditions be procured for moving towards ethical and sustainable social change that are located in agents' social relations. In addition, identifying returnees' "reasoning" or justification of their actions (their subjectivities) allows us to see how opportunities might be reached in ethical ways that are localised rather than imposed by outsiders. It must also be noted that in this thesis, this is not a demand on returnees to engage in reflexive judgement of their practices. It is offered here as a way to understand and theorise *normative agency*.

2.4.3.2 Agency for social change - interdependence of individual agency and collective agency

Understanding agency-focused capability through *habitus* that draws on historical and situational specificities implies that social change requires individual agency as well as collective agency. Some CA scholars like Dubois and Lasida (2010), Ballet et al (2007), and Ibrahim (2013) refer to collective agency as derived from a solidarity-based society, where individual actions that are based on responsibility *to* and *for* others collectively, can form collective action and collective capability. In this regards, Dubois et al (2008) acknowledged that it is difficult to constitute collective capability by pooling individual and social capabilities, and that only a clever combination of the two through collective agency, may direct it towards action for social change. The idea of *habitus* can be understood to extend this idea of collective agency by considering that a constitution of collective action is within the dialectical relationship between, on the one hand, *habitus*, "a system of lasting dispositions that functions as matrix of perceptions and actions", and on the other hand, "an objective

⁶ This is Sen's position on commitment and constraints in agency (Sen 1977)

event which exerts its actions of conditional stimulation calling for a determinate response” (Bourdieu 1977, pg. 82-83). In other words, if there is solidarity based on homogeneity, which is assumed by Bourdieu in the field for *habitus* to act as a structure, then there is some form of collective agency as long as all members within the group share the same values set, and ownership of cultural and social capital that allow them to empower themselves. It is individuals’ ability to empower themselves as a result of that shared understanding with other members within the field that gives them their individual agency. Their recognition of their opportunity within that field, and the necessary actions to pursue their goals which call on their membership of that group, could then lead to collective actions. I argue that collective agency, in this way is conceived as interdependent of individual agency. It depends on individual agency, but also gives rise to individual agency.

In this thesis, the interdependency between individual agency and collective agency is highlighted by focusing on the symbiotic relationship of “power” and structures within the social groups that returnees belong to, which may enable or restrict their empowerment; empowerment being the process of social change (Drydyk 2013). To characterise power positions within Bourdieu’s social fields, I draw on Allen’s (2014) typologies of power: *power-over* is when the person has control but no power, or little power to change or act in accordance to what she aims for; *power-to* is when the person has ability (from an individual basis) to make the change, or have the effective tools to achieve valuable outcomes (agency freedom); and *power-within* is when the person draws on her membership within the group that she belongs to enable change.

The *power-within* highlights the interdependence of individual agency and collective agency within the group that the agent belongs to: a person may acquire power when there are shared values, identities, goals and responsibilities with others in her social environment. However, when a person operates in a social group where her values are not shared, her resources are not valued similarly by others, her goals are not shared with others, where she does not fit in or feel subjugated in the social hierarchies of the group, she has little power. She might still have procedural control over what she does practically but little power to do what she values. She may then makes choices that are not in accordance with her values but are accorded to her power resources - her owned cultural and social capital - to increase her power so she can have both power and control.

To illustrate, overseas-educated academics working in Vietnamese universities might value doing research. However, the norm of career pathway in these universities is to become

a department manager where no research is allowed. Such managerial roles have other benefits for example, higher salaries and opportunities to participate in international partnership programs. The academic is inclined to take up the managerial position as expected of her and also to leverage her English skills to engage in foreign partnerships. Moreover, while she has the autonomy to exercise her choice, her choice is based on the knowledge that to jeopardise such privileges associated with managerial position is a kind of taboo, and the fear that the system that gives her the privilege would be threatened or collapse if such order is altered. Such knowledge is the *power-over* her. Her *power-to* is dependent on her department members to recognise and share her value of research - *power-within*, as well as her own recognition of the *power-over* her. Her *power-to* if exercised in the long run will produce the *power-within* by constituting a new *habitus*, and allow for what Drydyk (2008) called durable empowerment.

Understanding the dialectic way in which the returnees respond to their objective structures subjectively gives this thesis the space to understand transformative agency in terms of the returnees' power structures, which are derivative as well as formative of their values and conception of freedom, and in ways that connect individual agency and collective agency. This focus on understanding collective actions and collective agency echoes the call by scholars like Evans (2002), Deneulin (2009), Dubois et al (2008) and Stewart (2005), for more attention to collective agency, or influence of groups in individual agency achievement in theories and application of the CA. I now discuss some of the potential challenges and limitations of my approach to applying Sen and Bourdieu in this research.

2.5 Challenges and limitations of the Sen-Bourdieu conceptual framework

2.5.1 Multiplicity of *habitus*

To highlight the complex idea of *habitus* as dialectic relationships between objective structures and subjective responses by the agents, Bourdieu distinguishes “*habitus* as embodied in individuals, and *habitus* as collective homogenous phenomenon, mutually adjusted for and by a social group or class” (Bourdieu 1977, pg. 81). It is the homogeneity of norms as a consensus of the social groups that allows *habitus* to act as a structure. While I have discussed this idea in some details, it should be noted that this notion of homogeneity of norms assumed in social groups might not uncover the “rationality” of the returnees' practices in this research easily and clearly. The reason is that the Vietnamese society is laden with

fragmented values (Jamieson 1993, London 2010, Marr 2000) due to its long periods of colonisation and fighting for independence, and different political governing groups with different motivations and self-interests (see chapter 4). While most societies have varied social values across social groups, the contradictory values are much more pervasive in Vietnamese society compared to societies with more stable independent ruling government (Jamieson 1993).

Furthermore, when international graduates return home, they may have to mediate their overseas-acquired beliefs and attitudes with the traditional Vietnamese values, which literature has shown to be much more conflicting due to reverse culture shock. This will be further analysed in chapter 5. Thus the homogeneity that Bourdieu supposes in the social fields which acts to regulate the practices of members may not be so easily recognised and validated by returnees. In this case study, the divergences and convergences, solidarity and fragmentation at various levels across Vietnamese society, are much more than in France or Kabyle society where Bourdieu conceptualises *habitus* (Reed-Danahay 2005). While the proposed conceptual framework - particularly Sen's notion of agency and capabilities - allows for a plurality of contexts, the challenge for this thesis is to understand the complexities of the returnees' values, choices and practices that take account of competing motivations and pluralistic values inculcated from overseas, which are inherently different to Viet Nam, and Viet Nam's long and complex history and significant economic changes in recent decades. As Pham and Saltmarsh (2013) pointed out, Vietnamese international students are very much aware of their plural identities as members of many different and sometimes conflicting groups.

Both Sen's CA and Bourdieu's theory of practice lack attention to the relations between State and society, which impact on governance and organisation of institutions in Viet Nam. Both approaches assume a degree of political separation between the State and society, and thus individual practices are derived or limited within the separate spheres of the State and civil society. This poses a challenge in analysing returnees' experiences in Viet Nam given the intermingled relationship between State and society under authoritarian socialist regime, and the imposition of the State over functions of institutions and aspects of social life through mass organisations (Kervliet 2005; London 2010; Thayer 2008) (see chapter 4 and 8). Given the long history of colonialism, the Communist governance followed by authoritarian Socialist State, and the market-based economy in recent years, the political structures may have changed but the *habitus* of the Vietnamese people may still carry

elements of submission to and rebellion from authority of previous systems. Thus, the impact on returnees' motivations for political and civic actions can be diverse and eclectic rather than homologous and systematic over time.

2.5.2 Boundary of fields

The idea of field is an important consideration in Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* and its functions. According to Collyer (2014), the intersection of differing fields and everyday practices are continually perceived by agents according to incomparable logics, codes, rules and values. This seems to imply that fields have significant diversity where the experiences of people can be both competing and complying, and that the nature and direction of such compliance and resistance can be understood within the fields. This would make "fields" compatible with what Sen calls "plurality of conditions for functionings" (Sen 1999). However, as Vaughan (2008) noted, the field idea is also difficult to apply because there are layers of fields that are embedded in each other, that is, where do the fields and subfields begin or end? In addition, it is not clear what Bourdieu means by the field and how one might conceive fields, as analytical constructs or within the social consciousness of actors? According to Bourdieu (Jenkins 2002) it is both, which means the decision has to be made by the researcher; but what is absent from Bourdieu's writings is criteria for identification of the fields' existence and determination of typologies of the fields. In this study, I have broadly categorised the social fields as "professional", "intellectual" and "civic", in order to account for the economic sectors that returnees work in and the community groups that they participate in. The subfields are institutions within these sectors, for example types of employers, universities or community groups. The assumption is that the symbolic power is different at the sector level, the institutional level and at the individual level of interactions, which demands analysis at these various levels. This categorisation also accounts for the research participants' demography of work and community work, which will be further explained in chapter 3.

Furthermore, Bourdieu does not talk about the value of various forms of capital across fields, and their transitivity across fields. This maybe challenging for analysing Vietnamese returnees' power positions. For example, critical thinking may be a form of cultural capital that has some value in foreign universities in Viet Nam; but it may not be in Vietnamese firms' supply chain production line. However, that does not mean the person who has critical thinking should be any more elite in foreign universities than in a supply chain line. When

people can transfer capital across fields to enact agency, equality can occur but it may not. Thus, in this thesis, I draw attention to the types of overseas-acquired skills, knowledge, attitudes and attributes that are perceived by participants as cultural capital as a response to Vietnamese social norms, and whether these forms of cultural capital are actually legitimated as symbolic capital in the practical experiences of their work and community work. If they are legitimated, we could ask whether they may enable the kind of “revolutionary” personal and social change implicit in Bourdieu and Sen’s concepts of agency.

Connell (2007) argued that Bourdieu lacks attention to the macro of fields, that is how geopolitical relations affect the State and macro levels of society. This critique is also relevant for this research because the association of the everyday practices of Vietnamese returnees against the background of colonialism is significant in relation to their aspirations for international education, their changed viewpoints as a result of studying overseas, and what they can apply when they return to Viet Nam. However, there is no place in Sen’s CA or Bourdieu’s theory of practice to address this systematically. This is a limitation of this theoretical framework in the context of this research, because understanding the geopolitical impact of *habitus*, that is how returnees are positioned in the global fields, can help to understand whether their enhanced agency-focused capabilities as outcomes of international education can be true social change at the local level or simply subordination to the dominant actors at the global level. For example, how might one think about the domination of Western ideas and beliefs if Vietnamese graduates take these beliefs home and realise their aspirations rooted in the Western supremacy over Vietnamese nationalism? Would that social change still be considered justice or freedom expansion? These are not the main aims of this research, but it is worthwhile to highlight this limitation of the framework in address the global agency perspective of international graduates, given that there is much literature in international education that refer to global citizenship as an outcome of international education. In this research, I do briefly examine the extent to which returnees’ change in attitudes include a sense of global citizenship, but only insofar as how this change might shape their goals, choices and practices in Viet Nam.

2.6 Conclusion: Summarising key concepts of the Sen-Bourdieu framework

To conclude the chapter, I summarise the key concepts of the Sen-Bourdieu framework and highlight the usefulness of this approach to conceptualising *normative agency* and empowerment in this research. The appeal of Sen's agency-focused CA for this research lies in its conceptualisation of capability in three ways (Deneulin & Alkire 2009; Sen 1999). First, there is an *intrinsic value* of agency because expansion of a person's freedom to *do* and *be* as one has reason to value is significant in itself (Sen 1999). Second, the *consequential* role of agency is important in fostering a person's opportunity to have valuable outcomes for their education (Sen 1999). Third, agency also has a *constructive* role in shaping a person's values and choice to help themselves and their world. These are underlying aspects of the transformative potential of international education in this research. Sen recognises that reasoning, choice and agency are influenced by the external factors which are depending on the collectives that individuals belong. He argues that individuals weigh these commitments freely to decide on which choices to take depending on their assignment of importance to them (Sen 2007). I draw on Bourdieu's ideas of *habitus*, capital and field to understand and analyse Sen's abstract concepts of values, reasoning, opportunity, choices, and agency. I use Bourdieu's concept of reflexivity to understand how individuals weigh the importance of their commitment in making their choices and taking actions.

The focus of this enquiry considers and locates Vietnamese overseas-educated returnees in their social structures and relations with others. Moreover, Bourdieu's sociological tools are used to operationalise Sen's agency dimensions with the aim to understand the social conditions that give rise to returnees' values, choice and agency, and how they respond to these social conditions that may mediate or enhance their capabilities. The intention is to understand their values and attitudinal changes as result of living and studying abroad, how these shape their choices and what they can do when their choices are contested. These are important for understanding the potential of acquired international education in enabling returnees to take actions and bring about valuable changes for them and their local communities.

The combined framework of Sen's analytical philosophy and Bourdieu's critical sociology is helpful to achieve this aim because it looks at the social structures which produce returnees' actions through mediation of their values and appropriation of owned cultural and social capital, which in turn orient their motivations and commitment. By understanding the returnees' mediation and appropriation of values from the Vietnamese *habitus* (chapter 4) and

overseas-acquired values change (chapter 5) and how it engenders perception of opportunity, we can gain insight into returnees' goals and responsibilities which in turn, inform their choices in the workplace and community (chapter 6 to 8). The opportunity structures that returnees take up are reflective of their values, goals, and responsibilities, as well as their recognition of their power positions denoted by owned resources. Therefore, an understanding of the opportunity structures that returnees perceive and what they do in response, allows us to make sense of their normative practices, rather than just accept the normative as their conception of freedom and agency. In other words, the strength of this analytical framework in employing Bourdieu' toolkits to operationalise the CA is that it allows for normative choices and actions to be accounted for through sociological and historical processes of practices. From that, we can understand the returnees' conditioned or conditional freedom for transformative actions (Bourdieu 1977). The broader conceptual aim of this thesis is to offer a sociological framework of Sen's CA to theorise normative agency. Furthermore, I offer empirical accounts that support Crocker's (2014) argument that development ethics must go hand in glove with political economy and a view of unequal power relations.

In remaining open to the inherent plurality of situations of agency *opportunity* and *process*, which might be difficult to fit clearly and neatly in boundaries of agency, resistance, struggle or compliance in sets of social structures and relations, the theoretical framework proposed here allows the Vietnamese returnees' experiences to be understood in terms of conditions for agency-focused capabilities, rather than evaluated as binaries of social reproduction and agency achievement. It pays attention to the social factors and the ways in which ownership of certain forms of capital may act as power resources to expand or limit the returnees' choice and agency to achieve functionings. Furthermore, an analysis grounded in the epistemological relations of participants through reflexive sociology allows for understanding freedom and constraint of freedom which characterise social interactions rather than supposed by a transcendental idea of freedom and justice (Sen 2009). As Crocker (2008) noted, this allows for understanding the potential for deliberative methods of participation rather than assuming that deliberative methods will work to improve democratic base for social change.

Isn't sociology, which apparently undermines the foundations of reason and thereby its own foundations, capable of producing its own foundations, capable of producing instruments for forging a rational discourse and even offering techniques for waging politics of reason, a real politic of reason? (Bourdieu 1998, pg. 127)

Bourdieu's formulation (above) nicely summarises the intersecting ideas of Sen and Bourdieu in this study: using reflexive sociology to understand the *opportunity* and *process* of agency through sociological and historical production of *habitus*. It helps to highlight the normative assumptions that participants have, assumptions that may be different to what a general or overly abstract approach to social development or reform programs might be. Whether returnees believe outcomes of international education are about material prosperity, self-development or human freedom will shape thinking about international education and their opportunities at the local level. Ideas about the purpose of international education and what might be necessary for realising returnees' motivations and goals for themselves and their society, matter when they can reason and justify their choices and actions autonomously.

Situating this conceptual frame reflexively in the context of Viet Nam, allows me, the researcher - who was born in Viet Nam, raised and educated in Australia - to recognise that a multiplicity of viewpoints on freedom, morality and agency exists, and thereby objectivise the temptation to speak from a self-referential, outsider-facilitated research exercise that might be very different to Viet Nam's local conditions. This point helps us explicate Sen's ideas of participatory dialogue for ethical development, by giving the returnees as research participants, a platform for expressing their ideas about the value of their overseas acquired resources, which could act to improve or lead to different opportunities and outcomes.

In summary, I have argued that Bourdieu's sociological tools are helpful to clarify elements of Sen's ideas of agency and guide in the analysis and interpretation of findings in reflexive ways that explicate the normative underpinning of an agency-focused CA. Sen's conceptual lens of capabilities allow for this research to emphasise the agency of returnees through their practical experiences in a developing nation with learnings from and impositions of globalisation and the developed world. Bourdieu offers an analytical toolkit that can be deployed to consider specific Vietnamese historical, political, cultural, social and economic dimensions of practices, which allows for understanding of the conditions for *opportunity* and *process* of agency as struggle and empowerment. Bourdieu's theory of practice can also benefit from Sen's notion of freedom to move towards theory of social change, as opposed to social reproduction, in analysing functioning of the fields in relation to *habitus*. In this way, Sen's ideal of freedom can be seen as capability inputs or conditions to articulate "equality" (equal agency) that is missing in Bourdieu's world, and allows us to conceive alternatives in broader social structures and relations. Both theoretical approaches are employed here with the aim to understand and make known the voices of the Vietnamese overseas-educated

returnees as subjects of their lives. In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodological design and methods that are informed by this conceptual framework.

3 The methodological design: From theory to praxis of reflexive sociology

3.1 Introduction

This project conducts an exploratory study to understand how the acquisition of international education may enhance Vietnamese overseas graduates' capabilities in work and community participation when they return home, in particular how it has enabled them to make personal and social change in their work and community work. This research orients around the main research question: What is the transformative potential of acquired international education for Vietnamese overseas graduates in their local communities?

In the last chapter, I argued that a combined framework of Sen's agency-focused CA and Bourdieu's theory of practice is a promising way to advance this research. In this framework, I understand the returnees' overseas-acquired skills, knowledge, attributes and attitudes (through Bourdieu's forms of capital) as power resources that they can use to pursue their goals. The extent to which they can mobilise these power resources depend on the fields and subfields (employer institutions and community groups) that returnees operate in. Within these fields, returnees make choices that are reflective of the opportunity structures they perceive as feasible and advantageous for them to pursue their goals and meet their responsibilities. Their choices and practices are dependent on their *habitus*, a system of dispositions, which is grounded in historical trajectory, and their perceived power positions in the immediate social situations. I developed this framework to address the overarching research question, that is, to gain insight into the returnees' conditions of agency and power in order to understand the possibilities for their agency and empowerment as processes of personal and social change. In this chapter, I provide an account of how I design the research to address the research question, with this conceptual framework guiding the research methods and data analysis.

This chapter is organised as follows. In the next section, I argue that a case study and mixed-method design is appropriate to provide a focus on the 'how' and 'why' of Vietnamese returnees' experiences. I argue that Bourdieu's reflexive sociology is useful in this research to explicate the normative underpinning of an agency-focused CA, and guides a praxis for

understanding agency and transformative capabilities. I then outline the two stages of the mixed-method design including the sampling, recruitment and analysis processes used. First, a social survey was fielded using a snowball approach to recruit a sample of returnees. The aim of the survey was to provide an overview of experiences and to identify clusters of returnees with similar study and work patterns (section 3). Second, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with selected survey respondents and key people in their networks. These interviews aimed to provide a fuller account of how returnees perceive their opportunities, agency and functionings as a result of their acquired overseas education (section 4). In section 5, I discuss the boundaries and limitations of using a case study and mixed-method approach, and reflect on my own role as an insider/outsider. I conclude the chapter by summarising the methods employed, and the implications of this approach for both ethical practice and the credibility of my findings.

3.2 Case study and mixed method approach

3.2.1 Case study approach

This research aims to understand “how” and “why” Vietnamese returnees may utilise their overseas-acquired skills, knowledge, attributes and attitudes to enable personal and social change in their work and community work. I intend to investigate the returnees’ motivations and expectations of their acquired overseas education, how they take choices and engage in practices in their fields of work and community work. A case study approach is useful to achieve this aim for the following reasons. First, given the sociological emphasis of agency, the research has to consider social, political, cultural, economic and historical contexts of the returnees in examining their practical experiences. From an analytic perspective, the boundaries of a case study of Viet Nam allow for the country’s political, cultural, social and economic specificities to be examined in depth and in an integrated fashion.

Second, as noted in chapter 1, Viet Nam has a high number of international students studying abroad. Viet Nam is the fourth highest sending country in Australia’s international student enrolment and this pattern has been consistent in the last ten years. Similarly, the number of Vietnamese international students enrolled in the US, the UK, and other parts of Western Europe have been consistently high in the last fifteen years. This pattern of studying abroad is reflective of the country’s economic growth and associated demand for quality labour forces, improved households’ wealth, as well as the country’s long history of studying

overseas (see chapter 4). These social, political and economic conditions position returnees as potential quality human resources for Viet Nam's socio-economic development. A case study approach would capture these conditions in examining the returnees' participation in the employment market and the communities.

Third, the research question demands an in-depth analysis of the returnees' values, choices and agency at the individual level with social explanations. The research design has to attend to explaining the social conditions that returnees have to mediate and appropriate, in order to understand the "how" and "why" of their choices and practices. Drawing on Yin (2009), a case study is an appropriate approach to address the explanatory nature of the research, focusing on contemporary social events with historical underpinnings, and within real-life contexts. This is because through the specificities of a case study, the analysis of the social processes of returnees' values, choices and everyday practices can link these phenomena over time rather than viewing them as frequencies or incidence (Yin 2009, pg. 9). As Schramm (1971) emphasised, "the essence of a case study is that it tries to illuminate a set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented and with what result". In addition, the idea of participatory dialogue with research participants is at the core of this research. The research aims to include the returnees in the research through reflexivity, where they can have the space to reflect on their values, choices and experiences. A case study allows the returnees to be involved in the process of interviews by engaging them to examine their reasons for everyday choices and practices. I will return to this point in the next section where I discuss the philosophical assumptions underpinning the conceptual framework and the methods employed.

Fourth, in this thesis, I also aim to develop propositions through "analytical generalisations" of the findings (Yin 2009, pg. 38), as opposed to "statistical generalisations", to strengthen Sen's and Bourdieu's concepts for future enquiries, and to test the Sen-Bourdieu framework that I developed. A case study is useful to explore the workings of the conceptual ideas proposed in the framework, for example intersubjective freedom, normative agency, reasoning through reflexive sociology, responsibility, forms of capital, resource and cultural opportunity structures, typologies of power, fields and subfields as levels of analysis. Moreover, these components of the research design force the researcher to construct a primary theory. In this research, that means developing a theoretical framework of *normative agency* that relates to the research aims. The case study makes it essential for the development of this theoretical framework to be part of the design (Lincoln & Guba 2000). It also allows for

testing of the theory proposed. In this regards, the case study approach would also take on an exploratory nature in this research (Yin 2009).

From a technical definition of a case study, the case study inquiry is appropriate for this research because it can cope with pluralistic dimensions and nuances demand of the research problem. According to Yin (2009), this requires the case study to rely on multiple sources of evidence, with data needling to be considered and analysed in a triangulating fashion. In this research, I used a mixed-method approach, to collect and analyse quantitative data from surveys, followed by collecting and analysing qualitative data from interviews. Then the results from the two strands of data were connected in the final stage of interpretive analysis, and combined with an analysis of the institutional, historical, cultural and political context of Viet Nam. The purpose of conducting analysis at various levels was to use the interview result to provide more information about the survey results, and triangulate the results from the two data sets. Following Creswell and Clark (2011), because of the consequential collection and analysis of data, connecting the quantitative and qualitative data can improve the validity of the data from both strands. For this research, this connection of data is critical in light of the transformative lens of understanding the returnees' conditions of agency in using their overseas-acquired skills, knowledge, attributes and attitudes as resources for enabling personal and social change. I will discuss these processes of analysis in more details in sections 3 and 4. I now discuss the epistemological assumptions underpinning the theoretical lens, which inform the mixed-method design. This is followed by an overview of the mixed method design and the rationale for using this design to address the research aims.

3.2.2 Epistemological assumptions underpinning the research applying Sen and Bourdieu

Following Kant, Sen presupposes that people can see themselves as agents (Sen 2013). According to Kant (1996), human beings have to be seen from two standpoints of agency. The first standpoint is that as people consider themselves as belonging to the “empirical” world, they act heterogeneously in the contexts that they operate within. At the same time, they consider themselves as belonging to the “intelligible” world where they operate under the law independent of contexts and thus have grounds of operations in reason (Kant 1996). Autonomy under the CA rests on these two standpoints of agency that operate simultaneously. People inhabit simultaneously both standpoints in the realm of necessity (empirical) and in the realm of freedom (intelligible) (Pham 2013). There will always be a gap between the two

realms due to existence of social structures or the laws of nature in the empirical world. According to Kant (1996), scientific research cannot disprove freedom because it is not an empirical concept. We cannot make sense of free life if we do not presuppose it, but at the same time, we cannot prove that it exists (Kant 1996). Along with Kant, Sen assumes that people, through *reason*, can make choices and engage in practices that are agentic, even though these choices may also include the goals and well-being of others, not just their own (see chapter 2 for full discussion of Sen's notions of "reason" in agency).

For Bourdieu (1998), there is a *social history* of reason, thus history has to be accounted for in the agent's reason. Reason is a form of *practical reason* because it is engendered through a person's social position that is contemporary with extensive historical trajectory (Bourdieu 1998). According to Bourdieu (1998, pg. 138), reason is historical, but it does not mean that reason is accounted or reduced to history only. Rather Bourdieu argued that *practical reason*, if it can lead to transformative actions, has to consider the historical underpinnings of a person's dispositions, as well as her determinate response to the present situation. Even though there are differences in the epistemological assumptions of reason between Sen and Bourdieu, where Sen focuses on the individual, and Bourdieu on systems of dispositions that are embedded in social structures, both consider *normative reason* as basis for agency, and that social conditions shape a person's agency; the latter is more implicit in Sen's vision than Bourdieu's.

In chapter 2, I argued that it is this emphasis on normative reason and agency, through what Bourdieu calls "real politic of reason" that this research can achieve its aim to understand returnees' empowerment for change. In understanding the social worlds in which returnees engage in their "reasoning", their power, interests and responsibilities must be considered - more or less - in terms of the tacitly recognised rules of their social fields, to which they might submit themselves, to obey with what they see as structures or opportunities and to function in those fields. In conceptualising this framework, I understand "reason" to be produced within the social microcosms in which returnees exist, which can lead to their choices and practices as forms of struggle, resistance, co-optation or agency in response to those social conditions. In other words, I argue that progress of reason towards agency and empowerment can only be achieved if we understand the struggle of returnees as a response to their power positions in their social fields. From this philosophical understanding of practical reasoning, agency and empowerment as embedded in the social structures and social relations, I argue for a transformative lens (Creswell & Clark 2011) as the overarching

research design because it allows for us to understand the social and political conditions that returnees respond to; and because these are actually preconditions for reason that can lead to empowerment for change. This underpins my concept of *normative agency*.

3.2.3 Mixed method design

The overarching transformative design is achieved with a mixed-method approach. Following the mixed-method models of Creswell and Clark (2009), this design also has an explanatory element in its two phases of data collection and analysis. Given the lack of data available on returnees, I aimed to identify who and where the Vietnamese overseas-educated returnees are in the first phase of the research. I also aimed to gather data about some aspects of the Vietnamese overseas-educated graduates who have returned to Viet Nam: (1) their jobs and community participation; (2) the types of overseas-acquired skills, knowledge, attributes that are useful in their work and community work; (3) their values and attitudinal changes as a result of overseas education; and (4) their goals and perception of positive or negative impacts of acquired overseas education in their work and community work. These aspects were considered proxies of achieved functionings to be further examined in the second phase of follow-up interviews.

In the second phase, I aimed to understand how and why these proxies of achieved functionings arise; more importantly, the conditions that give rise to returnees making choices and engaging in practices to achieve these functionings, and whether these are in accordance with their motivations, expectations and responsibilities. I prioritised the interviews in the interpretation of findings because I used the interviews to provide in-depth explanation of the results obtained in the surveys. Furthermore, there were two sets of interviews that allowed for data to be collected from multiple sources. The first set of interviews was conducted with the selected survey respondents (key interviewees). The second set was conducted with members of their networks. The purpose of interviewing network members was to gain perspectives from the social networks of returnees, as well as triangulating the responses of returnees with those of their networks. The two sets of interviews were considered essential to address the research aims and epistemological assumptions in their attention to the practical experiences of returnees and in conjunction with their social relations.

The connection (or mixing) of the two strands of data from the two phases of surveys and interviews is as follows.⁷ I used the results of the surveys to inform the sampling plan of the interviews by identifying the types of economic sectors and community groups to select the key interviewees. Another point of connection was in the final stage of interpretive analysis, where the results of analysis from the interviews were used to explain the results of the survey data. In addition, the interpretation and explanation of both the surveys and interviews were integrated to identify emerging patterns of returnees' social structures and relations in the sectors (fields), institutions (subfields) that they work in and their responses to these structures and relations. The data was connected to understand the usefulness of overseas-acquired resources for returnees in their work and community work (research aims 1 and 2), and to identify possibilities for enabling personal and social change from the perspectives and experiences of the returnees (research aim 3). Even though I have used the mixed method explanatory design of quantitative approach followed by qualitative approach, these procedures were implemented within the larger transformative theoretical framework that shaped the design decisions.

Furthermore, the reason for prioritising the interviews phase in terms of interpretative analysis, particularly the interview data with the key returnees, is the importance placed on reflexivity in the interviews, where returnees were encouraged to reflect on their values and chosen actions. As discussed in the epistemological assumptions of the Sen-Bourdieu conceptual framework above, this is an important design of the research where I, as the researcher, view participants as epistemic individuals rather than empirical objects of research. I incorporated the ontology that is needed for the CA in order to explicate its normative underpinning (Martins 2007, Smith & Seward 2009) in the methodological design in two ways. First, I gave space, through the interview questions, for the interviewees to reflect on their own motivations and expectations of overseas education, and asked them to consider whether they are influenced by the Vietnamese educational values as they know and live with, and if so, how and why. Second, the interview questions were designed to elicit the returnees to consider whether their actions or choices were enacted in *consciousness* of their social structures and relations that predispose them to these choices and actions, and if they then intended to make personal and social changes in their work and community work. For example, returnees were asked how and why they chose to take up community work, and

⁷ These terms are based on Creswell and Clark (2009)

community colleagues were also asked similar questions to see whether there were any agreements or contestations (see Appendix VI for the Interview schedules).

While the survey served to categorise the survey respondents' achievements in work and community work as proxies of achieved functionings, the interviews were intended to allow returnees to consider these as achieved functionings according to their reflections of their motivations, goals, choices and practices. Thus, the intention of connecting the survey results and interview results in the final stage of analysis was to link the opportunities structures that returnees see as available through their "reasoned" values to achieve functionings, whether or not they have actually achieved them. I intend to bring out in the analysis chapters (chapter 6 to 8) the nuances in the practical experiences of the returnees.

Lastly, a mixed method design was used to address the methodological gap in conducting research about international education outcomes. One of the reasons for the lack of clarity between outcomes and benefits of international education and whether they are applicable for returnees anywhere (Cuthbert et al. 2008; Jencs & Riessman 1977, Cavanagh 1993, Wingard & Williamson 1973), is the lack of consideration of cultural, institutional, and political contexts in which returnees work. The various research about outcomes tend to focus on jobs and employability, where outcomes are measured quantitatively in jobs, field of employment, salaries, or skills as inputs to jobs, and satisfaction levels of jobs as scales of satisfaction (Harman 2005). On the other hand, research that investigate institutional factors of employers, or cultural barriers in workplaces are often qualitative and do not link to returnees' job outcomes (Cannon 2000, Campbell 2010) (see also chapter 1). Thus, in line with Shougee's (1998) argument, I consider a mixed-method approach that embraces quantitative categories of outcomes in light of qualitative conditions to achieve these outcomes, as appropriate to understand achieved outcomes in a transformative way, because it allows for an examination of the returnees' perception of their self-worth in terms of their accomplishment and power relations with others. I now explain the methods employed in this two-phased mixed-method design.

3.3 Phase 1: Surveys

3.3.1 Recruitment, sampling and target population

The first stage of the data collection process involved conducting a survey of Vietnamese international graduates who have returned to Viet Nam. Invitations to participate in the surveys were distributed to potential participants through various sources both online and in person. These included my personal networks of Vietnamese academics, international students, families and friends who live overseas and in Viet Nam, Vietnamese students abroad organisations, universities alumni organisation with Viet Nam chapters sourced through social media including Facebook and LinkedIn, Vietnamese professional organisations on LinkedIn. In addition, I visited a number of large reputable public universities in Viet Nam in the four major cities Ha Noi, Ho Chi Minh City, Hue and Da Nang to circulate invitations to academics and staff who studied overseas. The invitation letter also included a request for potential participants to circulate the invitation letter to their networks. This form of recruitment is a non-probability, snowball approach that aims to gather the maximum number of survey respondents. Appendix I lists the Vietnamese student abroad organisations, overseas universities alumni chapters, LinkedIn professional groups, and the universities that I visited in Viet Nam.

Four hundred and one people started the survey, but only two hundred and eighty (N=280) people completed the surveys, resulting in 30 per cent rate of drop out. Only the 280 completed surveys were considered in this thesis for data analysis. The reason is that all the main sections of the survey were analysed in an integrated way, so it was necessary for the surveys to be fully completed.

The survey was made available online from May to August 2013. The decision to close the survey in mid-August 2013 was made in light of the cessation of new surveys started. For some universities, paper surveys were distributed to the Head of Administration, who is responsible for the university's human resources. In some cases, the Head of Administration sent me the listing of potential respondents, that is those academics who studied overseas. I then emailed the invitation letter and link to the survey directly to the potential respondents. In other cases, the invitation letter was sent directly by the Head of Administration. I collected all the paper surveys and keyed the responses online. There were 25 paper surveys that were keyed in and the remaining 255 surveys were completed online by respondents.

In order to establish the population of Vietnamese nationals who studied abroad and returned to Viet Nam, I contacted various Vietnamese government departments and foreign agencies including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), the US Embassy, the Australian Embassy, including AusAid (as there are many Vietnamese students who study through bilateral aid programs organised by AusAid), the UK Embassy, the Australian International Education (IDP) Office, the British Council, the British Consulate of Education, and the USA Education Advisory Centre. The embassies of the US, UK and Australia were selected because these countries had the highest number of Vietnamese students enrolment according to the OECD enrolment data of 2011 (OECD 2013) (see chapter 1). AusAid, the British Council and the USA Education Advisory Centre refused to provide information about returnees. There was no response from the other organisations.

3.3.2 Data collection: the survey instrument

I developed the survey instrument with the aim to identify four broad indicators of international education outcomes. As noted in the mixed-method design (see 3.2.3), these broad indicators were considered as proxies of achieved functionings, to be examined in more depth in the interview phase. In addition, the survey also enquired about the respondents' demographic information including their age, gender, place of living, family background, educational levels, occupational status and their overseas education program. The occupation categories were drawn from the Vietnam Household Living Social Survey (VHLSS), which is the largest annual survey conducted by the Government Statistics Office (GSO) of Viet Nam about socio-economic data at the household level (GSO 2013). The demographic information was collected in order to identify patterns of achieved outcomes across different groups, which could then be followed-up in the interviews. The results from the comparison across groups also informed the sampling selection for the interview phase. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix II. I will now describe the four broad indicators of international education outcomes, which were surveyed in the main sections (sections 2 to 5) of the survey instrument.

Achieved outcomes in work and community work.

These indicators of achieved functionings in terms of jobs and community engagement were surveyed in Section 2 and 3 of the survey. Section 2 of the survey asked questions about the returnees' work practices including occupation, economic sector, employer type (for example

foreign or Viet Nam; private firms or government agencies), and location of work. The job sectors and employer types were those used in the VHLSS, and identical to the categories used in the demographic information section. This section also surveyed the strategies that Vietnamese returnees use to gain employment (for example, recruitment agencies, personal networks), their perception of positional advantage in the jobs market as a result of acquired overseas education and their satisfaction with various job aspects. The aim was to identify particular strategies that the respondents perceived as more preferential to gaining employment, and if these differed across job sectors and employer types. The results were further examined in the interviews to understand the returnees' perception of opportunities in their fields.

Section 3 surveyed the types of community organisation and how often returnees participated in these organisations. The types of organisation listed in the survey are those used in the World Values Survey (WVS 2002). The reason for using the WVS is because it has been used in many countries across the world and Viet Nam has participated in the WVS in two waves (2002 and 2012) (see chapter 8 for further discussion about the categories of community groups as used in the WVS, and their findings). Similar to section 2, this section also collected data about strategies that Vietnamese returnees used to gain access to these organisations, and their satisfaction with various aspects of their community work. The aim was to identify any particular strategies that were more preferential to accessing community work, whether they were similar or different compared to gaining employment, and whether they differed across community activities (which could be further examined in the interviews). In both Section 2 and 3, the questions about satisfaction levels drew on questions used in Anand et al.'s (2005) indicators of well-being. As noted earlier, the job sectors, community activities, types of employers and community groups were also collected in order to determine the sampling criteria as these were considered fields and subfields in which the returnees operate.

Overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes.

Section 4 asked questions about the types of skills, knowledge and attributes that returnees acquired from studying overseas, and whether they align with the skills, knowledge and attributes that returnees thought were required in their work and community work. This section also surveyed returnees' preference for working with other overseas-educated or Viet Nam-educated graduates, and perception of advantages or disadvantages associated with

acquired overseas education in their workplace, community organisations and the wider Vietnamese community. At this stage, I aimed to identify any relationship between matched or mismatched overseas-acquired resources in work or community work and (1) perception of advantages or disadvantages in these fields, and (2) satisfaction with their work and community work. These findings were further explored in the follow-up interviews with selected respondents, in order to address the overarching research question about the types of overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes that returnees can utilise in their work and community work in ways that they value.

Personal attitudes change as a result of overseas education.

Section 5 presented questions about the impact of overseas study upon returnees' worldviews and how they see themselves in the world. The various value statements used in the survey were drawn from the questions used in the World Values Survey Viet Nam (WVS 2011) relating to values, attitudes and beliefs. The findings from the WVS are often used by Vietnamese scholars in discussing values education in Viet Nam (see chapter 4 and 5). I assume that these questions were likely to have been validated and tested for reliability by the WVS research team (see chapter 5 for further discussion of the WVS (2011) findings). As with Section 4 of the survey, the aim of this section was to obtain some understanding of the broad attitudinal changes which were further examined in the interview stage. This section also surveyed returnees' perception of their contribution to Viet Nam's national development through their work and community work. The aim was to identify returnees' perception of their achieved outcomes in regards to Viet Nam's social development, which could be further explored in the interviews to understand their views about contributing to social change (research aim 3).

The survey was compiled in English and Vietnamese and produced online through Qualtrics survey software. I compiled the survey in English, then engaged a translator to translate to Vietnamese, then another translator to translate it back to English. I then compared the original English version to English-translated version to ensure consistency. The survey was piloted with five Vietnamese overseas-educated returnees living in Viet Nam before it was fielded.

3.3.3 Data analysis

Both univariate and bivariate statistical procedures were used to analyse the survey data. The demographic information and respondents' answers to separate items in sections 2 to 5 of the survey were analysed using cross tabulation and frequency counts. The analysis was conducted as soon as the survey was closed in mid-August 2013. The aim of the analysis was to address the research aims by identifying the “what” of returnee' outcomes in terms of types of work, employer, sector, goals, community participation, community groups, application of overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes, perception of advantage and disadvantage of overseas education, and satisfaction with their work and community work. The analysis of these indicators of outcomes also aimed to identify any pattern in regards to economic sector, type of overseas education program, undergraduate or postgraduate, community group, gender and place of living. The analysis was also used to inform the selection of interviewees and identify areas where the interviews could further examine to gain more in-depth information.

3.3.4 Survey respondents

Table 3.1 shows that the majority of survey respondents reside in the two major cities of Viet Nam, Ho Chi Minh City and Ha Noi. Ho Chi Minh City is the economic hub of Viet Nam where most MNCs and private Vietnamese firms establish, particularly in the banking and finance sector (GSO 2013). Ha Noi has more government agencies, State owned enterprises, international NGO offices and multilateral organisations (GSO 2013). Most respondents were in the age group of 21-30 and returned to Viet Nam for 1-3 years. The majority of respondents studied on scholarship programs (56 per cent), compared to those who self-funded (39 per cent). This reflects a skew in the sample as according to MOET (Vietnam Net 2014), up to 90 per cent of Vietnamese international students studied by self-financing. The sample is also over-represented with 74 per cent of respondents holding postgraduate degree, and almost half of the sample studied Commerce, followed by Engineering. This skew toward postgraduates is probably reflective of a large proportion of respondents working as academics in universities, where they normally obtain international Masters degree under government scholarships.

Place of residence	Number of respondents	%	Age	Number of respondents	%
Ha Noi	99	35%	21-30	138	49%
Ho Chi Minh	116	41%	31-40	81	29%
Da Nang / Hue	21	8%	41-50	21	8%
Regional, others	44	16%	over 50	8	3%
Total	280	100%	Not known	32	11%
				280	100%
Gender			Qualification obtained		
Male	117	42%	Non degree	7	3%
Female	131	47%	Bachelor degree	70	25%
Missing	32	11%	Postgraduate	174	62%
Total	280	100%	Doctorate (PhD)	29	10%
			Total	280	100.0
Type of funding			Discipline of study		
Vietnamese scholarship	15	5%	Commerce	138	49%
Overseas universities scholarship	60	21%	Humanities, Education	22	8%
Bilateral/multilateral scholarship	83	30%	Engineering, Architecture & Design	29	10%
Self financing	109	39%	Health and welfare	14	5%
Other	13	5%	Services	15	5%
Total	280	100%	Social Science	51	18%
			Science, Environment & Agriculture	12	4%
			Information & Technology	20	7%
			Total	301	108%
			Total sample	280	

Table 3.1. Demographic information of survey respondents

Host country	Number of respondents	%	OECD 2011 enrolment data %
Australia	87	31%	32%
BRIC	9	3%	
Other OECD	60	21%	9%
Germany	11	4%	4%
Other non OECD countries	8	3%	
Singapore	15	5%	
Thailand	14	5%	
The UK	27	10%	10%
The US	47	17%	45%
Total	280	100%	100%

Table 3.2: Distribution by host countries

Table 3.2 shows the distribution of survey respondents and the countries in which they completed their overseas education, in comparison with the OECD 2011 enrolment data⁸ of Vietnamese international students in higher education. The table shows that the US is under-represented in this study (17 per cent compared to OECD 45 per cent) and other OECD countries are overrepresented (22 per cent compared to OECD of 9 per cent).

In regards to family background, most respondents' parents attained university level education, which in Viet Nam is still at a very low level of 3 per cent of total population (VHLSS 2013). Respondents from Ha Noi reported higher percentage of parents with university education compared to Ho Chi Minh City. In Ho Chi Minh City, the data shows that more fathers than mothers of respondents achieved university level (84 vs 61), offset by large representation of mothers at all other educational levels (primary, secondary, college). In Da Nang and Hue, the distribution is more even across levels of education for parents.

The occupation of respondents' parents reveal a similar pattern of middle class in the sample, where there is 23 per cent to 25 per cent of respondents having professional jobs, followed by 11 per cent in public administration and the rest of the occupations are spread out. A large proportion of respondents consider themselves as middle class (73 per cent, 205 respondents); 3 per cent (9 respondents) consider themselves as upper class and only 2 per cent (6 respondents) consider themselves as lower class⁹ (2 per cent). The majority of respondents live in a household of 4-6 people, which is consistent with VHLSS (2013) data.

Most respondents are employed or self-employed; 87 per cent (243 respondents) are employed, 6 per cent (16 respondents) are self-employed and 1 per cent (3 respondents) works in family business. There are 89 respondents (32 per cent) who work in the education and training sector, with 85 respondents in universities, 188 (67 per cent) in other sectors, and 3 (1 per cent) not working. Table 3.3 below, shows the distribution of survey respondents by economic sectors, in comparison to the proportion of employed 15 years old and above at national level (GSO 2013). There are more details about the types of economic sector, employer types and income levels of these respondents in chapter 6 and 7.

⁸ OECD enrolment data does not include non-OECD countries as host countries

⁹ The term lower class was used in the survey (see Appendix II)

Economic sector	Number of cases n	per cent of total sample %	per cent of 15 yrs old and above employed 2013 (GSO 2013) %
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	9	3%	47%
Banking and Financial Services	54	19%	1%
Construction	13	5%	6%
Consumer Trade (Wholesale/Retail)	13	5%	13%
Education and Training	89	32%	4%
Environment	3	1%	1%
Health Services	10	4%	1%
Information, Media and Telecommunications	19	7%	1%
Manufacturing	15	5%	14%
Public Administration	3	1%	3%
Tourism and Hospitality	15	5%	4%
Transport and Logistics	4	1%	3%
Other services (Please specify)	30	11%	2%
Not working	3	1%	
Total	280	100%	100%

Table 3.3: Summary of survey participants by economic sector N=280

Table 3.3 shows that the education and training sector has the largest distribution at 32 per cent compared to GSO (2013) data ¹⁰ of 4 per cent, followed by banking and financial services sector at 19 per cent compared to national data of 1 per cent. The other sector that seems high in comparison with GSO (2013) data is the information, media and telecommunications sector (IT) at 7 per cent compared to national data of 1 per cent. The sector that is underrepresented in this research is agriculture at 3 per cent compared to 47 per cent per GSO (2013), followed by manufacturing at 5 per cent compared to national data at 14 per cent. This suggests that the Vietnamese returnees in this study work in the sectors that have a smaller proportion of Viet Nam's employed population. This may reflect the disciplines that they studied overseas, and possibly that these are the sectors that require university education (only 14 respondents said that no university education is required in their field of work). However, given a lack of information about education levels by economic sectors in Viet Nam, there is no conclusive evidence to suggest that university education is a reason for the choice of sectors. Another possible reason is that due to the method of recruiting survey respondents, many respondents are teaching in universities and higher

¹⁰ GSO (2013) statistics also includes general education

education is a very small component of Viet Nam's GDP (GSO 2013). The majority of respondents studied Commerce, Engineering and IT (see Table 3.1) which are newly established service sectors in Viet Nam. Based on the distribution of respondents' economic sectors, four sectors with highest number of respondents were Education, Banking and Finance, IT and Manufacturing. Therefore, they were included as part of sampling criteria for interviews in Phase 2. See Appendix X for further breakdown of economic sectors by gender, place of living, income level, types of qualification, types of funding programs and host country.

Type of community organisation	Number of participants who are members of a community group n	Percentage of participants who are members of community organisation %	Percentage of participants who participate occasionally %	Percentage of participants who participate frequently %
Overseas education alumni groups	196	70	51	19
Professional associations	162	58	42	16
Humanitarian services	160	57	47	10
Sports and Recreation	143	51	39	16
Arts/Music/Sport/Recreation	129	46	36	10
Community services	124	44	37	7
Political groups	41	15	10	5

Table 3.4 Summary of types of community work participation. N=280

Table 3.4 above shows a summary of the types of community organisations that respondents belong to. Similar to the WVS (2011 wave), this shows that most of the respondents have membership with one or more community organisations. The community organisations with the highest number of respondents are overseas universities alumni groups, followed by professional associations. Participation in community services is 44 per cent, humanitarian services is 57 per cent, and political organisation is 15 per cent. Given the high level of membership and low level of frequent participation, the interviews were used to further examine this phenomenon; in particular to understand the returnees' motivations and goals in these community activities and how acquired overseas education might be beneficial for these activities. In this research, I consider community work as social development, charitable activities, and political activism (see chapter 8 for discussion of the rationale for this choice). Therefore, the categories of community services, political organisation and humanitarian services were chosen as part of sampling criteria for interviews in Phase 2.

As noted in chapter 2 (see 2.5.2), for the purpose of analysis, the economic sectors are broadly grouped in two fields: (1) “Professional” includes all sectors except higher education; and (2) “Intellectual” includes higher education.

3.4 Phase 2: Interviews

The second phase of the research involved two sets of in-depth semi-structured interviews. The first set was conducted with selected survey respondents (key interviewees) who had indicated their interest to take part in the interviews in the final section (section 7) of the survey, and were identified using a sampling framework (see 3.4.1). The second set involved interviews with members of the key interviewees’ networks. The key interviewees were asked to nominate these members and they could choose up to three members from their families and close friends, work and community work. For example, the members could be parents, friends, employers, work colleagues including university academics and general staff, community group leaders, or political group leaders. The purpose of the interviews with members of key interviewees’ networks was to triangulate their responses, and in so doing exploring possible connections between these social relations’ viewpoints and key interviewees’ motivations and expectations of their overseas education, and their choices and practices. As far as I know, this method of networks interviewing has not been employed in other tracer studies of returnees. The interview questions that networks members were asked were similar to those asked of the key interviewees, but limited to the social context that they were associated with the returnees. For example, a work colleague was only asked questions in relation to work practices.

As noted in the research design (see 3.2.3), the purpose of the interview phase was to further examine some of the findings from the survey, particularly the returnees’ motivations, and goals for their acquired overseas education in relation to their value of their overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes. The aim was to understand about the relevance of these overseas-acquired resources and how they might vary across economic sectors and community activities, or employers and community groups that these Vietnamese returnees work in. The interview also aimed to further understand about the opportunities and processes of mobilising overseas-acquired resources in terms of enhancing their positional advantage and enabling change in their work and community work as they see valuable. In addition, the interviews were used to triangulate links between achieved functionings such as income and

jobs (from survey results) to returnees' values, goals, and responsibilities to their families and communities; and perception of power positions in their fields of operation (from interview results). This means that the interview phase required attending to eliciting returnees' value judgement about their choices in specific social situations, in particular how their choices are made in response to their surrounding social structures and relations. I will explain how the interviews achieve this aim in the next section.

3.4.1 Recruitment and sampling

In the last section (Section 7) of the surveys, respondents were asked whether they were interested in participating in a follow-up interview. There were 65 respondents who indicated that they were interested and willing to participate in the second stage of the research. From these 65 people, purposive sampling was used to select key interviewees. The sampling frame that was used to select interviewees is shown below in Table 3.5. The main selection criteria were place of living, economic sector, and type of community work because they were broadly the fields of analysis in work and community work (see 2.5.2 and section 1 of this chapter), across the four major cities where the respondents were residing. Analysis of the survey data did not suggest any notable differences between males and females, therefore gender was not a selection criteria for recruiting interviewees. However, given the nature of patriarchy and hierarchy in Vietnamese society (see chapter 4), I wanted to examine gender differences in the interviews. Given the high proportion of respondents in higher education in the total sample of survey respondents, a higher number of interviewees from this sector was selected. Table 3.6 shows the selected key interviewees and their demographic attributes.

Place of work	Ha Noi	Hue/ Da Nang	HCM			Total
	9	3	9			21
Economic sector	Banking/ Finance	Education	IT/Media	Manufact- uring		
	4	9	4	4		21
Community group	Professional association	Humanita- rian services	Community services	Political Organisation	No community work	
	5	5	5	5	1	21

Table 3.5: Sampling frame for selecting key interviewees

Region		Types of qualifications	
HCMC	10	Undergrad	4
Ha Noi	8	Master	14
Hue/Da Nang	3	PhD	3
	21		21
Economic sector		Age	
Banking/Finance	4	21-30yrs old	10
Education	10	31-40yrs old	8
IT/Media	3	41-50 yrs old	2
Manufacturing	4	>50	1
	21		21
Community work		Years since return	
Professsional Association	10	1-3 yrs	16
Community Services	10	4-6 yrs	2
Humanitarian	4	8-10 yrs	2
Political Organisation	9	>10 yrs	1
No community work	5		21
Sex		Host country	
Male	12	Australia	6
Female	9	US	4
	21	Singapore	1
		Thailand	1
Types of program		UK	1
Scholarship	15	Germany	1
Self finance	6	Other OECD	7
	21		21
		Income level	
Type of employers		3-5m	2
MNC	6	5-7m	1
VN firm/university	2	7-9m	2
Foreign firm/university	6	9-11m	2
Govt/public university	7	>13m	14
	21		21

Table 3.6: Key interviewees and attributes

At the end of each interview with the key interviewees, the interviewee was asked to nominate voluntarily members of their networks who might be interested in participating in a short interview. If they agreed to nominate some members, they would also liaise with those

members to enquire whether they were willing to take part in the interviews, and then put myself, the researcher, in contact with these members. Most of the interviewees nominated two members, one from family and one from work. Due to the low level of frequent community participation, there were only three interviewees who nominated a member from their community groups. Most of the members of workplace were overseas-educated as well. There were 27 members of key interviewees' networks who voluntarily took part in the interviews. In aggregate, there were 48 interviewees (21 key interviewees and 27 members of their networks). Appendix VII lists the key interviewees, their employment sector, community groups, and the number of members of their networks who participated in the interviews.

3.4.2 Data collection: the interview questionnaire

The interview schedule with the key interviewees had five focal topics (see Appendix VI). These five topics were followed through in all interviews, even though the ordering of the topics may have changed to accord with the returnees' orientation of the conversations. The first topic aimed to understand the interviewees' values and motivations for studying abroad, whether they perceive that their values and motivations align with the Vietnamese societal values for international education, particularly their families and communities. This topic aimed to address agency dimension 1 (agency and values) and understand why returnees take up certain choices in their work and community work. For example, I asked the returnees why they chose to return to Viet Nam; why they chose to work in their field; were their choices expected of them? I also asked members of their networks similar questions.

The second topic focused on the returnees' goals of their work and community work. The questions aimed to ask the returnees to link their personal goals to their values and motivations for overseas education. The point of emphasis here was whether the interviewees' goals have changed since returning home, and how the social factors within the returnees' fields have influenced their motivations and goals. This topic aimed to address agency dimension 2 (agency and goals) and similar to agency dimension 1, to understand the returnees' choices and why they make those choices in their work and community work.

The third focal topic related to the returnees' ability to utilise their overseas-acquired skills, knowledge, attributes. The questions aimed to further understand the alignment or mismatch between their overseas-acquired resources and requirement in their field of operation found in the survey results (research aim 1 and 2). The questions oriented around:

(1) returnees' perception of skills, knowledge and attributes that are advantageous or disadvantageous for them in their job and community work; (2) returnees' deployment of these resources as cultural capital in conjunction with other forms of capital, for example personal and political connections as social capital to convert their skills and knowledge to outcomes that they desire; and (3) the similarity or differences of these resources in terms of their perceived value and opportunity across sectors and employers/community groups.

The fourth focal topic of the interview was about engaging the interviewees in the process of reflecting on the advantages or disadvantages associated with their overseas education from their experiences. The rationale for this focus was that Sen's CA rests on the notion of personal advantage (Gasper 2007; Sen 1999); this research seeks to find out if perceived advantage vis-à-vis overseas-acquired skills, knowledge, and attributes provide returnees "real" choices to do as they desire. In other words, whether their overseas-acquired skills and knowledge can be deployed as cultural capital in the field of operation that legitimates the symbolic capital associated with overseas education. The questions aimed to understand the role of external factors such as location of living, social networks (families, work colleagues, social groups), institutional structures (of workplace or community groups), political environment and labour market in affecting their ability and freedom to convert their resources into outcomes that they seek. For example, I asked how they go about looking for jobs and why do they employ those strategies; whether they are satisfied with their current jobs in terms of skills and knowledge development and relevance to overseas education; how might they improve the situation? These aspects of satisfaction were similar to those asked in the surveys. I also aimed to integrate this topic with other focal topics of the interview to understand how these social factors shape the dispositions of the returnees which then determine whether they co-opt with, resist or change the structures to make changes as they see valuable. For example, how may goals and expectations identified in the second focal topic relate to the opportunity structures that returnees perceive as feasible and pursue; have their goals or plans changed since working/living in Viet Nam, why have they changed and how have they pursued their changed plans?

The fifth focal topic aimed to understand the interviewees' satisfaction levels, that is their sense of well-being achievement in regards to their practices in work and community work. Similar to the third focal topic, the intention here was to facilitate an understanding of the satisfaction levels as indicated in the survey, and allowed returnees to make their own responses about their achievement, which were beyond the categories specified in the survey.

The aim was to see whether the satisfaction levels indicated from the survey align with the sentiments expressed in a more participatory mode of interviews, in order to develop a more in-depth understanding about achieved functionings and well-being that takes account of other factors like individual expectation and motivation, and sense of agency and opportunities. I also aimed to engage the interviewees in reflecting on what was important to them, compared to what was expected of them by their families and communities.

The interview questions were designed to foster conversations with the interviewees, to allow them to open up memories, reflect and elaborate on ideas, and to understand the meanings and subjectivity of their positions in certain contexts of their workplace and community. I attempted to engage the interviewees in reflexive reasoning by giving them the chance to examine and be reflexive in thinking about their own situations and deliberating their voices about their motivations, goals and changed worldviews as a result of their overseas studies. This was done by asking the questions broadly and emphasising that their responses should be about what they considered as important to them, not what I might see as important. Even though the interview questions were semi-structured in terms of focal topics which I followed through, the interviews were conducted in ways that encouraged the interviewees to have control of the direction of the conversations. Furthermore, I used an open structure of questions in terms of grammatical and semantic functions (Lincoln & Guba 1985), and without reference to returnees' responses in the survey, to allow them to gain depth and insight into their own situations without having to justify what they have said in the surveys.

This process was underpinned by the recognition that Vietnamese returnees can make informed and reasoned choices that are right for them, in order to achieve their capability, but it does not assume that such choices are actually taken or outcomes actually achieved as they desire. Thus, the interviews offered returnees' space to explain and reason their values about their choice and practices. It also gave me the opportunity to engage in reflexive sociology, by allowing the interviewees to exercise their agency and co-construct in the values identification process and establish criteria of conception for agency. This mode of praxis aimed to address the overarching research question about the transformative capabilities of returnees (as discussed in chapter 2 and earlier on in the philosophical assumptions in this chapter).

All interviews were conducted in Vietnamese (except one as the interviewee wished to speak in English) in order to create a common ground of shared understanding and effective

communication between myself and the interviewees (Blumer 1969). I reflect on my participation in the interviews as a researcher in section 5 of this chapter.

Interviews with the key interviewees lasted around one hour, and those with members of their networks lasted around 30 minutes. They were mostly conducted in cafés or at the universities where the interviewees worked. The interviews were audio-recorded. I and an accredited translator in Viet Nam transcribed and translated the recorded interviews from Vietnamese to English. I reviewed all translated transcripts prior to conducting analysis.

3.4.3 Data Analysis

The analysis of the interview data was performed using NVivo software for data storage, coding and developing themes. The steps that were undertaken in the analysis included: (1) reading through and editing the transcripts; (2) first level coding (Punch 1998) where I generated conceptual categories; (3) second level coding where I connected some of these categories to create themes (Punch 1998); and (4) comparing the themes across employment sectors, and community groups to identify any emerging patterns.

Given the theoretical proposition of agency as embedded in social structures, the analysis focused on the qualitative importance of social conditions that give rise to the Vietnamese returnees' agency opportunities and how they choose to respond to these social conditions. In deriving the first and second level of coding, the intention was to also explain the survey results. Given that the focal topics of the interviews were similar to the topics surveyed in the surveys, there were no predetermined codes set up prior to the analysis of the interviews. Rather, the coding followed the inductive thematic analysis approach (Punch 1998) with the aim to build themes that can then be used to provide more in-depth information about the surveys, and more importantly, to address the research aims.

The coding was done across all transcripts. All the first level codes were generated, and then they were reviewed to see if they could be merged prior to moving on to the second level of thematic coding. The merging of codes involved making judgements about the central themes in the data in respect to the research aims (Punch 1998). For example, how does this code relate to skills as cultural capital? Alternatively, how does this working culture relate to institutional structures of the workplace?

At the second level coding, I used the feature of "tree nodes" in NVivo to connect the codes. I also used the relationships function in NVivo to connect these codes and family codes

in three ways: symmetrical, reciprocal and asymmetrical (Bazeley & Jackson 2013; Rosenberg 1968). The purpose of creating relationships between the various codes was to integrate the first level codes to construct categories of theory. The idea was to come up with categorical concepts from the data in order to test the concepts proposed in the theoretical framework. So here, the emphasis on finding theoretical possibilities in the analysis was also important and reflected a theoretical sensitivity that Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) referred to.

I employed Bourdieu's reflexive sociology in conducting the analysis of the interview data. This process involved myself, as the researcher, in reflexive engagement in a *participant objectivation* approach, that is by making known to myself the epistemological underpinning of my analysis, which might presuppose the knowledge claims that I as a researcher from an outsider perspective can make (Bourdieu 1977). The aim of the analysis thus was to make explicit the ontological complexity of returnees' values conception and derivation, rather than following set ideas about participants' values, choice and actions through a particular viewpoint. The importance of this reflexive approach to data analysis is this. The understanding of the concepts of values, choice and agency depends on (in this case) my conception on situated knowledge of what these concepts are. If left unacknowledged, it is difficult to analyse participants' agency capabilities if the analysis depends on my own conception and not theirs. Bourdieu's (1998) reflexive sociology was useful here because it allowed for acceptance of the practical reasons of the returnees interviewed. The normative underpinnings of well-being and advantages exist at the returnees' level and thus were interpreted from their practical experiences.

3.4.4 Interpreting and connecting the survey results and interviews results

I now turn to the final stage of interpretive analysis where I connected the survey results and interview results in order to answer the overarching research question through a transformative lens. The aim was to uncover the returnees' ownership and mobilisation of overseas-acquired resources as their differentiated means to pursue their goals as they see valuable in their fields of work and community work. Drawing on Grenfell's (2015) suggestions for applying Bourdieuan analysis, there were three levels of analysis that were done interdependently using concepts of *habitus*, *field* and *capital* as ways to explain opportunity and process of agency and empowerment for personal and social change.

At level 1, the sector level, I aimed to analyse the power positions that the returnees occupy in the three fields (“Professional”, “Intellectual” and “Civic”). I examined similarities or differences of these power positions in terms of the interviewees’ perception of symbolic capital of overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes; in other words, whether or not these interviewees perceive advantages associated with their overseas-acquired resources in the sector that they work in. The types of skills, knowledge and attributes that were analysed were those asked in the survey (see section 3.2)

At level 2, the institutional level, I further analysed the returnees’ power positions in terms of the opportunity structures that result from the positions occupied within the subfields, that is the employers and community groups within the three fields. I examined the opportunities that interviewees see as available in terms of how and why they choose to work in certain employers or community groups. The focus was on the processes of deploying their overseas-acquired skills, knowledge, attributes (resource opportunity structures), work, community, personal and political relations (cultural opportunity structures), and whether they see these resources as forms of cultural and social capital. Then I analysed their long-term career and community goals to see whether these goals reflect their opportunity structures, and personal values.

Level 3 involved analysis of the *habitus* of returnees, that is their interactions with others in specific situations. The aim was to gain insight into their systems of dispositions, how they mediate and appropriate their overseas-acquired values and attitudes to accord with traditional values, how these inform them of their goals and responsibilities for themselves and others. At this level, the analysis was deeper than level 2, and drew on both level 1 and 2 by integrating the forms of capital and field in creating dispositions of returnees, and their reasoning about their dispositions in making choices and taking actions. The analysis focused on the logic of practice of the fields and subfields as they occur through elements of power (*power-within*, *power-to*, and *power-over*). Then, the analysis further explored the possibilities for individual agency and collective agency, by seeing how these elements of power work interdependently to enabling social change. The basis of the 3-step analytical process is making the link of power structures between the *habitus* (level 3) and the field structures (level 1) and the positions within the field (level 2).

3.5 Reflection on the research process

3.5.1 Boundaries of a case study

As argued in section 2 of this chapter, the use of a case study of Viet Nam to explore the benefits of acquired international education for returnees is appropriate because it allows for a consideration of Viet Nam's cultural, political and economic specificities. These social conditions are important for understanding how the Vietnamese returnees are positioned in their society, and the mediating factors that stem from these structures and relations which affect their ability to utilise what they have learnt overseas. However, it is impossible for one project to be able to account for all the complexities of Viet Nam's social environments; thus the use of cases of individual returnees (selected key interviewees) categorised by employment sectors, and community activities allow for some common macro structures of the fields of practices to be considered, and permit the research to retain meaningful characteristics of real life events (Yin 2009).

3.5.2 Validity, credibility and reliability in a mixed-method research

There are some limitations due to the boundaries of a case study, particularly in employing reflexive sociology as a method of engaging with interviewees and analysing interview data. First, the findings are based on my interpretation of the returnees' values, choice and agency in responding to their social structures, with the purpose of making explicit their ontological conceptualisation of what is valuable to them. Therefore, the findings are immanently bounded within the social contexts of Viet Nam and the subjective dimensions of returnees' understanding of their positions and practices in their fields.

Second, in regards to the survey data, external validity was more important than internal validity as there was no cause and effect relationship analysed among the variables (Creswell & Clark 2011). In terms of external validity, that is the extent to which the survey results can apply to a larger population, there is also less concern about validity threat because the intention of the research was not to make inferences about a larger population but rather to theorise from the case. This limitation also stems from the fact that the respondents self-selected to complete the surveys; therefore, the sample is not a random or a representative sample of Vietnamese overseas-educated returnees. I will discuss the implications of this unrepresentative sample in terms of the findings in the analysis chapters 6 to 8.

I attempted to minimise the validity risks of the survey data by: (1) compiling the survey instrument using some established survey questions (for example the World Values Survey, Viet Nam wave); and (2) translation of the survey from English into Vietnamese through a rigorous process of back translation (see section 3.2). The practical challenge in the use of surveys in this study was the high dropout rate. This might be because the survey questionnaire was long and involved, which might have deterred respondents from completing. The dropout was mostly around section 5 on values and attitudes, which suggests that these attitudinal questions might not have been well received by some Vietnamese returnees. Perhaps, this set of question could have been included only in the interviews.

In regards to the interview data, rather than establishing operational measures for these concepts of values, choice and agency that are being studied, validity here refers to credibility of the data (Lincoln & Guba 2000). Credibility was achieved in three ways: first, allowing the returnees to be active in their constructs of these notions in the interviews, and ensuring that their practical experiences were at the centre of the analysis; second, triangulation of the survey data and interview data, and triangulation of the interview data of the key interviewees and members of their networks (Creswell & Clark 2011); third, conducting interviews in ways that encouraged the interviewees to reflect and share their values. All these required a sense of trust between the interviewees and myself, as well as the interviewees' perception that I was open and non-judgmental (Punch 1998). In this regards, my Vietnamese identity and Vietnamese language proficiency were critical to establish trust and mutual understanding and empathy between the interviewees and myself. On the other hand, given that I and other Vietnamese translators did the translation, which means there is a presumed knowledge of culture in the Vietnamese language, there is a risk of being too close to the cultural meanings of texts to get them into focus in the process of translating the transcripts (Crocker 2004).

It must be also noted that the use of reflexive sociology in the analysis of the interview data and in the final interpretive analysis of both sets of survey and interview data means that I, the researcher was engaging in the analysis process myself (Bourdieu 1990). To clarify, even though I use concepts such as cultural capital or power positions (which are theorised by Bourdieu), I analysed and interpreted these concepts from the returnees' practical experiences. According to Bourdieu (1977), to accept the cognitive worth of research participants' practical experiences means acceptance of some degree of scientific fallibility. Thus, there is a limit to claims of validity or credibility in respect of the data that I as the researcher can make. However, I view it as critical to take this reflexive stance in applying the CA which has

normative foundations, in order to move toward ethics through research, and in my path as a researcher. That I see as an important explication of the CA as Sen's envisions it, to make research not a paternalistic exercise that entrenches a certain dominant scholastic viewpoint.

It follows then that the findings and discussion of findings in this thesis are seen as part of initial and fallible evidence with analytical representation that can be built upon in further research, rather than a position of absolute certainty (Bourdieu 1998). While the empirical data of this study is significant because it offers insights about a rarely researched topic about Vietnamese overseas-educated returnees and their experiences in their home country, the findings cannot be generalised uncritically to other social groups within Viet Nam or other countries. However, the epistemological knowledge that it seeks to build to illustrate the use of the combined Sen-Bourdieu framework and reflexive research in the field of development is highly relevant for other groups or societies.

Acknowledging the inherent challenges in claiming validity, credibility and reliability due to the methods employed, this thesis makes explicit the reflexive sociological steps in the research design, my position of the researcher as insider/outsider (in the next part) to make clear the link of data collection and data interpretation to the concepts theorised.

3.5.3 Position of researcher as insider/outsider

I consider my Vietnamese heritage and language fluency to be critical factors in the process of recruiting participants, interviewing and data analysis because they allowed me to build rapport and trust with participants, which gave them the space and comfort to respond to the surveys and participate in the interviews. Given that I am of Vietnamese ethnicity, I can understand the participants from a Vietnamese person's perspective. Using Vietnamese in the interviews allowed me to be more sensitive to the interviewees in asking questions and particularly in analysing their responses. In particular, the interviewees were able to share with me – in uninhibited ways - meaningful ideas about personal and complex issues like family relationships, Vietnamese culture, values and beliefs, goals, politics in the workplace, community life in uninhibited ways. This gave me a sense of familiarity to the interviewees, particularly through a shared understanding of the place and space of a Vietnamese person. This kind of familiarity gives rise to an ontological understanding of the experiences of these returnees (Bourdieu 1998). At the same time, having lived most of my life in Australia and being positioned as a researcher in the study, I was aware of my distance to the participants,

in particular the preconceptions that I hold in thinking about notions of freedom, agency, structures and relations, and capabilities. The research therefore involved an ongoing process of balancing the “Vietnameseness” in me that allowed significant insights into understanding the lives of participants, and making sociological knowledge steeped in Western ideas, some of which tend to dominate non-Western practical experiences.

Engaging in Bourdieu’s reflexive sociology across all levels of analysis helped me to tackle this challenging process by making explicit the epistemic knowledge that underpinned my analysis of the interview data. There were some aspects of the theoretical concepts of Sen and Bourdieu that I found to be useful to explain the practices of Vietnamese overseas-educated returnees in a sociological enquiry, and there were some that did not. In this particular study where there is a focus on values, it is important that I acknowledge that Bourdieu’s theory and Sen’s framework underpinning these concepts that I try to apply are created by those in the West living in advanced economies and liberal democratic societies. In order for research findings to have relevance for people who live in practical lives, it is important to be conscious that the cultural content of theoretical conceptions employed cannot be purged to make meaning across cultures without explaining the divergences or similarities in terms of cultural suppositions in the analysis. Reflexive sociology helped me to be wary of the kind of universal knowledge that I might impose on my participants. Thus I took a relational approach to the study: relational to participants as co-constructer of knowledge, relational to me being Vietnamese that is researcher-as-insider, and relational to theories employed that come from a Western tradition based on cultural assumptions of a liberalist democratic society that are quite different to Viet Nam.

This process of research as insider/outsider is critical for my journey as a researcher to understand the ethics of doing research by acknowledging that the problem of research is not how to deal with a kind of knowledge that shall be or is “truth in itself” (Martins 2007). Rather how my Vietnamese participants and I dealt with the problems of knowing, bounded by my researcher position in the context of my Western training and way of thinking. This is different for the participants’ actions, thought patterns, decision-makings, values and beliefs that are bound by their own knowledge practically by their position in their circumstances and upbringing in Vietnamese society. Perhaps what makes this journey of reflexive research so poignant is that I am Vietnamese with Western education so I can understand the position that these participants are in and the values that they carry and uphold. To use Crocker’s (2004)

ideas of insider/outsider hybrid, I can hold up a mirror to them as well as give them voice and also inject the valuable ideas from afar.

Given that there has been little research about Vietnamese returnees despite the large population of Vietnamese studying abroad, this thesis is an attempt to bring forth the Vietnamese returnees' voices. The CA is a powerful lens through which plurality and participatory dialogue can take place, thus is used in this research to allow the Vietnamese as subalterns to speak and be heard as epistemic beings, not just as empirical data. To achieve this aim, it was necessary for me to be aware of, and leave my preconception of a particular vantage point of the theoretical framework of agency that my research knowledge come from, so that I can see and understand the practical reasons that these returnees engage in. The agency-oriented CA stresses that people should be self-determining and not uncritically embrace or be coerced to accept alien ideas. And as Connell (2007) noted, the point is not to essentialise culture in applying theories to empirical data, but to bring forth the possible fallacy in extracting empirical data for purpose of making theories.

3.5.4 Ethical considerations

In this study, the conduct of surveys and interviews have violated no ethical principles. There has been no violation of laws, no deception, and not physical harm. Confidentiality of all interviewees was assured and pseudonyms for names are used throughout this thesis. The participants were communicated about the aims of the project prior to taking part in both the surveys and the interviews. I obtained ethics approval from the Macquarie University Ethics Committee prior to inviting potential participants to take part in the research (see Appendix XII for the final ethics approval to conduct the research). A consent statement was inserted at the beginning of the online survey so consent was assumed when the respondents continued with the surveys. Consent from the interviewees was obtained through signed consent forms before commencing the interviews. All participants were made fully aware that they were participating voluntarily. The interviews were recorded and if at any time during the interviews, the interviewees spoke about matters that were sensitive, or if they seemed uncomfortable to speak about certain issues, I turned the recorder off. Besides the lack of response from various government bodies and embassies in Viet Nam in regards to the number of Vietnamese international graduates returning to Viet Nam (see section 3.3.1 above), there were no other limitations to the study in terms of gatekeepers, or influence of

the government or politicians. The topics of enquiry were not considered sensitive by the participants.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued for and explained the use of a case study and a mixed-method explanatory design with a transformative lens (Creswell & Clark 2011) to answer the research question about the transformative potential of acquired international education for Vietnamese returnees in their local communities in Viet Nam. The consequential process of data collection and analysis of surveys followed by interviews allowed for an in-depth understanding of the returnees' experiences in work and community work. The triangulation of the survey and interview data, and interview data of returnees and members of their networks, coupled with the interpretive analysis of the connected results from the survey and interviews helped to ensure validity and credibility of this mixed-method research (Creswell & Clark 2011).

The Bourdieuan reflexive sociology mode of analysis was used to combine theory and practice so as to bring the practical experiences of Vietnamese returnees as praxis for transformative capacity. It does so by viewing these returnees as epistemic beings that help to theorise *normative agency* and empowerment. This mode of reflexive sociology was used to apply the theoretical Sen-Bourdieu framework to understand the Vietnamese returnees' values, choice and agency in regards to their acquired overseas education, and offer them a space to re-contextualise their social environments as empowerment for personal and social change in their communities.

According to Newman (2013), ethics begin and end with the researcher. To do participatory or reflexive research requires consideration of the ethics of the participants. One should be conscious of who it is that one is analysing and in whose service that one analyses for (Martins 2007; Newman 2013). To be ethical in the process of research, particularly in using the CA, the researcher is required to engage in it reflexively, by being conscious of being an agent in the process, and of how her agency may allow for her research participants to be agents in the process. This might mean, as is the case in this thesis, that the results fall short of a neat and coherent analysis. I acknowledge that my analysis does not just neatly link theory and data, but it is imperfect and at times, carries a paradox.

I now turn to Part II of the thesis, where I present some characteristics of the Vietnamese *habitus* (chapter 4), to understand the formation of returnees' values, motivations and goals (chapter 5), and their choices and practices in the “professional” field (chapter 6), “intellectual” field (chapter 7) and “civic” field (chapter 8).

THE CASE STUDY OF VIET NAM AND VIETNAMESE OVERSEAS-EDUCATED RETURNEES

4 Encountering the Vietnamese *habitus*

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I aim to give some insights into the Vietnamese *habitus* as formative conditions of the returnees' motivations and expectations of their acquired overseas education, and their choices and practices in the social fields. As argued in chapter 2 and 3, these conditions are embedded in the returnees' surrounding social structures and social relations. In order to understand how these conditions are constitutive of the returnees' values formation and choices, it is necessary to describe some of these structures and relations in some details. As Bourdieu (1985) says, if we want to understand a person's practical strategies then we have to link these strategies to her social structures through the concept of *habitus*. This is because for Bourdieu, an individual is a socialised person. Where Sen recognises cultural relativism in individuals' construct of values, choice and agency, Bourdieu deepens this idea, by considering that a socialised being is a person's existence (Bourdieu 1985). Moreover, given the emphasis of this thesis on understanding returnees' "reasoning" of their choices and practices in their social world, and that *habitus* is a social history of reason (see chapter 2), it is important that we understand their *habitus*.

In this chapter, I discuss some aspects of the Vietnamese cultural and social norms, political culture and educational values as characteristics of the returnees' *habitus*. The aim is to understand how these cultural aspects are internalised and transformed into aspirations or expectations of returnees' acquired overseas education (which I analyse in chapter 5). These internalised past experiences, what Bourdieu calls "integrated historical trajectory of experiences" (Swartz 1997), in turn, are externalised in the returnees' choices and practices as they respond to immediate social situations (which I analyse in chapter 6 to 8).

Maton (2008) pointed out that we can never see *habitus*, only the effects of *habitus* in the practices and beliefs to which it gives rise. I aim to provide some insights into what that Vietnamese *habitus* may look like - a series of Viet Nam's past experiences that shape some dispositions of the Vietnamese society. As Bourdieu (1977, 1998) puts it, the key to understanding a person's practices is to understand how the relational structure of the *habitus*

relates to the relational structure of the field. In this chapter, I describe the Vietnamese *habitus* as a relational structure and, in chapters 6 to 8, I will show how the fields relate to the *habitus* and shape returnees' actions. The purpose of this chapter then, is not to essentialise culture (through *habitus*) as determining factors of returnees' actions. Rather, I emphasise that because of the logic of social world in constructing power positions that agents perceive - and can potentially modify - in the fields that relate to their dispositions (Bourdieu 1987), we need to first understand what that culture looks like before we open space for agentic self-determination.

Given the immanent relationship between *habitus* and fields (see chapter 2), in this chapter, I highlight some characteristics of the Vietnamese society that were evident in the interviews with the returnees. Understanding these norms help us to understand their motivations and goals (chapter 5) and choices and practices in the fields (chapter 6 to 8). I draw on the writings of Vietnamese scholars inside and outside the country, and foreign scholars, to discuss these characteristics, their historical underpinnings and links with the Vietnamese people's view of their relations with their society and political rulers. These are in no way viewed as the only characteristics of Vietnamese society; rather, my interpretation of the literature on some aspects of Vietnamese culture, which I discuss here to foreground how they operate as social conditions of returnees' choices and practices in the next four chapters.

The five characteristics of the Vietnamese culture that I will discuss and clarify in the next sections are *personalism*, *individualism*, *nationalism* and *democratic centralism*, *economic pragmatism* and *educational internationalism*. *Personalism* underlines people's relationships in Vietnamese society and can help to explain the importance of personal connections (*quan he*) in returnees' workplace and community work culture in Viet Nam (see chapter 5-8). It also acts as a principle of morality which can help us to understand the returnees' sense of responsibility in making choices in their everyday practices. Embedded in *personalism* is the notion of *individualism*, which is inherent in Vietnamese society. It is worthwhile to consider whether overseas education has enhanced this notion of individualism through development of more self-oriented attitudes (chapter 5), and if so how might it affect returnees' choices and practices to pursue their goals as they see valuable. The Vietnamese dispositions to civic actions are discussed in terms of *nationalism* and *democratic-centralism*, which foregrounds the analysis of returnees' perception of *opportunity* and *process* of agency in their participation in community work in chapter 8. I discuss *economic pragmatism* because the choices and practices of returnees seem to emphasise personal economic motivations

rather than desire for social development (chapter 5 to 8). Here I want to draw attention to the historical trajectory of the economy as well as the contemporary State's agendas of markets - particularly in educational institutions. This leads to the discussion about Viet Nam's educational values and *internationalism* where I highlight the history of foreign influences in Viet Nam's education systems. The purpose is to provide some contexts for understanding the returnees' motivations and expectations of their overseas education (chapter 5), and the practices of returnees in the "intellectual" field (chapter 7).

4.2 *Personalism: the virtues of personal relations*

One thousand years of Chinese imperialism in what is now North Vietnam since the beginning of AD instilled Confucian values in its society (Jamieson 1993), putting Viet Nam in the cultural space of East Asia and differentiating it from its neighbours in South East Asia. From the middle of the 15th century to late 19th century, Viet Nam's kingdom had independent reign; however retaining much of Chinese feudalism and oriented its ways of life toward neo-Confucius, a combination of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism (Dao Duy Anh 1938). This was the beginning of Viet Nam's paradox of values as the Vietnamese mediated their cultural lives between Confucian ethics of natural order of the world, the mystical elements of Taoism, and karmic thinking beyond life of Buddhism (Jamieson 1993). Some of the key ideas of the traditional values based on neo-Confucianism are now explained.

In Vietnamese society, the principle of morality is understood as *Ly* (Reason). Following Confucian principles, *Ly* (Reason) is intended to be a rationalism of order and thus provides harmony within social systems through *proper* forms of relationships between ordinary people at the society level, and between subjects and officials at the Court level (Jamieson 1993). These forms of relationships are the essence of social structures which rationalise and legitimate the hierarchical order of society (Dao Duy Anh 1938, Weber 1946). They are *personal* ties within the family, students and companions. Retention of *personalism*¹¹ is important social ethics because it is seen as the *natural order of the world* - a principle of morality (Dao Duy Anh 1938).

According to Dao Duy Anh (1938), there are five forms of personal relationships which a Vietnamese person sees herself as embedded within, and thus functions in accordance

¹¹ "Personalism" is a term used by Weber (1946) to describe the characteristic of personal relations in Chinese society

with: ruler-subject, father-son, husband-wife, elder brother-younger brother, and friend-friend.¹² Except for friend-friend relationship, these relationships denote the role structure which are vertically hierarchical (Dao Duy Anh 1938). In addition to the psychological and cultural well-being, accumulation of these personal and dyadic relationships gives people *distinction* in their community. The *personalism* in these relationships is intended to promote the virtues of *Hieu* (filial piety) and *On* (moral debt) within family relationships and then transferred to the other forms of relationships (Marr 2000). Therefore, the parent-child relationship is at the core of the Vietnamese culture (Pham M. Hac 2012, Dalton & Ong 2003). Moral education in Viet Nam emphasises filial piety to obey, respect and honour their parents; children are understood to have a moral debt to their parents which needs to be repaid. Families are extended across generations and lineages because they are seen as united in spirituality and in material well-being (Le N Van 2012). As Jamieson (1993) noted, a person's primary obligation is to the family, as an eternal corporation. Similarly, the relationship between brothers (*De*) is a model for acting within families and in social roles (Le N Van 2012). Older brothers are supposed to teach, nurture and protect younger brothers. Younger brothers are supposed to respect, obey and support older brothers. In social life, one is supposed to behave towards those in senior positions or higher social ranks as if they are in brotherhood. Duties to friends (in the friend-friend relationships) also prescribe reciprocity as duties within these social roles (Weber 1946). These role structures undergirding personal relations are viewed as the core traditional values in Vietnamese society (Le N Van 2012).

Luong (1992) in his analysis of village life in Viet Nam, which he argued is the root of Vietnamese historical and contemporary social life, claimed that these personal relationships acted as structuring principles of behaviour to serve three purposes: (1) to manifest shared values, needs and concerns of the village as a whole; (2) to symbolise the dependence of the families as members of the village upon one another; and (3) to emphasise that external forces of natural, supernatural and social can only be controlled by the village as a collective not by the individual families. Similarly, Jamieson (1993) argued that these practices emphasised the idea that privileges and obligations were associated with village membership and membership was not to be asked but granted by the village. Distinction of membership in the village, and exclusion of non-members highlight the importance of personalism in social relations, and the need to cultivate these personal connections (*quan he*) in Vietnamese society today -

¹² It should also be noted that these relationships operate hierarchically in terms of the role structure not just age. For example, the term "elder brother" refers to the person's role as an older brother (*anh*) rather the age of the individual.

particularly in North and Central Viet Nam where families were organised in more closed traditional Confucian villages. In chapter 6 to 8, I show how returnees account for these personal connections as social capital in their deployment of overseas-acquired resources.

The embedded distinction underpinned by personal relationships designated a family's social position and competing values of solidarity and differentiation (Luong 1992). Based on the code of *Ly* (reason), a person acted in accordance with her family's social position that was stipulated within the rules of personal relationships. This duty to act in accordance with role structures is referred to as *Nghia*, and if she breached those behaviour codes, her family reputation can fall (Luong 1992). In village life in the North, these behaviour codes also signified social status of families in two ways: First, lavish spending on others because thrift was considered uncultured men's behaviour. The material emphasis here was on consumption as a signifier of social status, not work, because a cultured man would not learn economic management as it was not proper for him to do so (Weber 1946). Second, social competition among families was based on their level of self-sufficiency, where public opinion was the arbiter. Again, the economic emphasis was on displaying wealth ownership and shaming of poverty (Jamieson 1993). These two behaviour codes of extravagant spending and social competition were competitive actions to achieve ranking and ordering of families within their village community, which then prescribed a person's behaviour within the village. Their acceptance of these behaviour codes as moral obligations were based on democratic and shared values of *Ly* (reason). For them, unequal positions of wealth between those who lived in the subsistence economy and those in the prestige economy were part of the balance of the village life, a balance of *Xuan Mang*, the ying and yang forces (Jamieson 1993). On this basis, the acceptance of inequality of social hierarchy was embedded in the Vietnamese belief in the natural order of the world (Weber 1946).

On the other hand, village life in the South, particularly along the Mekong Delta, has always been much more open to the egalitarianism of mutual reciprocity among families (Huynh Lua 1982, Hoang Thieu Khang 1998). According to Taylor (1998), these co-operative relations stemmed from the diverse population of farmer-settlers in the Mekong Delta who were from the Cham (Khmer) population, Chinese immigrants and the Vietnamese who came from the North in the 17th and 18th century. They organised themselves voluntarily in habitats that were scattered in vast open land along the Mekong Delta, which were different to the geographically bounded villages in the North. In addition, the fertility of the Mekong Delta allowed for a commodity economy based on extensive market relations among these farmer-

settlers. Their market relations still had personal qualities, but were far broader than those in the villages in North and Central Viet Nam. The economic success of their farming made them less thrifty, and therefore less need for displaying wealth as ways of rendering social status. According to Nguyen Khac Vien (1985), for these historical reasons, the Southerners have always displayed more genuine hospitality based on the spirit of mutual affection and assistance, and more openness to foreigners. These indigenous characteristics set them apart from North and Central Viet Nam. This is an interesting indication that the Vietnamese *habitus* is not homogenous but is complex and contentious. Because there is no one *habitus* with respect to *personalism* (hierarchical versus egalitarian), returnees will have the occasion to exercise their critical agency and decide where to stand on hierarchical versus egalitarian values and practices.

It must be noted that in today Vietnamese society, families are still considered by many people, particularly in the North to be a person's social identity (Le N Van 2012). Even though there is less traditional village life, the dispositions to upholding families' social position and competitive behaviours to display social distinction particularly through wealth are still durable, and often serve as a basis for people's understanding of their lives (Pham M. Hac 2012). The point that Luong (1992) made is that "village life" is not just associated with people in agriculture, rather contemporary Vietnamese society is organised in small communities of families similar to village lives even in urban areas. This has implications for the Vietnamese people's conception of community and community work which I will discuss in chapter 8. Understanding the principle morality underpinning these personal relations in the Vietnamese past experiences, particularly the family socialisation (Bourdieu 1985) is important for understanding how returnees might see themselves in their society, how they capture the different ways of being and acting through personal relationships - particularly filial piety - into their present circumstances and how they then make certain choices in specific social situations. Yet, there is also the alternative norms that function in the Mekong Delta, norms of which returnees are also aware. And even in the North the traditional hierarchical norms may not be as strong as they once were – again encouraging returnees to think for themselves.

4.3 Individualism: Self and society relations

For many returnees, their changed attitudes as a result of overseas education seem to be more “self” oriented (see chapter 5), but to what extent are these changed attitudes an enhancement of the Vietnamese culture, or overseas-acquired? This can be understood through the Vietnamese conception of individualism - given what we know about the virtue of personal relations and usually hierarchical relations. According to Marr (2000), “individualism” circulated long before the term *ca nhan* (individual) entered the vocabulary of the official Vietnamese language (*Quoc Ngu*) in the early 20th century. The notion of individualism is embedded in the distinction associated with personal relations in village life in the following ways. The social competition between families in North and Central villages fostered self-interests, where the idea of “self” referred to being part of family. Social ranking based on social status promoted individualistic actions for achievement and positional advantage of the family (Luong 1992).

On the other hand, Hoang Thieu Khang (1998) argued that the category of a person in villages in the South followed the idea of the individual - rather than the family - as a building block of society that emerged from the “natural” conditions of the region. He argued that the spontaneous group formations in the South in the early periods of the 16th century, were in response to their natural needs of survival where each member participated as a free member. In this regards, Hoang (1998) considered that the market economy of the Mekong Delta allowed for a different conception of individualism that stemmed from people’s aspiration to compete individually based on individual worthiness to seek personal advancement. This was different to the social competitions in Confucian villages in North and Central Viet Nam that were based on social status arbitrated by a collective public.

The idea of individualism shifted to the Western concept of “self” as encompassing individual freedom (from social constraints and obligations) in the 1920s and 1930s. Following the footsteps of the Reform Movement led by anti-colonial nationalists including Phan Chu Trinh and Phan Boi Chau (Bradley 2004), the new intelligentsias (public intellectuals) saw the traditions of village life as constraining the rights and independent status of the individual, so much that when separated from their families and village, they were disoriented. These intelligentsias asserted that in addition to the duty to families and village, a person must also be accountable for her individual behaviour, attitude and intention (Bradley 2004). These intelligentsias were educated under the French education systems in Viet Nam or in France, and thus were influenced by Western ideas and values. They sought to break

with the Confucian past and colonial present by forcing a discourse of reconsideration of behaviours and obligations to society (Bradley 2004). They assumed that their quest for self-knowledge and self-realisation would bring about change in the conceptualisation of a person, civilisation movement, and bring about national liberation from the French (Marr 1981). These ideas were partly influenced by East Asian scholars' interpretation of Social Darwinism in more optimistic voluntarism as the path to national survival rather than the deterministic path of domination under the French rulers (Bradley 2004).

For these intelligentsias, their break with traditional ideas of "individualism" was their recognition of the political, economic and social forces of the French colonialist on Viet Nam, and appreciation of such recognition as their ways to triumph the "individual" to overcome destiny and Confucian ascribed position of subjects to colonialist rulers. However, according to Marr (1971), they were often given a broad pejorative brush by traditionalist anti-colonialists - those trained under Confucius examinations systems - who warned young Vietnamese to stay away from anarchism, hedonism and nihilism associated with the Western concept of individualism. Yet, as Taylor (1998) argued, the ideas of "self" in the fight for independence were already present in the 14th century to late 18th century, where there were diverse interests and attempts by the various Vietnamese rebellion groups who sought to call for greater freedom of the "self" in their uprisings against the Vietnamese Court. Here is one Vietnamese source of a more autonomous self or agent.

In summary, individualism is embedded in historical experiences of Vietnamese society, and is differently conceived by Vietnamese people in terms of what one can do for oneself, for one's families, or one's country. These conflicting dispositions have both Western roots and Eastern Confucian roots, and are linked with the political governance of the time. Understanding the conflicting Vietnamese conceptions of individualism allows us to question the extent to which returnees' changed attitudes towards the self as an enhancement of the Vietnamese culture or acquired from abroad. Moreover, it can shed light on the returnees' dispositions to their "self" and their roles in society, whether they take on Sen's liberalist view of individual freedom, or along the closed collectives of family and community that enforce co-optation with the behaviour codes of these collectives, or a combination of both.

4.4 Nationalism and democratic-centralism: State-society relations

Following from the relations of self and society, I now turn to the relations between the State and society to understand the Vietnamese dispositions to civic and political activism. This is important for understanding Vietnamese people's conception of democratic freedom and informs the analysis of returnees' community participation in chapter 8. One of the impacts of the French colonial period that lasted from 1884 to 1945 was the influence of the European and American historical experiences upon the Vietnamese political discourse. As Karl (1998) argued, along with other East Asian scholars, the Vietnamese anti-colonialists - many of whom were French-educated - deeply engaged in the process of rethinking politics, culture and activism. These anti-colonialists developed *nationalism* to be their core values. According to Marr (1981), the nationalist movement that was led by these anti-colonialists stemmed from the fear of loss of soul of national identity (*mat nuoc*), resistance to colonial rulers, and hopefulness. Paradoxically, these nationalist ideas came from the intellectual shift as a result of their education in France where they learnt Western thoughts about freedom and democracy (Marr 1981). Notably Ho Chi Minh wrote of "*The West's systematic betrayal of its own 18th century Enlightenment in its colonies*" in France. The leaders of the Reform Movement (see above discussion) who studied in Japan and France, established the school *Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc* when they returned home as part of their educational programs for the mass (Marr 1981). For many Vietnamese people who grew up in this era, this was the most significant educational and cultural movement at the time. It also holds significance in the Vietnamese political and educational history, which has legacy in the political culture and educational values for Vietnamese people today. These nationalists disseminated the writings of Rousseau, Spencer and Chinese nationalists to provide practical and relevant education for political change (Bradley 2004). They thought that understanding French philosophy would give the Vietnamese people a taste of democracy and freedom, which might foster people's desire for national pride and patriotism.

On the other hand, nationalism was instilled in the North through various political movements, of which Viet Minh led by Ho Chi Minh had the most influence, primarily through his ability to negotiate with the US and other world leaders on a global stage (Jamieson 1993). The mechanism of inculcating nationalist ideals by the Viet Minh movement seized on the village tradition of the North and offered families ways to find their equilibrium and sense of order by returning to the village life that the French dismissed, in even more tightened boundaries (Kolko 1997). These villages were much larger than those in

the prior century. They operated as *social enclaves* with their own political and religious centres, with clear hierarchical ranks, structures of roles, and set mutual obligations and expectations of village ethos of Confucian conformity (Peltzer 1993). They were more rigorously maintained and closed off to each other, with lines of segregation more evident than before.

According to Duiker (1983), the dualism of these social enclaves was to impose orthodoxy and conformity to family behaviours, as well as to inculcate adherence to the political values of the Communist movement. Communist teaching introduced the idea of *Nhan* to supplement *Nghia* in the principle of morality *Ly* (reason). *Nhan* was about loving and assisting one's comrades and compatriots. People chose to act along *Nhan Nghia* because they wanted to be part of the political framework and because it represented ways of attaining goals and fulfilling their needs as discussed above (Jamieson 1993). The Viet Minh's appeal to the Vietnamese traditional values for political purpose was distinctly different to the ideas of the anti-colonial nationalists and new intelligentsias who called on Western ideas of individual freedom to instil democratic values as a way towards nationalism. These competing thoughts of gaining national independence led to incoherent submissions by Vietnamese people to nationalism, particularly for the majority of families in the South who were outside of these social enclaves and thus detached to politics, and because of their alignment with the French bourgeois class (Kolko 1997).

The social enclaves that were the foundation of the mass-based Communist movement in North Viet Nam continue today in the form of Mass Organisations controlled by the Communist Party of Viet Nam (CPV), which are embedded in almost every institution in Viet Nam (Kervliet 2005). According to Kervliet (2008), these mass organisations are effective in channelling information from the State to society, and at the same time allow the State to become aware of any political sentiment and movement from the citizens very quickly. The strict hierarchical relationships within the social enclaves to ensure conformity in Viet Minh days underpin the administrative structure of the CPV in current times (see chapter 8 for further discussion).

In summary, I note the competing ideas of individual freedom between Western Enlightenment values, and traditional Vietnamese values of community solidarity that were used to propagate nationalism and democracy for national independence (from colonialism). It gives us a historical knowledge to understand how overseas-educated returnees may call on these different values sets to inform their political and civic participation. These past

experiences are insightful to understand whether and to what extent Western education foster returnees' aspirations as they return to Viet Nam, and how might that compete with the nationalism push by the State through its Party membership and mass organisations (Kervliet 2008; Lockhart 1993; London 2014). This is the focus of analysis in chapter 8.

4.4.1 Civil actions and democracy

With that background about Viet Nam's political paradigm shift from "serving the ruler" to nationalism, I now discuss how this shift has influenced Viet Nam's idea of democracy and civic actions. According to Marr (1981), despite the dissemination of intellectual thoughts to the mass, civic actions during colonial days in the early 20th century were still seen as for the intellectuals of society, commonly ascribed to Confucian cultured men in earlier periods. This was partly because the writing of anti-colonial nationalists saw heroes as those in the nationalist struggle with courage and devotion to the country rather than the grassroots level (Marr 1981). In addition, people were struggling with economic survival and thus there was a slow uptake of civil actions and social justice (Porter 1993). Therefore, the aspiration for social change inspired by Western philosophers remained as romanticised hopefulness in the writings and reportage of the elite intelligentsias (Marr 1981). Again, we can draw parallel to this to understand how might Western education foster ideas of social change in returnees who are in some ways might be considered elite in Vietnamese society.

On the other hand, the Viet Minh called on the masses as part of the uprising democracy for solidarity, to be organised through super villages, the heartland of the people in the North. In their official literature to the public, the CPV¹³ has continued to refer to Viet Nam as a democratic country. The plenary of the CPV espouses democratic values (Kervliet 2001). However, according to Lockhart (1993), the CPV's practices are a form of *democratic centralism* rather than representative democracy as supposed by the National Committee. Lockhart (1993) argued that the administrative structure of the CPV, which draws on the success of the super villages, has a centralised synergy mechanism that links the committees from the village, district, province and region. This structure allows the State to operate through relations of local authorities and national authorities, and between citizens and various levels of authorities. Kervliet (2005) argued that this form of autocracy enables democracy effectiveness as the State can respond to citizens quickly. Along this line of argument, Pham M. Hac (2012) claimed that Vietnamese people believe in democratic values,

¹³ According to the official literature of the CPV, Viet Minh became the CPV

the State's ability to improve democracy, and that the government is doing a good job in this regards, especially in the economic aspect by opening up the market. However, there are scholars like Le Thi (2011) who claimed that even though substantive ideas of democracy are well understood by Vietnamese people, the procedural aspect of democracy is missing. Le Thi (2011) attributed the problem as twofold. First, Vietnamese citizens are afraid to speak up against the authorities for fear of retribution or being conspired against. Second, they lack responsibility to society in general. These dispositions are important for understanding returnees' motivations and their perceptions of opportunities in community work (which I will discuss in chapter 8).

The observations made in the literature inside and outside the country, by foreign and Vietnamese scholars, suggest that democratic civic actions in Viet Nam vary between a lack of procedural dimensions of democracy and a lack of value for democracy itself. The latter stems from the administrative structure of the State, the operation of Mass Organisations that allow the State to inculcate its political ideologies in all sectors of society, and the general cynicism about the State's rhetoric about upholding democracy and civic actions - which citizens perceive as the State's push for socialism and nationalism (Hannah 2007; London 2006; Nguyen 2008; Salomon & Ket 2007).

On the other hand, there seems to be evidence of democratic actions despite these observations. For example, Hannah (2007) in his analysis of non-governmental organisations in Viet Nam, found that people question the local authorities, mainly about their abuse of power or corruption activities. Similarly, Porter (1993) argued that the peasants' revolt in the South in the late 1970s against collectivised agriculture and land control was democratic action at the grassroots level that led to the State's abandonment of these policies. According to Wells-Dang (2012), there are also forms of political advocacy in today Viet Nam through informal structures, personal connections and by creating niches between private and public domains. This draws on the idea of community orientations of villages in the Mekong Delta in the 17th-18th century where spontaneous group formation were brought collectively for the common good due to common needs rather than being imposed upon. Again, these past experiences are important to consider in terms of returnees' community participation in Mass Organisations that are imposed by the State in their workplace, or in informal groups based on common interests to help others. Democratic actions also take place within the Party committees themselves. For example, Kolko (1997) claimed that local authorities' interpretation of the central authorities' policies of the command economy eventually led to

the adoption of *Doi Moi* market based economic reform in 1986 (see section 4.5). Therefore, returnees' political participation must be considered in light of the political culture instilled by - but also resistant to - the Party-society relations.

These examples suggest that the notion of democracy is not something new to Viet Nam as the country seeks to integrate with the global world through economic reform in the 21st century. Rather, it is the perception of *equality* of democratic participation and the *processes* of participation that seem diverse among Vietnamese people. The twin notions of democracy and democratic centralism stem from two reasons. First, the political structure of the CPV, on the one hand, commands the central power of governance; on the other, the Party espouses democracy. Second, the idea of democracy is oriented, at least by authorities, towards expelling foreign rulers, whereas nationalism is inculcated by the CPV to uphold its legitimacy. This varied understanding of a person's role in democratic actions for social development is evident in the returnees' reason for their community work (chapter 5 and 8). Thus, it is worthwhile to consider how historical experiences shape returnees' perceptions of equality and processes of political and civic participation, which in turn shape their perception of opportunity structures in the "civic" field. As Sen (2015) comments in the Indian context, it is not the lack of democratic values that is the point, but rather the instrumental freedom to partake in democratic actions.¹⁴ Here, drawing on Bourdieu, I want to highlight that understanding these processes of democratic actions can uncover the conditions of agency and empowerment for democratic actions, but also how they may shape democratic values themselves. Understanding the symbiotic process of relating the procedures in the "civic" field to the political *habitus* that is embedded in returnees' historical experiences allows us to understand the choices that they make in their community work.

In summary, the idea of "individual freedom" that is associated with political consciousness has contested meanings in Vietnamese society. It signifies: (1) freedom from the constraint of a Confucian being with moral obligations to family and duty to the State who accept the world as it is; or (2) freedom of the individual who acts collectively to gain independence from foreign ruling; or (3) freedom that is bounded within the State-society relations. The returnees' political and civic motivations and actions are enacted within these different conceptions of individual freedom and sense of civic responsibilities and thus can be diverse, fragmented, complex and non-linear. In chapters 6 to 8, I will analyse the returnees'

¹⁴ Sen (in HDCA 2015 conference) is referring to the five notions of freedom: political freedom, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security. See Sen (1999) *Development as Freedom*

deliberation about and decision - both individually and collectively – to accord, modify and combine these different meanings and related practices.

4.5 Economic pragmatism: from the Mekong Delta economy to economic reform of *Doi Moi*

It seems that returnees' strategic choices and agency are likely to be influenced by recent shifts in economic values, such as those underpinning *Doi Moi*. Therefore, in this section, I explore the notion of *economic pragmatism* to foreground the analyses in chapter 5 to 7. The idea of an economy started as early as the 13th century when the farmer-settlers came to the Mekong Delta (see above discussion), then surged in the 18th century through the emergence of a large and internationally significant export port in the region of To Khang (Hoang Thieu Khang 1998). The subsequent establishment of Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) as a commercial centre by Nguyen Anh of the Nguyen Dynasty in the 19th century brought forward the notion of commercial interests, and human capital as an engine of productive economy and personal advancement. According to Taylor (1998), merchants became a significant social force in this period where thinking about wealth making through merchants' activities became notable rather than the earlier view of wealth as inherited and thus a matter of destiny.

This capitalistic and individualistic notion of wealth making and class divisions was enhanced during the French colonialism period that followed. By 1930s, imitation of French culture was widespread in Vietnamese society and a young French-educated Vietnamese "middle class" was born. Despite the flourishing economy of the French in Indochina at that time, the middle class Vietnamese society, along with the mass population of Viet Nam, benefited little in terms of economic betterment and actually encountered economic struggles (Kolko 1997; Templer 1998). What was a notable social change, however, was an urban youth value shift away from the ideals of village life. These youths associated their social disadvantages in relation to the French society in Viet Nam to their humble village roots and traditional culture that were constraining them to progress in modern society (Jamieson 1993). The idea of social status took on new shapes that were outside the boundaries of village life, and in reference to being French-educated or French-aligned.

By 1960, the presence of the US in South Viet Nam became significant. Rapid urbanisation took place as the American consumer economy presented the South Vietnamese with a source of income too great to be spurned given their capitalistic dispositions (Jamieson 1993). The result was a dramatic change in society and social order where a young person

cleaning shoes for Americans could earn more money than a college graduate who had held the same jobs for years (Jamieson 1993). Economic resources and means became the driver of social values and status. With that was a shift from natural and innocent ideas of individualism and capitalism to pragmatic basic instinct for economic survival. Interlocking with the traditional family values that were still revered in Vietnamese society, survival instincts and the will to do what is best for one's own families in uncertain times were the prime economic motivations for many Vietnamese people in this period (Templer 1998). In similar veins, Bourdieu (1979) analysed the Kabyle peasants and argued that the money economy imputed from colonialism demanded attitudes of money rationalism, to be internalised as a "virtue of necessity".

The historical trajectory of economic pragmatism for survival and social status is relevant for understanding returnees' economic motivations, which are underpinned by family responsibilities and Western superiority of education and employers (see chapter 5 to 7). To a certain extent, this is also reflective of Vietnamese educational values that also bear a long history of foreign influences. I will come back to this in the next section, but now I want to turn to the current State economic reform and how that enhances this "economic necessity as a virtue".

4.5.1 Economic Reform of *Doi Moi* (Renovation) and *Xa Hoi Hoa* (Socialisation)

From 1975 to 1986, Viet Nam had a centrally planned economy that followed the Soviet Union's economic approach. Following the Soviet Union's collapse in the 1980s, and failed policies to extract surplus from the Mekong Delta villages in the South via government controlled agricultural cooperatives (Peltzer 1993), Viet Nam's planned economy collapsed (Kervliet 2001; Kolko 1997; Turley & Selden 1993). In 1986, the CPV implemented economic reform called *Doi Moi* (Renovation) which is a Socialist market-based approach (Kervliet 2001). *Doi Moi* entails an economic system in which physical inputs and outputs of production are distributed through markets rather than controlled by the State. Contrary to Western models of market-based economy, the approach does not involve privatisation of land, labour and capital, but a continuation of State-owned enterprises (SOE) in managing these aspects of the economy (Fforde 1999).

However, as Jamieson (1993) and Kolko (1997) argued, *Doi Moi* resulted in competing struggles and tensions for Vietnamese people. This is because while it opened doors to SOEs, the farmers who occupied the majority of Viet Nam's economy, encountered

dramatic decrease in State subsidies (Fforde 1999). According to Pham M. Hac (2012), *Doi Moi* has led to significant change in social values in Vietnamese society. Vietnamese society now orientates towards materialism and property ownership for personal interests rather than social goals. Young people are more concerned with their own career, family happiness focusing on economic betterment rather than responsibilities to society (Pham M Hac 2012). The State's slogans like "*đan giàu, nước mạnh*" meaning "wealthy citizens, strong country" represent tacit recognition of the popular attitude that personal advancement is the surest and most satisfying way to contribute to society at large (Rosen & Marr 1999). Moreover, people realise that ownership of land, labour or capital is accepted despite the socialist ideology. Contrary to the Confucian cultured men who were not interested in economic management (see earlier discussion), the primary interest of modern Vietnamese people, is to make money, or occupy positions that can convert to profit making opportunities (Pham M. Hac 2012). Again, I draw parallel to the returnees in this research whose desire for economic betterment seem embedded in the virtue-of-necessity, and in response to State economic and social policies (see chapter 5).

4.6 Educational values and internationalism

Viet Nam's education systems have always been influenced by foreign forces and tied up with cultural values and political governance (Welch 2010). In this section, I discuss some of those linkages and how they shape Vietnamese educational values broadly, with the aim to provide some grounding for understanding how historical experiences may shape returnees' values of overseas education, and inform their choices and practices in their work and community work. Furthermore, returnees generally undertook primary and secondary, and for some, undergraduate education in Viet Nam. According to Tibbetts (2007) and London (2006), there have been four notable shifts in thinking about the purpose of education throughout history. These shifts are often aligned with political ideologies at the time: (1) education to serve the ruler of the day; (2) education to improve the economic lives of the people; (3) education for nationalism; and (4) education for personal economic advancement. I now discuss how foreign influences or *internationalism* are embedded in these different viewpoints about education over time.

4.6.1 Education to serve the ruler: a form of social mobility

The development of formal education in the Confucian era was deeply implicated with the expansion of bureaucracy and exercise of State power. The competitive examinations based on the Chinese systems of examinations were used to recruit staff to officials, develop bureaucratic competencies and achieve feudal claims to state office (Welch 2010).

Examinations were tests of a candidate's skills in literary analysis. The qualification for office depended on the number of examinations a person successfully passed. Scholar-literati were the bearers of progress toward rational administration and of all "intelligence" (Weber 1946). As a status group, the scholar-literati were privileged, even those who had been examined but not in office. Education was for serving the Court, but achieved through small networks of village elders and local scholar-literati.

According to Weber (1946), the Confucian wisdom of life was "civic" because it offered optimistic rationalism of officialdom, a form of social mobility, morale of literary intellectualism with specific pride in education. The motivation for the Confucian man was to gain literary achievement - the honour bestowed by cultured men. Weber (1946) claimed that the purpose of education in the Confucian era was to awaken the charismatic nature of men, and to impart specialised training. As Doa Duy Anh (1938) pointed out, the submissive role of women in society was also evident where women often worked to support their husbands, sons, or brothers to take many years to complete their examinations. The Confucian educational practices corresponded to structural domination that served as social division where ethics of intellectuals were not intended for the mass society, and biased against women (Weber 1946). Education was seen as a cultivation of wisdom and thus substance of a person, rather than means to perform tasks except to serve the King. The paradox of educational values based on Confucian principle is that the idea of education through examinations to reach officialdom was a form of social mobility, yet codes of behaviours prescribed judgement upon families that bound their social positions in structured segregation.

During the French colonial period from the late 19th century to early 20th century, the French education system had a significant influence in Viet Nam in terms of introducing Maths and Science, and many Western concepts in the curriculum (Kelly 2000). Even though modelled on an intellectual-oriented system, the basis of knowledge was considered to be teaching of series of systemised pieces of knowledge in print (Pham Dinh 2000). A common factor between the Confucius and French systems is rote memorisation, passive learning attitude, and transmission of knowledge from teachers to students - questioning, evaluating

and analysing skills were devalued. According to Tibbetts (2007), acquisition of static knowledge was required rather than dynamic investigation through questioning, however much simpler than literary examinations of Chinese texts. Therefore, while the French curriculum introduced other subjects beyond literature, the emphasis on static acquisition of language and literature skills was heavily embedded in the Confucian philosophy. Similarly, Jamieson (1993) argued that the intention of the French colonialist for French schools in Viet Nam was to subordinate the Vietnamese to colonial imperatives. This was to be achieved by educating Vietnamese people to enable them to speak French to be clerks and interpreters who could work with the French government. Progression through the system was based on mastering French language, and thus many parents sought extra teaching of French language outside formal schooling in order to ensure that their children were well prepared to communicate and respond to colonial employers (Tibbetts 2007). In these ways, the French colonial education system served to reinforce the purpose of education to serve the ruler, and accession to serve the French ruler was a form of social mobility.

4.6.2 Education to enhance the economic lives of the people

The influence of the US in Viet Nam's educational system was remarkably different to that under the French colonial period. During their time in South Viet Nam, the US built classrooms and distributed textbooks that doubled the number of children attending public schools in the city. In terms of curriculum and pedagogy, there was not much American influence as with the French (Tibbetts 2007). According to Pham and Fry (2004), in contrast to the French idea of education as servitude to colonial rulers, the US aimed to reform South Viet Nam's educational system to provide greater access and training to Viet Nam to facilitate economic development, in order to encourage Vietnamese people to follow the South Vietnamese government rather than Viet Minh forces, and ultimately win the Cold War. As part of their foreign aid strategies, which were aimed to supplement their military goals, the US Foreign Assistance Agencies implemented projects that focused on developing Viet Nam's vocational education, professional education, technical education, adult education and community schools.¹⁵ The aim of these projects was to develop skills and knowledge of the Vietnamese people so they could participate in developing the economy, administration, social planning and public institutions as part of development. The activities of the US

¹⁵ The US National Archives Records Administration, RG 469: Records of US Foreign Assistance Agencies 1948 - 1961

Operation Mission (USOM) ¹⁶ also reveal the US aid agencies' recognition that French schools were impediments to process of development because the Vietnamese people were so well assimilated to the colonial prestige of French schools that they did not want to attend Vietnamese schools. There was a class division between French schools and Vietnamese schools. These USOM projects involved American personnel teaching Vietnamese people in Vietnamese schools across different regions and local hamlets. The US also helped to expand universities and development of new college systems, and assisted the South Vietnamese government to subsidise their student abroad schemes. In addition, there were many scholarships for Vietnamese to study in US during this time.¹⁷

The historical experiences of French and American influence in Viet Nam's education systems have significant implications for the returnees in this study who recognise the superiority of Western education and Western employers in the Vietnamese values of education. Moreover, they themselves carry the embedded superiority of Western education systems (see chapter 5 to 7). In chapter 7, I discuss the returnees' viewpoints of Western universities compared to Vietnamese universities. Recognition of Viet Nam's colonial history offers a postcolonial perspective to understand not only Vietnamese returnees' experiences in this research, but also other students from countries of similar colonial history.

4.6.3 Education for nationalism

According to Salomon and Ket (2007), education is a mechanism for the State to push nationalism. While this has conception in the anti-colonial days as discussed earlier through the Reformers project (see section 4.4), the historical narrative of Viet Nam's education under the CPV from 1945 onwards speaks loudly of national autobiography (Salomon & Ket 2007). In this regards, education for nationalism echoes with the notion of education to serve the ruler as discussed above, but imposed in more subtle ways through mass education. According to Kolko (1997), the CPV's mass education and literacy in North Viet Nam in the period post 1945 was a significant achievement. Mass education improved access to education for young people and was seen as equalising society, an approach that was completely different to the social distinction in Confucian and French education in earlier years (Marr 1993). According to Taylor (1998), the notion of equality was so spectacular that the push of the Communist political agenda through mass based education, primarily through

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ The US National Archives Records Administration, RG 469: Mission to Vietnam 1950-1957

literature, was never questioned. Rather, as discussed above, this Communist education promoted national “independence” and national identity, which many Vietnamese intellectuals at the time sought and embraced.

According to London (2006, 2010) and Salomon and Ket (2007), the role of mass education was deliberately tied to the inculcation of the ideologies of the CPV’s Socialist governance to meet two objectives: First, to impart a nationalist ideology that leveraged the struggle for self-determination with a national goal of defeating imperialism. Second, this education laid the foundations for socialist industrialisation and, more generally, the development of socialism. These purposes of education continue today where the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) strictly controls the curriculum and pedagogy and funding for all levels of education. In conjunction with the *Doi Moi* and *Xa Hoi Hoa* policies that promote nationalism through economic growth, the curriculum is used to inculcate a national identity (Salomon & Ket 2007). However, the problem, as it seems from the perception of the returnees in this research, is that the education system does not produce graduates to meet the required labour force intended by *Doi Moi* because the underlying purpose of education is to instil Party ideologies (see chapter 6 and 7). This is one of the reasons why returnees seek overseas education and return to participate in Viet Nam’s emerging economy (see chapter 5). At the same time, MOET allows for education provision to take on a market-based approach. I now discuss how this market-based approach shapes the Vietnamese viewpoints about the purpose of education.

4.6.4 Education for economic advancement: market-based approach and growth of international education

According to London (2006), the effect of *Doi Moi* and *Xa Hoi Hoa* policies has been a shift of costs of public services (including education) from the State to households. The State reduced funding on schools, which resulted in significant reduction of salaries for teachers and education administrators, and infrastructure spending on education. This led to reduced quality and devotion of teachers to teaching in schools because they had to supplement their income by additional teaching outside of school hours (Marr 1993, Hoang Tuy 2011a, Nguyen V. Dan 2011). Mass education is no longer free except at the primary education level. At all other levels, there are various types of “non-State” education delivery including semi-State, non-State and people-founded (Pham & Fry 2004) (see chapter 7 for further explanation of these types in higher education). In effect, this is a two tiered and dualist education system, with different levels of public and private funding (London 2006). In addition, shadow

education, that is those given by teachers in the homes to supplement their income presents a new kind of private education (Bray 2012). Given that the competitive examinations system still operates in schools especially in university entrance exams, teachers and parents who want their children to succeed in getting a place in universities often resort to shadow education and resist attempts of educational reforms that would minimise students' chance to pass these examinations (Tibbetts 2007). According to Hoang Tuy (2011a), the result is low quality education, which is contradictory to the vision of producing quality human resources to meet growing economy that can integrate with the global economy. Moreover, as London (2009) argued, the emergence of market-based education delivery gives rise to new forms of economic inequalities associated with markets.

The higher education sector has also experienced many changes due to *Doi Moi*. Since *Doi Moi* policies in late 1980s through to 1990s, the number of student enrolments in tertiary education and technical colleges decreased significantly (from 156,000 to 120,000 for technical colleges, and from 126,000 to 114,000 for tertiary) (Marr 1993). Some of the explanation for this reduction, which is perceived as a by-product of *Doi Moi* policies, is that families have realised that diplomas and degrees do not guarantee employment in the State sector, which were traditionally the sector that university graduates aimed for as part of the Soviet planned economy (Marr 1993). A large percentage of the postgraduates in the Soviet Union who returned to Viet Nam were unable to put their expertise to use (Marr 1993). They ended up as administrators, teachers of university introductory course or interpreters (Marr 1993). One other significant development in this period was that Vietnamese tertiary students began to openly criticise the higher education system in Viet Nam, particularly the examination systems, procedures for scholarships awards, living conditions, and obligatory Marxist-Leninist classes (Rosen & Marr 1999).

The 21st century saw a change in the higher education sector with a push for improvement in quality of graduates for development of human capital (Welch 2005, 2010). The reasons are to accord with *Doi Moi* reforms, the vision of the State for Viet Nam to integrate with the world through World Trade Organizations (WTO), and upon receiving funding financial assistance from multilateral organisations like the World Bank to improve its universities (World Bank 2015). With a dynamic economic growth, many families have more financial capacities to send their children abroad. The aspirations for overseas education are rooted in Viet Nam's deep history of affinity with Western education and economic betterment. These aspirations are now reflective of the current market-based education

consumption and the view that jobs are outcomes of education. Along the *economic pragmatism*, education is now viewed as a way to achieve economic betterment, and for some, an economic necessity (Pham M. Hac 2012; Hoang Tuy 2011a).

The growth of numbers of Vietnamese students studying abroad in the last 10 years has been significant, peaking in 2012 where the number of Vietnamese students abroad was registered at 45,000 worldwide (see Chapter 1 for more detailed information on enrolment number in various countries). According to Thanh Lam (2014), 90 percent of Vietnamese students studying abroad are self-funded, the balance are on scholarships either through Government programs, bilateral programs or overseas universities offering as part of their internationalisation activities. There has also been an increase in the number of Western universities operating in Viet Nam since Viet Nam entered the WTO in 2007 (Fry 2009; Welch 2010). However, according to Harman et al (2010), the main obstacle facing these programs remains Viet Nam's lack of resources to promote even joint approaches and reciprocity in terms of research and teaching (Harman et al. 2010). Attempts of joint publication have probably been the result of continuing restrictions of academic freedom in Viet Nam (Harman & Le 2010).

The Higher Education Reform Agreement (HERA) has also seen an emphasis on international education and internationalisation activities as a way of improving the quality of Viet Nam's universities (Welch 2010). The State's vision of HERA is to have 40,000 PhDs by 2020, with the majority to be trained overseas (Vu H. Van 2011). Along with the objectives of *Doi Moi*, the motivations for MOET's internationalisation policies are primarily to improve the quality of graduates to meet the labour demands of an industrialised economy. Yet, at the same time, there is much scepticism that HERA visions can be achieved under the current pervasive control of the State on governance of universities (Hoang Tuy 2011b; Ngo Bao Chau 2011; Vu Ha Van 2011). Furthermore, the attainment of some of these targets, without systemic changes in the institutional structures, teaching and student enrolling practices, staff and staff training, would lead to loss in quality. The dynamics of the political and economic contexts and operations of universities are of considerable importance in understanding the choices and practices of returnees who work in the higher education sector (chapter 7).

In summary, historical sources suggest that Viet Nam's educational values have shifted from the social distinction through serving the ruler, to improvement of people's economic lives, to nationalist ideals that serve the State, and to advance personal economic

betterment through labour participation. However, these values may co-exist and interact in competing and inconsistent ways in contemporary society, and may pose competing and contradictory agendas for returnees. According to Hoang Tuy (2011a), the ideas of education for social mobility, to be a learned person, to serve or dismiss rulers of colonial days have been replaced by the view of education as a commodity to be purchased as a way to access something else. As with many public intellectuals in Viet Nam, Hoang Tuy (2011a) noted that the values of education in Viet Nam is similar to its values in other domains - a paradox of old tradition of examinations and fame for social status, but based on superficial standards for realisation of personal economic benefits. These contested and conflicting conceptions of educational values are important to consider as formative conditions of the returnees' motivations and expectations of their overseas education, and in instituting their choices to correspond with these values as tacit knowledge, or enable tides of change.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented some characteristics of Vietnamese society with the aim to foreground the analyses of returnees' values, choices and practices in their work and community work in the next four chapters. I drew attention to the Vietnamese people's conception of the "self" in relation to their families, society and their rulers. I highlighted Viet Nam's development of aspirations for the West, and duality of traditional Vietnamese values and modern Western ideas of *individualism*, freedom and democracy. I noted the practical experiences of the Vietnamese in enacting these Enlightenment values that drew on the Confucian *personalism* in social relations, and village life organisation of community, which were distinctly different to the West. Historical experiences also suggest that the ideas of freedom and independence were not alien to intellectual thoughts of Vietnamese people in earlier periods. Literati like Dao Duy Anh in the 14th century had spoken about freedom, self-confidence and assertions of one's will without regard for convention, history and ancestors (Taylor 1998).

Amidst a newfound solidarity of *nationalism* through the authoritarian regime of the CPV, there are glimpses of democratic civic actions that are built on the State's political structure of *democratic centralism*. Along with that is the continued polarisation between the North and South with historiography, culture, geography, political and economic conditions. The economic reform of *Doi Moi* and *Xa Hoi Hoa* policies in 1990s have fostered profound

economic pragmatism drawing on the monetary rationalism derived from the French colonisation and the American era.

I argued that the foreign intervention in Viet Nam over the years and their influences on educational values, nurture a form of *internationalism* that is inherently tied to cultural values and political ideologies. The internationalism embedded in the Vietnamese educational values cannot be deemphasised in this research. Even though the State closely controls definition and push of national identity through promotion of nationalism in education, sentiments of the Vietnamese people reflect diverse and competing ideas about the purpose of education, most notably its economic instrumentality. The link between educational values and political governance of past and present experiences necessitates a consideration of the State-society relations in understanding the returnees' aspirations for their acquired overseas education, choices and practices in their work and community work.

In this chapter, I attempted to discuss some cultural features of Viet Nam as the broad contours of the Vietnamese *habitus*, to better understand some of the cultural, political and economic conditions that are formative conditions of the returnees' motivations and expectations of their overseas education, and their goals and responsibilities to their social relations. Much of this chapter drew on historical moments because *habitus*, as systems of dispositions, draw on integrated historical experiences as much as a person's perception of opportunities in the present situations (Bourdieu 1977, 1998). Understanding history is helpful to understand the conditions that Vietnamese participants in this research may encounter and respond to, as these historical experiences are internalised to condition their aspirations, and externalised through their practical strategies in the fields that they operate in (Bourdieu 1998). In drawing on history, I do not say that returnees' actions are determined by these historical experiences, but that they are important in shaping the social structures in which the returnees operate. Along with Taylor's (1998) recognition of particularity of social situations in history rather than history itself, this thesis attends to specific social situations with historical sensitivity, in which the Vietnamese overseas-educated returnees decide on, shape, and enact their values, choices and practices. This is the focus of the next four chapters, which I now turn to.

5 Values, motivations and expectations of acquired international education

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is the first of the four chapters that present and discuss the findings of this research. It investigates the returnees' values, motivations and expectations of their acquired overseas education, and thus foregrounds the analyses of their practical experiences in the three social fields (to be discussed in the next three chapters). In this chapter, I aim to discuss the influences of overseas education in shaping the returnees' motivations, expectations and goals of their work and community work. I examine: (1) returnees' formation of values through their *habitus*, drawing on the traditional culture and contemporary political, economic and social contexts of the returnees (see chapter 4); and (2) the value judgement process that returnees engage in as they appropriate their overseas-acquired viewpoints. I argue that understanding the nature of values - how returnees conceive and develop values - allows us to understand the instrumental and intrinsic value of their *beings* and *doings* as well as what they will commit to *beings* and *doings*. This is important to address the overarching research question about the transformative potential of returnees to enable change in their communities. I will show that the returnees' economic motivations and goals are grounded upon the intrinsic value of filial piety as a principle of morality, and the instrumental value of overseas-acquired resources for workplace participation. Furthermore, their values are shaped by their perception of "self" in relation to their families, communities and the State. I thus argue that motivations for and expectations of acquired overseas education are intimately linked to the returnees' local contexts, embodied in their *habitus*, rather than stemming from exogenous economic push-and-pull factors as often discussed in the literature about international student motivations.

This chapter is organised as follows. In the next section, I briefly discuss the conceptual ideas about values formation using Bourdieu's (1977) *habitus* and Sen's notion of agency. I then present a summary of the survey responses about returnees' attitudinal changes as a result of overseas education (section 3). This is followed by the discussion of the interview data about the values, motivations and expectations of returnees in their work and community work (section 4), where their economic goals are explained in terms of family responsibilities (section 5), and perceived advantages of overseas-acquired skills and

attributes (section 6). I draw attention to the symbolic capital of Western education that has historical underpinnings as much as current economic utility in the jobs market. Drawing on the features of the Vietnamese *habitus* as discussed in chapter 4, I will show how the returnees' contested ideas of "self" and "individualism" between Western orientations and Vietnamese conceptions are embedded in their values for overseas education. I conclude the chapter by offering some implications of the findings in terms of the research question and theoretical contribution (section 8).

5.2 *Habitus* and values

According to Bourdieu (1977), values systems are conceived and applied through *habitus*. Values function at two interactive levels: as accomplished results of social systems, as well as constituting plans, goals, and contingencies of social systems. While people have to contend with the former, the latter serves as a means for individuals to create future possibilities of change (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). Values thus should be seen as artefacts of culture, not in static and deterministic ways, but as part of the process of becoming and interacting (Billig 1994) as people respond to economic, social and political institutions and processes.

Although individuals' values systems may differ within any one culture, the community shares some norms that distinguish one culture from another (Hofstede 1991). Sen (1997) also argued along this line in his critique of "Asian Values" in saying that the tradition extant in Asia may differ among Asian cultures but share some common characteristics. He gave an example of the values of respect and care for elderly parents, which is common across diverse cultures of Asia. He emphasised that in examining values, we have to ask whether there are shared values that may appear counterfactual to other values, rather than assuming a homogenous set of values to make a claim about other set of values (Sen 1997). For example, we could ask whether freedom-oriented perspectives co-exist with order and discipline in an authoritarian State, rather than assuming that the former does not exist because of the latter. It is important that we consider how culture operates from within the systems as generative structures, and vice versa, by examining the social structures that govern culture. This is because a person acquires cultural values of a society as she experiences the values systems of that society - but she also can play a role in modifying as well as reproducing those values.

According to Bourdieu's idea of *habitus*, values systems are transposable, durable but not necessarily immutable as people encounter different social conditions and respond to those conditions (Bourdieu 1994). Collyer (2014) explained *habitus* as linking past fields to present fields through individual actors who bring their values to their social organisations, where some values are shared and some are not. Sen (1999) also argued along the same line: the choices and the values people uphold are self-reinforcing, at least for so long as they stand unopposed by new and different choices and values. It is through the dialectical process of individuals' reflexive reasoning of values formation, that is, their recognition of the ways in which cultural systems (*habitus*) shape their values, that may result in them structuring new *habitus* to shape new values system (Bourdieu 1998) (see also chapter 2 section 2.4). Underpinned by this theoretical presupposition, I argue that it is important to understand both the returnees' values formation and their "reasoning values" in order to understand how they are motivated to perceive and grasp opportunities in their work and community work. The reason is that in order to understand the transformative potential of overseas education, we have to understand (1) the circumstances in which returnees can act to reap the benefits of their acquired overseas education as they see *valuable*; and (2) the conditions of values formation that might be conducive to choices and practices that empower them to enable personal and social change.

5.3 Summary of survey responses about values and attitudinal changes

Following from the above discussion, an analysis of values would entail examining social structures and social relations as embodied in the returnees' *habitus*. This would offer understanding of not just the values themselves, but the formation of values and values change, which returnees draw on to make choices and take actions (see chapter 2 section 2.4.1 for discussion about *habitus* and values in the agency *opportunity* and *process*). Living and studying overseas might foster new attitudes and beliefs, which returnees might have to appropriate and negotiate in light of their Vietnamese traditional values to form aspirations in their work and community work in Viet Nam.

As discussed in chapter 3 (section 3.3.2), the survey in Phase 1 aimed to gather data about the returnees' change in personal attitudes and values as a result of studying abroad. In section 5 of the survey, respondents were given a list of "values" statements and were asked to select the statements that they feel their overseas education has influenced their opinion of

the importance of these “values” (see Appendix II for the survey instrument). The various value statements were about views about themselves and how they relate to the world. They were drawn from the values items used in the World Values Survey Viet Nam (WVS 2011) (see chapter 3). Fig 5.1 below presents a listing of all the values statements that were asked in the survey, and the distribution of the number of responses for each statement. There were no apparent gender differences, or in other groups in the analysis.

The values statements were grouped in three broad areas: (1) self-development and orientation, (2) intercultural awareness, (3) understanding of international and national issues; and (4) traditional family values. Figure 5.1 suggests that the most significant impact of overseas education for the survey respondents is development of the autonomous and self-determining “self”. The three statements that had the highest number of responses were “thinking critically about own beliefs, attitudes and values”, “living life according to own beliefs and attitudes”, and “developing original ideas”. This result may seem counter intuitive in comparison to the lower number of responses to “personal achievement” and “getting ahead in life”; but this may be because these self-oriented and competitive actions are already embedded in their traditional Vietnamese values rather than something they have acquired from overseas education. For example, Vietnamese people are accustomed to achievement and competition (see chapter 4, section 4.2). It may also be that “self” orientation is more about self-understanding rather than about self-actualising. Similarly, the lowest numbers of responses are in “upholding family expectations and traditions”, and “exercising commitments to meet family responsibilities”, which may suggest that these values are very well anchored in the returnees, as they are in the Vietnamese society (see chapter 4, section 4.2 and 4.5.1).

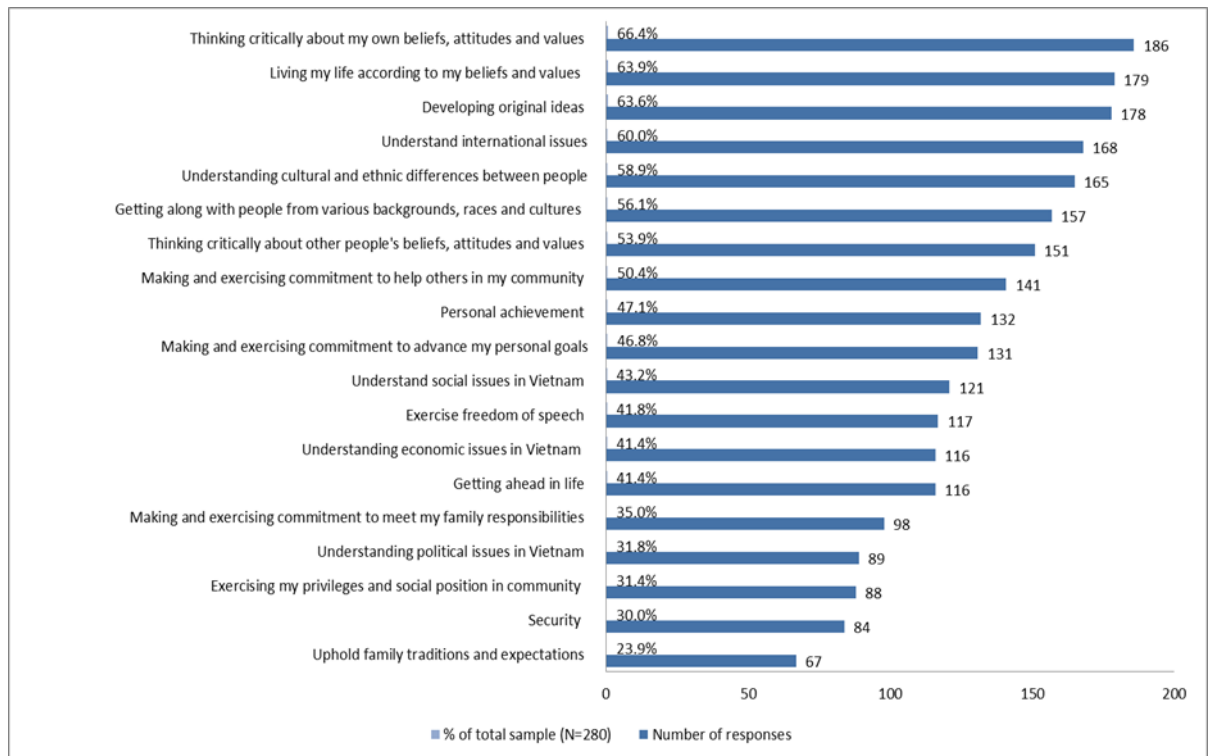


Fig 5.1 Summary of survey responses in “values” change

Figure 5.1 also indicates that the second group of values change is “awareness and acceptance of different cultures”. This may be because in their sojourns overseas, returnees were exposed to and integrated with other cultures, which allowed them to become more interested in other cultures and getting along with people from different backgrounds. This may also relates to returnees’ ability to think critically about themselves, their attitudes and beliefs given the different cultures that they were exposed too, as found in Pham and Tran’s (2015) analysis of international students’ motivations for intercultural interactions in Australian institutions.

The survey responses also show a higher number of responses to “understanding of international issues”, compared with “understanding of social, economic and political issues in Viet Nam”. This may be reflective of the subject content of overseas programs, the returnees’ lower concerns for these issues, which could be due to other factors, or that these returnees may already have strong views about some of these issues before studying overseas. I will now further explore the attitudinal changes found in the survey about “self”, traditional family values, openness to different cultures and understanding national development issues using the interview data.

5.4 Motivations, expectations and goals of acquired overseas education

The interviews in Phase 2 aimed to further explore the responses in the survey, by understanding the returnees' motivations, expectations and goals for their acquired overseas education; how they might be reflective of values and attitudes change from overseas education. Four key themes emerged from the analysis of the interview data. First, the motivation for economic betterment through work seems to be the main goal of the majority of returnees, with very few interviewees aspiring to engage in community work. Second, these economic objectives are driven by the returnees' responsibilities to their families, and to meet expectations of their families and communities. Third, these expectations come from a generally accepted viewpoint in the employment market that overseas education develops transferable skills and work-ready attributes that will be advantageous for employment. These expectations reflect a symbolic capital associated with overseas education, particularly Western education, which is beyond the utility of skills and attributes for work. Fourth, embedded in these motivations and expectations are nuances of understanding their "self" in relation to their society, families and the State. These four themes are now discussed.

5.4.1 Economic pursuit of wealth betterment

Most returnees interviewed seem to be motivated to acquire jobs and career advancement for personal economic betterment rather than improving Viet Nam's social development. The returnees' expression of their motivations reveal embedded societal viewpoint about the purpose of education, particularly the idea of international education as a step towards job opportunities and economic benefits (see chapter 4, section 4.3 and 4.6). Almost every returnee interviewed view wealth accumulation as the main purpose of education in Viet Nam, to accord with his or her family or community expectations about acquired overseas education. Minh says:

The view about education in Viet Nam is to pass exams, get a degree and a good job in society, which will lead to having a lot of money. In Viet Nam, people do not really choose a job based on their career direction, or passion but more because of high salaries because of their need for money. They would choose whatever job that gives them a good income. Minh (HN, IT, 20s)

Minh's comment suggests that education is a means to achieve jobs and income. Choices of job are based on an instrumental goal to accumulate wealth rather than individual interest and direction. Her idea of wealth attached to education also echoes Pham M. Hac's (2012) claim

that wealth is valued for personal benefits rather than for the whole society (personal includes family in Vietnamese society). The economic values associated with education expressed here by Minh can be understood in the Vietnamese *habitus* that stem from a historical trajectory, and reflect societal response to the economic reform of *Doi Moi* and *Xa Hoi Hoa* policies which emphasise the role of education and work (see chapter 4).

As Long comments below, this pursuit of wealth is beyond economic necessity as most Vietnamese international students are well established in society. Rather, he suggests that it is reflective of the fervent materialist outlook in society that predisposes returnees to taking choices that prioritise economic benefits:

The focus on money is now habitual. Even if their salary is raised, their greed also rises.

They would do anything to gain material benefits. The more money there is for them, the better it is. Long (HCMC, Education, 40s) ¹⁸

While Long comments on the possibilities of institutional factors like salary scales as a driver, he seems to emphasise an internalised set of values about economic betterment as a cultural disposition. This comment may help to explain the low number of survey responses to “uphold family traditions and expectations” in that returnees’ motivations for economic betterment respond to meeting family responsibilities and expectations. Long’s idea of materialism is close to Bourdieu’s (1998) idea of economic necessity as a virtue. Long talks about “greed that rises with salary as habitual”, suggesting that economic betterment is a form of *unconsciousness* cultivated from internalised experiences (Bourdieu 1998), that overrides the exogenous conditions of actual economic needs. The comments of Minh and Long suggest that returnees are predisposed to view overseas education as opportunities to gain economic betterment. Many other interviewees also speak about societal values of overseas education for money making opportunity. This suggests that economic motivations are Vietnamese societal norms, not something newly acquired from overseas studies. These quotes also highlight that these returnees are aware of societal values about education and economic pragmatism, and that their motivations for overseas education are reflective of these societal viewpoints. Moreover, they are *conscious* that their viewpoints are shaped by societal norms.

¹⁸ In Vietnamese language, society is often spoken about in the third person as “they”, “he”, “she”. Similarly “we” is often used to refer to oneself. These collective terms are the Vietnamese way of expressing politeness and social class.

5.4.2 Values and motivations for community work

Most of the returnees interviewed do not seem to be motivated to participate in community work, or perceive it as an expectation of their overseas education. Ngoc explains that international graduates are primarily focused on economic benefits:

The focus for most returnees is upon benefits from jobs brought about from studying abroad rather than focusing on reforming society. I myself do not care about the society.
Ngoc (HCMC, IT, 20s)

In this comment, Ngoc notes that overseas education is not an impetus for making social reform but only to obtain benefits in the jobs market. Given that Ngoc is one of the six interviewees who actively participated in community work (see chapter 3 and 8), her comment suggests that the value of community work may not always be about enabling social reform. As I shall discuss in chapter 8, community work in Viet Nam is also about socialising, as well as helping others to improve their well-being because they are part of the close networks. In talking about “reforming society”, Ngoc is referring to national development issues, rather than the types of activities that she does in her close networks of families and friends. This highlights the need to understand motivations for community work in the context of Vietnamese *habitus* where families are viewed as part of small communities (see chapter 4, section 4.4).

The lack of aspiration to participate in community work might also reflect the political culture of Vietnamese society where people are ambivalent about democratic actions (see chapter 4, section 4.4.1). However, on the rare case among the interviewees, as with Quan whose sojourn in Germany changed his political viewpoint and thus political aspirations. Quan comments:

After a period of time that I lived in Germany, I understood that a one-party regime would not be able to develop society in socially just ways. Making change to bring about social justice is impossible if I continue to be conservative with those thoughts. Actually, I also realise that history also has its right and left sides. Of course, because this State is protecting this regime, it must make this regime appear beautiful. Sometimes we Vietnamese people are blind to its left side. When I lived overseas, I looked back and saw Viet Nam and I saw that our society has too many injustices. That was a great change in me, my political outlook changed dramatically. Quan (HCMC, Manufacturing, 30s)

Quan’s values for political participation may not be newly acquired from overseas studies as he comes from a Party-affiliated background, which predisposes him to see and take up

opportunity to participate politically. Political participation as an instrument of social change and social justice has always been valuable to him. Living overseas and observing German society allowed him to see how political regimes can function in different ways to achieve different outcomes, which changed his ideology. His comment about “society’s blind to the State’s political regime” is a metaphor for the lack of citizens’ political voice against the State. This echoes Le Thi’s (2011) claim that Viet Nam lacks mechanisms for mobilising democratic actions even though Vietnamese people value democracy (see chapter 4, section 4.4.1).

Similarly, in the case of Kim who has interests in social development, her comment below shows that that her values about community work have not changed because of overseas education. Rather, studying abroad gives her a sense of advantage which leads to her willingness to engage in community work;

I can see how I may realise my values, what I can do to help others to achieve things. Maybe it is the confidence. Before I did not dare to try. I did not know how to try. However, after studying overseas, I can see something as opportunities and I grasp those opportunities. I also feel that I want to improve and change myself. In Viet Nam, I feel that there are many people like me, who initially had dreams but they cannot realise their potential. They are not given the opportunity to develop that drive to change them or find out things to change themselves. I think it is the opportunities. I think the opportunities that I had overseas gave me more advantages than those trained in Vietnam. The advantage is that when you are overseas, you are able to find your values, realise those are your values and follow though. Kim (HN, Education, 20s)

Kim distinguishes between her values for community work that remains unchanged, and her confidence to realise her values that has changed. She refers to confidence as a resource that allows her to recognise opportunities, and be self-determined to take on those opportunities. What is insightful in this comment is that Kims’s opportunities are also derived from her perception of being advantaged compared to others, which motivates her to take up community work. It must also be noted that Kim works for a local NGO, which might explain why her idea of community work seems to be about a broader community development (compared to Ngoc in earlier quote who sees her community work as an extension of family activities). These comments by Quan and Kim suggest that while some returnees have values for community work, whether they take up the work depends on the present conditions that they operate in, and that depends on the perception of what they can do, and also what they

see as feasible opportunities to pursue their goals. In chapter 8, I will further explore these opportunity structures in the returnees' practices in community work.

To summarise the findings in this section, the economic pragmatism associated with education seems to be pervasive with the returnees across all sectors. Their motivations and expectations seem to be constructed with a *consciousness* (Bourdieu 1998) of societal norms. The reflection of the majority of returnees interviewed about their lack of motivation for community work suggests not only the economic purpose of overseas education, but also the Vietnamese dispositions to a reluctance to engage in political and civic actions. I now discuss the returnees' "reasoning" for these economic motivations: first, filial piety as a principle of morality; and second, the cultural capital of overseas-acquired skills and attributes and symbolic capital of Western education.

5.5 Filial piety as the principle of morality

It seems that the returnees' motivations for economic betterment are directly associated with affection for and responsibility to their families which are part of their cultural values. As argued by Pham (2013) in her analysis of Vietnamese international students' motivations to study in Australia, filial piety is part of a system of dispositions of Vietnamese international students to aspire international education. Filial piety is the principle of *Ly* (Reason) and *Nghia* which acts as the principle of morality (see chapter 4, section 4.2). Reflections by the interviewees in this study suggest that their economic drive is embedded in their family commitments and expectations, thus, a disposition to thinking about the values of international education rather than a result of acquired international education. This is distinctly different to the literature on international students' motivations that often attribute economic goals as exogenous push-and-pull factors of host countries and universities (Mazzarol & Soutar 2002). Duy, in the below quote speaks from a parent's perspective. He explains the wish to ensure economic prosperity for his daughters as a sense of responsibility that is embedded in the Vietnamese values of filial piety;

From a cultural perspective, parents in Viet Nam buy houses for their children so they [returnees] as members of society have to follow that norm. He has a house but he needs to also buy and give a house to each of his two daughters. Duy (DN, Education, 50s)

This comment also suggests that filial piety imposes responsibility upon Vietnamese people to acquire wealth for their families. Even though he is speaking about duties of parents towards

children, he is referring to the reciprocity of children paying their due debts to parents. This comment emphasises the value of social status for families as a “structured and structuring structure” (Maton 2008). It is structured by the traditional values of filial responsibility, and achievement of education and wealth as denoting family position in the community. It is structuring in that it shapes returnees’ economic motivations and goals. The anchor of family values is a “reason” for economic motivations.

Similarly, Hong (HN, Education, 50s) comments that “parents will try to give their children opportunity to study overseas because it is seen as their responsibility to provide a good education for their children, in order for them to get good jobs”. She connects this sense of family responsibility to the motivations for parents seeking international education for their children. She implies that having wealth is a good life; international education is about materialist values of jobs; provision of material well-being is parents’ responsibility, and thus international education is about gaining the advantage to ensure wealth accumulation.

These reflections on responsibility by Duy and Hong echo other interviewees’ viewpoints and convey a sense of morality embedded in the ideas of virtue and loyalty to Vietnamese families. As noted in chapter 4 (section 4.2, 4.4), the strong family values are anchored in the *habitus* of dyadic relationships of families in village life and extend to general community life in Vietnamese society today. Hong and Duy’s ideas of what is right or wrong are constituted by their conception of virtues, which are based on their understanding of their self in relation to their families. Their morality about behaviours in accordance with roles and relationships is constructed in the traditional context, which shape their motivations and goals of education. It is a kind of *prospective responsibility* (Ballet et al. 2007) that constitute their ways of being, their sense of freedom, to be enacted to service the family or small community around them. The idea of filial piety (*Hieu*) and moral debts (*On*) form a prospective responsibility that constitutes their conception about freedom and opportunity. It is the reasoning process about economic objective, underpinned by their prospective responsibility that constitutes their economic values of education. This is different to the reasoning that Sen envisions where individuals can examine their values in order to form a judgement about morale behaviours.

The stronghold of family values is also reflective in the returnees’ decisions to return to Viet Nam. Almost every returnee who had to weigh up the benefits of staying overseas or returning to Viet Nam said that their choices were based on family values. As Vu and Hong

comment below, they returned to Viet Nam because of their families, even though they had opportunities to stay abroad.

I would always go back to Viet Nam. For me, the values that I have for family are important. Vu (HN, Education, 20s)

Honestly, during the time that I studied MBA and PhD, I always intended on going back to Viet Nam. It is also because I already have a family here with my parents and children. I am also a bit traditional. I have also had invitations to go abroad, including the US. Acquaintances and professors also recruited me. I applied but once I got something, I still wanted to be in Viet Nam, possibly because of my attachment to family. Hong (HN, Education, 50s)

In Chien's comment below, affection for families is evident as a reason for returning to Viet Nam. Speaking from a parent's perspective, he explains the emotional connection of Vietnamese parents who want to have their children living close to them;

Vietnamese families do not want their children to go and live faraway. It is the emotions between parents and children, generally for Asians, and specifically for Vietnamese people. They do not like their children to live far away. That is the main reason for many people to return to Viet Nam. Chien (HN, Thanh's father)

This sense of affection is also evident in Minh's comment below:

My family said it was up to me where I wanted to live, but I thought I needed some family love after being away for so long. If I had stayed in Thailand or worked in another country, I would still be living on my own, doing everything on my own. Minh (HN, IT, 20s)

Minh's comment suggests that while her parents might give her the choice to live wherever she wants, her affection and needs to be with her families informed her choice to return home. These comments above from perspectives of both parents and children suggest the strong family values among the returnees, which encompasses responsibility as their morality and affection as their psychological well-being. The strong family values held by these returnees are also similar to the findings in the World Values Survey (WVS 2001). The 2002 Viet Nam wave results indicated that 98 per cent of survey respondents felt family roles and commitments are most important in their lives (Dalton & Ong 2003; Pham 2013; Pham M. Hac 2012; WVS 2002). Viet Nam ranked highest in family commitment and responsibilities compared to other East Asian countries including Japan, China, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, and South Korea (WVS 2002).

These comments, which are consistent with other returnees' help to explain the survey findings about "upholding family traditions and expectations", and "meeting family responsibilities" being the lowest categories of values change as a result of overseas education. The strong family values may also be due to the moral education in Viet Nam, which prescribes behaviours in accordance with role structures (see chapter 4, section 4.2). As discussed in chapter 4, filial piety is the virtue in personal relations of Vietnamese society that has durable structure of dispositions in Vietnamese society. While overseas education may expose returnees to beliefs of "individual" and freedom to act, their traditional values and affection for families constitute their motivations to return home, which in turn govern their commitments to families.

5.6 Western supremacy and instrumentality of education

In this section, I discuss the second element that underpins the economic motivation of returnees for their overseas education, the cultural capital of overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes as well as the symbolic capital associated with overseas education, particularly Western education.

5.6.1 Cultural capital of transferable (soft) skills and work-ready attributes

The returnees seem to perceive the advantages associated with overseas education vis-à-vis their overseas-acquired transferable (soft) skills and work-ready attributes. This perception of advantage arises from the returnees' perception of a lack of quality higher education and a lack of production of quality human resources in Viet Nam. There is a generally accepted view among returnees, and members of their networks that overseas universities, particularly those in the West, can improve their ability to work in an industrialised economy, due to the experiential learning that integrate work experiences with theoretical learning. In the quote below, Hien talks about various skills sets of her overseas-educated staff:

Vietnamese people value overseas education because of better education systems in the West, for example, the format of education delivery, the types of training, the skills they instil like creative thinking and critical thinking. They can solve problems better with their lateral thinking. Hien (HN, Manufacturing, Mang's colleague)

In this comment, Hien directly attributes Western universities to equipping creative and critical thinking skills. This is similar to research studies that found that generic soft skills

including oral communication, high level thinking, problem solving, decision making, and affective traits such as responsibility, positive attitude, interpersonal skills and ability to work independently and in a team, are necessary for a flexible workforce in modern economies (Adams 2002; ADB 2001, Cassidy 2006; Cox & King 2006; Leckey & McGuigan 1997). The majority of interviewees irrespective of whether or not they studied overseas also acknowledge the benefits of these types of skills. For example Bang and My say:

Overseas education gives graduates better communication skills, especially presentation skills. The overseas education systems prepare students well in these areas. Bang (HN, Education Mang's friend)

It is without a doubt that overseas-educated graduates can think more laterally and openly. That means they can see problems from different perspectives and can solve problems too. It comes from living overseas and having to encounter different people from different cultures. My (HCMC, Finance, 20s)

My's comment resonates with other returnees in suggesting that "openness in thinking" is the most significant attribute acquired from living and studying overseas, which enables her to be adaptable to different work environments. The ability to see things from different perspectives comes from living in diverse cultural contexts. The returnees' view about divergent thinking is similar to research findings that claim that international graduates gain intercultural competence, which allow them to have integrated and inclusive world views, accept people with different attitudes and values, are more open and flexible in their thinking and communicating (Gill 2010, Cannon 2000) – all of which are beneficial for improving their commitment to their workplace and attainment of work related goals. What is different here is that these Vietnamese returnees seem to think that their ability to think openly and laterally is only advantageous in certain social contexts, mainly where there are foreigners and other overseas-trained workers. In other words, these skills and attributes are not perceived as forms of cultural capital that can be mobilised in all fields. Rather, they depend on returnees' social standings within the hierarchical society. This echoes other research findings about returnees in East Asian contexts where there is importance of age, status and role in social hierarchies. For example, Trinh comments:

Overseas-trained people might think that their assertiveness is good for work but not necessarily. It can be a disadvantage because other Vietnamese people might not receive it well. They have to be careful that they use their skills appropriately in certain environments. Trinh (HCMC, Ngoc's sister)

Overseas-trained people are very good in expressing their views, but this is not always good in Vietnamese firms. Vietnamese bosses prefer to have their say rather than being told by young graduates what to do. Whether these skills can be seen as good skills depend on the company. Chien (HN, Thanh's father)

These comments highlight that the idea of advantage rests in the “distinction” or cultural capital of these skills and attributes in the social situations, which is granted by members of the social group, not with the returnees even though they may have full knowledge of the types of skills and attributes they have. It is this perception of distinction that fosters the value of international education. In other words, values that inform decisions or reasoning of actions are embedded profoundly in returnees' perception and grasp of social norms. The point here is that cultural capital is about positional goals that a person takes up, rather than making a person a better person. In this way, the cultural capital associated with these skills and attributes is seen as overriding factor in mobilising these skills and attributes. However, these returnees still appreciate the substantial value of these skills and attributes in terms of improving their professional practices, by which they may distinguish themselves in employment with many returnees. (I will discuss this further in chapter 6 and 7).

Opportunities are constructed in two ways: first, opportunities exist to utilise the skills irrespective of whether returnees can or will take up opportunities; second, whether returnees take up opportunities depend on their perception of opportunities, and this comes from their perception of positional advantage in utilising their skills, whether or not they can actually use those skills. The economic utility of overseas education stems from the returnees' perception of advantage associated with their overseas-acquired transferable skills and work-ready attributes in the workplace. Their perception of advantage arises from their perception of societal recognition of these skills and attributes and internalised as embodied cultural capital, which in turn fosters their expectations about their acquired overseas education. In other words, opportunities are constructed by returnees' perception of opportunities as well as actual opportunities to employ skills. Both perception of opportunities and real opportunities influence the values and goals of their education.

The point to note here is that the value of these skills and attributes are viewed by returnees in terms of their economic opportunity vis-a-vis workplace participation. They have an instrumental function in the returnees' reasoning process about what they want to do with their overseas education. This is important to know in terms of analysing the choices that returnees have as a result of their overseas education, whether these skills and attributes

reduce or increase the choices that returnees have (which I will analyse in the next three chapters). It is important because to understand normative agency, choices have to be seen in terms of the values and goals of returnees (agency dimension 1 and 3), whether their choices reflect their goals or are taken for other purposes. In chapters 6 to 8, I will analyse how returnees choose to accord with, modify, and shape their goals and values, including these ones which they have internalised from the *habitus* of their culture.

5.6.2 Symbolic capital of overseas education

Symbolic capital also seems to be associated with overseas education, particular Western education, that is beyond the utilitarian application of overseas-acquired skills and attributes for work application. The interviewees' comments seem to reflect a societal view of Western superiority in education and workplace. Tam's comment below about Vietnamese employers' willingness to recruit foreigners instead of Vietnamese suggests high regards for foreigners. Here, she talks about the trust in foreigners as part of the mindset of Vietnamese people;

Why do Vietnamese employers hire a foreigner instead of a Vietnamese person even though the foreigner might not be as good in dealing with the government? Because they have more trust in a foreigner, because in their mind, a foreigner is better than a Vietnamese. Tam (HCMC, IT, 30s)

Khang, in the below quote, reflects on Viet Nam's colonised history by the West which cultivated a mental dependence on the West;

Preference for Western things is natural thinking for Vietnamese people. I think there is a historical reason as well. Vietnamese people love anything overseas, *sinh ngoai*. Part of it comes from that history of being colonised. Khang (HN, Manufacturing, Dinh's work colleague)

Khang's comment suggests the sense of "West is best" is internalised as tacit knowledge. His recognition of the colonial history suggests that the motivations to study overseas also have a historical trajectory of colonialisation that create a "pull" of the West, that is beyond the exogenous economic pull factors of host countries as often discussed in the literature. Similarly, Khanh (HN, manufacturing, 30s) says: "Some people think that a person coming back from an overseas training course will be like a fox turning into a peacock. So that is the perspectives of Vietnamese people". Here, he is talking about the extent of this internalised symbolic capital of overseas education in translating to the expectation that overseas education can transform a person.

Similar to Khanh, Vu reflects on his view about society's expectation of behaviours for an overseas-educated person, which he resists. He considers himself to be different because he perceives the judgement criteria to be based on superficial standards like extravagant dressing styles and explicit display of wealth and knowledge;

Vietnamese people prefer something foreign. They usually expect those who have studied abroad to look more elegant compared to the norms, while I simply think that studying abroad makes me more skilled. How I look on the outside, whether I dress simply or extravagantly, or that I do not really follow expected manners, is not as important as my effectiveness and abilities. Sometimes it is conflicting. Some people think that those who have studied abroad should display more self-importance and knowledge and high standards in behaviours, but I do not really display any of those things. I feel it is quite superficial and when they do not see what they want to see, they think I am very common without anything special. Sometimes it is just the way people talk that makes me feel uncomfortable. Vu (HN, Education, 20s)

This comment is also insightful in showing how societal expectation of overseas education reflects: (1) the Vietnamese *habitus* of traditional behaviour codes of extravagance and public flaunts in Northern village life (see chapter 4, section 4.2); and 2) romanticised notions of elitism vis-à-vis French bourgeois (section chapter 4, section 4.5). Moreover, Vu contrasts that with individual capability to do things, which for him is more important than the image of the person.

Similarly to Vu, Long has a scornful viewpoint towards Vietnamese businesspersons who leverage the economic pragmatism of education and the media's representation of international education. He tells a story of seminars organised in Ho Chi Minh City where promotional materials portray key speakers as authoritative with overseas credentials in order to attract attendees. However, according Long, such promotion displays the businessmen's lack of capacity to evaluate whether such credentials or expertise are real, which leads to a superficial inflation of educational value, and contradictorily reduces the practical application of education itself. He states:

When people organise those conferences they have titles that sound very superior, which no one really verifies for example "leading professional". But who accepts or verifies this person as leading? In general, if you want those titles then you go to those centres then you get the names. But when you go to google scholar to search you will never find any articles or expertise of these people. Long (HCMC, Education, 40s)

This comment suggests that Long recognises societal perception of international education as symbolic capital. His perceptions are consistent with the notion of symbolic capital in that society attaches superficial materialist value to overseas education. He does not seem to object to the idea of education as a commodity, only that Vietnamese people do not have the capacity to evaluate the quality of international education. He sees a distinction between what is *true* value and *superficial* value; the former is associated with acquired Western education because if a person has acquired Western education, then she can have real knowledge, whereas a person who has not had Western education tends to use the title of overseas education as a means to make money. The paradox is that, as noted in the previous section on opportunities and values construct, returnees also try to leverage their overseas education in these economic ways. Thus, there seems to be a duality of viewing education to produce knowledge to cultivate substance of person as an *end* in itself, and education to apply oneself in the jobs market which is only an economic *means*. There seems to be a blurred line of distinction between social status that relates to knowledge itself and social status that relates to wealth accumulation. This duality or contradictory values about education and symbolic capital associated with Western education seems to have legacy in the anticolonial intellectuals who were scornful of the attempts by French-educated Vietnamese, who also used their French education to advance themselves economically (Marr 1991) (see 4.6.1). In other words, returnees' viewpoints reflect social viewpoints with historical trajectory.

Along the colonial perspective, Binh, a leader of a university,¹⁹ refers to the value of independence in learning and self-actualisation to be associated with education in Western universities;

To me, colonialist universities were created in Saigon because they thought education has its wonder in accordance with its deep meaning about education, not superficial value. Education allows people to self-read, self-learn and self-think and that education will allow people to go beyond the objective of education that is set by the institutions. In South Viet Nam, there began a world-class university when there was a level of knowledge within Vietnamese people who were trained in concepts and fundamentals by French or American universities. Binh (HCMC, Education, 50s).

In Binh's recollection of colonialist universities in South Viet Nam pre 1975, she reasons that self-development is important because it allows people to be critical of their institutions and the State. Again, this thinking, as Marr (1991) pointed out, is typified of anti-colonialists in

¹⁹ To protect the identity of Binh, her role is referred to here as leader

the early 20th century (see chapter 4, section 4.4). Moreover, Binh's reasoning about the values of education seems to draw on the idea of knowledge rooted in the Enlightenment values and assumed to be acquired with universities in the West, which also stems from colonial education.

In summary, the returnees' economic motivations for overseas education are driven by a sense of superiority for the West in two ways. First, an instrumental perspective that presumes higher quality of Western education for the cultivation of practical, independent and divergent thinking, and flexible attitudes which are geared for adaptability for an industrialised workforce. Second, these values have historical roots in Viet Nam's aspirations for the West, that is, to catch up with the West, one has to be like the West, to develop the kind of knowledge for self-development in the West. But the colonial mentality must also be resisted: to fight the West one has to be equal to the West (Nguyen Tien Luc 2013). The returnees' viewpoints suggest that while there is a symbolic capital of international education which is commonly highlighted in literature (Brooks & Waters 2013; Ong 1999), it is embedded in Viet Nam's complex historical roots of colonialisation that serves to normalise the elitism of international education in Vietnamese society.

5.7 Self, individualisation and individualism

In this section, I further explore the "self" orientations reported in the surveys in terms of how the returnees see themselves in society, how they exercise their agency to enact their "selves" in relation to *habitus*, shape their values and construct their motivations and goals.

As discussed in chapter 4, the individualistic nature of Vietnamese society is embedded in the personal relations of their families and needs to achieve social distinction in society. This sense of "individual as part of family" forms boundaries and creates divisions across societies rather than establishing community goals of solidarity. In addition, the economic and political structures of *Doi Moi* policies have promoted the idea of international education as a way to acquire competitive advantage for the individual (and her family) in the labour market. This has enhanced competition among Vietnamese people in a society that is already predicated on public competition (see chapter 4, section 4.2). In the below quote, Sinh talks about the idea of selfhood as positioning the person in society, which is designated by the credentials that a person has, not what the person can do;

I am afraid that in the current context in Viet Nam, the influence of a degree is higher than [a graduate's] actual capabilities. Vietnamese people highly respect education, and they see education as associated with credentials achievement. Many people study Master or PhD although it is sometimes not necessary, for example, a staff in management role also pursues MA or PhD degree while it is not required. The tradition highly respects intellectuals, title of job and achievement. Sinh (HCMC, Education, 20s)

Sinh's comment echoes those of Vu and Long above in regards to pursuing overseas education to create distinction for themselves and families. It highlights the viewpoint about credentials and personal achievement as mechanisms for acquiring social status. Moreover, people seek overseas education to enhance their social positions. However, this is not something new as it draws on the Vietnamese *habitus*, where competition and achievement are the norms (see chapter 4, section 4.2). This might also explain the item "personal achievement" receiving a lower number of responses in the survey.

However, the "self" orientations acquired from overseas have contested meanings for some returnees. Even though respect for family roles and structures are dutifully and willingly adhered to, there seems to be conflicting values about respect and duties along social hierarchical rankings outside family relationships. Some returnees want respect and recognition for their acquired overseas education - particularly their skills, attributes and knowledge in the workplace that relates to their individual capability - rather than falling in line with the subservient rules of the social hierarchies in Vietnamese society. The comments below by Ngoc and Thanh who work for foreign firms suggest a desire for individual respect for their self-worth in workplace;

I value a job in an environment in which people appreciate and respect talent. Ngoc (HCMC, IT, 20s)

In general, the work program has to provide employees with good recognition. People in foreign firms mostly respect the job they do and their positions. They support each other very enthusiastically, and leaders and employees of other departments also support us and each other. Thanh (HCMC, Banking, 20s)

Ngoc and Thanh seem to value achievements that come from the returnees' ability to do things on their own account as part of their self-actualisation, and a basis for respect and recognition of their contribution. This idea of selfhood is different to the idea of overseas education credentials as markers of social distinction. These returnees mediate between two competing notions of "self", one that is more individualistic in a Western orientation, and one

that is seen in relation to the dyadic relationships of personal relations in Vietnamese traditions.

These findings echo Marginson's (2014) claim that self-orientation and self-trajectory are potentialities of international education to lead international students to self-transformation, but they depend on individuals' cultural, social and political relations which are historically grounded as well as on the returnees' own exercise of scrutiny and agency to decide how to balance and integrate these various influences. The returnees' comments point to the nuances of the idea of the self as *end* in a knowledge society because they develop themselves as better persons, compared to the self as *means* in a knowledge economy, where they leverage their overseas education to gain economic benefits (as discussed in 5.6.2). The duality of these ideas also results in contested values about what they can do in regards of their overseas education. On the one hand, they leverage the symbolic capital associated with the economic instrumentality of overseas education, on the other hand, they place importance on the idea of developing their self because they see this as the distinction between themselves and other Viet Nam-trained people.

Furthermore, as Campbell (2010) noted, the relevance of self attributes depend on the extent to which the home culture has similar values to those underlying attributes of foreign societies, and the extent to which the graduate has invested in acquiring those overseas attributes. For the returnees in this research, the assertion of the self that comes from critical thinking and communication skills may also be a disadvantage for them in the Vietnamese workplace. It seems that these elements of the "self" as their ways of viewing themselves in their society, as economic or civic actors, or family members, are continuously appropriated in shifting combinations of material conditions and social relations in which the returnees are embedded and want to maintain.

5.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analysed returnees' values, motivations and goals of their acquired overseas education. These findings provide an understanding of the returnees' change in values and attitudes as a result of their overseas education, which inform what they see as relevant and beneficial for their work and community work. These findings set the ground for understanding the choices and practices in their social fields, which I will analyse in the next

three chapters to understand the transformative potential of overseas education. I now summarise these key findings and discuss their implications.

5.8.1 Summary of findings and implications for the research aims

Living and studying overseas seems by and large to enhance returnees' Vietnamese belief structures rather than foster new values set, particularly in regards to the economic values of employment and its association with Western superiority of education and workplace practices. Their principle of morality about family values and understanding of relations and roles within the families seem to be anchored in the continuing influence of the Vietnamese *habitus*. While overseas education fosters a greater sense of the "self" and individualisation, it does not seem to significantly influence how returnees might live out their self-expression and self-determination. The consistent findings among returnees irrespective of gender, region or types of education suggest that what they have gained from being exposed to other cultures while living and studying overseas are: (1) the ability to recognise their traditional values in association with their self-orientation; and (2) how they may draw upon these individualistic values to meet their family responsibilities, which then set their motivations and goals for their workplace. Moreover, the self-orientations seem to enable them to examine with more *consciousness* (Bourdieu 1998), and decide to accept or retain Vietnamese culture in constructing their values.

While international education may have allowed the returnees to gain understanding of international issues, there seems to be less effect in enhancing their understanding of Viet Nam's national development needs. The lack of aspiration to engage in community work may be because of the importance placed on economic betterment. For the few returnees who participate actively in community work, their values of community work and social development have not changed as a result of overseas education, only that their overseas-acquired self-drive and perception of advantage lead them to take up opportunities they otherwise may not. The implications of these findings is that the returnees' values of political and civic actions are not simply because of a lack of democratic values and freedom, but carry other complexities and unique nuances of their Vietnamese past and present experiences in political and civic actions. Thus, I argue that political values of overseas-educated returnees need to be evaluated in the local contexts in order to understand the effects of personal values on civic actions. Such political values also need to be understood in relation to cultural and economic values of individual returnees to fully understand their political participation.

The returnees in this research seem to value highly overseas-acquired transferable skills and work-ready attributes because of their perceived positional advantage in the employment market, a form of cultural capital. The social status associated with Western education makes international education a form of symbolic capital, which returnees seek to advance their materialist goals. This suggests an interdependence of the values: Western (Enlightenment) superiority and the strategic value of education, underpinned by contested ideas about knowledge to develop a person as ends and knowledge as means to acquire economic benefits. The implications of these findings are twofold. First, orientations towards Western ideals - in terms of returnees' choices for work practices and civic actions - should be considered in the contexts of Viet Nam's colonial history and its influence on Vietnamese society. The process of reasoning about their dispositions allows returnees to recognise that their motivations and expectations of overseas education are influenced by their perception of the symbolic capital of their Western education and cultural capital of overseas-acquired skills, knowledge, attributes and attitudes. Yet, in that process of reasoning, they engage in the critique of Vietnamese society as lacking the capability to evaluate and appreciate what "true" knowledge is, and in so doing, they normalise the symbolic capital of international education within the social structures of Vietnamese society.

Second, the nature of materialist emphasis on education seems embedded and driven by the Vietnamese traditional values of social distinction, competitiveness, individualism and economic pragmatism. It is influenced by historical experiences of colonisation by the West and compelled by the economic reform of *Doi Moi* and *Xa Hoi Hoa*. Rather than a Western import of neoliberalist ideas from overseas education, the returnees' economic objectives arise from the values that are embedded in and take shape in complex ways through a system of transposable and durable Vietnamese *habitus*.

Drawing on these findings, I argue that the potential of international education in contributing to the knowledge society of developing countries must note the power of social values in the local contexts rather than assuming a set of values that are similar to Western orientations. As Pham M. Hac (2012) noted, traditional values of family have stood the test of time and can be used by Vietnamese leaders to cultivate human capital of skills and attitudes but with more social commitment. The prospective responsibility that returnees hold for their families stem from the principle of *Hieu* (piety) and *On* (moral debt) can be extended to social responsibility for the wider collective community. To take advantage of the overseas-acquired understanding of their civic place in society, they can be encouraged and supported

to accompany actions of social responsibility that go beyond the individualistic notions of economic pursuits. This requires conscious efforts by the State and institutions to develop policies for receiving returnees. I will return to this point in chapter 9, the concluding chapter of this thesis.

5.8.2 Theoretical implications of the findings

These findings explicate Bourdieu's idea that *habitus* of values "continuously transform necessity into virtue by instituting choices which correspond to conditions of which they are the product" (Bourdieu 2000). Engaging in the process of reasoning their values, the returnees in this research engage in a value judgement process that allows them to better understand their *habitus* as dispositions to choices and practices, and understand more fully their place in the social world. To understand the formation of values, we have to understand the conditions of social structures and relations as a structure that predisposes returnees to certain motivations and expectations. Yet, returnees' knowledge of *habitus* also give them some freedom to modify that *habitus* or decide to weigh parts of it more than other parts, or balance that legacy in a new way with some of the "Western" ideals they have acquired.

Understanding *habitus* as structure of values, that are not necessarily static and deterministic, is important to understand the hidden workings of conditions of social empowerment. It is also consistent with Sen's (1999) argument that "the freedom to act as one values" is an ethical practice of development. According to Sen, values play a critical role in allowing people to recognise what is ethical, what are possibilities and impossibilities, that they must be able to justify their values on their own account rather than having imposed values on them (Sen 1999). Sen's idea of capability stems from a presupposition that individuals can justify their choices based on their own values, and justify their values based on their ability to reason (Sen 2007, 2012). The returnees' expressions of their motivations suggest more nuanced understandings of their conception of freedom which is, in part constructed by their sense of morality and virtue of filial piety. The kind of reasoning that they can engage in is not separable from their conception of freedom, because they are bound by the complex social relationships that surround them. Their freedom and sense of freedom is a kind of *intersubjective freedom*, one that is shaped by the social, cultural and political conditions (*habitus* as relational structure) but which they can also help shape when they interact with their social structures (relational between the *habitus* and fields). As I have shown in this chapter, the freedom that these Vietnamese returnees sense is not a kind of

objective freedom that they can step outside of their values to see, in order for them to be able to scrutinise or justify objectively in a view from nowhere. This is clearly different to Sen's assumption of freedom that is external to the person. I thus argue that it is more fruitful to think about how individuals' values are shaped by the conditions of their social surroundings. I offer the term *intersubjective freedom* as a way to better understand individual values as individuals living as members of their society, who are motivated to act as they interact with others in their society. It is not a kind of otherworldly freedom with no constraints but a kind of situated freedom in which the agent, drawing on some aspects of her context, may scrutinise. I argue that the process of reasoning is important because it allows people to understand their *intersubjective freedom*, and from that they may re-contextualise their *habitus* to form new values in order to be a driver of their agency and enabling social change.

Lastly, while Sen (2012) recognises that institutions may create barriers by imposing behavioural correctness or values set which impede individuals' exercise of agency, he is assuming that people can separate themselves - to some extent - from these institutional impacts to aspire and make choices. I argue that it is more insightful to pay attention to how people respond to institutional structures to mobilise their resources as forms of power to create opportunities and exercise agency. These are the subjects of analysis in the next three chapters where I look at how returnees enact their values and pursue their goals through their practical experiences in the social fields.

6 Practical experiences in the “professional” field

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the practical experiences of the Vietnamese returnees in the “professional” field. It is the first of the three chapters that analyses the choices and practices of returnees in their fields of work and community work. Following from the discussion of returnees’ values and motivations in chapter 5, I explore how returnees mobilise their overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes to pursue their goals and meet their responsibilities. To address the research question, I will examine the institutional structures of returnees’ workplace to understand the conditions that enable or hinder them in utilising their overseas-acquired resources and enabling personal and social change.

This chapter is organised as follows. First, I will present a brief overview of Viet Nam’s business environment to provide some contexts for analysing returnees’ experiences in the “professional” field (section 2). This is followed by a summary of the sectors and enterprises that the returnees work in (section 3). Drawing on the analysis of survey followed by interview data, I will show that agency has an instrumental value for these returnees in terms of applying overseas-acquired resources and economic benefits, as well as an intrinsic value of meeting the moral obligations to their families. I argue that their “reasoned” choices for working in foreign firms over Vietnamese firms are based on their perception and evaluation of power positions within these organisations. I further argue that the Vietnamese returnees in this research perceive foreign firms as *resource opportunity structures* where they can mobilise their overseas-acquired skills and attributes to access jobs and high salary (section 4). They also see foreign firms as *cultural opportunity structures* where they can develop professional relationships, gain recognition for their overseas-acquired skills and apply their “self” attributes to be professionals and responsible workers (section 5). At the same time, they also recognise the need to adapt to the culture of personal connections in either foreign or Vietnamese firms. In their *career opportunity structures*, foreign firms seem to be the choices that returnees take up to enable personal change and some possibilities for social change through improved work practices (section 6). In concluding the chapter (section 7), I offer some theoretical implications for these findings. I argue that to apply the concept of *normative agency*, it is important to consider *intersubjective freedom* through the person’s

power structures, the role of reasoning in understanding her choices taking, and the interdependence of individual and collective agency.

6.2 Viet Nam's business environment

The aim of this section is to provide some information about Viet Nam's business environment to help understanding the structure of the "professional" field that returnees operate in. In this thesis, the "professional" field refers to all economic sectors except for higher education. In this chapter, it refers to the three sectors of banking and finance, IT and manufacturing, because the selected interviewees work in these sectors (see chapter 3). The term "professional" also refers more broadly to the types of jobs that these returnees occupy which are mostly in management support roles rather than technical roles. I now present a brief overview of the types of business enterprises, economic sectors, law and governance issues, and the labour market demand and supply of workers' skills as background contexts for the analysis of the returnees' choices and practices in this field.

6.2.1 Types of business enterprises

Viet Nam's business system comprises State owned enterprises (SOE), non-State owned enterprises (NSE), and foreign affiliated enterprises (FAE).²⁰ After joining the WTO in 2007, Viet Nam has received large foreign direct investment (FDI) through FAE operations. The contribution of FDI to Viet Nam's GDP has also been increasing steadily over the years from 15 per cent in 2006 to 20 per cent in 2013 (GSO 2013).

Through SOEs, the State retains a significant role in the economy. As such, SOEs enjoy favourable operating conditions and privileges such as preferred access to credit, land use and markets (Truong 2013). The majority of these SOEs are not profitable, with heavy debts and poor governance as a result of nepotism and mismanagement (Wright & Nguyen 2010). Since *Doi Moi* economic reform in 1986, there has been a push towards equitisation (Viet Nam's equivalent of privatisation) of SOEs, however the SOE reform has been slow (World Bank 2013; Plenum of Central Committee of Communist Party of Viet Nam). The main reasons for the slow progress are impediments within current legal frameworks and a

²⁰ These terms are used in Vietnam's official literature and the term foreign affiliates are based on WTO's terminology, which usually measures FAE presence in terms of Foreign Affiliates Statistics (FATS). Joint venture enterprises (JVE) are those between NSE and foreign partners at the early stage of gaining market access prior to become FAE. MNCs usually operate under this mode until they establish market presence (GSO 2014).

lack of experts or professionals who are knowledgeable about business restructuring (Truong 2013). There is no available information and well defined mechanisms that enable transparent processes of restructuring plans at either the enterprises level or by State agencies (Fford 2005). As with other reform initiatives (for example Higher Education reform), the process of formulating legal documents that have cross-sectoral issues require lengthy negotiation time, consensus between ministries and departments across geographical regions. The need to work with and satisfy various stakeholders in this process has resulted in inconsistencies between regulatory framework for SOE restructuring, and the SOE's plans themselves (Truong 2013).

According to GSO (2013), FAE is the fastest growing type of enterprise with GDP growth rates higher than other enterprises. As of 1 July 2013, FAEs represented 3 per cent of the total number of active enterprises in Viet Nam; FAEs' employed population was 3 per cent of Viet Nam's total employed population (GSO 2013). FAEs are seen to operate more effectively with high return on asset over 13 per cent compared to SOEs at 5 per cent, and NSEs at 3 per cent (Truong 2013). In line with *Xa Hoi Hoa* policies that support *Doi Moi* policies (see chapter 4, section 4.5.1), the State has encouraged development of non-State businesses. NSEs occupy 97 per cent of total number of acting enterprises; NSEs' employed population was 86 per cent of total employed population in the workforce as of 1 July 2013 (GSO 2013). NSEs' contribution to GDP continues to grow, roughly just less than 50 per cent of Viet Nam's GDP (GSO 2013). According to Truong (2013), two-thirds of NSEs are listed companies and a large number are families or start-up businesses that are often lacking in managerial skills or capital that are necessary to compete and sustain in domestic or international markets. Appendix VII shows Viet Nam's employed population by types of business enterprises from 2009 to 2013, and the number of enterprises by size of capital as of 1 July 2013.

6.2.2 Types of economic sectors

Viet Nam's economy has grown remarkably since joining the WTO in 2007, with the industrial and services sector each accounting for approximately 40 per cent of GDP, and the remaining 20 per cent coming from agriculture (British Council 2013). The largest proportion of employees work in the agricultural sector (47 per cent) (British Council 2013), followed by manufacturing at 14 per cent and trade (wholesale and retail) activities at 2 per cent. The number of acting enterprises, as noted above, has increased over the years, with those in trade

activities occupying 39 per cent through mostly NSEs. Manufacturing enterprises have the majority of FAEs operating in Viet Nam, occupying 16 per cent of the total number of enterprises as of 1 July 2013 (GSO 2013). Appendix IX (a) shows Viet Nam's employed population by economic sectors as of 1 July 2013 and the number of enterprises by size of capital and economic sectors as of 31 December 2012.

The banking system has also been heavily restructured, with non-State banks allowed to participate in the financial markets, leaving the State Bank of Viet Nam (SBV) occupying the role of the central bank with responsibility to manage monetary policies. However, SBV still has a strong intervention role often in providing loans to SOEs, many of which cannot repay their loans (Truong 2013). The banking and finance sector since 1990 has expanded significantly and diversify rapidly in terms of participants and activities. Most notably, the new banking regulations also put subsidiaries of foreign owned banks on an equal basis to local banks, for example to allow them to take deposits from corporate borrowers and issue credit cards in local currencies (Fforde 2005). However, both the banking system and capital market still needs much more comprehensive structural and regulatory reform in order to meet international standards and sustained economic growth (Fforde 2005).

6.2.3 Law and governance in business system

Since WTO accession, corporate governance laws in Viet Nam have been reformed, reflecting borrowed policies of Anglo-American jurisdiction (Le et al. 2006). However, the Vietnamese laws are ambiguous in terms of governance structure and leave room for interpretation of who can act as a corporate decision-making body (Le et al. 2006). In the case of SOEs and other government agencies, where leaders are often Party members, there is room for the CPV to directly influence strategic issues. According to Truong (2013), many Vietnamese enterprises and business people do not understand the basic concepts and principles of corporate governance as practised in advanced Western economies.

Fforde (2005) claimed that the Trade Union law adopted in 1990 following *Doi Moi* and based on tripartite relations of the State, trade union and employee organisations, has failed to deliver collective bargaining and reduce industrial conflicts. According to Fforde (2005), the reason is threefold: first, employee organisations are represented by the Viet Nam Cooperative Alliance (VCA) and Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI), which are semi-State organisations affiliated with Viet Nam Father Front (VFF) and controlled by the CPV. Second, union tasks are usually done by human resources managers in

enterprises which employees tend to utilise when they cannot go through the formal process though VCA and VCCI. Third, many of these human resources staff are also acting as union representatives. Thus, the process of collective bargaining is almost non existing in enterprises operating in Viet Nam, particularly in NSEs and FAEs. Furthermore, there is a lack of complete and clear wage policies. It is well understood by those in business that aspects of wage policies are often enacted based on officials' interpretations, do not follow meritorious assessment of skills and qualities, and are often determined based on personal connections and relationships (Truong 2013). Noting this environment, and the returnees' contested ideas of "self" as discussed in the last chapter, the analysis in this chapter will focus on how returnees negotiate, mediate, and appropriate their overseas-acquired skills and attributes to take on jobs and employers as they value.

6.2.4 Labour market demand and mismatch of skills requirement and supply

According to the World Bank (2013), Viet Nam's slower growth in recent years can be attributed to falling productivity and reduced competitiveness in labour costs. The country ranks 75th out of 144 countries in the 2013 World Economic Forum Competitiveness index (WEF 2013). According to WEF (2013), the low competitiveness of Viet Nam is due to several related factors: low quality of the educational system, particularly universities and professional colleges to produce skilled labour force; lack of availability of technologies and use of technologies in operations; low quality of scientific research institutions; lack of university-industry collaboration and availability of professionals, particularly in science and technology (World Bank 2012).

The presence of multinational corporations (MNCs) and other FAEs in the manufacturing sector have also driven up the demand for skilled workers, in particular the demand for professionals and managers (Vietnam Net 2014). Yet, at present, about 85 per cent of the labour force has no formal training besides literacy and numeracy education, with only 6 per cent of the labour force having university training (British Council 2013). There is a general perception in society that Vietnamese universities are not supplying graduates that are practical, job-oriented, and with generic skills (Vietnam Net 2014). Employers perceive Vietnamese workers as lacking general management skills, foreign languages, IT skills and motivational capacities such as pro-activeness, initiatives and self-directions (British Council 2013). Firms perceive graduates to be not capable of presenting and defending their viewpoints, that is they cannot create knowledge themselves; rather they are good at obtaining

knowledge but not able to apply knowledge in creative ways (Thanh Lam 2014). Workers lack knowledge about technology and innovation, and ability to adapt to new technologies. Despite attempts to improve skills, there remains significant shortages of high-end technical and management skills (World Bank 2012). As discussed in chapter 5, the returnees and members of their networks in this research also perceive universities in Viet Nam to be producing low quality education and low quality graduates, which is why they perceive that overseas education gives them a positional advantage in Viet Nam's labour market. In the following sections, I will show to what extent the returnees can leverage this perception of advantage to pursue their goals.

6.3 Participants' attributes in the “professional” field

The types of business enterprises and economic sectors described in the previous section (GSO 2013) were used in the survey (section 2 of the survey) to obtain demographic information about returnees' work patterns. In this section, I present a summary of the economic sectors and enterprises that the survey respondents and returnees interviewed work in.

As presented in Table 3.3 (chapter 3), out of 188 survey respondents who are not working in higher education, the highest number of respondents work in banking and finance (54 respondents), followed by IT (19 respondents) and manufacturing (15 respondents). Interviewees were selected from these three sectors (see chapter 3). Table 6.1 below shows the number of survey respondents in the three sectors and the types of enterprise they work for. The table shows that the majority of survey respondents in these three sectors are working in foreign firms FAEs (see Appendix X for a list of all survey respondents by economic sectors and types of enterprises).

	Foreign firms (FAE and MNC)	NSE	Government agencies and SOE	Other (family business/ NGO)	Total
Banking and Finance	32	8	10	4	54
Information and technology	10	4	3	2	19
Manufacturing	9	5	0	1	15

Table 6.1 Number of survey respondents in selected economic sectors by business enterprises

The interviewees selected from the survey respondents in the three sectors and their employers are: 4 from banking and finance (3 in foreign firms, 1 in NSE), 3 from IT (1 in foreign firm, 2 in NSE), and 4 from manufacturing (2 in foreign firms, 2 in NSE). As discussed in chapter 3, the sample of 21 interviewees across all three fields was purposively selected to take account of the differences between place of living because these were seen as theoretically significant, given the historical and cultural difference between North and South Viet Nam (see chapter 4, section 4.2). Table ix (see Appendix X) shows the breakdown of survey respondents in all sectors by place of living. The analysis of survey and interview data reveals no apparent differences between locations of workplace, gender or types of overseas qualifications for this cohort of returnees. A possible reason may be because of the small sample size of survey respondents (N=280), key interviewees (N=21) and network members (N=27), and sample bias because the participants self-selected to participate. This bias in the sample limits strong conclusions about the findings. However, as noted in chapter 3, interview findings are credible because of its triangulation with the survey data and network-member interviews. Furthermore, the research aims for “analytical generalisations” rather than “statistical generalisations” (see also chapter 3).

6.4 Resource opportunity structures

In chapter 5, I showed that the returnees’ economic motivations are partly based on their perception of advantage in the labour market about their overseas-acquired transferable skills and work related attributes. In this section, I aim to understand the type of skills and attributes and extent to which returnees can actually utilise them in their workplace (research aim 1). I will first discuss the survey results followed by a more in-depth discussion using the interview data.

6.4.1 Summary of survey responses

In the survey, respondents were asked about the types of skills, knowledge and attributes that they acquired overseas and those that are required in their workplace (see chapter 3 and Appendix II for a copy of the survey instrument). These skills and knowledge indicators were organised in four broad categories: (1) Transferable (soft) skills in communication (for example, presentation), and cognitive thinking (for example, problem solving); (2) Technology skills; (3) Core (hard) knowledge including industry and technical knowledge;

(4) Attributes including self-orientation (for example self-awareness) and self-application (for example self-expression). These indicators were developed along the Australian Graduates Learning Outcomes (AGLO) survey (Graduates Career Australia 2012), because there is a large number of Vietnamese international students studying in Australia (see chapter 1), and was the only graduates survey that included skills indicators as outcomes that I could access. The aim of this section of the survey was to see how aligned these skills sets might be with the returnees' workplace requirements.

Figure 6.1 shows a summary of the distribution of number of responses for both “acquired” and “required” skills, knowledge and attributes. In terms of skills, the survey responses indicate that the types of matched (between acquired and required) skills are “teamwork”, “analytical skills” and “presentation skills”. These types of skills also have the highest number of responses in terms of acquired skills. Even though “communication skills” and “problem solving skills” have fairly high number of responses, there is a slight shortfall when compared to work requirements. A possible reason might be because of different communication and work culture in Vietnamese workplace. The types of skills with lower number of responses and shortfall between required and acquired are “leadership skills” and “teaching and training skills”, which may also suggest cultural differences. Core or hard skills such as “technology skills” and “technical skills” also have lower responses to “acquired” and reported shortfall to work requirements. This may be due to the courses that the respondents studied where there might be less emphasis on these skills development, or a mismatch in the kinds of skills and technologies needed in Viet Nam compared to what is taught overseas.

Figure 6.1 shows that there is a high number of respondents who acquired self-application attributes, particularly in “working independently”, “confidence”, and “pro-activeness”, which are also matched with work requirements. This is not surprising given that the returnees feel that they should be respected and recognised in the workplace for their self-development (as discussed in chapter 5). Attributes that relate to “self”, such as “self-awareness”, “personal drive” and “self-expression” have lower number of responses for “acquired”, and are mostly matched with their work requirements. On the other hand, the mismatch between acquired and required in “conforming to rules” and “getting along with people” might be reflective of the difference in communication culture between overseas environment and Vietnamese workplace.

Overall, it seems that most of the overseas-acquired transferable (soft) skills are relevant in the returnees' Vietnamese workplace, with some mismatch probably due to

different communication and working culture. Core (hard) skills and knowledge (technology and technical) have lower number of responses with some shortfall compared to work requirements. Attributes of self-application report a high number of “acquired” responses and seem to be matched with work requirements; while self-orientation attributes have slightly lower number but are still relatively aligned. These findings are now further discussed using the interview data.

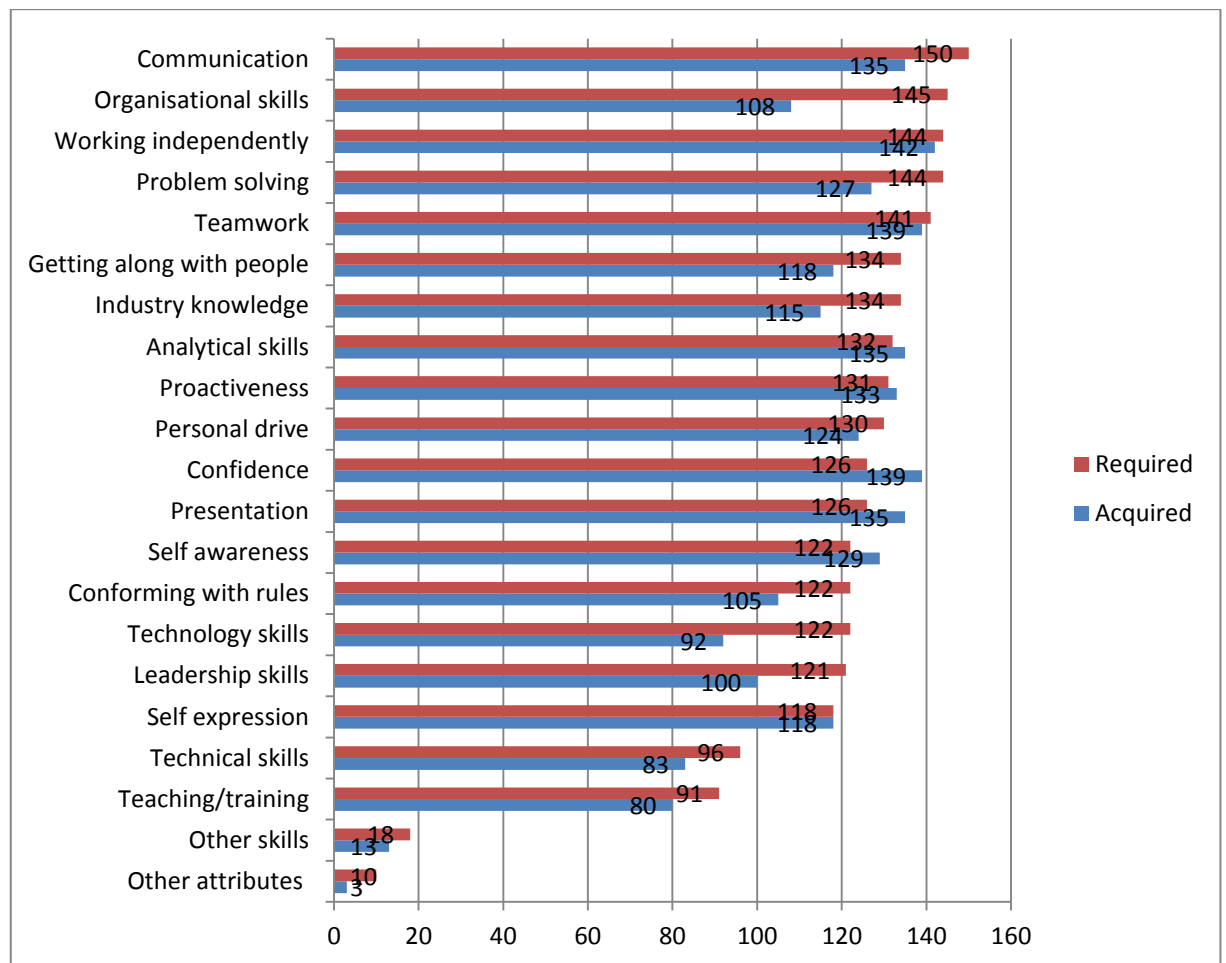


Fig 6.1 Comparison of types of skills, knowledge and attributes acquired from overseas study and required in workplace (N= 188)

6.4.2 Work-ready skills and attributes

The majority of interviewees (returnees and members of their networks) perceive that overseas-acquired skills and attributes are useful in preparing them for work. For those who studied in technical oriented disciplines like engineering, overseas training programs often integrate work experience through internship placement. For returnees who studied in management related fields like commerce and business management, they seem to gain

confidence and are prepared for work because their overseas educational programs often combine theories with case studies. Other soft skills like problem solving and independent thinking skills also help them to be more proactive in the workplace. As the below quotes show, there is a perception of positional advantage compared to Viet Nam-trained graduates who might be very strong in theoretical knowledge but lack the ability to apply their knowledge to practical situations;

Universities in Viet Nam focus on theories and abstract things but they do not teach students how to apply their learning. People who study overseas are taught formulae so that they can be applied; they are given opportunities to be creative. Chien (HN, Banking, Thanh's father)

What you learn in universities in Viet Nam is very theoretical and not practical, and you cannot really apply what you study in school. Over there, I was able to learn from case studies in which I was able to analyse companies' operations. My (HCMC, Finance, 20s)

I think over there, they teach things that are more practical. For example, in my program, there is participation by lecturers and people who work directly in firms. Therefore, the knowledge that they transfer to us is practical and close to real life problems. Thi (HCMC, IT, Ngoc's work colleague)

These perceptions echo Crossman and Clarke's (2010) claim that there is a connection between international education and employability in regards to the benefits of experiential learning of applying theory to practice (in overseas universities) in authentic, real life or practical ways. For the returnees in this research, these work-ready attributes are also a form of cultural capital that position them advantageously for employment in foreign firms because they are perceived as having been trained with appropriate work ethics and practices.

6.4.3 Technical skills and choice of employer

Even though there seems to be a lack of direct relevance of overseas knowledge content in the workplace across sectors and types of enterprises, returnees in the banking and finance sector seem to be able to apply technical skills more than those in IT and manufacturing. For example, Thanh (HCMC, banking, 20s) notes: "I think working in this bank offers me direct usage of banking concepts learnt in the US. That's why I choose a MNC". The reason that returnees are able to apply technical skills in this sector may be because Viet Nam's development in banking practices has more closely followed advanced economies of Western countries (as discussed above in 6.2.2). The majority of these financial institutions are MNCs, where returnees may be able to directly apply their overseas knowledge such as corporate

lending, capitalisation, credit, stock brokerage, accounting and corporate valuation. As Thanh says, this is also the reason why returnees in this sector prefer to work for foreign banks because they are seen as best to gain experience and develop technical skills.

For the returnees in IT, it seems that they can only find suitable jobs in management roles in sales or support, rather than in product development where they can use their technical skills. This may also be because returnees choose to take up these management roles to gain higher salaries. Dinh notes:

When I first came home, I set my target salary to be between 800-1,000 USD (per month), and I was in a technical field. But when I was looking for a job in Ha Noi, everything relevant to my field offered very low salaries, only 400-500 USD. They did not require high degrees because it is not a technical role, just someone who was able to do the job and had work experience, especially positions with Japanese and Korean companies. I do not really care about the job roles. I can do anything like quality assurance or sales. My priority is to work for Western companies. I had never been exposed to Japanese or Korean companies, but I still applied anyway. My first mistake was to set such high salary targets. Dinh (HN, Manufacturing, 20s)

Dinh's comment suggests that since he prefers working in Western companies, he encounters a lack of opportunities to utilise technical skills. In addition, his lack of work experience means he cannot command a high salary in technical jobs. Thus he takes up employment in quality assurance or supply chain management because he can command higher remunerations in these jobs. Another possible reason for the lack of opportunities to apply technical skills is that Viet Nam is a transitional economy. It is a rapidly emerging economy (Business Week 2013), but still at an earlier stage of development and is not ready to absorb technology or well placed financially and structurally to apply overseas technical knowledge that is more appropriate for advanced economies (WEF 2013).

As noted earlier (see 6.2.1), the manufacturing sector which has been experiencing tremendous export growth in recent years also has a large number of FAEs (GSO 2014; British Council 2013). The operations of these FAEs tend to be in assembly production and supply chains whereas their product development processes such as research and development are done in foreign countries. As Mang notes below, returnees could only transfer their overseas learning in relation to practical aspects of applying theories to work scenarios rather than technical skills and knowledge taught overseas. This is because these kinds of knowledge are specific to overseas economic environments and are specialised within the discipline,

whereas in Viet Nam, understanding the business contexts and industry knowledge are more important and only a general disciplinary knowledge is required;

What we can take home [from overseas education] is the way to do things rather than the actual content of learning. The factories here are different. The products are different. Many graduates we employ do not use any of their overseas learning. They have good work attitudes but they do not know the product lines. Mang (HN, Manufacturing, 40s)

Mang's comment suggests that while there is a general perception that overseas-educated returnees might be advantaged in terms of their work-ready attributes, they are also disadvantaged due to their lack of understanding of industry knowledge and the business environment in Viet Nam. This may explain why there is a shortfall between industry knowledge that respondents acquired compared to their work requirements (as reported in the survey).

6.4.4 Transferable (soft) skills

The interview responses suggest that transferable (soft) skills such as teamwork, presentation skills, analytical skills, problem-solving skills and communication skills are more applicable in the workplace than hard skills like technical or technology skills. The term “soft” skills is used here not to essentialise these skills, but to define them loosely as “non-technical” and behavioural related as opposed to knowledge competencies. These soft skills are required in management jobs, and perceived by employers as scarce in Viet Nam's labour force. In chapter 5, I discussed the returnees' perception of the value of these skills and attributes as cultural capital, which stems from the common perception in society of low quality of graduates from Vietnamese universities. In the field, as the quotes below suggest, returnees strategically use them as positional advantage over Viet Nam-trained graduates to access management related jobs, particularly to secure jobs in foreign firms;

Overseas graduates are excellent in writing emails. They do very good presentations, for example when using Power Point. They are good at project management. For example, my firm [a MNC] only hire MBAs who were trained overseas. If you are trained in Viet Nam, then you can only get to analyst positions. You will not be able to become a good manager. Viet Nam-trained people may have good knowledge but they fail in their work behaviour, how they manage themselves at work, that is they do not have soft skills. Ngoc (HCMC, IT, 20s)

Last year I was in charge of accounting. That role required my technical skills of accounting that I learned from my university. But generally, my job is mostly writing

proposals for clients, which require little knowledge of accountancy. It mainly requires writing skills and presentation skills. My (HCMC, Finance, 20s)

As My comments above, these soft skills are more valuable to returnees than technical skills, because they are demanded in the jobs, and they are skills that Viet Nam-trained graduates generally do not have. These perspectives are similar to those found in literature about benefits of transferable skills as they are seen to be necessary for flexible workforce (Cox & King 2006; Leckey & McGuigan 1997). Returnees' perception of cultural capital associated with soft skills and work-ready attributes also reflect the findings of other research studies where international education is viewed as valuable cultural capital for returning Asian students (Chen & Zimiatat 2006; Matthews & Sidhu 2005; Ong 1999; Waters 2006).

6.4.5 English skills

There is a general agreement among interviewees that English proficiency (an item that was not asked in the survey)²¹ is the most beneficial skill that they have gained from living abroad. English skills allow them to access jobs with foreign firms, especially MNCs. For some, English skills also enable them to work more effectively. For example, Mang and Chinh comment below that they can read information and data that may not be produced in Vietnamese or to communicate with foreign leaders;

Overseas-educated students have better English usage to understand instruction manuals. There are only a few foundational documents that the authorities translated called rules and regulations. Not all of the other documents, for example technical documents are in Vietnamese. Mang (HN, Manufacturing, 40s)

When I studied in Australia, I also studied English. In my current job, I have to communicate with foreign people a lot, international co-operations. I liaise with donors and clients. I have to talk to them in English. Chinh (HN, Khanh's wife)

As the comments below suggest, the returnees are aware of the positional advantage associated with the general perception of their English proficiency, regardless of whether the host universities and countries are English speaking, and they leverage that to access employment opportunities;

²¹ The omission of English skills in the survey was because the skills section was based on the Australian Graduates Career Survey (see chapter 3) which was designed for Australian graduates from Australian universities where English competency is assumed. Future research in tracer studies of international graduates should incorporate English skills in evaluating acquired skills.

Within the international environment, English is needed. If the job has exposure to foreign working then overseas graduates will certainly get the job. Chinh (HCMC, Khanh's wife)

In multinational corporations, English is required, so the clearest advantage is English. Although in Viet Nam, student can learn English well but foreign living facilitated me to practise English daily. Thanh (HCMC, Banking, 20s)

These comments suggest that there is an instrumental value to English which returnees recognise and leverage. This finding also echoes other literature about international students' desire to improve English while living overseas. However, as Pham and Tran (2015) pointed out, the symbolic capital of English language risks ethnocentric view of education that may not enhance international students' cultural diversity. In the case of returnees in this research, it is important to consider the cultural capital of English in the postcolonial context. I will come back to this point in the concluding chapter.

6.4.6 Economic objectives and choice of jobs and employers

The majority of returnees interviewed considered salary and other economic benefits to be the most important factor in their decisions about jobs and employer. These evaluations seem to be driven by their motivations and goals of international education and broad educational values (as discussed in chapter 5). Foreign firms, particularly MNCs, are their preferred options for employment because they perceive that these enterprises offer high salaries and prefer overseas-educated graduates. As Thanh says:

The benefits of multinational companies are always better than those of private companies. For example, the salary is higher; and in terms of the insurance, apart from the required insurance, they provide me with personal medical-care insurance, higher bonus. Thanh (HCMC, Banking, 20s)

On the other hand, some returnees claim that government agencies offer fixed and low salary, which as Minh notes below, would not be enough to meet the costs of living. It is not surprising that the majority of returnees in the "professional" field work for FAEs or MNCs. Those who choose to work in SOEs mainly do so because of their overseas education scholarship conditions, other commitments to the organisations, or because of a more flexible work life balance.

If I work for government agencies, the salary would be very low, below average income. If I want to live a decent life, I would need other sources of income. For someone studying abroad, working in a government agency is not even comparable to a high-

school graduate working a simple job like cleaning. You can earn 4-5 million dongs a month by working as a cleaner for a rich family. However, if I was to work for a ministry, which is at the central level, my base salary is only 3 million dongs. That is barely enough to live on. Minh (HN, IT, 20s)

It seems that the motivation for economic betterment also influences the type of roles that returnees are willing to take up. As discussed earlier, those in the manufacturing sector might possess high technical skills but lack industry experience in Viet Nam. Therefore, they choose general management roles that allow them to use soft skills rather than technical skills, because they can command higher salaries for these soft skills. Similarly, they can access employment with MNCs and FAEs for better remuneration if they are willing to take up management roles in trade-off for technical roles to leverage their language and transferable soft skills. What seems to be evident is that the returnees' choices are made in recognition of the value of their overseas-acquired resources within particular sectors and employers. As Hai says:

They know that I have those skills, so they will call on me more when the opportunity comes. It just provides an advantage at the beginning, when they look at my resume. I think that is just a first impression, but in the long run, what matters is your ability. If you do not have ability, people will lose that initial respect. Hai (HN, Vu's friend)

Hai's comment, similar to other returnees, suggests that the positional advantage of overseas education is only at the entry level, where the cultural capital of overseas-acquired skills acts as a filter for selection of interview. She seems to perceive that employers value skills and work experience, and other factors more than the symbolic capital of overseas education. In other words, she recognises the extent to which these forms of cultural capital can be mobilised in the workplace.

Similarly, Y comments in the quote below that the gap between overseas trained and Viet Nam-trained graduates in terms of perceived workplace skills is closing as employers realise that skills and experiences of overseas educated people may not differ significantly to those who are trained in Viet Nam; and more importantly, many overseas educated returnees lack the business context and industry knowledge that local graduates have;

People who study foreign trade even though they study in Viet Nam know that employers are prepared to pay at certain level. So they say "Even though I haven't studied overseas but I have these skills so I also deserve to get paid at these levels. Not only people who studied overseas are entitled to those levels." So I think later on, the difference in terms of

remuneration between locally trained and overseas trained will start to disappear. Y (HCMC, Thanh's work colleague)

Y seems to perceive that in the long run, the ability of returnees to convert their overseas-acquired resources to economic capital might be reduced as the quality of locally-trained graduates improves. Thus, the expectation of high salary may be a disadvantage for overseas-educated returnees in terms of competitiveness against locally-trained graduates.

In summary, the resource opportunity structures that returnees in these sectors perceive and take up are contingent on the institutional structures of their employers, and their perception of the value of their skills, knowledge and attributes which denote their power positions within these structures (Bourdieu 1977). For most returnees, their overseas-acquired transferable (soft) skills, English skills and work-ready attributes give them the *power-to* pursue their goals. These skills sets are viewed as cultural capital to access jobs with foreign firms, particularly MNCs which in turn, shape their preferences for foreign firms. The choices of foreign firms also reflect returnees' perception that they can apply these skills because these firms recognise and utilise these skills, even though this seems to be more evident in the banking and finance sector. The extent to which they can utilise these resources depends on the shared value of these resources within these foreign firms - the *power-within* that returnees perceive and seek. Their *power-to* is dependent on the *power-within* insofar as there is a shared value of these skills and shared perception that returnees are better than locally-trained because of these skills. As noted in chapter 5, returnees construct their goals based on their perception of "distinction" of their skills in the field, not only because of their own value of these skills. Their choices of employers also reflect the same logic, that is, their choices of employers reflect their perception of their relational power within their institutions (subfield) and the sector (field). On the one hand, their choices may be expanded as a result of their overseas education because of the overseas-acquired skills; on the other, their choices are restricted to foreign firms because they perceive that these skills are more valued in these firms rather than elsewhere.

The *power-over* these returnees is their emphasis on high salaries which further limits their choice of employers to foreign firms and their decision to trade-off applying technical skills to leverage their (soft) skills. The returnees recognise that making these trade-offs may restrict their opportunities to seek technical skills development in future careers but they still follow it because of the higher importance of economic returns. Understanding the *power-over* allows us to see why the choices returnees have theoretically, may not always be the

choices they take. Rather, the returnees' choices are contingent on the power positions they occupy in the field. The returnees' perception of opportunity which shapes their choice is constructed and bound within their *power-to* convert their overseas-acquired resources to economic capital, which is linked with the *power-within* the institutions they work, and determined by the *power-over* of their narrow choice of foreign firms. But this economic motivation is different to the self-interest that economic rationality assumes to be the only thing that motivates people. For these returnees, they take choices for other reasons to meet family responsibilities, which is part of their values set. Understanding elements of relational power that influence returnees' choices allows us to see why there might divergences between other directed values and prudential or self-interested choice.

6.5 Cultural opportunity structures

In this section, I aim to analyse how the institutional structures of the field that returnees work in, promote or constrain their pursuit of goals in their work (research aim 2). I discuss the returnees' practices in terms of their *habitus* as culture to negotiate and appropriate their overseas-acquired resources that they see valuable in the field.

6.5.1 Personal connections

For many returnees interviewed, the type of employer is important because of the associated cultural working environment. In line with literature (Truong 2013; Le & Truong 2005), there seems to be notable differences in the work culture between foreign and Vietnamese organisations. The main difference comes from the importance of personal connections within the Vietnamese business environment generally, and within the organisation, and acting in accordance with social hierarchies of these dyadic links (see chapter 4 for discussion of dyadic personal relations). According to Truong (2013), personal connections (*quan he*) or personal relationships²² are paramount to doing business in Viet Nam, therefore they have to be extensive across sectors, disciplines, and encompass both social and political spectrum. Furthermore, a person's status is important in the business community. Status is obtained with age, education, relations with their leaders, and connections within and across organisations

²² The two terms personal connections and personal relationships are used interchangeably, and refer to the Vietnamese term "quan he"

(Truong 2013; Truong 2006; Le et al. 1999). Echoing these research findings, Khanh and Minh note below:

Vietnamese people often consider work as personal relations between people. When a Vietnamese enterprise starts up, they often recruit relatives to work together. They recruit employees through their personal relationships. Khanh (HN, Manufacturing, 30s)

You need relationships everywhere, but in Viet Nam that is more pronounced. You might be very qualified, but if I do not know who you are, then you are nobody. When having to choose between two people, one is the child of someone who is well known, and my agency will benefit from having him on the staff; whereas the other one might be more qualified but the agency will not gain from having him, they will not choose the latter. State companies are ready to employ people if they come from State officials' families. Minh (HN, IT, 20s)

These quotes show the importance of having personal connections, particularly in government enterprises. Connections are critical at almost any point from entering the workforce, to carrying out business operations, performance evaluation and career progress. In general, the work culture of Vietnamese businesses reflects social organisations which is premised upon personal and dyadic relationships (Marr 2000; Truong 2013). Rather than seeing and operating as some forms of collectivity, these personal connections act as exclusive access with an ultimate objective to secure and protect individual benefits (Nguyen & Jerman 2009). Thus, these personal relationships are similar to Bourdieu's (2006) idea of social capital in that the agent strategically invests in these relationships to enhance her self-interests. However, she has to accord with behaviours expected within the dyadic relationships, which means that her perception of freedom is shaped by these relationships. As these above quotes suggest, people expect those within the links to do "favours" for them, which they will repay in the future. Furthermore, the value of these connections lies in the opportunities that they provide for those with established connections.

6.5.2 Impact of culture of personal connections in workplace

While the Vietnamese culture of connections can provide bonding, support and comfort if one has the connections, it also leads to emotional ties rather than professional working relationships in workplace. Most returnees feel that personal connections present cultural challenges that limit their effective work participation and satisfaction. The four challenges that the returnees perceive are: (1) mismatch between salaries and employee's abilities and

experience; (2) lower work standards; (3) lack of accountability, particularly by leaders; and (4) lack of ability to utilise their skills, knowledge and attributes.

6.5.2.1 Mismatch of salary and employee's ability and experience

Truong (2013) claimed that work placement based on personal relationships often leads to a lack of objective basis when negotiating and awarding salary because of a lack of reference to skills and experience required for the role (Truong 2013). The comments of many interviewees in these sectors echo Truong's (2013) findings. For example, Khanh says:

It often starts with the relation between you and I or I need a job. Then I want to work for you, then I can accept any salary level you offer. I will work for you but I do not require salary, you can pay me any level of salary you want because I have no skills. Then if I work well you can raise my salary, if I do not work well, you can still let me do the job. There is no dismissal. It comes from the perspective of Vietnamese employers that does not consider skills and knowledge or experience as criteria to negotiate salary. They cannot value personnel simply because the quality of personnel at the entry level is so low. Khanh (HN, Manufacturing, 30s)

Khanh, in the above comment, is reflecting on general recruitment dispositions of Vietnamese employers, particularly government agencies. This may explain why some returnees do not choose Vietnamese organisations to work because they feel that their skills are not sufficiently rewarded at the entry point and further developed in the workplace. This view is similar to Long's comment (in chapter 5, section 5.6.2) about a lack of capability of Vietnamese businesses to evaluate skills and experience appropriately. Here, Khanh seems to relate the reason for the lack of appropriate evaluation to the low quality of graduates, which leads to the use of personal relationships as a basis for awarding salary initially. In contrast, Dang (HN, Manufacturing, 30s) suggests that foreign firms are fairer in recruiting personnel, because these firms remunerate based on an individual's experience and ability: "That's what I like about working in a foreign environment. There is no vague relationship. Everything is fair and there's no "favour" playing".

6.5.2.2 Low work standards

Another impact of personal connections in the workplace is a lack of clear standards or adherence to standards in workplace. For example, Mang shows his dissatisfaction with the lack of complying with standards, rules and regulations as result of work practices based on

friendship, which he contrasts with the professional standards of overseas-educated workers and their professional relationships;

In general, overseas-trained employees are very clear in dealing with any problem. We can say that they are very professional. It shows a higher awareness of work professionalism. If we cannot cooperate with each other, we are still friends. We still keep a certain standard. For overseas-trained people, they can deal with things in a more professional way. Mang (HN, Manufacturing, 40s)

Relationships with colleagues [in foreign firms] are also important, but they are not personal. These relationships focus on how we may solve problems, how we mix in with others and motivate others. These are professional relationships. Dinh (HN, Manufacturing, 20s)

These comments above suggest a direct link between transferable skills, professionalism and professional relationships: transferable skills lead to professionalism, and skills like problem solving can be applied when there are professional relationships rather than personal ones. This quote may explain why problem solving skills are perceived as mismatched to work requirements in the survey. Both comments suggest that foreign firms are perceived as sites where there are shared responsibilities, which they consider as ethical work practices. In this regards, the returnees seem to see themselves as different to locally-trained colleagues and leaders in their professionalism and work ethics. As Tam says:

Based on the working style of foreigners, they [overseas graduates] are ready to take responsibility for their work or task. Instead of shifting blame on the other, they will focus on solving problems. Finally, they care about reasons why accidents occur. Shifting the blame to others is not a good way to find out good solutions for problems. Those who study abroad and foreigners are similar in that aspect. They have higher work ethics. In the US, there is also lobbying and politics, but it is clearly for an organisation. In Viet Nam, it is more for the individuals. Honestly, because I am in business, it is unavoidable that I follow these ways. Tam (HCMC, IT, 30s)

In this comment, Tam shows awareness of the Vietnamese business environment that he works in, and that he has to mediate the connections culture in order to do his job. The kind of responsibility that Tam is talking about is social responsibility, a form of personal accountability, which he sees as different to the kind of responsibility to the self and family, which he refers to as “individuals”. So here there seems to be an implicit recognition of competing motivations of improving work practices and further one’s interests and one’s family interests. Even though Tam sees the lack of personal accountability as a societal

problem, he also recognises the need for balancing his own viewpoint about ethical standards to be able to work in Viet Nam.

Much of literature, particular in discussions of Viet Nam's economic development, note Viet Nam's reduced labour competitiveness in the last few years compared to its Southeast Asian neighbours Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines (ADB 2014; British Council 2013; World Bank 2013). These reports often attribute the reason to the lack of human capital for industrialised economy (ADB 2014; GSO 2014; World Bank 2013). In this research, these returnees' work experiences suggest that workplace culture, particularly the culture of personal connections, is part of the impediment to improved work standards.

6.5.2.3 Leadership, social hierarchies and lack of accountability

The *personalism* embedded in the social relations of Vietnamese people, and adherence to social hierarchies within personal relationships that I discussed in chapter 4, seems to be a distinctive feature of leadership in Vietnamese firms. In addition, Viet Nam has followed the Soviet model where institutional structures tend to be hierarchical and patriarchal in operation (Le & Truong 2005). Vietnamese government agencies tend to operate on centrally managed matrices of functions like finance and human resources, and directly controlled by top management (Le & Truong 2005). Decisions are usually generated by leaders, and communication is mostly top-down through organisational hierarchies. Ngoc, in the quote below, notes that there is a tendency for leaders to be protective of their ideas and thus resist new ideas and solutions to problems or proposed changes particularly from younger people:

In government agencies, things can be traditional and old fashioned. Older people or people who have been in the workforce longer than you may not be willing to accept that they are not as good as you are. Maybe it is because these people are fearful that they will lose their position, their world, so they tend to protect their interests very much. They might not be willing to give returnees a chance to take responsibility. Ngoc (HCMC, IT, 20s)

Tinh, in his comment below, talks about the potential for discrimination against overseas graduates by government employers as they are perceived to want to bring foreign ideas home, or to make big changes;

In government owned companies, people are not straightforward. Overseas graduates when they come back, tend to be so confident that they are so straightforward. They talk about making changes based on what they see overseas, but that is not suitable here. Maybe once, twice, three times of such running in with leaders may create a certain

opinion about them. So maybe it is not so suitable for them to work in those organisations. Tinh (HN, Manufacturing, Dinh's work colleague)

My company is a private firm, but it follows the ways of the Government. I see that overseas graduates struggle because they do not have the freedom to do as they want. Whatever they want to do, they have to seek permission from the above. Sometimes people from above them do not have as much knowledge as they do but they still can say no or tell them what to do. Hung (HCMC, My's brother)

These comments suggest that participation in the decision-making processes are often not encouraged or practised, due to the culture of paying respect to leaders and senior people, and social norms of behaving in accordance with social hierarchies. These comments are similar with many other returnees, particularly those who did not work in Viet Nam before going overseas. They seem to be frustrated by the culture of adhering to the authoritarian nature of leadership coupled with respect for elders in the community, because they are accustomed to egalitarian relationships in Western countries. This may explain the survey result of “conforming to rules” reporting a low number of responses in “acquired”, and falls short of workplace requirements.

Following from the virtue of *personalism* in relationships, trust is essential in business culture and practices in Viet Nam. Vietnamese leaders behave towards subordinates based on interpersonal trust between leaders and subordinates rather than evaluation of professional outputs and conduct (Nguyen & Jerman 2009). Time is necessary to accumulate trust between workers and any attempt to create shortcuts for example in employee involvement and empowerment for voice is deemed as naïve (Le et al. 2006). The returnees who have just returned home may not have the connections, or the time to build up a level of trust with these relationships. As Quan and Thanh's comments below suggest, the mismatch between acquired and required communication skills and problem solving skills found in the survey are about personal relationships and culture of according with hierarchies rather than speaking directly about the problems:

State-owned companies impose the boss's idea on staff. If the boss thinks it is a good thing, he will try to impose everything. Quan (HCMC, Manufacturing, 30s)

The thinking in Viet Nam is very different. They have hierarchies, the boss, the boss of the boss, the subordinates, and then you have to work with these. In addition, the process is very slow, very slow. Overseas-trained people want results, changes immediately but it is very slow, especially in SOEs. The process of getting opinions across is very slow. People have to express opinions and be considered according to their level of authorities. Thanh (HCMC, Banking, 20s)

The comments above also highlight the cultural barriers that returnees encounter in trying to deploy their overseas-acquired skills and attributes. Even though they may have gained communication skills overseas, the communication culture in Viet Nam requires understanding of how to speak appropriately in social contexts according to certain rules. These sentiments resonate with Carruthers' (2010) claim that in order for *Viet Kieu* (overseas Vietnamese) to act on the symbolic capital of their overseas status in their middle management role as cultural mediators between upper management and local staff, they have to present themselves to the local staff as legitimately belonging to the Vietnamese nation. Attitudes towards foreigners maybe displayed as superior aspiration to Western ideas on the surface, however display of individual assertiveness and directness by Vietnamese nationals as a result of studying overseas, might be considered arrogant and tactless (Ashwill & Thai 2004).

6.5.2.4 Intercultural skills and adaptation

The discussion so far in this section highlights the cultural challenges for returnees in this study in engaging in the types of work practices that they value. The extent to which they can exert their agency depends on their ability to voice their ideas, and contribute in ways that do not depart significantly from their preferred work practices and ideas of professional standards and work ethics. This depends on the connections that they have in business in general, and particularly in their workplace. Many returnees talk about the disadvantages of spending time overseas that disrupted their process of building connections and gaining an understanding of Viet Nam business culture. This is similar to Cao (2006) who found that Chinese returnees experience difficulties in workplace due to institutional factors like personal connections, low efficiency levels, personal conflicts and loss of contact with international communities in their disciplines. Chen (2008) also highlighted that Chinese returnees' success in entrepreneurship and technological innovation emphasises both international and local contacts but most returnees have neither. This type of disadvantage associated with a lack of personal connections seems common among the interviewees in this study. Tam says:

The cost of studying abroad is losing the relationships in Viet Nam. The disadvantage is that we lose around 4 years overseas and in those 4 years if we had stayed in Viet Nam we would have the networks, we would understand the working culture of Viet Nam. Tam (HCMC, IT, 30s)

This suggests that the cultural skills that enable returnees to work with Vietnamese colleagues are intimately tied with personal connections - a form of social capital in these workplaces. There is a dynamic overlap between connections that come from families, in the field and institutions within the field (subfields). This social capital allows them to apply their overseas-acquired skills, and without it, they have to adapt to existing structures and relations. Social capital denotes their power position in its link with cultural capital of skills, and attributes, irrespective of whether they are the right types of skills and attributes. In Thien's comment below, there appears again a perception of positional disadvantage in terms of cultural attributes compared to locally-trained graduates:

In reality, overseas-trained people may not be able to do as well as locally-trained because they have neither experience, nor cultural sensitivity to the working environment, especially the people they work with. Thien (HCMC, Quan's work colleague in manufacturing)

When they come back and say they work with different types of people who are not open, who are traditional in the Vietnamese way, and they do not adapt then they will find it difficult. Adaptability is very important. The way Vietnamese people work is very different to the way Westerners work so they must be able to adapt, that is use their skills and things that they have learnt overseas but adapt themselves to the circumstances here. Some people cannot deal with cultural differences, then they want to give up, and go back (overseas) to what they are used to. So it depends on the person, they need to be able to adapt. Trinh (HCMC, Ngoc's sister)

Trinh's comment suggests that adaptation to the surrounding environment is viewed as a cultural skills set, rather than a lack of agency. For those who have been abroad for a short time, usually to acquire Master degree after having had work experience in Viet Nam, they seem to experience less difficulty in cultural adjustment. Their prior work experiences in Viet Nam have given them the relevant cultural skills, which are different to those who have been overseas for long time, or those who are acculturated with Western ideas, or have never worked in Viet Nam and may not be aware of the business culture of Viet Nam. It is worthwhile to note that cultural adaptability also calls on how well connected each person is. The more connections they have, the more they are able to leverage these connections to build upon new ones or mediate cultural adjustment. Mo says:

People who studied many years overseas face more challenges in terms of dealing and integrating with the Vietnamese way of living, because they do not have the right relationships. Mo (HCMC, Quan's wife)

The working culture embedded in personal relations seems to be the *power-over* these returnees that hinder their opportunities to mobilise their overseas-acquired skills and attributes. There is a paradox that skills like critical thinking, problem solving, are generally viewed as valuable because they are advantageous in workplace, yet they have to be mediated because of the overriding importance of relationships in workplaces, particularly with leaders. Personal qualities such as conforming to social norms of vertical hierarchies to gain trust and respect with leaders seem to be contrary to the self-orientation and self-application attributes that returnees acquired from overseas education. The *power-to* pursue their goals is contingent on the social capital of these personal connections - the *power-within* the institution that they work. In other words, the *power-to* is linked with the *power-within* in enabling returnees to mobilise their overseas-acquired skills as they desire. In exercising agency, the returnees seem to give more weight to their own well-being in the context of a traditional, hierarchical culture and less weight to promoting equal agency and egalitarian relationships.

The culture of personal relations presents returnees with disadvantages and frustration due to conflicted ideas of work ethics and professionalism, which result in their choice of working in foreign firms. Returnees' aspirations for foreign firms seem to be for a cultural well-being, not only because of the symbolic capital of the West or to acquire high salary. There seems to be a connection between skills and attributes deployment and cultural opportunity structures, which suggest that the returnees have to adapt to gain their *power-to*. Adaptation is thus an agency opportunity, rather than an adaptive preference. In Bourdieu's world, adaptation may be a form of struggle, but it is the returnees' way to respond to the *power-over* them. The analysis of relational power through cultural opportunity structures highlights the process of agency as embedded in the social relations because these relations are the basis of shared value of certain skills and work practices.

6.5 Career opportunity structures

So far, I have shown that the reasons many returnees prefer to work for foreign firms, particularly MNCs, are: (1) to allow them to utilise their overseas-acquired skills to gain high salaries; and (2) to mediate the Vietnamese working culture that hinders their ability to use these skills and attributes to improve standards of work practices. In this section, I aim to discuss the extent to which returnees can leverage their overseas education to enable personal

and social change in their fields (research aim 3). I will analyse these notions of change in terms of what returnees achieve, and how these achieved functionings and well-being influence their career opportunities and empowerment for change.

6.6.1 Personal and social change: achieved functionings and well-being

Overall, the survey responses show that the returnees in the “professional” field achieve positive outcomes in regards to employment and high income. There are 188 respondents (98 per cent of 191 respondents) in paid employment; with 118 (63 per cent) in professional jobs, and 10 (5 per cent) in public administration. There are 135 respondents (72 per cent) who earn more than 7 million dong (350 USD) per month, and 91 respondents (48 per cent) earning over 13 million dong (650 USD) per month. Out of the 47 respondents in the banking and finance sector, 25 earn more than 13 million dong per month. Out of the 18 respondents in the IT sector, 11 earn more than 13 million per month. Out of the 14 respondents in the manufacturing sector, 13 earn more than 13 million dong per month. Noting that the average salary in urban cities according to VHLSS (2013) is 3.5 million dong (175 USD), it seems that these respondents’ incomes are much higher than the average income in Viet Nam. It should be noted that this finding is limited to these respondents because they self-selected to participate in the research.

Their *achieved functionings*, that is *doings* and *beings* as they see valuable, seem to be applying overseas-acquired skills and attributes which they see as part of professional and ethical work practices. They also value their “self” attributes because they can apply themselves to be professionals. These types of achieved functionings seem to be their well-being achievement also as they view well-being in terms of high income and employment in foreign firms to accord with the responsibilities and expectations of their families and communities.

Returnees in these sectors view enabled social change through their contributions in the workplace, which require the freedom and procedure to apply their overseas-acquired resources and cultivate professional relationships rather than personal relationships. Even though they speak about work ethics and professional standards as practices of positive change that they have the skills and attributes to enable, their choices and actions suggest observations of these in foreign firms, rather than aspirations to implement them. They seem to focus more on mediating and negotiating the Vietnamese working culture of personal

connections to leverage their resources to achieve personal returns rather than implementing the professional practices that they expect.

6.6.2 Empowerment for personal and social change

While economic returns may be the most important goals, and returnees often select resource and cultural opportunity structures that align with economic benefits, their choices are driven by a normative reasoning laden with acceptance of social norms rather than self-actualisation. Hai's comment below reveals the paradox of pursuing economic goals and empowerment at the personal level;

Many of my friends often choose their career based on what they think society would consider prestigious or want them to follow, not necessarily what is in line with their value system. Hai (HN, Vu's friend)

This comment suggests that the "self" is enhanced, as a result of overseas education, insofar as it is in line with their *consciousness* of family and societal expectation of themselves. The paradox is that returnees, in taking choices and actions that leverage the symbolic capital of overseas education, also signify their own disadvantage because they create positions of themselves as "others" within their communities. In other words, they might not fit culturally in all social situations; yet, they are expected to conform to social values and norms, in order to gain acceptance, and do what these social relations impose on them as values. This is consistent with the dialectic working of *habitus* in that returnees by acting along with the structures and social relations, reproduce the structures that produce their dispositions to act in the first place (Bourdieu 1977). As Khanh and Quang note below:

Overseas-trained people tend to think they are better than others, and from that, they expect better salaries. Khanh (HN, Manufacturing, 30s)

It is an unrealistic for many overseas-educated people to expect high salary all the time. We refer to this obsession with a good job and high salary as a disease of Vietnamese people. This is the typical mentality of current overseas students who come back. After getting a Master degree, instead of earning about 600-700 USD, they always expect a salary with from 1,000 to 1,100 USD a month. Quang (HCMC, Finance, 20s)

The returnees also choose career in foreign firms because of higher salaries, social status associated with foreign firms, as well as sense of higher quality of staff compared to SOEs and NSEs. The following comment by Dinh displays his "reasoned" choice in finding a balance between cultural identity, and choice of job and employer;

The first disadvantage for me is that I only fit in a foreign working environment. I really cannot work in places or take jobs that require me to be obsequious, like those in government agencies or public companies, to get to higher positions. Sometimes it creates difficulties. If I get into a public company and need those qualities to move up, then I cannot. I am not used to it. Dinh (HN, Manufacturing, 20s)

This comment suggests that the relations within the work environment shape Dinh's power position, which in turn, is a reason for him to conform to those relations, or find alternative options that he feels more empowered to do and be as he sees valuable. He perceives that a job in a foreign firm is preferable because of the cultural fit, but might not offer technical skills application. He decides to trade that off for promotional process and long-term career because he sees it as a feasible choice. His choice is conditioned by his perception of opportunities, not only his value of technical skills development. He acts in recognition of the conditions that shape his choice of actions. Dinh's reflection on his long term career decision echoes Gross and Connor's (2007) call for returnees to lower their expectation of advancing techniques, managerial skills, ethical business practices and understanding international norms because of workplace culture practices in their home countries, especially the exclusive practices of personal connections. Similarly, Quan in the below quote, recognises his struggle to comply with the social conditions of his workplace:

When returnees start working in Viet Nam, they will feel very bored because the things they have studied are too advanced but the actual demands are too low. They feel very frustrated. Quan (HCMC, Manufacturing, 30s)

This quote highlights Quan's disappointment with the Vietnamese work environments in comparison to advanced economies, and his disillusion about real opportunities for a career that meets his expectation of his acquired overseas education.

The returnees in this study strategically choose management pathways or foreign firms as career opportunities because they recognise their power positions in the field and they want to enhance their power. They perceive their career opportunity structures through acknowledgement of the need to adapt - to some extent - to the working culture in certain work situations. At the same time, they also leverage the cultural capital of overseas-acquired resources that they can deploy within their institutions. These competing motivations are similar to Pritchard's (2011) findings of Indonesian returnees experiencing re-entry trauma from the tensions between being career minded, ambitious and individualistic, and at the same time accommodating with cultural norms. In this research, the Vietnamese returnees' reasoning of their cultural adjustments suggest that their affiliation with social networks and

family, predisposes them to act in accordance with their responsibilities to these relations, and precludes them from advancing their needs to implement practices which they see as enabling for their professional practices.

One of the conditions of agency that Crocker (2008) outlined is for individual actions to make an impact on the world. These returnees' perception of achieved social change seems dim as they struggle to find their own positions in their workplace. However, this is not to say that there is no space for recognising possibilities for social change. I argue that the power structures of their workplace and relations are clear to the returnees. The process of exercising their power is well understood within the constraints of the business environment, their initial lack of knowledge and experience in Viet Nam, which necessitate more or less cultural adaptation. Some returnees, particularly those who work in NSEs or SOEs, see their adaptation to the environment as cultural skills set and provide the opportunity to be autonomous in the pursuit their goals. Even though the possibilities to enable change seem limited because they do not perceive opportunities beyond managing and accommodating cultural norms, they can and often exercise agency in recognition of their dispositions or *habitus*, and their subjectivities to the rules of the structures of the fields they operate in. Their ability to objectify their practices, and justify their goals and motivations lead them to deliberate their choices of either according with hierarchies of senior leaders and culture of connections in SOEs and NSEs or enter foreign firms. I argue that there is some space for autonomous choices and actions because returnees choose certain pathways to create their *power-within* in order to meet their personal goals and cultivate professional practices in the workplace. Working with other returnees, they may increase the space in which they with others can open even more space for agency.

6.7 Conclusion: Summary of findings and implications

The evidence presented in this chapter suggests that the overseas-acquired skills and attributes that are most useful for the returnees in the “professional” field are those that give them the opportunities to work in foreign firms. Both the survey and interview data suggest similar expressions between gender, qualifications and place of living in regards to choices of foreign firms, particularly in MNCs. Their choices seem to be primarily for higher salary, which they see as expected of their overseas education as well as to meet their families' responsibilities. While they also perceive better work standards in foreign firms, such perceptions reflect their

observations of Vietnamese work culture, rather than an impetus for enabling change in the Vietnamese workplaces. Their career tracks reflect strategic positionings to mobilise their overseas education status and overseas-acquired resources, which they see as evident of personal change and achieved functionings. There are three implications of these findings for theorising normative agency in an agency-focused CA: (1) understanding the power structures through the notion of *intersubjective freedom*; (2) reflexivity in the process of reasoning; and (3) interdependence between individual agency and collective agency. In concluding the chapter, I summarise and draw on these key findings to discuss these theoretical implications.

6.7.1 Power structures through intersubjective freedom

In chapter 5, I argued that the returnees' conception of *freedom* aspect of agency is intimately linked with their conception of freedom which is related to their moral obligations to families. In addition, the responses of returnees to societal norms and expectations, particularly of their families, suggest a conception of freedom within their relations with others. I offered the term *intersubjective freedom* as a way to conceptualise freedom through the idea of a person whose obligations and rights are embedded *within*, rather than external from their social relations. By this concept, I do not mean that they are only really free when they do their filial duty. They can exercise their agency to subordinate their family obligations to other values. The discussion of the returnees' choices and practices in their fields and subfields in this chapter reinforce the notion of social relations as underpinning what they see as morally obligatory and free. I have shown that their conception of *agency opportunity* is viewed within their workplace social structures and broader employment sector. The *agency process* is dependent on the returnees' recognition of their power positions in the social fields; I have analysed the elements of the power structures (*power-to*, *power-within* and *power-over*) to understand the "real" choices that these returnees make, and whether those choices reflect their values. I thus argue that *normative agency* necessitates recognition of power structures as conditions for choice and agency. As I have shown, the equality that Sen envisions and inequality that Bourdieu emphasises can be brought closer to each other by recognising the power structures that cause the power struggles, and consequently, open possibilities for agency and empowerment. I argue that understanding *intersubjective freedom* is critical to account for the relational power structures that are embedded within a person's social structures and relations, but not limiting her to deterministic or adaptive actions.

6.7.2 Reflexivity in “reasoning” of values

In this chapter, I have explicated Sen’s idea of “reasoning values” through the returnees’ *consciousness* of their values, goals, choices and actions; moreover, in their recognition of the temptation - and at time necessity - to be co-opted by the powers constructed from the social conditions of their workplace. I have argued that their practical experiences suggest their recognition of the reasons and extent to which their skills, knowledge and attributes may or may not legitimise the cultural capital often associated with overseas education. Returnees also recognise the disadvantage of economic objectives as the sole or overriding value of their actions, and how such value comes about as a result of internalising others’ expectations. They perceive opportunity structures as feasible opportunities based on their recognition of their power positions and whether they want to enhance their power to pursue their goals. These opportunity structures are thus not taken for granted by returnees as objective structures (Grenfell 2008) because they are aware of their conditioning impact on their actions. These “reasoned” choices and actions are in line with Crocker’s (2008) conditions of agency where the person makes choice based on her own reasons (see chapter 2). Reflexivity allows the returnees to engage in their own objectification of practices that allow them to understand and shape their conditions of agency. These findings are consistent with Bourdieu’s (1977) idea of dialectic process of *habitus* and its relation to the *field*, where nuances between returnees’ recognition of their surrounding conditions and actions to co-opt, struggle, resist, or reform, may lead to possibilities of change. I thus argue that to understand *normative agency* for empowerment, these nuances must be captured through reflexive reasoning as both a process of constructing new values (as argued in chapter 5) and taking choices and actions for change.

6.7.3 Interdependence of individual agency and collective agency

The returnees’ experiences as discussed in this chapter, suggest an intertwined link between individual agency and collective agency through the working of power structures. I have shown that in order for the returnees to mobilise their overseas-acquired resources, they have to build and leverage the social capital of personal relations in workplace in order to gain a shared value of these skills. In order to implement changed work practices, they adapt to the Vietnamese work culture to mobilise these connections or seek the foreign workplace culture. In so doing, they enhance the *power-within* as collective agency to enhance their *power-to* as individual agency: individual agency is conditioned upon the collective value of their *beings* and *doings* (for example, professional and ethical work standards). The culture of personal

relations in Viet Nam, and returnees' economic motivations, seem to be significant *power-over* these returnees, which limit their individual agency to implement changes as they see valuable. I thus argue that agency for empowerment is contingent on the collective agency of others. If we understand *normative agency* through *intersubjective freedom*, then the interdependence between individual agency and collective agency is significant for transformative actions. I will now further explore these conceptual ideas in discussing the practical experiences of returnees in the "intellectual" field (chapter 7) and "civic" field (chapter 8).

7 Practical experiences in the “intellectual” field

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the practical experiences of Vietnamese overseas-educated academics in the “intellectual” field of higher education. To address the research aims, I examine the choices and practices that these returnees take, in regards to their overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes; how they utilise these resources to reform their teaching and research practices in accordance with their values, goals and responsibilities.

This chapter is organised as follows. In the next section, I present a brief overview of the university sector, and the teaching, learning and research environment in Vietnamese universities. The aim is to provide some contexts for the analysis of the institutional structures of Vietnamese universities and their influence on returnees’ choices and practices. This is followed by a summary of the types of universities that the overseas-educated academics work in (section 3). I will then discuss the *resource opportunity structures* that these academics perceive as feasible in applying their overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes (section 4). I will argue that their view about teacher-student relationships and “self” development are embedded in the Western Enlightenment values of knowledge, self and individual freedom, which in turn render a symbolic capital of their overseas education. However, their *process of agency* is shaped by their perception of *cultural opportunity structures*, which are embedded in their relations with their colleagues and leaders (section 5). I will argue that their choices and actions entail co-optation with these relational structures, which can be adaptive as well as agentic in creating opportunities for them to implement new practices in the future. In section 6, I discuss their long-term *career opportunity structures*. Despite recognition of some achieved changes in their teaching practices, their choice of management pathways suggest more or less conforming to institutional norms that may result in conflicting consequences for empowering educational reform. I conclude the chapter (section 7) by discussing the implications of the key findings for the research question, and for theorising *normative agency* and empowerment.

7.2 Viet Nam's higher education system

The aim of this section is to provide some information about Viet Nam's higher education sector²³ to help understanding the structure of the “intellectual” field that the overseas-educated academics work in. I present a brief summary of the types of universities, Viet Nam's higher education reform, and some aspects of teaching, learning and researching as background contexts for the analysis of returnees' practical experiences in this field.

7.2.1 Types of universities and governance structures

In Viet Nam there are five types of universities: (1) specialised (public) universities that are controlled by line ministries for example, University of Economics; (2) multidisciplinary (public) universities that offer a wide range of programs through to doctorate, for example Ha Noi National University; (3) open universities (semi-public), for example, Ho Chi Minh City Open University; (4) non-State (non-public) universities, for example Hoa Sen University; and (5) international universities (foreign-owned), for example RMIT.²⁴

Following the Soviet Union higher education system, university governance in Viet Nam is constituted on a highly centralised basis (Welch 2010). The State has authority over all universities, mainly through the thirteen ministries that regulate responsibilities across the system in relation to advising government about national policies and targets, sectoral financial plans, labour force plans and governance protocols (Hayden & Lam 2010). In some cases, the ministries hold executive responsibilities for individual universities, particularly specialised universities (London 2006). The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has by far the most extensive system wide responsibilities. In consultation with the Ministry of Planning and Investment, MOET allocates enrolment quotas for all universities and colleges whether they are public or non-public. These quotas are used by MOET to manage growth in the supply of higher education places and labour skills (Fry 2009). The quotas apply to both the overall student load of the university as well as load within programs of study. MOET also approves curriculum frameworks for all programs of study across the system, including prescribing objectives, knowledge requirements, curriculum components, allocating theory, practical and internship components. MOET has executive responsibilities including

²³ In this thesis, the term higher education refers to universities

²⁴ Studying at foreign universities is not considered as international education in this thesis.

management of appointment processes for chair positions in universities, and management of examination systems for admission to universities (Hayden & Lam 2010).

MOET has direct management responsibilities for about one quarter of all public universities, except for two national universities (Viet Nam National University in Ha Noi and Viet Nam National University in Ho Chi Minh City) which directly report to the Cabinet. The remaining public universities report to the other twelve ministries (Hayden & Lam 2010). The two national universities enjoy more autonomy than other universities with special privileges in areas related to expenditure, travel and ability to host foreign scholars because their presidents are appointed directly by the Prime Minister and have ministerial-level status (Hayden & Lam 2010). Since the CPV has control over the State, this suggests that the Party has considerable influence over the governance of these universities (Varghese & Martin 2011).

All non-public universities are responsible to the State through their own governing boards, comprising mainly of notable members of local community or professionals responsible for their establishment (Hayden & Dao 2010)). The boards usually have financial autonomy from the State and rely on tuition fee entirely. However, in other respects, their autonomy is as limited as the case for public universities, for example, they have to adhere to admission quotas and curriculum frameworks set by MOET (Hayden & Dao 2010). Each university, whether public or non-public, has a governing council chaired by a “noted personality” from outside the institution, or the Communist Party committee secretary of the university. The members of the governing council include the Communist Party secretary, the rector, heads of constituent colleges, and heads of various unions (Hayden & Lam 2010).

7.2.2 Higher education reform

In 2005, MOET adopted the agenda of reforming higher education.²⁵ The visions of the Higher Education Reform Agreement (HERA) aim at improving the current universities structures and quality of education to equip students to participate in the local and global labour markets, and to meet the country’s economic growth towards middle-income status (Pham & Fry 2004). HERA aims to develop Vietnamese universities to support economic and social development and facilitate Viet Nam’s emerging international trades and communication technologies (Harman & Hayden 2010). According to Hayden and Lam (2010), similar to the agendas of other South East Asian nations higher education reform, the

²⁵ Resolution Number 14/2005/NQ-CP

key themes of HERA are about marketisation and privatisation to increase diversity in funding, changes in governance to allow more institutional autonomy, enhanced student access to allow universities to meet enrolment demand, modern curricular and teaching practices in line with Western standards to enhance quality education. This is a departure from the Soviet influenced model of universities where training programs are tailored to meet specific labour force needs of particular ministries and access to these programs are determined by the State (St George 2010). Following the establishment of the non-public sector in higher education in 1993 as part of *Doi Moi* economic reform, HERA enhances the market-based structures of universities by offering a user-pay tuition fee enrolment process. However, settings of tuition fees for these non-public universities are still controlled by the State (Fry 2009). As discussed in chapter 4, international education also has a role in HERA, primarily in training academics (Welch 2010). One of HERA's aims is to have 40,000 PhDs by 2020, with the majority to be trained overseas (Vu 2011).

As a result of HERA's market orientations, there has been a steady growth in the number of public and non-public universities (MOET 2013). As of 2013, the number of non-public universities is 26 per cent of the total number of universities; the number of student enrolments in non-public universities is 15 per cent of total student enrolment (MOET 2013). There has been a significant growth (61 per cent) in the number of teaching staff across the whole sector in the last six years to 2013, with a larger increase in non-public universities compared to public universities. Appendix XI shows the growth in various types of universities from 2008 to 2013.

Despite these improvements, the general perception of the sector itself, and through public discussion in media outlets, is that there is a gap between the aspirations of HERA and realistic achievements for the sector by 2020 (Pham 2010). The challenges of implementing HERA are significant barriers at a system level where there is lack of autonomy in curriculum and management (Dao & Hayden 2010), at an institutional level where there is general lack of skills among university leaders (Harman & Nguyen 2010), and resistance by teaching staff to adopt modern and Western-based teaching and learning practices that are geared towards the labour market (Tibbetts 2007). Senior academics and administrators of the universities are used to the culture of centralised planning; they lack exposure and experience in practices of autonomous institutions. The emphasis on relations within social hierarchies of Vietnamese society, and centralised planning in the last 50 years have instilled a management culture of State reliance with little self-reliance, initiative, transparency, accountability and efficiency

(Hayden & Lam 2010). According to Hayden and Lam (2010), decision-makings by leaders of universities are often done based on individual interests with little collaboration among leaders within or across universities. Furthermore, the decisions made by the governing council of the university would need to take into consideration the political power of the CPV through the Party Committee, who is part of the governing council, in upholding or vetoing any decision taken by a governing council or rector (Varghese & Martin 2011). Lastly, the regulatory environment of higher education in Viet Nam under the firm control of MOET does not allow the process of renegotiating existing regulatory controls over any operational aspects simplistically or transparently (Hayden & Lam 2010).

7.2.3 Teaching and learning environment

Doi Moi and Viet Nam's access to WTO, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) brought about the needs to improve human resources to meet the labour needs of an industrialised economy (Welch 2010). With this comes the requirement for the education systems to train students for skills that enable them to work productively, independently and collaboratively. There is much recognition by the State, Vietnamese people and international development agencies that the higher education system in Viet Nam still lags behind in teaching students these skills (Harman et al. 2010). Much is attributed to the poor academic qualifications of many academic staff, the relative low salary levels of academics, and a salary structure that prioritises teaching over researching or professional development activities (Harman et al. 2010). With HERA, there has been increase in government sponsorship programs for academics to gain postgraduate degrees overseas, such as the 911 (or 322) programs, or bilateral sponsorship programs (for example, AUSAID Endeavour programs). This has resulted in improvement in academic qualifications of teaching staff in both public and non-public universities (see Appendix XI).

However, the centralised curriculum framework, a general shortage of learning materials and a lack of autonomy in selecting text books and teaching materials, result in constraining capacity of academics to provide students with appropriate learning to meet new demands of a transitional economy (Harman & Nguyen 2010). English is now the compulsory foreign language taught in replacement to French and Russian, resulting in increased collaborations with foreign universities, foreigners and NGOs to establish teaching programs with English as medium of instruction. However, there is a lack of academic staff and managers who can read English materials (Pham 2011).

In response to the need for change in pedagogy to improve the employability of students, Vietnamese universities increasingly emphasise skills development for information-based environments such as critical thinking, problem solving, and independent learning, which requires academics to focus on application of knowledge rather than transferring theories of knowledge (Pham 2011). However, this is difficult to adopt, in part because of the teaching and learning practices of the general education system (Pham & Fry 2004). As noted in chapter 4, education in Viet Nam is underpinned by the Confucian philosophy and French colonial education system with an emphasis on ‘correct’ behaviours, mastering content and transmission of knowledge from teachers to students rather than constructing knowledge through independent thinking and questioning (Tu 1996). Students are encouraged to adopt passive learning attitudes. The deep-seated perception of harmonious learning is contrary to independent thinking; the respect and reverence for teachers is contrary to the critical thinking and independent problem solving that is required in new classroom environments. Furthermore, the strong hierarchy in teacher-student relationships, embedded in the traditions of Vietnamese society (as noted in chapter 4) provide much resistance to practices of self-expression, independent thinking and learning in both academics and students (Tibbetts 2007).

7.2.4 Research and development

According to Harman and Le (2010), the research function of Vietnamese universities is quite weak. There are various factors that contribute to this weakness. Following the Soviet model of universities, research is conducted at research institutes which are separate to the universities where the focus is on teaching. This results in little funding being available for universities to undertake large-scale research (Harman & Le 2010). Limitations of research capacity are also due to the lack of infrastructure and tools in universities. In addition, academics are constrained by lack of time for research due to high teaching workloads, underpinned by a remuneration system that prioritises teaching over research. The lack of doctoral qualification also means that academics are ill prepared to conduct high quality research (Harman & Le 2010). There is a lack of cooperation and collaboration between industries and universities to assist with innovation, research and development, which is due to rigidity in management practices of these industries as well as lack of understanding the potential role of research and development in industrialised businesses (Fatseas 2010). This

results in universities' disengagement with industries in relation to new technology and intellectual development issues.

In summary, Viet Nam's higher education system seems to position overseas-educated academics favourably in terms of applying their overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes for higher education reform. However, the bureaucratic governance of universities laden with political and economic complexities, the Vietnamese learning environment, and lack of research capacity in the university sector presents returnees with challenges in implementing changes that they may be inclined to do. Against this background, I will now discuss their opportunities, practices and choices of career pathway in their universities. First, I present a summary of the types of universities that the survey respondents and interviewees work in.

7.3 Summary of participants by types of universities

Table 7.1 below shows the number of survey respondents, interviewees, their work colleagues, and the types of universities they work for. As presented in Table 3.3 (see chapter 3), 85 survey respondents (30 per cent) work in universities (N=280). As of 2013, Viet Nam's employed population in the education and training sector was 3 per cent (see Appendix IX (a) for GSO statistics on the employed population in education sector). As noted in chapter 3, the high proportion of participants in this study who work in universities compared to GSO statistics is probably due to the method of recruiting respondents through universities. The universities from which I recruited survey respondents were key public universities, which explains why the majority of survey respondents are in public universities (Appendix I lists the universities that I recruited respondents). Ten participants from the 85 survey respondents were selected for key interviews. Eight members of the key interviewees' networks took part in the second interviews. Out of the eight network members, five also worked in universities; the other three were family members. Table 7.1 shows the number of survey respondents and interviewees and types of universities they work in.

	Public universities	Non-public universities	Foreign universities	Total
Survey respondents	73	4	8	85
Key interviewees	8	1	1	10
Work colleagues of interviewees	2	2	1	5

Table 7. 1: Number of survey respondents and interviewees and types of universities

The majority of overseas-educated academics in this research work in public universities as part of their scholarship requirement. There are 27 respondents from Ha Noi, 31 from Ho Chi Minh City, 17 from Hue and Da Nang, and 10 from other regions. Similar to the returnees who work in the “professional” field, analysis of the survey and interview data of returnees reveal no apparent differences between locations of universities, gender and types of overseas qualifications. This could reflect the small sample, and sample bias due to method of recruitment and participants’ self-selection. This sample bias thus limits using this data to make inferences about Vietnamese returnees working in universities. However, there are broader conceptual implications of the findings beyond these returnees.

7.4 Resource opportunity structures

The discussion in chapter 5 highlighted two underlying drivers of the returnees’ values, motivations and expectations of their acquired overseas education: first, cultural capital of transferable (soft) skills; second, knowledge associated with cultivation of “self” attributes for independence, and self-development. In this section, I aim to understand the extent that returnees can utilise these skills, knowledge and “self” attributes in their work at universities (research aim 1). I will first discuss the survey results and further explore the findings using the interview data.

7.4.1 Summary of survey responses

The survey provided initial insight into the type of skills, knowledge and attributes that returnees have acquired from overseas compared to their workplace requirements. Figure 7.1 shows these survey results for the 85 survey respondents who work in universities (see chapter 3 (section 3.3.2) and 6 (section 6.4) for description of the categories of skills and knowledge indicators). The survey responses indicate similar findings with the “professional” field in that “confidence”, “working independently”, and “proactiveness” are attributes that many respondents acquired, and are closely aligned with their work requirements. Attributes oriented towards “self” including “self-awareness”, “personal drive” and “self-expression” also have a high number of responses (acquired); however, there seems to be a slight shortfall to work requirements compared to the “professional” field, particularly in “self-expression”. This may reflect the nature of teaching where self-orientation and self-application attributes may be more relevant.

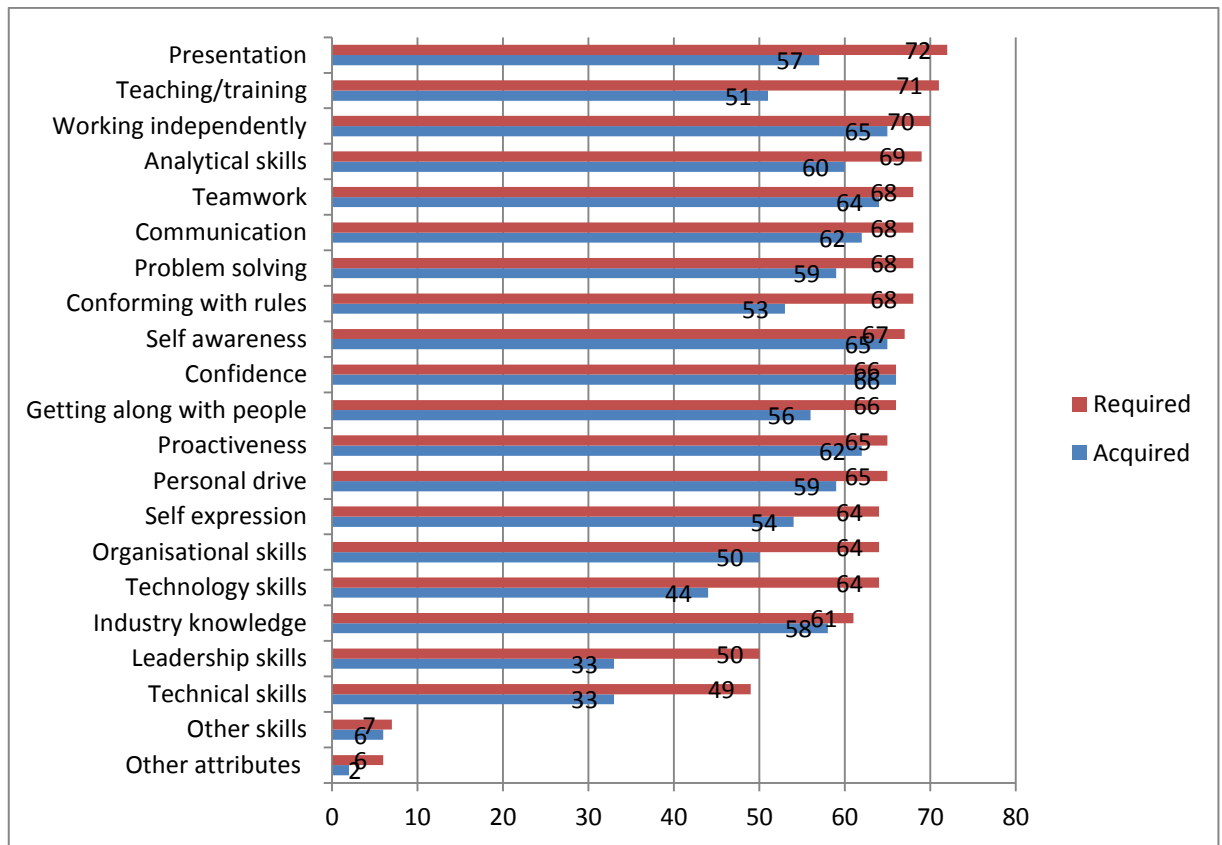


Figure 7.1: Comparison of types of overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes acquired from overseas education and required in universities (N=85)

Figure 7.1 shows that there is a 18 per cent mismatch in regards to “conforming to rules” (68 required and 53 acquired, N=85), compared to 9 per cent mismatch in the “professional” field, which may reflect the more bureaucratic operation of universities compared to corporations. It may also be because most respondents in the “intellectual” field work in public universities (86 per cent) compared to 21 percent of returnees in “professional” field who work in government agencies and SOEs (see Table v in Appendix X for breakdown by public and non-public universities). The mismatch in “getting along with people” is similar with the “professional” field. Again, this may be due to different communication and work culture due to hierarchical relations in Vietnamese society (as discussed in chapter 6).

In regards to skills, similar with the “professional” field, transferable (soft) skills such as “teamwork skills”, “presentation skills”, “communication skills”, “analytical skills” and “problem solving skills” rank high as “acquired” among respondents. However, there seems to be a slight shortfall in “analytical skills” and “presentation skills” compared with the “professional” field, where these skills are more aligned with work requirements. This may be because of different demand for application of these types of skills between jobs in universities and other sectors. For example, presentation skills are important for teaching;

analytical skills (as discussed in chapter 6) may not be required by those who work in industry because they often choose middle managerial jobs in support functions rather than technical roles. There is less of a shortfall in “organisational skills” compared to the “professional” field and this may be because these overseas-educated academics are already used to these skills demand as academics prior to going overseas, whereas returnees in business and industry are taking on new managerial roles as a result of their overseas education.

“Technology skills”, “teaching and training skills”, “technical skills” and “leadership skills” rank the lowest in acquired skills, which are similar to responses in the “professional” field; however, there seems to be a larger shortfall across these skills. The shortfall in “teaching and training” may be due to different learning environment (as discussed above in section 2.3) between Vietnamese and overseas universities thus different pedagogy is required. None of the returning academics interviewed taught overseas which may also suggest why there is a mismatch between acquired teaching skills and work requirements. Similarly, the mismatch in “technical skills” may be because of different business and industrial contexts in Viet Nam, therefore they may not be able to incorporate their overseas-acquired disciplinary knowledge in their teaching. I will now further explore these findings using the interview data.

7.4.2 Transferable (soft) skills

Similar to the responses from returnees in other sectors (in both surveys and interviews), most of the interviewed overseas-educated academics perceived soft skills to be most beneficial because they can apply the skills themselves and transfer those skills to Vietnamese students. Generally, the interview responses corroborate with those from the survey, in that skills such as “teamwork”, “analytical skills”, “presentation skills”, “communication skills” and “problem solving skills” are also perceived as valuable by their universities and are expected of returnees as a result of studying abroad. Returnees perceive that non-public universities demand teaching of these types of transferable (soft) skills more than public universities. This may be because the non-public universities that the interviewees work for specialise in business and management, which emphasise these skills for employability.

It seems that the ability to teach Vietnamese students transferable (soft) skills foster upon many returnees a sense of being a higher education reformer. They perceive such applications of skills and attributes as a form of self-enhancement, against the low quality educational environment where Viet Nam-trained academics’ applications of teaching and learning practices developed in the West have often resulted in failure (Pham 2011). Pham

(2011) argued that the reasons for these failures are often due to Vietnamese educators being pressured to teach Western-oriented skills when they themselves do not possess skills and knowledge to adopt imported practices and thus cannot examine their appropriateness. In addition, as noted above in section 2.3, the traditional learning styles of Vietnamese students who are used to Confucian philosophy of teacher-student relationship do not allow for easy adaptation to the Western style of independent learning that aims to be creative with their thinking (Harman & Ngoc 2010).

The overseas-educated academics in this study see their application of soft skills, and the ability to effectively teach those skills because they possess those skills, as their cultural capital that position them advantageously over locally-trained academics. This is the case for returnees in both public and non-public universities. Kieu's comment below suggests that her ability to teach academic reading and writing skills to students is an application of her skills, and with that, a sense of achievement. This suggests both an instrumental nature as well as intrinsic value of teaching as improving Vietnamese students' capabilities;

After some time I feel that my students have learnt a lot, particularly in writing skills, reporting skills. Their English writing is better. Before that, they did not dare to write according to their own ideas. Their writing improved. Kieu (HCMC, non-public university, 30s)

On the other hand, Cuc's comment below suggests the difficulty in transferring these skills to a cohort of Vietnamese students who are used to a particular style of teaching and learning, and their reluctance or inability to take on new practices of self-oriented learning and self-expression. This may also explain the mismatch in "self-expression" as found in the survey results;

In Viet Nam, students do not really study independently. You ask a question and receive no answer. Students rarely answer and often say: "I don't know." This leaves me with no motivation to share my knowledge. Cuc (HN, public university, 30s)

7.4.3 English language skills

Similar to the returnees in the "professional" field, overseas-educated academics reported that English proficiency is the most valuable skill that they acquired from living overseas. There is a general view among the interviewees that their English skills improved significantly because of studying and living abroad. Moreover, English is their comparative advantage for accessing jobs, particularly for those who want to work in non-public or foreign-owned universities. Due to the lack of education material in Viet Nam (see section 2.3), returnees are

able to translate their textbooks or academic sources acquired from overseas studies from English to Vietnamese. They have to translate from English to Vietnamese because most public universities require Vietnamese to be the language of instruction. They can also use these English resources to design and teach non-core courses, which do not fall under the MOET curriculum framework. As the interviews suggest, these courses tend to be in disciplines that are new to Viet Nam's economy, with low delivery costs, and likely to be offered by non-public universities due to high demand by students (for example, business, management, counselling and tourism). Returnees perceive teaching in English or teaching these types of non-core programs as opportunities to teach and for their career progression. The below quote illustrates such sentiment:

I think the dean and deputy prefer people who studied abroad because we can teach in English. Teaching in English for some courses is compulsory so there is no Vietnamese class. Gradually we all have to teach more English classes. Anh (HCMC, non-public university, Kieu's colleague)

Furthermore, these returnees view English as a form of cultural capital because it allows them to access and understand information in specific disciplines directly, which give them a comparative advantage over those who do not have English skills and have to rely on translated material. As Cuc says:

If you have studied abroad, your language skills are no doubt better. Even in universities, if a research topic has a comparative aspect to it, the priority would be given to someone who has studied abroad because the person can access the native language. If you can only read translations, there are very few texts and it is much more limited. Cuc (HN, public university, 30s)

There seems to be a common perception across all interviewees that English ability is their advantage, insofar as it allows them to access jobs. As Xinh notes below, she can leverage the symbolic capital associated with English skills and overseas education:

Before [studying overseas] I might be a good student, but I was not recognised. When I return with a foreign degree, though I did not study from a prestigious school, I am valued more. People think, "This person has graduated from this institution", and whatever I say in English seems to have more value. Xinh (HCMC, foreign university, Van's colleague, HCMC,)

However, Xinh's perception of English skills as advantage for workplace recognition is not universal among the overseas-educated academics interviewed. For some, even though English skills give them the opportunity to participate in job opportunities such as

international partnerships programs (IPP) with foreign universities, they seem to see it as reflecting the university's lack of staff with sufficient English proficiency (see earlier discussion in section 2.3). As Long comments below, English skills can be understood to have a utilitarian purpose rather than a form of symbolic capital;

If there are tasks that need English or new knowledge content, then they will allocate [them] to you. In other words, they depend on you for those things. For example, if schools participate in international conferences then definitely the people who studied overseas will be chosen to attend. In addition, any programs that have anything to do with overseas or international then the people who studied overseas will get those tasks. So it is not really advantage, it is more that they need the resources so they ask us. Long (HCMC, public university, 40s)

In this quote, Long rationalises the practical use of English on a needs-base rather than as a symbolic capital, by comparing to other activities in his university that do not require English, and not made available to him. Similarly, Thinh, in the below quote, considers foreign language skills to be useful for communication purpose, compared to other skills and knowledge which he does not see as always being applied and appreciated;

I think the most important benefit of overseas education is foreign language skills. I think if we have many language skills, this will facilitate us in communication as well as building relationship with foreigners. That is the only advantage of the overseas degree. In regards to education level or skills improvement that can be used and appreciated, it is not a guarantee. Thinh (Hue, public university, 30s)

These comments echo other returnees who express mixed views about the utility of English. Some see it as symbolic capital that gives rise to advantage for jobs access, mainly in non-public universities where they can teach non-core curriculum. Some view English as utilitarian due to lack of staff with English proficiency rather than advantage. It seems that MOET set curriculums and traditional teaching practices in Vietnamese language, may not create environments where academics, administrators and students might subscribe to English as main mode of knowledge production and transfer. However, there is a potential that non-core courses, or those that are borrowed or purchased from overseas, particularly in business and management disciplines, may to a certain extent foster this kind of colonial practices, similar to returnees' experiences in the "professional" field. Much more research is required to investigate this phenomenon.

7.4.4 Knowledge application and transfer

Despite the perception of some returnees that they cannot transfer overseas-acquired knowledge readily, they seem to aspire to do so, particularly when it has a Western knowledge content. For some returnees, the use of Western texts is a step towards a higher quality education system and thus they persist with translating English texts to Vietnamese even though it creates extra work for them. The below quote by Hong shows her sense of affiliation with the intrinsic value of knowledge transfer through research knowledge and skills, and the attention to foreign scholars as subjects of knowledge;

Vietnamese students here do not really understand what research methodology is. They talk about things like dialectical materialism, historical materialism, which are very general and are in every thesis, but they do not really know how to apply these concepts. From the workshops that I hold with foreign scholars, it is slowly changing. Therefore, I can say that I am happy to have been able to learn from these programs and share it initially with a small group, and then bigger groups. Hong (HN, public university, 50s)

Interestingly, Hong later explains that without the presence of foreign scholars, she would not have been able to organise the research workshops and Vietnamese senior academics would not have taken her ideas about research issues seriously. This illustrates the superiority that Vietnamese leaders in universities assign to foreign academics over Vietnamese academics even if the latter have acquired doctoral qualifications overseas. It also shows Hong's awareness of such distinction and her strategic mediation of the conditions that she sees as advantageous in order to carry out what she sees as valuable, while acknowledging her actions are adaptive to the culture that puts her at a disadvantage.

There seems to be fewer opportunities for those in public universities to transfer subject contents from overseas curriculum because the Vietnamese business or industry case studies employed are different to those used by overseas universities. In many cases, returnees draw on the disciplinary knowledge learnt overseas to compare between foreign operations and in Viet Nam. Doan says:

I also give to students case studies from overseas. I translated these and gave to students. We adopt general knowledge (learnt overseas) not really the practicalities of each case study. Doan (Hue, public university, 20s)

Contrary to those working in the “professional” field who focus more on applying skills rather than applying knowledge, these overseas-educated academics are motivated to

apply both knowledge and skills in practical ways to their students. Even though they aspire to Western ideas, they have to use these ideas selectively, which means they are involved in the process of knowledge construction, not only importing Western ideas without thoughts. It is this space where they appropriate their overseas learning that fosters their sense of being an education reformer. While they may see their teaching using overseas-acquired material as contributing to quality of education, they also see their aspirations laden with the practical challenges in which their teaching takes place. I will come back to this issue in section 5 of this chapter.

7.4.5 Research skills

While some returnees express that they have improved their research skills as a result of their overseas degree, not many feel that they can utilise these skills in their universities except for one PhD qualified scientist who works in a research laboratory. In Viet Nam, working in a research laboratory is not seen as an academic activity, because staff is controlled by other government agencies and work closely with an industrial organisation. This returnee also works in a joint program with a foreign university, at one of the two national universities, which has more autonomy in funding and foreign partnerships. In line with the literature about Viet Nam's higher education (Fatseas 2010; Fry 2009; Harman & Le 2010; Hayden & Lam 2010) which note the focus of universities on teaching, the overseas-educated academics in this study do not perceive research as a main goal of their academic lives, nor is it expected of them to do research. Most refer to research through overseas textbooks, which they use as a way to bring knowledge from research into teaching rather than wanting to do research themselves. Thinh, in the below quote, has a pragmatic viewpoint about engaging in research, which is to satisfy obligations of salary requirements and gain promotion, rather than a motivation to contribute to knowledge;

When we talk about research in Viet Nam, we say that science is in the sky and reality is on Earth. From that statement, you can understand the value of research here. The majority of people who are concerned about research are pressured to do research to avoid having their salary hours deducted, and because they need to become associate professors. Thinh (Hue, public university, 30s)

Research literature about the state of research activities in Viet Nam often highlights the low research outputs and productivity of Vietnamese universities, and the low number of publications in international journals (Harman & Nguyen 2010; Welch 2010, World Bank

2005). This may also be due to limited English skills of Vietnamese academics as discussed above, and that most international journals are published in English. The below quote explains some of the reasons (besides lack of English skills) behind this low level of productivity, and why the majority of returnees in this study do not see opportunities to engage in research;

In reality, there has not been adequate attention to the points scoring system to create the real incentives for international publication. Many people stop trying and even revert to doing nothing. For example, they might say that they have learnt about research and they are willing to do research. But because it is difficult here due to a lack of databases and lack of recognition, they stop completely. They no longer conduct research or learn new things. In my opinion, that is a waste of the effort to study abroad. The environment for them to develop is very limited, in terms of material (database), attitude and recognition. Nothing is attractive. Hong (HN, public university, 50s)

Hong's comment suggests that the lack of motivation to do research reflects the relatively poor facilities and infrastructure of research in Viet Nam universities. Similar to Hong, most interviewees recognise the importance of increasing research activities and research capacities to improve Viet Nam's higher education. They also feel that their overseas-acquired research skills are not relevant because they do not have opportunities to take on research work.

7.4.6 Economic benefits

As with the returnees who work in the "professional" field, economic benefits seem to be the most important criterion for these academics in their choice of work. Their perception about skills and knowledge, are underlined with materialist values and positional advantage of transferable (soft) skills. Where possible, returnees choose to work in non-public and foreign universities because these institutions offer much higher salaries and other benefits similar to overseas universities, for example provision of health care, overseas travel allowance as bonus scheme for good performance. As Long comments below, working in public institutions require taking on large number of extra teaching hours at other non-public universities or in business enterprises to gain sufficient income to meet their living costs;

In general, lecturers live by the number of excess teaching hours over stipulated teaching hours. For example, there is a rule that as a PhD, my required hours is that I teach 200 teaching periods each semester or 400 periods a year. So first, we get basic salary that is set by the government, and second, we get a share of revenue that the university derives from other sources. If I do not do anything, then each month I get around 10 million dongs. 10 million dongs is not enough to live in Saigon even for me on my own, let alone

my family. Therefore, lecturers need to live on what we call revenue from excess hours. Say if I teach 500 periods, the excess hours are 100, and that gets multiplied by a rate. The majority of people want to earn more money, so they have to teach a lot. Many people teach at non-public universities to earn more. Long (HCMC, public university, 40s)

Long's comment is consistent with literature about Viet Nam's higher education in regards to low salary rates and salary structures of public universities, which lead academics to seek other revenue sources such as teaching in non-public universities and consulting in industries (Fry 2009; Hayden & Lam 2010; Pham 2010). In this research, other means that returnees use to acquire additional teaching and higher salaries is primarily through teaching in non-public universities. In some cases, they participate in IPP and consultancy work outside academia, which tends to be with the business and tourism sectors. Long also considers family responsibility to be a reason for wanting material incentives.²⁶ The paradox is that while these returnees see themselves as educational reformers with the intent to improve quality of education, they also recognise that the choices they take in extra teaching often result in lower quality of teaching.

The resource opportunity structures that these overseas-educated academics see as feasible seem to be constructed by their conception of value associated with overseas-acquired skills such as English skills, transferable soft skills, and ability to transfer knowledge acquired from overseas learning, particularly disciplinary knowledge. The economic motivations are similar to those in other sectors, however they also are intrinsically motivated to teach and apply overseas-acquired skills and apply knowledge, albeit selectively to accommodate Vietnamese business contexts. Embedded in these motivations is a sense of being education reformers, which also reflect their responsibility to students, their *power-to*. However, there are also contested views about the extent to which they can mobilise these overseas-acquired skills and knowledge due to the learning culture and research environment. These factors, in addition to the economic necessity to accommodate living costs are significant *power-over* these academics, which they recognise as limiting their motivations to apply new teaching and learning practices.

²⁶ The average salary at entry level for academics in public universities is 3 million dong (150 USD) per month, and increases depending on years of service. It should also be noted that returnees perceive average salary to accommodate living costs in urban cities to be 7 to 8 million dong per month, which is much higher than 3 million dong reported by GSO (2013).

7.5 Cultural opportunity structures

In this section, I aim to analyse how the institutional structures of returnees' universities influence their choices and agency in their work. I discuss their choices and practices, in terms of their *habitus* of teaching and learning, which are embedded in their relations with students, colleagues and leaders, and how they appropriate their overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes to pursue their goals (research aim 2).

7.5.1 Teacher-student relationships

The majority of returnees seem to aspire to the teaching and learning environment in Western universities. Their aspirations reflect a superiority of Western teaching practices, operations of overseas universities, and appreciation of more open relationships between teachers and students and between colleagues and leaders. For these reasons, the returnees who are not under scholarship conditions prefer to work in non-public universities because these universities often operate under similar environment to overseas universities. In the below quote, Kieu who works in a non-public university, talks about the role of teachers and its influence on teaching practices;

The environment at my university is very suitable for people who return from overseas studying. The model is very similar to overseas universities. It is very different to public universities. You can follow your own style of teaching. Traditional lecturers will do traditional things like taking the roll every day, asking students to stand up and acknowledge them when they enter the classrooms. For me I do not need those things. I am used to overseas style, so in my class, it does not matter whether students turn up or not as long as they do their assignments well. Some lecturers do not let students bring water in the classroom and I let them. Overseas lecturers are casual with students and we can even share food with each other, for example, lecturers can order a whole pizza and share, and I am very comfortable to do that with my students. But other Vietnamese lecturers do not see it like that. They say that students will not respect lecturers if we do these things. There needs to be a distance. I feel overseas style of teaching is better. Kieu (HCMC, 30s)

In this reflection, Kieu refers to the Vietnamese traditional view of teacher-student relationships of didactic nature where respect is demanded to be shown by students to teachers through strict rules of behaviour in the classroom (see chapter 4, section 4.2). As a result of studying overseas, she views teacher-student relationships to be more open and equal. The ability to engage in various practices of teaching gives her the opportunity to teach

and relate to students in a more egalitarian way that is similar to overseas universities. In this comment, there seems to be an orientation of the “self” as independent from the dyadic relationships of traditional culture that is similar to the notion of freedom as envisaged by the French-educated Vietnamese bourgeois intellectuals in colonial days (see chapter 4, section 4.3 and 4.6.1). It suggests that the way Vietnamese people take on the values about “self” and independence as a result of Western education are similar across different times, and across different political contexts.

Kieu’s sentiment can be further supported by Binh, a senior member of the non-public university that Kieu works in. Here, Binh draws on the idea of “freedom” associated with foreign teaching practices, as part of reforming her university’s arrangement of physical space;

You can see in the library, we have set up places where people can lie down to read. My overseas guests and *Viet Kieu* (overseas Vietnamese) guests understand that students need to have freedom physically because it will allow them freedom in their mind. So they can lie along those places and read as they want. In the last 20 years, I have tried to implement some things that are symbolic of freedom. For example, there is no lectern in the classrooms. This is because we do not let the lecturer occupy a higher position than students. The Committee disapproved and I insisted that these initiatives are symbolic and have to be kept that way. I had to resist against people within the Committee in order to set it up. It is not easy. Binh (HCMC, 50s)

For Binh, freedom achieved through the university’s physical space and classrooms arrangement is symbolic because it fosters openness between teachers and students, and in turn, allows freedom to be conceived in the mind of students. Her emphasis on the symbolic nature of free space also suggests a resistance against the traditional values, rigidity and lack of freedom of Vietnamese universities, both at the teacher-student relationships as well as the lack of autonomous governance due to authority of the Committee. The freedom that Binh talks about and the meanings that are associated with it, seem to be about her belief in independence of the “self” to do and be as they want without adherence to behaviour rules of dyadic relationships of Vietnamese culture. The notion of freedom and egalitarian relations that Kieu and Binh value, which they seek opportunities to assert their overseas-acquired idea of “self” and freedom, gives insight into the self-orientation attributes reported in the survey results.

7.5.2 Teacher-students relations and standards of teaching practices

These overseas-educated academics view “self” and independence as a condition of quality learning. They also perceive these qualities to be lacking in Vietnamese teaching practices. Long, below, suggests that learning culture affects teacher quality. He describes a typical teaching practice in a Vietnamese university:

Quality teaching in Viet Nam is viewed as if you lecture in an easy way for students to understand. If you lecture and you entertain students, and they feel excited then that is seen as quality teaching. Many lecturers, instead of teaching students, they ask students to do their own research and then come in and do presentations. Yet they do not critique or comment on whether these presentations are right or wrong. So students do not know whether it is right or wrong. Instead of lecturers teaching or helping them to understand the issues, their friends teach them. It may seem like students have opportunities to have initiatives or independent learning but really, there is no effect, and it is really degrading. Long (HCMC, public university, 40s)

Long suggests that adopting a foreign teaching practice of allowing students to do their own research, a form of independent learning, is not effective in Viet Nam because lecturers may not have the knowledge or interest to evaluate students’ work. This is similar to Pham’s (2011) claim about the problem of applying Western conceptions of knowledge development (as noted in Chapter 4) to an education system where Vietnamese teachers have inherently different philosophical assumptions about teacher’s role in students’ learning. Long is critical of his colleagues who do not share his understanding of Western-oriented pedagogy because of their lack of knowledge about how to develop independent learning practices. While Long might understand the value of knowledge from Western perspectives that are geared towards independent learning, he highlights the difficulty of applying these ideas in a completely different learning environment. This difference in knowledge value is a point of disjuncture, a contradiction that he, as with other returnees, has to work with.

On a similar note, Cuc comments on the difficulty of teaching Vietnamese students who are used to a more didactic style of learning:

To teach, you have to have passion and light the fire. But you need the fire to kindle too in order to keep going. Unfortunately, the students are very reluctant to engage in any independent learning. They are used to being told what to do for so long that it is hard for them to have self-drive, to learn on your own. After a while, it gets difficult to try to work with so little response. Cuc (HN, public university, 30s)

Cuc is critical of the lack of Vietnamese students' ability to learn on their own, which results in her frustration and lack of motivation to continue with that style of teaching. This is similar to Long's claim that students' expectations about certain ways of learning, embedded in dyadic teacher-student relations, affect teachers' style of teaching. Both Long and Cuc perceive that accommodating to this learning culture lead to lower standards of teaching practices. They seem to share the value of independent learning from a vantage point of Western-educated person, and are frustrated because they cannot fully make use of such practices in the classroom. Their frustrations are similar with other interviewed overseas-educated academics, who have worked for a few years since returning from overseas. For some, such frustration results in their choice to "survive the academic experience while serving out their scholarship obligations" rather than consciously engage in activities of reform, even if they value such practices.

On the other hand, there are some returnees from both public and non-public universities, who claim that there is a shared value among colleagues about the superiority of Western-oriented pedagogy. According to these returnees, the shared value is not related to where an academic is trained; rather, it depends on their relations with each other. The shared value is derived from and fosters collegiality among these academics as they share teaching resources and methodologies. Kieu and Doan comment:

Here people always try to help each other, even when it comes to preparing slides we share the slides so we all teach the same slides. I want to improve my teaching so through their feedback, I can understand what I need to change and improve. Kieu (HCMC, non-public university, 30s)

When I work with people in my faculty, there is no problem, because everyone wants to work towards a shared objective. We want to do something to achieve results. So, even if we raise our own opinions they will be considered so we can achieve a shared objective. Doan (DN, public university, 20s)

In both quotes, there is a sense of collaboration and sharing of goals and values, which they see as important to allow them to apply and transfer their skills to students, and enhance educational quality by improving students. They seem to consider egalitarian relationships between academics as important to producing outcomes and improvements that meet international standards. The findings presented in this section suggest that there are different viewpoints among these academic returnees about the extent to which their colleagues share their value about Western pedagogy and thus allow them to implement teaching practices that they desire.

7.5.3 Staff-leader relations and maintenance of status quo

Echoing the literature on the challenges of higher education reform, many academic returnees feel that their relations with leaders of their universities impact the way they can take part in the education reform. They see this in two aspects: leaders' motivations and dyadic relations of staff-leader and culture of personal connections. In the below comment, Binh refers to leaders in Vietnamese universities as politically motivated, who view education as commodity to be traded between merchants;

There are many rectors of public universities of Viet Nam who are working as public administrators. There are many principals, managers and even lecturers of public universities who are public servants, not knowledge creators. So they are not really members of universities in the sense that the world understands universities. Their kind of problem solving does not enable a university to develop. University leaders are either public servants who act as loyal servants to the authority, who will be partly commercialised, or they become a worker for a capitalist system of a private university. There are big arguments between the rector and the Chair of governing committee of public university, because the law allows people with money to be leaders of academics in universities. The fact that many public universities in Viet Nam take identically the Government program rather than doing something different is because the leaders do not have any capacity or knowledge to do anything else, nor do they have any thoughts towards doing anything else. Why would they want to do anything different, they do not get anything in return? Binh (HCMC, non-public university, 50s)

In Binh's strong critique of university leaders in public universities, she perceives that leaders' resistance to reform stems from their lack of ability because they are not educated in ways that would enable them to develop students' knowledge in the way that Western universities would. Her idea of knowledge, which she refers to as "the world", is embedded in the Western ideals of universities. She suggests that without that conception of Western knowledge, knowledge could only be cultivated as commodities to be sold. There is an iterative effect of implementing reform in market oriented approach and conception of knowledge as a commodity. Furthermore, she attributes leaders' personal economic interests and political alignment with the CPV as underlying the economic approach to managing universities (see section 7.2.1 about the role of the CPV in university governance). This quote is insightful in that it reflects a historical trajectory of traditional Confucian thinking about the distinction of knowledge for its intrinsic value (see section 4.6.1), compared to the merchant operation of knowledge as an instrumental means to acquire wealth (see section 4.6.4). At the

same time, Binh highlights the predicament of returnees who might have to accommodate the political ideologies of the CPV if they want to become leaders in public universities, or working along the more marketised environment of non-public universities. Paradoxically, both sectors, according to Binh, are steeped in viewing education as commodities. I will come back to this issue in section 6 of this chapter about returnees' career pathways.

In addition, returnees perceive a gap in skills and knowledge between them and their leaders. Cuc in the below quote, gives an example of a reform process, which she sees as lacking competent program designers:

Most universities now follow the credit point system of overseas universities. However, it is still very Vietnamese. Therefore, it is a foreign model but it depends on how you apply, and your capacity. They still use the Vietnamese ways to evaluate and track students. It is not very dynamic. For example, the management model of student enrolment is still managed by specific classes, not by IDs, so it is cumbersome and slow. Here is the problem, even when there is already reform by bringing in a foreign system, they still apply it the Vietnamese way. I do not think having more people would help. It is about how you design the course program. I think it is all about the capacity, and the capacity of the person who design that program, the programming staff. Cuc (HN, public university, 30s)

Cuc's comment is similar to Long's earlier criticism about the failure of locally-trained academics to apply Western teaching practices. Cuc perceives leaders' lack of capacity and experience in reforming education, and ambiguity of policies aims and implementation, as a problem of HERA. Her comment gives insight into the challenge that is consistently reported in critiques of Viet Nam higher education reform as noted earlier in section 7.2.2. As Hayden and Lam (2010) noted, what is in the policy of reform does not translate to practices but interpreted and in the context of Viet Nam, can be anything that leaders see as appropriate. The frustration for Cuc is that her idea of enabling reform is limited by a lack of shared understanding by leaders about the solutions to the problems. Moreover, she seems to see leaders' lack of capacity to implement appropriate solutions as a knowledge gap between her and them. As with returnees in the "professional" field, there seems to be a distinction with overseas education that these overseas-educated academics perceive in terms of skills and knowledge that differentiates them from their leaders.

Yet, maintaining personal connections with leaders is paramount in Vietnamese universities, as with those in the business environment. This is well understood by these returnees. Many, particularly those who held senior positions prior to studying overseas or are

interested in management pathways, feel that their time abroad disrupted opportunities to create personal connections (*quan he*) with leaders and colleagues that is critical in Vietnamese universities for promotion. The promotion process in universities is based on an election and voting by other colleagues and students, which in practice are embedded in the culture of connections where favours are granted through networks and personal connections. Since many academics have disrupted their connections whilst overseas, they encounter more difficulties than those who do not study overseas in terms of promotion opportunities. Therefore, they feel the need to improve their relational power with leaders. The below quote by Doan illustrates the relational power arising from opaque process of performance evaluation based on connections and affiliation with colleagues and leaders, and her frustration in the situation;

The promotion process is not clear. It depends on the valuation of my boss, the Dean, the Minister or the Rector. To me it is not clear because there is no form, no assessment that is written. Actually, colleagues may value me, but not really in formal ways. The valuation is not done in a formal way. For example, they listen to gossips - what everyone is saying - and sometimes subjective opinion of the boss and they will assess me. During the performance meetings, people give opinions of other people in some ways, but nothing is clear and formal. What people say to each other is based on their relationships with each other. Criteria are not set out clearly, but everyone somehow knows. Doan (DN, public university, 20s)

Doan's recount of the evaluation by the group suggests that the personal relationships that underlie the evaluation process create different power positions. The opaqueness of the process and lack of formal procedures result in different understandings of the rules of the evaluation, and highly unequal power relations.

These personal relations and social hierarchies of staff-leader create social distance between returnees and their leaders. They also lead to conflicting agendas for these returnees because they are obliged to follow their leaders' pathways in order to access opportunities that enable them to do something they feel is useful of overseas learning. At the same time, they feel frustrated in having to adapt to this environment and recognise that in adapting, they implicate themselves in the process of entrenching the status quo of a system that they are critical of. As Thinh says:

In order for us to be able to get things done, our relationships with leaders are very important. For example, I had to persuade them to let us organise the first class to introduce innovative ideas. Then we have to maintain relationship with them so that they

do not object to it, because sometimes they might not understand or are not aware about those things because they have never done it before, because they are from a different generation, and because it affects some people's vested interests. They feel their power is being affected if new ideas are introduced and they do not understand these ideas, so there will be some objections. Thinh (Hue, public university, 30s)

In this comment, Thinh recognises the impact of his relationship with his leaders on his actions, not only how it shapes his choice and immediate actions, but that it can bring about possibilities for future actions. His accommodation to the social hierarchies of his leaders is adaptive, but also a strategic deliberation to create pathways for him that can lead to future opportunities.

Similar to the practical experiences of returnees in the “professional” field, the cultural opportunity structures that these overseas-educated academics perceive as feasible intersect with their resource opportunity structures. Their power resources are mobilised when their colleagues and leaders share and validate their value of Western teaching and learning practices, which enhance their *power-within* the university. They recognise that there are contested knowledge conceptions, views about teacher-student and staff-leader relations, between their universities and their overseas-acquired perspectives. They respond by - to some extent - adapting to these cultural norms, and in so doing, they also recognise the limits – at least in the near term - of their ability to implement reformist teaching practices. The need to adapt to the cultural norms of student learning and leaders is the *power-over* them, which limits their freedom to do what they value and see as necessary to improve the higher education system. However, they also see their co-optation with the institutional structures as ways for them to connect and gain support from leaders which will enhance their power positions to engage in opportunities that they otherwise could not. Adaptation and accepting co-optation is their power struggle, but it also signifies their *power-to* because it allows them to have the autonomy and procedural control in specific situations to achieve small changes in the short term.

7.6 Career opportunity structures

In this section, I aim to discuss the returnees' practical experiences in relation to achieved personal and social changes in their work practices, and how these achievements influence their values of and participation in higher education reform in the long term (research aim 3).

7.6.1 Personal and social change: achieved functionings and well-being

The survey responses show that the average salary of the 85 respondents in this sector is 7 million dong (350 USD), with 24 respondents earning over 13 million dong (650 USD) per month, and only 4 respondents earning 3 million dong (150 USD) or below. Conversations with some academics reveal that the entry level of salary for academics is 3 million dong per month and increases according to the number of years in service. The average individual salary reported by VHLSS (2013) is 3 million dong per month for urban areas. The income levels of academics in this study are much higher compared to reported national statistics and average salary of university academics. However, as shown in previous sections, returnees perceive the low salary structure to be ongoing economic challenges for them, so it seems that these earned income levels are neither achieved functionings nor achieved well-being.

These returnees view achieved functionings in terms of teaching transferable (soft) skills to Vietnamese students, and using their English skills to translate texts or directly teach non-core subjects. They achieve well-being when they are able to apply overseas-acquired teaching practices and knowledge because they see themselves as education reformers, who can enable change in teaching practices and enhance quality of education in line with the standards of overseas universities and visions of HERA, and gain economic benefits in return. There seems to be a connection between personal and social change vis-à-vis application and transfer of overseas-acquired skills and knowledge. While there are some initiatives by returnees to encourage new ideas to be taught, their achieved functionings entail a combination of struggles and achievements. Often, the results are not what the returnees want to implement but only part of the solution to manage the expectation of their leaders, so as to enable them to have opportunities in the future. As Thinh says:

It is like this, I have many aspirations for change, but when I put through my recommendations, I have been told that unless I change the objectives then I cannot get them through. I think if I want change in absolute ways, I have to get at the roots of the problem. If I go around and around then it will take a long time. Thus for me personally, I am not that satisfied because I can see the root of the problem, but I cannot make changes yet. Therefore, I am still in a circle. In regards to the things that I have been able to do, then I am happy to have done that. I am satisfied with these small changes. Especially that the young generation respond to these changes, and the leaders who have their heart in these things, they recognise that too. Thinh (Hue, public university, 30s)

Thinh's comment suggests that he has ownership of his choices and actions, because he "reasons" about the situation and in response to that situation - which also calls on his past experiences as dispositions to making certain choices. Moreover, he perceives that he is making an impact on his students. He exercises agency based on "reasoned" choice made in recognition of his subjectivities to his surrounding structures and relations. He recognises the institutional formal structures (his career pathway) and informal structures (his relationships with his leader and students). This suggests his recognition of the *power-over* him, while appropriating his connections with leaders to foster his *power-within* the university. While he may not be able to do what he desires immediately, which might seem as reduced agency in Sen's idea of effective agency, he is increasing the possibilities for him to enable change in future actions.

Each returnee's story is different in terms of the extent to which he/she can achieve some forms of functionings that depends on his/her immediate situation. However, there seems to be a *consciousness* (Bourdieu 1998) of their values, goals and responsibilities as academics, their struggles, resistance and frustration from competing agenda of personal economic interests and upholding their ideals of knowledge and educational reform. The below quote by Hoa illustrates how she views social change through the achievement of small changes in daily tasks, and at the same time adapting to the environment, which in turn creating the momentum for the *power-to*;

If overseas-educated people can adapt, then they might go with the flow, be humble, perhaps by contributing to their daily tasks and not having too much expectations, and not sticking to their initial expectations and endeavours. In other words, be practical, try to be good at the small tasks to prove themselves, understanding that such organisational culture has existed for hundreds of years and they cannot change in a day or two. Hoa (HCMC, Van's sister)

7.6.2 Empowerment for personal and social change

Given the limitations in enabling change in teaching practices or transferring disciplinary knowledge learnt from overseas directly through teaching and researching, and economic challenges, many returnees see management pathways within their department as their career opportunity structures. They see management roles as ways that they can enhance their power positions to allow them to take opportunities in engaging in IPPs, business consultancies rather than teaching, in order to gain more income. These management roles are their ways to

appropriate their cultural opportunity structures, particularly to connect with leaderships of universities, and through Party membership.

This management pathway is also a contradictory aspiration for some returnees, particularly those with PhDs, who sees the value in research. Overseas-educated academics with doctoral qualifications are incentivised to take up positions in management because these roles are perceived to be the right pathway by senior management in universities. As Tibbetts (2007) noted, given the dyadic relationships between staff and leaders, and the need to behave in accordance with these relationships (see chapter 4, section 4.2), people are expected to follow the norms and being harmonised with the mass. While these academics may see research as a valuable activity, they are not encouraged to take this up as a career choice. Thinh explains below about the choices that academics with PhDs consider in their consideration of management positions:

Actually the cases of people who only focus on research and do not enter management are very rare, almost there is none at my university. Say when you come back here with a PhD. There should be a research environment for you. However, a PhD tends to get a management role, but when you are in management you stay very far away from research. People do not value research, but they value management and personal connections that come with a management role. If you are a research expert, then this depends on the situation. But when there is no one, you have to take management role because if you are a Party member then you have to service what the Party says. Secondly, if you do not want to participate in management then you have to bear the pressure that people think that you have a problem or some kind of issue with leaders. Thirdly, you will only do research if you have the power to propose a research project, and really that is very difficult to do at the moment. Thinh (Hue, public university, 30s)

Thinh highlights the pertinent issues of not just a lack of research capacity of the universities, but rather the need to co-opt with leaders. This co-optation stems from the social norms of the institution but also the expectation to be loyal to the Party, who has governance over the university (see discussion in 7.2.1). This suggests an intertwined connection between political norms and social norms in the career opportunity constructs of these returnees, that is not often observed in literature about Viet Nam's higher education. While literature tends to view low research capability of Vietnamese universities because of a lack of infrastructure and research support or funding, Thinh's story suggests more nuances in the political governance of universities and career interests of academics. The culture of following political and institutional norms (*habitus*) predisposes returnees to engage in the activities that accord with

the norms, which they do in *consciousness* that their actions perpetuate that *habitus* (Grenfell 2008). In this way, it can be a form of cultural and social reproduction rather than empowerment for change.

On the other hand, there are those with Master qualifications, who may seek PhD qualification as a way to access management because they lack connections. Here, there is an instrumental value for PhD for jobs access rather than research capability. These returnees seem to struggle with their lack of privilege as overseas educated compared to Viet Nam-educated in terms of the power positions in the universities. This sense of disadvantage motivates them to pursue doctorate qualifications as a way to return overseas or to access management roles. As Diep says:

PhD is important for me because I cannot join the Party due to my family background, I cannot do research or hope to get to management through the process of promotion. But a PhD will allow me that route. Diep (Hue, public university, 20s)

As Diep is not part of a Revolutionary family, that is families with history of belonging to Viet Minh and Communist Party (see chapter 4, section 4.4), she is not able to become a Party member. Her lack of political connections, in addition to institutional constraints, foster an instrumental value for a research degree rather than the intrinsic value of research as a form of knowledge production. This is another form of *power-over* for some of these returnees. The paradox of power is that while some of these returnees see themselves as knowledge actors who have the *power-to* enable educational reform, they succumb to “making it” economically by means of their PhD. Despite their values and responsibilities towards students in terms of enabling new forms of teaching and learning practices, they make their career decisions based on their perception of lack of opportunities in teaching and researching because of its lack of status, a lack of support through funding and institutional structures and a lack of personal economic returns. The *power-over* presents significant challenges for returnees to commit to their overseas-acquired ideals of teaching practices. Many feel that it is difficult to see teaching and researching as career opportunity structures that they can access and sustain their economic well-being or improve education itself in the long term. Thus, some see management pathways as ways to alleviate the teaching workloads and also to acquire higher salaries, and engage in consultancy activities outside universities. Cuc’s comment below is an example of a returning academic’s dilemma of choosing to serve their university, work for a non-public university, or leave academia altogether. In this comment, she is referring to the

obligations of scholarship holders to work for their universities for a number of years upon their return, otherwise they have to repay their scholarship fundings;

There are those who have worked in the country before studying abroad through government scholarships [funded] by either Vietnamese or a foreign government. When they come back, they tend to want to break away to work outside. Cuc (HN, public university, 30s)

Moreover, as Hong reflects below, there is a risk that over time people may lose that ability to see the opportunities; they may internalise the subordinate power positions and will not be able to exert agency at all.

When they come back here, the environment makes them lose their will, they dwindle. The good ones would just do what they can, and give up if it does not work. In addition, the bad ones even stop immediately and follow the old habit, since it is easier for them. So that is quite sad. That is why I am saying it takes a long time for real change to happen because no one wants to live a difficult life. Hong (HN, public university, 50s)

In this comment, Hong emphasises the point that if returnees do not have the agency freedom to develop what they see as valuable, the intrinsic value of agency may be lost and over time, they may adapt to the environment and lose the motivation for enabling change.

7.6 Conclusion: Summary of findings and implications

In this chapter, I have examined the choices and practices of returnees in the “intellectual” field of higher education. I now summarise the key findings and their implications in regards to the transformative potential of overseas education for returnees and their universities, and offer some theoretical implications for conceptualising *normative agency*.

The overseas-educated academics’ practical experiences highlight conflicted ideas about their role as educators in relation to their students, colleagues and leaders. These differences do not seem to be attributable to gender, types of qualifications or place of living. However, returnees who are older and have worked in the universities before going overseas, seem to express more frustrations about the systems and their ability to implement overseas-acquired teaching practices. While the overseas-acquired skills and attributes that these returnees seem to be able to leverage as cultural capital are similar to that in the “professional” field, there is much more evidence of symbolic capital associated with Western superiority of knowledge and teaching and learning practices. This reflects the colonial history of Viet Nam, as much as it is a result of their overseas education in Western

universities. Their values of the “self” and knowledge seem to conflict between the intrinsic value of knowledge for the development of the self, and the instrumental reasoning of applying knowledge for economic returns. These returnees may choose to follow their leaders to gain power positions for their own economic interests as well as to seek opportunities for change. Their practices thus suggest appropriation of Western ideas, and acknowledging the limitation of their application in the Vietnamese universities. They act out their role as knowledge producers as well as reproducing the structures that they are critical of, and in that process implicate themselves in the hegemony of Western knowledge by emphasising and normalising the superiority of Western knowledge and practices.

The returnees’ reasoning of their career choices in the long term suggests dim chance of depoliticising or deinstitutionalising the power of leaders that govern Vietnamese public universities. While leadership positions and structures tend to be quite entrenched in university institutions in many countries, the social conditions in which these returnees encounter, which shape their opportunities, choices and practices are different in Viet Nam’s higher education sector. The CPV has a role in the university governance, and Party membership is a means of progressing career pathways, and gaining power and privilege. Along with that, returnees also encounter resistance by established cohorts of administrators who are determined to defend their turf against any changes that might threaten their positions. This finding echoes Zweig’s claims of “conservative firewalls against the inculcation of Western norms that returnees are accustomed to” (Zweig & Yang 2014, p. 260).

Despite the challenges of enabling reform in ways that they see as valuable, some returnees make small changes by collaborating with colleagues and establishing connections with their leaders who share their ideals of teaching and learning. Even though their aspirations for education reform are to improve student learning and development, they conceive power within the hierarchical relationships with senior leaders who set the agenda in their universities rather than at the grassroots level. They are conscious that their actions, which align with existing power structures, may limit empowerment for real reform of higher education as developing quality education. At the same time, they see conformity to cultural and political norms is a form of agency to gain procedural control, or autonomy, to acquire future opportunities. Even though these conforming practices might result in changed teaching and learning practices, they also enhance institutional rigidity and patriarchal leadership of Vietnamese public universities that might not sustain the momentum required for long-term social change.

These findings reinforce the conceptual implications I offered in chapter 6 in regards to theorising *normative agency* for empowerment in the following ways. First, the idea of power structures is essential to understanding the returnees' dispositions to making choices. In this chapter, I have shown that their choices and practices are bound in the relationships and procedures of managing relationships with students and leaders, because these are necessary social capital to mobilise their cultural capital in the sector (field) and particular university (subfield), as well as meeting their goals. Thus, I argue that Sen's (1985) *opportunity* aspect of agency can be seen in term of the person's relationships with others, not external to her. As with the findings presented in chapters 5 and 6, the idea of *intersubjective freedom* is useful in analysing overseas-educated academics because it considers their conception of freedom within their surrounding social structures and social relations. Their motivations are influenced by what others consider as valuable, and their choices are influenced by others' perception of the cultural capital associated with their owned skills and knowledge.

The idea of *intersubjective freedom* is useful to understand how these overseas-educated academics mediate between: (1) their sense of responsibility as an educator, a form of personal accountability to teach in ways that they see valuable, which comes after their freedom is exercised; and (2) their obligations to accord with their leaders, prospective responsibility that construct their freedom (Ballet et al. 2008; Dubois 2010). *Intersubjective freedom* also allows us to understand the returnees' contested ideas of the "self" as individual with independence and freedom from Vietnamese tradition of dyadic relationships, and the "self" as part of the institutional structure. These contested ideas of responsibility and "self" shape these returnees' values about their role as educators and knowledge makers, and construct their choices. As with the returnees in the "professional" field, these overseas-educated academics may have expanded choices theoretically as a result of overseas education, but the actual choices that they take are embedded in the relations with others.

The returnees' experiences in their universities also highlight the *process* aspect of agency as practices based on their situational power, and how they enhance their power positions by gaining shared values of their overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes. They do so by developing personal relationships with their leaders or through shared practices with their colleagues as a form of social capital. Thus, I argue that there is an intimate link between individual agency and collective agency. The more significant social relations act as *power-over*, as in the case of these returnees, the more individual agency (*power-to*) is

dependent on collective agency (*power-within*). Furthermore, as the returnees' practical experiences suggest, *power-within* is necessary for *power-to*, but may result in maintaining *power-over*, and limits the chance for empowerment in the long run.

Lastly, the choices and actions of these overseas-educated academics highlight that reflexivity in "reasoning" of values is essential to break out of these conventions and seize agency freedom. Reflexivity in the process of "reasoning values" offer insights into the power distance between returnees and their students, colleagues and leaders in terms of utilising their overseas-acquired resources to enable change in their work as an educator and reformer. As discussed in section 7.6.2, returnees' choices of their long-term career, suggest their *consciousness* of the influence of their university environment upon their choices, and that their actions may enhance those structures and relations that produce those choices and actions in the first place. In other words, they recognise that there are serious limitations to the changes that they can enable because of their choices, and at the same time, they also see these choices as potential for changes because they enhance their power positions in the field. In other words, they are not only influenced by values but can shape and forge them in new ways. Thus, I argue that such reflexivity is an indication of their perception of opportunities as much as missed opportunities. I now turn to the returnees' practical experiences in the "civic" field to further explore these concepts of *normative agency* and empowerment.

8 Practical experiences in the “civic” field

8.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the practical experiences of Vietnamese overseas-educated returnees in the “civic” field of community work. To address the research aims, I examine the choices and practices of returnees in community work, how they utilise their overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes to enable personal and social change as they see valuable.

This chapter is organised as follows. In the next section, I present a brief overview of the nature of community organisations and civic culture in Viet Nam. The aim is to provide some background contexts for analysing the returnees’ engagement in community work. I will then present a summary of the types of community organisations that the returnees belong to and their level and kind of participation (section 3). Section 4 discusses the *resource opportunity structures* that returnees perceive as feasible in terms of their overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes. I will show that agency *opportunity* relates to returnees’ sense of civic “self” and social responsibility, and their past experiences in doing volunteer work overseas, which are appropriated within the Vietnamese conception of community and civic actions. In section 5, I analyse the returnees’ practices in terms of their *cultural opportunity structures*. I will show that they engage in community work mainly through personal networks rather than formal organisations. Their *process* of agency involves mediating opposing ideas from members of their community groups, and adherence to the political culture and social hierarchies within these groups, which limit their achieved outcomes. However, it seems that their long-term commitment to community work draws on the intrinsic value of doing good for others and sustained through the social space of personal relationships, rather than seeking to achieve social changes (section 6). In concluding the chapter (section 7), I summarise the key findings and offer some implications for the research aims and theoretical contributions.

8.2 The nature of community and civic culture in Viet Nam

This section provides a brief summary of the types of community organisations and community activities in Viet Nam. I expand on the discussion about State-society relations,

civil actions and democracy in chapter 4 (section 4.4), to help understanding the structure of the “civic” field, and the dispositions of returnees in engaging in community work in Viet Nam.

8.2.1 Mass organisations and NGOs

As noted in chapter 4, Mass Organisations is the most popular form of formal community organisations in Viet Nam. Under the umbrella of the Viet Nam Father Front (VFF), mass organisations are controlled but not formally part of the government (Wells-Dang, 2012). They operate as Party cells in workplaces, in the neighbourhood, as unions in various sectors, or social groups like “War Veterans”, “War Heroes”, “Women’s Groups” and “Youth Groups” (Wischermann 2010). Both the VFF and these mass organisations have the dual function of allowing citizens to voice their concerns to the State and at the same time, pre-empting the emergence of associations autonomous from the State, or activities that maybe hostile to the State Socialist ideologies (Shanks et al. 2004). Thus, Thayer (1992) claimed that Viet Nam State is a form of mono-organisation socialism, with little scope for organisation of activities independent of Party-led command structures. According to Turley (1993b), social forces may influence State decisions but only through organisations where the State dominates, a phenomenon often referred to as “State corporatism”. An example of this is the media, which is largely controlled by the Government, where there is a mild form of activism mainly serving to voice various perspectives of State officials (Heng 2004). This model of mass organisations as civic organisations and State corporatism is distinctly different to the Western model of civil society where the State, civil society and families operate in separate spheres (Wright 2015). Yet, there is some evidence that pressures from citizens and the State’s lack of resources to implement changes have led to some negotiations between various parts of the State and society (Kerkvliet 2001; Saleminck 2006) (see also chapter 4, section 4.4.1).

In Viet Nam, the term “Party”, “State” and “Government” are understood as the Central Party-state. Challenging the Central Party-state is challenging the entire political system and is treated as treason against the State (Nguyen 2008). It is permissible to work for social services or for the benefits of a constituency, as long as one is not promoting alternative hostile policy to the Central Party-state (Hannah 2007). Being political is seen as engaging in activities that undermine the Marxist-Leninist ideology that underpins the State (Hannah 2007). Civic actions that are organised through international and local NGOs are non-political

and less sensitive to Socialist ideologies (Hannah 2007). For example, international NGOs tend to limit their work toward service provisions, poverty reliefs and some advocacy works, especially in areas such as micro-credit and in the support of local NGOs that do not challenge the State's political status quo (Nguyen 2008). Development agencies, including Vietnamese NGOs, may engage in humanitarian activities and provision of social services, support the health, education and poverty relief policies of the State (Wells-Dang 2012). The degree of tolerance by the State towards these NGOs depends on whether the programs are seen as fitting in with the Party's idea of "socialisation", that is to develop welfare at the household level. These NGOs may have some autonomy in running these programs but are always tied up with administrative official surveillance and patronage and "minding" (Wells-Dang 2012). From the reform policy of *Doi Moi* in 1986, followed by *Xa Hoi Hoa* (chapter 4 and 6), there has been a growth of formal and informal societal groups (Heng 2004). According to Wischermann (2010), there were 1,453 community organisations based in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City as of April 2009, a 106 per cent growth from 706 organisations in 2003.

8.2.2 Nature of civic and political participation

Under this socio-political landscape, and drawing on a historical trajectory of State-society relations (see chapter 4), the nature of civic and political engagement in Viet Nam reflects diverse attitudes (Dalton & Ong 2003). On the one hand, the Socialist culture associated with nationalism, charismatic leadership, and Party-people relationships foster a culture of obedience to the State authority and a general expectation that the government is responsible for addressing social needs (Nguyen 2008). On the other hand, Confucian ethics cultivate that the authorities must be trustworthy to their people, act in people's interests and people have the right to overthrow leaders if the leaders display lack of virtue. According to Nguyen (2008), the Vietnamese State's socialisation policies, evident in rhetoric such as "People are the roots of the country", presupposes and appropriates these Confucian ideas. While these might suggest a democratic discourse in political participation (see chapter 4), in practice, civic actions are usually enacted by political elites with emphasis on loyalty and support of existing social order because of fear of instability (Khong 1995; Tu 1984). There is also evidence to suggest that families that are economically better, especially those in the North, are usually those who have positions of authority both as Party committee members who can

parlay their positions to economic functions and success in various State organisations (Porter 1993).

For the common Vietnamese people, as opposed to the political elites, Confucian ethics are internalised within the traditional community and the family, where practices are grounded in being responsible for their own lives and working hard to improve their immediate economic future, rather than trusting the Government to provide for them (see chapter 4, section 4.5.1). This is also evident in the returnees' economic objectives underpinned by family responsibilities (chapters 5 to 7).

The practices of community work take place through various forms of formal and informal organisations that have structural ties to the State or connect with State officials. Association with the State in community work is considered the norms because of the pervasive presence of the State in formal institutions (Hudson 2003; Uphoff 2003; Wischermann 2005). Even though the State is conscious of adopting the Western idea of civil society that is promoted by Western international donors, its policies, enacted through VFF and its mass organisations, with tight monitoring of NGOs, remain firmly on the ground of the State maintaining key control of citizens' prerogatives to organise and act publicly on important social issues (Carothers & Ottoway 2005; Hart 2002; Jenkins 2001; Kervliet 2005; Marr 1994). These interactions between Party officials and citizens, in turn, create the blurred distinction between State and society and often deter people who are not politically engaged from participating in these organisations altogether because they do not want to be involved with the State. In addition, there is a deliberate keeping of distance from the State by some because they do not trust the State's intentions (Khong 1995).

Noting the returnees' overseas-acquired self-orientation, opportunities seeking and sense of personal accountability as discussed in the last three chapters, yet with a lack of motivation to engage in community work (as discussed in chapter 5), I will examine how they may respond to these socio-political conditions and take choices and actions in community work. I will now briefly describe the types of community organisations that the returnees are involved, before I turn to the analysis of their practical experiences in community work.

8.3 Overview of returnees' engagement in community work

8.3.1 Types of organisations

The survey responses show a high number of returnees who have membership in community organisations (see Table 8.1). This is consistent with the reporting of the World Values Survey (2011) about the high per capita density of membership in community organisations in Viet Nam. As Table 8.1 shows, the majority of returnees in this research have membership in overseas universities alumni groups, followed by professional associations. This is not surprising given the returnees' motivations and goals of overseas education are mainly associated with work and career development (see chapters 5, 6 and 7). The high number of membership in alumni groups may also be because alumni groups were directly approached to recruit respondents (see chapter 3, section 3.3.1). Membership in humanitarian services organisations ranks third. This may be because mass organisations, particularly unions are embedded in most workplaces. Academics at universities are often required to participate in union activities as part of their work duties, which tend to be in humanitarian services. Community services and political groups have the least number of returnees holding membership.

Type of community organisation	Number of participants who are members of a community organisation n	Percentage of participants who are members of community organisation %	Percentage of participants who participate occasionally %	Percentage of participants who participate frequently %
Overseas education alumni groups	196	70	51	19
Professional associations	162	58	42	16
Humanitarian services	160	57	47	10
Sports and Recreation	143	51	39	16
Arts and Music	129	46	36	10
Community services	124	44	37	7
Political groups	41	15	10	5

Table 8.1: Membership in community groups by types of community organisation. N=280

Table 8.1 also shows that even though there is a high level of membership, participation in these organisations is passive across all types of community organisations. In this chapter, the term passive refers to occasional participation, and active refers to frequent

participation. The terms “occasional” and “frequent” are used in the survey.²⁷ In humanitarian services organisations, 47 per cent of total survey respondents participate occasionally, compared to 10 percent frequently; in community services, 37 per cent of total survey respondents participate occasionally, yet only 7 per cent participate frequently; in political groups, the ratio is less at 10 per cent of respondents who occasionally participate compared to 5 per cent who frequent participate. This may be due to strict requirement for attendance to Party meetings as a Party member. However, given a lack of research data about community activities in Viet Nam, it is difficult to assess whether the returnees’ reported participation levels are indicative of the level and kind of Vietnamese community participation.

In this thesis, as noted in chapter 3, community work in the “civic” field, or civic engagement refers to participation in humanitarian services, community services and political groups. Thus, the sampling criteria for selecting interviewees from survey respondents only included these three types of community groups. There are no apparent differences in the participation level in these three types of community groups across employment sectors, gender, educational qualifications or place of living. As presented in Table 3.6 in chapter 3, out of the 21 selected interviewees, 5 returnees do not participate or belong to any community organisations. For the remaining 16, there are 2 who engage in community work on a frequent basis, the other 14 take part occasionally in annual activities organised through their work or friends. Out of the 27 members of key interviewees' networks, there are 4 people, who actively participate in community work on a voluntary basis, and one in paid work capacity (3 are colleagues of returnees' community groups).

In summary, out of the total 48 interviewees, six participate actively in their community groups. Of these six people, two (1 male and female) participate regularly in a large international NGO that aims to raise funds to improve lives of disadvantaged children. They also participate in another Vietnamese NGO with similar objectives. Two interviewees (1 male and female) engage weekly in an informal group that promotes AIDs education and support for people with HIV. One (female) works for a registered educational group, which provides literacy development and support to young children outside of Viet Nam’s formal education system. One (female) works for a national NGO, which is a member of an international organisation that provides humanitarian services. The experiences of community work and quotes used in this chapter draw mainly on the interview data with these six interviewees. There are no apparent gender differences in their experiences, and the sample

²⁷ In Vietnamese language, the terms “occasional” and “frequent” are quite specific in meaning: occasional literally translates to once or twice a year, and frequent means regularly.

size of six is too small to warrant any significant differences among the interviewees. The aim of this chapter is to explore their choices and practical experiences in their community participation. The discussion on returnees' choices of participating in community work draws on interview data with all interviewees.²⁸

8.4 Resource opportunity structures

This section aims to further explore the two factors shaping returnees' values, motivations and expectations of their overseas-acquired education as discussed in chapter 5: (1) the usefulness of overseas-acquired skills for returnees in their community activities; and (2) the impact of the "self" attributes and "independence" on returnees' participation in community work (research aim 1). I will first discuss the survey results and further explore them using the interview data.

8.4.1 Summary of survey responses

As explained in chapter 3, the survey asked respondents about the types of skills, knowledge and attributes that they acquired overseas as well as those that are required in their community work. The skills and knowledge indicators were the same as for their work (see chapter 6 for explanation of the categories of indicators). Contrary to both the "professional" and "intellectual" fields where these skills and attributes are generally matched, there is a surplus of skills across all categories in the three community groups, except for "getting along with people" in the political group. Surplus of skills means the respondents' responses to "acquired" are higher than "required". The surplus of skills across all groups suggests that these types of skills, knowledge and attributes may not be as useful in community work as in the workplace.

Figure 8.1 shows the number of respondents (that frequently participate in the three community organisations in this field), who indicated skills surplus for each of the skills indicator. For example, there are 4 respondents in community services who indicated a skills surplus in "problem solving", compared to 2 respondents in humanitarian services and 6 in political groups.

Figure 8.1 suggests that there is less skills surplus in transferable (soft) skills compared to self-orientation and self-application attributes. Attributes of "self-awareness" and "working independently" report the highest surplus, which suggest that these attributes may

²⁸ As noted in the last two chapters, sample bias due to the method of recruiting participants limits strong conclusions about the findings presented in this chapter

not be useful in community work. Given the above discussion about the Vietnamese preference for informal-networks based community work, this might suggest that the culture of community work maybe more collective based with less emphasis on self-orientation. Similarly, “conforming to rules” rank highly in skills surplus; this may suggest that the nature of community work and informal networks have less rules and regulations, compared to the workplace. Teaching and training also rank highly which may be reflective of the types of work they do in the community groups. Core (hard) skills including technology and technical skills rank highly which also suggest that these types of skills are not as useful. This result is similar to the workplace.

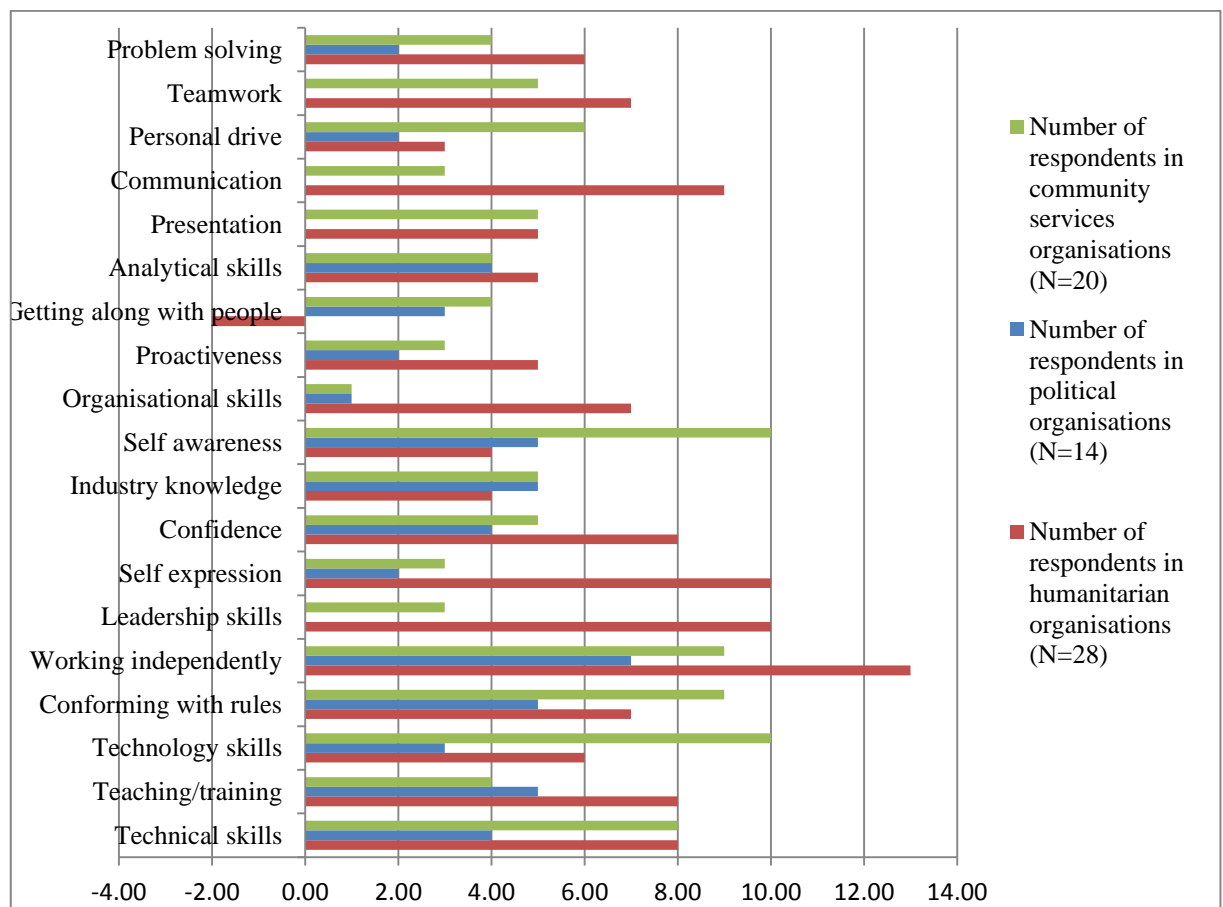


Fig 8.1: Types of overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes compared to community work requirement

Figure 8.1 also suggests that most skills surplus is in community services, followed by humanitarian services. Political groups seem to have the least skills surplus in various skills indicators, particularly in soft skills such as “team work”, “communication”, “presentation”, “leadership skills”; with “getting along with people” shows a skills shortfall. This suggests that the types of activities in political groups maybe different to community services or humanitarian services, or that the required communication skills are different. Since this research does not set out to examine each type of community group or compare them, there is

no further analysis in this regards. Furthermore, there are only two interviewees who speak about skills utilisation in community work, and a very small number of survey respondents who frequently participate in community work across all groups. In fact, two choose to participate in community work to acquire skills they do not have. I will come back to this issue in the next section on institutional structures. I now discuss how these self-attributes are perceived by returnees using the interview data.

8.4.2 “Self” attributes

8.4.2.1 Independent living skills: impact on the goal of community work

It seems that overseas-acquired attributes of “self”, “independence” and “confidence” (see chapter 5), influence the returnees’ viewpoint about the goal of community work in regards to social development. They see community work to be about developing capacity of the poor to enable them to be independent in their own lives rather than just providing short-term aid that create culture of dependency. This attitude is coherent with their proactive attribute, which they perceive to be contrary to the Vietnamese mentality of accepting the situation and reluctant to take up initiatives to help themselves. As Quan comments below, his idea of helping others involves developing skills and competency of a person to participate in society. This is different to the Vietnamese approach of giving money to the poor as a way of solving the problem;

Most Vietnamese people think that raising money is good. But they don’t think what a person can do with that money because actually, it is not much. It does not solve any problem. When I went abroad, I found that Germany’s environment taught me to save and spend money worthily. When I returned, I thought that I should have something to help disadvantaged people, to support them. I want to let them know that I help them develop capacity to earn money later by themselves and this is better than giving them money now. Quan (HCMC, Manufacturing, 30s)

While the underlying focus is still about economic objectives, Quan highlights the importance of training and teaching others skills to enable them to gain independence. As with the goals of those working in universities, Quan sees applying overseas-acquired attributes, especially in resourcefulness, durable agency, self-development, and transferring them to others as valuable for his and others’ well-being.

Similarly, in the quote below, Thanh highlights the difference between the Vietnamese mentality of short term benefits by giving money, compared to overseas-educated graduates who think of the long term development of capacity building and future opportunities;

In Viet Nam, people tend to think that if people do not have enough means then giving them money will help them to survive. But they may survive for one week rather than one month. Overseas graduates do not think about helping people to survive in one week, they think about how to help them to survive and develop. It is my own view. Also, if someone loses their house then others will help to build a “house of love”, but I think even after they have a “house of love”, and both husband and wife don’t have jobs then it’s the same. So why don’t we create opportunities for them to earn their living so that they can use those earnings to build their own house? When people go overseas, they tend to see things from a long-term perspective compared to people in Viet Nam. Thanh (HCMC, Banking, 20s)

The objective of community work seems to be about practical use of overseas-acquired skills and knowledge. For example, Quang feels that the purpose of his community work is to provide something useful for the everyday life of people in need: “I use my knowledge from my overseas education to create software to provide information. I want to give pregnant women relevant information and knowledge through my software”. This practical approach to applying skills may also be shaped by returnees’ community work experiences while studying overseas. As the comments below suggest, the opportunities that Thanh and Bach see and take up come from the experiences that they had overseas;

Well, the impact of oversea study may depend on school that people attended. If there is a strong charity activities system, the school places students in these activities. Certainly, the more I did, the more familiar I was with and I learned more. Therefore, the school had a certain impact. I think after studying overseas, you can realise that doing community work is simple, does not cost much, and does not take much time. Thanh (HCMC, Banking, 20s)

When I was at university, I also taught English to Burmese refugees. In the beginning, I did it as a social event because university students have free time. However, when I started the work, I realised how people appreciated the work that I did, then I realised that I could do things to help other people, which did not take much of my time. Also, there are many opportunities overseas to do community work, more than in Viet Nam. Bach (HCMC, IT, 20s)

These comments suggest that the direct experiences of participating in community work overseas shape their conception of community work beyond the Vietnamese idea of helping

others mainly through donations. Moreover, such experiences enable them to see that their work can contribute and make a difference in society, which is similar to the work-ready attributes that returnees acquired from internship programs offered in overseas universities. As noted by Thanh above, this may depend on the universities that they attended.

8.4.2.2. Individualisation and social responsibility

The idea of “self” development also links with returnees’ sense of “individualisation” where they see themselves as separate to their families. As discussed in chapter 4 (section 4.3) and chapter 5 (section 5.6.2), these notions of self and individualisation are similar to the freedom associated with Enlightenment values that French-educated nationalists embraced when they returned to Viet Nam in the colonial period, and even earlier Vietnamese traditions of self-determination. In other words, they stem from the Vietnamese *habitus* that have historical trajectory of colonialisation, rather than something newly acquired from overseas education. Overseas education may have enhanced returnees’ sense of individualism, which has always been a characteristic of Vietnamese society. For some returnees, this is significant because it allows them to gain a sense of membership in their wider community beyond their families, and with that a sense of social responsibility. Hai says:

I have a comparative view of things, and am able to choose my own path based on the refinement of different perspectives and values. What is important for me is to do things that are useful for me as well as the community, including not only my family but society at large. I do not necessarily follow the majority, or what society considers valuable, but following what I think is valuable for me. For me, if I really believe in something, I will follow it to the end. At least this is something I see as very close to my heart, which is very important. That is also another change in attitude I gained abroad. It does not matter how other people view you, but it’s important to follow what you think is right. It does not matter if it does not conform to general viewpoints. This might be considered individualistic. But I think there are also two sides to individualism. I am talking about it not in a selfish way, but doing what I think is good for others. Because for me, that is not just about myself, but how to better the lives of my family, friends, partner, etc. Hai (HN, Vu’s friend)

In this comment, Hai refers to the difference between individualisation and individualism; the former refers to ability to think about the self that does not have to conform to social norms, to follow her individual values to pursue what is valuable for her, rather than following what society considers as valuable. Hai suggests that this self-orientation allows her to separate herself from her family, to see society beyond the boundaries of her family. She perceives

social responsibility when she sees herself as a member of society. It should also be noted that this civic attitude is also not something new to Vietnamese society because it was evident in Vietnamese overseas-educated intellectuals' desire for nationalism in colonial days. Doan, in a similar sentiment notes:

I saw what a poor American child has, and I compare that to what a poor Vietnamese child has. I feel that we ought to do something so that the Vietnamese child can get to the standard of the American child. We owe that to society, not just our own families. Doan (DN, Education, 21-30 yrs)

In this comment, Doan observes the differences in living standards between the US and Viet Nam, and her sense of social responsibility towards Vietnamese poor children. Both Hai and Doan refer to conflicting ideas about social responsibility acquired from overseas and traditional family responsibilities. There seems to be a connection between the obligations that they have towards society based on their membership within the society, and the civic attitude that is developed from self-attributes. This sense of self is different to that expressed in the “professional” field, where their self-orientations seem to be enhanced insofar as it falls in line with their family expectation, even though they desire to be recognised for their ability to apply themselves through skills (see chapter 6). For Hai and Doan, there is less of a need to be recognised for applying their self, but more about the placement of their self in the wider community, with social responsibility to others.

Cuc below also notes this tension between social responsibility and family interest. She talks about the difference between Japanese society and Vietnamese society in terms of community values;

There is no sense of a common good in Vietnamese society. That is something that is very difficult to change, because people are not concerned with the common good, the community. If one thinks for others, everyone will have a large and clean alley. However, people would like their house to be bigger to compete with each other, and they do not care who they might block. If there is change, I think it needs to be from primary school, or kindergarten. You can see that kindergarten education in Japan, or the US, is very different. Their sense of community is very high, with self-responsibility and accountability. Cuc (HN, Education, 30s)

Cuc perceives that the idea of community in Viet Nam is still limited within the traditional closed communities similar to Northern village life, where families are the units and public competition is important to denote family social positions (see chapter 4, section 4.2). Her claim of social responsibility is along the ideas of self-responsibility and accountability,

which are not the norms of Vietnamese society. Similar to Hai and Doan, Cuc expresses a contested views about community and responsibility. She sees community as a wider society, which is different to Vietnamese people who sees community as small collectives of families as in the village life of Confucian period. These contested ideas about community and social responsibility again echo anti-colonialists' call on nationalism and a break from traditional Confucian values of families in village life in early 20th century (see chapter 4, section 4.4).

Following this Vietnamese conception of community, the notion of community work in Vietnamese society tends to remain within the boundaries of families, which is different to the idea of civil actions that take place between individuals outside the families. As Kim notes below, it is not that the values of doing community work are absent, rather Vietnamese people are not used to the kind of formal community organisations that operate on a wider community base which are commonly established in Euro-American civil societies. Even though there has been an increase in NGOs in Viet Nam in recent years, these are not viewed as the common ways to engage in activities to helping others. For the ordinary Vietnamese people, the idea of community work is still conceived as charitable acts to help families to sustain their physical and economic lives. As the saying "*la lanh dum la rach*" meaning "whole leaves protect torn leaves", helping others is the norm, and at times viewed as laudatory and obligatory actions. Thus in the minds of the Vietnamese people, they are forms of civic actions. Kim says:

The majority of people feel that because most of them already have relatives that are poor, they see community work through helping directly their relatives rather than follow something like a formal community organisation. I think that is a point. In Viet Nam, we do not really have a format or structure that encourages people to participate in community work like overseas. Kim (HN, Education, Vu's friend)

Kim's comment supports the earlier comments by Thanh and Bach about participation in volunteer work in overseas universities that allowed them to experience community work in organised formats. Moreover, she suggests that the traditional ideas of family values are still the principle of morality based on personal relations (see chapter 4, section 4.2) and the need to help others who are less wealthy is something expected of families that are wealthier, a balance of *Xing Mang* in village life, where inequality is the natural order of the world. It should also be noted that families in Viet Nam are large and includes hundreds of members of lineage lines. Kim suggests that even though returnees' sense of self and citizenship may have oriented towards a more Western ideal, their choice to participate in community work is largely driven by their values about community work, which has always been part of their

dispositions due to the Vietnamese traditional values of helping others. Along a similar line, Khanh says:

Such activities (community) do not relate to studying abroad. Many of my colleagues who studied in Viet Nam still join in such activities. I think it is tradition of Vietnamese people, asking people to come together to help.' Khanh (HN, Manufacturing, 30s)

Similar to the other interviewees, Kim and Khanh perceive that overseas education has not changed their values about community work. As noted in chapter 5, their altruistic values have always existed regardless of overseas education. Overseas education may have allowed them to see community in a wider context and understand the purpose of community work differently, but the “values” of helping others are part of their Vietnamese *habitus* (see above discussion). This reflects Carruthers' (2010) idea that embodied aspect of citizenship may shape deliberation for social transformation rather than flexible citizenship (international mindedness) as result of overseas education as advocated by Ong (1999) and Waters (2006). Embodied citizenship calls on the collective group to engage in social change because it comes from internalisation of social norms (Carruthers 2010). Flexible citizenship risks being rejected by the collective group because not everyone owns it or shares its value, or afraid that it might threaten their power positions (Zweig & Yang 2004).

In summary, the reflections of some of the returnees in this research suggest nuanced and complex conceptions of “self”, community and community work. The overseas-acquired self-orientations seem to foster a civic attitude, social responsibility and potential for the *power-within* because returnees can build upon the Vietnamese values of helping others. The *power-in* these returnees seems to lie in their perception of ability to apply their overseas knowledge in practical ways to help others to develop independent skills. However, the contested ideas of community and lack of organised formats that returnees can engage in may be the *power-over* them in *opportunity* agency. As Marginson (2014) noted, the trajectory of citizenship is dependent on individuals' social and political context. Even if the returnees have a sense of citizenship, they still require perception of possibilities for change in order for them to deliberate their values about community work.

8.5 Cultural opportunity structures

This section explores the influence of community group structures upon returnees' choices and practices in community work (research aim 2). I discuss how returnees negotiate and

mediate their political and civic *habitus*, in light of their overseas-acquired attributes discussed above, to pursue their goals in community work.

8.5.1 State-society relations and passive participation in mass organisations

The majority of returnees interviewed participate in occasional community activities through mass organisations in their workplace that are often part of their work requirements. The reasons for the lack of active participation are varied and contradictory. Some indicate that time is a factor for not participating more regularly because of their work commitments. Some feel that social development is the responsibility of the State and involvement in these organisations could be perceived as a close alliance with the State (see above in 8.2). As with any public institution in Viet Nam, the leaderships and operations of formal organisations in Viet Nam tend to have government affiliation or political connections. As Kim says below, the distrust in government to utilise funds raised through these organisations or general scepticism about the State's purpose of mass organisations discourage people to engage actively with these formal community organisations;

People do not trust the government too. There are different types of distrust. Say in the workplace, there is *Cuu Chinh Binh* (War Veterans), *Doi Di Tich Anh Hung* (Museum of Heroes Organisation), etc. and they make you donate this and donate that. When they come and ask, we have to declare that we do it. You have to question community work in “organised formats” because in Viet Nam it is not transparent. So people do not trust, and if they do not trust then they do not participate. There are too many frauds as well. Kim (HN, Education, 20s)

This comment also highlights that membership in these organisations, particularly mass organisations, is obligatory to follow the State's order. The interviewees seem to be discouraged from active engagement in formal institutions and mass organisations because they perceive a lack of transparency of their operations, as well as little recognition of the legitimacy of the organisations. In this way, returnees' passive participation may suggest a sceptical response to the State imposition over them to participate in mass organisations as part of socialisation policies, which, in itself can be understood as a form of resistance to State policies.

Other returnees perceive that involvement with the State through active participation in mass organisations would not be conducive to real actions and outcomes because the processes of registering, operating and reporting of these organisations are often fraught with government surveillance that is threatening and burdened. Ngoc says:

Community activities in Viet Nam are limited by various things. Some spontaneous ones will be permitted by the State but the systematic ones like my community group are restricted because the State is afraid that there are disguised activities in these organisations. So there are many restrictions put on us. I am not talking about higher authorities, I am talking about police at the wards' levels, they check on everything. Ngoc (HCMC, IT, 30s)

Ngoc is referring to the surveillance at various levels of authority that her group has to encounter, which restrict her group from implementing initiatives. She also notes that formal groups are faced with more State monitoring compared to informal ones. This may explain why the returnees prefer to working in informal groups. Similarly, Hai comments below about the bureaucratic processes that a community group has to go through, which limit the group's capacity to operate;

A second factor that is limiting is the bureaucratic processes that the group has to go through. For example, if you want something to be done at the community level, you need to go through headquarters, then provincial, district and only then to the commune, which is very time-consuming, a very ineffective way of doing things. Hai (HN, National NGO, Vu's friend)

These comments provide insight into the pervasive nature of the State through operations of mass organisations and the administrative structure of the State that acts as a regulatory monitor of community groups. While Kervliet (2005) argued that this vertical structure enables policy responses by the State to bring about more democratic outcomes compared with other democratic countries like the Philippines, the returnees in this study seem to find this structure difficult to mobilise community actions of community groups, which can restrict the effectiveness of grassroots movements.

In addition, and contrary to the Western ideas of civic actors as non-State actors (Hannah 2007), some returnees do not perceive Viet Nam's civil society as autonomous or separate from government. They believe that political connections are necessary to mobilise advocacy actions, thus the separation between government and community development advocacy will not be effective. These perceptions are consistent with Heng's (2004) claim that the political authority in Viet Nam has the power to decide what is beyond the boundaries of constructive debate, and the line between what is permissible and what is not, is more or less understood by those who are members. Similarly, some returnees perceive that the structures of various levels of government may be set to create checks and surveillance, but the feasible process of getting things done require working with the system and party officials

rather than against or in spite of them. This is similar to Hannah's (2007) claim that the outcomes of NGOs in Viet Nam are not always determined by a top down process or bottom up approach; rather it depends on the personalities involved.

8.5.2 Active participation in international NGOs

Given the complex workings of formal community organisations, some returnees prefer to work with international or foreign NGOs. Thanh participates actively in an international NGO because of the institution's reputation in international development, its non-affiliation with the Vietnamese government which means he does not have to deal directly with the government. Furthermore, the activities that he takes up allow him to develop different skills sets and build further networks for future career prospects. Thanh comments about his choice to participate in this international NGO:

International NGOs are good for networking. My organisation is a big organisation under the UN, so it is very professional and systematic. I can learn a lot from the people I work with, for example the mechanism and the way they do and their studies. For example, when I did the last project, I could learn how to do marketing and communication on Facebook. Then there were people who reviewed what I did. I could learn the ways they do things. For other people who volunteer with me, the focus on networks is very strong which can be a motivation for people to join this group. Maybe for some people, when they start a business, they might call on this network. In addition, some people might go into the philanthropic career so the more networks they have the better it is. For me, I think I will meet the people in my industry who come from the networks in this organisation. Furthermore, if we have something in common such as this project, then it will be easy to work with each other in our work. Thanh (HCMC, Banking, 20s)

Thanh is strategic in his decision to participate in this international NGO because he sees it as an opportunity to build networks that he could later leverage. He also recognises that other people who volunteer in the group also have a similar desire to build networks, which is a common ground for joining the networks. This is consistent with Bourdieu's (2006) idea of social capital where members are linked because of mutual recognition and acquaintance, and where they seek to establish these relationships to take advantage.

However, Bach, a colleague of Thanh in the same international NGO, acknowledges that working in this particular organisation often brings about frustration due to many procedures, rules and regulations that volunteers have to follow, which are contrasting to the flexibility and comfort that they feel as normative in Vietnamese community work. This highlights a different view about the process of community work and relations that people

have in community groups in the Vietnamese culture, compared to the more professionalised relations and practices she encounters in the international NGO. She claims that for Vietnamese people, the idea of community stems from close relationships between people, thus voluntary participation in the community needs to provide the space for maintaining trust, bonding, and closeness with each other rather than adherence to rules and regulations. This might be because the community is traditionally seen as collective of families where personal relationships are cultivated and behaviours acted upon these personal ties (see earlier discussion in section 8.2 and 8.4). Bach says:

Everything is procedural in this organisation. In the beginning, I felt that these procedures were very rigid and I was very restricted by these procedures, the terminologies, and the communication styles. I have to feel comfortable, so I can be flexible and contribute in my community work. I prefer a bit more freedom, so I can fit in a bit better. For me it cannot be too restrictive. I think international NGOs working in Viet Nam should allow us Vietnamese to have more freedom. Bach (HCMC, IT, 20s)

Furthermore, as Bach continues below, some Vietnamese volunteers perceive these rules and regulations as ways of compensating for leadership distrust towards them, which brings about resentment for some;

I think my organisation can trust Vietnamese volunteers a bit better. They must try to understand that we need to understand what it is we are doing. We have adequate knowledge to understand that we need to use the right terminologies in our communications. We will not do anything that is obviously wrong. But we have to feel comfortable and free as long as we do not do anything that is contrary to rules and procedures. If we can create trust in the leaders of our organisation, so they do not have to monitor every topic, every pathway. They have to give us a bit more freedom to let us build our trust in the organisation too. Bach (HCMC, IT, 20s)

Bach has a different understanding of organisational structure as method of community work compared to that undergirding the international NGO that she volunteers in. Her idea of community work is underpinned by trust and personal relationships typical of Vietnamese social life. This echoes Kim's comment earlier that the philosophy of community work in Viet Nam is different to Western countries, in terms of the relationships and interactions between people. Bach perceives the importance of relating to Vietnamese colleagues and people that the group is helping at a personal level, and a sense of equality in the practices, rather than having rules and objectives imposed on the group. In some ways, Bach's resentment of rules in the international NGO (in the previous quote) seems similar to that felt

by other returnees about the State's pervasive surveillance on formal community groups discussed earlier.

Despite the encountered cultural differences, Bach, Thanh and their friends continue to participate actively in their international NGO because of their commitment to each other within the networks, which motivated them to join initially, and to further develop their personal skills and networks. In this regards, there seems to be disconnection between cultural opportunity structure and resource opportunity structure, which is intimately tied in the paid employment. This may also explain the survey results about the skills surplus, because returnees are not utilising their acquired skills as much as in their workplace. Furthermore, in addition to the instrumental purpose of developing skills and networks, there seems to be an attached intrinsic value to their practices of doing good for the community, which underpins their choice to participate and continue to commit themselves in the long term. This finding is similar to sentiments expressed by returning academics in the “intellectual” field.

8.5.3 Direct and active participation in informal groups and networks-based organisations

Given the emphasis on personal relations in community work that are fostered through kinship or friendships, some returnees who actively engage in community work prefer activities through their personal networks rather than through formal organisations. This echoes the findings of Fayong and Yongshun (2006), Wells-Dang (2012), and Hannah (2007) that the growth of several networks Viet Nam (particularly in 2002 to 2003) are mostly through personal networks and informal ties of friends and colleagues in close communities, rather than formal organisations. The interviewees who engage actively in informal groups and networks-based groups do so because they are collegial towards the traditional Vietnamese values of helping their families, which are then extended to those in wider families and connections. Even though some foster a sense of “civic self” that is beyond the boundaries of their families, their identities seem firmly situated as members of the social networks with close connections with friends and families. These close connections provide a common ground for them to understand and work with each other. This suggests that the returnees' *agency process* takes place within the close connections of personal relationships. These personal relations are a form of social capital, a kind of solidarity based on shared values and objectives and connectedness with each other, the kind of collectives that Pelenc et al (2015) and Dubois et al (2008) refer to in collective capabilities. This construct of social

capital seems contrary to Bourdieu's social capital which is evident in the returnees' workplace practices, or in the case of Thanh in the international NGO, where they strategically employ personal networks to mobilise skills and knowledge in order to gain positional advantage.

As illustrated in Kim's comment below, she is committed to her goals irrespective of payoffs or outcomes of the group, as long as her values and objectives align with those of the group. This sentiment is similar to Sen's (1985) idea of other-regarding goals, which Pelenc et al (2015) views as important for collective agency;

I feel that I now want to do things directly. I feel that my values are aligned with my community group. I think my group has values that are similar to mine. That is why I joined the group. Kim (HN, Education, Vu's friend)

It should also be noted that for the small number of interviewees who do community work through networks-based organisations, they mostly agree that community activities in Viet Nam through small networks are scattered and fragmented. However, the informality in membership, procedures and processes of sharing ideas and activities offered through these networks are important to them. Personal ties among networks members and their commitment to goals of the group appear to matter more to these returnees than the organisational structures of the groups. This may also be because they perceive networks as places where they can engage in helping the community, without too much confrontation with the Government, and be comfortable with group leaders and colleagues.

8.5.4 Mediating and appropriating opposing ideas and social hierarchies

One of the most challenging aspects in these returnees' everyday practices is contending with opposing ideas of other members within the groups in ways that align with the community work culture. This reflects Wischerman's (2010) claim that rather than having their ideas compromised, community associations in Viet Nam tend to prefer a multitude of ideas where no one single idea prevails. These returnees also talk about contrasting perspectives between members of the groups, which they see as offering diversity as well as sharp differences of strategies and tactics to achieve outcomes. For example, as discussed in section 3, some returnees view the purpose of community development as developing capabilities of the disadvantaged person to participate in her own life, which is different to the local Vietnamese viewpoint about helping the disadvantaged through provision of immediate financial resources. Some returnees are exposed to processes and tools used in community programs

overseas, which they find difficult to persuade Vietnamese people to take up because they are not aware of these mechanisms and are suspicious of their application in Vietnamese society. In the comment below, Bach finds it difficult to get support for introducing mobile phone technology to collect donations. Again, the resistance to Bach's ideas seems to embed scepticism and lack of trust in the leader of Bach's organisation who is associated with the project and her foreign ideas;

For me I think these mobile formats [for collecting donations] are very common, but when I took the idea to my colleagues in my workplace where most employees are Vietnamese, they did not trust the idea. They questioned many things that were not really relevant to the problem. For example, they said we will contribute to XYZ, and XYZ is a relative of the Prime Minister, or they did not believe about the funding. They did not believe in the technology. Overseas, this technique is quite common but in Viet Nam, no one has done so. Perhaps in some ways they did not believe in the presenter. Bach (HCMC, IT, 20s)

Similarly, Thanh talks about Vietnamese people's lack of trust that foreign ideas can work in Viet Nam. His comment below reflects not just a lack of application due to different environment, rather a sense of resistance to foreign ideas. This means he, as an overseas graduate, has to develop the trust in order to engage these community group leaders. Thanh says:

Maybe when people come back and say, "In the US or Australia, community work is like this and that", people who live only in Viet Nam may say, "You have studied overseas for 4 years you don't really understand what's going on here". Maybe we cannot gain their trust. They may say that we do not have enough knowledge to provide services here. They may think that we will put foreign ways over traditional ways. There are many things that people feel cannot be done in the same ways as overseas. Thanh (HCM, Banking, 20s)

These findings suggest that while overseas education may present returnees with some advantages in the employment market due to the symbolic capital associated with Western skills and knowledge, it also position them as "others" in community work. The comments by Thanh and Bach above suggest that some local people perceive them as disconnected from social realities of Viet Nam and that imported ideas from overseas to improve social development may not work. Such resistance may also be reflective of the push of nationalism by the State which Carruthers (2010) referred to as the paradox of Western superiority and White-exclusion in Viet Nam: natural belonging is judged by members of national community, and only they can make this kind of judgement.

In addition, the dyadic relationships in the personal relations within these networks-based groups require returnees to respect and not contradict older people's ideas. In the comment below, Kim finds it difficult to share her aspiration with the older Vietnamese people that she works with because of their unfamiliarity with the new learning and teaching practices, which they then view as not achievable;

People say that my school is not going to go anywhere because of the learning approach. The methodology is so new. But for me I feel that that is only because of their way of seeing things that limit them to make change. My school is so much different to the way Vietnamese people are. It attempts to change many Vietnamese ways of learning and teaching so they think these changes cannot be achieved. I feel that I must understand the nature of Vietnamese people in order to do what I want to do. I think that there are many things about Viet Nam that I must understand fully in order for me to do those things.
Kim (HN, Education, 20s)

Kim's comment is consistent with Wischerman's (2010) claim that the approach to group negotiation and persuasion is built on the premise of harmonising and cooperation toward a common goal rather than through confrontation. Kim seems to struggle to adjust to this culture in trying to pursue her goals. As Thanh suggests below, the Vietnamese mode of conflict management poses a pathway to move forward and seems to be cohesive at the group level but can be a barrier to achieve individuals' goals;

NGOs in Viet Nam are open. They are willing to accept anyone who wants to support or volunteer. NGOs always need more support from people, but the issue is who wants to support and how much they can support in the long run. It depends on the individuals and what they think they can achieve. It is difficult when things are not done and we just go around and around. Thanh (HCMC, Banking, 20s)

8.5.5 Party loyalty, equality and process of agency

In addition to the challenges due to cultural differences in communicating and accepting ideas, the returnees' practices in community groups seem to be constrained by the broader political landscape. There is a general lack of perception of possibilities for change through political participation, even for those who are Party members. For some returnees, joining the Party is about maintaining the ideology of Socialism, rather than promoting social equality and working for the common good. As discussed in chapter 7, Party membership also serves a practical purpose of building personal connections with the leaders to gain management pathways in universities. Ngoc reflects on this ideology as a legitimisation of her Party

membership. At the same time, she is disillusioned with the political system, what the government can do for society, and her lack of belief in her own ability to change the system;

The belief in the system is shaky. That is the thing I observe. I see that for me, people must change. If not, this situation will become worse. I am aware of that knowledge. But I still do not see that anyone can change it. I myself am not that person because I know I am not good enough so that I can change or do something. Therefore, I do not go deep into politics. Really, the more I know about politics, the more I feel how powerless I am. I am not a person with adequate competence to be able to change something and the situation here is also different from before. For me, there is nothing wrong with following ideals of Socialism, only its line of operation is wrong. Ngoc (HCMC, IT, 30s)

In a similar vein, Quan recounts his engagement in social media to question the State's political ideologies upon coming home. Despite a fervent discussion on Facebook, he encountered many negative responses and rejection of his opinions, particularly from those who wanted to pursue political careers. These political idealists were also overseas-educated returnees as well as locally trained people. The point that Quan emphasises is that irrespective of the forum where the public discussion took place, these rejections were not based on a different ideological beliefs or viewpoints about the State's political directions, but because of the persons' social positions in society, which were intimately connected with their political positions:

Really, many Vietnamese people here also share the understanding about Socialist ideologies and their misdirection. The people who disagreed with me also knew that these problems exist but they still protected their ideas and objected to mine because they wanted to protect their benefits, their vested interests. However, there were some people who supported me, but again these people said "Don't use sentences like that. It is easy to create problems". This represents another problem in that Vietnamese people even though they can recognise that there is a problem, they still accept the problem. That is the silent culture. Quan (HCMC, Manufacturing, 30s)

Quan's comment suggests that even though his value for political advocacy has not changed as a result of overseas education, he was determined to speak out because he saw the opportunity to make change. By speaking out, he felt out of place with his friends; he was politically and socially disconnected with others in his group. He perceives their agreement or disagreement with his opinions to be based on whether such expressions of ideas are accepted as appropriate in the social contexts, not the ideas themselves. This incident is consistent with Sen's idea of public discussion that even if there is a shared understanding of the issue at hand, the process of political advocacy might not enable such shared values to be

acknowledged and mobilised. While Quan perceived and grasped the opportunity to communicate and participate in public discussion, he was also dependent on motivations of others. Public discussion, as a form of deliberative democracy, was differently enacted by Quan and his friends: Quan acted upon his view of democratic freedom, which is freedom to express one's views; his friends saw his freedom to speak as conditioned by the appropriateness of what one speaks, and for other friends, such appropriateness was determined by one's political ambitions. The incident suggests that the process of public discussion is intimately tied to the political conditions that give rise to people's conception of freedom and their practices, and these conceptions and practices of freedom are shaped differently for different people depending on their social and political positions in society.

Furthermore, it seems that these channels are perceived, at least by Quan's friends, to be available as conversational exchanges for the politically affiliated people, where they display or exhaust their power against one another, with the aim to protect their self-interests. Quan refers to the Vietnamese culture of recognising yet accepting the problem, as a systemic practice of "silent culture". However, this comment suggests that the root of the silent culture is not only because of strict control of authoritarian State but also because of the need for protecting one's own vested interests and power relations in the specific social situation. In other words, to leverage one's own political position, one chooses to accommodate to political rules as one perceives it. This example is insightful to allow us to understand that one's construction of political freedom is embedded within the State-society relations. It illustrates the working of *habitus* as a relational structure in the field, with a historical trajectory of how Vietnamese people see themselves in relation to the ruler of the day (see also chapter 4).

These findings suggest that the cultural opportunity structures that returnees perceive as feasible depend on their community group structures. The *power-over* these returnees are the integrated State-society relations, and burdensome procedures that formal groups have to encounter at various levels of government. These forms of *power-over* discourage returnees to actively engage in formal organisations, particularly those controlled by the State or closely affiliated with the State. Paradoxically, the blurred relationships between State and society also foster a normative acceptance of State involvement in community work, in particular political activism. Participation in the international NGO, on the other hand, can foster the *power-within* returnees to build networks and develop additional skills, thus enhance their individual *power-to* in other fields. This focus on networks is also evident in the returnees'

preference of community work in informal networks, whereby they see shared values and shared objectives of helping others as the basis for taking up and committing to community work. Similar to the experiences of returnees in the international NGO, this is the *power-within* of informal groups that they see as important in enabling their *power-to*. While this linkage is similar to that in the workplace, there seems to be more of a sense of solidarity and trust in the personal relationships compared to the workplace where these personal relations are used primarily for power enhancement to gain positional advantage. This may also be because contrary to the workplace, returnees do not perceive their overseas-acquired resources in community work as cultural capital or overseas education as symbolic capital. Engaging in informal networks seems to provide flexibility, trust and friendship that align with some returnees' conception of community work. This suggests a *power-to* that builds strongly on the *power-within*, because it rests on the personal relations among members, rather than the structure of an institution. Paradoxically, the required behaviours of according with dyadic relations embedded in these personal ties, also result in the returnees' acceptance of Vietnamese communication culture that inhibits their individual goals, which can be the *power-over* some returnees.

8.6 Community work opportunity structures

In this section, I discuss the returnees' experiences of community work in terms of achieved personal and social change, and how might overseas education impact their opportunities and commitments to community work in the long term. The aim is to understand the potential for empowerment as a result of past experiences and how might these past experiences shape future choices (research aim 3).

8.6.1 Personal and social change: achieved functionings and well-being

For the few returnees who actively participate in community work, their independent skills, self-orientation and a sense of civic duty are the personal changes that they have acquired from overseas education. These personal changes motivate them to engage in community work, and allow them to see the purpose of community work as developing capacity of others to live an independent life and participate in society rather than being passive recipients of donations. Their achieved functionings include applying their overseas-acquired knowledge directly, for example, introducing mobile technology for fundraising, or creating software to

distribute health information. They also see their achieved personal changes in terms of changed political viewpoints and optimistic perception of opportunities for change. While there is no clear evidence to suggest that the interviewees could achieve any significant social change - at least in the short run - in their community groups, their achieved functionings and well-being may follow along these ideas. The importance of community participation for some returnees seems to encompass the instrumental benefits of applying their individuals' skills and transferring them to the broader community. They also engage in community work to accord with their intrinsic values of doing good for others, which gives rise to achievement of their well-being. In this way, personal and social changes are intertwined in their community work participation.

8.6.2 Empowerment for change

Similar to Hannah's (2007) findings, the practical experiences of the six interviewees who participate actively in community work suggest fluid and energetic networking based on friendship, kinship, and Party membership. The effectiveness of community actions depends on the personal relationships as a process of agency, rather than through the set objectives and structures of the organisation. Consistent with the findings from Wells-Dang (2012) and Wischermann (2010), these returnees view the issue of helping people in need as the focus of the group, rather than the organisational structure that may or may not achieve the goal of the group. From the perspectives of the returnees in this research, empowerment for social change is viable from informal networks of personal relations rather than collective actions by virtue of community organisations as autonomous civic groups. These findings have to be considered in light of the historical experiences of Viet Nam's political governance that result in returnees' deterrence from participation in formal organisations because of these institutions' perceived association with the State.

The returnees' choices to commit to long-term community work seem to be influenced by their perception of opportunities or possibilities of change - the *freedom* aspect of agency, more than achieved outcomes of their community work - the *process* aspect of agency. However, their perceived opportunities also depend on the level and kind of participation and their perception of their role in these groups. For example, while some participants may intrinsically value the participation and contribution to the lives of others in the community, their perception of resistance by group leadership to their ideas, perception of distrust, a lack of shared values by other members of the groups, or a lack of support for advocacy due to

personal political interest, can present barriers to their long term engagement. As Quan reflects on his attempt of political voice, which was discontinued:

We must do something to change when we know there is a reason for change. But in my case, it is okay that I recognise there is a change in my own political values. I cannot do much but the recognition is very good. I contribute to society in other ways. Quan (HCMC, Manufacturing, 30s)

Even though he perceives barriers to his actions, Quan reasons that his recognition of the need for change is his achieved personal change, and a necessary step towards enabling social change. He emphasises the importance of recognition because it can lead him to perceive opportunities, that otherwise may not be seen as feasible.

Similarly, Kim in the below comment refers to the need for reasoning about the purpose of doing community work in regards to one's own values:

If you adapt and compromise your values, then you will not be able to make changes. A person who does community work must not have that purpose and this is what makes a difference. Kim (HN, Education, 20s)

Kim is suggesting that in adapting to the traditional culture of their community groups, people might risk ineffectual changes, because it leads to adaptive preferences. This is different to the type of adaptation evident in the workplace, where returnees are more willing to compromise their choice of jobs and employers in order to progress with their career opportunity structures that they see valuable to achieve certain outcomes and goals (see chapters 6 and 7). This could be because community work is not a motivation or expectation of overseas education, so there is less importance placed on improving the power structures of the field and subfield to gain personal advantages. Their commitment to long-term community work seems to reflect their intrinsic value of doing good for others, or by having close relationships with their community colleague, rather than for personal interests. Except for the returnees who participate in the international NGO, there seems to be “disinterestedness” (Bourdieu 1977) in community work that draws on the humanism of personal relations, which is distinctly different to the power enhancement for positional gains seen in workplace. Furthermore, the intrinsic value of doing for the common good commits these returnees to their community works despite unclear outcomes.

8.7 Conclusion: Summary of findings and implications

In summary, the values, choices and practices of these overseas-educated returnees in community work reveal nuanced conceptions of community and civic actions that mediate between the overseas-acquired ideas of community and civic “self” and the Vietnamese tradition of families as small communities. Overseas education does not seem to be a direct driver of community work, nor is community work expected of those with overseas education. Rather, overseas education seems to indirectly foster more individualised and self-driven attitudes, which give returnees a sense of social responsibility and allow them to perceive opportunities they otherwise would not. However, they also recognise the constraints of formal organisations like mass organisations that are laden with State power, which discourage some from participating in community work. Despite some returnees’ critique of the Vietnamese conception of community and community actions as limited within boundaries of families, their choices and practices of community work, seem to be firmly situated in the Vietnamese *habitus* of personal relations. Their enabled personal change is the development of civic self and sense of social responsibility, and the ability to use their overseas-acquired skills in practical ways, albeit more limited compared to the workplace. Their achieved outcomes of community work in terms of social change seem unclear or not significant in the short term because they have to mediate and appropriate multitudes of opposing ideas or rejection of their ideas. These rejections stem from the members and local communities who resist foreign ideas or are pessimistic about the possibilities of enabled change. Furthermore, returnees’ commitment to community work, at least for those in informal networks, is about the participation itself because of shared values and goals among members rather than focusing on achieved changes or applying overseas-acquired skills. Therefore, the *agency process* and *agency achievement* do not seem to be important factors for them in terms of future commitment. In other words, their well-being seems to be achieved from the participation in community work itself rather than achieved outcomes of their participation. This is different to participation in international NGO where there is a consideration of both intrinsic value and instrumental outcomes of community work.

It must be noted that these findings are limited by the boundaries of the case study, and in this chapter, the small number of six interviewees. However, the findings reinforce the conceptual ideas offered in the previous three chapters in three aspects. First, the *opportunity* aspect of agency is essential for these returnees in relation to their decision to take up community work: they perceive opportunities because they see their “self” as members of the

wider society, which in turn bring about their sense of social responsibility. This emphasises the notion of *intersubjective freedom* embedded within the self-society relations, as conditions and conditionings of agency and empowerment in community work.

Second, the importance attached to the returnees' reflexive "reasoning" of their choices to engage in long-term community work is essential for *normative agency* and empowerment. By being *conscious* of the influence of organisational structures and the social relations of community groups upon their choices, these returnees see themselves as different to local Vietnamese people who often view these structures and relations as objective thus lacking the aspiration to pursue community work or risking changing these structures. As the comments of Quan and Kim in the last section suggest, recognising their subjectivities to objective surrounding structures is important to see possibilities of change whether or not the change comes about.

Lastly, similar to the "professional" and "intellectual" field, given the close personal networks that underpin the Vietnamese community, the ideas of individual agency and collective agency are deeply intertwined in the "civic" field. Collective agency is dependent on the individual returnee seeing herself as a member of a group or society, and that members of her group share her values and goals in community work, and the value of her skills and knowledge in pursuing her goals. Her *power-to* may lie with her sense of civic, independence and self-determination, but her ability to procure change depends on her *power-within* her group. This is because personal relations create trust, bonding and shared values that harmonise the group and bring about collective actions. These personal relations are a form of social capital based on solidarity, rather than the strategic exchange for personal interests seen in the workplace. The idea of social capital seems to work here in the way that Sen envisions as *power-within* that ties to *power-to*, rather than Bourdieu's *power-over* that needs to be mediated. Furthermore, the logic of collective agency does not seem to be dependent on any particular institutionalisation. In fact, institutional structures can be seen as barriers to some grassroots movements in Viet Nam - the *power-over* some returnees in this study. Thus, I argue that rather than assuming institutions as platforms for enabling civic actions, we have to scrutinise the power distributions of individuals within their relations in the process of enabling change. As I have shown through the practical experiences of these returnees in their community work, it is the power relations that enable or hinder their *power-within*, which in turn create contingencies for *normative agency* and empowerment.

9 Conclusion: Recap, reflection and future research directions

9.1 Introduction

Policies and practices of international education have often focused on the vantage position of Anglo-Western education that assumes international students' development as human capital for economic growth and global citizenship. This research stems from the motivation to shift that thinking to consider international students' perspectives about themselves as ends not just as means in the development process, who can critically examine their roles in their society, and enable change as they see valuable. Along this vision, and in consideration of the large population of international students from Asian developing countries (OECD 2013), this thesis sets out to understand the transformative potential of acquired international education for Vietnamese international graduates in their local communities. To address this central objective, this thesis has three main aims: (1) To understand the extent that Vietnamese overseas graduates can utilise their overseas-acquired skills, knowledge, attributes and attitudes to participate effectively in the employment market and community activities upon returning to Viet Nam; 2) To understand how the economic, political and institutional structures in Viet Nam promote and constrain Vietnamese returnees' ability to pursue their goals in respect of their acquired overseas education in their work and community activities; and 3) To understand the extent that returnees leverage their acquired overseas education to enable personal and social change in their chosen work and community activities in Viet Nam. This research is preliminary and certainly presents an incomplete understanding of the impact of acquired international education for Vietnamese overseas-educated returnees in their work and community work. However, the research offers empirical groundwork and a new theoretical approach to further explore these phenomena.

In this final chapter, I will first recap the major findings and my arguments to address the three main aims and the overarching research question (section 2). I will summarise the evidence of the usefulness of some overseas-acquired resources from international education in terms of enabling the Vietnamese returnees in this research to meet their goals. I will show that the broader economic and political contexts, as well as the institutional structures and Vietnamese cultural systems, limit - but also enable - their opportunities and processes to develop their work practices as they value. I will argue that within their practical experiences,

there are suggestions of both co-optation with the social norms and autonomy of choices and actions, which signal different drivers of agency and possibilities for social change. I will then discuss the theoretical contributions of these findings in section 3. I will argue that *intersubjective freedom* that is understanding freedom as embedded in a person's relations with others, is important to understand a person's values, sense of morality and responsibility, and power positions in the social field, which is critical for understanding *normative agency*. I will further argue that reflexive sociology is useful to achieve two purposes. First, as shown in this thesis, returnees engaged in the praxis of “reasoning” their values and choices whereby they considered their contextual or conditioned freedom in their social environments - a necessary step for their empowerment of social change. Second, as I have tried to do in this research, engaged the returnees in this praxis through the interview process, and then analysed and interpreted the interview data from the returnees’ practical experiences, rather than from the researcher’s worldviews. In section 4, I reflect on the challenges and limitations of employing Bourdieuan theories in supporting Sen’s CA to conduct research and theorise development from a non-Western context. I then offer some implications for using the Sen-Bourdieu framework to engage international education with ethical development for Asian developing countries similar to Viet Nam (section 5). Finally, I note the boundaries of this research, and draw on the research contributions to offer some suggestions for future research about the outcomes of international education for graduates in Viet Nam and in the global field (section 6).

9.2 Recapping the key empirical findings

In chapters 5 to 8, I have shown through the analyses of the returnees’ practical experiences in their social fields that their values, choices and practices are laden with contested and conflicted ideas of freedom, responsibility and agency. I have carefully noted that the analysis of the survey and interview data revealed no apparent differences in regards to gender, types of educational qualifications, and place of living. This finding seems contrary to literature about Viet Nam that suggest patriarchy in society and cultural differences between North and South (Dao Duy Anh 1938; Hoang Thieu Khang 2011; Le Thi 2011; Le N. Van 2012; Nguyen V. Dan 2011), but it maybe because of the small sample size with selection bias (noted in chapter 3). It could be because the returnees had similar family background, socioeconomic status, professional work, educational background and were all living in major

cities. A closer analysis of gender relations between individuals is warranted nevertheless. Such analysis would invoke feminist theories, which could be encapsulated and examined using Sen's Capability Approach; however it would demand a consideration of another dimension of capability, which is out of scope for this thesis. Similarly, the North and South differences could also be further examined in each of the "fields". This, too, demands a more in-depth investigation into the political, institutional and economic structures and historical contexts that are beyond this thesis.

In this section, I aim to highlight the findings as patterns of homologies of thoughts and practices of returnees in the three fields ("professional", "intellectual" and "civic") to: (1) address the research aims; and (2) argue for theoretical generalisation about normative agency and empowerment (section 3).

9.2.1 Research aim 1: Utilisation of overseas-acquired skills, knowledge, attributes and attitudes

9.2.1.1 Transferable (soft) skills, English proficiency and work-ready attributes

It seems that the types of overseas-acquired skills that the Vietnamese returnees in this study can deploy in the "professional" field are English proficiency, and transferable (soft) skills such as independent thinking, problem solving, and communication skills. In addition, work-ready attributes, confidence and proactiveness seem to position these returnees advantageously over locally-trained graduates because these skills and attributes are in demand in the labour market. Thus, returnees perceive these skills and attributes as cultural capital because they can utilise them to take up management roles in various sectors, particularly in foreign firms and MNCs, and achieve higher salaries. These findings echo the literature about international students' perception of cultural capital of soft skills and work-ready attributes (Chen & Zimiatat 2006; Cox & King 2006; Leckey & McGuigan 1997; Ong 1999, Waters 2006).

Overseas-educated academics also perceive these types of skills and attributes as valuable in the "intellectual" field because they can use them to engage in consultancy services to businesses outside academia, and teach in private or foreign universities where they are expected to transfer these skills and attributes to students. For the majority of overseas-educated academics in this study who work in public universities, their ability to utilise these transferable soft skills seems more constrained than those in the "professional" field due to the teaching and learning environment in Vietnamese universities. Nevertheless,

the majority are able to utilise their English in their teaching, through translating foreign texts to teach Vietnamese core subjects, or teaching in English in non-core subjects and in international partnerships programs (IPP).

9.2.1.2 Technical skills and knowledge

On the other hand, core (hard) skills such as technical skills, and technological skills gained from overseas studying seem to be less beneficial for most returnees in the “professional” field because these skills are often specialised within the discipline of overseas study, and tend to be relevant for working in advanced economies. Despite Viet Nam’s strong economic growth in the last 25 years since *Doi Moi* economic reform, the business and legal contexts, infrastructure, and rules and regulations are still less developed compared to advanced economies. Thus, there is a lack of opportunity for these returnees to apply their overseas-acquired skills and knowledge directly in their work. Those who work in newly service sectors like banking and finance, or in applied research roles in other sectors like IT, are able to utilise technical skills and discipline knowledge more than those in the manufacturing sector. This may also reflect the returnees’ choice of working in MNCs whose operations in Viet Nam tend to be in production and supply chain distribution rather than product development.

The returnees who work in universities, particularly private or foreign universities, seem to be able to apply their disciplinary knowledge more than those in other sectors because they can teach subject contents learnt from overseas, albeit only selectively. However, and irrespective of their qualification and years of service, their teaching seems limited to either translating basic concepts or comparing different methodologies within subject disciplines at a theoretical level, rather than applying overseas-acquired knowledge and pedagogy in practical and direct ways. Again, this may reflect the broader economic contexts and sector development in Viet Nam where there is limited capacity for Vietnamese firms to provide data that these academics can readily use as case studies in their teaching.

The other limitation to teaching overseas content in Viet Nam is the prescribed core curriculum mandated by MOET. The requirement to teach core courses in Vietnamese language that adhere to the official curriculum means that they have to translate the texts from English to Vietnamese and revise them to fit in with the Vietnamese curriculum. Such preparation is time consuming and given the low salary structures for teaching and high teaching workloads, most academics interviewed seem reluctant to do so. Thus, they prefer to

participate in IPPs with foreign universities where they can teach in English using the direct material that they acquired from overseas. Despite the limited application of their overseas-acquired knowledge, these overseas-educated academics view Western knowledge as symbolic capital, and superior to Vietnamese knowledge. Influenced by broader historical trajectories of colonisation, the supremacy of Western knowledge and pedagogy seems to centre on the idea of self-development, independence and freedom, which they perceive as lacking in the teachings offered by Vietnamese universities.

The returnees desire to mobilise their overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes which they perceive as more feasible with foreign employers. Therefore, most returnees are motivated to work for foreign firms, particularly MNCs, foreign universities or those that mimic activities of foreign universities (for example purchased courses from overseas universities such as tourism and management). These choices, particularly evident in the “professional” field reflect: (1) their perception of the cultural capital associated with overseas-acquired transferable (soft) skills and work-oriented attributes, which they leverage to gain employment with foreign firms; and (2) their embedded values of overseas education as opportunities for economic betterment through jobs, high salaries and social status of foreign firms. In other words, their perception of the value of their resources in their field of work influences their motivations, goals, and expectations of acquired overseas education. Their choices, in turn, enhance the symbolic capital associated with these overseas-acquired resources and the instrumental value of overseas education. On the other hand, returnees do not seem to take up choices that utilise skills that are not seen as valuable by their universities, for example research activities. Even though they may appreciate research for knowledge production, it is not part of their career goals because they do not perceive research to be enhancing their positional advantage in their universities. This is similar with the technical skills that returnees in the “professional” field are willing to trade off for management skills in support roles in order to access jobs with MNCs.

In this thesis, I used the concept of *resource opportunity structures* to analyse the choices of returnees in terms of their perception of opportunities that their owned overseas-acquired resources may provide them. The findings suggest that returnees make choices, which reflect the power positions that they perceive in regards to the resources that they have and can mobilise, which are dependent on the field and institution they work in. The *power-over* these returnees seems to be a lack of institutional support for their core (hard) skills, which they are willing to trade-off to capitalise on their transferable (soft) skills in order to

increase their *power-to*. For academics working in universities, even though they acknowledge the barriers to applying overseas-acquired knowledge and skills, they seem to see the *power-within* themselves as education reformers when they can transfer these skills to their students. Similarly, the returnees in the “professional” field choose foreign firms because they perceive a shared value and appreciation of their overseas education. In making these choices, returnees legitimise the value of their overseas-acquired resources, and normalise the superiority of foreign firms and Western knowledge, which in turn reproduce their dispositions to such choices. This is by no means a lack of agency, rather it explicates the dialectical workings of Bourdieu’s *habitus* in constructing returnees’ *opportunity agency*: the interdependent and iterative workings of their overseas-acquired skills, knowledge, and attributes and their employer choice.

9.2.1.3 Overseas-acquired skills, knowledge, attributes and attitudes in community work

Overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes seem to be much less useful for returnees in community work. The survey data suggests a skills surplus across all skills types for the majority of returnees, even those who participate actively in community work. Possible reasons for this maybe because the skills indicators used in the survey are oriented towards workplace in advanced economies, which are different to activities in community work in Viet Nam; or that the returnees engage in community activities that demand different skills to their workplace. In fact, some returnees do participate in community work, particularly in international NGOs to acquire skills in a different field to their work, and to build personal networks that they can utilise for work.

The impact of overseas education for returnees in the “civic” field seems to be in the enhancement of “self” oriented attitudes, and acquisition of independent working attitudes. These attitudes allow them to approach community work as developing capacity of people in need, which is different to the Vietnamese views of providing basic needs through donations. The other attitudinal change for some returnees as a result of overseas education is a sense of “civic” self, where they see themselves as members of wider society, with social responsibility beyond their families. However, this sense of citizenship does not seem to motivate the returnees to engage in community work. The majority of interviewees claim that overseas education is not a driver of community work because community values are already embedded in the Vietnamese society, due to the virtues of personal relations (see chapter 4).

Furthermore, the motivations and goals of overseas education are work related and economic betterment, which are more important to them and take up most of their time.

9.2.2 Research aim 2: Impact of social structures and social relations in returnees' pursuit of goals

The practical experiences of these returnees suggest that they recognise and respond to their surrounding social structures and social relations at three levels: (1) the sector (field) that they operate in which is influenced by the economic and political contexts; (2) the institution (subfield) of their employer or community group; and (3) within the subfield, the specific situation (*habitus*) of their interactions with their work and community work colleagues and leaders.

9.2.2.1 Sector level

As discussed above, given the transitional stage of Viet Nam's economic development (World Bank 2013), there seems to be a lack of opportunities for the returnees in the "professional" field to work in the specific knowledge disciplines which they were trained for, which limits their ability to apply technical skills and knowledge. Moreover, this limitation may also arise because of their preference to work for foreign firms, particularly MNCs, to earn higher salaries and social status, as they can leverage their transferable soft skills, English proficiency and work-ready attributes.

In higher education, the Higher Education Reform Agenda (HERA) has resulted in the growth of non-State universities, and internationalisation initiatives with some joint partnerships with foreign universities. This presents opportunities for some returnees to leverage their overseas-acquired knowledge and teaching practices, particularly English skills. However, most academics interviewed seem to encounter challenges of HERA due to a lack of capacity, lack of autonomous governance of universities, and a general mentality of resistance to changes by university leaders. They, thus, perceive opportunities to contribute to HERA through their teaching overseas-acquired skills like academic writing and reading, and teaching specialised subjects using overseas textbooks.

In community work, the returnees' lack of involvement in political activities appears to reflect the broad political culture in Viet Nam. The reasons may be due to the State's strict policy around political advocacy and the requirement of organisations leaders, particularly in public institutions, to be Party members. Community work thus generally involves

humanitarian activities and some community services, with the majority of returnees holding passive membership as part of work requirements rather than active community participation.

9.2.2.2 Institutional level

As noted in section 1.1, these Vietnamese returnees set goals and take choices to leverage the cultural capital of their overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and work-ready attributes to enhance their power positions in jobs market, and to be able to apply some of their overseas-acquired resources in ways that they value. These forms of cultural capital are thus their power resources. In both the “professional” and “intellectual” field, it appears that the extent to which these returnees can mobilise their power resources depends on the institutional structures, particularly their relations with their colleagues and leaders. Some of the institutional structures of universities that present barriers to deploying their overseas-acquired resources to improve teaching standards include the lack of infrastructure and support for conducting research, rigid system of student enrolment and course management, and low salary structure which lead academics to taking high teaching workload. In other sectors outside academia, the challenges appear to be a lack of infrastructure such as professional associations and regulatory bodies to support professional development or ensure quality framework of professional standards.

The impact of returnees’ social relations upon their agency seems to occur at two levels. First, while there might be a societal perception of symbolic capital associated with overseas education for employability, there seems to be disparate understanding and appreciation of these overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes by leaders and colleagues in their workplace. For some, particularly those working in public universities and government agencies, they encounter skills and knowledge gaps, particularly in English proficiency, between themselves and their Vietnamese leaders. These gaps operate in different directions. They give rise to a sense of superiority over their leaders and other colleagues, which may advantage them in accessing certain roles. At the same time, they result in working behaviours and attitudes that are different to the Vietnamese culture, and can be viewed negatively by their colleagues and leaders. Given the social hierarchies in the Vietnamese society and thus workplace, which favour senior over junior (whether in age, years of service or role), these returnees encounter a competing agenda. On the one hand, they want to utilise their overseas-acquired resources as they see appropriate for both personal development and improving work and teaching practices and standards, which they view as

their personal accountability. On the other, they are obliged to follow their leaders' directions in order to fit in and to gain access to opportunities that would allow them to mobilise their power resources.

Second, the business environments and working culture in Viet Nam are underpinned by the traditional culture of personal relations and political affiliations. In addition to a general lack of industry and business knowledge in the Vietnamese contexts, the returnees who did not work prior to going overseas, often lack personal or political connections as a result of their time overseas. In State-owned organisations or Vietnamese-owned firms, returnees perceive this lack of personal connections to be a positional disadvantage compared to those who studied in Viet Nam. Furthermore, many returnees claim that personal connections foster a lack of personal accountability, lower work ethics and standards, and under-appreciation of the value of their overseas-acquired skills and qualifications. Those who work in the "professional" field tend to compare the professional relations in overseas work environment to the personal relations in Vietnamese workplace, and see themselves as more professional than locally-trained colleagues because they can follow rules and regulations and thus can adhere to standards. Thus, they prefer to work with foreign firms because they perceive that there are shared values and attitudes about work that cultivate professional relations and more ethical and higher standards in these settings. Their choices of foreign firms thus seem to be also avenues for them to mediate the Vietnamese working culture. For those who have to work in government agencies, they appear to adapt to the personal connections culture. They regard this adaptation as cultural skills, which are necessary to build social capital of personal connections, which they strategically use to maintain their positions in the institutions.

Similarly, in universities, some returnees prefer to work in IPPs and non-State universities because they can work with colleagues who value overseas teaching content and pedagogy, and appreciate the more open and egalitarian relationships between teachers and students in overseas universities. However, due to their scholarship conditions, which require them to remain at their universities for a certain period, the majority of returnees work in public universities.²⁹ In these situations, some position themselves strategically by taking up management roles to gain personal and political connections. Others see management pathways as the norms of universities that they are expected to follow. As with those in the "professional" field who work for government agencies, the majority of academics

²⁹ As noted in chapter 3 and 7, due to the method of recruitment there is a sample bias where there is an over representation of survey respondents and interviewees in public universities

interviewed seem to view “adaptation” to the university culture as necessary cultural skills that enable them to work with colleagues and leaders of their universities. Even though the economic interests underlie their career choices, which are similar to returnees in the “professional” field, the academics’ choices of adapting to the structures and relations of their universities seem to be also based on their perception of opportunities to make changes in the future. In their adaptation, they reflexively view their choices as personal empowerment, to meet their goals of applying their overseas-acquired skills and knowledge, and being an education reformer where they can improve the teaching and learning environment. Adaptation to the institutional culture appears to allow returnees to mediate the institutional *power-over* them in order to enhance their *power-to* by drawing on the *power-within* their relations with colleagues and leaders.

For the few returnees who participate actively in community work, their practices also suggest their reflexive recognition of the structural conditions of formal community organisations as the institutional *power-over* them. Returnees’ lack of active participation in formal community organisations reflect various factors, none of which are clearly linked in the returnees’ choices. First, there seems to be a deep-seated scepticism of the State’s political ideologies inculcated through mass organisations that are embedded in State institutions. Second, community work in Viet Nam is not usually enabled through formal organisations. Third, due the close associations between leaders of formal organisations and Party officials, which some view as necessary for community actions, formal organisations are often viewed as Party-affiliated. Fourth, there are rigorous government surveillance and monitoring of the processes of these formal organisations. International NGOs, on the other hand are generally not connected to the State. Two returnees who participate in an international NGO, reason their participation as having the opportunities to develop additional skills and networks, which can be beneficial for their future careers.

The returnees who actively participate in community work tend to prefer informal networks, which they access through families and friends. They seem to perceive trust, bonding, shared values and common goals of helping others in the personal relationships within these informal networks. However, they often have to mediate and appropriate multitudes of opposing ideas about strategies and tactics to enable change that are different to their own. Their own ideas are often resisted by others in the groups, particularly group leaders who are sceptical about implementing foreign ideas for social development in Viet Nam. Similar to the experiences encountered in public universities, government agencies and

Vietnamese firms, these returnees have to adapt to the social hierarchies and relations within these community groups, because they underpin the Vietnamese communication culture. However, they seem to be more accepting of the personal relations in community groups compared to the workplace, where they use personal connections strategically to deploy power resources to enhance their power positions for personal interests. It might be because there is an intrinsic value to doing community work, whereas in the workplace, personal relations have an instrumental value to achieve economic goals.

The analyses of returnees' practical experiences in light of the institutional structures and relations reveal the interrelation of their *power-to* and *power-within* their work relations. When they work within a group that share their value of overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes, returnees can increase their *power-to* deploy these resources as cultural capital in order to translate them to economic capital, as well as increase the *power-within* the group as professionals or education reformers. These valuable *beings* and *doings* refer to economic returns and application of overseas-learning. In their practical experiences, the returnees' perceptions of the *opportunity* and *process* of agency are shaped by the sector and institution that they work for, which may limit how they can effectively utilise their overseas-acquired resources to do what they see as important and valuable. This is what Bourdieu refers to as dialectic workings of "objectivity" and "subjectivity" in the process of agency (Bourdieu 1977). It also highlights the tension of Sen's agency in practical experiences in that: what returnees perceive as opportunities are shaped by their surrounding structures, which in turn construct their choices. My analysis of these practical experiences suggests that the power positions that returnees occupy because of their relations with others, shape their perception of agency opportunity, what I term *cultural opportunity structures*. Thus, I argue that an analysis of power structures, and agents' recognition of their *power-to*, *power-within*, and *power-over*, is critical for understanding the choices agents make in regards to valuable *doings* and *beings*. Agents' understanding of the inherent workings of their power within the field and how they can act as constraints of agency (Sen 2007) is also a potential for them to change these power positions by reexamining what is important to them. We can only understand the opportunities that agents might have if we understand the social conditions that give rise to how such opportunities are constructed, perceived and taken up.

9.2.3 Research aim 3: Enabled personal and social change in returnees' work and community work

This section addresses the third aim by discussing the returnees' choices and practices in regards to their achieved functionings and well-being, and how these choices and practices accord with their values of acquired overseas education. The reason for making explicit the link between agency and values is to also understand returnees' intrinsic and instrumental reasoning for committing to enabling change for themselves and their communities.

In the "professional" field, personal change seems to be viewed by returnees in terms of their ability to utilise their overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes. As found through research aim 1, what these returnees value is applying overseas-acquired resources to gain economic betterment and improve their professional practices. Their economic goals seem to be achieved with the majority of returnees earning much higher income than the average income in Viet Nam. In addition, their employment with MNCs is a form of achieved functionings for many returnees as they consider these firms to be prestigious employers who offer high salaries and economic benefits. Their contributions to improved ethical and professional standards seem to be more uneven, with some experiencing a sense of satisfaction in working standards mainly in MNCs. Overall, returnees seem to be less committed to improving professional practices, even though there are many observations of different work practices between foreign firms and Vietnamese firms.

In the "intellectual" field, returnees' ideas of personal change seem intertwined with social change. They perceive the ability to apply overseas-acquired resources, and transfer them to students to improve the teaching and learning environment as personal empowerment and improving quality of higher education in Viet Nam. Thus, they see themselves as education reformers even though their economic interests underlie their motivations and goals. Their achieved functionings and well-being are also viewed in terms of teaching foreign texts and employing foreign pedagogy. However, these achievements seem limited due to the university structures and lack of shared values by colleagues and university leaders (as discussed above). Therefore, they see adaptation to the culture, particularly building networks with their leaders as ways to create future opportunities for enabling change. Similar to those in the "professional" field, materialist values seem to be at the core, but their views of their roles in universities seem to be more altruistic with responsibility to students at large.

For the majority of returnees across all sectors, their accounts of enabled personal and social change suggest that they face multiple and sometimes conflicting obligations, for

example, contested to their families and to their profession. They view their economic motivations and goals as responses to economic necessity to meet costs of living, but embedded in moral responsibilities to their families; the latter constructs their sense of freedom. In that way, family responsibility is not a constraint to their freedom; rather what Ballet et al (2007) and Dubois (2010) refer to as *ex-ante* to freedom. They view themselves as free to be responsible to their family and they so choose this responsibility. The instrumental objective of jobs and salary is underpinned by the intrinsic value of meeting their family responsibilities, which is their well-being. They also have a sense of responsibility, a kind of personal accountability, to improve their work environment, particularly those in universities, which demands the freedom (*ex-post*) to put in changes as they see valuable. However, they have to balance this form of retrospective responsibility, with the prospective responsibility to their families. For example, some returnees in universities see the intrinsic value in doing research as knowledge production but they choose teaching or consulting to earn more money; some returnees in manufacturing choose to trade off their technical skills to take up managerial jobs to be able to work for MNCs to meet their family expectations.

In this regards, overseas living might provide some returnees with momentum for self-drive and self-actualisation to do what they might see as ethical and high standard work practices, yet their desire to act on those values seem to be secondary to the economic goals that stem from their responsibility to their families, in some cases because of low salaries. Their choices seem to reflect contested and conflicted values of self-oriented attitudes acquired from overseas and traditional virtue of filial piety, as they respond to the economic conditions and institutional structures within the field. This suggests that returnees exert agency in response to the immediate conditions of economic and employment structures and relations that surround them, and dependent on their *habitus*, which has historical roots. What seems to be important for these Vietnamese returnees in considering whether they can or will take actions to enable personal and social change is the need to consider or account for their traditional culture, because they are living in that culture.

The importance of understanding individual responsibility to others and conception of freedom (for agency) in terms of enabling social change, is further shown through the returnees' community participation in the "civic" field. Most of the interviewees seem to value charitable work because helping others, particularly those within the immediate families and communities are laudatory and sometimes obligatory in Viet Nam. It seems that such values have not changed because of overseas education. The returnees may have developed

more proactive attitudes to work in general but that does not seem to extend to participation in community activism. As discussed earlier, a possible reason is lack of time. However, the majority of returnees seem sceptical about community activism and possibilities for social change, particularly in regards to formal community organisations that have close affiliations with State officials. Their perception of unequal opportunities for political and community advocacy seem to reflect contradictory viewpoints about the role of political connections as a necessity or a hindrance to enabling change.

For the six interviewees who participate actively in community work, their ideas of personal and social change are deeply intertwined. They seem to consider personal change to be about sense of citizenship, independence and proactiveness, which lead them to perceive and grasp opportunities that local people might not. Some see their civic attitudes arising from their changed views about their “self” in society that extend beyond families. This sense of being a member in society and responsibility to society is similar with those in the “intellectual” field. However, there seems little evidence of any significant social change achieved as a result of their community work. The reason maybe because they tend to accord with the social hierarchies with the groups, which result in their acceptance of opposing ideas, or having their ideas rejected by their community group leaders because they are seen as foreign and too different for the Vietnamese community to accept.³⁰ Their commitment to long-term community work seems to be driven by the values of community work itself, and is not related to achieved outcomes or their power positions within the groups, or even perception of possibilities for change. They perceive the potential for change to come about in non-systemic ways, even unintentional ways, or as a result of their co-opting with the structures and relations of their community groups.

Furthermore, it seems that these overseas-educated returnees have to mediate between two different views of community and civic actions. On the one hand, as a result of living and studying overseas, they see themselves as members of wider society with freedom and social responsibility beyond families. On the other hand, in their practices, particularly in political activism, they seem to accord with the Vietnamese norms that public accountability is shaped by what can be publicly discussed, social responsibility depends on societal norms; both are dependent on individuals’ political interests and positions. If we apply Sen’s idea of agency, these returnees’ dispositions to civic and political activism may be seen as adaptive preferences that preclude political action because of a lack of political freedom. However,

³⁰ As noted in chapter 8, the six interviewees who participated frequently only returned to Vietnam within six years

from their practical experiences, their view of community and civic actions are embedded in the conditions that they live with rather than the objective idea of democracy that they see overseas, which they might value in theory but cannot realise in practice. Despite the small number of interviewees that this finding draws upon, the tension that returnees seem to have to mediate gives insight into how Sen's vision of public reasoning and democratic freedom might be enacted in everyday practices. This is not to say that there are no democratic values in Vietnamese society or held by these returnees. Some returnees clearly appreciate and value democracy. Their co-optations are their ways of responding to the State's *power-over* them to gain some procedural control to exercise their *power-within* their community groups. In that way, their community work seems to be a form of struggle, as much as resistance to the State's deliberation of ideologies. I will now discuss the theoretical implications of these key findings to further argue how we may understand the transformative potential of acquired overseas education.

9.3 Theoretical implications for conceptualising *normative agency* and empowerment

In this section, I discuss the theoretical implications of the findings for conceptualising *normative agency* and empowerment. I argue that attention to these concepts through the practical experiences of returnees is important to understand the transformative potential of acquired overseas education. In this thesis, I consider the transformative potential in terms of agency of returnees to *do* and *be* as they see valuable, in enabling personal and social change, but more importantly the *opportunity* and *process* of agency in achieving these changes. Moreover, I consider transformative potential as tied to both economic and social development which Cannon (1999) noted is much needed to understand the conditions that enable or challenge returnees, in order to understand the potential of returnees to make impact on themselves, their employers and society as a result of their acquired overseas education.

The practical experiences of the Vietnamese returnees in this research suggest that the transformative potential of acquired overseas education is laden with complexities, contradictory goals, responsibilities and contested values. The returnees take choices and actions based on their perception of power positions within their social fields, and how well they can enhance their power resources to pursue their goals in light of their responsibilities. I argue that the implication for understanding *normative agency* is twofold. First, individuals

conceive freedom or *agency opportunity* within their social structures and relations, not external to them, which in turn construct their values and responsibilities. Second, *agency process* is dependent on (1) the power structures that individuals perceive within their social field, and (2) their dispositions to choices that come from their values and responsibilities. I argue that empowerment necessitates (3) individuals' recognition of their power structures in the field and their dispositions to choices through reflexive reasoning of their values and responsibilities; and (4) understanding the interdependence of individual agency and collective agency within the individuals' power structures in their social groups. I will now discuss each of these implications.

9.3.1 *Intersubjective freedom, values and responsibility*

In this thesis, I offered the term *intersubjective freedom* as a way to think about a person's freedom *within* her relations. It takes account of her social structures and relations in constructing her sense of freedom. When the returnees reason their choices, they recognise that their values are shaped within a conception of freedom embedded in their relations with families, work relations or community groups. This is different to Sen's (2007) acknowledgement that individuals make choices within constraints due to their commitments to others, but that they have *effective freedom*, as if such freedom is external to them.

Intersubjective freedom constructs returnees' sense of responsibility, which is prospective as it is *ex-ante* to freedom: that is their responsibility *for* and *to* others comes before their freedom is exercised (Ballet et al. 2013). For example, the virtue of filial piety is the returnees' principle of morality, constructed within the roles of family members (see chapter 4). They imagine their freedom within the boundary of their responsibility to their families, not external to it. This is different to retrospective responsibility, which is when they perceive freedom to act, which shapes their responsibility as *ex-post* to freedom. For example, they adhere to rules of working standards set in MNCs because they see it as exercising their personal accountability. The experiences of the returnees in this research suggest that they have to mediate between the two types of responsibilities in making their choices. How each returnee mediates between the two forms of responsibilities depends on her view of her "self" in relation to others. The more individualistic the person, the more her sense of responsibility shifts towards *ex-post* freedom. I argue that in understanding agency in relation to individual goals and responsibilities, we have to understand and analyse different conceptions of responsibility through a relational analysis of the person *within* her social relations, not

external to these relations. This is a nuanced extension on Sen's idea of *effective agency* - that considers a person's responsibility *to* others, to the idea of *normative agency* - that considers a person's responsibility *within* her relations with others.

9.3.2 Power structures

The *process* aspect of agency, as I have shown, is dependent on the returnees' recognition of their power positions in the social fields. The findings suggest that the returnees account for the reasoning process by understanding their power positions through their owned resources in the practical fields. For example, the overseas-acquired transferable soft skills that returnees can mobilise to gain positional advantage with foreign firms are forms of cultural capital, which act as their power resources. In addition, the personal relations that they have to accumulate in order to help them to mobilise their power resources are the social capital, which are necessary for converting their power resources to achieve their goals. Again, the idea of *intersubjective freedom* is critical to understand returnees' power structures, and how they deploy their power resources within their fields. I have shown that the returnees' relational power structures, as enactments of their *habitus* in the field, help us to understand how and why they make their choices. Thus, I argue that power structures provide a way to understand Sen's abstract notions of choice and agency, constraint and commitment. Power structures can be understood and analysed through: (1) forms of cultural and social capital as power resources that agents mobilise interdependently to convert to valuable *doings* and *beings*; (2) social structures and social relations as cultural power within the agent's field of operation; and (3) individual dispositions (*habitus*) to taking power positions in the field.

9.3.3 Interdependence of individual agency and collective agency as empowerment

It follows then that to understand empowerment, we have to recognise the intimate relationship between individual agency and collective agency through a person's power structures. In this thesis, I draw on Allen's (2014) typologies of power (*power-over*, *power-to* and *power-within*) to analyse the returnees' power positions. I have shown that *power-over* occurs when the social structures and relations surrounding the returnees are hegemonic, and limit them to act in ways that they value. Their *power-to* may come about when they recognise that *power-over* them, and when they can realise the *power-within* their social group, that is when they share the value of their owned resources, goals and values with other members in the group. The more that social relations act as *power-over* or *power-within*, the

tighter is the relationship between individual agency and collective agency. Thus, I argue that the transformative potential of international education has to be understood and analysed at both the level of the individual returnees and at the level of the social groups that they operate in. If empowerment for social change is about some kind of collective actions and collective agency, then individual agency could be recognised as intertwined with collective agency; rather than assuming that individual agency happens, and collective agency occurs just because one takes actions as part of a member of the group.

9.3.4 Reflexivity as empowerment

In this research, I have used reflexive sociology in two ways. First, as a way to engage returnees in the process of reasoning their values and responsibilities to justify their choices and practices. I have shown that in the process of reasoning, returnees draw on their view of their "self" in relation to their families, society, and the State to understand their dispositions. The evidence also suggests that their choices reflect their recognition of their dispositions, and their perception of their power positions in regards to these relations. Their choices seem to result in a combination of co-optation with surrounding institutional structures and autonomy of choices and actions. The practical experiences of these returnees highlight that adapting to social structures and social relations are not always the result of adaptive preferences. Returnees' adaptation can be generative when they construct future opportunities for them, which is dependent on their perception of opportunities and their owned resources. Their perceived opportunity structures may carry impositions to accord with the status quo, but also constitute possibilities of agency. The returnees' *consciousness* of their values and attitudinal change about knowledge, professionalism, pedagogy, and community actions as a result of overseas education, suggest a potential change as arising from dislocation, that is what they see as different with the logic and rules of the sector and institution that they operate in (Bourdieu 1977). Their practices take into account the past and present and while they might be predisposed to act in certain ways, the potentiality for change is never foreclosed. This is displayed through the small changes that they make in their workplace in regards to improving pedagogy, working standards and satisfactions with those small changes along the way. The intertwined corporeal being and agency implied in the concept of *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977) goes some ways to resolve the tension between freedom and responsibility of Sen's liberal conceptions of the individual, and thus adds to understanding Sen's vision of agency. However, it must also be noted that in practice, as shown with these returnees' practical

experiences, there is still a tension between recognising the *power-to* as agency and *power-over* as struggle or resistance, and how they actually engage in choices as responses to the social conditions that produce these forms of power.

Despite these tensions, I argue that the second way that I use reflexive sociology as research praxis to analyse returnees' power structures to understand *normative agency* can be generative for understanding empowerment in the following ways. These returnees perceive opportunities and grasp opportunities that they otherwise may not as a result of independent living in foreign countries, even if these opportunities do not directly relate to opportunities to make social change in Viet Nam. Understanding the transformative potential of acquired overseas education then, is about understanding about the process of utilising these opportunities - the social factors that condition returnees' opportunity structures that they perceive and take up, rather than an evaluation of particular choices or set of practices that may not be conceived within the same set of values conception or enacted in similar contexts of the participants and the researcher. If social change is about transformative capacity, it cannot be about objective sets of ideas. Rather, it should be reflective of the social conditions that give rise to the social contexts in which people's lives are in and how they can be empowered in response to these social conditions. A reflexive sociological approach enables I, the researcher, to gain insights into the returnees' subjectivities that shape and are shaped by their world; the alternative is an analysis that employs abstract concepts of values and agency taken from epistemological framework that are outside the returnees' world.

However, there are also dangers in taking an insider position such as being oblivious to the constitutive meanings because they are so omnipresent, or that an insider may be too close to get things in the focus requisite for evaluation. This may mean that an insider has to give up certain perspectives and become an outsider. Bilingualism and biculturalism that enable cross cultural dialogues, as I and some of the returnees have shown to be capable, are helpful because we can immerse in the different experiences, grasp some of what is going on, and be accepted as partners. At the same time, as a researcher/outsider, I could take advantage of outsider status to reflect the culture back to the insiders, contrasting it with their different experiences, bringing and speaking about new ideas. As Crocker (2004) pointed out, which ever position one takes, it is important to recognise that there is no such view as a "view from nowhere", that is a view of the inside from an ahistorical transcendent and objective outside. Reflexive sociology can help as a methodological step in participatory action research to identify where a researcher's views come from, by understanding the social positions that the

researcher takes relative to their participants and how that influence their interactions and conduct of the research.

9.4 Reflection on the use of Bourdieuan theories to supplement Sen's CA

9.4.1 Transitivity of value of cultural and social capital across fields

The use of Bourdieu's capital and field has limitations in this thesis in that the field is associated with the boundedness of a social group, or an imagined consensus about the value of forms of capital within the group. The workings of the field suggest a homogenous collection of people whose thoughts and values are shared and agreed upon, and for that reason, agents strategically accord with those shared values in order to promote their self-interest (Bourdieu 1977, 1990, 1998). While the analysis of skills, knowledge and attributes at both the field (sector) and the subfield (institution) allows for understanding the value of these overseas-acquired resources as power resources that the returnees can use, the homologies of thoughts that are required to associate their value within certain predispositions is less yielding when one considers movement across fields. Furthermore, as noted in chapter 3, Bourdieu does not give much guidance on the demarcation of field and subfield and leaves it up to the researcher. In this research, analytical skills seem to have less value in the "civic" field compared to the "professional" field. In the Vietnamese society, there are complex and diverse economic, political, legal, social and cultural factors that operate across fields which affect skills value and skills utilisation differently. Therefore, divergent values of overseas-acquired resources have to be examined and questioned, rather than assumed within the field and across fields. Moreover, the colonial historical context, which underpins returnees' aspirations, also produces competing hegemonies. Thus, transferable (soft) skills or self-orientation attributes are recognised as power resources in foreign firms, particularly MNCs but not widely in society. Sen's CA considers the value of resources as important in the conversion to valuable *doings* and *beings* (Alkire 2002; Robeyns 2008), thus if using Bourdieu's idea of capital to explain power resources, we have to pay attention to divergent values of these forms of capital in constituting agency-focused capabilities as people operate in different fields simultaneously. While Bourdieu may have intended for this in his concept of *habitus*, Maton (2008) argued that the workings of *habitus* in relation to the field suggest a more rigid and homogenous application of forms of capital. This is also evident in this

research. If we recognise that *habitus* is often the norms in tension and contestation, then this opens the door for critical scrutiny of *habitus*.

Bourdieu's notions of cultural, social and symbolic capital are based on systems of exchanges in an economic sense. Bourdieu considers these forms of capital to be convertible to economic capital and that is how agents intend to use them (Bourdieu 1977, 1998). This notion seems relevant in relation to the overseas-acquired skills, knowledge and attributes, which returnees use as cultural capital to enhance their power positions in the workplace. However, personal relations seem to be differently viewed between workplace and community groups, especially networks-based groups. In the workplace, returnees strategically use these relations to mobilise their skills, knowledge and attributes for instrumental value of career advancement. This is consistent with Bourdieu's concept of social capital. In community groups, they view these relations as platforms for co-operation and trust, to allow them to be comfortable in their community activities, in order to achieve an intrinsic value of community. It should also be noted that this finding is based on a very small number of returnees who actively participate in informal networks of community work. However, the point is that the returnees' purpose of personal relations in these informal networks is different to the social capital as Bourdieu envisions because returnees' values and goals are to help others, to work with others towards a common goal, rather than to advance personal interests. Thus it seems that Bourdieu's idea of social capital may be less relevant in situations where people have altruistic motivations, goals and responsibilities for others, instead of for themselves.

Furthermore, the personal relations in returnees' informal networks in community work act to delineate the State from the community. This is despite, and in resistance to the State's embedded mass organisations in formal community organisations. So on the one hand, there are personal connections between Party officials and citizens that are imposed, and voluntarily taken up by many returnees in order to mobilise their political or work ambitions, which accord with Bourdieu's idea of social capital; on the other hand, personal connections also serve to bond returnees in community through networks of families and friends who might also be Party officials.

9.3.2 Elitism of Bourdieu's cultural and symbolic capital

Bourdieu's forms of capital are based on their distinction in order for them to be converted to economic capital. The findings of this research are consistent with literature in suggesting that

international education is beneficial because it provides international students with cultural capital that associate with employability (Ong 1999; Waters 2006). I argue that privileging certain types of skills, knowledge and attributes as cultural or symbolic capital, risks entrenching their elitism. English language skills, transferable (soft) skills and work-ready attributes for Western industrialised economies may provide advantage for these returnees in MNCs which may satisfy their goals. That also means they have to accord to the dominance of MNCs and Western industrialised work practices as normative forms of knowledge to be cultivated. These practices are further homogenised, with potential for hegemonic practices, as overseas-educated returnees seek to cultivate identities of professional workers in a knowledge economy.

The implication is that local knowledge and skills are viewed as something of a deficit in comparison to that of the West rather than inviting some creative anticipation of a future that takes account of Vietnamese indigeneity. The knowledge hierarchies remain within the West rather than allow for other mode of knowledge from the periphery to be equal in the process of knowledge production. For research about international education outcomes and benefits, the risk of not understanding the value of overseas-acquired resources, which are usually acquired in Western liberalist capitalist societies, and their power positioning across nations, is that hegemonic practices of the dominant (and subordinate) nations may not be uncovered. The point is if overseas-education is seen as elitist through Bourdieu's symbolic capital, as in this study and others, there is a risk that we miss recognising international education as mechanisms for exporting Western symbolic power into emerging knowledge societies and economies like Viet Nam.

As Maton (2008) pointed out, there is a limit of *habitus* in engendering change in practices. The experiences of returnees in this research suggest that in order for cultural capital to work to enhance power position, they must be seen as elitist power resources by the returnees. Yet, if they leverage this elitism, they implicate themselves in the process of hegemony, as they do by privileging Western knowledge and foreign firms in their choices of work. Internationalisation of higher education, if seen through the idea of taking Western program and selling it to Vietnamese through overseas-educated academics or professional workers, may predispose these returnees to be transferors of Western knowledge rather than be knowledge producers of their local communities. Similarly, if returnees channel their energy in working in MNCs' supply chain production, then their roles are simply applying

Western intellect in a factory line rather than developing local knowledge that would transform human resources in Viet Nam.

While these areas are not the main focus of investigation in this research, the emergent findings suggest that the vagueness of Bourdieu's concept of field in definition yet boundedness in conceptual working of forms of capital may underestimate the ambiguities and dissonances that exist in ways that research participants occupy their positions in the global/local field. The homogeneity of capital assumed within the field maybe limited for understanding the global hegemony underlying nuances of individual agency process as element of social change and collective capability. For this reason, it might not be so helpful to further develop or supplement the CA's collective capability at a broader level, and for understanding the balance of global and local power and agency.

Lastly, given that the returnees in this study find it challenging to apply their overseas-acquired skills and knowledge in their community work, an understanding of the intersection of global and local can give insight into the colonial contexts and dispositions of Vietnamese people to accept or reject, or both, foreign Western ideas about social development in Viet Nam. Here, Sen is helpful to supplement Bourdieu in bringing out the transformative potential of *habitus* because his vision of equality, and emphasis on individuals as drivers of agency can help to close the potential gap between elitist and non-elitist by asking what is it that people can actually do with their resources. What kinds of government do they have good reason to value? How can they equalise their positions in accordance with their values and goals? What is it that they actually equalise? In this research, Sen's agency-focused Capability Approach, which emphasises freedom and equality, provides a conceptual lens for understanding agency for empowerment, in light of Bourdieu's elitist forms of capitals and power struggle.

I have discussed above some limitations in combining Sen's and Bourdieu's way of thinking to conduct this research. More generally, there is quite a difference between the deterministic and functional approach of Bourdieu related to social attitudes and relationships, when compared to the potential vision brought by the capability approach which is based on alternative choice (as freedom of expression), and on probabilistic opportunities. Future employment of the Sen-Bourdieu framework in scientific studies would need to carefully consider these differences. I will now discuss the implications of the Sen-Bourdieu framework for ethical development.

9.5 Implications of the research for ethical development

Through the lens of Sen's CA, operationalised using Bourdieu's sociological tools, the findings of this research point to the potential for international education to connect with ethical development through the lives of international graduates when they return to their home country. The benefits and challenges encountered in operationalising the Sen-Bourdieu framework in this research could be used to strengthen both theoretical frameworks, and develop it as a framework in its own right towards ethical notions of development. I offer some of the implications of this research for ethical development.

9.5.1 Interdependence of global and local in capabilities

There is a need to consider cross-cultural issues where overseas-educated returnees' values are recognised in terms of their local contexts, which might be very different to that of the foreign universities that they studied in. The essence of participatory method in development broadly and the CA specifically can be invigorated when participants are viewed not just as empirical data to fit some conceptual models but also as epistemic individuals who can participate in the research process. In this thesis, reflexive sociology is used to achieve the latter by conceptualising and examining the returnees' freedom and agency through their practical experiences, and through attention to the researcher's epistemological understandings of freedom and agency that take account of the returnees' viewpoints. This is part of the developed framework of *normative agency*. The returnees' voices have been at the forefront of the analysis chapters (chapters 5 to 8) of this thesis to conceptualise and explicate these ideas of *normative agency* and empowerment. The aim is to consider the returnees as epistemic beings in the research, not just empirical data (see chapter 3). For example, conception of freedom is understood from their perspectives of virtue and morality, democracy is understood drawing on their relations with the Viet Nam State, which are starkly different to Sen's or Bourdieu's idea of freedom and democracy. I argue that a space of agency-focused capabilities for overseas-educated returnees to see their subjectivities to global asymmetric power in educational outcomes ought to consider socio-historical structures in reference to specific situations of the returnees in their home countries rather than a blanket approach across all nations.

This thesis highlights the value in researching about the role of international education and development that deploys relational thinking as Sen envisages it, which Bourdieu's

sociological tools help to understand at concrete levels, and to extend the relational analysis to take account of the macro relations of States and its citizens, and interactions between nations and how they shape local actors' actions. In addition, indigenous traditions and values need to be understood from both the developing and developed nations who help in the development process, and that includes international education providers. Ethical development practices would need to be informed with an understanding of the relationships between nations where there is transfer of knowledge, and the political and economic interests of parties involved. As the findings of this thesis point to, balancing local needs and global structures is complex and challenging. The practical experiences of returnees suggest that international education ideas that are borne out of colonial logic have limits because all they might procure is hostility, rejection, or entrenchment of hegemonic practices that are not durable for longer-term development of those countries that send their students abroad.

This thesis offers the concept of *normative agency* from the practical experiences of returnees, to understand the economic prerogatives of international education and legacy of colonisation. Embracing the political, economic and cultural interdependence of the global and the local in capabilities can strengthen the CA to understand the normative underpinning of "international" and move forward with theoretical aspects. In doing so, it can help to better understand the conditions of and possible responses to these dependencies.

9.5.2 Non-universality of democratic freedom

The idea of democratic freedom that is presupposed in Sen's reasoning and values is very far from the reality of countries with authoritarian State like Viet Nam. Yet the lesson learnt in this research is that ethical development is not necessarily about democratic freedom, whether it is about substantive ideas or procedures for deliberative participation or representative liberal democracy. Nor do these notions of democratic freedom always enhance capability. The returnees in this study seem to appreciate democratic values, that is they appreciate the freedom and see value in engaging in civic actions to help the community. While the *opportunity* and *process* of agency in political and community actions seem limited, they do exist despite the lack of political freedom. These actions are enacted in various ways, even through co-optation with political structures and relations. Even though these actions might seem to enhance the hegemonic power of the State's *power-over* these returnees, the returnees' co-optation with such power can be understood as their way of creating possibilities of future agency, as much as they are forms of struggle and resistance. I argue

that the relational analysis of civic actions has to consider integrated State-society relations, rather than assume that the State and society operate in separate spheres. The returnees' choices, particularly in community work, highlight that a lack of political freedom might not always result in lack of democratic actions. Rather, we have to consider how freedom is conceptualised by the people in relation to their political, social and cultural contexts, and what democratic civic actions mean to them. Thus, I argue that it is more fruitful to think about conditions and conditionings for democratic actions in terms of political relations and how people respond to these conditions. Much more work is thus required to consider diverse ideas about democracy and democratic actions in different social, cultural and political contexts.

9.5.3 Implication for policies and practices

I argue that shifting the viewpoint about international education towards ethical development requires policies, practices and research to attend to the possibilities of transnational hegemony that may come about as a result of creating knowledge, skills and English language hierarchies through internationalisation activities. As with other developing nations in South East Asia, the Vietnamese participants in this research are vulnerable to economic wants and perceptions of Western superiority due to family traditions and history of colonisation. The findings suggest that international students could become aware of their traditional culture - with its contestations as well as continuities - in the development progress, not just from the vantage point of acquired overseas education, which also has contestations. There are some benefits of international education in terms of transferable (soft) skills, English proficiency, work-ready attributes and to some extent disciplinary subject knowledge, while industry and technical knowledge are less useful. While these acquired skills, knowledge and attributes give returnees initial advantage in the employment market, their knowledge about Vietnamese economy, businesses, working culture, and personal connections are necessary for sustaining or career advancement. International education can build their curriculum to incorporate industry knowledge in the local contexts of international students so they can acquire some of the local know-hows, networks, and intercultural skills. Joint programs, for example the international partnerships programs or 2 by 2 programs where students study in two years in Viet Nam and two years abroad can include experiential learning that enable international students to apply their skills locally, or develop some attributes and attitudes towards contributing to common good of wider society that are relevant and applicable to actually

doing good in their local communities. As this thesis has highlighted, this is not easy to achieve given returnees' family commitments, business demand for conformity with local culture and values, resistance by local leaders and the economic pragmatism that are embedded in society. However, these returnees are also capable of enabling small changes in small environments. With the conscious effort assisted by strategic partnerships between universities, industries and government agencies, there may be opportunities for ethical development of these emerging economies and enhance knowledge societies.

On the other hand, reform policies of Viet Nam's higher education sector are at a risk of missed opportunities of utilising overseas-educated academics to create environment of quality university education that takes account of local culture, if these policies rely on borrowed policies from the West to advance personal interests in the knowledge economy. As Marginson (2007) noted, the commodification of higher education is real in Asia as much as it is in the West, but a nation like Viet Nam is much more susceptible to imperialism through neoliberal entrapment from the West due to its colonial history and economic pragmatism. As the thesis has shown, the susceptibility is not a cultural subscription to the West, rather using Western firms as a means to gain personal wealth. Again, the scepticism, cynicism of the nationalist agenda, individualist motivations compelled by *Doi Moi* and *Xa Hoi Hoa*, and resistance by those who fear Western standards might erode their privileges make the flight to foreign firms a safer choice of actions for returnees.

This thesis has highlighted the difficulty and complexity for formulating policies and implementing practices for receiving returnees in Viet Nam, as with other source countries of international students like China (Hao et al. 2016, Zweig & Yang 2014), or Indonesia (Daoresman & Daoresman 1992, Kiley 1999). The point to emphasise is that internal demand for skills and knowledge for economic development must be increased and met to allow integration with the world but at its own space and culture, not just a push for foreign development investment that does not take into account the impact of indigenous conditions and ambitions. Overseas graduates could be incentivised to utilise their technical and specialised knowledge in research across all sectors and employers to develop their own knowledge and pathways not just replicating models from foreign markets. Perhaps, host universities and aid agencies that provide scholarship programs to international students can work with the State or employers in home countries to support these initiatives.

In summary, the idea of international education as a contribution to development of a knowledge society not just through the illusion of a knowledge economy is thus an ethical

perspective that should be of great concern for policies in this area, as much as it is for Viet Nam to support overseas-educated returnees to contribute to their society.

9.6 Conclusion: Limitations of the research and suggestions for future research directions

This research is limited by the boundaries of the case study of Viet Nam and Vietnamese overseas-educated returnees. There are also other limitations inherent in the methodological approach including the process of participant recruitment and their self-selection to participate in the research, and researcher bias in the interview analysis and interpretation. To address these methodological limitations, I have attempted to be explicit in explaining all steps of the data collection methods and the analysis processes, in particular the use of reflexive sociology to analysing and interpreting the data, and my insider/outsider position of a Vietnamese-Australian researcher. My intention is to present the findings with “truthfulness” in recognising the returnees as objective and highlight my subjectivity within the research process. I have given much attention to the credibility of the data in the design and analysis by corroborating the survey data with interview data, and triangulating the interview data of the key interviewees and members of their networks. The nature of an exploratory study and the wide ranging issues that the thesis touches upon limits its findings from being generalised to other Vietnamese overseas graduates or other countries. However, the concepts and ideas that arise from the findings have broader applications to research on international education and beyond. Given that this research explores an area that is scarcely researched, and as far as I know, is the first study about the benefits of international education for Vietnamese international graduates in their homeland, the findings present significant insights and contributions to understanding the experiences of international education graduates upon returning home. The use of survey instrument suggest relevant categories of skills, knowledge, attributes and attitudes for work. Additional categories could include English and cultural skills, and the values statements could include economic betterment. Much more can still be done, particularly in the domains of civic and political participation, and this thesis sets the ground for further research work in these areas.

Similar to other research about international students’ motivations and goals for overseas (Brooks & Waters 2013, Ong 1999), the Vietnamese returnees in this study want to improve their English, graduate as privileged agents and pursue highly skilled well-paid employment. They may not want to engage in civic activities in their homeland or they may

not prioritise it. They may aspire to Western ideas particularly in their work. However, there are complexities to their economic desires and Western aspirations that have historical roots of Western colonisation, Confucian tradition of family responsibility, and political ideologies of authoritarian Socialist State. The practical experiences of these Vietnamese returnees' work and community work are shaped by geopolitics of knowledge and values of knowledge. History of colonialism, transitional economy, economic and social development strategies of the Socialist State, and returnees' cultural transition from overseas back home, are determining factors that shape their goals, choice and practices. What seems to be evident is that the practical experiences of these returnees entail both advantages of elites and disadvantages of "others" in their social fields. While their choices may be theoretically expanded because of their increased skills sets, their actual choices of career tracks are based on a narrow limited set of options, and with conditions to apply what they see as valuable. Their choices and actions seem to be in *consciousness* of their surrounding social conditions, and straddle adaptation, resistance or struggle; yet also signify perception of agency and future possibilities. They are marked by contests, tensions, and struggles that are disjunctions within the fragmented values that they carry within, as much as the exogenous factors of their surrounding institutions and relations.

These findings highlight that the past has intersecting and overlapping conditions that might present complex and competing values, which affect individuals' choice and practices. Thus, the problem of future research is to find innovative ways to understand the shifting paradigms of normative thoughts and identities, and acknowledging these shifts in order to establish conditions of ethical change. I offer the concepts of *normative agency* and *intersubjective freedom* through reflexive sociology in this thesis as one way to do so.

This research also raises other questions that could be further investigated. One research direction could be an inquiry into the productive character of overseas graduates as a new form of labour or intellectual as a force in the periphery or the metropole. For example, the role of overseas-educated academics as intellectual workers within the internationalisation process of Vietnamese universities; the role of MNCs and their employment of overseas-educated professionals in Viet Nam's economic development pathways; the role of overseas-educated Government officials in public policies for social development; or comparison of jobs access, income earned, knowledge and skills utilisation between overseas-educated and Viet Nam-educated workers. These would have implications for policy and programs of professional colleges as well as universities in Viet Nam. At the regional level, it is

worthwhile to compare the work experiences of Vietnamese returnees and other countries in the East and South East Asian region with similar economic development status like Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand, or similar colonisation background like Malaysia and Indonesia, or similar cultural Confucian tradition like China and South Korea.

Another research direction can be investigating how new technical knowledge, acquired in overseas universities, and at home in workplace practices, intersect with community development, with attention to how a Socialist market-based economy may erode the ideal of social equality, and make it vulnerable to Western supremacy. For example, research can question the duality of Viet Nam's market-based economy and socialisation policies in pushing neoliberalism that results in susceptibility to non-democratic and elitist Western ideologies; or the State's push of nationalist ideologies through practices that may be conducive to emulating the West, or for Vietnamese overseas-educated returnees to learn from and be equal to the West.

While this study's empirical accounts are not generalisable, they offer possibilities for rethinking international education in regards to knowledge production and transmission on a wider scale. The suggestions for future research extend on the findings of this research in the context of Viet Nam. However, this thesis raises ideas and research pathways that may be relevant for developing nations with students studying abroad. The research implications are significant in terms of economic, social and human development for countries that send their citizens abroad to study, as much as it is of benefits for institutions offering international education. To do research with the intention of connecting international education and ethical development requires some form of democratic reform at the global space where policies and practices of international education are being crafted. At the core of ethical development is that the researchers be conscious that these democratic reforms do not always have to be conceived in the Western liberalist models or epistemological framework. But there is something to be said for democracy as a universal value to be democratically realised in different ways in different contexts. This study offers pathways for research to recognise the social dynamics of change in the local contexts, and how they construct power and mobilise resources, and doing so with *consciousness* of the role of the metropole on the periphery. As Connell (2007) argued, this is how a global labour force or intellectual force for a global knowledge society may eventually be built in ways that the intellectuals and labour force of the global and local can understand their place in social transformation.

This thesis highlights the challenges and complexities of international education to transform the lives of returnees and their communities when they return home. It is an attempt to illustrate the interdependence of the global and local in bringing about returnees' capabilities in the process of development. It draws attention to individual and collective agency that are premised on people's indigenous knowledge within the political, cultural and economic specificities of their nation.

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Appendix I. List of Vietnamese Student Abroad Organisations, Overseas Universities Alumni Chapters, LinkedIn Professional Groups, and Universities visited

Vietnamese Student Abroad Organisations

1. VGAC - Vietnamese Graduates From Australia Club
2. US Alumni Vietnam
3. Vietabroad – US alumni
4. UKAV – UK Alumni Vietnam

Overseas Universities Alumni Chapters

1. AITAA Asian Institute of Technology Alumni Association
2. University of Queensland Vietnam Alumni
3. Vietnam Belgium Alumni <http://www.vietbelalumni.org>
4. La Trobe University Alumni – Vietnam Chapter Contact details:
5. Australian scholarships alumni in Vietnam
6. Edinburgh Business School Vietnam Alumni
7. Holcim Alumni (Engineering)
8. Ford Foundation International Fellowship Program (IFP) Vietnam Alumni (Thua Thien Hue)
9. The Center for Educational Exchange with Viet Nam (CEEVN)
10. Horizon International Bilingual School
11. QUT Alumni Vietnam chapter
12. Sydney University Alumni in Vietnam
13. Brown University Alumni in Vietnam
14. ITE Alumni Association Vietnam Chapter
15. Swinburne University alumni
16. Stanford University Alumni in Vietnam
17. University of Southern California
18. University of Melbourne Vietnam alumni
19. US-Vietnam International Exchange
20. ABAC MBA Alumni Vietnam
21. Alumni-Deutschland Vietnam
22. Curtin University Vietnam
23. Alumni Troy STU gathers graduates from Troy Program at STU Campus
24. Cuu Sinh Vien UBI Belgium
25. MBS Vietnam Alumni
26. GRIPS Alumni in Vietnam

LinkedIn Professional Groups

1. Link In Vietnam
2. Anphabe.com
3. APAC Business
4. Vietnam Jobs Network
5. Link In Vietnam – Education and Training

6. Vietnamese Professional Networks
7. Vietnamese Small Business Associations
8. VinaHR – HR Networks in Vietnam
9. Vietnam PhD Org

Universities

1. Ha Noi National University
2. Ho Chi Minh National University
 - Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology
 - Ho Chi Minh University of Science
3. Hue University – Hue College of Economics
4. Ho Chi Minh University of Economics
5. Ha Noi University of Law
6. University of Da Nang – Da Nang University of Technology
7. RMIT International University Vietnam
8. Foreign Trade University

Appendix II. The survey instrument ³¹



Survey on experiences since returning home from studying overseas.

Khảo sát – Kinh nghiệm từ khi trở về quê hương sau khi du học.

We would like to invite Vietnamese nationals who have acquired their tertiary education overseas and currently live in Viet Nam to participate in a research project on experiences post overseas studying. Your opinion is valued and appreciated. The survey will help us to understand how overseas tertiary education may contribute to Vietnamese international students' experiences in work and community participation after their return to Viet Nam.

Chúng tôi muốn mời các cựu du học sinh viên Việt Nam hiện đang sống tại Việt Nam để tham gia vào một dự án nghiên cứu về kinh nghiệm sau khi học tập ở nước ngoài. Ý kiến của bạn có giá trị quý báu. Cuộc khảo sát sẽ giúp chúng tôi hiểu thêm những lợi ích của du học cho sinh viên quốc tế Việt Nam trong việc tham gia công việc và cộng đồng sau khi trở về Việt Nam.

This survey should take you about 20 minutes to complete. Cuộc khảo sát này sẽ cần khoảng 20 phút để hoàn thành.

The information you supply on the questionnaire will be kept completely confidential. Your real name will not be used in any disseminated report. Please answer the questions based on your personal experiences. There are no right or wrong answers. Don't try to think how other people might answer the questions. Mark only ONE response per question unless you are instructed to do otherwise. Thông tin mà bạn cung cấp sẽ được giữ kín hoàn toàn. Tên thật của bạn sẽ không được sử dụng trong bất kỳ báo cáo phổ biến nào. Bạn hãy trả lời dựa trên những kinh nghiệm của bạn. Không có câu trả lời nào là đúng hay sai. Bạn đừng nghĩ những đáp án mà người khác có thể trả lời. Chỉ chọn MỘT câu trả lời cho mỗi câu hỏi, trừ khi bạn được hướng dẫn phải làm khác.

Please complete this survey by 15 August 2013. Xin vui lòng hoàn thành cuộc khảo sát này trước 15 tháng Tám 2013.

³¹ I changed department and faculty during my candidature

Section 1: OVERSEAS EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS **Phần 1: BẰNG CẤP GIÁO DỤC Ở NƯỚC NGOÀI**

Q1. How long ago since you completed your overseas education? **Bạn đã hoàn tất du học cách đây bao lâu?**

- ☐ 1 - 3 years 1 - 3 năm
- ☐ 4 - 6 years 4 - 6 năm
- ☐ 8 - 10 years 8 - 10 năm
- ☐ >10 years >10 năm

Q2. At which institution did you complete your overseas education? **Bạn hoàn tất du học ở cơ sở giáo dục nào?**

Q3. In which country was the institution where you completed your overseas education? **Cơ sở giáo dục nơi bạn hoàn tất du học thuộc về quốc gia nào?**

Q4. What was the major field of your overseas qualification? If more than one major, tick the ones that are applicable. **Lĩnh vực chính của văn bằng nước ngoài của bạn? Nếu có nhiều hơn một lĩnh vực chính, đánh dấu những lĩnh vực áp dụng.**

- ☐ Architecture and Design **Kiến trúc và Thiết kế**
- ☐ Commerce **Thương mại**
- ☐ Education **Giáo dục**
- ☐ Engineering **Kỹ thuật**
- ☐ Health Science (for example Medicine, Dentistry, Chiropractic) **Khoa học Y tế (ví dụ Y khoa, Nha khoa, Chỉnh hình)**
- ☐ Home Economics/ Family & Consumer Services (for example Child Care, Fashion Design, Food technology) **Kinh tế / Dịch vụ Gia đình & Tiêu thụ (ví dụ: Chăm sóc trẻ em, Thiết kế Thời trang, Công nghệ Thực phẩm)**
- ☐ Journalism and Communications **Báo chí và Truyền thông**
- ☐ Information and Technology **Thông tin và Công nghệ**
- ☐ Languages and linguistics (for example Foreign Languages, English, Creative Writing) **Ngôn ngữ và Ngôn ngữ học (ví dụ Ngoại ngữ, Anh Văn, Sáng tạo Văn bản)**
- ☐ Law **Luật**
- ☐ Biological and Physical Science (for example Astronomy, Physics, Geology, Biology, Botany) **Sinh học và Khoa học Vật lý (ví dụ Thiên văn học, Vật lý, Địa chất, Sinh học, Thực vật học)**
- ☐ Philosophy and Religion **Triết học và Tôn giáo**
- ☐ Social Science (for example Sociology, Economics, Geography, History, Psychology, International Relations) **Khoa học Xã hội (ví dụ Xã hội học, Kinh tế, Địa lý, Lịch sử, Tâm lý học, Quan hệ Quốc tế)**
- ☐ Social work and Community Development **Công tác Xã hội và Phát triển Cộng đồng**
- ☐ Trade and Industrial (for example Aircraft Mechanics, Automotive) **Thương mại và Công nghiệp (ví dụ Cơ khí máy bay, ô tô)**
- ☐ Visual Arts and Performance Arts **Nghệ thuật**
- ☐ Other (Please specify) **Những lĩnh vực khác (xin ghi rõ)** _____

Q5. What is the level of this qualification? **Trình độ của văn bằng này là gì?**

- ☐ Associate degree **Bằng cao đẳng**
- ☐ Vocational qualification/certificate/diploma **Bằng cấp/chứng chỉ/văn bằng học nghề**
- ☐ Bachelor degree **Cử nhân**
- ☐ Postgraduate certificate/diploma **Văn bằng cao học**
- ☒ Master degree by coursework **Thạc sĩ theo khóa học**
- ☐ Master degree by research **Thạc sĩ theo nghiên cứu**
- ☐ Doctorate (PhD) **Tiến sĩ**
- ☐ Professional Doctorate **Tiến sĩ chuyên nghiệp**
- ☐ Other (Please specify) **Những trình độ khác (xin ghi rõ)**

Q6. What type of overseas education program did you complete to achieve this qualification? **Bạn đạt được văn bằng này theo chương trình du học nào?**

- ☐ Vietnamese Government scholarship **Học bổng chính phủ Việt Nam**
- ☐ Overseas university scholarship **Học bổng trường đại học ở nước ngoài**
- ☒ Bilateral or multilateral aid scholarship (for example AusAid, USAid) **Viện trợ song phương hoặc Viện trợ đa phương (ví dụ AusAid, USAid)**
- ☐ Self-financing **Tự tài trợ**
- ☐ Other (Please specify) **Các chương trình khác (xin ghi rõ)** _____

Q7. Prior to obtaining overseas qualification, what was your highest educational qualification? **Trước khi đạt được văn bằng nước ngoài, trình độ giáo dục cao nhất của bạn là gì?**

- ☐ Secondary education **Trung học**
- ☐ Undergraduate diploma **Văn bằng đại học**
- ☐ Bachelor degree **Chương trình cử nhân**
- ☐ Postgraduate degree **Cao học**
- ☐ Other (Please specify) **Các trình độ khác (xin ghi rõ)** _____

Q8. What is the highest educational goal you now have? **Mục tiêu giáo dục cao nhất của bạn bây giờ là gì?**

- ☐ Associate degree **Bằng cao đẳng**
- ☐ Vocational qualification/certificate/diploma **Nghề bằng cấp/chứng chỉ/văn bằng**
- ☐ Bachelor degree **Cử nhân**
- ☐ Postgraduate certificate/diploma **Văn bằng cao học / cao đẳng cao học**
- ☐ Master degree by coursework **Thạc sĩ theo khóa học**
- ☐ Master degree by research **Thạc sĩ theo nghiên cứu**
- ☐ Doctorate (PhD) **Tiến sĩ**
- ☐ Professional Doctorate **Tiến sĩ chuyên nghiệp**
- ☐ Not applicable **Không áp dụng**

Q9. What was the highest educational goal you had before you studied overseas? **Mục tiêu giáo dục cao nhất bạn đã có trước khi du học?**

- ☐ Associate degree **Bằng cao đẳng**
- ☒ Vocational qualification/certificate/diploma **Nghề bằng cấp/chứng chỉ/văn bằng**
- ☐ Bachelor degree **Cử nhân**
- ☐ Postgraduate certificate/diploma **Văn bằng cao học / cao đẳng cao học**
- ☐ Master degree by coursework **Thạc sĩ theo khóa học**
- ☐ Master degree by research **Thạc sĩ theo nghiên cứu**
- ☐ Doctorate (PhD) **Tiến sĩ**
- ☐ Professional Doctorate **Tiến sĩ chuyên nghiệp**
- ☐ No clear goal **Không rõ mục tiêu**

Section 2: WORK Phần 2: VIỆC LÀM

Q 10. What is your current work situation? **Nghề nghiệp hiện tại của bạn là gì?**

- ☐ Employed **Có việc làm**
- ☐ Working for family **Làm việc cho gia đình**
- ☐ Self-employed **Làm việc cho chính mình**
- ☐ Looking for work **Đang tìm việc làm**
- ☒ Not looking for work **Không tìm việc làm**

Q 11. In what sector is your current job? (If not working, previous job you had subsequent to overseas studying) **Việc làm hiện tại của bạn thuộc lĩnh vực gì? (Nếu hiện tại không làm việc, việc làm trước đây của bạn sau khi hoàn tất du học)**

- ☐ Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing **Nông nghiệp, Lâm nghiệp và Đánh cá**
- ☒ Banking and Financial Services **Ngân hàng và Dịch vụ Tài chính**
- ☐ Construction **Xây dựng**
- ☐ Consumer Trade (Wholesale/Retail) **Ngành tiêu dùng thương mại (bán sỉ/bán lẻ)**
- ☐ Education and Training **Giáo dục và Đào tạo**
- ☐ Environment **Môi trường**
- ☐ Health Services **Dịch vụ Y tế**
- ☐ Information, Media and Telecommunications **Thông tin, Truyền thông và Viễn thông**
- ☒ Manufacturing **Sản xuất**
- ☐ Public Administration **Hành chính**
- ☐ Tourism and Hospitality **Du lịch và Khách sạn**
- ☒ Transport and Logistics **Giao thông Vận tải và hậu cần**
- ☐ Other services (Please specify) **Các lĩnh vực khác (xin ghi rõ)** _____
- ☒ Not working **Hiện không làm việc**

Q 12. How would you best describe your employer? **Tổ chức bạn đang làm việc thuộc loại hình nào?**

- ☐ Government **Chính phủ**
- ☐ State Owned Enterprise (SOE) **Nhà nước thuộc sở hữu doanh nghiệp**
- ☒ Private firm (Vietnamese owned) **Công ty tư nhân (Việt Nam)**
- ☐ Multinational Corporation **Tổng công ty đa quốc gia**

- ☒ Private firm (Foreign owned) Công ty tư nhân (Nước ngoài)
- ☐ Charitable/Humanitarian organization Tổ chức từ thiện/nhân đạo
- ☐ Family business Kinh doanh Gia đình
- ☐ NGOs/Multilateral organizations/Development agencies NGOs/ Tổ chức đa phương / Cơ quan Phát triển
- ☐ Self-employed Tự làm chủ
- ☐ Other (please specify) Các ngành khác (xin ghi rõ) _____

Q 13. In which country is your job primarily based? Công việc của bạn chủ yếu ở quốc gia nào?

- ☐ Viet Nam Việt Nam
- ☐ Overseas Ở nước ngoài

Q 14. Where does your organization operate? Công ty nơi bạn làm việc hoạt động tại đâu?

- ☒ Viet Nam and overseas Việt Nam và nước ngoài
- ☐ 1 location in Viet Nam 1 vị trí ở Việt Nam
- ☐ More than 1 location in Viet Nam Hơn 1 vị trí ở Việt Nam

Q 15. What is your current job classification? If not currently working, what was the most recent job you had subsequent to studying overseas? Below is a list of types of jobs. Please tick your current job and include your job title in the space below job type. Việc làm hiện tại của bạn là gì? Nếu hiện tại không làm việc, việc làm gần nhất của bạn sau khi du học là gì? Dưới đây là danh sách các loại nghề nghiệp. Xin chọn và ghi chức danh nghề nghiệp của bạn.

- ☐ Professional and technical (for example doctor, teacher, engineer, artist, accountant) Chuyên nghiệp và kỹ thuật (ví dụ bác sĩ, giáo sư, kỹ sư, nghệ sĩ, kế toán gia)

- ☐ Public administration (for example civil servant, government official) Hành chính (Ví dụ: công chức, chính phủ) _____
- ☐ Clerical (for example secretary, office person) Văn phòng (ví dụ: thư ký, người văn phòng) _____
- ☐ Sales (Sales manager, shop assistant) Bán hàng (quản lý bán hàng, bán hàng)

- ☐ Service (for example restaurant owner, police officer, ambulance officer, nurse) Dịch vụ (ví dụ chủ nhà hàng, cảnh sát, nhân viên cứu thương, y tá) _____
- ☐ Skilled worker (for example plumber, mechanics, electrician) Nhân viên có tay nghề (ví dụ thợ sửa ống nước, cơ khí, thợ điện) _____
- ☐ Unskilled worker (for example labourer, cleaner) Nhân viên không có tay nghề (ví dụ người lao động, dọn dẹp) _____
- ☐ Farm worker Công nhân trang trại _____
- ☐ Farm owner Chủ trang trại _____
- ☐ Never had a job Chưa bao giờ có việc làm

Q 16. How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your job? Please use the following scale: Very Dissatisfied; Dissatisfied; Neutral; Satisfied; Very Satisfied. **Đánh dấu mức độ hài lòng của bạn đối với mỗi khía cạnh sau đây có liên quan đến việc làm của bạn. Xin vui lòng sử dụng thang điểm : Rất không hài lòng; Không hài lòng; Trung lập; Hài lòng; Rất hài lòng.**

	Very Dissatisfied Rất không hài lòng	Dissatisfied Không hài lòng	Neutral Trung lập	Satisfied Hài lòng	Very Satisfied Rất hài lòng
Personal achievement Thành tích cá nhân	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Job security Bảo đảm việc làm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Independent decision making Quyết định độc lập	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leadership (you leading team) Bạn lãnh đạo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Networking Tạo lập mối liên hệ	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognition Được công nhận	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relevant to your overseas education Liên quan đến văn bằng đạt được ở nước ngoài	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of skills and knowledge gained from overseas education Sử dụng các kỹ năng và kiến thức đạt được từ giáo dục ở nước ngoài	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hierarchy in organization Phân cấp nhân viên trong công ty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of technology Sử dụng công nghệ	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Research capacity Khả năng nghiên cứu	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Benefits and remuneration Lợi ích và thù lao	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Career advancement Tiến bộ sự nghiệp	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural fit Phù hợp với văn hóa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal values fit Phù hợp với giá trị cá nhân	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (Please specify) Các lý do khác (xin ghi rõ)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q 17. In your field, do you feel that overseas education is more favourable to one obtained in Viet Nam in the following aspects? Please tick yes, no or don't know. **Trong lĩnh vực làm việc của bạn, bạn có cảm thấy rằng giáo dục ở nước ngoài được công nhận tương đương hoặc nhiều hơn giáo dục ở Việt Nam? Xin vui lòng trả lời: Có, Không có, Không biết**

	Yes Có	No Không có	Don't know Không biết
Job appointment Kiểm được việc làm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Challenging work Công việc thử thách	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Job security Bảo đảm công việc	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Benefits and remuneration Lợi ích và thù lao	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Career advancement Tiến bộ sự nghiệp	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q 18. What are your strategies in getting work? Please tick all that apply. **Bạn tìm việc làm bằng cách nào? Xin vui lòng đánh dấu tất cả các cách thức bạn đã áp dụng.**

- ☐ Overseas University Career Service **Dịch vụ nghề nghiệp tại trường đại học ở nước ngoài**
- ☐ Viet Nam University sources (such as lecturers or faculties) **Qua các đại học Việt Nam (chẳng hạn các giảng viên hoặc các phân khoa)**
- ☐ Careers fair or information session **Hội chợ Nghề nghiệp hoặc các chương trình hội thảo**
- ☐ Job advertisement **Quảng cáo tìm việc làm**
- ☐ Family or friends **Gia đình hoặc bạn bè**
- ☐ Approached employer directly **Trực tiếp liên lạc công ty**
- ☐ Approached by employer **Công ty liên lạc bạn**
- ☐ Previous work contacts **Liên lạc từ các việc làm trước đây**
- ☐ Government connections **Liên hệ với chính phủ**
- ☐ Other (Please specify) **Các cách khác (xin ghi rõ)** _____

Q 19. In your field, which type of tertiary education would give you the best opportunity to obtain the job you want? **Trong lĩnh vực làm việc của bạn, giáo dục đại học ở đâu sẽ cho bạn cơ hội tốt nhất để tìm được việc làm bạn mong muốn?**

- ☐ At a university in Viet Nam **Đại học ở Việt Nam**
- ☐ At an overseas university **Đại học ở nước ngoài**
- ☐ No tertiary education required **Không cần giáo dục đại học**

Q 20. Is your present job the one you hoped to get as a result of your overseas education? **Việc làm hiện tại của bạn có phải là nghề nghiệp bạn đã hy vọng đạt được sau khi du học?**

- ☐ Yes **Có**
- ☐ No **Không**
- ☐ It is a pathway to the job I want to get **Nó là con đường dẫn tới nghề nghiệp mà tôi muốn đạt được**
- ☐ Don't know **Không biết**
- ☐ Not applicable **Không áp dụng**

Q 21. Have you changed your mind about the type of job you seek since returning to Vietnam? **Bạn có đã đổi ý về đường hướng việc làm từ khi trở về Việt Nam?**

- ☐ Yes **Có**
- ☐ No **Không**
- ☐ Don't know **Không biết**
- ☐ Not applicable **Không áp dụng**

Section 3: COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES Phần 3: HOẠT ĐỘNG CỘNG ĐỒNG

Q 22. We would like to know what community organizations you are a member with and how often do you participate in their activities. Please mark all categories using the scale: Frequently; Occasionally; Not at all. **Chúng tôi muốn biết những tổ chức cộng đồng bạn đang tham gia và mức tham gia của bạn trong những tổ chức này. Xin vui lòng đánh dấu tất cả các tổ chức. Xin sử dụng thang điểm: 1 = thường xuyên; 2 = đôi khi; 3 = không tham gia.**

	Frequently Thường xuyên	Occasionally Đôi khi	Not At All Không tham gia
Professional association Hiệp hội chuyên nghiệp	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sport and recreational organization Tổ chức thể thao và giải trí	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Art and music and educational organization Tổ chức giáo dục, nghệ thuật và âm nhạc	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overseas education alumni Nhóm cựu du học sinh	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Religious organization Tổ chức tôn giáo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community service Dịch vụ cộng đồng	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Political organization Đảng phái chính trị	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Humanitarian/Charitable organization Tổ chức nhân đạo, từ thiện	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Environmental organization Tổ chức môi sinh	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consumer organization Tổ chức người tiêu dùng	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Welfare group Nhóm phúc lợi xã hội	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Self-help group Nhóm tự lực	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Military group Quân sự	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other organization (Please specify) Tổ chức khác (xin ghi)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

rõ)			
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Q 23. How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects in your current community activity? Please use the following scale: Very Dissatisfied; Dissatisfied; Neutral; Satisfied; Very Satisfied. Chúng tôi muốn biết mức độ hài lòng của bạn đối với mỗi khía cạnh liên quan đến hoạt động cộng đồng của bạn liệt kê dưới đây. Xin vui lòng đánh dấu dùng thang điểm: Rất không hài lòng, Không hài lòng, Trung lập, Hài lòng, Rất hài lòng.

	Very Dissatisfied Rất không hài lòng	Dissatisfied Không hài lòng	Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied Trung lập	Satisfied Hài lòng	Very Satisfied Rất hài lòng
Personal development Phát triển cá nhân	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Awareness of social issues Nhận thức về các vấn đề xã hội	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assistance to people less fortunate Hỗ trợ những người kém may mắn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Self-expression Hiện thị tư tưởng cá nhân	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Government support for organization Hỗ trợ của chính phủ cho tổ chức	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognition Được công nhận	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Networking Tạo lập mối liên hệ	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leadership (You leading a team) Lãnh đạo (Bạn lãnh đạo)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relevant to your overseas education Liên quan đến văn bằng du học của bạn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cooperation by other members Hợp tác của các thành viên khác	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hierarchy in organization Phân cấp nhân viên trong tổ chức	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Political fit Phù hợp với tư tưởng chính trị của bạn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural fit Phù hợp với tư tưởng văn hóa của bạn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal values fit Phù hợp với giá trị cá nhân	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (Please specify) Các khía cạnh khác (xin ghi rõ)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q24. How do you find opportunities to participate in community organizations? Please tick all that apply. **Bạn tìm cơ hội tham gia các tổ chức cộng đồng bằng phương pháp nào? Xin vui lòng đánh dấu tất cả các phương pháp áp dụng**

- ☐ Information session **Các chương trình hội thảo**
- ☐ Advertisement **Quảng cáo**
- ☐ Family or friends **Gia đình hoặc bạn bè**
- ☐ Approached community organization directly **Trực tiếp liên lạc tổ chức**
- ☐ Approached by community organization **Tổ chức liên lạc với bạn**
- ☐ Contacts from other community organizations **Liên lạc từ các công việc trước**
- ☐ Government connections **Liên hệ với chính phủ**
- ☐ Other (Please specify) **Các phương pháp khác (xin ghi rõ)** _____
- ☐ Not applicable **Không áp dụng**

Section 4: SKILLS and PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES Phần 4: KỸ NĂNG và các THUỘC TÍNH CÁ NHÂN

Q 25. Below is a list of some general skills and attributes one might expect to develop while pursuing higher education. In the first column, please tick the skills and attributes that you have gained from overseas education. In the second column, please tick the skills and attributes that you feel are required in your present job. In the third column, please tick the skills and attributes that you feel are required in your current community activity. Please tick ALL that apply. **Dưới đây là danh sách một số kỹ năng và thuộc tính nói chung mà người ta hy vọng sẽ phát triển khi theo đuổi giáo dục đại học. Trong cột 1, xin vui lòng đánh dấu các kỹ năng và thuộc tính mà bạn đã đạt được khi du học. Trong cột 2, xin vui lòng đánh dấu các kỹ năng và thuộc tính mà bạn cảm thấy cần thiết trong nghề nghiệp. Trong cột 3, xin vui lòng đánh dấu các kỹ năng và thuộc tính mà bạn cảm thấy cần thiết**

	Gained from overseas education Đạt được từ giáo dục ở nước ngoài	Required in your current job Cần thiết trong nghề nghiệp hiện tại của bạn	Required in your current community activity Cần thiết trong các hoạt động cộng đồng hiện tại của bạn
Communication skills Kỹ năng giao tiếp	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Presentation skills Kỹ năng thuyết trình	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teamwork skills Kỹ năng làm việc nhóm	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working independently Làm việc độc lập	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teaching and training skills Kỹ năng giảng dạy và đào tạo	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Problem solving skills Kỹ năng giải quyết vấn đề	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organizational skills Kỹ năng tổ chức	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Technology skills Kỹ năng công nghệ	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Leadership skills Kỹ năng lãnh đạo	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Technical skills Kỹ năng kỹ thuật	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Analytical skills Kỹ năng phân tích	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal drive Động lực của bản thân	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knowledge of industry Kiến thức trong lĩnh vực	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self-awareness Tự nhận thức	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self-expression Thể hiện bản thân	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Confidence Tự tin	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pro-activeness Tính chủ động	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conforming with rules and regulations Theo quy tắc và quy định	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting along with people Hòa đồng với mọi người	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other skills (Please specify) Các kỹ năng khác (xin ghi rõ)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other attributes (Please specify) Các thuộc tính khác (xin ghi rõ)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q 26. Do you work best with people who are trained abroad or ones trained locally? **Nói chung, bạn làm việc tốt nhất với người được đào tạo ở nước ngoài hay người được đào tạo ở Việt Nam?**

- ☐ With people trained abroad **Người được đào tạo ở nước ngoài**
- ☐ With people trained in Viet Nam **Người được đào tạo ở Việt Nam**
- ☐ No difference **Không khác biệt**

Q 27. In your experiences, do you feel that locally trained people or overseas trained people are recognized more often at work and in community organizations? **Bạn có cảm thấy người được đào tạo tại Việt Nam hoặc người được đào tạo ở nước ngoài được công nhận nhiều hơn tại nơi làm việc?**

	Locally trained people Người được đào tạo tại Việt Nam	Overseas trained people Người được đào tạo ở nước ngoài>	It depends Tùy vào trường hợp	No difference Không khác biệt	Not applicable Không áp dụng
At work Trong việc	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

làm In community organizations Trong cộng đồng	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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Q 28. Do you encounter any negative perception against people who have studied abroad in your work and community activities? Trong việc làm và hoạt động cộng đồng của bạn, bạn có phải đối mặt với những nhận thức tiêu cực về du học sinh?

	Yes Có	Little ít	It depends Tùy vào trường hợp	Not at all Hoàn toàn không	Not applicable Không áp dụng
At work Trong việc làm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In community organizations Trong cộng đồng	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q 29. Do you feel studying abroad is well regarded in the Vietnamese community? Bạn có cảm thấy việc du học được đánh giá cao trong cộng đồng Việt Nam?

- ☐ Yes Có
- ☐ No Không
- ☐ Don't know Không biết

Q 30. Do you face any difficulty in terms of social adjustment since returning home? Below are some examples of social adjustment. Please tick all that apply. Trong việc làm và các hoạt động cộng đồng của bạn, bạn có gặp khó khăn trong việc thích nghi với xã hội sau khi trở về Việt Nam? Dưới đây là một số ví dụ về thích nghi với xã hội. Xin vui lòng đánh dấu.

- ☐ Language Ngôn ngữ
- ☐ Goals Mục tiêu
- ☐ Family expectations Kỳ vọng của gia đình
- ☐ Way of thinking Cách suy nghĩ
- ☐ Other (Please specify) Các khó khăn khác (xin ghi rõ) _____
- ☐ No social adjustment Không gặp khó khăn

Section 5: ATTITUDES and VALUES Phần 5: THÁI ĐỘ và GIÁ TRỊ

Q 31. People have different views about themselves and how they relate to the world. Please indicate whether you feel your overseas education has impacted your opinion of the importance of these statements. Mọi người đều có quan điểm khác nhau về bản thân họ và liên hệ của họ với thế giới xung quanh. Xin vui lòng đánh dấu các khái niệm mà giáo dục nước ngoài đã ảnh hưởng đến ý kiến của bạn về tầm quan trọng của khái niệm này.

- ☐ Developing original ideas and or products **Phát triển các ý tưởng và / hoặc các sản phẩm nguyên gốc**
- ☐ Personal achievement **Thành tích cá nhân**
- ☐ Thinking critically about my own beliefs, attitudes and values **Suy nghĩ sâu sắc về niềm tin, thái độ và các giá trị của chính mình**
- ☐ Thinking critically about other people’s beliefs, attitudes and values **Suy nghĩ phê bình về niềm tin, thái độ và các giá trị của người khác**
- ☐ Making and exercising commitment to advance my personal goals **Tạo và thực hiện các cam kết để thăng tiến mục tiêu cá nhân**
- ☐ Making and exercising commitment to help others in my community **Tạo và thực hiện các cam kết để giúp đỡ những người khác trong cộng đồng**
- ☐ Making and exercising commitment to meet my family responsibilities **Tạo và thực hiện các cam kết để đáp ứng trách nhiệm gia đình**
- ☐ Living my life according to my beliefs and values **Sống theo niềm tin và giá trị của mình**
- ☐ Uphold family traditions and expectations **Duy trì truyền thống gia đình và kỳ vọng**
- ☐ Getting ahead in life **Đi trước trong cuộc sống**
- ☐ Security **An ninh**
- ☐ Getting along with people from various backgrounds, races and cultures **Hòa đồng với những người mang khác biệt về nền tảng, chủng tộc và văn hóa**
- ☐ Exercise freedom of speech **Thực hành tự do ngôn luận**
- ☐ Exercising my privileges and social position in community **Thực hành những đặc quyền và vị trí xã hội của mình trong cộng đồng**
- ☐ Understanding cultural and ethnic differences between people **Hiểu biết về những khác biệt văn hoá và sắc tộc**
- ☐ Understanding political issues in Viet Nam **Hiểu biết về chính trị Việt Nam**
- ☐ Understanding economic issues in Viet Nam **Hiểu biết về kinh tế Việt Nam**
- ☐ Understand social issues in Viet Nam **Hiểu biết về xã hội Việt Nam**
- ☐ Understand international issues **Hiểu biết các vấn đề quốc tế**

Q32. In your current work and community activities, do you feel that you are helping Viet Nam’s national development needs? Some of the ways that you can help are listed below. Please tick all that apply. **Trong việc làm và các hoạt động cộng đồng hiện tại của bạn, bạn có cảm thấy bạn đang giúp đỡ các nhu cầu phát triển quốc gia của Việt Nam? Một số cách mà bạn có thể giúp đỡ được liệt kê dưới đây. Vui lòng đánh dấu tất cả những điểm áp dụng.**

	At work Trong việc làm	In community activities Trong hoạt động cộng đồng
Improving technology Cải tiến công nghệ	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improving national health Cải tiến sức khỏe toàn quốc	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increasing national production Nâng cao sản xuất quốc gia	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Raising educational levels Nâng cao trình độ giáo dục	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improving public administration Cải thiện hành chính	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Reducing poverty Giảm nghèo	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improving environment awareness and programs Nâng cao nhận thức và các chương trình về môi trường	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increasing gender equality Nâng cao bình đẳng giới tính	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improving democracy and human rights Cải thiện dân chủ và nhân quyền	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improving social welfare programs Cải thiện chương trình an sinh xã hội	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enhancing and/or improving cultural programs Tăng cường và / hoặc cải thiện các chương trình văn hóa	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improving livelihood of underprivileged groups Cải thiện đời sống của những người thiệt thòi	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please specify) Các cách giúp đỡ khác (xin ghi rõ)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 7: BACKGROUND INFORMATION Phần 7: THÔNG TIN CƠ BẢN

Q 33. Are you male or female? **Bạn là nam hay nữ?**

- ☐ Male **Nam**
☐ Female **Nữ**

Q 34. What is your age group? **Bạn ở lứa tuổi nào?**

- ☐ 21-30
☐ 31-40
☐ 41-50
☐ >50

Q 35. What is your current income per month? (If not working, what was the income of your most recent job since returning home?) **Thu nhập hiện tại của bạn mỗi tháng là bao nhiêu? (Nếu hiện tại không làm việc, thu nhập của công việc gần đây nhất sau khi về Việt Nam.**

- ☐ <1m VND **< 1 triệu đồng Việt Nam**
☐ 1m VND - 3m VND **1 - 3 triệu đồng Việt Nam**
☐ 3m VND - 5m VND **3 - 5 triệu đồng Việt Nam**
☐ 5m VND - 7m VND **5 - 7 triệu đồng Việt Nam**
☐ 7m VND - 9m VND **7 - 9 triệu đồng Việt Nam**
☐ 9m VND - 11m VND **9 - 11 triệu đồng Việt Nam**
☐ 11m VND - 13m VND **11 - 13 triệu đồng Việt Nam**
☐ >13m VND **> 13 triệu đồng Việt Nam**

Q 36. Which town/city were you born? (For example TP Hồ Chí Minh, Hà Nội, Thừa Thiên Huế, Đà Nẵng) **Tỉnh/thành phố nơi bạn sinh ra (Ví dụ: TP Hồ Chí Minh, Hà Nội, Thừa Thiên Huế, Đà Nẵng)**

Q 37. Which town/city are you curenly living in? (For example TP Hồ Chí Minh, Hà Nội, Thừa Thiên Huế, Đà Nẵng) **Tỉnh/thành phố nơi bạn hiện đang sống (Ví dụ: TP Hồ Chí Minh, Hà Nội, Thừa Thiên Huế, Đà Nẵng)**

Q 38. What is the highest education level of your mother AND father. **Xin vui lòng đánh dấu trình độ giáo dục cao nhất của cha mẹ bạn?**

- ☐ Primary school **Tiểu học**
- ☐ Secondary school **Trung học**
- ☐ Upper secondary school **Trung học phổ thông**
- ☐ Technical/Professional college **Trường cao đẳng kỹ thuật / chuyên nghiệp**
- ☐ University **Đại học**
- ☐ Primary School **Tiểu học**
- ☐ Secondary school **Trung học**
- ☐ Upper secondary school **Trung học phổ thông**
- ☐ Technical/Professional college **Trường cao đẳng kỹ thuật / chuyên nghiệp**
- ☐ University **Đại học**

Q 39. Here is a list of different types of jobs. Please indicate which job does your mother AND father currently have or (or previous job if not currently working)? Please choose only ONE job type for each person. **Dưới đây là danh sách các loại nghề nghiệp khác nhau. Xin vui lòng đánh dấu nghề nghiệp hiện nay của cha mẹ bạn (hoặc trước đây nếu hiện không làm việc).**

Mother **Me**

- ☐ Professional and technical (for example doctor, teacher, engineer, artist, accountant) **Chuyên nghiệp và kỹ thuật (ví dụ: bác sĩ, giáo viên, kỹ sư, nghệ sĩ, kế toán)**
- ☐ Public administration (for example civil servant, government official) **Hành chính (ví dụ: công chức, quan chức chính phủ)**
- ☐ Clerical (for example secretary, office person) **Văn phòng (ví dụ: thư ký, người làm văn phòng)**
- ☐ Sales (Sales manager, shop assistant) **Bán hàng (quản lý, trợ lý bán hàng)**
- ☐ Service (for example restaurant owner, police officer, ambulance officer, nurse) **Dịch vụ (ví dụ chủ nhà hàng, cảnh sát, nhân viên cứu thương, y tá)**
- ☐ Skilled worker (for example plumber, mechanics, electrician) **Công nhân có tay nghề (ví dụ thợ sửa ống nước, thợ cơ khí, thợ điện)**
- ☐ Unskilled worker (for example labourer, cleaner) **Nhân viên không có tay nghề (ví dụ người lao động, quét dọn)**
- ☐ Farm worker **Công nhân trang trại**
- ☐ Farm owner **Chủ trang trại**
- ☐ Never had a job **Chưa bao giờ có việc làm**
- ☐ Other (Please specify) **Các công việc khác (Vui lòng chỉ rõ)**

Father **Cha**

- ☐ Professional and technical (for example doctor, teacher, engineer, artist, accountant) **Chuyên nghiệp và kỹ thuật (ví dụ: bác sĩ, giáo viên, kỹ sư, nghệ sĩ, kế toán)**
- ☐ Public administration (for example civil servant, government official) **Hành chính (ví dụ: công chức, quan chức chính phủ)**
- ☐ Clerical (for example secretary, office person) **Văn phòng (ví dụ: thư ký, người làm văn phòng)**
- ☐ Sales (Sales manager, shop assistant) **Bán hàng (quản lý, trợ lý bán hàng)**
- ☐ Service (for example restaurant owner, police officer, ambulance officer, nurse) **Dịch vụ (ví dụ chủ nhà hàng, cảnh sát, nhân viên cứu thương, y tá)**
- ☐ Skilled worker (for example plumber, mechanics, electrician) **Công nhân có tay nghề (ví dụ thợ sửa ống nước, thợ cơ khí, thợ điện)**
- ☐ Unskilled worker (for example labourer, cleaner) **Nhân viên không có tay nghề (ví dụ người lao động, quét dọn)**
- ☐ Farm worker **Công nhân trang trại**
- ☐ Other (Please specify) **Các công việc khác (Vui lòng chỉ rõ)**
- ☐ Farm owner **Chủ trang trại**
- ☐ Never had a job **Chưa bao giờ có việc làm**

Q 40. Most people see themselves as belonging to a particular class. Which social class would you say you belong to? **Hầu hết mọi người xem mình thuộc về một giai cấp xã hội nào đó. Theo bạn thì bạn thuộc về giai cấp xã hội nào?**

- ☐ Lower class **Giai cấp thấp**
- ☐ Middle class **Giai cấp trung lưu**
- ☐ Upper class **Giai cấp thượng lưu**
- ☐ Don't know **Không biết**

Q 41. How many people are there in your household? **Gia đình của bạn có bao nhiêu người?**

- ☐ 1-3
- ☐ 4-6
- ☐ 7-10
- ☐ >10

Section 8: CONTACT DETAILS Phần 8: CHI TIẾT LIÊN LẠC

Q 42. Would you be interested in participating in a follow up interview? The interview will last around 45-60 minutes and you will receive \$USD10. **Bạn có muốn tham gia cuộc phỏng vấn tiếp theo cuộc khảo sát này? Cuộc phỏng vấn sẽ kéo dài khoảng 45-60 phút. Bạn sẽ nhận \$USD10.**

- ☐ Yes **Muốn**
- ☐ No **Không**
- ☐ Please contact me at a later time **Xin vui lòng liên lạc sau**

Q 43. What is your name? **Tên bạn là gì?**

Q 44. What are your contact details? Please provide phone number and/or email address.
Xin vui lòng cho biết thông tin liên lạc của bạn: Điện thoại, email.

Thank you very much for completing this survey. Your contribution provides valuable information for research about international education and international students generally, and particularly for Vietnamese international students. **Cảm ơn bạn rất nhiều đã hoàn tất khảo sát này. Đóng góp của bạn cung cấp thông tin giá trị cho cuộc nghiên cứu về giáo dục quốc tế và sinh viên quốc tế nói chung, và đặc biệt cho sinh viên quốc tế Việt Nam.**

Please be assured that your responses are confidential and your real name will not be used in any disseminated report. If you have any comments about this questionnaire, please feel free to contact the researcher, Ms Lien Pham on lien.pham@mq.edu.au or the principal supervisor, Dr David Saltmarsh on david.saltmarsh@mq.edu.au. The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this project, you may contact Ms Truc Tran on 0908 525 417, or the Director, Research Ethics (telephone +612 9850 7854, fax +612 9850 8799, email: ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Hãy yên tâm rằng các câu trả lời của bạn sẽ được giữ kín và tên thật của bạn sẽ không được sử dụng trong bất kỳ báo cáo phổ biến nào. Nếu bạn có ý kiến về khảo sát này, xin vui lòng liên lạc với nhà nghiên cứu Cô Liên Phạm +61 400 960 888 hoặc người giám sát chính Tiến sĩ David Saltmarsh +612 9850 8798. Các khía cạnh đạo đức của cuộc nghiên cứu này đã được chấp thuận bởi Ủy Ban Nghiên Cứu Đạo đức, Đại học Macquarie. Nếu bạn có bất kỳ khiếu nại hoặc e ngại về sự tham gia của bạn trong dự án này, với bất kỳ khía cạnh đạo đức nào, bạn có thể liên lạc với Cô Trúc Trần qua số điện thoại di động 0908 525 417, hoặc với Ủy Ban Nghiên Cứu Đạo Đức (điện thoại [+61 2] 9850 7854, fax [+61 2] 9850 8799, email: ethics@mq.edu.au). Khiếu nại của bạn sẽ được xử lý kín đáo và điều tra, và bạn sẽ được thông báo về kết quả.

Appendix III. Invitation letter to participate in interviews



October 2013

Dear

Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire about your experiences post overseas studying. Your responses are very valuable for our research project about international students' experiences in work and community participation after their return to Viet Nam. The project is being conducted by Ms Lien Pham, to meet the requirements for a PhD award, under the supervision of Dr David Saltmarsh (Department of Education), Macquarie University.

We would like to invite you to participate in a follow up interview to understand more about your current work and community activities since returning to Viet Nam. You will be asked to reflect on the skills and attributes you have acquired from overseas education, and how studying abroad has influenced your goals and choices of work and community activities. You will also be asked about your perception of the advantages and disadvantages of having an overseas education. The interview will take around 45-60 minutes.

If you agree to participate in the interviews, you will be asked to sign a written consent. The interviews will be audio-taped and then transcribed. The interview can take place in a mutually agreed location. Every effort will be made to ensure that any personally identifying information you provide will be treated confidentially. We will use a pseudonym to record your contribution and will also change any details that could be used to identify you. Your contact details will be kept in a locked filing cabinet separate from the interview material. Only the researcher and supervisors will have access to interview material. You can request for a summary of the findings of the study when it is completed and we will send it to you.

Please be assured that your participation in this study is voluntary and you can choose to stop the interview at any time and withdraw participation without giving a reason or adverse consequence. You can also refuse to answer specific questions. If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact the researcher, Ms Lien Pham on +61 400 960 888 or the principal supervisor, Dr David Saltmarsh on +612 9850 8798.

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Faculty of Human Sciences - Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this project, you may contact Ms Tran Thi Thanh Truc on 0908 525 417, or the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics (telephone [+61 2] 9850 4197, fax [+61 2] 9850 4465, email: fhs.ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Your participation is important to the success of this project. Please let me know if we can arrange to meet and when and where is the best time and place for you. We thank you for your willingness to share your thoughts and ideas and look forward to receiving your reply and meeting you.

Yours Sincerely

Lien Pham

PhD Candidate, Department of Education
Faculty of Human Sciences
Macquarie University NSW 2109 AUSTRALIA
Email: lien.pham@students.mq.edu.au

Appendix IV. Information sheet for survey respondents



May 2013

Greetings from Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia!

We would like to invite Vietnamese people who have acquired their tertiary education overseas and currently live in Viet Nam to participate in a research project on experiences post overseas studying. The aim of this project is to understand how overseas tertiary education may contribute to Vietnamese international students' experiences in work and community participation after their return to Viet Nam.

The project is being conducted by Ms Lien Pham, to meet the requirements for a PhD award, under the supervision of Dr David Saltmarsh (Department of Education), Macquarie University.

We would be grateful if you could complete the attached questionnaire and return it to Ms Lien Pham in the enclosed envelope by 30 May 2013. The questionnaire should only take about 20 minutes to complete. Your return of the questionnaire indicates your consent to participate in the study. Please be assured that your participation in this study is voluntary. All individual responses will be strictly confidential and the results of this survey will be reported only in group form.

If you have any questions about this questionnaire, please feel free to contact the researcher, Ms Lien Pham on +61 400 960 888 or the principal supervisor, Dr David Saltmarsh on +612 9850 8798.

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Faculty of Human Sciences - Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this project, you may contact Ms Tran Thi Thanh Truc on 0908 525 417, or the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics (telephone [+61 2] 9850 4197, fax [+61 2] 9850 4465, email: fhs.ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Your participation is important to the success of this project. We hope that this research may help international education providers to know more about the ways in which overseas training may be of use to you. We thank you for your willingness to share your thoughts and ideas and look forward to receiving your reply.

Yours Sincerely

Lien Pham
 PhD Candidate, Department of Education
 Faculty of Human Sciences
 Macquarie University NSW 2109 AUSTRALIA
 Email: lien.pham@students.mq.edu.au

Appendix V. Information sheet for interviewees

INFORMATION SHEET

Title Understanding the transformative potential of international tertiary education for overseas students and their local communities	
The study is being conducted to meet the requirements of the PhD award (Education), under the supervision of Dr David Saltmarsh (Education), Macquarie University, Dr Adam Stebbing (Sociology), Macquarie University, and Dr Noah Basil (Political Economy and International Relations), Macquarie University.	
The study is not funded by any education institution, commercial organization or sponsor.	
Researcher: Ms Lien Pham Contact phone: +61 400 960 888 Email: lien.pham@students.mq.edu.au	Supervisors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr David Saltmarsh Department of Education Faculty of Human Science Macquarie University Office phone number: +61 2 9850 8798 Email: david.saltmarsh@mq.edu.au • Dr Adam Stebbing Department of Sociology Faculty of Arts Macquarie University Office phone number: + 61 2 9850 8798 Email: adam.stebbing@mq.edu.au • Dr Noah Basil Department of Political Economy and International Relations Faculty of Arts Macquarie University Office phone number: +61 2 9850 8798 Email: noah.basil@mq.edu.au
What is the study about? The aim of this project is to understand how overseas tertiary education may contribute to Vietnamese international students' capabilities for work and community participation subsequent to completing their overseas study and returning home. The project will examine capabilities in terms of the opportunities for work and community participation that Vietnamese graduates have as a result of their overseas education and how they go about pursuing their goals since returning to Viet Nam.	
Who would we like to contribute to it? We would like to talk to Vietnamese people who have acquired their higher education abroad and who have returned to Viet Nam and currently live in Viet Nam.	
What's involved if I agree to participate? If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a survey. The survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Subsequent to the surveys, you may be selected to participate in a follow up interview. The interviews will take around 45	

<p>minutes to one hour. The interview will involve talking about your current work and community activities since returning to Viet Nam. In particular, you will be asked to reflect on your values, skills and knowledge gained from your overseas education and how they affect your choices and actions to pursue your goals. You will also be asked to reflect on how your social environment provides you with opportunities to utilize your overseas education as you aspire. If you agree to participate in the interviews, you will be asked to sign a written consent. The interviews will be audio-taped and then transcribed. The interview can take place in your home or in any other mutually agreed location.</p>
<p>Will I be reimbursed for any expenses? The participation is voluntary and we are extremely grateful for your participation in our research and the valuable information that you will share with us.</p>
<p>Are there any possible risks? We will provide utmost care to deal with all matters sensitively and in confidence.</p>
<p>Will the interview be confidential? Every effort will be made to ensure that any personally identifying information you provide will be treated confidentially. We will use a pseudonym to record your contribution and will also change any details that could be used to identify you. Your contact details will be kept in a locked filing cabinet separate from the interview material. Only the researcher and supervisors will have access to interview material.</p>
<p>Am I able to refuse or withdraw at any time? Participation in the research is voluntary and you can choose to stop the interview at any time and withdraw participation without giving a reason or adverse consequence. You can also refuse to answer specific questions.</p>
<p>Can I find out the results of the research? You can request for a summary of the findings of the study when it is completed and we will send it to you.</p>
<p>People to contact for information, concerns or complaints If you have any questions about the study, you can contact the researcher, Ms Lien Pham on 0400 960 888 or the supervisor, Dr David Saltmarsh on 02 9850 8798.</p> <p>The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics (telephone [02] 9850 7854, fax [02] 9850 8799, email: ethics@mq.edu.au).</p> <p>Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.</p>

Appendix VI. Interview Schedules

1. Interview with graduates

For use with completed questionnaire

1. Introductory conversation:
Talk informally about research study. Assure interviewee that responses are confidential and his/her real name will not be used in any disseminated reports.
2. Can you share me with an account of your education in Viet Nam and overseas?
 - Qualifications
 - Universities
 - Fields of expertise
 - Impression/perceptions
3. Could you tell me a bit about why you chose to study abroad?
 - Job
 - Skills and knowledge
 - Networking
 - Cultural experience
4. Can you tell me why you returned to Viet Nam after studying?
 - Pursue career
 - Family
 - Visa requirements
5. Can you tell me about your goals in terms of work?
 - Personal development
 - Making use of overseas education
 - Income
 - Networking
 - Family responsibility
6. A) Could you tell me about your current job? How satisfied are you with these aspects (below are prompts)?
 - Reason for taking this job
 - How did you get this job
 - Relevance to overseas education
 - Income satisfaction
 - Networking
 - Promotion opportunities
 - Skills and knowledge development
 - Personal achievement
 - Type of industry
 - How you fit in to workplace
 - Job security

- B) How may you improve the situation?
 C) Are there any other aspects in addition to those already mentioned that you consider are important for you to have in respect of work?
7. Can you tell me whether overseas education has changed your attitudes towards your career aspirations?
- Working in Viet Nam/overseas
 - Working in your field
 - Type of work you want
 - Type of employer
 - What you want to gain from work
8. Have your goals or plans changed since working/living in Vietnam? Why have they changed? Can you explain how you go about pursuing your changed plans?
- Financial resources
 - Family
 - Social networks
 - Personal commitment
9. Can you tell me about your goals in terms of community activities?
- Personal development
 - Making use of overseas education
 - Contribute to society/helping others
 - Leisure/entertainment
 - Networking
 - Family responsibility
10. A) Can you tell me about your community activities? How satisfied are you with these aspects (below are prompts)?
- Type of activities
 - Type of organisation/sector
 - Reasons for joining community group
 - Relevance to overseas education
 - Networking
 - Social mobility
 - Skills and knowledge development
 - Personal achievement
 - Fitting in to community group culturally/socially/politically
- B) How may you improve the situation?
 C) Are there any other aspects in addition to those already mentioned that you consider are important for you to have in respect of community participation?
11. Can you tell me whether overseas education has changed your attitudes towards community participation?
- Citizenship
 - Community development
 - Social equality
 - Type of community organisation you want to be a member

- What you want to gain from community participation
12. Have your goals or plans about community work changed since participating in this organisation in Viet Nam? Why have they changed? Can you explain how you go about pursuing your changed plans?
- Financial resources
 - Family
 - Social networks
 - Personal commitment
13. A) Drawing on your own experiences, could you tell me about the advantages of having overseas education?
- Job access
 - Recognition at work
 - Perceived as better educated/better skills/more knowledge
 - Networking
 - Social mobility
 - English language
- B) Can you tell me how you may leverage these advantages?
14. A) Drawing on your own experiences, could you tell me about the disadvantages of having overseas education?
- Skills and knowledge not relevant to Viet Nam labour market and society in general
 - Difficulty in adjusting to Viet Nam's way of life
 - Negative perception of overseas trained people as losing Vietnamese values and tradition
- B) Can you tell me how you may overcome these disadvantages?
15. a) In your view, are there any social and/or cultural differences between people who have studied abroad and those who are locally trained?
- values and attitudes
 - language, way of speaking
 - way of thinking
 - work ethics
 - social norms
- B) Could you tell me whether you have any preference toward working with or hanging around with overseas trained or locally trained people?
16. Would you like to make any other comments?
17. I would like to interview some members of your networks. Would you be able to suggest names and contact details of some of your family members, your work colleagues, people you work with in your community organisation, or academics who may be interested in participating in interviews. The interviews are very similar to the one we just had and will take around 30-45 minutes.
18. Close of interview

Thank you for taking part in the interview and for providing valuable information for research about international education and international students generally, and particularly for Vietnamese international students. Assure that interview responses are confidential and his/her real names will not be used in any disseminated report.

2. Interview with members of networks (family member, work colleague, community leader, academics)

For use with completed questionnaire

1. Introductory conversation:
Talk informally about research study. Assure interviewee that responses are confidential and his/her real name will not be used in any disseminated report.
2. Could you please confirm
 - Relationship with graduate interviewee
 - Work organisation/ community organisation/ university.
3. Could you tell me why people who have studied overseas may want to return to Viet Nam?
4. A) In your view, how do you think your organisation accommodate overseas trained graduates?
 - Relevance to their overseas education
 - Income
 - Networking
 - Promotion opportunities
 - Skills and knowledge development
 - Personal achievement
 - Fitting in to workplace (or community group)
 - Job security
 B) How may the situation be improved?
5. Can you tell me whether overseas education may change people's attitudes towards career aspirations (community participation)?
 - Working in Viet Nam/overseas
 - Type of sector
 - Type of work
 - Type of employer/organisation
 - What they want to gain from work (community activity)
6. Could you tell me about what you feel maybe the advantages for people who have overseas education?
 - Job access
 - Recognition at work
 - Perceived as better educated/better skills/more knowledge
 - Networking
 - Social mobility

- English language

B) Can you explain how people with overseas education may leverage these advantages?

7. A) Could you tell me about what you feel maybe the disadvantages for people who have overseas education?

- Skills and knowledge not relevant to Viet Nam labour market and society in general
- Difficulty in adjusting to Viet Nam's way of life
- Negative perception of overseas trained people as losing Vietnamese values and tradition

B) Can you explain how they may overcome these disadvantages?

8. a) In your view, are there any social and/or cultural differences between people who have studied abroad and those who were locally trained?

- values and attitudes
- language, way of speaking
- way of thinking
- work ethics
- social norms

B) Could you tell me whether you have any preference toward working with overseas trained or locally trained people?

9. How do you think overseas education graduates go about pursuing their goals?

- Financial resources
- Family
- Social networks
- Personal commitment

10. Would you like to make any other comments?

11. Close of interview

Thank you for taking part in the interview and for providing valuable information for research about international education and international students generally, and particularly for Vietnamese international students. Assure that interview responses are confidential and his/her real name will not be used in any disseminated report.

Appendix VII. List of interviewees, employment sector and community work

Name	Economic sector	Place of living	Community work participation	Number of members	Work colleague	Community work colleague	Family/ friend
Phung	Banking	Hanoi	No community work	1	x		
Thanh	Banking	HCM	Community work	3	x	x	x
Quang	Banking	HCM	Community work	0			
My	Banking	HCM	No community work	2	x		x
Minh	IT	Hanoi	Occasional community work	1			x
Ngoc	IT	HCM	Community work, political membership	3	x	x	x
Tam	IT	HCM	Occasional community work	0			
Khanh	Mgmt	Hanoi	Occasional community work	1			x
Quan	Mgmt	HCMC	Occasional community work	3	x	x	x
Dinh	Mgmt	Hanoi	Occasional community work	3	xx		x
Mang	Mgmt	Hanoi	No community work	2	x		x
Hong	Education	Hanoi	Occasional community, mass organisation	0			
Cuc	Education	Hanoi	Political membership	1	x		
Van	Education	HCM	No community work	2	x		x
Vu	Education	Hanoi	Community work, political membership	2			xx
Sinh	Education	HCM	Occasional community work	0			
Kieu	Education	HCM	Occasional community work	2	xx		
Long	Education	HCM	Occasional community work	0			
Thinh	Education	Hue	Community work, political membership	0			
Hoa	Education	Hue	No community work	0			
Doan	Education	Danang	Community work, political membership	1	x		
Number of members				27			
Number of key interviewees				21			
Total number of participants in second stage of interviews				48			

All names are pseudonyms

Appendix VIII. Viet Nam's employed population by types of enterprise, and number of enterprises as of July 2013

Table i. Employed population at 15 years of age and above as of 1 July 2013 by types of ownership

	Total	State	Non-state	Foreign investment sector
	Thousands persons			
2009	47743.6	5040.6	41178.4	1524.6
2010	49048.5	5107.4	42214.6	1726.5
2011	50352.0	5250.6	43401.3	1700.1
2012	51422.4	5353.7	44365.4	1703.3
Prel. 2013	52207.8	5330.4	45091.7	1785.7
	Structure (%)			
2009	100.0	10.6	86.2	3.2
2010	100.0	10.4	86.1	3.5
2011	100.0	10.4	86.2	3.4
2012	100.0	10.4	86.3	3.3
Prel. 2013	100.0	10.2	86.4	3.4

Source: Government of Statistics Viet Nam. Retrieved from https://www.gso.gov.vn/default_en.aspx?tabid=774

Appendix VIII (Continued) Viet Nam's employed population by types of enterprise, and number of enterprises as of July 2013

Table ii. Number of enterprises by size of capital and ownership type as of 1 July 2013

	Total	<0.5 billion dongs	0.5 – 1 billion dongs	1-5 billion dongs	5-10 billion dongs
	Number of enterprises				
Total	346,777	17,800	23,261	142,124	66,451
State own enterprises	3,239	17	9	113	208
Non-State enterprises	334,562	17,506	23,040	140,850	65,377
Total	346,777	17,800	23,261	142,124	66,451
	% of total number of enterprises				
State own enterprises	0.93	0.1	0.04	0.08	0.31
Non-State enterprises	96.48	98.34	99.05	99.10	98.39
Foreign Associate enterprises	2.59	1.56	0.91	0.82	1.30
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Government of Statistics Viet Nam. Retrieved from https://www.gso.gov.vn/default_en.aspx?tabid=777

Appendix IX (a). Viet Nam's employed population by economic sectors as of July 2013

Table iii. Employed population at 15 years of age and above as of 1 July 2013 by types of economic activity

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	% of total for 2013
	In thousands persons					
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	24606.0	24279.0	24362.9	24357.2	24440.2	46.81%
Mining and quarrying	291.5	275.6	279.1	285.4	266.9	0.51%
Manufacturing	6449.0	6645.8	6972.6	7102.2	7285.2	13.95%
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	131.6	130.2	139.7	129.5	131.4	0.25%
Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	95.4	117.4	106.3	107.8	117.5	0.23%
Construction	2594.1	3108.0	3221.1	3271.5	3258.3	6.24%
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	5150.7	5549.7	5827.6	6313.9	6548.6	12.54%
Transportation and storage	1426.1	1416.7	1414.4	1498.3	1495.9	2.87%
Accommodation and food service activities	1573.7	1711.0	1995.3	2137.4	2211.0	4.23%
Information and communication	228.0	257.4	269.0	283.6	267.0	0.51%
Financial, banking and insurance activities	230.3	254.5	301.1	312.5	334.3	0.64%
Real estate activities	65.2	101.3	119.0	148.1	149.6	0.29%
Professional, scientific and technical activities	218.5	217.5	220.2	248.8	242.6	0.46%
Administrative and support service activities	171.8	185.5	197.9	229.3	225.0	0.43%
Activities of Communist Party, socio-political organizations; public administration and defence; compulsory security	1596.9	1569.6	1542.2	1582.7	1687.0	3.23%
Education and training	1583.9	1673.4	1731.8	1767.1	1808.8	3.46%
Human health and social work activities	364.7	437.0	480.8	482.4	501.6	0.96%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	210.8	232.4	250.1	256.0	280.9	0.54%
Other service activities	569	687.3	734.9	731.9	777.7	1.49%
Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods and services producing activities of households for own use	183.3	196.7	183.1	173.9	174.5	0.33%
Activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies	3.2	2.5	2.8	2.8	3.9	0.01%
Total	47743.6	4908.50	50352.0	51422.4	52207.8	100

Source: Government of Statistics Viet Nam. Retrieved from https://www.gso.gov.vn/default_en.aspx?tabid=774

Appendix IX (b). Number of enterprises by types of economic activities in Viet Nam as of December 2012

Table iv. Number of enterprises as of 31 December 2012 by size of capital and by types of economic activity

	0-10 billion dongs	10 billion dongs and above	Total	% of total number of enterprises
	Number of enterprises			
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	2,401	1,116	3,517	1.01%
Mining and quarrying	1,570	1,072	2,642	0.76%
Manufacturing	37,442	18,863	56,305	16.24%
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	867	219	1,086	0.31%
Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	762	371	1,133	0.33%
Construction	30,314	18,476	48,790	14.07%
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	97,802	37,186	134,988	38.93%
Transportation and storage	15,179	4,157	19,336	5.58%
Accommodation and food service activities	11,524	1,613	13,137	3.79%
Information and communication	6,530	739	7,269	2.10%
Financial, banking and insurance activities	745	1,169	1,914	0.55%
Real estate activities	1,245	5,735	6,980	2.01%
Professional, scientific and technical activities	25,451	4,144	29,595	8.53%
Administrative and support service activities	10,464	1,034	11,498	3.32%
Education and training	2,873	472	3,345	0.96%
Human health and social work activities	720	276	996	0.29%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	1,203	314	1,517	0.44%
Other service activities	2,544	185	2,729	0.79%
Total	249,636	97,141	346,777	100%

Source: Government of Statistics Viet Nam. Retrieved from https://www.gso.gov.vn/default_en.aspx?tabid=777

Appendix X. List of survey respondents in paid work by economic sectors

Table v. List of survey respondents in paid work by economic activities and business enterprises

Economic sector	Government & State owned enterprises	Private firm (Vietnamese owned)	MNCs	Private firm (Foreign owned)	Family business/ self employed	NGOs	Other	Total	% of total number of respondents in paid work (N=277)
Agriculture, Forestry and	5	0	1	1	1	1	0	9	3.25%
Banking and Financial Services	10	8	18	14	2	2	0	54	19.49%
Construction	3	5	1	4				13	4.69%
Consumer Trade (Wholesale/Retail)	0	3	4	5	1	0	0	13	4.69%
Education and Training	73	4	2	6	1	2	1	89	32.13%
Environment	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	3	1.08%
Health Services	6	0	3	0	0	1	0	10	3.61%
Information, Media and Telecommunicatio	3	4	5	5	1	1	0	19	6.86%
Manufacturing	0	5	6	3	1	0	0	15	5.42%
Public Administration	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1.08%
Tourism and Hospitality	1	4	1	3	5	0	1	15	5.42%
Transport and Logistics	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	4	1.44%
Other services	8	2	3	6	1	8	2	30	10.83%
Total	113	35	46	48	15	16	4	277	100.00%
% of total sample	40.79%	12.64%	16.61%	17.33%	5.42%	5.78%	1.44%	100.00%	

Appendix X (continued) List of survey respondents in paid work by economic sectors

Table vi. List of survey respondents in paid work by economic sectors and by gender

	Gender		Total
Economic sector	Male	Female	
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	1	4	5
Banking and Financial Services	22	25	47
Construction	9	4	13
Consumer Trade (Wholesale/Retail)	7	4	11
Education and Training	33	49	82
Environment	1	1	2
Health Services	1	7	8
Information, Media and Telecommunications	14	4	18
Manufacturing	9	5	14
Public Administration	1	1	2
Tourism and Hospitality	5	6	11
Transport and Logistics	0	4	4
Other services (Please specify)	12	16	28
Total respondents	115	130	245
% of respondents	46.9%	53.1%	100.0%

Table vii. List of survey respondents in paid work by economic sectors and by types of overseas-acquired qualifications

	Type of degree			Total
Economic sector	Other	Under-graduate	Post-graduate	Total
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	0	0	9	9
Banking and Financial Services	1	22	31	54
Construction	0	4	9	13
Consumer Trade (Wholesale/Retail)	0	3	10	13
Education and Training	2	8	79	89
Environment	0	0	3	3
Health Services	0	0	10	10
Information, Media and Telecommunications	0	8	11	19
Manufacturing	1	4	10	15
Public Administration	0	0	3	3
Tourism and Hospitality	2	7	6	15
Transport and Logistics	0	1	3	4
Other services	1	11	18	30
Total in paid work	7	68	202	277
% of total respondents in paid work	2.5%	24.5%	72.9%	100.0%

Appendix X (continued) List of survey respondents in paid work by economic sectors

Table viii. List of survey respondents in paid work by economic sectors and by types of overseas education funding programs

	Type of overseas education funding program					Total
Economic sector	Vietnamese Government scholarship	Overseas university scholarship	Bilateral or multilateral aid scholarship (e.g. AusAid, USAid)	Self-financing	Other	
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	1	1	5	1	1	9
Banking and Financial Services	1	11	9	30	3	54
Construction	0	1	2	10	0	13
Consumer Trade (Wholesale/Retail)	0	1	2	8	2	13
Education and Training	8	20	40	16	5	89
Environment	0	0	2	1	0	3
Health Services	2	1	4	3	0	10
Information, Media and Telecommunications	1	5	4	9	0	19
Manufacturing	2	2	2	8	1	15
Public Administration	0	1	2	0	0	3
Tourism and Hospitality	0	3	3	9	0	15
Transport and Logistics	0	1	0	2	1	4
Other services	0	12	7	11	0	30
Total in paid work	15	59	82	108	13	277
% of total respondents in paid work	5.4%	21.3%	29.6%	39.0%	4.7%	100.0%

Appendix X (continued) List of survey respondents in paid work by economic sectors

Table ix. List of survey respondents in paid work by respondents' place of residence

	Place of residence					Total
Economic sector	Ha Noi	HCMC	Hue	Da Nang	Other regions	
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	4	1	0	0	4	9
Banking and Financial Services	19	26	0	1	8	54
Construction	5	7	0	0	1	13
Consumer Trade (Wholesale/Retail)	2	9	0	0	2	13
Education and Training	27	31	5	12	14	89
Environment	1	1	0	0	1	3
Health Services	6	2	0	0	2	10
Information, Media and Telecommunications	9	8	0	0	2	19
Manufacturing	5	8	0	1	1	15
Public Administration	2	0	0	0	1	3
Tourism and Hospitality	3	8	0	0	4	15
Transport and Logistics	2	1	0	0	1	4
Other services (Please specify)	13	13	0	2	2	30
Total respondents	98	115	5	16	43	277
% of total respondents	35%	42%	2%	6%	16%	100%

Appendix X (continued) List of survey respondents in paid work by economic sectors

Table x. List of survey respondents in paid work by host countries

	Host country											Total
Economic sector	USA	Aust- tralia	UK	France	Germany	Japan	Singa- pore	Other OECD countries	BRIC	Thai- land	Other non OECD countri es	
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	3	0	2	0	9
Banking and Financial Services	11	17	7	3	4	1	3	4	2	0	2	54
Construction	1	5	2	0	0	0	1	2	1	1	0	13
Consumer Trade (Wholesale/Retail)	1	6	0	2	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	13
Education and Training	12	31	9	7	1	6	4	9	2	6	2	89
Environment	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
Health Services	1	2	2	0	1	1	0	1	0	2	0	10
Information, Media and Telecommunications	5	3	1	0	2	0	2	4	1	1	0	19
Manufacturing	2	2	0	2	2	0	1	5	0	1	0	15
Public Administration	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
Tourism and Hospitality	3	6	1	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	1	15
Transport and Logistics	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	4
Other services (Please specify)	10	8	3	2	0	0	2	3	1	0	1	30
Total respondents	46	86	27	17	11	9	15	35	9	14	8	277
% of total respondents	16.6%	31.0%	9.7%	6.1%	4.0%	3.2%	5.4%	12.6%	3.2%	5.1%	2.9%	100%

Appendix X (continued) List of survey respondents in paid work by economic sectors

Table xi. List of survey respondents in paid work by income levels

	Income per month (in VND)								Total
Economic sector	1m	1m-3m	3m-5m	5m-7m	7m-9m	9m-11m	11m-13m	>13m	
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	2	5
Banking and Financial Services	0	1	1	2	8	8	2	25	47
Construction	0	0	0	2	2	3	1	5	13
Consumer Trade (Wholesale/Retail)	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	8	10
Education and Training	0	4	16	19	6	6	5	25	81
Environment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Health Services	0	0	2	2	0	1	0	3	8
Information, Media and Telecommunications	0	1	1	1	1	0	3	11	18
Manufacturing	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	13	14
Public Administration	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
Tourism and Hospitality	0	1	0	1	1	2	1	4	10
Transport and Logistics	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	4
Other services (Please specify)	1	1	0	3	3	4	1	15	28
Total respondents	1	8	23	33	22	25	14	116	242
% of total respondents	0.4%	3.3%	9.5%	13.6%	9.1%	10.3%	5.8%	47.9%	100.0%

Appendix XI. Number of universities, student enrolment and teaching staff in Viet Nam from 2008 to 2013

Table xii. Statistical information about number of universities, student enrolment and teaching staff.

	2007- 2008	2008- 2009	2009- 2010	2010- 2011	2011- 2012	2012- 2013
Institutions	160	169	173	188	204	207
Public	120	124	127	138	150	153
Non-Public	40	45	46	50	54	54
Students	1,180,547	1,242,778	1,358,861	1,435,887	1,448,021	1,453,067
Public	1,037,115	1,091,426	1,185,253	1,246,356	1,258,785	1,275,608
Non-Public	143,432	151,352	173,608	189,531	189,236	177,459
Teaching Staff	38,217	41,007	45,961	50,951	59,672	61,674
Public	34,947	37,016	40,086	43,396	49,742	49,932
Non-Public	3,270	3,991	5,875	7,555	9,930	11,742
PhD	5,643	5,879	6,448	7,338	8,519	8,869
Master	15,421	17,046	19,856	22,865	27,594	28,987
University & College degrees	16,654	17,610	19,090	20,059	22,547	23,002
Other qualifications	499	472	567	689	1012	816

Source: Ministry of Education and Training Viet Nam Retrieved from <http://www.moet.gov.vn/?page=11.11&view=5251>

Appendix XII. Final Ethics Approval to conduct research



Fhs Ethics <fhs.ethics@mq.edu.au>

To: Dr David Saltmarsh <david.saltmarsh@mq.edu.au> Cc: Ms Lien Thi Pham
<lien.pham@students.mq.edu.au>

Dear Dr Saltmarsh,

Re: "Understanding the transformative potential of international tertiary education for overseas students and their local communities - Voices from Vietnam"(5201300115)

Thank you for your recent correspondence. Your response has addressed the issues raised by the Faculty of Human Sciences Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee and approval has been granted, effective 18th April 2013.

This email constitutes ethical approval only.

This research meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). The National Statement is available at the following website:

http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/e72.pdf. The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research:

Dr David Saltmarsh Ms Lien Thi Pham

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1. The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).
2. Approval will be for a period of five (5) years subject to the provision of annual reports.

Progress Report 1 Due: 18th April 2014

Progress Report 2 Due: 18th April 2015

Progress Report 3 Due: 18th April 2016

Progress Report 4 Due: 18th April 2017

Final Report Due: 18th April 2018

NB. If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report for the project.

Progress reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/forms

3. If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Sub-Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).

4. All amendments to the project must be reviewed and approved by the Sub-Committee before implementation. Please complete and submit a Request for Amendment Form available at the following website :

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/forms

5. Please notify the Sub-Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

6. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University. This information is available at the following websites:

<http://www.mq.edu.au/policy>

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/policy

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external funding for the above project it is your responsibility to provide the Macquarie University's Research Grants Management Assistant with a copy of this email as soon as possible. Internal and External funding agencies will not be informed that you have approval for your project and funds will not be released until the Research Grants Management Assistant has received a copy of this email.

If you need to provide a hard copy letter of approval to an external organisation as evidence that you have approval, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Secretariat at the address below.

Please retain a copy of this email as this is your official notification of ethics approval.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Peter Roger Chair

Faculty of Human Sciences Ethics Review Sub-Committee Human Research Ethics Committee

Faculty of Human Sciences - Ethics Research Office

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Email: fhs.ethics@mq.edu.au

Appendix XIII. Final Ethics Report



From: Fhs Ethics <fhs.ethics@mq.edu.au>
 Sent: Thursday, 31 July 2014 10:43 AM
 To: David Saltmarsh
 Cc: Ms Lien Thi Pham
 Subject: RE: HS Ethics Application - Final Report Approved (5201300115)

Dear Dr Saltmarsh,

Title of project: 'Understanding the transformative potential of international tertiary education for overseas students and their local communities - Voices from Vietnam' (Ref: 5201300115)

FINAL REPORT APPROVED

Your final report has been received and approved, effective 27th May 2014.

The Faculty of Human Sciences Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee is grateful for your cooperation and would like to wish you success in future research endeavours.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Simon Boag
 Acting Chair
 Faculty of Human Sciences
 Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee

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