Transformative education as an orientation for sustainable development of higher education in Vietnam: An exploratory study

Mai Son Tung[1], Ha Minh Tri[2*]

[1]Eastern International University, Binh Duong Province, Vietnam
[2]International University, Vietnam National University - HCMC, Vietnam
[*]Corresponding author: hmtri@hcmiu.edu.vn

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Transformative education is recognized as a relevant theory for educational development in many countries. Scholars have noted that transformative education can help learners to become more critical, responsible, and autonomous. However, there is no such empirical evidence available in Vietnam to date. There is also a gap between theoretical construct and practical application of transformative education in Vietnam. This study aims to explore the current understanding of transformative education and clarify its impact on learners. To address the gap, the authors assess the status of higher education in Vietnam and propose why transformative education can be a solution to improve the quality of higher education. Our study used a qualitative approach to explore the knowledge and experience of respondents related to transformative education. Data collection used Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and In-Depth Interview (IDI). Two FGDs were performed with students and alumni from universities in Binh Duong Province and Ho Chi Minh City exploring the learning experience in class. Three IDIs were implemented with experts in higher education management and quality assurance exploring the consistency and application of transformative education in Vietnam. The findings indicate that learning activities at several universities in Vietnam are still heavy on theory, and students lack experimental activities. Respondents also reported that transformative education is consistent with the sustainable development of higher education in Vietnam. Our study also provides several suggestions regarding to how to apply transformative education in Vietnam in the long term.

1. Introduction

Education plays an essential role in ensuring the survival and development of human society. Education is associated with the strength of each country. The more education develops, the richer the country becomes and vice versa (Astakhova et al., 2016; Dumciuviene, 2015; Gregorio & Lee, 2002). Therefore, most countries in the world attach great importance to education and always research to improve the quality of education. Education in Nordic countries such as Finland, Norway, and Sweden is recognized worldwide for the quality of its training programs (Gustafsson & Blömeke, 2018). One of the most prominent advantages of Nordic education is that students are the basis corner to adjust the training program accordingly

(Astakhova et al., 2016). The United States (US) has the highest total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the world's top education quality, where many talents and outstanding inventions were born. The core value of the educational program in the US is freedom as the foundation for development. According to Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the education system in Singapore is always at the top of the best quality education in the world, making it a destination for international students (OECD, 2011). The government of Singapore aims for fairness, promoting creativity and innovation in education development (Leen, Hong, Kwan, & Ying, 2014).

Although important factors for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education have improved significantly in Vietnam, Vietnamese education still needs to take bigger steps (Peeraer & Van Petegem, 2015). Vietnam has only two universities that have entered into the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) world's top 1000 university rankings in 2022. This number of universities is small compared to other countries in Southeast Asia, such as Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. According to Vu and Dong (2019), although Vietnamese education has made much progress and obtained determined achievements, the education system still has many weaknesses and inadequacies. Educational content, programs, and methods are outdated, slow to innovate, and modernize, and not yet relevant to social life and professional work. Graduates from Vietnam are also found hard to compete with international labor (Vu & Dong, 2019). The system of higher education in Vietnam is burdened by the increase in the unemployment rate amongst university graduates. A report from General Statistics Office of Vietnam (GSOV, 2019) noted that there were over 300,000 highly skilled people unemployed, accounting for about 27% of total unemployment. Thus, continuing research and innovation in teaching and learning methods is an urgent requirement to improve the quality of education in Vietnam, especially in higher education.

Learning about the world's leading educational nations, we find that they have a principal common point: learners are the center of education. This common point is also compatible with fundamental elements in the theory of transformative education. Transformative education is an advanced teaching method that emphasizes being student-centered. Learners acquire knowledge actively. They are encouraged to share experiences, debate to clarify the problem, and experiment to test problem solutions (Franz, 2005). The theory of transformative education was introduced early by Mezirow (1997). It has attracted the attention of many researchers who continue to develop this concept. However, there have been studies confirming the positive impact that transformative education brings to learners. However, this concept is still very new in Vietnam. Therefore, in this article, the authors will approach the theory of transformative education. We expect to broaden the current understanding of transformative education and explore the effects of this educational theory on the quality improvement of further education in Vietnam. This study will aim to answer the questions:

Q1: Has transformative education been applied, and to what extent has transformative education been practiced in Vietnam?

Q2: What are the challenges and solutions to the development of transformative education in Vietnam?

2. Literature review

2.1. The theory of transformative education

The theory of transformative education was introduced very early by Mezirow (1997). The author defined transformative learning as the process of effecting change in a frame of reference.

Adults have acquired a cohesive set of experiences, concepts, values, emotions, and conditioned responses that define the world of their lives. They tend to deny ideas that do not fit their perception and label them as misleading, meaningless, or irrelevant. However, in society, we must learn to think and act scientifically and dialectically rather than based on other people's beliefs, judgments, and feelings. Facilitating such understanding is the cardinal goal of adult education. Transformative learning develops independent thinking (Mezirow, 1997). Later, many authors clarified and developed the concept of transformative education (Aboytes & Barth, 2020; Bell, 2016; Paul & Quiggin, 2020). Transformative education is a teaching and learning-oriented approach that promotes student engagement. Students are encouraged to ask questions, make their own decisions, and take action. Students will reflect on practical results through learning activities and reflect on past experiences leading to changes in their perceptions and actions. Learners must interact with the worldview around them and find a connection between the world they experience in school and the world we all aspire to build outside of school (Aboytes & Barth, 2020; Ngo, 2019; Paul & Quiggin, 2020; Rocks & Lavender, 2018).

Transformative learning evolved from the concept of perspective transformation into an established learning theory based on concepts from constructivism as well as humanist and critical social theory (Aboytes & Barth, 2020; Illeris, 2014; Kitchenham, 2008). The transformative learning process involves experiencing a profound structural change in the basic premises of thinking, feeling, and acting (Michael, Michael, Ann, & Peter, 2015). It is a shift of consciousness that significantly changes our interaction with the world. Such change concerns our understanding of ourselves and our place; our relationships with people and things around us; our understanding of power relationships in intertwined structures of class, race, and gender; awareness of our body; our vision of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace.

No matter how it is defined, the goal of transformative education is to promote personal transformations and encourage change for learners (Boyd & Myers, 1988). The theory of transformative education has set a new way of thinking about education. Teaching and learning are not just about imparting new knowledge but rather a process towards how learners experience, struggle with themselves, realize, and change their thoughts and behaviors. (Paul & Quiggin, 2020; Walsh, Böhme, Lavelle, & Wamsler, 2020).

2.2. Fundamental features of transformative learning

According to Mezirow (1997), transformative learning is demonstrated through the following ten phases:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. A self-examination
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition that others have shared similar transformation
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for plan implementation
8. Trying out the plan
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one's life based on a new perspective

A disorienting dilemma contrived by the educator or occurs naturally through learning (intended or unintentional situations) would cause learners to realize that their beliefs and experiences in the past are no longer accurate. A disorienting dilemma promotes the desire to reflect on the learner's self and change for development. When faced with a disorienting dilemma, students have to reconnect with their experiences and accumulate knowledge in the past to assess the situation and realize that such knowledge and experiences are no longer precise (Mezirow, 2003). They may accept that perhaps some of their past assumptions were incorrect. Therefore, they are more open to new perspectives and thoughts. Now is the moment for learners to make their plans and move further in their transformational learning. They may have to learn new things and consider different perspectives to enhance their learning. It can take a lot of work and effort and requires strategy and guidance from the instructor, but this is what real learning happens. When receiving and sharing new knowledge and solutions, learners must be ready and active in applying and experimenting, exploring and trying new roles (Glisczinski, 2007). As part of transformative learning, students are not merely learning but also practicing actively to understand and experience new things by themselves. It is the cornerstone to learner growth and transformative learning success. Overall, these ten phases are fundamental features in helping learners have undergone a "personal transformation" that transforms their prior notions as they get new information and insight (Kitchenham, 2008).

2.3. Mechanism of impact from transformative education

Learning itself is a process of change and development. It is a process of absorbing new knowledge and skills to develop the learner's capacity. However, as Rocks (2018) has pointed out, entering a higher education program is not a transformation. Neither is learning new skills or meeting new people with different perspectives. Earning a degree also does not necessarily constitute a transformative experience. Transformative learning, which requires adults to critically perceive and analyze the assumptions underlying why they experience the way they do, has been positioned as the foundation for human development in our rapidly changing world.

The impact of transformative education is to put learners in a disorienting dilemma that forces them to be aware and willing to accept change through self-examination or self-awareness and critical reflection (Christie, Carey, Robertson, & Grainger, 2015). Awareness of oneself and one's surroundings is the key to full knowledge and action. Various models have articulated specific positions for self-reflection and awareness in the context of human development (Ardelt & Grunwald, 2018). These models could be classified as genetic, social, liberal, transpositional, and spiritual human development models. However, self-awareness and critical reflection both play a crucial role in all models of human development (Ardelt & Grunwald, 2018). In addition to self-awareness, discourse is also a fundamental mechanism of transformative education. Discourse occurs as a dialogue among faculty and class members and is triggered and enhanced through self-reflection and critical discussion. In addition to self-awareness, discourse is also a fundamental mechanism of transformative education. Discourse occurs as a dialogue among faculty and class members and is triggered and enhanced through self-reflection and critical discussion. When learners participate in sharing experiences, knowledge, and rational counter-arguments, they will evaluate and deal with problems in a more objective and multi-dimensional way. Learners are not dependent on old stereotypes but are ready to act and experiment with solutions to solve problems. Like Rocks (2018) commented, transformation occurs when learning encourages a deep questioning of long-established frames of reference and the creation of new meaning schemes.

3. Methods

3.1. Research methods

The qualitative interview is an excellent means of gathering data to answer our research questions (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). The in-depth interviews would help the interviewees to convey information actively. It also supports the interviewers to exploit the knowledge and experience of interviewees more deeply (Myers & Newman, 2007).

To address the research questions, the authors conducted focus group discussions with students and alumni from universities in Vietnam to learn about their experiences of classroom activities and process learners to change and develop themselves. The authors also conducted in-depth interviews with three key informants or experts in the educational sector. They shared their opinions about the reality of applying transformative education in Vietnam. They also evaluated the opportunities and challenges of practicing transformative education in Vietnam.

3.2. Data collection

Our study employed a purposive sampling method that is commonly used in qualitative research (Patton, 2014). In addition, we want to focus on the appropriate characteristics of interviewees, which will best enable us to answer our research questions (Campbell et al., 2020; Patton, 2014). The interviews were conducted online via Google Meet using IDI.

With regard to focus group discussion, the authors mainly learn about students' experiences in the university environment in the classroom and self-assessment of their process of change and development. The study focuses on the learning activities that students are experiencing at Vietnamese universities today. The study sample includes eight selected students and 12 selected alumni at universities in Binh Duong province and Ho Chi Minh City. These interviewees have to fit a particular profile that is spending a great deal of time focusing on university studies and having a long enough experience in the university environment. The duration of each discussion is approximately two hours. Video and voice were recorded under the consensus of the participants.

With regard to depth interviews, the authors approached three experts in higher education management and quality assurance. They are the former director of Binh Duong Department of Education, the quality accreditation expert of Vietnam's higher education, and the former Vice President of Vietnam National University in Ho Chi Minh City. Table 1 and Table 2 show participants' demographic profiles.

Table 1

Student and alumni profile

Groups	Participants	Number	University
Student	P1 => P8	8	Binh Duong Province Ho Chi Minh City
Alumni	P9 => P20	12	Binh Duong Province Ho Chi Minh City

Source: Author's synthesis

Table 2

Specialist profile

Experts	Profession	Educational status
E1	The former director of Binh Duong Department of Education	Master
E2	The quality accreditation expert in Vietnamese higher education	Associate Professor - Doctorate
E3	The former Vice President of Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City	Doctorate

Source: Author's synthesis

The authors conducted interviews to obtain the opinions of educational administrators about the current situation of higher education in Vietnam. The specialists shared their views on the suitability of transformative education with the orientation of higher education development in Vietnam. They also considered the opportunities and challenges when developing transformational education in Vietnam. Based on expert sharing, the authors proposed solutions to practice transformative education in higher education in Vietnam. The duration of each in-depth interview is approximately one hour. Voices were recorded under the agreement of the participants.

3.3. Data analysis

The data obtained from the interviews are analyzed using content analysis (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). It enables the authors to sift through large volumes of data with relative ease in a systematic fashion (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Stemler, 2000). First, the video and voice recordings are watched and listened to several times. Then, the authors type the answers as complete text in Vietnamese in the respondents' own words. The text is read and coded by using propositional units. We broke down the full text from the interviewees to examine the underlying meaning. The co-author checked the coding table to ensure no possible interpretation biases. After the coding process, the codes depicting common ideas are identified and grouped into categories, and thus categories are classified into themes based on the theoretical framework from the transformative education literature. The co-author checks separately with the main author to confirm the stability and reproducibility of data coding (Stemler, 2000). Table 3 and Table 4 show the categories and themes derived from the data from focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.

Table 3

Summary of themes and categories of focus group discussions

Theme	Categories
The learning experience of economics student	Learning activities in class The program is heavy on theory Fewer discourse experiences Little contact with social reality
The learning experience of engineering and medical students	Learning activities in class Have hands-on experience, experiment Lack of discussion and testing of new application method
Expectations and suggestions for improvement of learners	Increase communication with lecturers Increase discussion, practice, and experiment Remove unsuitable subjects Increase practical social knowledge

Source: Author's synthesis

Table 4

Summary of themes and categorization of in-depth interviews

Theme	Categories
Prevalence and characteristics of transformative education	Definition of transformative education The development level of transformative education Relationship in transformative education
The reality of applying transformative education in Vietnam	Transformative Learning in Vietnam Transformative in Binh Duong Province Transformative learning at universities Not methodical
In line with the orientation of Vietnamese education	Orientation conformity Policies conformity From theory to practice
Synchronous solutions to develop transformative education	Challenges Impact and improvement on related factors Synchronized participation of stakeholders

Source: Author's synthesis

4. Result

Key findings of the study are classified according to research questions

4.1. Student learning experience

Research findings show that learning activities at many universities in Vietnam are diverse with different types such as theoretical learning, presentation, group exercise, group discussion, internship, internship, and doing projects. However, in general, the learning activities are still heavy on theory. The economic respondents all say that the time spent on class discussion and experimental activities is still modest. Students' questions, if any, are also answered by teachers, but due to time pressure, teachers do not share much about real-life contacts in society. Some students and alumni in engineering and medicine say that they had many opportunities to practice, but they followed previous guidelines and had little opportunity to discuss and test new methods. The following statements provide some illustrations as follows:

The main activity is still teaching theory which accounted for 3/4 of the class time. The remaining time can be spent doing exercises or discussing a specific topic. (P4)

Classes are mainly theory learning. Several subjects have a high number of discussions. However, in other subjects, students are still passive. So, they merely listen to lecturers. (P6)

If students have any questions, the teacher will explain immediately. However, due to the limited time of the program, teachers have to lecture a lot, so students rarely hear about real-life issues in society. (P7)

In class, students rarely ask questions. Due to complicated academic knowledge, students will mainly note in notebooks and research later at home or in the library. (P11)

Classes usually have activities such as learning theory, practical exercises, and going to practice at the hospital. When students have questions about any situation, they often discuss them with their friends or consult the lecturers. (P14)

The analysis shows that students and alumni also want to have more discussions in the classrooms and more sharing of practical knowledge in society. Learners also look forward to creating and testing new solutions. Feedback from students and alumni has shown that learners have demands and expectations for diverse learning experiences, chances to test, and apply practical solutions. However, the issue is that the current educational program does not allow them to do that.

4.2. Transformative learning in Vietnam

The specialists confirmed that although the concept of transformative education has been known globally, it is still uncommon in Vietnam. In Vietnam, there are also few studies on this educational philosophy. Some experts assess that Vietnam has applied several activities consistent with the theory of transformative education but has not used the correct terms. Therefore, this concept is quite new in Vietnam. The following statements illustrate some of the points mentioned earlier:

For the world, the concept of transformative education is not new overall. This term has been mentioned in several research, academic forums, and seminars. However, this issue in Vietnam is a different story. (E2)

Learning must go hand in hand with practice. Theoretical studies need to be experimentally verified. Learners must play a leading role in accessing new knowledge. (E1)

For example, learning about peanuts will be more effective if students can go on field trips to the farms, talking with farmers about the characteristics of the tree and the cultivation method. (E1)

Several Vietnamese universities have begun to have a deeper understanding of liberal arts education (Penprase, 2021). Some of them adjust their training programs in the first years to support students from their outlook and develop their learning abilities. However, these specialists share the common opinion that Vietnam has only begun to develop concepts, views, and thoughts but has not yet formed specific methods in transformative education.

4.3. In line with Vietnam's educational orientation

The quality accreditation expert of Vietnam higher education noted that in terms of ideology and meaning, transformative education has also been known in Vietnam when the current view of Vietnamese higher education focused on the combination of knowledge - skills - attitudes. Other specialists also agree that in the orientation of further education in Vietnam, education has the mission of changing and developing learners, thereby changing and developing the community and the country. The following statements illustrate some of the points mentioned earlier:

Transformation education is already known in Vietnam, but we are not using the word transformative education. The quality of higher education in Vietnam today requires a combination of three factors: knowledge - skills - attitudes. (E2)

The philosophy of transformative education is similar to the orientation of higher education in Vietnam. However, we are currently familiar with a concept that has a similar meaning to transformative education. It is liberal art education. (E3)

The premise of transformative education has appeared in Vietnam, but the extent of application in practice depends on each locality. Currently, Binh Duong province is promoting practical activities as well as creative activities in schools. (E1)

Although transformative education is not popular in Vietnam, the ideological elements corresponding to the perspective of transformative education have appeared. The Ministry of Education and Training has also issued policies to promote creativity in education, for example,

pushing the autonomy mechanism of universities. It is a favorable condition to consider systematically practicing transformative education. The relevance of the theory of transformational education in terms of Vietnam's educational orientation is a crucial factor in proving that the practice of transformative education in Vietnam is necessary for raising the quality of higher education in Vietnam.

4.4. Synchronous solutions

Indeed, the theory of transformative education has just formed in Vietnam as a concept rather than a standardized method. To be able to develop transformative education effectively in Vietnam requires synchronous solutions. These statements are illustrated as follows:

The Government should not interfere highly in the training programs and policies of the universities but should develop guiding documents to instruct and support them. Schools themselves should be bold in practical and critical educational reform. (E2)

The biggest obstacle in developing transformative education in Vietnam is the mindset of the leaders. If the leadership mindset is open and visionary, the job will be successful. (E2)

Enterprises themselves need to have policies to promote capacity and creativity in recruiting and employing people. For the state, there should not has a ceiling on tuition fees. The school should decide the expenses to ensure fair competition among universities. (E1)

The development of transformational education does not depend only on the education sector. It requires coordination with the state and businesses. (E1)

The problem is that when applying transformational education in Vietnam, it is necessary to develop a specific method. The educational program at school must also be linked to real society. (E3)

Firstly, there must be consensus and coordination among stakeholders conclude state agencies, schools, businesses, families, and society. Secondly, it is necessary to combine synchronous factors such as reforming educational programs and methods, increasing educational investment, innovating regulations and policies, and changing personal and social thinking. The effectiveness of the above recommendations still needs detailed studies and more time to evaluate. However, the experts' suggestions are still crucial reference bases for developing specific solutions for the development of transformative education in Vietnam.

5. Discussion

5.1. The current situation of Vietnam's education

Globalization and internationalization forces have placed Vietnam's higher education under the pressure of change (Nguyen & Tran, 2018). Therefore, reforming Vietnam's higher education has become imperative. However, the efforts in educational innovation have been irregular, fragmented, and unstable. Reforming outcomes have remained relatively limited and fallen under scrutiny. The Vietnamese higher education system is burdened by the increasing unemployment rate among university graduates (Ngo, 2019; Nguyen & Tran, 2018). Over the past decades, Vietnam's education has made significant progress, with remarkable achievements contributing to upgrading the citizens' intellectual level and human resources for the country's development. Nevertheless, Vietnamese education still has many weaknesses and shortcomings; for instance, education and training are weak and inadequately overcome; education managers take care to develop more quantity than quality (Vu & Dong, 2019). The quality of education in attendance is lax. The national education system is unreasonable, inadequate, unconnected, and

unbalanced. Some education policies are still subjective, unintentional, far from reality, and lack social consensus. We can not solve the above problems by local, single, temporary surface solutions but need synchronous solutions, long-term strategies, and visions (Gunnlaugson, 2006; Michael et al., 2015; Thomas, 2009).

The research shows that learning activities at many universities in Vietnam are diverse with different types such as theoretical learning, presentation, group exercise, group discussion, internship, and doing projects. However, the learning activities are still heavy on theory. Time spent on class discussion and experimental activities is still modest. Current learning contents at many universities in Vietnam have not met the orientation of transformative education.

5.2. Theoretical contributions

Our study offers two key theoretical contributions. First, this is the first study that explores transformative education as a feasible solution to improving the quality of higher education in Vietnam. There have been studies and seminars for the innovation and development of education in Vietnam. However, these studies have not approached the theory of transformative education. Our study may be considered a starting point for research related to transformative education to be applied in Vietnam in the future.

Second, our study broadens our understanding of transformative education in Vietnam systematically and comprehensively with regard to the method of transformative education. We can assess the quality of higher education institutions through several criteria such as the modernity of facilities, the number of scientific research works, or the achievement of international assessment standards. However, the basis and the most relevant criteria are the outputs of learners. This study shows that transformative education can help learners achieve significant changes in thought and action. As a result, it will transform our society in a more positive direction. That is also consistent with the ideology of higher education.

5.3. Practical implications

Transformative education is consistent with the development orientation of higher education in Vietnam. The Government has already issued resolutions, regulations, and guidelines to create conditions for educational institutions to promote efficiency and creativity in teaching and learning activities. However, in practice, the application and transition from text to action still differ among regions and universities. The experts share the same opinion that many universities in Vietnam still focus on vocational training programs. Hence, graduates have not had a transformational orientation. The core meaning of transformative education is to transform learners so that they can contribute to changing the workplace, community, and society. It is the essence of sustainability and responsible citizenship (Bell, 2016).

The practice of transformative education in Vietnam still faces challenges. We propose the need for synchronous coordination of many stakeholders. They are the government, schools, and society. The government should promulgate guiding documents and orientation for schools to promote operating autonomy and fair competition. Universities should implement innovation in operation and design programs for community and social change. Families and society need to change their thinking and create an environment for individuals to promote creativity and substantive abilities instead of chasing after material things and social positions. For the application of transformative education to be effective, it also requires an equal improvement in the corner elements. They are the educational program, the educational method, and the educational environment.

6. Conclusions

6.1. Conclusions

This research contributes by deepening understanding of the mechanism of impact of transformative education on social progress. The study also provides a practical case that is the ability to practice transformative education in Vietnam. The result shows that although there have been significant changes in Vietnam's education system, the current learning programs at many universities in Vietnam have not met the criteria for transformative education. Understanding the benefits of transformative learning, we recommend that Vietnam needs synchronous solutions from the government, schools, and society to practice transformative education effectively. The findings could be a reference base for educational administrators in Vietnam to consult and propose solutions for Vietnamese higher education development to compete with other countries in the region and the world.

6.2. Limitations and future research

There were some limitations in the study. First, the number of students and alumni participating in the interviews is still limited, so even though we have deeply explored the evaluations of students and alumni, these responses cannot be generalized to all universities in Vietnam. Second, consulting with only three experts on educational management and quality accreditation may not be sufficient. It is recommended that future research can further explore students and alumni at other universities to compare student experiences at Vietnamese and international universities. Future research articles should also approach experts who are policy makers from the Ministry of Education and Training to have a deeper assessment of the perspective of developing transformative education in Vietnam. Later studies may also focus on evaluating and comparing the development of Vietnamese education after reform activities, applying the philosophy of transformative education and liberal education ideology.

References

Aboytes, J. G. R., & Barth, M. (2020). Transformative learning in the field of sustainability: A systematic literature review (1999-2019). *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education, 21*(5), 993-1013. doi:10.1108/IJSHE-05-2019-0168

Ardelt, M., & Grunwald, S. (2018). The importance of self-reflection and awareness for human development in hard times. *Research in Human Development, 15*(3/4), 187-199. doi:10.1080/15427609.2018.1489098

Astakhova, K. V., Korobeev, A. I., Prokhorova, V. V., Kolupaev, A. A., Vorotnoy, M. V., Kucheryavaya, E. R. J. I. R. o. M., & Marketing. (2016). *International Review of Management and Marketing, 6*(1S), 54-55.

Bell, D. V. J. (2016). Twenty-first century education: Transformative education for sustainability and responsible citizenship. *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability, 18*(1), 48-56. doi:doi:10.1515/jtes-2016-0004

Boyd, R. D., & Myers, J. G. (1988). Transformative education. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 7*(4), 261-284. doi:10.1080/0260137880070403

Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Young, S., . . . Walker, K. J. J. o. R. i. N. (2020). Purposive sampling: complex or simple? Research case examples. *Journal of Research in Nursing, 25*(8), 652-661.

Christie, M., Carey, M., Robertson, A., & Grainger, P. (2015). Putting transformative learning theory into practice. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning, 55*(1), 9-30.

Downe-Wamboldt, B. (1992). Content analysis: Method, applications, and issues. *Health Care for Women International, 13*(3), 313-321. doi:10.1080/07399339209516006

Dumciuviene, D. (2015). The impact of education policy to country economic development. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 191*(2), 2427-2436. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.04.302

Erlingsson, C., & Brysiewicz, P. (2017). A hands-on guide to doing content analysis. *African Journal of Emergency Medicine, 7*(3), 93-99. doi:10.1016/j.afjem.2017.08.001

Franz, N. K. (2005). Transformative learning in intraorganization partnerships: Facilitating personal, joint, and organizational change. *Journal of Transformative Education, 3*(3), 254-270. doi:10.1177/1541344605275099

General Statistics Office of Vietnam (GSOV). (2019). *Báo cáo điều tra lao động việc làm [How much does the labor force work?]*. Retrieved October 10, 2021, from Tổng cục Thống kê website: https://www.gso.gov.vn/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Bao-cao-dieu-tra-lao-dong-viec-lam-2019-26-3-2021.pdf

Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E., & Chadwick, B. (2008). Methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews and focus groups. *British Dental Journal, 204*(6), 291-295. doi:10.1038/bdj.2008.192

Glisczinski, D. J. J. J. o. t. e. (2007). Transformative higher education: A meaningful degree of understanding. *Journal of Transformative Education*, *5*(4), 317-328.

Gregorio, J. D., & Lee, J. W. (2002). Education and income inequality: New evidence from cross-country data. *Review of Income and Wealth, 48*(3), 395-416. doi:10.1111/1475-4991.00060

Gunnlaugson, O. (2006). Generative dialogue as a transformative learning practice in adult and higher education settings. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education, 12*(1), 2-19. doi:10.7227/JACE.12.1.2

Gustafsson, J.-E., & Blömeke, S. (2018). Development of school achievement in the nordic countries during half a century. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 62*(3), 386-406. doi:10.1080/00313831.2018.1434829

Illeris, K. (2014). Transformative learning and identity. *Journal of Transformative Education, 12*(2), 148-163. doi:10.1177/1541344614548423

Kitchenham, A. (2008). The evolution of john mezirow's transformative learning theory. *Journal of Transformative Education, 6*(2), 104-123. doi:10.1177/1541344608322678

Leen, C. C., Hong, H., Kwan, F., & Ying, T. W. J. S. N. T. U. (2014). *Creative and critical thinking in Singapore schools* (NIE Working Paper Seres, No2). Retrieved October 10, 2021, from http://hdl.handle.net/10497/17709

Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative learning: Theory to practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 1997*(74), 5-12. doi:10.1002/ace.7401

Mezirow, J. (2003). Transformative learning as discourse. *Journal of Transformative Education, 1*(1), 58-63. doi:10.1177/1541344603252172

Michael, C., Michael, C., Ann, R., & Peter, G. (2015). Putting transformative learning theory into practice. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning, 55*(1), 12-16. doi:10.3316/ielapa.069076554869878

Myers, M. D., & Newman, M. (2007). The qualitative interview in IS research: Examining the craft. *Information and Organization, 17*(1), 2-26. doi:10.1016/j.infoandorg.2006.11.001

Ngo, H. V. T. (2019). Transformative learning and some suggestions on applying it into teaching and learning practices in Vietnam. *VNU Journal of Science: Education Research*, *35*(1), 35-37. doi:10.25073/2588-1159/vnuer.4219

Nguyen, N., & Tran, L. T. (2018). Looking inward or outward? Vietnam higher education at the superhighway of globalization: Culture, values and changes. *Journal of Asian Public Policy, 11*(1), 28-45. doi:10.1080/17516234.2017.1332457

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2011). Lessons from PISA for the United States. In *Strong performers and successful reformers in education* (pp. 159-176). Paris: OECD Paris Centre.

Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Paul, L., & Quiggin, J. (2020). Transformative education. *Educational Theory, 70*(5), 561-579. doi:10.1111/edth.12444

Peeraer, J., & Van Petegem, P. (2015). Integration or transformation? Looking in the future of Information and communication technology in education in Vietnam. *Evaluation and Program Planning, 48*(2015), 47-56. doi:10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2014.09.005

Penprase, B. (2021). *Global liberal arts and new institutions for 21st century higher education*. Paper presented at the Higher Education Forum, Hiroshima University, Japan.

Rocks, E., & Lavender, P. (2018). Exploring transformative journeys through a higher education programme in a further education college. *Education + Training, 60*(6), 584-595. doi:10.1108/ET-02-2018-0047

Stemler, S. (2000). An overview of content analysis. *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation, 7*(1), 2-4. doi:10.7275/z6fm-2e34

Thomas, I. (2009). Critical thinking, transformative learning, sustainable education, and problem-based learning in universities. *Journal of Transformative Education, 7*(3), 245-264. doi:10.1177/1541344610385753

Vu, M. T., & Dong, H. T. M. (2019). A vision for Vietnam in the revolution 4.0. *European Journal of Engineering Research and Science, 4*(2), 123-128. doi:10.24018/ejers.2019.4.9.1526

Walsh, Z., Böhme, J., Lavelle, B. D., & Wamsler, C. (2020). Transformative education: Towards a relational, justice-oriented approach to sustainability. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education, 21*(7), 1587-1606. doi:10.1108/IJSHE-05-2020-0176