Swimming in unchartered waters: A case for developing lecturers of English in Vietnam higher education

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The changing landscape of global higher education, due to the increasing use of educational technology, has become 'unchartered waters' for many university lecturers. Continuing professional development (CPD) that aims to support lecturers to 'swim in the unchartered waters' has become a priority in many countries. However, CPD tends to be competency-based with little attention given to lecturers' motivations. This paper presents a conceptual framework that helps to explore CPD for lecturers teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) with technology in the Asian context of Vietnam higher education. It unpacks the important elements of CPD for the 21st century EFL lecturer through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge Framework (TPACK) (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Accordingly, three psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness are identified as being essential elements for CPD, with TPACK specifying lecturers' competence. This new CPD approach can guide EFL teaching practice and CPD policy in Vietnam and other similar contexts.

Introduction

The 21st century has been a time of dramatic change in higher education in part due to the increasing use of educational technology. Several decades ago, good teaching required sound pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1985), that is, teachers' knowledge of using appropriate methods to teach a particular subject. With the increasing use of educational technology, the question of how technology can be used to support the teaching and learning of a particular subject has become a focus for many university teachers. Consequently, how these teachers can best be supported in their endeavours to integrate technology is a critical area for researchers to explore. Mishra and Koehler (2006) introduced the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework that describes the capabilities required of teachers to integrate technology into teaching with seven constructs: Content Knowledge, Pedagogical Knowledge, Technological Knowledge, Technological Content Knowledge, Technological Pedagogical Knowledge, and Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge. TPACK has since been widely used for both pre-service teacher education and in-service teacher professional development. TPACK helps guide continuing professional development (CPD) approaches to support in-service educators in teaching with technology in the 21st century. However, TPACK only focuses on teachers' competence, or the core knowledge that teachers require to teach a subject with technology. TPACK does not address other needs of teachers, such as beliefs and motivations, which are important for their professional becoming (Friedman & Phillips, 2004; Kennedy, 2014; Scanlon, 2011).

This paper will present an ongoing doctoral research study on continuing professional development (CPD) for lecturers teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) with technology at Vietnamese universities. In particular, the paper focuses on the development of a conceptual framework for "Becoming a 21st century EFL lecturer in Vietnam", which combines two Western theories to examine CPD in an Asian context. The paper begins by describing the context where the study is situated, the research problem and research questions, the research design and especially the conceptual framework that guides the investigation. It then discusses preliminary findings from a focus group used to validate the conceptual framework. The paper concludes by outlining the future directions of the study.

Background of the study: Vietnam

Learning and teaching in the 21st century have been significantly influenced by the integration of technology in educational settings. The Vietnamese government has responded to this trend by investing in ICT to improve the quality of higher education broadly, and English language education in particular.

The aim is to enhance graduates' language competence to enable better global integration (Dinh, 2015). Most noticeably, in 2008 the government launched the National Foreign Language Project 2020 worth millions of US dollars to promote foreign language learning and teaching (English in particular) via the use of communicative language teaching approaches integrating technology (Project 2020, 2016). The project also prioritises professional development as one of the important tasks to improve the quality of teaching and learning. However, the results remain limited. The problems include (1) the traditional view of professional development as a deficit model with the main purpose of updating teachers' knowledge and skills, as reflected in important documents issued by the Vietnamese government (i.e., HERA 2005; Tertiary Education Law 2012; Strategic plan for educational development 2011-2020); (2) limited opportunities for EFL lecturers' CPD (Dang, Nicholas, & Lewis, 2012b; Dinh, 2015); and (3) irrelevant CPD which is not needs-based (Tran, 2016). Therefore, CPD in Vietnam remains an under-researched area (Harbon et al., 2014; Nguyen, 2016; Tran, 2016; Vietnamese Prime Minister, 2012), lacking both a theoretical background and practical directions to support the challenging work of the 21st century EFL lecturer.

Kennedy (2014) discusses a transition in CPD approaches, from the traditional view focusing on technical knowledge and skills and teachers' passive role in their learning, to a constructivist view valuing lecturers' needs and motivations in their professional becoming, with individuals taking an active role in their development. This constructivist view of CPD has been shown to be relevant to the Vietnamese context (Nguyen, 2016; Nguyen & Sunggingwati, 2008; Tran, 2016). However, to date there has been no large-scale study that examines a CPD framework for becoming a 21st century EFL lecturer in Vietnam, which takes into consideration the complexities of lecturers' professions when they have to teach English in a communicative approach with technology. The research study, therefore, aims to explore such a CPD framework by addressing the following overarching research question: What are the key elements of a CPD framework for the 21st century EFL lecturers in Vietnam?

The research design

The study adopts mixed methods in an exploratory sequential design with "qualitative data collection and analysis in Phase 1 followed by quantitative data collection and analysis in Phase 2, which builds on Phase 1" (Creswell and Clark, 2011, p. 73).

The study began with a review of the literature to inform the development of a conceptual framework for "Becoming a 21st century EFL lecturer in Vietnam" (described below). In Phase 1 of the current study, a focus group was conducted with nine Vietnamese EFL experts to validate the conceptual framework. The experts were studying and working in Melbourne with various experiences in EFL teaching in different universities across Vietnam. Specifically, the focus group helped to unpack EFL experts' perceptions of the importance of competence, autonomy, and relatedness in their teaching practice and professional development. The focus group data will guide the design of an online practitioner survey in Phase 2. The survey will be administered to EFL lecturers in Vietnam to continue the validation of the framework with broader data about lecturers' perceptions of what is important for their practice, their career development, and CPD expectations. The mixed data analysis will provide a comprehensive understanding of the current EFL teaching practice in Vietnam Higher Education to inform relevant CPD of the 21st century EFL lecturer in Vietnam.

The conceptual framework for "Becoming a 21st century EFL lecturer in Vietnam"

The conceptual framework has been developed from the literature on teacher professional development, focused on CPD in higher education for in-service and pre-service teachers, on a global scale and taking into consideration the Vietnamese context.

Firstly, the study attempted to conceptualise CPD in the Vietnam Higher Education context as professional becoming (Scalon, 2011) that requires not only the development of competence but also teachers' values and beliefs (Friedman & Phillips, 2004; Kennedy, 2014). The study adopts a constructivist ontology that views lecturers as active learners, social learners, and creative learners in the process of learning as becoming (Perkins, 1999). Accordingly, learning is actively achieved through

discussion, debate, hypothesis formation, investigation, reflection, and taking viewpoints. Learning is also socially constructed via dialogue with others, or through collaboration. Finally, as creative learners, learning takes place as knowledge and understanding are created and recreated. The constructivist ontology, therefore, underscores the importance of teacher autonomy and relatedness in the construction of teacher knowledge and competence.

Secondly, the review of the literature centred on studies describing CPD approaches that support the use of educational technology in teaching practice such as those published in the most recent TPACK book by Mishra, Koehler & Herring (2016). In the chapter on in-service TPACK professional development, the authors summarize the most effective approaches to CPD, and these approaches share a similarity with Kennedy (2014) in their aims to meet the teacher needs for competence (TPACK), autonomy (by providing opportunities for individual free choices of preference), and relatedness (collaboration in CPD). Though there has been rare research using the lens of Self-Determination Theory to explore CPD concerning TPACK, this lens is helpful for the current study in Vietnam.

The conceptual framework that has been developed from the literature review is outlined below in Figure 1. The framework is grounded in Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000). The competence element of the conceptual framework is focused on technological competence and is informed by Mishra & Koehler's (2006, 2009) Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework.
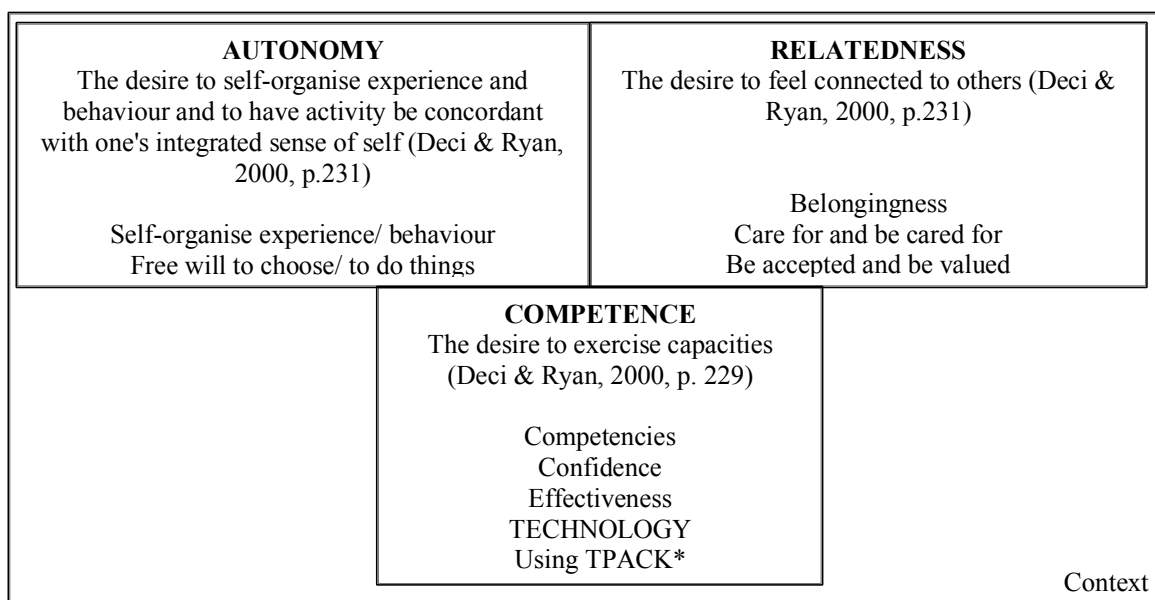
AUTONOMY The desire to self-organise experience and behaviour and to have activity be concordant with one's integrated sense of self (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p.231) Self-organise experience/ behaviour Free will to choose/ to do things	**RELATEDNESS** The desire to feel connected to others (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p.231) Belongingness Care for and be cared for Be accepted and be valued
COMPETENCE The desire to exercise capacities (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 229) Competencies Confidence Effectiveness TECHNOLOGY Using TPACK*	Context

Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework for "Becoming a 21st century EFL lecturer in Vietnam"

Self-determination theory

Self-Determination Theory is a theory of motivation that emphasises the satisfaction of three psychological needs - competence, autonomy, and relatedness - to achieve motivation and well-being in professional life. This theory is well aligned with the constructivist ontology and provides a lens for the exploration of EFL lecturers' experience of competence, autonomy, and relatedness in becoming a 21st century professional in Vietnam. Autonomy refers to "the desire to self-organise experience and behaviour and to have activity be concordant with one's integrated sense of self" (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p.231), or the desire to have free will to choose and do things. Relatedness refers to "the desire to feel connected to others" (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p.231), or it can be understood as the feeling of belongingness, care for and being cared for, being accepted and valued. Competence is "the desire to exercise capacities" (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p.229), or the feeling of being competent, confident and competent in doing things.

Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework

TPACK attempts to identify the nature of knowledge required by lecturers for technology integration in their teaching while addressing the complex, multifaceted and situated nature of lecturer knowledge. Hence, TPACK fits well with the competence element of the Self-determination theory and can be used to clarify seven types of knowledge EFL lecturers need to effectively teach with communicative language teaching approaches and technology. Koehler & Mishra (2009) define these knowledge as: teachers' knowledge about the subject matter to be learned or taught (CK); teachers' deep knowledge about the processes and practices or methods of teaching and learning (PK); teachers' knowledge about working with technology, tools and resources; and adapting to changes in information technology (TK); teachers' knowledge of pedagogy that is applicable to the teaching of specific content (PCK); teachers' understanding of the manner in which technology and content influence and constraint on another (TCK); teachers' understanding of how teaching and learning can change when particular technologies are used in particular ways (TPK); and the basis of effective teaching with technology, teachers' understanding of the interactions among content, pedagogy, and technology knowledge (TPACK).

There are three contributions that the study can make with the development of the conceptual framework to explore CPD approaches for Vietnamese EFL lecturers. Firstly, from the practical aspect, the framework can guide CPD policy to address the problem of limited CPD theoretical foundation and directions. Secondly, regarding conceptual contribution, the study will contribute to the understanding of Self-Determination Theory and TPACK in a cultural setting other than Western culture. The researchers will investigate how each construct, such as competence, autonomy, relatedness, and the seven types of TPACK knowledge are conceptualised in an Eastern collectivist culture such as Vietnam. Thirdly, this is the first study that the researchers are aware of that combines Self-Determination Theory with TPACK to explore CPD for the 21st century EFL lecturer. TPACK only focuses on the core competencies of teachers but neglects their other needs for autonomy and relatedness. Self-determination theory can, therefore, broadens the TPACK framework to include these constructs.

Discussion and future directions

Preliminary findings from the focus group with Vietnamese EFL experts validated the importance of competence, autonomy and relatedness as essential elements of CPD for the 21st century EFL lecturer. The experts reported that to them competence means meeting the government's competence standard for EFL teachers. Regarding TPACK competencies, they found it difficult to distinguish between the seven TPACK constructs since they did not have significant experience in teaching with technology. Similar to the findings of Dinh (2015), the experts could only distinguish between Technological Knowledge (working with technology) and non-Technological Knowledge, such as CK, PK, PCK, because they were not trained to teach with technology. This suggests that TPACK-based CPD is vital for EFL lecturers in Vietnam.

The EFL experts perceived their autonomy as free choice in making their own decisions in their teaching practice and CPD, but reported the need for support from institutions and leaders and to have opportunities and resources to make their own choices. This is referred to as "autonomous interdependence" where autonomy is the product of interdependence rather than independence (Ryan, 1991, p. 227, cited in Littlewood, 1999, p. 74). According to Littlewood (1999, p. 74), in the collectivist culture, autonomy is exercised with relatedness, that people "need to feel not only autonomous but also part of a social network". As a result, autonomy develops most effectively in an interpersonal environment which supports it. However, the experts in the focus group argued that autonomy could be a drawback if it was not accompanied by competence. This is because incompetent lecturers may make a choice that is not good for students and thus impacts the quality of teaching. Accordingly, they supported the idea of a certain level of control in relation to autonomy. This suggests that to exercise autonomy, EFL lecturers need to experience relatedness and competence.

Regarding relatedness, most participants felt connected with others in their work and their CPD. However, they mentioned a feeling of "split belongingness", both to their institution, and to other parties given the fact that they also worked for businesses, and taught extra or private classes to earn their living. Participants also emphasised connectedness not only inside but also outside of the institution, with various stakeholders such as colleagues, mentors, parents, and students.

Responses from the focus group suggested including the context in the conceptual framework since teacher CPD is "bounded within a dynamic social, cultural, and political context of lecturers' learning" (Tran, 2016, p. 249) and influenced by the politics and policies (e.g. individual versus collective culture, educational reform, and institutional policy) (Day& Sachs, 2004).

In conclusion, this paper presents a doctoral research study on CPD approaches with a focus on the development of a conceptual framework to support the becoming of the 21st century EFL lecturer in Vietnam. This conceptual framework provides a new way of viewing CPD regarding TPACK for Vietnamese higher education and other similar settings. The next step of this study is to develop and administer the practitioner survey to EFL lecturers working in Vietnam to collect further data on lecturers' perceptions of what is important for their practice, their career development, and CPD expectations to further refine the framework. The study reflects a message that in order to empower teachers to 'swim in unchartered waters', CPD approaches should meet their needs for competence in teaching with technology, autonomy and relatedness.

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