LIGHTS AND SHADOWS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION FOR GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP
IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN VIETNAM: A CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

• The first two decades of the 21st century has gone through an avalanche of revolutionary breakthroughs of humankind; nevertheless, behind the glamour of success are myriad thorny problems leaving millions of people trapped in the vicious circle of suffering.
• Japan: failure to nurture young generations who possess skills and know how to experience the world
• Vietnam: much dispute over the question of whether “global citizenship” is merely “a linguistic fancy” about “a fiction” that the political powers yearn for (Davis, 2006, p. 5).
• The method of integrating GCE into English language teaching curriculum has been increasingly intensified over the past decade in many countries. Though many reform projects have been conducted in general education levels, higher education seems to be left out.
• Research questions:
  1. What is the overview of English language teaching at tertiary level in the global citizenship approach in Japan and Vietnam from a comparative perspective?
  2. What are the challenges for Japan and Vietnam in English language education in the global citizenship approach?

Key Concepts

1. Global citizenship: “a sense of belonging to a broader common and human community” (UNESCO, 2015, p. 14) which concentrates on individuals’ possessing global awareness, knowledge, skills, and values, to think and act “locally and globally” in an attempt to tackle the world’s issues (Schattle, 2008; Thanosawan, 2012).

2. Needs for GCE in higher education:
   - conveying in-depth understanding of global issues to equip students with universal values from justice, equality to dignity and respect (UNESCO, 2013)
   - “global-ready graduates” are expected to possess “cognitive skills to think critically, systemically and creatively” (Hunter, et al., 2006; UNESCO, 2013)
   - university graduates who are expected to work in multicultural and multicultural society need to prepare non-cognitive skills (social & communicative skills) to handle social interactions in appropriate manners (UNESCO, 2013).
   - labor market treasures graduates with behavioral capacities to act collaboratively and responsibly as well as possess teamwork skills to strive for collective good (UNESCO, 2013)

3. English language teaching in higher education in Japan and Vietnam
   - During Showa Era (1926-1988): The Japanese economy grew required employees equipped to practice English (four macro-skills); but Grammar-Translation & Audiolingual Method were still popular.
   - Heisei Era (1989-present): more motivation to learn English; shifted from academic English to more practical English, but two trajectories still exist.
   - Vietnam:
     - Before Doi Moi (the Revolution in 1986): Russian thinned, English virtually vanished. After Doi Moi, English language has been a compulsory subject in virtually all the higher education institutions.
     - Conventional pedagogy: grammar & vocabulary → Current method: communicative language teaching (CLT); learner-centered, English as a medium of instruction

Methodology

• Framework:
  - In this study, only three elements were focused.
    - Framework of learning domains for GCE (UNESCO, 2015)
    - Research design:
      - Systematic Review
      - Qualitative method: Textbooks from 6 universities in Japan & Vietnam using simple random sampling
      - Content analysis:
        - "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18)

Findings & Discussions

1. Research question 1
1.1 Curriculums
• Similarities:
  - Higher education institutions entitled to the freedom of choosing & designing curriculum
  - In-house materials or materials developed by renowned publishers and experts overseas
  - Most of students have to take English courses; GCE not explicitly articulated in curriculum
• Differences:
  - Japan: In 2016, MOET approved the GCE program initiated by UNESCO UCLA Chair in Global Learning and Global Citizenship Education (Global Commons Review, 2017) to integrate the content into the national tertiary educational curriculum.
  - Japan: The Global 30 Project promotes English as the medium of instruction in the 13 most prestigious universities to bring 300,000 international students to Japan by 2020 to promote intercultural exchange. The 2003 Action Plan to cultivate “Japanese with English Abilities” to sustain Japanese culture and simultaneously promote the English learning.

Conclusions & Recommendations

1. Conclusions
   - Both Japan and Vietnam share some similarities and differences regarding curriculum design & reforms, and challenges in integrating GCE into English language education.
   - Implications for Japan and Vietnam
     - Educational institutions and authorities:
       - Manpower and financial resources in teacher training & assessment framework (UNESCO, 2014); qualified trainers accessible to support lecturers in the real-world classrooms (observations, informal workshops or discussions, etc.)
       - Flexibility in curriculum design: by design & delivery: locally relevant content & projects
       - Reinforce mutual support among educational institutions (Swee-Hin, 2017)
       - Collect feedback from teachers & students about educational content to make alterations
     - Educational institutions adopted by public and private schools verified to assure the GCE orientation by the authorities
   - Academics:
     - Lecturers understand the goals of GCE, accumulating knowledge & skills; engagement in community projects using English as a major tool of communication.
     - Collaborating with other lecturers to develop GCE programs to conform with the specific context of the educational institutions.
     - The inclusion of project-guided and action-oriented teaching methods into curriculum should link with learners’ personal lives & experiences.
     - Flexibility in skills-based & content-based approaches

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References


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